Outdoor Experiential Learning Processes: Engaging Influential Professionals in Strategic Leadership towards Sustainability

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Abstract:
The sustainability challenge currently poses one of the biggest challenges society has ever faced. With declining natural resources, climate change and a rising human population the need to change humanity’s trajectory towards sustainability has never been more urgent. A greater degree of engagement in sustainability by people in positions of power and influence within society is necessary if this transition is to occur quickly. This thesis explores the dynamics of Outdoor Experiential Learning Processes (OELPs) as applied to individuals from a professional background. The purpose is to assess how the OELP can be designed within society to engage influential professionals in sustainability. The research combines the existing powerful approach of the OELP with the Framework for Strategic Sustainable Development (FSSD). Strategic recommendations are made for how to achieve greater engagement in sustainability amongst OELP participants for a more sustainable future.

Keywords: Outdoors, Experiential Learning, Sustainability, Engagement, Leadership, FSSD
Statement of Collaboration

The creation of this thesis has been a collaborative effort between Joe Alsford, Marko Ćuruvija and Annika Malewski. The three of us came together around the topic of outdoor education because of a shared love of the outdoors and a passion for education. All of us had spent prolonged time on outdoor trips away from the distractions and luxuries of city life and shared a belief in the power of the outdoors for reconnecting people to nature.

Due to the iterative nature of the research, the three of us manoeuvred the topic in a number of directions as new information came to bear. The constantly evolving nature of our topic and our intention to truly co-create this thesis has resulted in much of the work taking place together, in group work sessions. Each group meeting would begin with a check in to maintain a close and honest working relationship. Tasks were divided equally and all members contributed to all aspects of the project.

Interviews were carried out collaboratively in order to give all members the opportunity to pose questions and to take notes. Literature was reviewed individually and key references, useful information and downloads were shared on Google docs. The analysis and writing of the thesis was also carried out by all members with each member having the opportunity to provide feedback and comments on the work of others.

All three members brought their unique qualities and personalities to the process. Not all of these qualities can be mentioned here but what stands out to the three of us is described here: Annika brought her strong work ethic, methodical approach to working and thinking about problems. Marko brought his insight and often new perspectives on issues, his ability to write well and fast and his fun and playful personality. Joe had the invaluable ability of processing a large amount of information into a concise text without getting lost in details, a calming effect on the group and helped to facilitate confusing instances and made sure we did not get lost during our walks in the Västramarken forest.
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Our interviewees proved to be incredibly passionate individuals who provided insightful and thoughtful commentary to our research questions. We were continually astonished with the cooperation and resources they provided to us. On a personal level, we often left our interviews feeling inspired and motivated to continue our research towards informing these individuals. They are, in no particular order: Tim Macartney, David Key, Morag Watson, Margaret Kerr, Dr. Sally Watson, Jeff Jackson, Andrea Cail, Barry Rowe, Göran Carstedt, Dana Carman, Mike Bodkin, John P. Milton, Andreas Rindsäter, Per Ericson, Göran Gennvi, Merlina Missimer, Anneli Örtqvist, Anna Thuradin Hedblad, Jan Henriksson, Korbi Hort, Jed Milroy, Andres Roberts and Martin Cadée.

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Thank you to our friends, partners and family members who have continued to provide us with the support, energy and inspiration to fulfil our dreams.

Lastly, a thank you to Mother Earth.

Cradled in your arms
We grow
And connect to the great joys and feelings of life

We fight for you
Your lasting long after we have passed
And the eternal serenity that your sanctuary provides.
Executive Summary

Introduction

Planet Earth is currently in the midst of a sustainability challenge of a magnitude never seen before in the history of the human kind. The design of our socio-economic systems and the prevalent mental models that have come to define our way of acting are severely threatening the capacity of the natural environment to support life.

If a change in trajectory towards a more restorative way of living is to take place, a quick and drastic shift in our ways of thinking will be required. This is especially relevant when dealing with people who hold positions of influence within society having the capacity to change corporate and individual attitudes within their sphere of influence. For these individuals, engagement, motivation and passion towards saving our planet will be necessary for this shift to manifest itself.

Outdoor Experiential Learning Processes (OELPs) carry the capacity for bringing about these necessary changes. For the case of this paper, these processes have four main components: The core process takes place in the context of the outdoors for the majority of the experience; the process includes a section of ‘solo’ reflective time; the programme targets individuals from a professional background with significant leverage potential; and lastly, the programme actively tries to engage participants in leadership towards sustainability.

OELPs have played a vital role in providing the time, setting and process required to “awaken” the individual towards fighting the sustainability challenge. The intense personal change of the experience provides a strong platform for a key demographic to move towards sustainability. Still, while shown to be effective, the OELP remains underused as a tool for engaging professionals in sustainability and lacks a strategic approach for helping these professionals to enact sustainability measures at the societal level.

Research questions:

Primary Research Question (PRQ):
How can an OELP be designed within society to engage influential professionals in sustainability?

Secondary Research Questions (SRQs):
SRQ1: How could the design of an OELP shift perceptions and build capacity for engagement in sustainability?
SRQ2: What are the gaps and challenges to an OELP engaging influential professionals in sustainability?
SRQ3: How can the gaps and challenges be overcome?

This thesis explores how the OELP could be used in a strategic way to guide influential professionals towards sustainability. Through combining current OELP approaches with the
Framework for Strategic Sustainable Development (FSSD) and further recommendations derived from our research, we hope to contribute to the evolution of the field in the grander scale of the sustainability challenge.

**Methods**

Joseph Maxwell’s Interactive Model for Research Design was referred to for the structuring of our research. This approach is built upon the definition, research and interaction of five constituent elements: Goals, conceptual framework, research questions, methods and validity (Maxwell 2005). The generic Five Level Framework (5LF) and the FSSD were used as conceptual frameworks for organising and analysing data. They aided in providing us with a categorised overview of our research, while facilitating analysis by structuring data in each of the individual five levels. From here, a collaborative analysis was done in order to find common categories. The data was collected from a document content analysis and interviews with practitioners, participants and experts in the field. The following graph shows an overview of the research process.

The initial part of our research in SRQ1 outlined the current reality of OELPs. This entailed examining the OELP in the broader context of society as well as the general OELP process. The second part of answering SRQ1 involved the creation of a desired future of the OELP informed by the FSSD and the positive attributes of the current reality gleaned from the interview process. This was important in providing an overview of what role the OELP could ideally play in the move towards a sustainable society. It presented various opportunities for growth and provided a strategic approach to decision making.

SRQ2 involved identifying the gaps between the current reality and desired future which was done by a process of comparison between the two models. Challenges were also identified from interviews with practitioners; these were then combined with the gaps to help identify what type of guidance was needed.
The process of creating recommendations (SRQ3) was now focused on addressing specific challenges as mentioned by existing practitioners, and specific gaps identified through the analysis between the current reality and desired future. There were three sources for the recommendations: Various practices amongst OELP organisations learned from practitioner interviews; ideas and insights from expert interviews, and concepts drawn from the FSSD and strategic sustainable development. The PRQ was answered with strategic guidelines for practitioners that were informed by both the recommendations and the desired future. The recommendations were elaborated on in the form of ‘points and questions to consider’, and important elements from the desired future model that had not been explicit in the recommendations were also formulated into guidelines. The answer to the PRQ is designed to be practically useful yet non prescriptive.

Results

SRQ1:

A comprehensive analysis of the OELP for professionals combined with concepts from the FSSD provided a desired model of how an OELP could shift perceptions and build capacity for engagement in sustainability.

Systems: The OELP process can be considered as a system nested within another system. In the broader system we have the OELP as it operates in society. It works with businesses and other professional organisations, but also with professionals themselves if they decide to partake in an OELP. The four components of which the process is comprised are participants, facilitators, the group and the wilderness environment interacting with one another to provide the experience. In the desired future model, the OELP is nested within the larger socio-ecological system as a tool for engagement in sustainability.

Success: In the current reality, heavy emphasis was placed on the learnings taken from the OELP process directly as opposed to the hard outcomes which would constitute practical engagement in sustainability. These include key personal learnings such as the awareness of interconnectivity, the overcoming of personal barriers and the development of leadership capacities such as authenticity and collaboration. In the desired future model, a more robust definition of success was created incorporating the four sustainability principles as a definition of sustainability. It also included the development of capacities within influential professionals to operationalise change towards sustainability in their workplace.

Strategic: Within the process of the OELP, decisions were made through a process of reflexive facilitation which was found to be both necessary and sufficient for producing the desired outcomes. In the desired future, FSSD concepts such as backcasting and the prioritisation questions were incorporated to the decision making process for actions external to the process.
**Actions:** The actions during the process were found to consist of three stages:

1) Slowing down and reflecting - time spent acclimatizing to the surroundings and beginning to practice ‘being’ and reflecting in the natural world as opposed to thinking and doing
2) Soloing in nature - a prolonged period of solitude in nature
3) Group dialogue - a process of deep sharing and communicating about the experiential aspects of the solo and on issues of importance that come up

**Tools:** A variety of tools, such as, meditation and yoga apply to all three phases of the actions above. There were also found to be a variety of strategic tools which consisted of guiding theories such as Theory U and guiding concepts such as Presencing.

**SRQ2:**

Once the desired future had been created, the gaps were identified by comparing the current reality and the desired future. Challenges were described by practitioners during the analysis of the current reality and pertain to multiple levels of the framework. Some examples of gaps are listed below:

**Systems:** A lack of understanding of the socio-ecological system.

**Success:** - No success goal pertaining to the participants ability to be able to operationalise sustainability after the OELP. No shared understanding of sustainability or success.

**Strategic:** - A lack of a strategic decision making process with respect to recruiting, marketing and communicating to the professional world.

An example of some of the challenges are as follows:

- Reinforcing the transformation
- Inter-organisational sharing and learning
- Communication of value to different audiences

**SRQ3:**

Ten recommendations were created to provide guidance across different potential areas of improvement for the OELP, as identified in SRQ2. The recommendations were ordered according to their degree of impact and addressed multiple gaps and challenges at once. The three most impactful were as follows:

- Collaboration between OELP organisations
- Shared definition of success
- Practitioners have a shared and scientifically robust definition of sustainability
Recommendations were cross checked against all the gaps and challenges to ensure all were being addressed.

**Discussion**

The application of the OELP for engaging professionals in sustainability is a fairly recent adaptation from traditional ways of running an OELP. Given the strong existing foundation of the current OELP towards engaging individuals in sustainability, this new application to the professional world holds great potential for the OELP to play a strategic role in moving society towards sustainability.

The biggest gaps found between current OELP approaches and the potential role OELPs could play were around understanding the OELP as a tool for engagement in sustainability in the broader context of the global sustainability challenge, and a lack of long term attention to participant learning in order to further sustain engagement towards sustainability. Often participants were left to their own devices following the trip with little operational knowledge of how to implement sustainability in the workplace. Likewise, many OELPs faced difficulties communicating their approach to relevant parties and as such, had a limited scope of influence.

Our results suggest that with the remodelling of the OELP towards an FSSD informed desired future, the OELP for professionals could benefit immensely. The implications for society would be a powerful approach to engaging influential professionals in strategic leadership towards sustainability by building motivation and passion for sustainability and then providing them with a strategic framework for operationalising this passion into making a structural change in society.

The primary target audience for this research are the practitioners working in the field which was kept in mind throughout the study and resulted in guidelines which are orientated towards that audience. The results do however have wider implications and could be beneficial to many other groups, particularly those working in the field of sustainable development.

**Conclusion**

OELPs can act as a powerful platform to engage influential professionals in strategic leadership towards sustainability. They not only have the ability to enact large scale personal transformation, but when used in a strategic way, have implications for the long term structural change required to move society towards sustainability. The inclusion of the FSSD and strategic concepts elaborated upon in this thesis expand the role of the OELP in the broader context of reaching a sustainable society. Using guidance from these concepts as well as general guidelines produced in this thesis, practitioners will be able to develop a strategic approach for navigating themselves and their participants through an OELP to achieve greater engagement in leadership towards sustainability.
Glossary

**Backcasting:** A strategic planning method where a vision of success in the future is defined and steps are taken to reach this vision (Dreborg 1996; Robinson 1990).

**Current Reality:** A generalised systems perspective of how the OELP currently operates.

**Desired Future:** An FSSD and research informed model of how the OELP for professionals could look in the future.

**Deep Ecology:** A theory that stipulates two fundamental principles: Firstly, humans are necessarily part of an interconnected system, namely, the ecosphere. Secondly, instead of identifying only with an ego or anthropocentric perspective on the world (where humans are considered separate from nature), we should identify with all of the natural world as if it was a part of ourselves or our family (Naess 1995).

**Ecopsychology:** A modern theory which postulates that human psychological well-being is directly connected to, and dependent on, the well-being of the environment, both human and natural, that is inhabited (Rantanen 2009).

**Ecological Self:** An awareness of oneself and one’s identity as being fundamentally transpersonal and ecological as opposed to egocentric.

**Facilitator:** The individual responsible for guiding participants through the Outdoor Experiential Learning Process (OELP).

**Five Level Framework for Planning in Complex System (5LF):** Being comprised of five distinct levels (Systems, Success, Strategic, Actions and Tools), the 5LF is a conceptual framework used to aid the understanding and analysis of complex systems (Robèrt 2000).

**Framework for Strategic Sustainable Development (FSSD):** A conceptual framework that identifies the ecological and societal conditions necessary for human survival within the finite limits of the biosphere. The FSSD is structured in five levels (System, Success, Strategic, Actions and Tools), with a key aspect being the strategic use of backcasting from the four Sustainability Principles (Robèrt 2000).

**Hard Outcomes:** Outcomes which have structural repercussions in society.

**Influential Professionals:** Professionals who hold a position of significant power or influence within their organisation.

**Outdoor Experiential Learning Process (OELP):** Experiences which seek to explore a core sense of personal identity and reconnection by utilising the outdoors as a context for this exploration with the rationale that the impetus for action is more powerful when driven by deep rooted motivation.
**Practitioner:** Practitioners are understood as all persons involved in the design, management and facilitation of an OELP. Facilitator, organiser and project manager are all sub-categories of practitioners.

**Prioritisation Questions:** Being a core concept of the Framework for Strategic Sustainable Development (FSSD), the three prioritisation questions help planners decide whether an action (1) leads in the right direction with respect to the Sustainability Principles, (2) is a flexible platform for future improvements and (3) provides a sufficient return on investment to further catalyse the process (Holmberg and Robèrt 2000).

**Professionals:** Individuals who work within an organisational context.

**Socio-ecological system:** The system composed of the biosphere, society, and their complex interactions.

**Soft Outcomes:** Outcomes which pertain to personal and psychological learnings of a participant.

**Solo:** A prolonged period of solitude spent in a single location in nature and remaining in or around that spot with the aim of allowing the mind to slow down and reflect.

**Sustainability Challenge:** The systematic degradation of the biosphere and the social systems, upon which human society depends (Robèrt 2000, 245).

**Sustainable Development:** A term defined by the Brundtland Commission as the “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (Brundtland 1987, 15).

**Sustainability Principles:** The four basic principle based system conditions for a sustainable society in the biosphere stating that:

In a sustainable society, nature is not subject to systematically increasing...
1. ...concentrations of substances extracted from the Earth’s crust;
2. ...concentrations of substances produced by society;
3. ...degradation by physical means;
   and, in that society...
4. ...people are not subject to conditions that systematically undermine their capacity to meet their needs (Robèrt 2000; Ny et al. 2006).
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1 Introduction

1.1 The Sustainability Challenge

Planet Earth is comprised of a variety of natural systems upon which all life is ultimately dependent. Since the dawn of the industrial revolution, these systems have come under increasing pressure from human society (Robèrt 2000). Humans continue to generate systematically increasing concentrations of substances such as CO$_2$ and HCFCs which threaten the life-sustaining capacity of the biosphere (Robèrt 2000). The natural world is being physically degraded and encroached upon as land is taken for development and agriculture. Meanwhile, poor resource management has lead to increasing deforestation and loss of natural habitat (Brooks et al. 2002). Further, the already heavily consuming human population has risen exponentially over the last century and is set to continue to grow to 9.3 billion by 2050 (United Nations 2011), compounding the problems we face. This systematic degradation of our social systems and natural habitats - our forests, oceans, wetlands etc. - poses a major threat to the survival of the human race and the Earth as a whole (Rockström et al. 2009). The pursuit of continuous economic growth has caused people to disregard caring for their fellow man, eroding one of the fundamental social fabrics upon which humans operate, trust (Otteson 2012). All of this accumulating pressure constitutes a declining capacity of the Earth to sustain human life. This can be understood with the metaphor of a funnel which is visualised in Figure 1.1 (Robèrt 2000).

![Funnel Metaphor](image)

*Figure 1.1. The funnel metaphor (adapted from Robèrt 2000)*

The walls of the funnel represent the “decline of the ecosphere’s capacity to support our present day economies, and life itself” (Robèrt 2000, 245). Over time, it is clear that the walls of the funnel will constrict and limit our capacity to operate. Due to the delay between cause and effect, as well as unknown thresholds or feedbacks, the overall consequences of past and current unsustainable behaviour are not fully understood yet. The extent of these impacts is widely recognised in the academic world, so much so, that the era has been given a distinct
label, “The Anthropocene Era” (Crutzen 2002). If we are to avoid crashing into the walls of the funnel by, for example, our climate becoming uninhabitable, businesses failing because they cannot afford high energy or material costs, or running into a food crisis because we can no longer supply our people with enough food, we must change our trajectory in alignment with sustainability (Robèrt 2000).

Sustainable development has been defined in the Brundtland Report to the United Nations World Commission on Environment and Development as “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (Brundtland 1987, 15). However, our current reality is nowhere close to fulfilling this definition and significant changes in all levels of society will be necessary if this type of radical change is to come about in time for our planet.

1.1.1 The Framework for Strategic Sustainable Development

Real life problems are almost always without exception complex (DeTombe 2001), being comprised of numerous, dynamic parts and their often unpredictable interconnections which are often not recognised as such (Capra 1985). If the complexity of the sustainability challenge is going to be addressed, a strategic approach to planning towards sustainability within human systems will be necessary. To facilitate the move towards a sustainable society while recognising the complexity of the underlying issues, the Framework for Strategic Sustainable Development (FSSD) provides a guide for strategic direction being based on the “concept of simplicity without reduction” (Broman, Holmberg and Robèrt 2000, 13). The FSSD entails a science-based definition of sustainability consisting of four basic sustainability principles (SPs) that function as boundaries within which society can operate while being sustainable and state that:

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

1. ...concentrations of substances extracted from the Earth’s crust;
2. ...concentrations of substances produced by society;
3. ...degradation by physical means” (Broman et al. 2000; Holmberg and Robèrt 2000);
   “and, in that society...
4. ...people are not subject to conditions that systematically undermine their capacity to meet their needs” (Ny et al. 2006).

These four basic SPs can be used for a backcasting planning process for sustainable development (Broman, Holmberg and Robèrt 2000). Backcasting is an alternative to traditional planning methods such as forecasting which are no longer sufficient due to the complexity of the underlying problems. It works in such a way that a desired future operating within the bounds of the four SPs is envisioned. An assessment of the current reality alongside the desired future reveals any misalignment and creates a tension from which possible actions can then be brainstormed by asking “What do we have to do today to get there?” (Holmberg and Robèrt 2000, 293). Out of these actions, the most strategic ones are selected with the use of prioritisation guidelines. Under the FSSD, every action that is
considered can be put up against a simple but effective list of three prioritisation guidelines (Holmberg and Robèrt 2000).

These guidelines, worded here as questions, are:

1. Does this action proceed in the right direction with respect to the four SPs?
2. Does this action provide a flexible platform for future improvements?
3. Is this action likely to produce a sufficient return on investment to further catalyse the process?

By prioritising actions in such a manner, every action will have been strategically selected to move progressively towards a desired future (Holmberg and Robèrt 2000).

Unfortunately, the prevalent mental models of today still differ largely from the concepts explained above. The current environmental predicament is in large part due to the misalignment between linear mechanistic human systems and the systems we see in nature which are characterised by an ability to self-organise with cyclical flows of matter and energy. This dilemma can be illustrated through the cylinder paradigm (Robèrt et al. 2010, 10). In contrast to the funnel, the cylinder paradigm can be visualised as shown in Figure 1.2.

![Cylinder Paradigm](image)

**Figure 1.2. The cylinder metaphor (adapted from Robèrt et al. 2010)**

It has two main tenets:

1. “There are limits to how many resources the socio-ecological system can provide to humans and other species; but
2. The absolute ability of the system to provide those resources is not being systematically degraded by society’s current activities.” (Robèrt et al. 2010, 11-12)

The implications of this paradigm remove the onus on humans and the organisations to act sustainably. Similarly, the dominant economic system that emerged out of the industrial revolution, neoclassical economics, whose principles align with cylinder thinking, assumes that “environmental resources are turned into raw materials and imported into the economic system while waste is exported back to the environment; all at little or no cost” (Robèrt 2000, 130). Human capital (labour) and service are also reduced to functional roles in a mechanised way towards the accumulation of financial wealth (Otteson 2012). Goods are mass produced in factories and distributed to the world with the average individual seldom seeing the systematic degradation of nature caused by the production and disposal of goods or the provision of services purchased. Further, our reliance upon technology for communicating with one another and carrying out daily tasks culminates in an increasingly prevalent social and environmental disconnect (Otteson 2012). Widespread feelings of indifference, apathy
and alienation towards nature and our fellow human beings permeate through many levels of society (Heath and Gifford 2006; Mainella, Agate and Clark 2011). A quick and drastic shift away from a traditional linear and siloed mental model to a more holistic perspective, which recognises human systems as operating within the larger socio-ecological system, will be a necessary precondition for the average individual if there is to be hope for a better future.

1.2 Organisational Culture and the Lack of Engagement in Sustainability

The systematic degradation of Earth’s natural systems is in large part due to the operations which take place within organisations and the disconnect which is prevalent among decision makers within those organisations. Ian Cheshire, the CEO of Kingfisher PLC, Saker Nusseibeh of Hermes Fund Managers and John Steel of Café Direct have recently gone on record iterating how “most businesses feel entirely separated from the natural world and fail to recognise that their future success is dependent on local ecosystems in particular and the health of the planet in general” (Confino 2013). The three of them represent only a small fraction of the business field, but the relative difference of their companies, from service to hedge fund based, shows how the concern for the interconnection between the company and the impact of its actions on nature has spread across the entire business landscape.

Further, evidence in corporate behaviour suggests that there is a particular lack of deep rooted passion for sustainability amongst corporate leadership. As Dunphy, Griffiths and Benn point out, “[c]orporate scandals such as James Hardie, Enron and Anvil Mining have highlighted the extent to which powerful corporate entities can write their own rules for action regardless of the consequences of others” (Dunphy, Griffiths and Ben 2003, 4). Many modern day organisations operate under a hierarchy that places decision making power in the hands of few people. These people then define the organisational culture, internal structure and overall position their company will take in regards to sustainability. While it is not a given that an individual in power will directly misuse his power for personal gain, the potential for him or her to do so is great (Dunphy, Griffiths and Ben 2003). In the context of sustainability, an example of this is shown through the strategic disenfranchisement of the railway system and expansion of road infrastructure in the United States whereby “a coalition of oil companies and large construction firms [...] planned and efficiently brought about the demise of the US railroad system to favour the construction of a vast network of interstate highways” (Dunphy, Griffiths and Ben 2003, 4).

Power is not the only thing that inhibits individuals from acting towards sustainability. Fear also plays a part. Unilever’s CEO Paul Polman has gone on record saying “business leaders do not like to promise on things they are not sure they can deliver on, so they would rather work discretely on projects” (Confino 2012). Marc Bolland, CEO of Marks and Spencer is an example of this. He has recently been heavily involved in the Rio +20 conference and has also addressed numerous sustainability concerns in over 1000 different suppliers of the company, but as of right now has remained out of the limelight regarding his involvement in these issues (Confino 2012). Likewise, The Guardian reported that other corporate
influentials have stated various other fears off the record including “being attacked by NGOs or the media if they stick their heads above the parapet, and their brands being damaged in the process [...., whereby] the press had made the company wary of publicising any of its sustainability activities, even though it was proud of what was being achieved” (Confino 2012). Further, it was noted “if anyone, and particularly a man, takes a step outside of his comfort zone, and gets immediately criticised, he is likely to retreat” (Confino 2012). Many also shared the sentiment that “[t]he best protection is to have belief in what you are doing and personally embody the change” (Confino 2012). The lack of engagement with these issues in the mainstream is easier to understand when looking at the rationale behind leaders’ decisions with respect to sustainability

1.3 Leadership towards Sustainability

"The question of reaching sustainability is not about if we will have enough energy, enough food, or other tangible resources - those we have. The question is: [W]ill there be enough leaders in time?" (Broman and Robèrt n.d.)

While organisational culture and outside factors impact the level of engagement in sustainability, another of the biggest challenges when dealing with the complexity inherent to sustainability issues is the lack of competent leadership. Decision-makers rarely foresee the full consequences of their actions which are often system wide and may manifest years or decades later (Senge 1990).

If we are to change our trajectory and address the complex global sustainability challenge, we need people to influence the change in all sectors of society, whether it is in governments, multinational corporations, small and medium-sized enterprises, charities, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) or the educational sector. The individuals who hold positions of authority and influence within these organisations have significant leverage potential for bringing transformational change towards sustainability (WWF 2011). Engagement in the development and fostering of new concepts, frameworks and methodologies which challenge how we think, learn and connect to our environment and fellow man will be essential if this change is to take place. Influential professionals, if influenced in the right direction and re-invigorated with new energy and enthusiasm towards sustainability, could have huge implications for the sustainability movement as a whole.

From a business perspective, able leaders that are engaged in sustainability are increasingly desired. With major corporate players such as Walmart, Patagonia and IBM consciously changing their approach to business, it is apparent that the sustainability challenge is increasingly recognised globally in the workplace and is becoming a priority for many upcoming and forward thinking companies. Likewise, in a recent study with schools and executives from the United Nations’ Principles for Responsible Management Education, it was “found that 76 percent of the chief executives and senior leaders surveyed thought it was important that senior leaders in their organisations had the mindsets and skills to lead in a changing global context marked by the trends discussed above. Yet fewer than 8 percent thought either their own organisations or business schools were doing a very good job of
developing these mindsets and skills” (Gitsham 2012, 299). Further, 88 percent of chief executives [...] believed it was important that educational systems and business schools develop the mindsets and skills needed for future leaders to address sustainability” (Gitsham 299).

### 1.3.1 Influential Professionals and Engagement in Sustainability

There are many practical and intellectual reasons why influential professionals would initiate an engagement in sustainability. For leaders of the business world, there is a wealth of evidence outlining the various advantages of a move towards sustainability. Amongst other things, these include a higher retention and easier hiring of top talent, reduced production costs and reduced risk (Willard 2012). However, apart from such external motivations, the role of individual beliefs, values and motivation is seen as increasingly important for understanding individual behaviour in the context of a collective, such as the organisation. Ken Wilber’s four quadrants of consciousness (Wilber 2006) are one way of understanding the dynamic between individual beliefs and values, performance and organisational culture and the corresponding results (Carman 2010; Future Considerations 2013). This is visualised in Figure 1.3.

![Wilber's 4 quadrants of consciousness](image)

*An integral model of learning and change
For learning and change to be effective and lasting, all four quadrants must be addressed equally*

*Adapted from Ken Wilber*

*Figure 1.3. Visualisation of Wilber’s 4 quadrants of consciousness (Future Considerations 2013)*

As Wilber describes it, the four quadrants at their most fundamental level make a distinction of perspective between “the ‘I’ (the inside of the individual), the ‘It’ (the outside of the individual), the ‘We’ (the inside of the collective) and the ‘Its’ (the outside of the collective)” (Wilber 2006, 24). In the case of the organisation, all four quadrants need to be addressed to
effect change towards sustainability (Future Considerations 2013). Looking at organisational change towards sustainability through the lens of Wilber’s four quadrants of consciousness highlights the importance of individual motivation and values when implementing change throughout the organisation’s culture and developing new strategies for a sustainable future.

1.3.2 Engagement in Sustainability and the Need for a Deeper Motivation

It has been indicated that the motivations behind the decisions we make and the actions we take are predominantly rooted in our emotions and values (Moloney, Horne and Fien 2010). It is therefore crucial that influential professionals have an internal motivation and drive for this engagement in sustainability which is rooted in not just the objective, intellectual understanding of the need, but rather in a deep subjective passion and emotional connection to the need (O’Dwyer et al. 1993).

Existing academic literature argues that what motivates our engagement in any kind of behaviour is our underlying beliefs and values, cultural protocols and satisfaction of human needs (Maslow 1943; Kollmuss and Agyeman 2002). It is clear then that there are many dimensions to human motivation that play a significant role in the behaviour of any individual. Maslow, in his theory on the hierarchy of human needs, postulated that a higher need should be included which he termed ‘Self-transcendence’ (Maslow 1969). This involves motivation born out of the need to experience oneself in the service of something greater than oneself, such as in the pursuit of an ideal or experiencing a sense of communion beyond the bounds of the self (Maslow 1969; Koltko-Rivera 2006). Another prominent thinker on the topic of human needs, Manfred Max-Neef, has also referred to the potential inclusion of ‘transcendence’ in his non-hierarchical theory of human needs (Max-Neef 1992). Motivation for sustainability could be derived from the human need for self-transcendence. It should not be understated that this type of mental transformation requires time, commitment to change and effort to sustain this change on the part of the individual. Unfortunately, the reality is that individuals immersed in a stressful working environment rarely have the time and space to take on these challenges.

New mental models, concepts and ways of working will be needed if individuals are to change mankind’s trajectory towards sustainability. One aspect of this transformation will be a move away from linear ways of thinking to a more systemic, interconnected one. Instead of examining systems in a fragmented manner by looking for linear relationships between different parts of a system, a systems approach works to understand the complex dynamic of the whole system. As Capra describes it, “the world does not appear as a mechanical universe composed of fundamental building blocks but rather as a network of relations” (Capra 1985, 476). The implications of this at the personal level is for an individual to view himself as part of and equally dependent on a larger system, the Earth. Establishing this connection is a natural step towards taking responsibility for the state of the world and becoming motivated internally towards engaging in sustainability (Evitts, Seale and Skybrook 2010).
Linked to this requirement for a systems perspective is the necessity for professionals to be engaged and focused around a larger purpose and intention that inspires and motivates people to create and innovate (Senge et al. 2005). In order for this to happen, an individual must become aware of what their genuine intention actually is. This requires a journey of reflection and discovery which is described by Senge et al. as becoming “extremely clear about what it is you want to do. Why is it you want to do what you do? How is it a reflection of your values? How does it relate to your unique purpose in life? What is it that you want to accomplish in society?” (Senge et al. 2005, 134).

Another key aspect of being motivated to engage in sustainability is to be conscious and clear about your authenticity. As Morag Watson, policy officer at WWF Scotland describes it: “[I]t is that burning inner sense of authenticity to be who you are and use that without fear to lead others, that’s the powerful process” (M. Watson 2013). A former IKEA executive, Göran Carstedt, has also emphasised the importance of trust, credibility and authenticity if you are to remain believable as a leader (Carstedt 2013).

An effective approach has to be found to help an individual achieve these goals, i.e. a perception shift, finding passion, becoming authentic and engaging in leadership towards sustainability. The empirical literature shows that knowledge is not sufficient to lead to long-term engagement. As O’Dwyer et al. found, “[i]nformation alone is unlikely to motivate changes as a matter of course. Information is also unlikely to result in sustained behavioural change beyond the life of a given campaign, since enthusiasm for ‘new’ behaviour or actions tends to wane and participation decays in the absence of continual reinforcement.” (O’Dwyer et al. 1993)

An approach known as experiential learning has become widely recognised as a viable learning tool for developing the aforementioned desired capacities and necessary changes in perception. In a recent poll, 70 percent of executives from companies such as IBM “believed that experiential learning was an important element of the learning process for developing the mindsets and skills needed for a changing business context” and recognised this leadership challenge as the second most pivotal area of influence for addressing sustainability issues (Gitsham 2012, 299).

1.3.3 Experiential Learning and its Role in Instilling a Deeper Motivation for Engagement in Sustainability

The definition of experiential learning has evolved immensely over time. One of the earliest experiential learning thinkers, John Dewey, introduced the concept of “learning by doing” in 1915 (Gentry 1990, 10). Since then, its usage has gone on to transcend common notions of what learning is, placing an extreme emphasis on the transformative aspect of learning in conjunction with our interactions with nature and our surrounding environment. This runs in opposition to the orthodox memorisation of knowledge and replicating of tasks often asked of us in modern day educational institutions. Currently, experiential learning has come to take on “a quality of personal involvement - the whole-person in both his feeling and cognitive aspects being in the learning event” (Gentry 1990, 10). Today, David Kolb, the modern
figurehead of experiential learning theory, has defined the learning process as “knowledge ... created through the transformation of experience” (Kolb 1984). Its application in practice has mainly been applied to programmes immersing people in the outdoors, duly illustrated through organisations such as the Natural Change Project based in Scotland. The intention of the experiential learning trips often run through these types of organisations is explicitly directed at stimulating certain transformative habits, whether it be with troubled youth, recovering addicts or people searching for a change in lifestyle. While each experience on an OELP does not instantly lead to behaviour change in an individual, there is a notable trend towards an increasing connectivity with nature and the remedying of previously fragmented human relationships (Russell 2005).

Further, general consensus was found that experiences in the outdoors have a positive influence on raising awareness for sustainability. For example, Lugg states that “outdoor experiences in ‘natural’ environments [...] are significant formative influences in establishing an environmental conservation and/or activist ethic in adults” (Lugg 2007, 105), while Higgins and Kirk find that “developing a relationship with the environment is an important precursor to understanding sustainability” (Higgins and Kirk 2006, 321). O’Connell et al. stipulated that outdoor experiences might even “reverse our current state of alienation” (O’Connell et al. 2005, 87). Further evidence suggests that outdoor experiential learning can offer skills and values which equip participants with the ability to tackle complexity in modern society (Higgins 2009). To date, some key learnings which have emerged from outdoor educational experiences include a greater understanding and awareness of complexity, connection and consequences (of action) (Higgins 2009). These themes can be revealed to the learner as a result of the dynamic relationships between the individual, others and the environment, instilling an overarching sense of responsibility in these aspects of life (Higgins 2009). Other capacity building attributes have also been noted over longer time frames including: Reflection, perceived competence, self-efficacy, accomplishment, awareness of surroundings and new beginnings (Davis-Berman and Berman 2012). Feelings of oneness, primitiveness and humility have also been observed on trips (Borrie and Roggenbuck 2001).

1.3.4 Outdoor Experiential Learning Processes (OELPs) Engaging Influential Professionals in Sustainability

For this research, Outdoor Experiential Learning Processes (OELPs) are defined as experiences which seek to explore a core sense of personal identity and reconnection by utilising the outdoors as a context for this exploration with the rationale that the impetus for action is more powerful when driven by deep rooted motivation.

OELPs have been shown to exhibit numerous transformations in individuals’ opinions and outlook on life. This was illustrated most notably through an anecdote of Theodore Roosevelt, a former president of the United States, after a camping and experiential learning trip in the Yosemite Valley (WWF 2011, 4). His experience in wilderness not only inspired him to open numerous protected national parks (Minteer and Pyne 2012), but also influenced
his political mindset by stating that “it is undemocratic to exploit the nation’s resources for present profit” (WWF 2011, 4). The implications of Roosevelt’s new found inspiration, from a man harbouring arguably the most powerful position of any human on Earth, shows that the OELP has the capacity, when used correctly, to impact policy change at the highest levels of human society.

There are numerous other examples showing the potential of outdoor experiences in helping to develop a stronger awareness of connection. For instance, in the early 1990s, a group of engineers at the multinational company Xerox were given the task to develop a new generation of digital copiers. John Elter, the team leader, felt that a new way of thinking was necessary for this and wanted his team members to get “connected to their purpose, the company’s purpose, and to one another more deeply than normally occurs” (Elter n.d.). Elter decided to hire a company that took the team members on a process of connecting people “in a deep way to [...] themselves and nature”, including a two-day wilderness solo (Senge et al. 2008). After the solo, on the way back to the retreat centre, the engineers were intentionally guided past a large landfill where they discovered an old Xerox copier. The contrast between the pristine wilderness they experienced during the solo and the waste they found in the landfill inspired the new “Zero to Landfill” guideline for their future work (Senge et al. 2008).

In recent years, the Natural Change Project, developed as part of WWF Scotland’s effort to embed sustainability into the Scottish society, has developed programmes aimed at people who hold positions of influence in society (WWF 2013). In the introduction to their 2011 report it is stated that “[t]he Natural Change Project catalyses a shift towards an identity intrinsically connected with the rest of nature. This transformation in the sense of self brings about a deep and enduring motivation to work towards a more sustainable future” (WWF 2011, 6).

The programme includes a variety of experiences including residential wilderness workshops, as well as meetings and mentoring over a six month period. It combines outdoor education with creative communications and psychotherapy, and is facilitated by an outdoor educator and a psychotherapist working closely together. They strive to make change by addressing the prevalent personal, cultural and structural norms in society (WWF 2011). They report success by publishing testimonials and case studies of participants who have undergone a transformation leading to engagement in sustainability. One example of a participant for whom the experience has led to significant changes is the chief executive of Young Scott. Following her experience, she established a staff well-being group in order to promote healthy lifestyles and developed a new purchasing strategy which encourages suppliers throughout the value chain to act sustainably (WWF 2011, 30).

As illustrated, OELPs carry a great potential to engage individuals in leadership towards sustainability. However, practitioners in the field agree on the fact that more research is needed. In the report following the first Natural Change Project, it was stated that “[t]he relationship between personal identity, well-being and pro-environmental behaviour is a new and developing area of research and understanding [...] and further research and projects will
be needed to build on the learning generated by the Natural Change Project” (WWF 2009). Furthermore, a theme around the lack of collaboration among similar programmes was addressed. David Key, a facilitator of the Natural Change Project stated that it would be “[v]ery helpful [...] to know what other programmes are doing similar stuff” (Key 2013). Another commonly recognised need for research in the field was described by Korbi Hort in relation to “[l]earning to collaborate more with people who do the marketing of the programmes and the sales [...] and getting people to come” (Hort 2013). The time, space and process of the OELP have been able to produce some remarkable outcomes, yet still, they are not commonly sought after by companies and individuals. A pressing need remains, “[w]hile experiential learning remains popular; the credibility of outdoor leadership development is challenged by budget holders and key organisational stakeholders. The disconnect between corporate rhetoric on collaborative working practices and the competitive reality of many outdoor learning events has not been fully explored” (Watson and Vasileva 2007).

1.4 Purpose

Backcasting from a sustainable society, the purpose of this research is to strengthen the OELP as a tool for moving society towards sustainability. By taking a whole systems perspective, the goal is to provide practitioners with guidance to create a stronger, longer lasting experience that can help to strategically move society towards sustainability by training and supporting influential professionals to be better equipped to engage in strategic leadership towards sustainability. Similarly, in strengthening the OELP, this research aims to provide OELP practitioners with insight on how to communicate their programmes more effectively and to a wider audience.

1.5 Research Questions

1.5.1 Primary Research Question (PRQ):

How can an OELP be designed within society to engage influential professionals in sustainability?

1.5.2 Secondary Research Questions (SRQs):

SRQ1: How could the design of an OELP shift perceptions and build capacity for engagement in sustainability?
SRQ2: What are the gaps and challenges to an OELP engaging influential professionals in sustainability?
SRQ3: How can the gaps and challenges be overcome?

1.6 Scope, Limitations and Intended Audience

The scope of this research included individuals and organisations in Western developed countries, as within these regions, suitable programmes running OELPs could be found. The primary audience of this thesis is intended to be existing and aspiring OELP practitioners. In
this thesis, practitioners are understood as all persons involved in the design, management and facilitation of an OELP. Some practitioners do not wish to or do not have the capability to adapt their process into a further reaching, strategic process that moves society strategically towards sustainability. Others are already partially doing so or have the capacity to take their organisation to this level. This research is specifically aimed at helping those with a wish to evolve their OELP into a strategic transformative process guiding individuals towards the creation of a sustainable society.
2 Methods

This chapter starts with a description of the general research design, how suitable programmes were identified and which conceptual frameworks were used to facilitate the research. In the main part of this chapter, the approaches taken to collect and analyse the data and to answer the three SRQs and the PRQ are explained. An overview of these steps is provided in Figure 2.1.

![Figure 2.1. Overview of the research process](image)

2.1 Research Design

The design for this qualitative research was informed by Maxwell’s *Interactive model for research* (Maxwell 2005) which is built upon the definition of five constituent elements of the research and their interactions (Figure 2.2).

![Figure 2.2. Interactive model for research design (Maxwell 2005)](image)

This flexible, iterative approach allowed for the simultaneous consideration and constant evolvement of these five elements of the research. The data collection and analysis as well as
the answering of the research questions was conducted iteratively so that newly emerging themes could be included.

2.2 Selection of Programmes

To inform our research, contacts were established with practitioners in the field of outdoor experiential learning. Suitable programmes were selected using three criteria. Firstly, the experiential learning process should to a large extent take place outdoors in a wilderness setting. Introductory parts of the programmes could also be held indoors; however, the programme should, as a minimum, include preparation time as well as a solo spent outdoors. Secondly, the programme should be aimed at participants who have a professional background and/or hold certain leverage potential within society or their organisation. Thirdly, at least part of the programme’s aims should be to engage the participants in leadership towards sustainability.

2.3 Conceptual Frameworks

This research was informed by two frameworks which helped to organise and process the gathered information in a strategic way. In this section, they are introduced in general terms while the specific ways in which they were applied in order to facilitate this research are explained in the following sections.

2.3.1 The Five Level Framework (5LF)

The focus of this research, OELPs for engaging influential professionals in leadership towards sustainability, is a complex topic with dynamic relations. Additionally, all analysed programmes differ in numerous small ways from each other. To aid the understanding and analysis of this complex system, the generic Five Level Framework (5LF) for Planning in Complex Systems (Robèrt 2000) was used. The 5LF is composed of five distinct, interrelated levels (Systems, Success, Strategic, Actions and Tools) under which information about the system is structured (Robèrt 2000). The left side of Table 2.1 gives an overview of what kind of information is relevant to each of the levels.

2.3.2 The Framework for Strategic Sustainable Development (FSSD)

When the 5LF is applied to a planning endeavour where the desire is sustainability, it is called the Framework for Strategic Sustainable Development (FSSD). The FSSD is used to inform a strategic approach to decision making and planning for an individual or organisation moving towards sustainability. Applying the FSSD to the OELP provides strategic insight on how the OELP could best exist within society and contribute to a faster shift towards sustainability. The right side of Table 2.1 shows what constitutes each of the five levels of the FSSD.
Table 2.1. The Five Level Framework (5LF) and the Framework for Strategic Sustainable Development (FSSD) with explanations (Robèrt 2000; Robèrt et al. 2002; Robèrt et al. 2010)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>5LF</th>
<th>FSSD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Systems</td>
<td>The system that is relevant to the overall goal/success.</td>
<td>The global socio-ecological system (society within the biosphere); An overview of the sustainability challenge.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Success</td>
<td>The definition of success.</td>
<td>A society that complies with the four SPs (see Section 1.1.1) and also with the organisation’s vision and goals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategic</td>
<td>The strategic guidelines used to select actions that move towards success in the system.</td>
<td>Backcasting from success; The three prioritisation Questions (as a minimum; both explained in Section 1.1.1).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Actions</td>
<td>The concrete actions that follow the overall strategic guidelines to reach success.</td>
<td>The actions that help move the global socio-ecological system towards sustainability.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tools</td>
<td>The tools that support the planning process.</td>
<td>The tools that support the effort to reach global sustainability.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.4 Data Collection

To collect the data relevant for answering the research questions, document content analyses as well as numerous interviews were conducted as described below.

2.4.1 Document Content Analysis

Initiating the data collection process, document content analyses were conducted using the information found on each of the programmes’ websites. Examples for analysed documents include: Reports on programmes and their outcomes, talks given by the practitioners as well as testimonials and blogs participants had written. The information found on the websites was complemented with documents shared by the practitioners after having been interviewed.

The document content analysis was conducted in order to be able to ask more specific questions during the interviews. The results of the interview data analysis were later cross-checked with results from the document content analysis in an attempt to further the validity of the results. For a better organisation of the gathered information, the data applying to each of the five levels was collected and sorted under sub-categories of each of the levels. For example, goals as well as outcomes were categorised under the success level. The extent to which this could be done depended on the amount and quality of data provided on the websites. To maximise validity, the quality of the documents was established by asking interviewees if the participants’ blogs had been edited in any way before being published online.
2.4.2 Interviews

For the main part of the data collection, interviews were held in which three different interviewee groups took part: Practitioners, participants and experts in the fields of outdoor experiential learning and organisational culture and change. In what follows, the process is explained according to each interviewee group. Lastly, an overview of the general interviewing process for all interviews is given. In general, all interviews were semi-structured to allow for freedom and a deeper level of discussion. This also helped to stay open to newly emerging categories that could then be explored to a deeper level.

**Practitioner Interviews.** From each programme, at least two practitioners were interviewed to get different viewpoints and deeper insights about the programme’s design. An all-encompassing list of interviewees and their roles in the programmes can be found in Appendix A.

The interview questions were created keeping in mind a general idea of the desired future (see Section 3.3) of an OELP fully using its potential to accelerate the move towards a sustainable society. The questions were organised according to the 5LF which helped to keep a better overview for structuring the information. For each of the practitioner interviews, a list of standard interview questions was used (see Appendix B). However, the questions that were actually asked differed in most interviews slightly from the standard questions. This was for several reasons. Firstly, since the interviews were semi-structured, in some cases, follow-up questions were asked that had not originally been in the default list when the interviewee had mentioned something that warranted more explanation. Secondly, in some cases, the document content analysis revealed interesting aspects that were further explored in the interview. Lastly, practitioners from the same programmes were generally asked the same questions. However, in cases where many of the standard questions could already be fully answered by the document content analysis and the first interview with a practitioner from a given programme, more emphasis was laid upon other aspects in the interviews with additional practitioners from the same programme.

The aim of these practitioner interviews was to get a thorough overview of the conditions under which the programmes are structured, what kinds of actions, tools and concepts are used and with what intentions. Furthermore, the interviewees were asked to evaluate how far they felt the intended success of their programme was achieved, what kind of challenges were being faced, as well as if they use any kind of evaluation method.

**Participant Interviews.** Supplementing the information gathered during the document analyses and practitioner interviews, participants of the respective programmes were interviewed and asked about their experiences from taking part in the programmes. The questions thematically revolved around how they perceived the different approaches of the programme and the possible influence of nature. These participant interviews also helped to gather additional and more personal insights.
Contacts were established through the practitioners. In the document content analysis, it was recognised that the experiences the participants were going through during the programmes were usually of a very deep and personal kind. Face to face interviews offer a deeper level of conversation, often leading to a deeper level of insight and were therefore preferred over surveys. Generally, the questions asked of participants differed slightly from the ones that were used for the practitioners but were also organised according to the 5LF. A default list of questions used can be found in Appendix C.

**Expert Interviews.** Apart from practitioners and participants, experts in the fields of ‘outdoor experiential learning’ and ‘organisational culture and change’ were interviewed. They were selected because of their expertise and experience in one or both of the mentioned fields as well as their availability for an interview. The experts were not necessarily linked with any of the analysed programmes, even though this was the case for John P. Milton who occasionally facilitates the Naturakademin’s Nature Quest. The experts’ knowledge was made use of in order to help overcome any challenges mentioned by the practitioners and to inform the desired future of the OELPs.

**General Interviewing Process.** A few days before each interview, an overview of the interview questions was sent to the interviewees to help them prepare and reflect before the actual conversation took place. This was done out of courtesy and to improve the quality and thoroughness of the responses.

All interviews were held with only one interviewee at a time using a Skype or telephone connection. In one exception, the two practitioners running the programme Vilse were met in person and simultaneously interviewed. The conversations were recorded with an Amalto Skype Recorder as well as an iPhone as a back-up. The facilitation of the interviews was a shared task to give each of the researchers the chance to establish contact with the interviewee. All conversations lasted between 30 and 70 minutes.

### 2.5 Data Analysis

Before answering the research questions, the large amount of data had to be structured and analysed. The approach taken to do so is described in this section.

In the first stage, the recordings of the interviews were listened to and transcribed to avoid missing information and increase validation. Then, the information gathered about each programme was scanned and mapped into different categories that arose, for example “Role of Facilitator” or “Underlying Theories”. These were organised according to the 5LF to structure the data and be able to compare the information collected from different programmes concerning one aspect. Additionally, a section for ‘Challenges and Needs’ was added to organise information that was not directly related to any of the five levels. This step helped to gain a preliminary overview of the gathered data and the different categories. In the next stage, two further approaches to analysing the interview data in detail were employed.
Firstly, two researchers reviewed the interview transcriptions and summarised the key points concerning each category. In case new categories emerged, they were added to the existing ones. The two researchers worked independently in order to avoid being influenced by each other as well as to avoid missing potentially relevant information. Afterwards, both analyses were merged into one final collection of data in the form of the 5LF by comparing the data in one category at a time and finding consensus in case of conflicting results. An extract of this part of the analysis can be found in Appendix D. Summarising the information and matching it with previously identified and newly emerging categories helped provide a thorough overview of the gathered information without getting lost in details.

Secondly, the third researcher established a database in the form of a matrix which was then used for quantifying results and organising data. This was done by reading through the transcriptions of all interviews and searching for information that related to any of the categories. This time, instead of summarising the information, quotes relevant to any of the categories were copied and organised into a matrix structured according to the 5LF and including the same categories as in the first approach. To quantify how many times certain aspects were mentioned by the interviewees, each category was further divided into specific codes (see Appendix E and F). While each interview had its own column, the quotes were included in the row pertaining to the relevant code. Each quote was read through again after it was put into the matrix to ensure that it was not being interpreted out of context. This approach led to an extensive database of information collected from all three types of interviewees, i.e. practitioners, participants as well as experts. By calculating how many interviewees mentioned one specific aspect, quantitative support for the results of the qualitative analysis could be provided.

2.6 Answering of the Research Questions

Having established a good overview of the gathered data in form of the 5LF, specific steps were taken to answer the three SRQs as well as the PRQs. These are explained below.

2.6.1 SRQ1

SRQ1 (How could the design of an OELP shift perceptions and build capacity for engagement in sustainability?) was answered iteratively by way of two stages. In the first stage, the current reality of the OELPs was analysed to get an overview of the role OELPs are currently playing in shifting perceptions and building capacity for engagement in sustainability. The second stage considered the role that OELPs could ideally play in contributing to society's move towards sustainability.

Current Reality. In this step, information about the programmes’ current reality was collected and outlined using the matrices described in Section 2.5. The information used to conduct this analysis was mainly derived from the interviews with practitioners and participants as well as the document content analyses. A general idea of the desired future was necessary to formulate interview questions so that information about the OELPs’ current reality, for example whether a shared understanding of sustainability existed, could be gathered. The
5LF was used for the presentation of the current reality and the desired future to facilitate the answering of SRQ2. A preliminary overview of each of the levels can be found in the left side of Table 2.2.

*Desired Future.* To identify the potential OELPs have in contributing to the transition towards a sustainable society, this step was informed by the FSSD (see Section 2.3.2). Further, findings from the current reality were incorporated concerning aspects of the OELP that, as confirmed by positive participant outcomes, were considered necessary to adopt under the desired future. An example is the decision making process taken by the facilitators during the OELP, reflexive facilitation (see Section 3.2.3). An overview of the aspects addressed in this step is listed in the right side of Table 2.2.

*Table 2.2. Overview of the OELPs’ current reality and desired future*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Current Reality (5LF)</th>
<th>Desired Future (informed by FSSD)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Systems Level</strong></td>
<td>What is the context in which the OELPs are taking place? What are the elements</td>
<td>What would the context be in which the OELPs are taking place? What elements would play a role?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>playing a role in an OELP?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Success Level</strong></td>
<td>What are the current goals of the OELPs?</td>
<td>What does success look like for an OELP that is contributing to the transition towards a sustainable society?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Strategic Level</strong></td>
<td>In what ways are OELP practitioners currently making decisions?</td>
<td>How could the planning process be strategically informed?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Actions Level</strong></td>
<td>What concrete actions are taken to reach success?</td>
<td>What actions would contribute to reaching the desired success?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tools Level</strong></td>
<td>What kind of tools are used to support the efforts?</td>
<td>What tools would contribute to reaching the desired success?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**2.6.2 SRQ2**

To answer SRQ2 (*What are the gaps and challenges to an OELP engaging influential professionals in sustainability?*), this section is divided into two parts, the identification of gaps and challenges. Gaps are the missing pieces between the current reality and FSSD-informed desired future and were identified by comparing each of the levels of the two analyses. An example of a gap is the “lack of a shared definition of sustainability” on the success level. Challenges are issues that the practitioners currently face and that pertain to multiple levels of the current reality and did not directly come out of the comparison of the current reality and the desired future. An example is “more research needed”. These were identified by extracting the information from the “Challenges and Needs” section added to the 5LF described in Section 2.5.


2.6.3 SRQ3

To answer SRQ3 (*How can the gaps and challenges be overcome?*), solutions were identified that helped bridge the gaps and tackle the challenges identified in SRQ2. The solutions were identified in three ways. Firstly, through practices and approaches that are used by some of the OELP organisations but not considered to be general practice amongst OELPs. Often it was found that these uncommon practices would serve as appropriate recommendations to address the common gaps and challenges. Secondly, our interviews with both kinds of experts provided insights and ideas which would address many of the challenges and also some of the gaps, despite the fact that the interviewees were not aware of what these gaps were at the time of interview. Thirdly, concepts derived from the FSSD and strategic sustainable development were used to address the remaining gaps and challenges. The recommendations were entered into a spreadsheet and cross-checked against the gaps and challenges to ensure all were being addressed. Since each recommendation responded to multiple gaps and challenges, the answers to this research question are ordered according to the level of impact at addressing gaps and challenges.

2.6.4 PRQ

In order to offer strategic guidance to answer the PRQ (*How can an OELP be designed within society to engage influential professionals in sustainability?*), it was first necessary to formulate a desired future for the OELP while carrying out an analysis of their current reality (SRQ1). With this, it was possible to establish the challenges being faced under current operations, and assess any gaps that might exist between the two models (SRQ2). The recommendations that came out of this process addressed the gaps and challenges (SRQ3).

To synthesise all of the information and knowledge gathered in the above mentioned steps, guidelines were formulated for practitioners that drew largely on the model for the desired future and the recommendations. Guidelines were created to answer the PRQ because the field of OELPs is deemed to be very complex with numerous influences, contexts and conditions. Further, they are designed to provoke thoughts and ideas for solutions in the OELP field rather than be prescriptive. Practitioners can therefore be encouraged to build off their existing experience to form a list of possible actions to deal with a given problem. After completion, the questions were sent to all practitioners interviewed to gather feedback on their relevance, feasibility and practicability.
3 Results

The results are presented in such a way that they answer the three SRQs which then are synthesised to answer the PRQ. The first part of the results section gives a brief overview of the different OELPs that were analysed, as well as of the interviewed practitioners, participants and experts. In Sections 3.2 and 3.3 (SRQ1), results describing both the current reality and desired future for the OELPs are presented. In Section 3.4 (SRQ2), gaps between the current reality and the desired future and general challenges for the OELP are identified. To answer SRQ3, recommendations for OELPs to overcome these challenges are presented. Finally, as an answer to the PRQ, the gathered knowledge is synthesised into guidelines for practitioners.

3.1 Programmes and Interviewees

To inform this research, contacts were established with fifteen practitioners running OELPs. In three cases, suitable programmes could directly be identified due to their websites. Also, emails were sent to outdoor experience providers to ask if they worked with professionals to trigger leadership towards sustainability if that was not yet directly stated on the programme’s website. This led to another programme that fit the criteria. Lastly, two programmes that could not easily be found using the internet were recommended by experts in the field of outdoor experiential learning. Altogether, six programmes were analysed to inform this research, of which five are based in Europe and one in the U.S. Table 3.1 shows an overview of all programmes that were analysed.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name and Location of Organisation</th>
<th>Length of Programme</th>
<th>Short Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Natural Change Project in Scotland</td>
<td>16 days over 6 months</td>
<td>Initially funded by the WWF Scotland, individuals holding positions of influence in Scotland were strategically targeted and invited. Large public awareness has been raised due to blogs written by participants. Far reaching positive changes towards sustainability in Scotland have resulted from the two times the Natural Change Project was run. WWF Scotland has now ceased to fund this project and the newly formed Natural Change Foundation is now independent and operates without external funding. (Natural Change 2013)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lancaster University Management School (LUMS) in England</td>
<td>~ 5 days</td>
<td>As part of the Customised Executive Education Master’s course, a “Wilderness Thinking Retreat” is held focusing on deep reflection and developing personal leadership capacities such as critical thinking. The programme is not explicitly aimed at engaging leadership in sustainability. (Lancaster University Management School 2013)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institution</td>
<td>Duration</td>
<td>Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Naturakademin, Sweden</td>
<td>~ 6 days</td>
<td>The programme “Nature Quest” focuses on sensing activities and soloing and is often co-facilitated by John P. Milton. Also, consulting is included in Naturakademin’s work. Participants taking part in the quest are rather individuals as opposed to organisations. (Naturakademin 2013)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Active Earth, Spain</td>
<td>~ 5 days</td>
<td>The programme “Solo in Wild Nature” includes preparation, deep relaxation, artfulness and sharing afterwards. Participants join the programme as individuals and on a voluntary basis. (Active Earth 2013)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rites of Passage, United States</td>
<td>~ 9 days</td>
<td>The programme “Vision Quest for Transformative Leadership” is informed by a combination of Native American influences as well as Integral Theory. Due to the emphasis on leadership, the participants have to have a specific intent to take part. (Rites of Passage 2013)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vilse, Sweden</td>
<td>Several activities over one year</td>
<td>Catering to organisations, this programme differs from the other programmes since it will be rather action-based (rope course activities) focusing on learning to recognise fears. It will also include personal coaching. The concept is still evolving and has not been explicitly applied yet. (Vilse 2013)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Later on in the research, it was discovered that the Wilderness Thinking Retreat held by the Lancaster University Management School does not, as initially understood, aim towards engaging the participants in leadership towards sustainability. Nevertheless, since the programme design aims at leadership in general, takes place at least partly in the outdoors, and has intended outcomes such as deep reflection and critical thinking, it was in essence very similar to the other programmes. Correspondingly, it was not excluded from the research even though it did not explicitly meet all three selection criteria.

The interviewees consisted of at least two practitioners from each of the programmes (fifteen in total), five participants, two experts in the fields of ‘outdoor experiential learning’ and two in ‘organisational culture and change’. In Appendix A, a list of all interviewees and their corresponding expertise can be found.

### 3.2 SRQ1: The Current Reality

In order to answer SRQ1 (*How could the design of an OELP shift perceptions and build capacity for engagement in sustainability?*), information from all the practitioners were gathered through interviews and the analysis described in Section 2.5 was carried out. The results for the current reality are presented in the structure of the 5LF to better enable comparison with the results for the desired future presented in Section 3.3. Our results presented in this section enable a clear understanding of how the current OELP design shifts perceptions and builds capacities for engagement in sustainability. A summary of the results of this section is included in the left column of Table 3.2 which can be found in Section 3.4.
3.2.1 Systems Level

The system under examination in this section is the OELP as it currently exists in society. Based on the analysis of interviews with practitioners in the field, the system is best understood as a system nested within another system, i.e. the OELP itself nested within the broader context of society. As such, the systems level includes information about how participants are connected with the programme and the learning processes used in each programme.

**Participant-Programme Connection**

*Organisational Sign-up.* This refers to the executive decision of an organisation to send some or all of its employees on an OELP. While there is much common ground across all six programmes with respect to the core process, there is some variation in the context in which the OELP is applied. In three programmes, the OELP is applied within the context of the organisation. These three programmes, LUMS, Active Earth and Naturakademin, take groups of participants out on OELPs as a way of approaching some kind of organisational need. This can be to facilitate strategic discussions within the context of the outdoors or to develop leadership and collaborative capacity within a team or organisation (Gennvi 2013; Hort 2013; S. Watson 2013). LUMS is an interesting case because the practitioners see their role as providing leadership development and organisational learning (S. Watson 2013). Their target audience is the organisation and their purpose is to address organisational needs and to develop leadership qualities and collaborative capacity in a particular sector. In the case of Naturakademin, the practitioners work with municipalities and NGOs as well as companies (Gennvi 2013; Örtqvist 2013).

*Voluntary Sign-up.* This refers to an individual signing him- or herself up for an OELP. With the exception of LUMS, all OELP organisations also run programmes for individually motivated professionals who partake independently of an organisation. These professionals are from different backgrounds such as NGOs, corporations and municipalities or entrepreneurs who want to refine their skills and develop as human beings and professionals. They often have an awareness of sustainability and are using the process as a way of rejuvenating themselves (Gennvi 2013; Hort 2013; Milroy 2013). One practitioner stated that “these courses quite often offer respite and support for people who are taking on the pain of the world” (Milroy 2013). Often, the OELP attracts consultants and leadership developers working with change. It was noted by participants and practitioners that one common attractor for individual participants is Peter Senge’s book ‘Presence’ which cites the work of John P. Milton and OELPs in general as a powerful approach for engagement in sustainability (Eriksson 2013; Gennvi 2013; Hedblad 2013; Örtqvist 2013). Another motivating factor came from wanting to have some time out from cultural norms and rekindle a connection to nature (Bodkin 2013; Carman 2013; Gennvi 2013; Hort 2013; Kerr 2013; Key 2013; Örtqvist 2013).

*Strategic Invitation of Influential Professionals.* The two projects of the Natural Change are unique in the sense that they were funded by an NGO, the WWF Scotland, as part of a
strategic approach to embed sustainability into Scottish culture. The participants were selected and invited because of their credentials as influential professionals within their organisations and relevance to a key sustainability issue (Key 2013; M. Watson 2013). The approach was highly effective, with Scotland now becoming a pioneer in implementing sustainability into the mainstream curriculum (M. Watson 2013).

Affiliation with Consultancy Firms. Three programmes have affiliations with consultancy firms who are engaged in various forms of organisational development (Rites of Passage, Active Earth, Naturakademin). Naturakademin is a consultancy firm which runs ‘Get Wild’ as a sub-programme to its consultancy work (Gennvi 2013). Dana Carman, director of Integral Consulting, combines his approach with the OELP organisation Rites of Passage. Dana went on a vision quest with Rites of Passage, decided to train as a facilitator and then helped co-create the programme ‘Vision Quest for Transformative Leadership’ which is now advertised through Integral Consulting (Bodkin 2013; Carman 2013). One of the directors of Active Earth is also a partner in the consulting firm ‘Kessels & Smit’ as a designer of transformative learning experiences (Roberts 2013).

The Core Learning Processes

The Process Conditions. The OELP is designed as a process of deep reflection and dialogue to facilitate a transformative learning experience which shifts perceptions and builds personal mastery. With the exception of LUMS, all programmes described the OELP as a kind of educational experience for sustainability. The programmes are usually run for a period of three to nine days. These are spent in places which are as wild and natural as possible. The Natural Change Project is the only programme which does not only run one, but a series of these short residential sessions as part of the whole OELP package. The number of participants on the programmes usually ranges between five and fifteen.

Interplay Between Four Elements. At its core, the learning process is made up of four interacting parts: Individuals, the group, facilitator(s) and a wilderness environment. This is visualised in Figure 3.1.
The interaction between these elements during the OELP is what determines the outcome. The *individuals* are professionals who may come from any sector of society: Public, private or non-profit. The role of the *facilitator(s)* consists of four main areas: Practical measures and safety, relaxation and preparing for the solo, guiding the process and in some cases leading ceremonies (Bodkin 2013; Carman 2013; Gennvi 2013; Hort 2013; Kerr 2013; Key 2013; Milroy 2013; Örtqvist 2013). The details of how the specific actions are chosen by facilitators will be elaborated on in the strategic level of this analysis (Section 3.2.1). When participants and facilitator(s) come together for the OELP, they form a *group*, a significant element with respect to creating an open platform for discussion and support. The *wilderness environment* is used as a tool in the context of providing a sphere where individuals are no longer connected to the normative personal and social constructs of their everyday lives. It is unique in providing a distraction-free place for reflection as opposed to a city where there are people, expressions and judgements that one analyses and is conscious of all the time (Jackson 2013). Nature is also used in the context of evoking psychological reactions within individuals towards an awareness of their relationship and connectedness to nature. The immersion of an individual into a natural setting with emphasis on observing oneself and one’s surroundings can allow people to “see relationships and complicated webs that they are a part of” (Milroy 2013).

### 3.2.2 Success Level

Success is determined in relation to the transformative learning that occurs in the participant. There are many ways in which the transformative learning can then be translated back into everyday life. This section focuses on the outcomes of the process in relation to the personal perception shifts and development of leadership capacities. The general intent of the OELP is to spark a natural process of self-reflection in the participants, the results of which vary. The outcomes listed below are general participant outcomes that have arisen from the OELP. The intended outcomes which facilitators aim for in their participants vary from case to case, and therefore, success can be seen generally around the emergence of the participant outcomes outlined below.

**Participant Outcomes:**

*Perceiving Interconnectivity.* All practitioners identified ‘perceiving interconnectivity’ as at least a part of the experiential learning taking place on OELPs. One expert remarked that it is “important in sustainability education that the people are led to a place where they feel belonging and connectedness and understand themselves as interconnected parts of something bigger” (Macartney 2013). For all programmes, with the exception of LUMS, developing an awareness of the interconnectedness of everything was seen as a powerful and positive result by its practitioners. As one practitioner described success, “hopefully they have found a new perspective on themselves and their relationship with the interconnected web of life” (Milroy 2013). The experience of interconnectedness has been described differently by many practitioners. John Milton, one of the OELP expert interviewees, emphasised the sacredness of the relationship to Earth and describes it as establishing a
deeper and deeper “authentic connection to source” (Milton 2013). With respect to nature, it was stated by a practitioner of the LUMS programme that participants can have a “realisation that they are one small part of something much, much bigger” (S. Watson 2013). This is an interesting observation since developing a deeper awareness of our connectedness to nature is not a specific objective of LUMS. There is also a connectedness within a “community of people who all understand their Ecological Selves [explained below], which is something bigger than themselves” (Key 2013). As Göran Gennvi stated, “[m]ost of the people coming already have the intellectual framework but they don’t have so much of the deeper nature connected experiences” (Gennvi 2013).

Ecological Self. The development of an understanding of the self as an Ecological Self represents “a profound shift in sense of Self - from one focused on ego identity to one that is transpersonal and ecological” (Kerr 2013). Six practitioners from three programmes explicitly mentioned the concept of the Ecological Self or the development of an ecological awareness. All programmes with the exception of LUMS referred implicitly to the development of a closer connection and identity with the natural world. During the Natural Change Project, one of the key areas of success was the development of ‘Ecological Self-Confidence’, the means to stand up for your beliefs in relation to the well-being of the planet (Key 2013). Furthermore, the attempt was made to bring about a situation where “the two apparent polarities of ego and Ecological Self become integrated” (WWF 2011, 37). This was seen as essential in order to facilitate a change in society by building the capacity in participants to operate within an ecocentric worldview and an egocentric worldview (WWF 2011).

Awakening, Renewal and Rejuvenation. Five practitioners from four programmes explained how participants experience an inner awakening, developing passion and motivation towards activism. Participants develop a greater clarity and awareness regarding what they feel is “genuine, interesting and valuable for them” (Örtqvist 2013).

Five practitioners remarked that there is an emphasis on how the participants can use this passion in their lives. Sometimes that manifestation comes in the form of greater impact and satisfaction within the participants’ organisation or greater compassion for the people within that organisation. As mentioned by practitioners from four programmes, the ‘awakening’ comes in the form of quitting their job and realigning their lives according to their new values. David Key emphasised that one key determinant of whether this happens is “how much power they have within their organisations” (Key 2013).

Overcoming Personal Barriers and Developing Authenticity. Seven practitioners from five programmes and one expert stated that, in order to have a powerful impact on issues like sustainability, it is necessary to deal with any personal fears or issues that are lying beneath the surface. All practitioners talked about this as a mainstay of the OELP, whether as a precursor to deepening a relationship with nature, or to building personal leadership capacity. As Martin Cadée described it: “There are a lot of things that you bring into your persona that are maybe not really you and that are more protecting you from being vulnerable or from being hurt. For all the good reasons, we all build protection mechanisms that in the end are

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keeping us from being authentic and being in our own power. If they are really strong, they might even be counter-productive, like acting from fear or anger.” (Cadée 2013)

The significance of dealing with these issues is mainly to discover your authentic self and build the confidence to lead and speak from that place: “[I]t is that burning inner sense of authenticity to be who you are and use that without fear” (M. Watson 2013). To realise that it is “ok to be me” (S. Watson 2013) allows an individual to live more freely and exist against the norms of society. Practitioners from five programmes said that authenticity and understanding of self is a principal outcome of the OELP. The development of authenticity is largely derived through the process of dealing with personal “demons” (Bodkin 2013) and being given the time to reflect on who you are as a person. Authenticity is generally described as knowing yourself, your values and your gifts and being comfortable with speaking and acting from that knowing place on a day to day basis. Both organisational learning and OELP experts described the ability to “be vulnerable and at the same time stand strong without needing to protect by aggression” (Cadée 2013) as something which gives off a sense of your power as a leader (Cadée 2013; Carstedt 2013; Macartney 2013). It not only builds trust and disarms people through honesty, but also gives credibility to yourself (Carstedt 2013).

Development of Collaboration, Communication and Creativity Skills. Collaborative skills are mainly developed when a team from the same organisation takes part in an OELP. This is a key component of three programmes and a mainstay of the LUMS approach to the OELP. In these instances, the issue of teams and organisations operating in drill holes and not working productively together are addressed. Collaborative skills are developed alongside capacities such as critical reflection and respecting diversity. Communication skills such as ‘deep listening’ are improved as well (Gennvi 2013; Hort 2013; S. Watson 2013).

The emergence of creativity in participants was seen as a very powerful outcome of the OELP by John P. Milton. He stated that “[u]ltimately, [the participants] tap into a very deep spring of creativity which is one of the foundational gifts of this process” (Milton 2013). On finding ways to engage in sustainability, one participant noted: “People can be very ingenious if they have the will. Many of the people who were in this course were in big companies, medical companies, psychiatric care. And they find ways to work with it, too, within their restricted systems.” (Hedblad 2013)

Structural Change in Society

All of the analysed programmes recognised the potential for personal learning, i.e. motivation for sustainability to translate into hard structural outcomes in society. Naturakademin is a good example of a programme which is focussing on this aspect of success. Apart from providing OELPs, it is a consultancy firm offering practical guidance and strategic development approaches to organisations (Gennvi 2013). LUMS also focuses on the hard outcomes. They are running the OELP as a service for developing leadership capacities within organisations. This also facilitates the defining and delivering of the hard outcomes. In both cases, this success is achieved through well structured preparatory and follow-up work.
The Natural Change Project was the only OELP which defined success specifically in terms of embedding sustainability into the Scottish society. Again, the specificity of this hard outcome came from the organisation that was funding the project, in this case the WWF Scotland.

### 3.2.3 Strategic Level

The strategic level consists of two parts: Firstly, the facilitative approach that is elaborated on by listing facilitator skills which shows how decisions are made during the OELP and secondly, the way in which decisions are made in the design and organisation of an OELP regarding the marketing to and recruitment of participants.

#### Facilitation

In the following, skills that practitioners deemed necessary for any facilitator responsible for guiding individuals through an OELP are listed. In all cases, skills mentioned in this section were brought up by over half of all practitioners. They range from personal demeanour, how one conducts oneself, to more exclusive skills that are specific to facilitating an OELP. There are also some pre-requisite skills seen as necessary to be able to facilitate an OELP. First and foremost, facilitators are expected to conduct themselves with authenticity, honesty, and unconditional positive regard. Further, they need to be present and composed at all times and as such require personal practices, whether meditative or otherwise, to keep themselves grounded.

Eight practitioners emphasised that facilitators are also expected to have undergone the experience themselves before being put in charge of others undertaking the journey. The core of the experience is so unique and plays such a deep role in connecting people to one another and to nature that it would be impossible to identify with people and guide them along this process without having undergone the journey beforehand.

*Sensing and Reflexive Facilitation*. This is the central concept that guides facilitator practice revolving around perception of group needs. There is rarely a pre-defined structure to the OELP. The make-up and flow of the experience is often dictated by the needs and sentiment of the group at any given period. Facilitators have to be able to pick on where people are in the journey and what might help them move along as well as what might hinder them in this. Likewise, if one individual in the group is posing a risk to themselves or others, it is the responsibility of the facilitator to remove this person from the process, although this is rarely the case.

#### Selection of Participants

A strategic approach to selecting participants was only used by one programme, the Natural Change Project. For all others, participants came under their own direction or under suggestion by their respective organisations. In the case of the Natural Change Project, the practitioner’s surveyed individuals in the desired field that fit a certain criteria, pertaining to
leverage potential and influence in their field, invited a substantial amount of them on the
premise that many would not be able to accept due to time constraints. This approach of
selecting participants allows for the potential of a group of motivated individuals to emerge
from the OELP, organise effectively around issues common to all of them and use their
collective influence to conquer a shared success goal around structural change in society
(Kerr 2013; Key 2013; M. Watson 2013).

3.2.4 Actions Level

In this section, the actions which are taken during the OELP with the aim of achieving
success are explained. The core actions which make up the OELP are divided into three
chronologically organised phases. They are sensing and presencing activities, soloing in
nature and group dialogue. Actions which the practitioners take with respect to marketing and
communicating are also outlined in this section.

During the Process: Slowing Down as a Guiding Action

All interviewed practitioners described the most important activity on an OELP as ‘slowing
down’. During the OELP, participants are given the opportunity to go deeper and deeper into
reflection until “your mind stops and you actually begin to settle, start to feel and experience
what your mind is doing” (M. Watson 2013). This plays a key role in shifting perceptions and
reconnecting participants to nature. It also increases the potential for participants to “open up
to new ideas so they are moving from a more conventional mindset towards a more post-
conventional mindset” (Hort 2013). The process of slowing down and reflecting is
juxtaposed to the kind of life most professionals are used to on a day to day basis (M. Watson
2013).

Sensing and Presencing Actions. Eight practitioners from four programmes and one
organisational learning expert noted that going into a sparsely populated environment with
little knowledge of what is going to happen on the experience can be challenging. The
‘Sensing and Presencing’ actions are taken in order to have participants build trust with their
facilitators and peers while becoming familiar and at ease with their environment. No OELP
uses the exact same actions although the intent of the actions and their role in the flow of the
process is similar. Simple tasks such as going on walks and engaging in art and creative
exercises can help people relax and familiarise with one another. Playing music, sharing
stories, and appreciative listening are common techniques undertaken by facilitators to gain
the trust of the group. Introducing practices such as yoga, deep relaxation and meditation help
to slow down the thought pattern of individuals and give them some potential activities to do
during their solo process. Likewise, these exercises provide the facilitator with insights into
the needs of the group and how future situations and interactions should be approached. They
are often connected with the teaching of various theories, such as those mentioned in Section
3.2.5, to give people direction and guidance through their experience.

Framing the Experience. Seven practitioners and two participants mentioned the significant
effect that framing the OELP can have on the actual experience itself. In general, the goal of
these framing sessions is to get individuals to examine their expectations and start to ponder important questions and relationships in their life before they are given time to deeply reflect on them. In one instance, practitioners explicitly requested that individuals not consume alcohol for a period before the journey. Another asked its participants questions such as: “What is the vision of yourself as a leader, how are you seeing these gifts coming forth? Why are you here? What are you hoping to gain from this?” (Bodkin 2013)

Other OELPs undergo spiritual ceremonies accentuating the interconnected nature of the Earth sometimes facilitated through spiritual elders. Such actions ideally allow the individual relaxation, clear-headedness and concentration to use their solo period most effectively.

**Soloing in Nature.** The solo is the core action of the OELP and epitomises the outdoor experiential learning process that provides “the pedagogy of interruption” (Key 2013). It can range from as little as six hours up to four days for some programmes and consists essentially of settling your person in a specific, completely isolated position in nature and remaining in or around that spot for an extended period of time.

According to Korbi Hort, the solo “aims to allow the human mind to unwind, to slow down and to reconnect with the world and oneself. An unfolding of the wild, uncultivated and ephemeral qualities of nature into the psyche is then possible; it is an encounter with the Ecological Self.” (Hort 2003)

The solo experience is, by nature, subjective and, as such, the outcomes are numerous. Still, as was shown through our participant interviews, the time, space and context given during this experience are in themselves unique. A participant of Naturakademin, Jan Henriksson, explained how the experience provided him “a strong balancing effect of letting go of thoughts and emotions, a grounding effect” (Henriksson 2013), that allowed him to let go all of the concepts and look into the details. All practitioners noted how, logistically, the solo is introduced midway through the experience and requires considerable framing and contextualising in order to allow for a mentally and physically prepared participant.

**Group Dialogue.** In all programmes, the group sharing process follows the solo period and plays a key role in solidifying group identity as well as personal experiences. Group dialogue was generally described as a focused form of sharing with certain ground rules (M. Watson 2013). The solo is an experience unique to those people at that time and while its outcomes prove unique to each individual, the desire to express and share what is usually a very profound and introspective experience tends to emerge. This sharing not only helps to nurture group bonds, but also allows the individual an opportunity to put his or her own experience into words for the first time so that they may consciously reflect on what has just taken place inside of themselves. Four practitioners iterated that the bond that is being formed here is essential as these groups will often be reliant upon one another afterwards for psychological and practical help when re-adjusting to and dealing with the culture shock of city life.
Preparatory and Follow-up Work

Learning Support. This is a feature of the programmes which have a more structured approach to bringing about change in society (LUMS, Naturakademin and the Natural Change Project). When LUMS take top professionals out from a particular organisation, it is part of a longer developmental programme. They carry out diagnostics, individual interviews and encourage participants to keep a journal or personal development plan. After the OELP, the learnings are then transferred back into the organisation through new projects and continual coaching. Naturakademin also uses journaling and interviews when working with organisations on specific developmental issues, although the OELP is rarely used alongside this part of their business. The Natural Change had an open and informal approach to the follow-up. A supportive group network evolved despite the organisers not being set up to provide it. It came about because of the facilitators’ willingness to give their time to the group and set up nested websites where participants could share blogs and other information.

Measuring of Success. The measuring of success of the OELP is something that also seems to be done more by the programmes aimed at influencing structural change. LUMS is the only programme to have a written feedback mechanism, in the form of participant surveys, for reviewing the success of the programme. Recently, longitudinal studies have also been done. The practitioners of the Naturakademin do not measure their own success but recognise that this is something they should start doing. The Natural Change Project has carried out extensive documentation and longitudinal research into the outcomes of the OELP. Blogs and personal stories of participants were published on the website and in the reports which were published in 2009 and 2011 (WWF 2009; WWF 2011).

3.2.5 Tools Level

This section provides an overview of the various theories, concepts and practices being used at different levels of the OELP. A breakdown of the tools in table format is in the Appendix G. The explanations of the categories of tools in this section are derived from a general analysis of the interviews conducted.

Guiding Theories. These theories are commonly referred to as compass theories. They are used to provide individuals going through an immense personal change with some sort of 'bearing' on what part of the process they are in, as well as what they can expect. This self-analysis allows a constant understanding of one’s inner workings as well as giving the individual a language that can be drawn upon throughout the process.

Guiding Concepts. Guiding Concepts are used in tandem with facilitation and can help to give the facilitator insights on how to conduct him- or herself in certain situations as well as how to conduct the actions of the group during the process. There are basic concepts that facilitators follow extremely closely pertaining to the dynamic of group relationships. Amongst these, the general code is to maintain a constant level of psychological and physical reassurance in the minds of the individuals and in turn to keep participants feeling unstressed
by time, safety or external measures. With these initial variables taken care of, the process can then truly start to take effect.

**Guiding Practices.** Guiding practices are specific activities which give participants a personal practice for introspection and connection.

### 3.3 SRQ1: Desired Future informed by the FSSD

This section sets out a model of an OELP playing a strategic role in the development of engagement of influential professionals as leaders for sustainability. The objective is to build on the already powerful approach OELPs have with respect to shifting perceptions and building motivation for leadership towards sustainability. Once again, the model is framed using the five levels. It offers a strategic dimension to the role of the OELP in the broader context of society by drawing on insights and concepts from the FSSD which is explained in Section 2.3.2. A summary of the results of this section can be found in the middle column of Table 3.2.

#### 3.3.1 Systems Level

This section includes information about how the OELP explicitly fits into the socio-ecological system as well as which elements play a role in the OELP.

*‘OELPs for Influential Professionals’ within the Socio-ecological System.* The system is defined as the ‘OELP for Influential Professionals’ nested within the wider systems of society and the ecosphere, i.e. the socio-ecological system (Figure 3.2).

![Figure 3.2. The OELP nested within the socio-ecological system](image)

This system is defined by complex system dynamics which govern how ecosystems interact with each other and with human systems. Of particular relevance to this system is the contribution the ‘OELP for Influential Professionals’ makes towards changing perspectives and the influential professionals’ impact on the wider socio-ecological system. The influential professionals within this system are defined as people who hold significant power and leverage potential within the professional world. They are willing and motivated participants who have been recruited to the OELP because of a need or objective within society or within their organisation to move towards sustainability.
**Existing OELP Elements.** In addition to these additional system parameters, all the existing elements of the OELP system as outlined in Section 3.2.1 are still at play, i.e. facilitator(s), the individual, the group and the wilderness environment (see Figure 3.1). Once again, these parts of the OELP are all contributing to an experiential learning which yields success.

### 3.3.2 Success Level

In this section, aspects relevant to the OELP’s success are explained. For the practitioners, this includes a shared understanding of success as well as of sustainability. In the main part of this section, the overall success goals of the OELP in the socio-ecological system are highlighted.

**Shared Understanding of Success and Sustainability.** It is important that practitioners have a shared understanding of all aspects of success, of the OELP’s role in engaging influential professionals in leadership towards sustainability and a definition of sustainability according to the four SPs (see Section 1.1.1). A shared vision allows all people working in an OELP organisation to be aware of the overall objective as they enact their particular role.

**Success Goals for the OELP.** The overall success goal for the OELP is to bring about structural change in organisations and society to reach sustainability. To achieve this goal, a number of sub-goals have to be addressed. Firstly, the potential personal learnings as outlined in Section 3.2.2 (motivation for engagement in sustainability issues and leadership development) are still required. A further second sub-goal is sustaining engagement in sustainability and developed leadership skills over time. If the learning and transformation are not supported as people re-enter their everyday life, there is a strong likelihood that they will be pulled back into familiar ways of thinking.

The final sub-goal is that the learnings achieved during the OELP need to be translated into action, i.e. strategic leadership towards sustainability. For this purpose, the theoretical understanding of sustainability and strategic sustainable development is necessary. The reasoning for this is that participants will need to have the skills and capacities to operationalise and direct this passion in a strategic way to resolve systemic and complex problems.

### 3.3.3 Strategic Level

In the following, the desired ways of decision making and deciding on specific actions are described.

**Reflexive Decision Making.** The iterative approach to decision making currently used by facilitators of OELPs during the experience itself (termed ‘reflexive facilitation’, see Section 3.2.3) should still be used since it was emphasised by all facilitators as essential to the complex, context-specific nature of the group process and is proven to help bring about the desired perception shift and motivation in the participants.
Backcasting from Success Principles and the Three Prioritisation Questions. A strategic approach is necessary to decide on actions that lead to the ambitious success goals explained in Section 3.2.2. As defined in Section 1.1.1, backcasting is a strategic planning approach which involves envisioning a desired outcome and then asking what needs to be done today in order to reach that desired outcome. As part of the backcasting process, potential actions are selected using three prioritisation questions (Section 1.1.1). These are also very much grounded in the working reality of organisations. The question “Is this action likely to produce a sufficient return on investment?” caters to achieving organisational needs. The question “Does this action provide a flexible platform for future improvements?” recognises the complexity of the modern world and the necessity for flexibility when moving forward towards a success goal revolving around sustainability. Lastly, the question “Does this action proceed in the right direction with respect to the success goals?” ensures an overall move towards sustainability in conjunction with the organisation’s various success goals. While the reflexive facilitation approach is useful during the OELP itself, backcasting from principles will be necessary for the practitioners to maintain a strategic approach when making decisions about how the OELP can best be positioned in society to engage influential professionals in strategic sustainable development.

Preferred Selection of Influential Professionals. With a greater awareness of the sustainability challenge and the urgency with which it needs to be dealt, practitioners could develop a criteria or informed decision making process for selecting participants. While this may not always be possible with some types of programmes, for example voluntary sign up programmes, having an awareness of which professionals are likely to be able to make the biggest impact could improve effectiveness.

Procedure for Measuring Success. To ensure that actions being taken are strategic in moving the OELP organisation towards their success goals (i.e. leadership and motivation towards sustainability leading to structural change in society), a procedure for monitoring the outcomes for participants should be put in place. Measurement of the participant outcomes could be taken to assess the effectiveness of tools, actions and approaches on the OELP itself, while measurement of the hard outcomes could be taken to assess the degree of organisational and structural change in society. Given the potential for long term impacts, longitudinal studies and feedback mechanisms on the outcomes would be extremely useful for measuring progress.

3.3.4 Actions Level

In the desired future, the OELP practitioners choose and implement actions that strategically lead towards success. These could include current actions that may still be applicable towards achieving the desired future. Further preparatory and follow-up actions could also be considered.


3.3.5 Tools Level

Tools are used in a strategic way to support the efforts taken to reach success. Process tools currently being used can be combined with tools used during the marketing stage and the follow-up work.

3.4 SRQ 2: Gaps and Challenges

To answer SRQ2 (What are the gaps and challenges to an OELP engaging influential professionals in sustainability?), gaps and challenges that OELPs currently face with respect to engaging participants in strategic leadership towards sustainability are identified. By organizing the results for the current reality and desired future of OELPs through the lenses of the 5LF and the FSSD, relevant gaps between the two could be identified. Insights about current challenges faced by OELPs derived from the interviews with practitioners are also discussed in this section. Identifying gaps and challenges provides the basis for giving relevant advice on how to overcome these which will be done in SRQ3.

Table 3.2 shows a summary of the results presented in Sections 3.2 (current reality) and 3.3 (desired future) as well as a summary of the gaps between the two. These are elaborated on in Sections 3.4.1 - 3.4.5. The challenges are listed and elaborated on in Section 3.4.6.

Table 3.2. Summary of the OELPs’ current reality and desired future as well as the gaps between these

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Systems Level</th>
<th>5LF of OELPs’ Current Reality</th>
<th>Desired Future for OELPs (informed by the FSSD)</th>
<th>Gaps</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Participants drawn to the programme in four ways</td>
<td>Existing current reality systems level</td>
<td>Not fully cognisant of the OELPs role within the broader socio-ecological system</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Process elements: Individuals, facilitators, the group and the wilderness environment</td>
<td>A systems understanding of the OELP in the socio-ecological system as a tool for engagement in sustainability</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Success Level</td>
<td>Participant process learnings:</td>
<td>Participant process learnings and the sustainment of these</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Motivation for engagement in sustainability (awareness of interconnectivity and connection to one’s Ecological Self)</td>
<td>Participant learning of how to operationalise sustainability in their sphere of influence</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Authenticity:</td>
<td>Structural change leading towards a truly sustainable society as</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Practitioners do not share a definition of success (as defined by the desired future)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Practitioners do not share a scientifically-derived definition of sustainability (i.e. the four SPs)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>No active sustainment of participant process</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Strategic Level | Resolving personal trauma, finding gifts and passions, gaining leadership skills and confidence  
• Potential to cause structural change in society | defined by the four SPs  
• A shared definition amongst practitioners of success and sustainability | learnings  
• No participant learning of skills for operationalising change towards sustainability |
|-----------------|--------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|
| Actions Level   | • Marketing approaches to different groups, organisations and individuals  
• Process facilitation: reflexive facilitation, experience and intuition | • Current process facilitation and relevant marketing approaches  
• Backcasting from the OELPs’ vision of success within the context of the four SPs  
• FSSD prioritisation questions for all decision making outside of the process itself  
• Preferred selection of influential professionals whenever possible  
• Procedure for measuring success (hard and soft outcomes) | • Little or no backcasting from the overall goal of a structural impact on society  
• No use of prioritisation questions  
• Influential professionals with large leverage potentials are not targeted explicitly, no language to communicate the hard/external outcomes of the process  
• Little or no measurement of success with respect to the hard outcomes |
| Tools Level     | • General flow of the core process: Slowing down, solitude in nature, group dialogue  
• Marketing and communication | • Existing current reality actions level  
• Preparatory and follow-up actions which help the OELP reach its goals | Little or no preparatory or follow-up actions:  
• To facilitate ongoing participant learning about operationalising sustainability  
• To sustain participant learning |
|                | Guiding theories and concepts are used  
• Guiding tools, e.g. Theory U  
• Guiding practices, e.g. yoga | • Existing current reality tools level  
• Preparatory and follow-up tools which help the OELP reach its goals | Little or no preparatory or follow-up tools:  
• To facilitate ongoing participant learning about operationalising sustainability  
• To sustain participant learning |
3.4.1 Gaps: Systems Level

Awareness of the Broader Socio-ecological System. The major gap at this level is not having a more systemic awareness of the OELP’s role within the socio-ecological system. This makes it hard for practitioners to define success and make strategic moves to fulfilling the OELP’s potential.

3.4.2 Gaps: Success Level

Shared Definition of Success. There is often variation in perspective when defining a successful outcome of an OELP. Some practitioners see the success of the OELP as person-centred. For example, one practitioner described the principal outcome of the OELP as “appreciation of your life, what is important for you” (Carman 2013). Others were more concerned with awakening a sense of awareness about the natural world (Key 2013; Milroy 2013) by “trying to help people look up from what they’re doing and see that the world has needs as well” (Milroy 2013). All programmes had a lack of clarity in what the overall objective of the OELP should be in the context of structural impacts in society towards sustainable development.

Shared Definition of Sustainability. OELP practitioners do not use concrete, scientifically based definitions of sustainability. While some practitioners (particularly those from the Natural Change) re-iterated the necessity of not using complex sustainability theories during the process, an overarching understanding of the sustainability problem could help provide participants with language, tools and descriptive methods for when they re-enter their working situation. By not having a clear and robust definition of sustainability, their ability to make strategic decisions contributing to structural change in society with respect to sustainable development is limited.

Sustainment of Participant Process Learning (the Transformation). This gap also appears as a challenge (further explained in Section 3.4.6), since it was noted by practitioners from the Natural Change Project and Naturakademin that the transformation can be quite hard for individuals to maintain when returning to everyday life. Here it appears as a gap in the success level since the sustainment of the transformation needs to be a specific long term goal if strategic decision making about follow-up actions is going to be made.

Skills and Capacity for Operationalising Change towards Sustainability. At present, OELPs do not generally offer a theoretical understanding of strategic sustainable development as part of their service. As has been discussed, the OELP for professionals is on occasion used in the context of a longer development plan. Naturakademin is a consultancy firm which specialises in strategic planning for sustainability and offers this kind of service to organisations. However, they do not always offer this service in conjunction with the OELP. Providing a platform to participants for learning how to implement change within the organisational context in a strategic way and in alignment with the four SPs is therefore a gap in all OELPs. The gap is located at the success level since this objective is not included in the current reality of the OELP itself.
3.4.3 Gaps: Strategic Level

Strategic Decision Making Process. The biggest gap with respect to the strategic approach of the OELP is how the OELP positions itself within society and in the context of the global sustainability challenge. As was discussed in Section 3.2.3, the reflexive facilitation method for making decisions within the process itself is considered to be necessary and essential for success. However, with respect to having the broader societal goal of engaging influential professionals in sustainability, a more strategic approach is lacking.

Prioritisation of Influential Professionals. While selection of influential professionals is a strategic approach within the Natural Change Project, it is not with any of the other OELP organisations. Given the urgency of the sustainability challenge and the potential for using influential decision makers as a powerful leverage point for bringing about change, the fact that there is no preferential selection of participants is considered a gap at the strategic level.

Measurement of Success. One cause of the lack of clarity around the hard outcomes of the OELP is the lack of clear evidence, research and documentation. In all programmes except LUMS, there is no longitudinal measuring of success. Five programmes use verbal feedback to get a sense of how the experience has been received, but this does not offer any insight into what happens over time with respect to perception shifts or the hard outcomes that follow from them. In order to assess progress with respect to achieving success, it is necessary to assess and check the extent to which success is being achieved through selected actions.

3.4.4 Gaps: Actions Level

Little or no Preparatory or Follow-up Actions. Practitioners on the Natural Change Project made themselves available for follow-up support with the group such as face to face meetings and going for informal outings with participants (Kerr 2013; Key 2013). LUMS had extensive follow-up and preparatory actions due to the design of the OELP as part of a larger programme. The lack of extensive follow-up actions with respect to sustainment of the transformation or building competence to operationalise change is considered to be a big gap in the field.

3.4.5 Gaps: Tools Level

Given the gaps at the four levels of the framework, there will no doubt be a range of tools which are not currently being used since they are not required for the way the OELP currently operates. These may relate to measuring success or providing the necessary preparatory or follow-up work.

3.4.6 Challenges

Inter-organisational Learning. Although many OELPs shared common theoretical approaches, motivations and practices, it was found that there was hardly any collaboration between various organisations. Four practitioners reiterated the want for further
collaboration. David Key expressed that it is “very difficult to even find other groups [in order] to look at them and see if there’s potential for collaboration and learn from each other” (Key 2013).

Communicating the Value of OELPs to Different Audiences. One of the big challenges with respect to communicating the value of the OELP is the need for an appropriate language to describe the experience. Nine practitioners remarked on the need to use language which was less spiritual as it can deter people from either having a powerful experience on the OELP or from choosing to go on an OELP in the first place. One practitioner described this issue as “a cultural thing and it leads to polarisation and it leads to some people feeling excluded because of their beliefs” (Milroy 2013). It is also possible to be too academic or “new age” (Key 2013) by using too many advanced theories which turns people off.

Some of the communication challenges relate to being able to describe the causal relationship between certain phenomena, for example, being able to describe the link between resolving a childhood trauma and leading change in the world (Kerr 2013; Key 2013). The problem is especially difficult when communicating the experience to people who are sceptical or hesitant about it: “Many people don't really get what you are trying to say. Some people get it immediately and these are usually the people who have already done something like that.” (Cadée 2013)

Time Commitment from Organisations. Practitioners from five of the programmes spoke about the problem of getting a decent time commitment from organisations. The organisational world and individuals in general face many time restrictions and are often too busy to create the time for this kind of a reflective experience.

High Financial Costs. Adding to the time commitment problem, the same five programmes face heavy financial costs, as well as the need to pay and in some cases (Rites of Passage, Active Earth) train good quality facilitators. Practitioners often have to put in a lot of groundwork in establishing a relationship of trust with clients and cover transportation and equipment costs which can be time consuming and expensive.

Sustainment of Participant Process Learning (the Transformation). While the OELP has numerous anecdotal testimonies to validate the effectiveness of the experience, questions will always arise: “How will I deal with society and how will society deal with me upon my return?” As it stands, a key challenge, sustaining participant transformation upon returning to the city and everyday life, is something many OELP organisations are struggling with. Many OELPs reiterated the sentiment that very often “there is no structure in place to follow things up over a long period of time” (Hort 2013). Of all the analysed programmes, only the Natural Change Project retained sustained contact over a year long period, and even so, this support was largely based upon volunteer efforts of the facilitators on the trip.

Marketing due to Unpredictability and Lack of Hard Outcomes. Practitioners from five programmes stated that one of the predominant problems which they are facing is the marketing of the OELP. One of the issues which have been highlighted is that it is hard to
quantify outcomes. Eight practitioners noted that, while the development of the individual on the OELP can be very profound and life altering, the quantifiable outcomes for organisations are not easy to describe prior to the experience even though there are a number of marketable outcomes which relate to leadership development and collaboration. Many of the other benefits pertaining to the awareness of interconnectivity and the understanding of self are less marketable to those who have not been through the experience (Hort 2013; Key 2013; Milroy 2013). One of the reasons for this is that there is no linear relationship between these concrete outcomes and the perception and awareness change which occurs on the OELP (Key 2013).

A recurring theme throughout many of the OELPs revolves around participants making significant changes in their life after the experience. Within these, some could be perceived to be negative. For example, one practitioner mentioned that three marriage breakdowns followed from one of the OELPs. Also, in five programmes there were instances of people quitting their jobs. This is not seen as a bad thing by most of the interviewed practitioners as this is often a huge step in achieving personal fulfilment. In one case it was deemed a “good indicator that something is happening [...] on successful sustainability programmes” (Hort 2013).

More Research Needed. Connected to the challenge of ‘marketing due to the unpredictability of outcomes’ and the gap of ‘measurement of success’ is the need for more research. Margaret Kerr of the Natural Change Project emphasised how useful longitudinal studies into participant outcomes would be while Anneli Örtqvist also expressed the need for research into the science of how this kind of transformation effects the brain. It is clear that research and more rigorous measurement mechanisms could provide a much stronger case for the OELP with respect to marketing outcomes.

3.5 SRQ3: Recommendations

In this section, recommendations are presented which bridge the gaps and tackle the challenges outlined in the previous section. The recommendations come from three sources: Firstly, uncommon practices that are currently being used which could be mainstreamed into more generalised practices are presented. Secondly, OELP experts provided insights and ideas which could help the OELP achieve more success in the future. Thirdly, concepts relating to strategic sustainable development are drawn upon.

The list of recommendations in its entirety covers all of the gaps and challenges, while each recommendation responds to multiple gaps and challenges. A recommendation is ordered according to how impactful it is with respect to bridging gaps and tackling challenges. Table 3.3 gives an overview of all the recommendations and the gaps and challenges to which they respond. The numerical and alphabetical codes in the table correspond to the specific gaps and challenges according to the following list:
Gaps:

1. Awareness of the broader socio-ecological system
2. Shared definition of success
3. Shared definition of sustainability
4. Skills and capacity for operationalising change towards sustainability
5. Sustainment of participant process learning (reinforcing the transformation)
6. Strategic decision making process
7. Prioritisation of influential professionals
8. Measurement of success

Challenges:

A. Inter – organisational (OELP) learning
B. Communicating value of OELP to different audiences
C. Time commitment from organisations
D. High financial costs
E. Sustainment of participant process learning (reinforcing the transformation)
F. Marketing due to unpredictability and lack of hard outcomes
G. More research needed

Table 3.3. Overview of all the recommendations and the corresponding gaps and challenges

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recommendation</th>
<th>Gaps bridged</th>
<th>Challenges tackled</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Collaboration between OELP organisations</td>
<td>1,2,5,6,7</td>
<td>A,E,F,G</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A shared definition of success</td>
<td>2,6,7,8</td>
<td>A,B,C,D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A robust and shared definition of sustainability</td>
<td>1,3,4,6</td>
<td>B,C,D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ongoing group/individual psychological support</td>
<td>4,5,8</td>
<td>A,E,F,G</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Longitudinal measurement of success</td>
<td>6,7,8</td>
<td>B,F,G</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affiliate OELP with consultancy organisation</td>
<td>4,8</td>
<td>B,C,D,F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Follow-up training for participants in strategic sustainable development</td>
<td>4,5</td>
<td>B,E,F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase variety of programme designs</td>
<td>1,4</td>
<td>B,C,D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Backcast and use prioritisation questions</td>
<td>6,7</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selection criteria for participants to favour influential professionals</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>B,F</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Collaboration Between OELP Organisations. Greater collaboration between practitioners in the field would benefit the OELP for a number of reasons. Firstly, a greater knowledge of the various tools and approaches used in the field could be gained by all parties involved. Secondly, the psychological and engagement aspects of the process could be collaboratively researched and shared. A more coordinated approach to conducting research would help to avoid duplications, reduce costs and build working relationships between OELP organisations. Thirdly, a stronger network of practitioners who share common goals could be formed enabling a deeper and more widespread impact on structural change within the professional world and in turn the socio-ecological system. Movement towards sustainability requires cooperation and impassioned individuals at many levels of society, a stronger inter-
organisational network could connect participants from different OELPs into a tightly bonded support network of change makers. John P. Milton, an OELP expert re-iterated that collaboration between OELPs would be a productive way forward for the field (Milton 2013).

A Shared Definition of Success. Defining one’s success goals is an important first step in developing a strategic approach to achieving full potential. A clearly defined, shared vision which takes into account the unique character of a particular OELP and the people working there, as well as the broader success goals as outlined in the desired future provides something solid and inspiring from which to backcast. It also provides a yard stick against which current outcomes can be measured. There may be benefits with respect to marketing since having a clearly defined vision of success enables a clearer understanding of what is being sold to prospective clients This would increase credibility and in turn the likelihood that companies commit more time and money to projects.

A Robust and Shared Definition of Sustainability. Practitioners, although quite knowledgeable in various aspects of the field, could benefit from a common understanding of the sustainability challenge where sustainability is defined by the four SPs. They are often relied on for guidance during and after the process and should have knowledge of the sustainability challenge in order to make informed decisions concerning the OELP’s role as a tool for engagement in sustainable development. A robust definition of sustainability would also encompass the vision of success which can then be used to indicate the extent to which engagement in sustainability is taking place as a result of the OELP.

Ongoing Group/Individual Support. The transition from an OELP back into a modern capitalist society can be very challenging (Key 2013). Even with an energising and motivating experience to draw upon, advocating sustainability is still not widely accepted or mainstreamed in common working environments. As Jed Milroy put it, “[c]hanging a big organisation is a very, very difficult thing to do and I think the people that do it are incredibly brave and strong people who need a lot of support” (Milroy 2013). Developing a platform or structure for participants to communicate, share experiences and stay in contact can help reinforce the transformation over time (Key 2013; Milton 2013). This could help to keep individuals engaged, motivated and greatly increase the effectiveness of the programme. Some examples of this could be organising blogging or social networking groups as with the Natural Change Project, or follow-up trips and group workshops as suggested by John P. Milton. Once again, this kind of ongoing support could be combined with that of other OELP organisations or at least, good practices could be shared.

Longitudinal Measurement of Success. Having a well documented back catalogue of success stories and testimonials provides legitimacy for the OELP in terms that are tangible for organisations. Likewise, as one practitioner suggested: “Further research into how the brain works was also seen as a way to offer scientific evidence of the potential of the OELP” (Örtqvist 2013). Potential studies such as these could help illustrate a scientific understanding of how the experience of slowing down, reflecting and sensing actually brings a more healthy
and holistic approach to life and well-being. Additionally, it provides a way of checking the effectiveness of the OELP and gives feedback on strategic approaches such as the selection of influential participants.

**Affiliate OELPs with a Consultancy Organisation.** Linking the OELP to a consultancy firm which already has a prominent role within the organisational world can be a very effective strategy. Consultants already have the ability to speak the business language and understand business challenges, enabling them to build trusting relationships with companies and then apply the OELP if appropriate. Two experts and one experienced consultant and OELP practitioner remarked that this approach represented the most impactful way of bringing the OELP to the professional world (Cadée 2013; Gennvi 2013; Milton 213). One way of attracting consultants in the field of organisational development is to take them through the process themselves. If the experience has a powerful effect and they see the value in it, the OELP will have gained a useful communicator of the experience (Hort 2013). This recommendation also serves as a way of building off the experience of the OELP to bring about change in the long term by providing structure to channel new learning into the organisational culture.

**Follow-up Training for Participants in Strategic Sustainable Development.** One of the major gaps of the OELP is how it could transition towards having a lasting structural impact on society. In order to effect structural change towards a truly sustainable society, it is recommended that the OELP should offer, as a follow-up to the outdoor experience, a process whereby participants learn theoretical and strategic approaches to sustainable development. The FSSD combined with the motivation and passion for sustainability could provide a powerful foundation for successful engagement in sustainability. The FSSD would provide participants not only with the capacity to operationalise change in their organisation, but also a robust definition of sustainability and a common language to talk about sustainability with other OELP participants and within their sphere of influence in the workplace.

**Increase the Variety of Programme Designs.** There are numerous ways in which the OELP could be delivered. One example is to include the OELP as part of organisational learning and leadership development programmes, or simply by inviting people to come on the OELP. One practitioner and two OELP experts described the need to make the OELP more accessible and adaptable to different kinds of clients. One of the ways to do this is to have a larger variation in the programmes in order to meet people in different sectors (Milton 2013; Roberts 2013) and to be more creative in the way that the OELP can be packaged (Cadée 2013; Roberts 2013). Naturakademin has worked with the Tällberg foundation since 2006 on creating an outdoor nature experience in a conference setting which allows people to have a taste of some of the ‘sensing’ exercises which can be carried out in the outdoors (Örtqvist 2013). This is another way of offering a short adaptation of the OELP by giving people at a conference (in this case, about leadership) an insight into the concept of contemplation in nature. This may encourage further participation in OELPs and serve as a good marketing platform.
**Backcast and Use Prioritisation Questions.** The FSSD concept of ‘backcasting from principles’ should be used to provide a strategic approach to achieving success. The three prioritisation questions can be built and elaborated upon (according to unique goals and challenges of the OELP) in order for actions to be filtered through a process which reveals the ones which are most strategic. The questions should also take into account any particular constraints, values or obligations which affect the OELP as it operates in society. The FSSD provides a set of three prioritisation questions which are explained in Section 1.1.1.

**Selection Criteria for Participants to Favour Influential Professionals.** The OELP would ideally have participants holding leverage potential in various positions of influence within a certain sector. Other criteria could also be applicable, for example, the Natural Change Project searched for “shakers and movers” (M. Watson 2013) (people who were generally respected by their colleagues and were good at communicating) by canvassing workers in the education sector in Scotland and seeing what names arose. Furthermore, there may be the potential for a powerful synergy between the invited participants to enact change within their organisation and grow a new culture of sustainability in which case it is important to have employees from different levels of the organisation participate (Carstedt 2013).

### 3.6 PRQ: Guidelines

To answer the PRQ (*How can an OELP be designed within society to engage influential professionals in sustainability?*), guidelines were provided for practitioners. Drawing off the results from SRQ1 (the desired future) and SRQ3 (recommendations which addressed the gaps and challenges from SRQ2), the guidelines in this section offer a detailed, non-prescriptive way of achieving the desired future.

These guidelines are not only for the sole intention of guiding a practitioner, or telling them precisely what they should do in a specific situation. The practitioners themselves have a wide range of personal and professional knowledge to draw upon. It is in this widespread knowledge that these guidelines could help stimulate practitioners to come up with their own answers and, when necessary, create new practical methods for strengthening various aspects of their OELP.

The majority of the guidelines build off of the recommendations. Where this is the case they have been ordered in a similar way to the recommendations (see Table 3.3). The first and last guidelines, however, are derived from the desired future model. In what follows, the main guideline is presented in italics, followed by more detailed points and questions for practitioners to consider in relation to that guideline.

**Core Process Design:** The core process of the OELP with respect to the outdoor personal and leadership development of participants should remain largely untouched. The facilitative approach, tools and actions are all highly effective and should principally remain the same.

However, also consider how:
• Remaining open to new ideas and methodologies could enhance the effectiveness of the process.
• Collaboration with other organisations could provide new insights and ways of working.

Collaboration: Discover what opportunities exist for co-learning and co-creating with other organisations in the field.

Establish if there are...
• Opportunities for sharing a database of tools, theories and concepts.
• Opportunities for building an even larger network of change makers who have participated in an OELP.
• Opportunities for coordinating research efforts.

Given existing common ground and will to collaborate...
• How could a network be established to help link possible individuals using their past experience on the OELP as a common medium?

Create a vision of success which fully embraces the potential of the OELP as outlined in the desired future, along with any unique goals.
• Consider adopting a systems perspective on the sustainability challenge and using the four sustainability principles to identify where engagement in sustainability is most needed. The principles should also define success in terms of how the OELP organisation is impacting change towards sustainability.
• Create your vision as an OELP, including any unique values, expertise or goals.
• Introductory training in FSSD concepts would provide practitioners with a robust understanding of sustainability, a common language for any marketing or collaborative projects in the future and a whole systems perspective on the role of the OELP within the socio-ecological system.

Develop feedback mechanisms and processes in order to measure the success of the OELP.
• Consider how feedback on the OELP’s effectiveness (in terms of transformation and perception shift) could be gathered from participants.
• Consider how longitudinal impacts of the OELP could be measured. How can they then be used to strengthen the case of the OELP and provide a language to communicate the benefits of the OELP?

Encourage and be prepared to support the establishment of ongoing group support networks for participants after the experience.
• Create networking platforms to help maintain strong relationships and reinforce the transformation.
• Encourage the group to continue supporting each other and form their own networks.
• Consider the logistics of ongoing support, the use of social media and the possibility for group/individual coaching.

**Combine passion for sustainability with the skills to make a fundamental change in organisations and society.**

• Be able to impart at least some knowledge of strategic sustainable development to participants following their experience on the OELP.
• Consider how this could be incorporated into the OELP.
• What frameworks, collectives of people or organisations and information could people be introduced to that would help them further the cause of sustainability?

**Understand the context of the prospective client (participant/organisation) being approached.**

Based on this knowledge...

• What language would best engage these prospective participants in dialogue around taking part in an OELP?
• Be aware of the power of language during the process (e.g. overly spiritual language to sceptical participants).

**Develop a strategic decision making process.**

• Utilise backcasting and the three prioritisation questions when deciding on actions which effect the OELP’s movements towards sustainability.
• What additional prioritisation questions could be used to decide on a course of action?
• How might ‘strategic selection of participants based on their leverage potential’ fit in this process?

**Develop a strategic process to select participants.**

• Determine the desired characteristics that participants should share that would help them form a cohesive and trusting group.
• Consider what selection criteria could be used to select participants who have significant leverage potential in moving a specific system/sector/organisation towards sustainability.
• Consider what similarities/differences between participants would enable the forming of a cohesive and trusting group.

**Assess the direct impacts that the OELP itself has on sustainability and strive to make it as sustainable as possible.**

This guideline does not relate to a specific recommendation, but rather iterates the importance of operating OELPs within the limits of the planet.

• In what ways is the OELP not in alignment with the four sustainability principles?
• What actions would lead the OELP towards a future that is in complete alignment with the four sustainability principles?
4 Discussion

4.1 Implication of Results

At the outset of the research process, the OELP emerged as an effective tool for engagement in sustainability. Its application to engaging professionals in sustainability is a recent adaptation to traditional ways of running an OELP. Further, the OELP draws upon a wealth of knowledge from native traditions and pioneers in the field as well as a base of experienced facilitators. Given the strong foundation of the current OELP, the move towards creating an OELP with a greater strategic role in moving society towards sustainability, in the context of our research questions, was a natural one. As a process that worked primarily with the personal aspect of people in the organisational field, it seemed a natural complement to the FSSD, a grounded framework facilitating the navigation through organisational and societal complexity. While the OELP and FSSD seem like two distinctly different methodologies, the advantages to both merged quite seamlessly. The culminating result is a set of guidelines to help OELPs be more strategic in how they engage influential professionals in strategic leadership towards sustainability using the OELP as a primary tool in doing so.

The primary target audience of our research is limited to practitioners who are currently running or are intending to create OELPs with the aim of engaging influential professionals in leadership towards sustainability. This was kept in mind throughout the research in order to tailor the resulting guidelines in a way that is most useful for the target audience. This research can also be useful for other audiences and purposes. Firstly, it has a value for organisations and individuals that are interested in finding ways to engage persons in leadership towards sustainability, i.e. for potential participants or for organisations looking to engage their employees in sustainability. It provides an overview of what value an OELP can bring in order to engage individuals in sustainability. By showing through numerous examples how powerful this approach is, the findings of this research also help to legitimise the case for OELPs as a general approach for accelerating the transition towards a sustainable future. Secondly, value is added by giving the practitioners an overview of what other programmes exist conducting similar work. As elaborated on in Section 3.4.6, more collaboration among the different organisations running OELPs is in most cases desired by the practitioners.

Most practitioners wish to expand their work and the use of OELPs in general for the aim of bringing about positive change in the world but are currently facing problems to communicate the value effectively to the potential clients. In that regard, our research results can be beneficial in two ways by guiding practitioners towards a more strategic marketing approach as well as, as described above, informing potential participants about the value of an OELP.

On a general level, our findings showed that OELPs can be very unique and powerful tools for raising interest in sustainability among influential professionals. By informing practitioners about how to communicate the value of such an experience, providing
participants with knowledge of how to operationalise sustainability in the context of the organisation, and by sustaining the experience via follow-up methods, a significant step towards the creation of a sustainable society can be taken.

4.2 Shortcomings and Confidence in Results

4.2.1 Shortcomings

Due to difficulties in establishing contacts (see Section 2.4.2), the number of participants that could be interviewed was limited. From the programmes Rites of Passage, Vilse and Active Earth, no contacts with participants could be established due to unavailability and privacy concerns. This poses a limitation to our results since no triangulation of data could be achieved in terms of, for example, the outcomes of some of the programmes. Therefore, conducting interviews with a larger number of participants might have led to slightly different results. For an ideal triangulation of the results, the interviews with both practitioners and participants would have been complemented with observations (Maxwell 2005). This was not possible due the fact that no programmes could be found within a reasonable distance from Karlskrona that were run during the given time and that could have been visited for observation.

The organisation LUMS did not share specific criteria of an OELP as mentioned in the introduction of our thesis although it did share numerous other similarities. As a result, some of our data may not have entirely reflected the current reality or desired future of the OELP field.

Further, by asking the practitioners to be put in contact with participants, the possibility exists that the practitioners preferably chose participants that were more content with the overall experience than the average participant. Fortunately, in the case of the Natural Change Project, a testimonial of all participants’ blogs along with a longitudinal study were available to help gain a broader perspective.

Finally, this research was limited to countries in North America and Western Europe. No attention has been paid to the usefulness and kind of application of an OELP in other countries since they were out of the scope of this research project.

4.2.2 Strengths

Our interviews were conducted in a semi-structured process. This entailed providing a set list of questions that individuals were given before the interview that would guide the general flow of the interview. At times during the interviews, the development of new questions and deviation from the pre-determined flow was allowed as new themes emerged that seemed important to be addressed at that moment. This was helpful in harvesting new themes that would not have arisen from the initial list.
Another strength of our research came from the variety of practitioners interviewed. From each programme, at least two or three practitioners could be interviewed which helped getting a comprehensive and more reliable perspective on approach and success goals of the field. Moreover, the experts’ input was deemed as independent and unbiased which helped gaining a new perspective on OELPs and their application in the broader context of society. Likewise, each of the interviewed individuals provided a thorough and helpful recount of their experiences and was extremely cooperative in helping the researchers to collect data and contact other potential interviewees. Furthermore, all parts that were quoted were sent back to the respondent interviewee for reviewing before publishing this thesis to avoid misinterpretations of the information obtained during the conversations. Lastly, five practitioners were gracious enough to look over, comment on and validate our guidelines adding legitimacy to the accuracy of our findings and their usability.

4.3 Recommendations for Future Research

In order to strengthen research related to this topic, the authors of this thesis recommend that research of this sort should be expanded by interviewing a larger amount of participants from as many programmes as possible. Themes of the interview could revolve around potential shortcomings of the process itself as well as positive structural outcomes in society resulting from the experience. This could help to provide insight and build a stronger case for the OELP and provide a more statistical backing to our research.

The guidelines and recommendations created through this research have not yet been applied to the internal structuring of an OELP. Documentation of their usage would provide insight as to their strengths and shortcomings in a practical setting.

Research on the application and strengthening of an OELP to demographics other than the influential professional could provide insight into the greater applicability of the OELP. Further, the adaptation of the guidelines provided in this research towards a more general audience could help provide a more widely applicable way of strengthening OELPs.

Further research and documentation is also needed into what hard outcomes result from these programmes over a longer period of time. Successful findings in this kind of research will help build a more substantial case for the OELP as a powerful approach to engaging professionals in sustainability. It will also aid many other OELP organisers in selling and marketing their product in the organisational world and to constantly improve their practices.

Some possible research questions could revolve around:

- In what ways could an OELP move various sectors of society towards sustainability?
- What long term outcomes result from the OELP?
- What are the strengths and shortcomings of the guidelines for achieving the desired future?
5 Conclusion

An urgent change in current societal patterns to diminish the rapidly ongoing systematic degradation of the Earth’s ecosystems and social systems will be necessary if there is to be any hope of salvation for our planet. This research suggests that OELPs can play a significant role in bringing about the necessary shift of mindset and behaviour to direct society towards sustainability. Not every citizen can take part in a resource and time intensive OELP which is why focusing on influential professionals is a strategic choice to facilitate this shift in as quick and effective a manner as possible. By motivating and engaging more leaders who understand the sustainability challenge, feel deeply connected to nature as well as their fellow man and have a profound passion for bringing about change in the world, the shift towards a sustainable society can be catalysed. In order for this to take place, it is essential that the participants’ learnings gained from the OELP are translated into strategically informed actions that can operate within varying degrees of complexity.

The current practices of the OELP embody a strong and forceful means of engaging key sectors of society in a transition towards sustainability. The OELP movement, much like the sustainability movement, is also on the rise. Highly experienced and motivated individuals in many different countries are taking the initiative to provide people with the reprieve of the OELP with the intent of engaging them in sustainability. Not all practitioners will have the capacity or desire to take on larger societal issues. By looking into the various opportunities available to OELPs, as presented in this thesis, the individual practitioner can draw on the collective strength of the community, the changing landscape of the world and the ingenuity of their own knowledge to strengthen the OELP.

For those practitioners looking to tackle the sustainability challenge at a larger scale, consulting the strategic recommendations and guidelines produced in this thesis, is a helpful first step. The proposed guidance is designed to help practitioners address key themes around how to sufficiently support the participants, i.e. influential professionals, after the experience, how to communicate the value of their programme to different organisations and how to strengthen current approaches. The researchers believe that the incorporation of such measures into the design and implementation of the OELP would contribute to the evolution of the OELP and the move towards a truly sustainable society.

The reality of the situation is dire. The time for change is now. The survival of the planet depends on whether a collective of people can rise with the will and desire to enact a restorative change to all levels of human civilisation. Immersed in the outdoors, people’s roots begin to grow and their passion becomes alive. Dedicating oneself to the preservation of the planet no longer seems like something foreign to the individual. It defines the individual. Empowers them and guides them on a path that is all too foreign to the majority of onlookers in the general population. But now they are not alone. The Outdoor Experiential Learning Process has the potential to unite these eco-warriors and change our world for the better, one person at a time.
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Milroy, Jed. 2013. Interview by authors (via Skype), Karlskrona, Sweden, April 18.
Milton, John P. 2013. Interview by authors (via Skype), Karlskrona, Sweden, April 18.


Örtqvist, Anneli. 2013. Interview by authors (via Skype), Karlskrona, Sweden, April 8.


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Roberts, Andres. 2013. Interview by authors (via Skype), Karlskrona, Sweden, April 26.


Rowe, Barry. 2013. Interview by authors (via telephone), Karlskrona, Sweden, April 25.


Watson, Morag. 2013. Interview by authors (via Skype), Karlskrona, Sweden, March 22.


Watson, Sally. 2013. Interview by authors (via telephone), Karlskrona, Sweden, March 26.


# Appendices

## Appendix A: Interview Partners

<table>
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<th>Organisation or Expert</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Date of Interview</th>
<th>Role/Position</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>The Natural Change Project</strong></td>
<td>David Key</td>
<td>21.03.2013</td>
<td>Facilitator</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Margaret Kerr</td>
<td>08.04.2013</td>
<td>Facilitator, psychotherapist and medical doctor</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Morag Watson</td>
<td>22.03.2013</td>
<td>Participant as well as involved in finding the participants and project management</td>
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<td><strong>Lancaster University Management School (Wilderness Thinking Retreat)</strong></td>
<td>Dr. Sally Watson</td>
<td>26.03.2013</td>
<td>Director of Executive Education, Lancaster University Management School, Lancaster, UK</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Jeffrey Jackson</td>
<td>15.04.2013</td>
<td>Facilitator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Andrea Cail</td>
<td>22.04.2013</td>
<td>Participant 2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Barry Rowe</td>
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<td>Participant 2012</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Naturakademin (Nature Quest)</strong></td>
<td>Göran Gennvi</td>
<td>10.04.2013</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Anneli Örtqvist</td>
<td>08.04.2013</td>
<td>Facilitator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Anna ThurdinHedblad</td>
<td>18.04.2013</td>
<td>Participant 2012</td>
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<td><strong>Rites of Passage (Vision Quest for Transformative Leadership)</strong></td>
<td>Dana Carman</td>
<td>13.04.2013</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Mike Bodkin</td>
<td>18.04.2013</td>
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<td><strong>Vilse</strong></td>
<td>Andreas Rindsäter (with Per Ericson)</td>
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<td>Per Ericson (with Andreas Rindsäter)</td>
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<td>Korbi Hort</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Andres Roberts</td>
<td>26.04.2013</td>
<td>Facilitator</td>
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<td><strong>Experts</strong></td>
<td>Tim Macartney</td>
<td>13.02.2013</td>
<td>Founder of Embercombe</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Göran Carstedt</td>
<td>04.04.2013</td>
<td>Held leading positions at IKEA and Volvo</td>
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<td></td>
<td>John P. Milton</td>
<td>18.04.2013</td>
<td>Expert in the field of OELPs</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Martin Cardée</td>
<td>23.04.2013</td>
<td>Founder of Kaospilots and Knowmads</td>
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Appendix B: Standard Interview Questions for Practitioners

Introductory questions
Can we record this conversation?
Can we cite you on what you tell us in this conversation?
Do you have any questions about our research?
Could you please tell us shortly about your role at…?
On average, how long are your programmes?
On average, how many participants are taking part?
Where are your programmes taking place?

System
What do you see is the role of your programme in the broader context of society (with respect to sustainability)?
What kind of clients do you have?
What is the rationale of the clients for taking part in your programme? Are they participating on a voluntary basis or are they send by e.g. their organisations?
What are the expectations of the participants or the expectations of their organisations?
Are the participants prepared for the process in any way? How and why?
What is the “selling point” you use for business choosing to participate in your programme?

Success
What motivates you to do this work?
Do you have a shared definition among all people involved (including participants) as to what determines the success of the programme? If yes, can you tell us what this definition is?
Do you have a shared definition of sustainability? What is this definition? How did you decide upon it?
What are the biggest key learnings that your participants take with them?
What key learnings translate the most in the business field when dealing with sustainability?
Does it vary depending on the participants’ initial worldview?
How is success sustained over the long term?

Strategic
How do you decide on which activities you use in the programme? (How do you prioritise one approach over another?)
How does the design of such a programme deal with participants experiencing the trip in different ways?
Is your programme design informed by a certain framework or pedagogical approach?
Do you have certain guidelines which inform the programme design or the decision-making?
Do you make efforts to make your activities as sustainable as possible?

Actions
Are you preparing the participants in any way before the experience? Why and how?
Which specific actions are you taking during the experience to reach the desired success?
Are you preparing the participants in any way for the time after the experience?
Are there any actions that follow the experience?

**Tools**
Do you have any insights on which tools are useful for developing the desired outcomes of the programme?
How are you measuring success at an individual and organisational level?

**General questions**
Do you think your programme could be improved in any way?
Do you have any testimonials, journals, interviews, surveys or reflections of the participants etc. that you can share with us?
Has similar research to ours already been conducted with your participants? Could you share the results with us?
Would it be possible for us to send out surveys to your participants in order to get insights on what they learned and how they learned it?
Appendix C: Standard Interview Questions for Participants

**Introductory questions**
Can we record this conversation?
Can we cite you on what you tell us in this conversation?
Do you have any questions about our research?
Could you please tell us shortly which programme you took part in and when that was?

**System**
What was your life situation prior to entering the programme?
What was your job?
  - What was your outlook on sustainability?
  - What did you feel your role was in the world in regards to sustainability?
What was your rationale for taking part in the programme?
What were your expectations?
Were you prepared for the process in any way?
What is the role of nature in this process?

**Success**
Did you have any success goals going into the programme at a personal level and for your organisation?
Did you have any success goals going out of the programme at a personal level and for your organisation?
How did your life change during this process?
What aspects of the things you learned translate the most in the business field when dealing with sustainability?

**Strategic**
What was the role of the facilitator in your programme?
Which specific activities or exercises did you find especially effective or enlightening?
Were you aware of any underlying theory or concepts which were being used to guide the experience?

**Actions**
Are there any actions you took later in life that you can directly relate to your experience on the programme?
Do you take any personal actions, or participate in any group action to sustain yourself?
What do you find are the biggest difficulties when re-entering the workplace?

**General questions**
What were the greatest strengths of the program? Noticeable gaps?
Do you think the programme could be improved in any way? How?
Appendix D: Excerpt of Data Analysis Stage 1

Success:

Success for participants (personal growth and development)

Perception shifts:

Interconnection:

- Develop a conscious shift towards interconnectivity
- Aware of the meanings of your actions and connections to other people.
- Learn about yourself and your personal relationship with the rest of the world.
- Renewed appreciation of the earth and their relationship to the earth.
- Developing a new perspective on themselves and their relationship with the interconnected web of life.
- Connectedness with other people, other parts of nature
- The emergence of the Eco-self
- To see beyond my immediate more selfish thoughts and feelings towards a more larger more inclusive feeling of being part of a huge system

Appreciation of nature
### Appendix E: Excerpt of Data Analysis Stage 2

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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Getting a new perspective</td>
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<td>Knowing what is important in your life</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Able to feel prized, valued, and cared for</td>
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<td>Attention skills</td>
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**Legend**

- **Stage 1**: Learning objective (pre-learning)
- **Stage 2**: Learning objective (post-learning)
- **Stage 3**: Learning objective (follow-up)

**Notes**

- The emotional change topics are organized in a hierarchical structure, with general topics at the top and specific topics at the bottom.
- The table is designed to facilitate easy identification of learning objectives across different stages.
Appendix F: Data Analysis Stage 2 - Codes

**Systems Level**

*Information about Interviewee*
- Role
- Experience
- Motivation

*Information about Programme*

*General*
- Length
- Customised Programmes Available
- Location
- Payment

*Getting Participants*
- Invitation
- Recruitment

*Level of Activity*
- Contemplative
- Physical

*Role in Society*
- Big Change Needed
- Form of Education
- Therapeutic Programme
- Rituals for Transitions in Life

*Participants*

*Background*
- Kind of Participants
- Expectations

*Rationale for Taking Part*
- Curiosity
- Refining Skills
- Conscious Decision to Take Part
- Sent by Organisation

*Our Society*
- No Sustainability
- Raising Awareness for Sustainability, Not Necessarily Action
- More Than Knowledge Needed
- Interest for the Outdoors
- Disconnection
- Communication
- Ego
- Taking Things for Granted
- No Time for Reflection/Addiction to Thinking
- Not Sensing Enough Before Making Decisions
- More and More Technology
- No Collaboration/Drillholes
- Feelings not Welcome
- Fear Inhibits Us
- Not Being Yourself in the Workplace
- Driving You into Fear
- Pulling Back out of Comfort Zone
- No Rituals for Transitions

**Role of Nature**
- Space
- The Journey to the Place
- Raising Awareness for Sustainability
- Feeling at Home
- Silence, No Stimuli
- Learning from Nature

**Success Level**

**Sustainability**
- Fixed Definition of Sustainability

**Shared Understanding of Success**
- No Shared Understanding
- Group

**Outcomes in General**
- Not Predictable
- Hard to Measure
- Depending on Life Situation, Initial Worldview, Level of Influence

**Enablers**
- Fear
- The weather

**Outcomes**
- Strategic Goal
- Leaving the Programme Before the End
- Motivation
- Creativity
- Credibility
- Awareness
- Commitment
- Find Language
- Activism
- Doing Former Job in a Better Way
- Resolving Trauma
- Co-creation
- Vision
- Taking Time, Reflecting
- Awakening
- Less consumption
- Skills
- Appreciation of Nature

**Sustainability**
- Ecological Self, Reconnection to Nature
- Seeing the Whole, Dealing With Complexity
- Understanding Necessity of Sustainability

**Connectedness**
- With Other People
- With Other Parts of Nature

**Being Yourself**
- Being Able to Speak From the Heart, Say Things You Haven’t Before
- Authenticity
- Self-Confidence, Courage
- Passion, Gifts
- Being Able to Feel
- Knowing What is Important in Your Life
- Loosing Fear

**Change in Life**
- Getting a New Perspective
- Quitting Job
- Marriage Breakdowns
- Disorientation, Tension
- Difficult to Go Back to Work
- Arguments With Partners

**Group**
- Trust
- Supporting Each Other

**Repetition of Experience**
- Participants on Their Own
- In the Group

**Strategic Level**

**The Natural Step (TNS)**
- Affiliation With TNS

**Choosing Participants**
- Kind of Participants
- Influential Professionals
- Time in Their Life

**Choosing Facilitators**

**Importance**
- Influence of Facilitator

**Background**
- Someone With a Psychotherapeutic Background
- Someone With an Outdoor Education Background
Personality
- Compassionate, Empathetic, Supportive
- Authentic
- Skills
- Facilitating in Pairs
- Having Undergone the Experience Yourself

Facilitation
- Help Participants Being Open
- Opening Safe Space
- Language
- Presence, Awareness, Love
- Instinct, Intuition
- Listening
- Problem Solving
- Gaining Trust
- Respect, No Judgement
- Reflexive Facilitation

Actions Level

Establishing Contacts
- Language
- Educating People the Programme Exists
- Word of Mouth, Read
- As a Management Consultant

Preparation

Participant
- Initial Conversation
- Meeting “Graduate” of the Programme
- Sending out Information Documents

Facilitator
- Coming to the Place Earlier
- Making Connections
- Constant Practices
- Deep Listening
- Resolving Personal Things
- Practical Preparation

Content Taught
- No Content Taught
- A Little Bit of Content

Practices

Solo
- Slow Down and Reflect
- Same Process for Any Individual, For Other Reasons
- Solo is Most Powerful, At the Core
- Length
- Preparation
- Who Shall Go on a Solo?
- Settling Down

**Sharing**
- Story Telling
- With the Whole Group
- Sitting in a Circle
- Listening, Reflecting Back
- Very Deep, Very Personal Process

**Repetition**
- Repetition of Practices

**Afterwards**
- Feedback
- Leaving Participants Alone
- Further Workshops, Actions
- Psychological, Personal Support
- Project Support
- Support Systems
- Spreading Participants’ Awareness, Blogs

**Walking the Talk**
- Simplicity
- General
- Food

**Trauma**
- Resolving Trauma to Be Able to Engage in Sustainability

**Tools Level**

**Communication Tools**
- Deep Listening
- Dialogue
- Story Telling
- Timeline of Solo
- Talking Stick

**Guiding Theories, Concepts**

**Guiding Theories**
- Ecopsychology
- Theory U
- Spiral Theory
- Milton’s 12 principles
- Integral Theory
- Appreciative Inquiry
- Epistomology
- Personal Mastery
- Mindfulness
Guiding Concepts

- Comfort, Fear/Risk and Panic Zone
- Presencing
- Ecological Self
- WILD – Wisdom, Insight, Leadership, Dialogue
- Wilderness Thinking
- Self 1 and Self 2
- Right Brain/Left Brain Ways of Thinking

Native Traditions/Influences

- Vision Quest
- Medicine Wheel Approach
- 12 Principles
- Qi Gong
- Bringing in Wisdom Keepers

Others

- Art, Symbols, Metaphors
- Music
- Discomfort to Comfort
- Campfire
- Psychadelic Mushrooms
- Journalling
- MSLS Lotus Thesis

Group

- Group Feeling, Dependence
- Support
- Collective Knowledge

Challenges and Needs Level

For Participants

Time Issues

- Too Little Time
- Paradox: You Have to Slow Down and Do Nothing Even Though There is So Much to Do
- As an Organisation

During the Experience

- Anxieties
- To Be on Your Own During the Solo
- No Curriculum, Objective

Money

- Funding, Payment
- Applying for Funding
- Funding for Research

Afterwards

- How Outcomes Translate Back Into the Organisation
- Sustaining the Experience
Engagement in Bigger Than Self Problems But Neglecting Others

For the Facilitator

Before the Experience
- Not to Raise Expectations Too High But Motivate Participants to Take Part
- Selling Programme
- Communicating How Useful Reflection Is

During the Experience
- Walking the Talk
- Spirituality

Afterwards
- Feedback

Needs

Research
- Design
- Language, Marketing
- Longitudinal Effects, Why Does Engagement Results?

Improvements
- General
- Solo
- Measuring Success
- Personal, Structural and Cultural Change
- OELP as a Strategic Option
- More Flat Structures

Expanding Programme
- Desired
- Not Desired
## Appendix G: Overview of Tools used in OELPs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perception Shifts</th>
<th>Guiding Theories</th>
<th>Guiding Concepts</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>U Theory</td>
<td>Presencing</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Ecopsychology</td>
<td>Ecological Self and ego</td>
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<td>Spiral theory</td>
<td>Comfort, fear, panic zone model</td>
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<td>Milton’s 12 principles</td>
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<td>Integral theory</td>
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<td>Leadership Development</td>
<td>9 steps to authentic leadership</td>
<td>Self 1 and Self 2 (inner and ego)</td>
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<td>Wilderness thinking</td>
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<td>Right brain/left brain ways of thinking</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sensing and Slowing Down</th>
<th>Guiding Practices</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Meditation, Qi Gong, Tai Chi, sharing, Gaia Flow, Mindfulness, silence, solo, yoga, shamanic and Buddhist practices</td>
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<tr>
<td>Art and Creativity (often in the process of slowing down the mind)</td>
<td>Images from the land, collage drawing, land art, dance, painting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group and Leadership</td>
<td>Dialogue, storytelling, coaching (small group and one to one), journaling,</td>
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</tbody>
</table>