Student Thesis

Level: Master's Thesis in Business Administration

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) networking

A case study on why members join CSR network and why are they sharing their knowledge

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Abstract

Purpose – This research focuses on finding the reasons, why members from different sectors join a cross-sector/multi-stakeholder CSR network and what motivates them to share (or not to share) their knowledge of CSR and their best practices.

Design/methodology/approach – Semi-structured interviews were conducted with members of the largest cross-sector CSR network in Sweden. The sample base of 15 people was chosen to be able to represent a wider variety of members from each participating sectors. As well as the CEO of the intermediary organization was interviewed. The interviews were conducted via email and telephone.

Findings – The findings include several reasons linked to the business case of CSR such as stakeholder pressure, competitive advantage, legitimacy and reputation as well as new reasons like the importance of CSR, and the access of further knowledge in the field. Further reasons are in line with members wanting to join a network, such as access to contact or having personal contacts. As to why members are sharing their CSR knowledge, the findings indicate to inspire others, to show CSR commitment, to be visible, it leads to business opportunity and the access of others knowledge, and because it was requested. Reasons for not sharing their knowledge would be the lack of opportunity, lack of time and the lack of experience to do so.

Originality/value – The research contributes to existing studies, which focused on Corporate Social Responsibility and cross-sector networking as well as to inter-organizational knowledge sharing in the field of CSR.

Keywords: Corporate Social Responsibility, Sustainability, Cross-sector network, Multi – stakeholder network, Inter-organizational knowledge sharing

Table of content

Figures and tables:

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1. Introduction

1.1. Background information

There has not been one generally accepted definition of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) to date, even though it is a widely discussed phenomenon and has been mentioned since the first ideas appeared about the responsibilities of the businessman (Bowen, 1953). CSR commonly refers to the voluntary measures taken by firms in order to meet their stakeholders' expectations regarding environmental, economical and social aspects. The debate is still ongoing whether corporations should take responsibility further than what is legally required and there are numerous articles trying to link corporate responsibility to corporate performance aiming to find the business case for CSR. (Benn & Bolton, 2011 pp 56-58; Beal, 2014, pp 3-5)

Jenkins (2009) mentions: for learning about CSR and new ways of doing business, training is necessary, which can be achieved via partnering and networking with other companies to share best practice. (Jenkins, 2009, p 29) A simple formal network can be defined as an organizational structure, where the members share a collective identity based on common values and face similar social and environmental pressure from stakeholders. (Battaglia et al. 2010, p 134) The collaboration should be built on a long term interest of the multi-stakeholder group. (Hoivik & Shankar, 2011, p 185) In specific networks researchers also mention a close geographical location of the participating firms. (Hoivik & Shankar, 2011; Battaglia et al. 2010) A cross-sector or multi-stakeholder network is usually a collaborative partnership between the public, private and civil society organizations. This type of a network is becoming more common to address international development goals and social issues, such as sustainability, health, education, and economic development. (Manning & Roessler, 2014 p 527; Googins & Rochlin, 2000, p 127) In a multi-stakeholder approach governments may encourage business involvement where public services are lacking. In these collaborations the government is often expected to take the leading role and define the framework of actions. (Murillo and Lozano, 2009)

Benn and Bolton (2011) has mentioned that one of the problems arising in such cross-sector networks is that instead of focusing on solving social or environmental problems, the members mainly focus on discussions and sharing best practices of CSR actions. When discussing and sharing best practices of CSR, members engage in inter-organizational knowledge sharing. In a simplified model based on Hislop (2009) for inter-organizational knowledge sharing: it occurs when

a donor organization, which has transfer capacity and willingness to teach engages with a recipient organization, which has absorbance capacity and willingness to learn through inter organizational dynamics. The significance of cross community knowledge process is that, inter-organizational knowledge sharing can facilitate innovation and development of products, as organizations gain access to external knowledge as long as the partners maintain trust and the exchange is mutually beneficial. Common difficulties are the lack of trust, the complexity of projects, the commitment issues and the difficulty to give up the independency of each organization, as well as the different cultures and the lack of common knowledge. (Hislop, 2009)

Davenport and Prusak (2000) pointed out that knowledge is a bundle of "experiences, values, contextual information, and expert insight that provides a framework for evaluating and incorporating new experiences and information" (p. 5). "Knowledge sharing is the process where individuals mutually exchange their knowledge and jointly create new concepts." (Nooshinfard & Nemati-Anaraki, 2012, p 244) Hislop (2009) mentions that knowledge sharing can happen during rich interpersonal interactions as well as via informational and communicational technologies. He has mentioned the dilemma of sharing or hoarding the knowledge, as both have advantages and disadvantages. The advantages of sharing knowledge on an individual level may include: material reward, an improvement in status/recognition; a sense of fulfillment from the process itself or achieving the desired outcome, as well as an expression of commitment towards the profession or organization. On the other hand knowledge sharing can be time consuming, and by sharing knowledge the individual or organization might lose power and competitive advantage. To hoard (free-ride) knowledge can give the advantage of avoiding the risk of losing power, but it has the disadvantage of that the extent of the knowledge might not be understood by the organization or other employees and therefore might not be recognized properly.

1.2. Research problem formulation

A personal interest has been triggered towards the topic of researching CSR cross-sector networks, while executing an assignment for a local firm with the objective to research the interest and willingness of local firms in Ludvika, Sweden to establish and participate in a cross-sector CSR network. During the assignment it was discovered that although there are several examples of cross sector CSR networks, where members are willingly share (or not) their CSR knowledge and best practices, there is little known about them. While the existing literature often focuses on why corporations should engage in CSR and what is the role of cross sector networks in promoting the case of CSR, little is known about why members from the different sectors join these cross sector

CSR networks and if there are different motivations and reasons to share (or not) CSR knowledge then for knowledge sharing in general.

The aim of this research will focuses on finding the reasons, why members from different sectors join a cross-sector/multi-stakeholder CSR network and what motivates them to share (or not to share) their knowledge of CSR and their best practices.

Being aware of the reasons for joining cross-sector CSR networks, can contribute to both already existing networks and organizations just thinking about forming a cross-sector CSR network to recruit new members, as well as be aware of the motivations to share CSR knowledge and best practices, to engage less active members and new members in these activities.

2. Conceptual framework

The research focuses on a cross-sector CSR network. To be able to find the reasons why members join to such networks the following chapter is going to frame the key concepts by defining CSR and in the light of CSR the related cross-sector/multi stakeholder networks, as such networks are often formed to mitigate issues considered too complex for one sector to solve. The second aim of the research is to see what motivates members in such networks to share or not to share their CSR knowledge, therefore the concepts of knowledge sharing and inter organizational knowledge sharing as well as the motivation for knowledge sharing is defined. The key concepts serve as a framework for the analysis of the empirical data.

2.1. Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) is a complex, dynamic and contemporary phenomenon; therefore it is difficult to find one fitting definition for it. Over the past decades CSR has been clarified and defined in various ways by academics and practitioners. Many of the definitions attempt to describe the role of business in society and society´s expectations of business at a given time. The expectations from society commonly include the ethical behavior of corporations and cover the areas of social, environmental and economic responsibility. An additional dimension is the voluntariness of the business actions in the previously mentioned areas, i.e. corporations are willing to go further than it is legally required. (Benn & Bolton, 2011 pp 56-58; Beal, 2014, pp 3-5) The arguments for business to engage in CSR activities (also known as the business case for CSR) include, but not limited to: (1) costs and risk reduction, (2) profit maximization and competitive advantage, (3) reputation and legitimacy and finally (4) value creation. (Beal, 2014 p 64)

CSR practices can lead to realization of various corporate social opportunities (CSOs). As Donna Wood (Visser, 2010) describes it in the book A to Z of Corporate Social Responsibility. "A corporate social opportunity is a potentially profitable market oriented venture that derives from or is suggested by company´s social responsibilities or by social or environmental problems…Taking advantage of corporate social opportunities generally requires innovative perception and high tolerance for risk. The potential rewards include typical business goals such as profits, new markets, and process improvements, as well as social goals such as alleviation of human suffering and improvements to the quality of human life." (Visser, 2010, pp 119-120)

One of the mentioned CSOs are innovative products and services, which also address social or environmental issues are often appear to be too specialized to attract large multinational companies, therefore appear to be attractive for small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs). (Jenkins, 2009 p

24-30) Beside the awareness of new markets and products, formal CSR activities can lead to (1) "increased access to talent and better employer – employee relationship", (2) better "supplier – buyer relationship and access to markets", (3) "long term cost savings", (4) "sustainable leadership", (5) "differentiation". […] On the other hand CSR policies can also reduce risks, such as (1) "restricted market access", (2) "negative publicity and reputational affects", (3) "reduced ability to leverage on opportunities arising from CSR", (4) "discontinuous organizational change as a result of forced requirements due to regulations and legislative actions", and (5) "credit risk".

Even though the arguments for the business case for CSR seem convincing enough for a large number of corporations (both MNEs and SMEs) to take up CSR on their agenda, the debate is still ongoing if business should just be accountable for its shareholders. Beal (2014) collected some of the arguments against CSR, which include: the main goal of business should be profit maximization, and the (financial) burden of additional social responsibilities might hinder corporations to reach this goal. Moreover business (people) do not have the skills nor the right motivation to address social issues. Business leaders are not elected by society therefore they are not accountable for it and their engagement might risk the balance of the pluralistic institutions responsible to solve societal problems. Finally there might be activist groups, who are protesting against the involvement of business in social issues. (Beal, 2014, pp 67-68) Apart from the debate around the business case for CSR another difficulty emerges for practitioners trying to embrace the expectations from society: the difficulty to define CSR and the co-existing as well as overlapping terms such as sustainability.

Sustainability, when used in a business context (also referred to as corporate sustainability (CS)), encompasses social, environmental and economic concerns. (Beal, 2014, p 12) Corporate Sustainability (CS) is a business strategy that creates long term value by incorporating the social, economic and environmental dimensions into the core of the business operations, corporate values and (stakeholder) relationship management. In a broader term it contributes to the maintenance and creation of a healthy society and natural environment by efficient resource usage and wealth creation. Sustainability also refers to the interrelatedness of technological, social, political, and environmental systems. (Benn & Bolton, 2011 pp 63-68) CS is closely related to sustainable development, which is most commonly defined as a development which meets present requirement and needs without compromising future generations to meet their own needs. (Beal, 2014, p 12; Brundtland Report, World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987 in Benn & Bolton, 2011 p 209) Sustainable development has global, national, regional and local implications; therefore

political actors provide economical incentives on various levels for business to join the initiative. Decision makers are required to balance between three sets of relationships: between humans and the rest of the biosphere; between present and future generations; and between the developing and developed world. Critics of sustainable development mention its "anthropocentric" concept and that is promotes an "instrumentalist approach to nature and endorses the mutually dependent relationship between economical growth and environmental protection, underpinned by techno-scientific rationality and market based mechanism." (Benn & Bolton, 2011, p 211) Another argument against sustainable development is that instead of a serious attempt to solve societal and environment issues, the initiative is led by global organizations such as the UN or the World Bank. Despite of the critics one of the greatest achievements of sustainable development is that it succeeded to bring different stakeholders to work together. (Benn & Bolton, 2011, pp 211-212)

One of the main issues when organizations engage in CSR is linked to its communication. As part of the complexity of the phenomena organizations sometimes use CSR and sustainability as greenwashing. "Greenwashing refers to the phenomena of organizations trying to cover up environmentally and/or socially damaging activities." "Greenwash is a deceptive use of green public relations." (Benn & Bolton, 2011, p 115) While greenwash is associated with media manipulation and building a green image of the company falsely, in other words using the CSR talk merely for marketing purposes, there is parallel view about CSR talk, which suggest talking about CSR can be aspiring and it can also move the field forward. (Christensen et al., 2013, p 373) Christensen et al. (2013) discusses the CSR talk and its aspiration value, suggesting that communication constantly shapes corporate decision making and is followed by actions, otherwise public questions may arise. They mention that the buffer between talk and action can lead to the implementation of different activities, and it cannot be regarded as pure hypocrisy. Furthermore, they differentiate between two types of hypocrisy: (1) hypocrisy as duplicity, which is associated with fraud and lies and (2) hypocrisy as aspiration, which is associated with positive visions and is able to stimulate action and new practices. Although there is a great difference between the two types of hypocrisy, they admit it is difficult to know if the corporation is using the first or the second example. Christensen et al. (2013) propose that it cannot be expected that talk and action would always fully correlate, because then companies will stop talking and CSR might lose a tool of inspiration; therefore the gap must be kept open for new inspiration and continuous development.

2.2. Cross sector networks

Social Partnerships refer to a wide range of inter-organizational, cross-sector mechanisms created to address social, environmental, health or educational issues. They can be contractual partnerships or partnerships based on looser agreements between non-governmental organizations and business, non-profit organizations and business or government and business, as well as partnerships including more than two sectors. Social partnerships between business and government promoting CSR and CS are not substitutes of formal legislations and rules. Business can enter into such partnerships for various reasons, e.g. external industry or market pressure and to strengthen competitive advantage. The emergence of such partnerships shows a new approach from the government and is seen very important especially in the promotion of CSR and CS for SMEs. (Benn & Bolton, 2011, pp 187 – 192)

Cross-sector networks, with public and private participants, are often created after public sector initiatives following the Danish network creation model. Rosenfeld (1996) describes originally the government in Denmark used public policy to induce the practice of inter-firm cooperation by training and supporting network brokers (network facilitators) and introducing incentives to three or more firms willing to cooperate for extended market access, development of new products or higher productivity. (Rosenfeld, 1996, p249) The perceived advantages of operating in a network for SMEs are to overcome the limitations faced by the individual organization as the network can bring together core competences of different business. It can motivate other SMEs which were not aware of CSR to take it up on the agenda due to peer encouragement/pressure. It is an innovation driver as members in the network would try to differentiate from their rivals by maintaining competition and innovation. It legitimizes pro-active CSR engagement and through the peers positive influence on each other, implementing CSR as a network-based approach. (Hoivik and Shankar 2011 p 186)

Googins and Rochlin (2000) have already described a phenomenon where the three institutional sectors: government, business and civil sector begin to form cross-sector partnerships to address social issues, which "no one sector has sufficient resources or capability to adequately address or resolve". (Googins & Rochlin, 2000, p128) They describe partnership as a commitment where a corporation or a group of corporations are willing to cooperate with an organization from a different economic sector (public or nonprofit). Social partnerships form to solve issues stretching beyond organizational boundaries and often lie in the social arena, in the traditional area of the public sector. This partnership requires active involvement and more than monetary resource commitment and has to be mutually beneficial for all party members. (Googins & Rochlin, 2000, p130-131)

Cross-sector partnerships are often result in social alliances, voluntary collaboration between business and social enterprises to address social issues which are often too complex to cope with alone. In social alliances corporations often aim for goals beyond pure economic gain to positively impact the societies they operate in. From resource dependence perspective, resource complementarities between business and social enterprises motivate them to cooperate. These resources range from financial resources to knowledge and reputation and can lead to competency exchange and joint value creation. (Sakarya et al. 2012, p1710-1712)

SME participation in business networks and cross-sector networks, and engaging in CSR activities provide an opportunity to invest in social capital within the business and social environment. SMEs are able to establish mutual help relationships functional to stability and survival in increasingly competitive market arenas. (Morsing & Perrini, 2009, p3)

According to Battaglia et al. (2010) the benefits of being in a network are the reduced costs and the improved individual results within the network, as well as the possibility of defining common effective policies and strategies and establish better relation with local stakeholders. From this point of view, an active role in the network system could be played by the intermediate organization, defined as intermediate since they operate among firms, local communities, local economies and local politics. In addition intermediate organizations facilitate the improvement of internal and external communication of the network. It also plays an important role in the promotion of shared strategies, as well as to seize the common problems network members experience. Therefore these organizations also play a key role in the implementation and spreading of CSR policies among members. (Battaglia et al. 2010, p 134-135)

Beside the advantages cooperation in cross-sector networks carries several risks: the possibility of unequal resource sharing, where the larger companies take advantage of the power imbalance between network members and drain SMEs or leave other members in a difficult situation. (Spence, 1999, p168) Another disadvantage of such collaboration can be that MNEs over regulate the behavior of SMEs against the SMEs interest. (Morsing & Perrini, 2009, p 3) Spence (1999) suggest a cooperative dialogue, a search for consistency between ends and means as well as the achievement of a consensus on common moral principles. He further suggests that these networks should be dealt with as ethical projects. (Spence, 1999, p168) For creating mutually beneficial relationships there are critical steps to be followed: (1) defining common goals, (2) obtaining senior level commitment, (3) engaging in frequent communication, (4) assigning professionals to lead the

work, (5) sharing the commitment of resources, (6) evaluating progress/results. (Googins & Rochlin, 2000, p 133)

One of the main issues when establishing or joining inter-organizational networks is trust. It takes time to develop and it has to be continuously facilitated. The difficulties of cross-sector networks arise from the different characteristics of the participating firms. As the private, public and civil sector organizations have different institutional background, drives and motivation as well as different goals. These differences lead to lack of understanding and unfamiliarity with potential partners and cultural and institutional distance. When collaborating in a network they should realize mutual interests, opportunities and interdependencies to tangle conflicts and to be able to work together successfully. (Manning & Roessler, 2014, p 530) Moreover, cross-sector networks can present a series of problems: (1) multi-stakeholder decision making process, (2) they often led by business and government with headquarters in North America and Europe, (3) instead of addressing sustainability or CSR goals the emphasis is on dialogues and sharing best practices, (4) business can use the network for greenwashing. (Benn & Bolton, 2011, pp 20-21; p189)

2.3. Innovation

Pittaway et al. (2004) suggests inter-organizational networking is critical for the development of innovative ability in firms. (Pittaway et al., 2004, p138) The principal benefits of networking as identified in the literature by Pittaway et al. (2004) include: "risk sharing; obtaining access to new markets and technologies; speeding products to market; pooling complementary skills; safeguarding property rights when complete or contingent contracts are not possible; and acting as a key vehicle for obtaining access to external knowledge." According to the authors "those firms which do not co-operate and which do not formally or informally exchange knowledge limit their knowledge base long term and ultimately reduce their ability to enter into exchange relationships." (Pittaway et al., 2004, p143-150)

Innovation is defined as the successful exploitation of new ideas, into new products, processes, services or business practices and is a critical process for achieving the two complementary business goals of performance and growth. (DTI´s Innovation Report 2003,8 in Pittaway et al. 2004, p144) Murphy et al. (2012) suggests cross-sector initiatives in context of social innovation often start as pilot projects and when the project proves to be successful it begins general implementation on a larger scale and sometimes it is also introduced in new markets with similar pre-conditions. (Murphy et al. 2012 p1705-1706)

2.4. Knowledge sharing

Davenport and Prusak (2000) pointed out that knowledge is a bundle of "experiences, values, contextual information, and expert insight that provides a framework for evaluating and incorporating new experiences and information" (p. 5). According to Davenport and Prusak (2000), it is further a cognitive process from individuals and thus, "[i]n organizations, it often becomes embedded not only in documents or repositories but also in organizational routines, processes, practices, and norms" (ibid).

"Knowledge sharing is the process where individuals mutually exchange their knowledge and jointly create new concepts." (Nooshinfard & Nemati-Anaraki, 2012, p 244) It is important to distinguish between information and knowledge, where knowledge refers to the "flow of information which is anchored in beliefs and commitments of its holder". (Nonaka and Takeuchi, 1995, pp 58-59) It is also important to mention the different types of knowledge as explicit, which is easy to codify, impersonal, context independent and easy to share and tacit, which consists of experiences, intuition and therefore it is subjective, personal context specific and very difficult to share or codify. (Hislop, 2009; Hartley & Bennington, 2010, p 103)

Hislop (2009) has described the characteristics of the knowledge from a practice based epistemology, which includes knowledge is embedded in practice, the tacit and explicit knowledge are inseparable, knowledge is embodied in people and socially constructed, it is also culturally embedded and contestable. The practice based perspective describes knowledge sharing, as it requires "perspective making" and "perspective taking", which refers to that the participants in knowledge sharing has to develop an understanding of tacit assumptions. Knowledge sharing happens during rich social interactions and it is immersed in practice, which requires watching and/or doing to be able to enable acquisition of knowledge. On the other hand from the objectivist perspective knowledge should be codified (externalization) and collected in structured and systematized central repositories to make it available for all people who may want to use it. From an objectivist perspective technology plays a key role in knowledge sharing. (Hislop, 2009)

According to Hislop (2009, p. 220) information and communication technologies "are technologies which allow/facilitate the management and/or sharing of knowledge and information (…) including computers, telephones, e-mail, databases, data-mining systems, search engines, the internet, and videoconferencing equipment." The wide scope of ICT therefore encourages the possibilities to use ICT to facilitate knowledge management. This is agreed on by Davenport and Prusak (2000) who emphasized that "the communication and storage capabilities of networked computers make them knowledge enablers" (p. 18)., Hislop (2009, pp. 220), it becomes obvious that ICT are both, tools of

codification and tools to enable person-to-person communication. However, these technologies became useful in organizational learning and knowledge sharing over time, e. g. with the help of extended libraries and well-categorized repositories. Hislop (2009) describes knowledge as a resource locked in a human mind, where one´s tacit knowledge is only available if the person shares it on voluntary basis. He has mentioned the dilemma of sharing or hoarding the knowledge, as both have advantages and disadvantages. Once employees share their knowledge it adds to the collective organizational knowledge resource and becomes a public good. The advantages of sharing knowledge on an individual level may include: material reward, in form of improved payment or better conditions; an improvement in status/recognition; a sense of fulfillment from the process itself or achieving the desired outcome, as well as an expression of commitment towards the profession or organization. The disadvantages of sharing knowledge on an individual level may include: it is time consuming to share knowledge, especially in case of tacit knowledge, or when turning tacit knowledge into explicit knowledge; moreover, when sharing knowledge the employee gives power and expertise to others. To hoard (free-ride) knowledge can give the advantage of avoiding the risk of losing power, but it has the disadvantage of that the extent of the knowledge might not be understood by the organization or other employees and therefore might not be recognized properly. (Hislop, 2009) On an organizational level encouraging knowledge sharing might contribute to an increased profit and market share by improving innovativeness and lessen the risk of losing knowledge when employees leave the organization. (Hislop, 2009)

Nooshinfard & Nemati-Anaraki (2012) has divided the motivations influencing knowledge sharing as individual motivation, and organizational motivation. Individual motivation are individual characteristics, as individuals with higher level of expertise and who are more confident in their knowledge are more likely to share their knowledge, on the other hand individuals with high level of anxiety are less likely to participate in knowledge sharing. Mutual trust and good relation between the partners positively influences knowledge sharing. Sharing knowledge takes effort and time from individuals, therefore intentions are very important motivation for knowledge sharing, and individuals are more likely to share knowledge if they deem it is beneficial for them. Organizational motivations are culture and organizational climate, such as flexibility, innovation. Organizations have to keep their employees motivated to engage in knowledge sharing otherwise the technical investment and infrastructure will not facilitate knowledge sharing, such motivation can be reward and recognition. Another important motivation is management leadership support and encouragement to knowledge sharing. More flexible and informal organizational structures tend to be more effective in enabling knowledge sharing. There are two further motivators which are
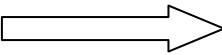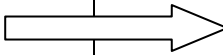
affecting knowledge sharing: one is related to the information technology, while the other one to collaborative networking. (Nooshinfard & Nemati-Anaraki, 2012 p 245-250)

2.5. Inter-organizational knowledge sharing

As previously mentioned the nature of knowledge is described with tacitness, ambiguity and complexity, which makes it difficult to transfer or share, which is especially true in case of inter-organizational knowledge sharing. In a simplified model inter organizational knowledge sharing can be described as a donor firm, which is absorptive with a transfer capacity and motivation to teach shares its knowledge with a recipient firm described by its absorptive and transfer capacity and with a motivation to learn. The donor and the recipient firm engage in a dialogue through inter-organizational dynamics. Inter-organizational dynamics include the power relation between the firms which might be conflicting or one firm might be more powerful than the other; trust and the risks arising from sharing their knowledge as well as the social ties between them. (Hislop, 2009) When well managed conflict can strengthen relationships, motivate individuals and enable knowledge sharing in inter-organizational situations, while poorly managed conflict can harm relationships. (Panteli & Sockalingam, 2004, p 604)

Figure 1: *Inter-organizational knowledge sharing (inspired by Hislop, 2009)*

Donor org. ⟹	Inter-organizational dynamics ⟹	Recipient org.
• Absorptive • Transfer capacity • Motivation to teach	• Power relation • Trust & risk • Social ties	• Absorptive capacity • Transfer capacity • Motivation to learn

The significance of cross community knowledge process is inter-organizational knowledge sharing can facilitate innovation and development of products, as organizations gain access to external knowledge as long as the partners maintain trust and the exchange is mutually beneficial. Common difficulties are the lack of trust, the complexity of projects, the commitment issues and the difficulty to give up the independency of each organization as well as the different cultures and the lack of common knowledge. Furthermore, conflict in power and competitive advantage might arise. Relationship management between organizations contributes to develop trust and a basic

understanding which can enable knowledge sharing between communities. Geographical and technological proximity can help to overcome the mentioned obstacles, as the first enables face to face communication, which helps trust building and increases the level of richness in communication and increases knowledge sharing. Technological proximity is based on shared technological experiences and knowledge. (Nooshinfard & Nemati-Anaraki, 2012; Hislop, 2009)

Knowledge sharing occurs from person to person (intra-organizationally) and from organization to organization (inter-organizationally). (Nooshinfard & Nemati-Anaraki, 2012 p 245-250) However the inter-organizational knowledge sharing occurs between people as well, especially if the shared knowledge is tacit, therefore the individual motivation for knowledge sharing applies in inter-organizational knowledge sharing.

Figure 2: *Levels of knowledge sharing (inspired by Nooshinfard & Nemati-Anaraki, 2012 p 252)*
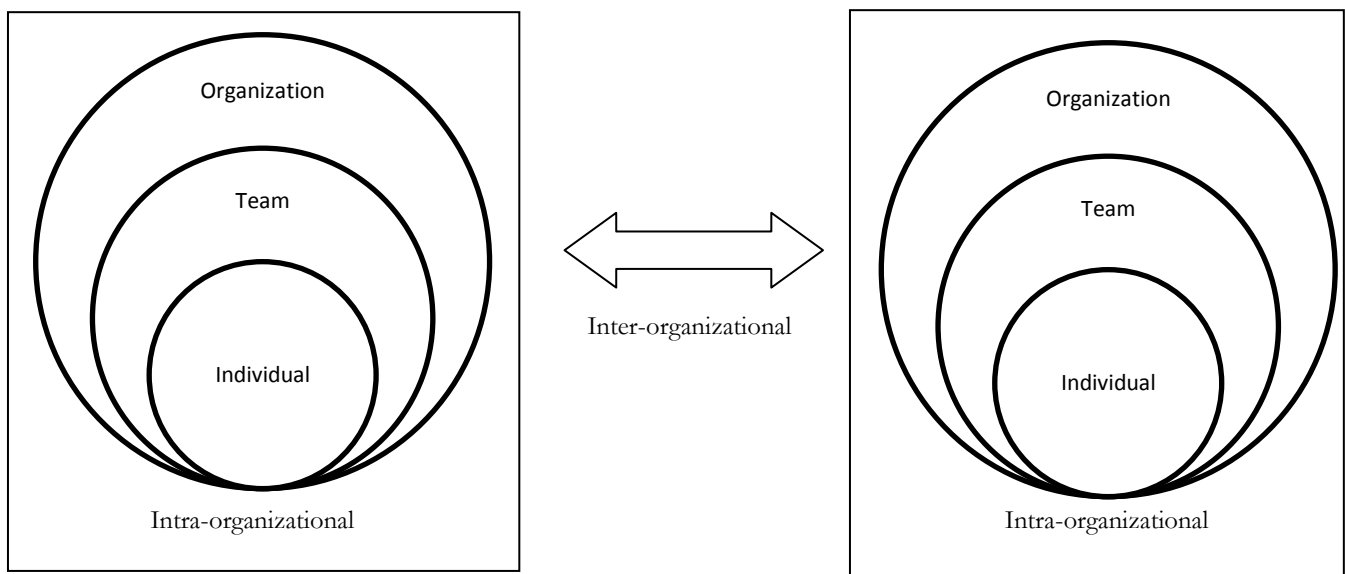
3. Research design

3.1. Research strategy

The aim of this research is to find out the reasons, why different members join cross-sector/multi-stakeholder networks and what motivates them to share (or not to share) their knowledge of CSR and their best practices.

Holiday (1995) "Only a qualitative approach responds to the differences within and between firms with the necessary sophistication to begin the task of helping us understand exactly how these rationalities are played out to create the organizations which we study." (Holiday, 1995 in Spence, 1999 p 170) A case study is chosen as it is commonly used in exploratory research as it allows making sense of complex situations, such as cross-sector networks. (Abdirahman et al. 2014, p 107) A case study approach is also preferred when little is known about the phenomenon and the researcher wants to investigate a contemporary phenomenon in real life context. Denscombe, 2007; Flyvbjerg, 2006; Merriam, 1994, Stake 1995, Yin 2009 in Elbe & Emmoth, 2014 p 4)

The research strategy has been a stepping back and forth between the conceptual framework and empirical data. This back and forth methodology helped developing both concept driven topics, and as data driven topics during data analysis, which contribute to the concepts as suggested by Suddaby (2006). (Suddaby, 2006 in Saunders, 2012, p147)

3.2. Data collection

In order to answer the aim of the research two strategies were discussed: a comparative case study, where the cases of a recently forming sustainability network and a well established network could be compared, and a single case study where only the well established network would be used. For simplicity reasons and given the concern with time the second method was chosen. The case for this research is a cross-sector CSR network founded in 2008 after several years of discussion between the public and private sector, operating in the west coast of Sweden. In 2015 the network consists of more than 200 members of different size from public, private and civil sector as well as academics.

In the beginning of data collection a key informant was identified in the intermediary organization and was interviewed to understand the work of the network and the role the intermediary organization. In order to have the most holistic picture representatives were asked to participate

from all sectors. The participating organizations were chosen from the member organizations after the interview with the representative of the intermediary organization. This first interview partially influenced the choice of the 33 member organizations which have been contacted, but the final 14 members, voluntarily showed interest in participating in this research.

In total (including the interview with the intermediary organization´s representative) 15 semi structures interviews were conducted via telephone and email conversations. The interviews took place in Swedish and were translated afterward. The methods of telephone and email interviews are discussed during the risk assessment chapter. The names of the representatives were found through the CSR Västsverige website, where all members and their contact person are listed. The selection for interviewed organization aimed to keep a wide range of participants, which represents different sectors, different years of joining, different sizes and experience both with the membership and with CSR. The many different types of participants could contribute to a wider selection of answers and a better understanding for the exploratory research. The interviewees held decision making position in their organization/company, as they were responsible for the organizations CSR, environmental or sustainability work.

Notes were taken during the telephone interviews, and no recording was used which is believed, contributed to more honest answers from the representatives. (Saunders, 2012, p 396)

Table 1: *Interviewed organizations*

Sector	Joined to CSR Västsverige in	Title
Intermediary org.	2007	CEO
Academy	2009	Environmental coordinator
Public	2011	Recruiter
Public	2015	Development leader
Non-profit	2013	Region representative
Non-profit	2012	Local coordinatior
Non-profit	2014	Region representative
Non-profit	2013	Communications/Fundraiser
Private (MNE)	2010	CSR manager
Private (Small)	2014	CEO
Private (Medium)	2008	Quality Manager & Sustainability specialist
Private (Large)	2013	Sustainability manager
Private (MNE)	2014	Project manager

| Private (MNE) | 2014 | Social Sustainable assignment manager |
| Private (Medium) | 2014 | Agency Director |

3.3. The interview guide

The interview questions focused on the main aim of this research why different members join cross-sector/multi-stakeholder CSR networks and what motivates them to share (or not to share) their knowledge of CSR and their best practices.

A set of questions were asked to find the reasons behind joining to the network, including prior experience with CSR, and if the member had any specific issue it sought help with. A second set of questions aimed to find out the involvement of the member organization, as to how often they participated in network activities organized by the intermediary organization and how active their participation was and why. Finally the interviewees were given a chance to add comments or share other thoughts which were not directly asked, but they felt it would be important or helpful to the research. (*the interview guide is in the appendix*)

3.4 Data analysis

The analysis of the data has started parallel with data collection to identify if the collected data can be used to answer the research aim. The level of analysis has been organizational in the beginning, because for the interviews certain organizations were chosen, but since the interviewees are individuals with their own opinion on the matter, the individual level cannot be excluded either. This has been more obvious while answering the second research aim, where the organizational and individual motivations were looked at. In this case when discussing organizational motivations the research considers the network as the organizational level, while the individual level consist of personal level and the member organization, the individuals represent. Once all data was collected the interviews were organized according to the sector the respondent organization or company belonged to (private, public, non-profit, academic). This method can help identify if there are similarities among similar types of organizations. As a second step the coding of the collected data began. Codes are tags or labels, which are assigned to bits and pieces of data to be able to describe and summarize the data. Coding helps to organize the collected data as well as to speed up the analysis process. (Myers, 2013, p167) After coding and re-organizing, the text the identification of the emerging themes have begun. The themes were identified related to the interview guide and linked to the conceptual framework. At this point the update of the conceptual framework continued, as the themes emerging from the data collection seemed to be more extensive than

originally assumed. Stepping back and forth between empirical data and the concepts used in the framework contributed to and formed the interpretation of the categorized data.

3.5. Research risk assessment and limitations of the research

The first identified risk is the time, as abductive research is more time consuming as data collection might take several phases and it was hard to predict how long it would take to analyze the emerging raw data as well as to collect the sufficient amount of data. (Saunders, 2012, p 148) It is also considered a higher risk, since with the abductive method a case might occur, where no useful data will be collected. Measures to avoid such situations are a well outlined timetable, which were followed up and adjusted several times as new risks and issues emerged during the data collection phase. To be able to finish within the given timeframe (10 weeks) the collected data was categorized and cross checked from the beginning of collection with the literature and conceptual framework in order to ensure its usefulness.

The second risk was data quality, as the research is going to be qualitative in nature. When discussing data quality, reliability, forms of bias, generalisability and validity has to be addressed. (Saunders, 2012, p 381) It is expected to be subjective and reflect the perspective of the interviewee and the interviewer especially when only one person conducts the interviews and company representatives tend to hide the flaws of their organizations. To minimize the risk that interviewees withhold key information, anonymity was guaranteed and the interviews were not recorded which was believed to enable the representatives to talk freely. To overcome interviewer bias the questions during the interview were neutral and interviewer role was maintained to be as objective as possible. The interviewer previous experience with conducting market research interviews believed to help maintain an open and relatively objective discussion. The influence of the first interview with the intermediary organization might pose a risk of bias on the data collection results, however to minimize this effect more organizations were included in the initially asked 33 organizations. The aim of this research is to find reasons and understand a complex and contemporary phenomena and not to generalize or produce replicable results; therefore the reliability of the collected data differs from that a quantitative research would result to.

The research limitations linked to the above discussed risks are that it studies only one network as the case, which makes it difficult to generalize from the empirical findings and results of analysis. Although as previously discussed generalization is not the aim of this qualitative research. Moreover, although the sample was chosen to provide a wide picture of the case and it is believed

that most of the reasons and motivations are covered, this research cannot exclude the possibility of further research discovering more reasons related to the research subject.

Other risks occurred, such as accessibility of the required data and unwillingness of organization's cooperation. The timing of the data collection happened to be unfortunate, as May – June months seemed to be busy for most of the organizations, which made the data collection longer and more difficult than initially expected. Telephone interviews were preferred due to its advantages of overcoming distance and lower costs as well as speed of data collection, in a critical time. (Saunders, 2012, p 404) Moreover some of the interviews were conducted via email, which had the advantage of accuracy and self reflection from both interviewer and interviewee. (Saunders, 2012, p 407-408) The method of telephone interviews and email interviews also provided the risk of not getting the full picture of the organization as in a face to face interview where it is possible to observe facial expressions, working conditions and environment. To minimize these risks respondents were given the choice to answer in their own time via email and telephone and the interviews were booked with a generous time ahead; as well as accessibility for further follow-up questions or clarifications were promised.

Finally, there was a thematic limitation. Although from the interviews a third topic has emerged regarding the satisfaction/dissatisfaction and organizational changes following the membership, this topic was not pursued any further because it was deemed to be unrelated to the research aims. This theme can be a suggestion for further research in the future.

3.6. Presentation of the case – CSR Västsverige

CSR Västsverige is a non-profit association and is politically and religiously independent. The association has been a dialogue and cooperation with an inclusive approach in order to support all types of organizations in their CSR and sustainability efforts. Operations are based on established policies by the management. The association offers relevant support and venues in many forms, such as breakfast seminars, basic CSR education, methods and tools to integrate and communicate a strategic CSR work. These resources should facilitate systematic CSR work for both members, who are in the beginning of their CSR development and for members, who are experienced in the field. A central point is that every business, no matter the size and CSR maturity, based on their specific conditions should find their entry level and from there take the next step. (source: www.csrvastsverige.se) In short CSR Västsverige is:

- Hub for Western Sweden's overall CSR work for both private, public, non-profit sectors, as well as academia

- Works for positive synergies between business and their social responsibility

- Network for cooperation between the private, public, non-profit sector and academia

- Is for all types of companies both large and small

- Provides relevant support and venues in many forms

- Non-profit association, co-financed by the Region Västra Götaland and membership fees

(source: www.csrvastsverige.se)

As it is seen in the description on CSR Västsverige´s website, the name CSR Västsverige refers to a non-profit association, which acts as a intermediary organization as well as the network, which consist of over 200 members (in 2015) from public, private, non-profit and academic sectors. During the interpretation and analysis of data these differences were noticed.

The purpose of the study is to have a better understanding of the reasons, why members from different organizations join to a cross-sector CSR network and why they share their CSR knowledge and practice with each other. To see if there are external incentives from the intermediary organization or what role does the intermediary organization play in the act the first interview was conducted with the representative of CSR Västsverige.

The first topic discussed during the interview was *the network structure*. CSR Västsverige as a network functions as an inspiration source and a connection between different sectors and different types of organizations/corporations. The network has over 200 members among which 70% is for-profit corporation and ¼ of these corporations are small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) with less than 25 employees. The network has undergone its greatest growth in 2013.

The second topic is related to the research question as it is directed towards *the recruitment of new members and the membership*. According to the representative from the intermediary organization, CSR Västsverige, there is no direct recruitment or selling of services and direct selling of membership, but there are several indirect methods to attract new members. These are CSR Forum, organized every year; breakfast meeting free of charge every 7th week; sometimes free seminaries; and once a month a free and open information meeting. Moreover in the past years social media has been used as a channel to reach out to new members, as well as a monthly newsletter. One of the motivational factors for the new recruitments is that the main funder, Västragötalands Regionen has set a target of 300 members by 2015, which presses the association for a more active search for new members.

The members are required to pay a certain amount of membership fee, depending on their organizational form and size. For example: small enterprises with less than 9 employees and non-profit organizations pay 3000 SEK/year, while large companies with over 500 employees pay 10000 SEK/year. (www.csrvastsverige.se) Membership has no requirements as to having worked with CSR/sustainability issues prior to joining the network, but it has expectations towards the members; which are:

- Show that member understands and accept the standard ISO26000 (responsibility, human rights, transparency, etc.).
- Under 1 year adopted at least one of the networks responsibility initiatives (social, environmental, workplace liability)
- Members should communicate their CSR engagement by using the online site "The Good Society"
- Develop a summary report called: CSR Västsverige's progress report.

But if the members do not fulfill these expectations, they are not going to be expelled from the network, since CSR Västsverige (the intermediary organization) is not a control organization and the network´s aim is to inspire. Rather a discussion would begin where they would aim to change and correct the behavior of such member. According to the representative from the association, there has not been a misuse of the network for greenwashing or other unethical ways. The intermediary organization conducts regular evaluative market research among network members to measure satisfaction with the current work and to ensure continuous improvements. These researches are done by a third party a consulting company. The last research took place in 2012 and there is a current research expected to be finished and published in 2015.

The third topic is related to the second research aim: *knowledge sharing among members* in the CSR network. As mentioned at the expectations previously, members are expected to share their CSR practices on the networks website "The good society". The site has been introduced in 2013 and both 2013 and the first half of 2014 members were informed and educated on how to use the site. So far approximately 20 % of the members are active on this site, but according to the CSR Västsverige representative more than 20 % of the members are active in the network. The association has another site called "Good Matchmaking", where NGOs and corporations can cooperate with each other.

Apart from the initial expectations the intermediary organization is not using any special motivators or incentives to encourage sharing CSR knowledge or practices. The motivation or incentive is to be visible on the first page of the website and on the meetings.

The perception from the intermediary organization is that the most active members are the large multinational companies (MNCs), since they have already worked with strategic CSR prior to joining and have many different communication channels, while smaller organizations do not have the resources or are just in the beginning of their CSR journey.

4. Empirical findings

Two respondents from the public sector, four respondents from the non-profit sector, one respondent from the academic field and seven respondents from the private sector has provided the data for the findings. All respondents are people listed, as contact persons on the CSR Västsverige website. The interview results with the representative from the intermediary organization, CSR Västsverige, has been presented in the methodology chapter, because the role of the interview was to provide background information and contribute to the understanding of the findings from the interviews with the member organizations. The aim of this research focuses on finding the reasons, why members from different sectors join cross-sector/multi-stakeholder CSR networks and what motivates them to share (or not to share) their knowledge of CSR and their best practices. The analysis shows that the participating organizations have various experiences regarding being a member in the network as well as working with different CSR topics. In this chapter the findings are going to be presented broken down to the two main topics: (1) reasons for having joined to the CSR network CSR Västsverige and (2) reasons for sharing CSR knowledge and practices within the network.

4.1. Reasons for having joined the CSR network

Most of the interviewees provided more than one reason for having joined, these answers are not ranked, and rather they are all presented to provide a rich understanding of the phenomena. Following the collection of all answers given as an explanation for having joined the network, they were categorized into concept-driven or data-driven categories. The categories have both an internal aspect (meaningful regarding to the data) and an external aspect (meaningful regarding to the other categories). (Saunders, 2012, p 557-558).

4.1.1 CSR is an important issue to work with, value creation

Several interviewees mentioned they were committed to take social responsibility and saw the joining to the network CSR Västsverige as a first step in a journey. The context of social responsibility and CSR was key during the decision making process, while placing the reasons under this theme. One respondent expressed, that social responsibility was a priority for the organization and CSR is a key issue. (public representative). Another respondent from the public sector also stated to take social responsibility. A non-profit organization representative mentioned that their organization did not work with CSR through the entire organization prior to joining, although corporations were sponsoring them to express corporate responsibility. The non-profit organization wanted to show a good example and start integrating CSR into their whole organization and thought joining the network as the first step. Another non-profit respondent states "our core business is social and ecological responsibility, as such an organization it felt appropriate to be part of the network." A medium sized Swedish company describes their first reason for joining because the network worked with issues that were important for the company.

4.1.2 To gain further CSR knowledge

One of the most popular reasons for having joined to the network appeared to be to gain further CSR knowledge, as this reason has been mentioned by respondents from all sectors. This reason was worded by the respondents in different ways. Key words, which indicated the text should belong to this category were: "learn", "know", "knowledge", "lectures", and in certain cases "activity".

"Public sector representative 1" expressed the lectures accessed through the intermediary organization, CSR Västsverige were attractive. The same reason has appeared in the discussion with a medium sized Swedish company as well. A respondent from a non-profit organization mentioned they joined to the network partially to get tools and coaching to work with strategic CSR. Another respondent from a different non-profit organization said they are in the beginning of their CSR journey and needed further knowledge about CSR. The third non-profit organization representative wanted to gain more knowledge by "seeing how other companies were dealing with CSR issues" and since they had limited knowledge of the field they wanted to get in contact with other organizations who knew more about it. A multinational corporation also shares this view, at the time when they joined CSR was considered a relatively new phenomena and they had very limited

knowledge and experience with it. The network provided the access to other corporations who were in the same situation and wanted to learn more about the field as well as a possibility to see how others worked. From the private for profit sector a Swedish SME has expressed its interest to join a network which was discussing CSR issues. A "large Swedish company" representative stated that they started looking at sustainability systematically and wanted to become members in a network that knew how to work with CSR and sustainability and access their knowledge. The large company especially sought help with sustainability reporting. A large local office of an MNE, which just set up a group to be responsible for corporate sustainability and CSR was also looking for skills and knowledge, which was provided by other members and via the programs organized by intermediary organization. Even the academic respondent has said they needed help regarding CSR and joined the network. Moreover, they encourage their employees to attend the meetings offered through the intermediary organization and learn. "One of our teachers was interested in the topic and wanted to integrate it in his/her lectures, so he/she participated in several meetings." (Academic representative)

4.1.3 Stakeholder pressure

Stakeholder pressure was mentioned in regards with employees and future employees of a private sector representative as well as customers, which demand a more extensive responsibility regarding social and environmental issues. One public sector representative mentioned among other reasons that they have filled out a project application, where one of the conditions was that they must work with sustainability and CSR. Large Swedish company felt the pressure from its shareholders, as they expected to demonstrate their sustainability efforts.

4.1.4 Contacts

The theme of contacts can be divided into two sub categories: (1) to gain contacts, which could help the organization in its daily activities, and (2) prior personal contact with someone from the intermediary organization CSR Västsverige. Responses containing words as "network thinking", "to gain contact with" were further analyzed to be able to decide if they fall under the first theme in this context or under the one presented previously "to gain further CSR knowledge".

One of the public sector representatives worded it as the main reason we joined was to get in contact with more organizations and corporations, which could help with their regular activity. Several non-profit organization thought the same way as the network help them access more private

for profit companies, which could sponsor them or buy their products. "We are with CSR Västsverige for the network service to get in touch with other NGOs and corporations to cooperate with." (Non-profit representative 4) The website "Good matchmaking" helps non-profit organizations to find corporate partners for different cooperation and partnerships. Some corporate representatives were also open to further their contact network, as large Swedish company representative expressed it: "We were looking for social entrepreneurs and other companies which worked with solving social problems". The academic representative has expressed it as it was difficult to work with social responsibility and sustainability alone, and being in a network has made it easier in a way that they can contact others who have said something interesting in a meeting and elaborate on that.

Having had personal contact with someone from the intermediary organization has also been mentioned as a reason for having joined the network. One of the private sector respondents has had previously a contact with CSR Västsverige 7-8 years ago, when it was founded, but only has decided to join the network. The medium sized Swedish company respondent has been personally involved in the network prior to joining, while the previous CEO of the MNE had a contact with the CEO of CSR Västsverige, intermediary organization. And the Swedish SME has been contacted by the intermediary organization if a consultant from the SME could give a lecture in one of the fairs organized by CSR Västsverige, and joined shortly after the fair.

4.1.5 Reputation and legitimacy

"Non-profit representative 1" has felt "To be a CSR project for corporations and encourage others to work with CSR, we should lead by a good example and work with CSR throughout the entire organization, so I suggested to join the network and my managers agreed with me" "Non-profit representative 4" had very similar reasoning: being linked and collaborating with various companies as part of these other companies´ responsibility, it felt right for them to be with the network CSR Västsverige. "Nordic SME local office" respondent mentioned as a first reason for having joined was to build company branding and image.

4.1.6 Competitive advantage

One respondent has mentioned to be able to give a higher quality service to the customers, ("Nordic SME local office") which can be interpreted as to gain competitive advantage, therefore cannot be categorized under the other reasons emerging from the interviews.

Summary

The main categories for the reasons having joined to a cross sector CSR network, can be summarized as "CSR is an important issue to work with", "to gain further CSR knowledge", "stakeholder pressure", "contacts", which can be divided to personal contact and to gain contacts with more companies and organizations, "reputation and legitimacy" and finally "competitive advantage". Among these main reasons the most commonly mentioned ones are the members wish to gain further CSR knowledge, and the access of further contacts with organizations and corporations.

4.2. Reasons for sharing CSR knowledge and best practices in the CSR network

The respondents had different experience and engagement in the CSR network, as well as different connection with the intermediary organization and to other members. During the interview a general question was asked regarding the sharing of CSR knowledge and practices, if the interviewed representative or someone else from the organization has done that within the CSR network in a meeting, conference or in a more personal face-to-face setting. As a follow up question "the good society" was specifically mentioned on purpose, because according to the intermediary organization representative the role of it is to communicate CSR practices through the CSR Västsverige website. The answers presented here have been collected from the empirical data and are categorized into data-driven categories. Regarding the question about sharing CSR knowledge and best practices only one person, a representative from the MNE, has mentioned the role of trust. In the context he/she explained that the MNE is a member in the smaller group of sustainable business, and there are no problems with sharing information and experience, since they trust each other, while in the larger group involving more members it takes longer time to get to know each other and open up, since there are many different personalities.

4.2.1 Business opportunity

The answers are categorized as business opportunity, because the organization´s main activity involves taking social responsibility, and an indirect way, the representative can gain "business opportunities by sharing their CSR practices. A private organization who although has not shared knowledge yet, but it could imagine doing it to gain further contacts and business opportunity.

4.2.2 To inspire

A non-profit representative believes members are motivated to share both knowledge and practices to inspire each other. A private respondent answered as, it shows that the company is pioneer and to a role model for others. Another reason mentioned is that other members can see how the company works and what they do, which also encourages other companies and themselves to do more, and becomes a trigger. By motivating and being a trigger for different people their work becomes more important. A different private sector member said they have talked about their CSR journey and how they used the 3 responsibility initiatives a few years ago. "We do it to inspire others, and what works well for us might be able to work well for others. One of the network's strength is precisely the exchange of experience and that leads to faster development." Also a member from the private sector talked about their work and experience in the sustainable business workgroup, because maybe their knowledge or experience would benefit others also. Academic representative explained that the workgroups are constructed that way that all have a moment to tell how they work with CSR and sustainability. It's great, as the information can be used on one´s own organization.

4.2.3 To access others knowledge

Several respondents have mentioned reasons connected to knowledge exchange as when they share their own knowledge or practice they also expect others to do the same. The strength of the network is the different types of businesses and how they can learn from each other. Members share their knowledge on network meetings both to contribute and to get back from others, it is a way to find good ideas. Members also receive new energy and learn much about social areas from other members. A private sector representative has organized a study visit at their company, and showed their training activities in order to get the views of others about it.

4.2.4 Visibility

Member shared it because they wanted be visible, as it was important for them and to get in touch with others and learn from them.

4.2.5 Formal request

Some of the respondents have shared their knowledge after CSR Västsverige has requested a lecture from them in a fair "To share our knowledge when we receive a request is also part of our own CSR." (private sector representant)

4.2.6. The Good Society

"The Good Society" is a west Swedish vision and knowledge base regarding CSR. It is a way to show how CSR Västsverige network members go from words to action. In addition to a source of knowledge, it is a communication channel where a variety of CSR-related activities are presented. (source: www.csrvastsverige.se) The interviewees had different opinions regarding the communication channel "The Good Society" depending on if they have used it actively or if they haven´t.

Those respondents who have been sharing their knowledge and CSR practices have done it to show their organizations commitment to CSR or to the initiatives they are engaged in. Moreover, one respondent mentioned it is a good opportunity to use it as an inventory, where they can check which issues they have worked with and with which issues they need further improvement. A respondent has also mentioned that they have taken up 4 initiatives from the site "The Good Society", because they feel that participating in these initiatives makes their CSR work more important, than if it is just their own environmental target. Finally, a respondent who has also used the website, mentioned that, he/she had a look at their information presented on the site, just prior to the interview, and has noticed that it is outdated. He/she added that they have used to website previously to show, in which fields are they taking responsibility (commitment to CSR) and to inspire other members.

4.3 Reasons for not sharing CSR knowledge and best practices in the CSR network

4.3.1 Lack of opportunity

One of the most common reasons for not having shared any knowledge within the network is the lack of opportunity. One respondent from a non-profit organization actually suggested that it would be beneficial if the intermediary organization could organize a theme evening only inviting its non-profit members, so they could talk with each other and exchange experiences and practices. Another

respondent has mentioned that they have learned much through lectures from guest lecturers and from other members as well, but they have not had the chance to share their own practices and knowledge. Another non-profit organization representative has not yet shared his/her knowledge or practices within this network, because the organization has other networking activities, where they actively share hands-on practical information about the organization and their CSR commitment. "We wanted to do it but have not had the opportunity." (non-profit representative)

4.3.2. The Good Society

Four respondents have not used "The Good Society" for various reasons. One of these is it is not easily accessible. The respondent has expressed, that he/she cannot log in to the member website to share information or update it from his/her workplace because of technical issues, and therefore he/she has not used it yet. Another member also said that it is difficult to sit down and look at the website and see how it works. He/she also added the lack of time to learn the features on the site and how to use it was also a hinder. Moreover, according to her/him the company has not had the need to use it, because they administer their CSR work themselves. The lack of time has come up in one more interview. Finally, the last person mentioning not having used the website has explained they did not prioritize evaluating the business CSR achievements; neither would they focus too much on the CSR guidelines offered by ISO26000.

Summary

To answer the second aim of the research, the motivation for sharing or not sharing CSR knowledge and practices with other network members, the following main reasons were collected: Members share their CSR practices and knowledge to "inspire" other members, because it can lead to further "business opportunities", through knowledge exchange they can get "access to a larger knowledge" pool, it makes a member "visible" for others, or they have received a formal request from the intermediary organization. There was only one reason mentioned regarding of not sharing the knowledge and it was the lack of opportunity. A non-profit member even suggests a theme evening to facilitate better knowledge exchange. Although the website "The Good Society" was intended to facilitate knowledge sharing and communication of CSR practices for members, it has not been used by 100 % of the interviewees. The reasons for having used it usually overlap with certain general reasons for knowledge sharing such as to inspire others or to show own commitment. The

main reasons for not having used is the not easily accessible features, lack of time or other organizational priority.

5. Discussion

5.1 Reasons why different members join a cross-sector/multi-stakeholder CSR network

5.1.1 CSR related reasons

The findings indicate that the notion of corporate social responsibility and sustainability has become more widely known among different sectors and the word "corporate" does not exclusively refer to the for profit sector, when talking about a cross-sector/multi stakeholder CSR network. This phenomenon can also be explained with the parallel usage of the Swedish expressions "företagets samhällsansvar" and "hållbarhet", the first one can be translated as corporate societal or social responsibility, while the second one is translated as sustainability, which seem to be used as synonyms. The co-existence and overlapping nature of these concepts is based on the definition by Beal (2014). This assumption is underlined by the finding of the reason for having joined to the CSR network, because it discusses issues deem to be important for the member. This reason has appeared for three different sectors: the public sector, which main activity was to take social responsibility, the non-profit sector, which core "business" was to help people and to be sponsored by corporation as corporate responsibility, as well as in private sector, where the company believed CSR is important to include into the business strategy.

The findings also indicate there are several reasons, which are connected to the business case for CSR in general, such as competitive advantage and access to new markets. It seemed to be a quite common reasoning among the interviewed members to join the network to find other organization and partnerships, especially among non-profit members. Such activity is also encouraged and facilitated by the intermediary organization via among others the website "good matchmaking". Although respondents have not mentioned innovation among their motivation, but their desire to implement and integrate CSR into business strategies or work with these issues systematically might lead to a new business model, which can be considered as a CSO and an innovation. Further business case related reasons are the building of corporate brand and image as well as the reputation and legitimacy. Legitimacy and reputation was indirectly mentioned, by two different non-profit organizations, as they believed they are already taking their responsibility, but wanted to be seen as

a good example therefore joined the network, which is considered to be the largest CSR network in the country. This was a surprising discovery, since legitimacy and reputation is mainly considered to be a concern of private companies and not the non-profit sector. On the other hand it can be understandable, as CSR is being seen more as an opportunity both for corporations and non-profit organizations to create a win-win situation. As one of the non-profit representatives expressed, finding sponsors is not like begging for money, it creates an opportunity for the corporation to build its image. Being in a CSR network for a non-profit organization can confirm its legitimacy.

Both Benn and Bolton (2011), Beal (2014) and Hoivik and Shankar (2011) has mentioned different stakeholder pressure as to why corporations choose to take responsibility. It might be interesting to mention that this is also one of the reasons why different sectors joined to the network. Among stakeholders, shareholders, customers and employees as well as future employees were mentioned.

Based on the general impression of CSR as a complex and dynamic phenomenon, which is difficult to define and has been tried to be clarified in various ways by academics and practitioners (Benn and Bolton, 2011; Beal, 2014), it is not surprising that one of the most commonly mentioned reason for having joined the network is to gain further knowledge of CSR. The interview with the intermediary organization and the information available on the CSR Västsverige website seem to emphasize or encourage members to join to learn. The intermediary organization facilitates network meetings where knowledge exchange is possible, guest lecturers can be invited as well as there are opportunities to learn in basic CSR courses and on different conferences, fairs and on the CSR Forum.

5.1.2 Network related reasons

The emergence of cross-sector partnerships has been a new approach from the government and has been seen especially important in promoting CSR and CS for SMEs. (Benn & Bolton, 2011) The interview conducted with the CEO of the intermediary organization has indicated that CSR Västsverige is also in such situation. The network is co-financed by Region Västragötaland, beside its membership fees, and has a relatively high number of SME members (1/4 of the private sector members have about 25 employees). The findings indicate the second most common reason to join a cross-sector/multi-stakeholder CSR network is to be in the network itself. Several members from different sectors have mentioned, to be able to contact corporations, other organizations or from a corporate perspective to be able to build partnerships with social entrepreneurs, among the reasons for having joined CSR Västsverige, network. As it was mentioned previously the intermediary organization also encourages further cooperation and partnership building within the network. The

sustainable business group and the sustainable purchase group are examples of network activites with the network, while the site "Good matchmaking" is an example of facilitating the formation of social partnerships.

The findings indicate contacts can also mean having personal contact with someone from the intermediary organization, or having been requested to give lecture could also lead to becoming a member in the CSR network. Prior personal contacts might be over looked when focusing on cross-sector networks or formal networks in general, as setting common goals and finding business partners come into focus, however it can be an important motivation as personal recommendation can indicate an already existing trust relationship.

5.1.3 Limitation of the CSR network

Disadvantages might occur when working in a cross-sector/multi stakeholder network, these might be the unequal resource sharing, a power imbalance (Spence, 1999) or that MNEs over regulate the behavior of SMEs (Morsing & Perrini, 2009). To avoid such disadvantages and limitations to the network Googins & Rochlin (2000) has suggested following a few steps. First define common goals, the interview with the intermediary organization representative has indicated the goals of the network have been defined and are well communicated towards the network members or future members. The second suggestion is obtain senior level commitment, after examining the CSR Västsverige members list it shows that the contact persons being involved with network activities are most often in decision making positions, such as CSR or sustainability directors, CEOs or project managers. Step three was engaging in frequent communication, which is also being followed as it is indicated by the interview with the representative of CSR Västsverige, as they offer several occasions for network meetings, communication channels and are open for a dialogue. The next step would be assigning professionals to lead the work. Information confirming if the intermediary organization has tackled this step was not clearly mentioned during the interview, but it is indicated on the event calendar that many of the network meetings also involve professionals responsible for leading these occasions. Commitment of resources is partially covered by the membership fee, members required to pay, and it is also adjusted to the members size and organizational type; and partially covered by the expectations of sharing own practices and knowledge on the meeting. And finally evaluating the progress and result of the network is done regularly, because the co-financier Västragötaland Region requires it.

Although it is seen that the intermediary organization is following the basic steps of conflict management within the network, there are other issues, which may arise from cross-sector networks

such as the difficulty of a multi-stakeholder decision making process, the network is led by governments in Europe, instead of addressing real sustainability issues the emphasis is on dialogues and sharing best practice, and finally that members can use the network for greenwashing. (Benn & Bolton, 2011) The findings indicate that these second set of problems might be present for the network. The main goal of the network is not to control or standardize CSR practices, but to inspire members for taking societal responsibility. (From the interview with the intermediary organization representative) The problems of not addressing the sustainability problems, rather than being a dialogue and a meeting point to exchange best practices, is the main goal of the intermediary organization and the network is to share these CSR knowledge and practices. The other critique which also correlates to the Benn & Bolton (2011) quote; members might be using the network for greenwashing. In reality it is difficult to know if the members are consciously using the network entirely to build their new green image or is just in the beginning of their CSR journey. A respondent has mentioned that joining to the network to build company image, as well as a non-profit organization to legitimize its activity, while other respondent has mentioned to be part of the network as a first step. As the intermediary organization respondent described it, there is no requirement to previous CSR engagement, entering the network can be the first step to future sustainable development. Christensen et al. (2013) writes in the article of CSR as aspirational talk, sometimes talking about CSR engagement, goals and visions can lead to actions and the gap between them might just be an open space for further development.

Finally one member has mentioned as an additional comment that the network accepts members for quantity and not quality reasons, which could be explained with the pressure Västragötaland Region places on the network to expand and reach a certain amount at a certain time. Another reason might be the membership fees, as more members join, the budget for organizing activities and for covering the daily costs increases.

The emerging topics might be related to each other within each main group and even between the main groups as the networking reasons might be related to the CSR related reasons as well. CSR is an important issue to work with because it can lead to value creation, legitimacy and competitive advantage. Competitive advantage and legitimacy is also in relation with the brand image. Stakeholder pressure makes CSR an important issue to work with, as well as working with CSR effects the stakeholder pressure. Since CSR is important, organizations are motivated to gain further knowledge on it, and as they gain further knowledge it becomes important. The source of information is partially from the activities organized by the intermediary organization and partially

from each other (contacts). Although gaining contacts to advance one´s own regular activities, and gaining access to new market is a bit different therefore it stands alone on the map.

5.1.4 Sector specific reasons

Even though it is not possible to generalize from a single case study, some patterns can be observed from the data as to which types of reasons motivate the different types of sectors, when joining the cross-sector CSR network. Corporate social responsibility often includes responsibilities, which are in the scope of public sector, such as social or environmental issues. One of the critics against CSR is that corporations are not prepared to deal with these issues and they are not elected by the public, therefore they should only be accountable to their shareholders. (Benn & Bolton, 2012) Why do public sector members, who are perceivably more prepared and elected to handle such issues join the cross-sector CSR network? Maybe as Murillo and Lozano said the public sector is lacking and these issues seem to be too complex to be handled by only one sector therefore, they would encourage the involvement of business. (Murillo & Lozano, 2009) When analyzing the empirical findings, it seems public sector members are aware of their own responsibilities and also see CSR as an important issue to work with. Moreover, the network is an opportunity to learn more about CSR, both from the activities organized by the intermediary organization and learn from other members. Finally, public sector members join to gain further contacts, which could lead them to advance their daily activities.

In the non-profit sector four reasons seem to dominate: 1) to access new contacts to further daily activities; 2) to gain further knowledge on CSR; and 3) reputation and legitimacy; as well as 4) taking social responsibility is important (value creation). On one hand the answers from the non-profit sector could be surprising, since they present many business related motivation, such as the reputation and legitimacy or to access new markets by gaining more contacts. On the other hand with the spreading of the business case of CSR and the knowledge of building win-win situations between business and the non-profit sector, the reasons are not that surprising. Many non-profit sector organizations are dependent on corporate and/or private funding, which can lead to the realization of building attractive brand and a continuous search for partners to cooperate with.

Among the private sector representatives the small and medium sized companies seem to have joined the CSR network for both reasons strongly related to the business case for CSR, such as stakeholder pressure, competitive advantage and reputation, and for the contacts, as some of these representatives have had known someone from the intermediary organization. Furthermore for contacts they can reach by being part of the network. Even though the literature suggest (Battaglia, 2010; Jenkins, 2009) that such network are beneficial in peer to peer learning for SMEs and

promoting CSR for SMEs, gaining further knowledge does not seem to be among the main reasons for having joined the network. This can be explained probably with the profile of the SMEs participating in the research, as they demonstrated extensive knowledge on the field themselves. The large and MNE private sector representatives however were highly attracted by the possibility to gain further knowledge on the field of CSR and to be able to get in contact with other private sector corporations and non-profit organizations. On one hand this might be surprising thinking of the various guidelines and tools offered and especially made for these types of corporations. On the other hand these guidelines are often complicated to understand and use and they require special training and customization which might pose additional challenges, which they could overcome with the help of others they get in contact with through the network as well as with the specialized trainings, meetings and seminars offered by the intermediary organization. Such guidelines and tools are the ISO26000, the different methods of Sustainability reporting (GRI). Large and MNEs are the ones receiving a high level of pressure from different stakeholders, as well as they often have to comply with different legislative systems in the different countries they operate in.

Only one representative from the academic sector participated in the research, therefore it is really difficult to see a pattern in the given answers, however it seems that furthering their CSR knowledge seemed to be the main reason for having joined to the network. Knowledge is especially an important factor in the academic sector, as it is responsible for shaping the future minds and specialists looking for opportunities in the same and in the other three sectors as well. Therefore it is understandable, that gaining knowledge about CSR and how other types of organizations work with the issue will motivate the academic sector for joining the network.

Table 2: *Summary of why different members join a cross-sector CSR network* (source: findings from the interviews with members from CSR Västsverige as well as the interview with the intermediary organization CSR Västsverige)

Findings	Interpretation	Sector
CSR is an important issue to work with, value creation	Since the first thoughts about the responsibility of the businessman (Bowen, 1953) CSR has been on the table for companies to work with. The issue is important since it can lead to a better society, while furthering the business case for CSR. (concept driven)	*Public *Non-profit *SME *Large & MNE
To gain further knowledge	CSR and sustainability are complex hard to tackle and understand issues, there is no one definition	*Public *Non-profit

		and no one right method to deal with it. (Benn & Bolton, 2011) Organizations/Corporation even in their best intentions might have difficulty to choose the right strategy therefore gaining further knowledge and opportunity to discuss the topic can be crucial for business (concept driven)	*SME *Large & MNE *Academic
Stakeholder pressure		In today's society where information spreads under a blink of an eye, there is much attention focused on business processes from different stakeholders, such as customers, employees, shareholders. Nowadays there is an increasing expectation of business to do the right thing. (concept driven)	*Public *Large and MNE
Contacts	To gain contacts	Reasons for joining a network in general involve the possibility to reach more organizations with similar issues and to be able to learn from them. (concept driven) Also to use these contacts to expand or to access new markets (concept driven)	*Public *Large and MNE *SME *Non-profit
	Prior personal contacts	Data driven	*SME *Large and MNE
Reputation and legitimacy		Corporate branding and image is one of the business cases for CSR (concept driven) Non-profit organization has also mentioned it (data driven)	*Non-profit *SME
Competitive advantage		CSR can lead to innovation in products, services and business process, which lead to differentiations and competitive advantage (concept driven)	*SME

5.2 Reasons why members in a cross-sector CSR network share or not share their CSR knowledge and practices

Among the organizations participating in this research many of them act as donor organizations, as they already have high expertise and they are willing to transfer their knowledge to recipient organizations. The findings suggest that organizations from all sectors are motivated to join the cross sector CSR network by the possibility to access more knowledge about CSR, and are motivated to learn from others (donor organizations) and have an absorptive capacity, as a recipient organization. Both Hislop (2009) and Nooshinfard & Nemati-Anaraki (2012) has described inter-organizational dynamics when organizations interact in a knowledge exchange. Such dynamics are important to keep in mind when analyzing the data. It suggests establishing trust is necessary to

knowledge exchange to take place as well as keeping a balanced power relation between the members, finally it also mentions the existence of social ties. The empirical findings show, that these social ties are encouraging knowledge sharing. Establishing smaller groups within the network, such as the sustainability business group or the purchase group seem to have a positive effect on building trust and minimizing the imbalance of power, however this can also lead to some exclusion of certain types of organizations for example from the non-profit sector.

The empirical data suggests that the inter-organizational knowledge sharing in a CSR network seems to be very similar to knowledge sharing within organizations. As both show organizational and individual motivations. In case of inter-organizational knowledge sharing in the network, the network itself can be considered as the organization, while the members are individuals representing their own organization and personal interests at the same time. It seems the knowledge that members gained from these inter-organizational interactions are valued and often transferred to their own organization. Although losing competitive advantage is often mentioned in the literature as a risk factor or a disadvantage in knowledge sharing (Hislop, 2009), none of the participants in this research felt threatened by it.

5.2.1 Organizational motivation

Nooshinfard & Nemati-Anaraki (2012) has divided the factors influencing of knowledge sharing to organizational and individual factors. Organizational factors are culture and organizational climate, motivation, reward and recognition, management leadership and support and organizational structure.

CSR Västsverige, the intermediary organization, representative has revealed that there is no direct monetary motivation to encourage CSR knowledge sharing within the network. According to him one of the main motivations is that when members share their CSR knowledge either in person or through "the good society" they become visible, both in person and on the first page of the website. Recognition is a motivation for members to participate in knowledge sharing. Another motivation, indicated by the findings and the background information of the network, can be the network culture. Knowledge sharing is facilitated through network meetings, breakfast seminars, information meetings, an annual event called CSR Forum and the existence of two smaller groups: sustainable business and sustainable purchase. Network members are also expected to be open and active when participating in the different activities. Moreover, the website called "the good society" is especially designed as an Information and communication technology (ICT) channel to facilitate communication and sharing CSR knowledge.

The findings indicate that some of the respondents have shared their knowledge after receiving a formal request from the intermediary organization. This can also be interpreted as an influential motivation from the organization side.

5.2.2 Individual motivation

Nooshinfard & Nemati-Anaraki (2012) describe the individual factors as individual characteristics, trust and relation, intention and attitudes. Hislop (2009) mentions recognition, reward and satisfaction of achievements or outcomes as well. The individual characteristics of the interviewees were observed during telephone interviews, even though this channel of communication has limited richness compared to face to face conversation. The respondents seemed to be open and honest; they did not try to hide the flaws of either the network they participated in, or their commitment to the network. They were also in a position as sustainability or environmental manager, or people responsible for sustainability/CSR actions of their organizations; therefore they can be concerned as employees with expertise and knowledge of the field. This indicated that the individuals participating in the interviews demonstrate the individual characteristics which positively influence people to share their (in this case) CSR knowledge.

The findings indicate one of the reasons for inter-organizational knowledge sharing within the CSR network is to inspire others and to show organizational commitment to CSR. This motivation can be related to CSR itself, as value creation or doing good. It can be interpreted as one of the organizations own CSR policy or activity to share their practices and help other organizations to act and behave responsibly. Providing inspiration and facilitating it for network members is also one of the intermediary organizations main goal. The interview with the representative from CSR Västsverige, has revealed that members should show their commitment to CSR, by using the initiatives offered on the networks website. Inspiring other organizations might lead to their deeper commitment and to a better society, if it takes actions too.

Sharing one´s CSR knowledge can also lead to business opportunities, especially in the case of consultant companies, and it can lead to partnerships between non-profit and private sector organizations, where the private sector representative can use non-profit organization as its CSR initiative and non-profit organization can gain sponsorship or other partnership benefits.

The findings indicate a reason for knowledge sharing can be the hope for a mutually beneficial knowledge exchange, where others will be also motivated to share their own knowledge. An important factor to mention here is the issue of trust, as one of the private sector representatives mentioned it. It was easier for the member to share their CSR practice and knowledge in a context

where they trusted each other, in the smaller group of sustainable business, rather than the larger group where more organizations were present and they did not know each other so well.

5.2.3 Reasons for not sharing

The research findings indicate the reason for not sharing knowledge and practices with other members was the lack of opportunity. The lack of opportunity could mean lack of trust in the other participating members, or even lack of participation from the member itself. If members only attend meetings with external guest lecturers it can lead to organizational learning without knowledge sharing. As one of the interviewees suggested, it could be beneficial for the non-profit organizations to have a theme evening, where they could talk to each other. This could indicate that these type of organizations are not properly represented when sharing knowledge, or this particular person did not trust or was inactive during network meetings. He/she indicated that they are part of other networks as well outside of the frame of CSR Västsverige, and there they actively share hands-on practical information and their commitment to social responsibility. Another explanation of not having had the chance to share knowledge is, that the organization or corporation has joined the network recently, and have not participated in a meeting with such discussion.

The good society

"The Good Society" is the previously mentioned ICT channel of knowledge sharing and CSR communication. The interviewed members using the channel are doing so for the same reasons as personal face to face knowledge sharing, to inspire other members to engage in CSR and to show their own commitment. And those members, among the interviewees who are not using it, is because of the lack of time or the accessibility of the service. ICTs can be useful tools to share explicit, codified knowledge, but are more challenging in case of sharing tacit knowledge, which could be embedded in organizational culture, personal experience or believes.

5.2.4 Relation between the topics...

It is difficult to establish relations between the emerging topics, as visibility, business opportunity are business related motivations. Accessing other people´s knowledge might be hoarding or a way of free-riding, but it can also mean a current lack of knowledge and experience, and once that is gained, members would also participate in knowledge sharing. Finally, to inspire others, might mean a selfless commitment to the field of CSR and to aspire for a better society, but is can also mean a way of visibility or confirmation to the organization as it shows a level of commitment. Can

it be a message for the stakeholders? The motivation of receiving a formal request shows the role of management or in this case the intermediary organization. The reasons for not participating in knowledge sharing were also related to the management as lack of request (on organizational level), lack of experience (on individual level). In case of the ICT "The Good Society" the motivation for sharing does not differ from the sharing during personal interactions, while the motivation for not sharing is mainly ICT related as lack of time, which is considered to be one of the main reasons, why people do not engage is knowledge sharing especially in case of translating tacit knowledge or practices, experiences into explicit knowledge. The second reason for not sharing via ICT was the issue of accessibility, as it was a new system, and it was considered to be not easily accessible.

One of the main surprises while analyzing the data was that losing competitive advantage was not mentioned by any of the participants, this could be due to the various types of the organizations being part of the cross-sector network, which could contribute to a non competitive and trust based environment. Another reason could be that members do not consider the field of CSR for competition.

5.2.5. Sector specific reasons

Although it is not possible to generalize from a single case study, the findings indicate that a public sector member shared knowledge to promote social responsibility among other members, especially for corporations. Since handling social issues is a public sector responsibility in the country of research (Sweden) this motivation was considered as a business opportunity, while the other representative from the public sector has not shared their knowledge, because they are new members and have not had the opportunity yet. None of the public representatives have used the ICT, since it is considered time consuming and not easily accessible.

The non-profit sector members, who shared their knowledge, did it because of individual motivations: 1) to show commitment and 2) inspire others as well as organizational motivation: to be visible (a reward for knowledge sharing). This could be related to the reason why they have joined the network to legitimize their activities and to be seen as a good example by showing good example. Their motivations might also be related to nature of their core activity, which is usually related to a social or environmental problem. By being visible and showing commitment they can indirectly access further sponsoring and build partnership, while inspiring others might lead to a broader care for the issue they are involved with. If the non-profit member has not shared their knowledge it was because of the lack of opportunity, which could be provided in a theme evening or meetings especially designed for them to facilitate peer to peer knowledge sharing.

SMEs seem to share their knowledge by individualistic motivations, such as inspiring others, showing own commitment and to contribute to a knowledge exchange and own organization motivation (the one they represent) to gain further business opportunities and organization motivation (from the intermediary organization) as they have answered to a request. In case of SMEs the individual reasons dominate, which could be explained by the characteristics of such organizations, where the owner-manager often have the power and possibility to form the whole organization according to his beliefs, therefore it is sometimes difficult to separate if the organization represents the owners beliefs or the owner represents the organizations beliefs. One SME has not shared their knowledge at the time of data collection, because they have not been asked yet. This reason might emphasize the role of the intermediary organization (leadership) as motivation.

The empirical findings indicate large and MNEs have shared CSR knowledge mainly in face to face situations and meetings. When these types of organizations not shared their knowledge on the ICT, they have mentioned the lack of time and accessibility, as well as the lack of priority. This could be explained with the many other communication channels used by these large organizations. In face to face or personal situations they are mainly motivated to inspire other organizations (they act as donor organizations) and to access others knowledge and take part in a knowledge exchange (act as recipient organizations).

The academic sector seem to have shared knowledge as part of group dynamics to participate in knowledge exchange themselves, and was motivated by individual reasons to inspire others.

Table 3: S*ummary of why different members share their CSR knowledge and practices in a cross-sector CSR network* (source: findings from the interviews with members from CSR Västsverige as well as the interview with the intermediary organization CSR Västsverige)

Findings	Interpretation	Sector
Business opportunity	When consultants share their CSR knowledge as an assignment, they might expect further opportunities outside of the network. Sharing ones practices might spark the interest of future business partners, for sponsoring or buying products from other members (concept driven)	*Public sector *SME
To inspire	The main goal of the CSR network, CSR Västsverige is to become an inspiration resource for its members, and where members can also inspire each other.	*Non-profit *SME *Large & MNE

	Inspiring other organizations & corporations might lead to deeper engagement with CSR Showing a good example, and one´s own commitment. (data driven)	*Academic
To access others knowledge	Knowledge exchange, which is beneficial for all parties. Requires trust, as the person sharing the knowledge expects others to engage in the same activity. (concept driven)	*SME *Large & MNE *Academic
Visibility	It can contribute to the organizations reputation and can be used for PR purposes/ it can contribute to recognition (concept driven)	*Non-profit *Large & MNE
Formal request	Knowledge sharing is treated as an assignment on specific event, such as a fair, conference or the CSR Forum (concept driven) – role of management	*SME

Table 4: S*ummary of why different members not share their CSR knowledge and practices in a cross-sector CSR network* (source: findings from the interviews with members from CSR Västsverige as well as the interview with the intermediary organization CSR Västsverige)

Findings	Interpretation	Sector
Lack of opportunity	Lack of experience or knowledge Lack of time, (ICT) Lack of accessibility (ICT) Lack of formal request, (concept driven)	*Public *Non-profit *SME *Large & MNE

5.3 Relation between the two aims of the research

During the analysis of the collected data certain relations between the two research aim has been observed. The reasoning behind having joined to the CSR network and the reasons for having shared CSR knowledge can be related to each other to some extent. The reason of joining, because CSR is an important issue to work with can be connected to the reason of inspiring others when sharing CSR knowledge and practices. These reasons are linked because it is believed in both cases the representatives wanted to achieve something without expecting something else in exchange. The reason to gain further CSR knowledge for joining is connected to the reason to access others CSR knowledge for sharing information. Stakeholder pressure and reputation and legitimacy, as reasons for having joined the network can be linked to the sharing knowledge to be visible and to show commitment to social responsibility. The prior personal contact as having joined to the network is

linked with the formal request from the intermediary organization representative. Finally, the reasons to achieve competitive advantage and to collect further contacts, can be linked to the sharing knowledge to achieve further business opportunities.

Table 5: *The pairs of the reasons for joining the network and the reasons for sharing CSR knowledge in the network*

Reason for having joined	Reason for sharing CSR knowledge
CSR is an important issue to work with	To inspire others
To gain further CSR knowledge	To access others CSR knowledge
Stakeholder pressure & reputation and legitimacy	Visibility & to show commitment to CSR
Former personal contact	Formal request
Competitive advantage & to gain contact with other organizations	Business opportunity

6. Conclusions

The research aims were to find the reasons why members join a cross sector CSR network and why do they share or not share their CSR knowledge and practices.

Related to the first research question the empirical findings and its interpretation suggest three main reasons to join such networks: The first is to gain knowledge in CSR, which can be achieved through lectures and activities provided by the intermediary organization or through other member organizations. The second reason is related to the business case for CSR, where three reasons are especially important: 1) the stakeholder pressure, which include shareholder pressure, customer pressure and pressure from current and future employees; 2) reputation and legitimacy, which is important for both private and surprisingly the non-profit sector; and 3) competitive advantage in form of higher quality service and products for customers. Finally, the third reason for having joined to the cross-sector CSR network is related to the network itself. Being part of the cross-sector network can lead to further contacts with other organizations from the same sector and also contacts with organizations from a different sector. These contacts can lead to access of new markets and further business opportunities. Another form of contact which has not been discussed very much in the literature is the personal contact between organizations and the intermediary organization prior to joining the network.

Regarding the second research aim, as to why are members sharing or not sharing their CSR knowledge, the motivations can be divided into two main categories: organizational motivations and individual motivations. The organizational level in this case is the cross-sector network, while the individual level is both the person him/herself and the organization he/she represents.

There are four organizational reasons, which motivate knowledge sharing in the cross-sector CSR network. The first is the organizational culture, which is flexible, open and members are encouraged by the intermediary organization to share their knowledge both in smaller working groups, in the larger network and via an ICT tool, *The good society*. The second organizational motivation is to inspire: members to take societal responsibility, which is the main goal of the network, and it also encourages members to inspire each other via sharing their best CSR practices. The third organizational motivation is that sharing CSR knowledge leads to visibility for the members both personally on meetings and via the ICT tool as well. Finally, the fourth organizational motivation is a request from the intermediary organization, which shows that the role of the leadership is very important.

There are also four individual motivations for CSR knowledge sharing. The first is to inspire each other, as it is also encouraged by the intermediary organization. The second individual motivation is

to show the represented organization´s commitment to CSR. The third individual motivation is that organizations, which share their CSR knowledge, believe that other organizations will do the same, which will lead to a mutually beneficial knowledge exchange. Finally, the fourth individual motivation is that it can lead to business opportunities, especially in case of organizations providing CSR related services. The personal characteristics, which enable knowledge sharing, seem to be an open and honest personality with high level of expertise on the field of CSR.

When discussing why certain members did not share their CSR knowledge in the network, the main reason was the lack of opportunity in case of personal face to face meetings. This lack of opportunity could have presented itself, because the member just recently joined the network, or because there has not been a meeting yet where the member felt that their experiences are aligned with the theme. In case of the ICT tool, *the good society*, the members who have not used it yet, reasoned as it is time consuming or not easy to access.

7. Recommendations

Based on the research, the following recommendations could be made for CSR network wanting to expand or establish and to facilitate knowledge sharing. As gaining further CSR knowledge is the main reason for having joined to the network, intermediary organizations should position themselves as a CSR knowledge resource. It is also important that the established network is credible, as many different types of organizations are joining to legitimize their operations and to build a good reputation. The intermediary organization should pay attention to how members use the network, as greenwashing or as aspirational talk. When promoting relations between members and different sectors within the network the possibilities of innovation and different corporate social opportunities could be introduced.

To motivate knowledge sharing within the network, the group dynamics should be considered more consciously, and maybe special themed meetings could be held for organization, that have not had the chance to share their knowledge yet. The intermediary organizations should also consider introducing additional rewards for knowledge sharing. In case of the use of ICT as facilitator for knowledge sharing training the members how to use such tool and providing a surface which is easy to access and administer is essential.

Two further research topics are suggested based on this research:

1) As mentioned in the limitations, there is a need for a more extensive study which could focus more   on each sector and their motivation, to be able to draw more accurate conclusions and prepare more recommendations for practitioners.

2) Thematically the research covered why members join to a cross-sector CSR network and why they do participate (or not) in knowledge sharing, however a third topic has started to emerge, which was out of the scope of this study: what impact does the membership have on its members. To further explore this topic was deemed to be too time demanding and therefore it is presented as a suggestion for further research.

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Appendix

Interview guide

- What were the main reasons for having joined to the CSR Västsverige network?

- How has your organization been working with CSR/Sustainability issues prior to joining the CSR Västsverige network?

- Which challenges did the organization face in connection with CSR/sustainability prior to joining the network?

- How often do you participate in activities (meetings, seminars, workshops) organized by CSR Västsverige?

- Have you shared CSR best practices or knowledge with other members in the network? If yes, why? or If not, why not?

- What type of information did you share? (experience, academic knowledge, article, news, sustainability report, a solution developed at your organization etc.)

- How did you share this information? (in a meeting, on a seminar or workshop, via the internet "good society" platform)

- How does knowledge sharing in the CSR network affect your organization?

- Have you learned anything about CSR/sustainability from other members?

- Is there anything else you would like to add?