Mind the Gap

The unexplored linkage between Corporate Mindfulness and Sustainability Adoption
Acknowledgments

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We are immensely grateful.

Tack! Grazie!
Abstract

Background: A nexus between the individual practice of mindfulness and sustainable behaviours has recently been unearthed all the while existing research tackling this connection on an organisational level is close to non-existing. Even so, corporate mindfulness has been object of extensive research in the past decades confirming increases in organisational and employee wellbeing. Given the need for sustainable development in contemporary society and for businesses to embrace this responsibility, the potential of such a connection is remarkable.

Purpose: This thesis aims to explore the nexus between corporate mindfulness and the adoption of sustainability practices and the facilitation of change processes in business.

Method: The study follows an interpretivist approach and is based on two cases, which are analysed and compared. Qualitative semi-structured interviews with open questions are conducted. Particular attention is given to the quality of the data and the ethical considerations accompanying the data collection.

Findings: The findings present the interconnection of corporate mindfulness, sustainability adoption and organisational change. This is graphically represented in the Mindfulness-Sustainability Nexus Model (MSNM). Respondents, being mindfulness practitioners, acknowledge the overarching inability to ignore the sustainability challenge and the organisational impact on present and future generations. Moreover, intrinsic values get to the surface, both at the individual and organisational level, which are essential for long-term sustainability practices. With the CBMT, old organisational structures are perceived as outdated and are remodelled as a result. Ultimately, in this research, the role of stakeholder engagement as well as a culture of openness are essential to embrace changes and to enhance sustainability.
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<tr>
<td>CBMT</td>
<td>Corporate-Based Mind Training</td>
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<td>CEO</td>
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<td>MSNM</td>
<td>Mindfulness-Sustainability nexus Model</td>
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<td>OC</td>
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<td>RTC</td>
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Table 1. Table of abbreviations
1 Introduction

In this section the reader is introduced to the research topic through background, problem statement, purpose, research questions and delimitations of the study. A terminology list of definitions used throughout this paper is presented as well.

1.1 Background

We are living in a world that is constantly speeding up. Increasing pressures to perform and technological advances are making it hard to separate work from leisure. Late night emails, long office hours and the pressure to stay available for work around the clock are just some examples of distractions that are leading to increased stress, anxiety and depression among employees (Hougaard, Carter & Coutts, 2016). Looking at the European workplaces, one third of employees report the presence of stress related to work (World Health Organisation, 2010).

Here is where the practice of mindfulness becomes interesting. Mindfulness is the art of focusing on the personal consciousness and allowing oneself to be aware of and consumed by the task at hand (Kabat-Zinn, 1990). It is an ancient practice from the East, which is generally defined as intentional, non-judgmental attentiveness to the present moment (Kabat-Zinn, 2015). In the past decades, this practice has been exposed to extensive research which has been scientifically proven to increase individual well-being. The method is widely used as a medical approach to cure stress, anxiety, depression, burnout as well as improve sleep quality among individuals (Van Gordon, Shonin, Zangeneh, & Griffiths, 2014). In addition, mindfulness is being implemented in organisations, where it is defined as the ability to respond promptly and flexibly to ever changing stimuli (Levinthal & Rerup, 2006). Organisational wellbeing has been confirmed through increased efficiency, better teamwork and creativity. As a corporation, the practice of mindfulness can yield positive outcomes in terms of improved work performance, happiness and deep meaning in work-related tasks. Improvements in job performance can
be recognised in several ways, such as (i) positive organisational behaviour, (ii) improved organisational performance and inclination for innovation, as well as (iii) self-efficacy related to work (Van Gordon et al., 2014).

In addition to the contemporary challenge of employee wellbeing, organisations today are forced to stay competitive, efficient and innovative in order to survive under challenging circumstances. Climate change, depletion of natural resources and destruction of biodiversity are some of the most pressing problems of our time, and organisations today play a vital role in ensuring a safe future for all earthly inhabitants (Van der Voorn & Popov, 2013). In 2017 the whole Swedish economy emitted 52.7 million tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalents (Statistiska centralbyrån, 2018). Despite the commitment to the Paris Agreement and the involvement in clean energy and sustainability-focused initiatives, the scientific evidence is daunting. In fact, the latest research from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (2018) stresses the need to limit global warming to 1.5°C, which is 0.5 degrees Celsius less than the target set by the Paris Agreement (United Nation Framework Conference on Climate Change, 2015).

In light of this pressing global challenge, recent studies show a linkage between mindfulness and sustainability. That is, higher individual sensitivity to climate change and to more sustainable behaviour has been linked to the practice of mindfulness. More specifically, mindful individuals have shown to: (i) believe in climate change, (ii) be more proactive toward climate adaptation activities, (iii) undertake activities with their community and (iv) consider the environmental impact of their behaviour (Wamsler & Brink, 2018). Additionally, mindfulness is not limited to individual sustainability but can also contribute to societal sustainability. Indeed, it can lead to increased awareness about the socio-political context and induce social change. The integration of mindfulness and sustainability face great potential for a holistic approach to the main societal issues of our society. Additionally, the introspective nature of mindfulness which connects individuals more with their values and purpose, might connect people with sustainability issues as well as tackle the causes of unsustainable behaviours (Wamsler, Brossmann, Hendersson, Kristjansdottir, McDonald & Scarampi, 2018).
Even though the link between individual mindfulness and sustainability has been studied, the same linkage on an organisational level is close to non-existent. At the same time, studies show that organisational incentives towards sustainability is greatly affected by the organisational culture, as well as the managerial attitudes and willingness to operate for a greater cause; factors which are present in mindful individuals (Wamsler et al., 2018).

1.2 Problem Discussion

As evaluated by Statistics Sweden (Statistiska centralbyrå, 2018) the Swedish emissions are generated by multiple stakeholders at different levels of society. Activities of the public and private sector, households, non-profit organisations and individuals are major drivers of productivity and economic growth that have a significant Co2 impact. Consequently, all areas of society need to be involved in the process of sustainable development and unanimous action is needed (United Nations, 2015).

This is one of the reasons why there is a great need for organisational change and for businesses to take on their responsibility of working toward sustainable development (United Nations, 2015.). However, without the right managerial attitudes and a sense of deeper meaning to work the transition towards organisational sustainability is likely to be inefficient and limited in time (Wamsler & Brink, 2018). Such changes, in order to be sustained over time, need to be embedded in the culture and grounded into shared values (Bernal, Edgar & Burnes, 2018). Yet, it is common that sustainability is not properly embedded in organisations which lead attempts of change into failure (Hougaard et al., 2016).

Because of the turbulence and uncertainty of the environment, the capacity for change by organisations is critical to their survival. In other words, change is inevitable if failure is to be avoided. Despite this, resistance to organisational change is common among employees and difficult to reduce due to conflicting motives, interests and needs (Furst & Cable., 2008). Resistance to change (RTC) tends to primarily be manifested through low engagement in pro-change behaviours within organisations (Peccei, Gianreco, &
Sebastiano, 2011), such resistance by various stakeholders could indeed restrain organisational change for sustainability adoption. Furthermore, it might be the case that the undertaking of mindfulness on a corporate level is rejected. In fact, the relationship between corporate mindfulness and sustainability adoption is fairly unexplored, yet it might be key for initiating a development toward the latter.

The existing evidence at large shows multiple benefits of mindfulness practices, and the recent link between this practice and increased individual sustainable behaviours enhance the relevance of exploring such link at the organisational level as well. Yet, there is a clear gap in the literature, particularly on organisational level, when it comes to the sustainability-corporate mindfulness nexus.

1.3 Purpose

The purpose of this study is firstly to investigate and examine the connection between corporate mindfulness and sustainability adoption in organisations. More specifically, the aim is to understand the different factors that stimulate the adoption of sustainability principles and of corporate mindfulness as well as how these are interrelated. Secondly, as this entails a change process, the aim is furthermore to understand the type of influence mindfulness has on organisational change for sustainability.

In light of the above-mentioned challenges as well as the unsatisfactory studies discussing these topics, the purpose is to investigate mindfulness and its effects (fostering or hindering) on sustainability adoption and change processes.

1.4 Research questions

The following research questions have been developed in order to meet the purpose of this study.
1. How does corporate mindfulness training affect sustainability adoption?

2. What influences does corporate mindfulness have on organisational change?

1.5 Delimitations

As stated in the problem discussion, all areas of society must strive for sustainable development. However, the scope of all social actors is too great for this single study, therefore the focus has been limited to private business firms as the authors view these as actors of great importance.

The focus of the study is toanalyse companies dedicated to sustainable development, who have undertaken a mind training program at the corporate level (CBMT) and who are continuously practicing mindfulness. Additionally, the analysis has been limited to the “adoption phase” of sustainability. The context is limited to Swedish urban areas, more specifically Stockholm area, and the companies are SMEs within the service industry.

1.6 Terminology

Change resistance - Form of organisational discord engaged by individuals where change feels personally unpleasant or inconvenient (Herscovitch & Meyer, 2002).

Corporate-Based Mind Training (CBMT) - Tailored development programs with focus on either productivity and performance; creativity and innovation or balance and resiliency (Potential Project, n.d.).

Corporate Mindfulness - The ability to recognise difficulties within the organisation and to act promptly (Vogus & Sutcliffe, 2012).

Mindfulness - Intentional, non-judgmental attentiveness to the present moment (Kabat-Zinn, 2009).
**Organisational Change** - A reaction to either an external or internal force that requires the organisation to modify its way of doing business (Beer, 1980).

**Organisational Sustainability** - An organisational understanding, effort and achievement to creating environmental and social benefits in addition to generating profit.

**Stakeholder** - Person that has an interest in shaping a given reality because s(he) is affected by it (Mielke, Vermaßen & Ellenbeck, 2017).

**Stakeholder Engagement** - Practices that the organisation undertakes to involve stakeholders (Greenwood, 2007).

**Sustainability** - The ability to act out of the environmental, social and economic pillars in an integrated manner (Elkington, 1998).

**Sustainability Adoption** - Process of expanding a business’ focus to a more holistic practice of sustainability, in order to create long-term value (Caprar & Neville, 2012).

**Sustainable Development** - “The development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (Brundtland, 1987).
2 Frame of Reference

In this section, the process of the frame of reference is presented, followed by a theoretical review of existing literature on sustainability, mindfulness and organisational change.

The following frame of reference is the outcome of a research developed out of a systematic review; the aim is to identify, analyse and summarise the existing literature on the topic of interest. Initially, a large selection of peer reviewed articles was selected based on the perceived potential to fit the study. Particular attention was directed to selecting fairly recent (less than 5 years), peer reviewed articles in order to obtain the most updated knowledge.

Upon collecting the initial assortment, the articles were skinned through in order to narrow down the selection and only keep the most relevant articles. The intention with the frame of reference was to bring the reader from the bigger picture to the narrow topic. As the notion of sustainability permeates the whole study, this is the first subject to be addressed and defined. The reader is then guided from mindfulness to corporate mindfulness followed by the nexus between sustainability and mindfulness and ultimately
organisational change, resistance to change and management & leadership, as these topics normally entail change processes.

2.1 Sustainability

Sustainability was firstly introduced on a global scale by the United Nations in terms of development, defined as the ability to meet the needs of the present without compromising the same ability for future generations (Brundtland, 1987). Ever since, the concept has become more and more critical in modern debates, but gaps continue to persist when it comes to an agreement. Because of the complexity of sustainability as a concept it is currently impossible to establish a single standardised definition. On the contrary, with its recent increase in popularity, the concept is constantly changing and evolving (Bateh, Heaton, Arbogast & Broadbent, 2013).

2.1.1 Organisational Sustainability Adoption

It is becoming increasingly more common to incorporate sustainability into the business practice in addition to more traditional methods (Thomas & Lamm, 2012). Different companies with different organisational cultures require their own definition of sustainability to fit the specific context (Van Marrewijk, 2003) and a universal definition has not yet been established, given the complexity of the notion (Bateh et al., 2013). In this study however, organisational sustainability is defined as an organisational understanding, effort and achievement to create environmental and social benefits in addition to generating profit (Horak et al., 2018).

According to Caprar and Neville (2012), the process of adopting sustainability is connected to an already established culture where long-term values are already in place. Indeed, cultural differences are also explained as a reason for variations in sustainability adoption (Haxhi & van Ees, 2010). It is the extent of sustainability-compatible values in an organisational culture that determines the likelihood of adopting sustainability. In this study, sustainability adoption is defined as the process of expanding a business’ focus to
a more holistic practice of sustainability, in order to create long-term value (Caprar & Neville, 2012). Thereby, sustainability adoption is not restrained to initiating the sustainability journey but entails the expansion to new areas within the topic as well.

A trend can be observed from the literature where companies see opportunities rather than threats in regard to sustainability strategies (Freire-Suarez, 2014); it is a way of gaining competitive advantage for companies worldwide (Bateh et al., 2013). As such, the topic is becoming increasingly more considered among CEOs today (McKinsey, 2014) yet, in order for the implementation to be successful, it has to be viewed as an organisational change initiative (Appelbaum, Calcagno, Magarelli & Saliba, 2016). The challenge is to take responsibility for contributing to a better world, beyond ensuring that an enterprise survive and prosper economically. It is a question of achieving reciprocal relationships with stakeholders and operating in a way that does not harm the environmental, social or economic resources (Doppelt, 2003). It often requires a complete shift in terms of how managers think an organisation works (Hendersen, Gulati & Tushman, 2015) such as switching focus from profit maximisation to maximisation of value and meaning.

Researchers stress the importance of aligning sustainability with organisational goals and core values (McKinsey, 2014) and therefore it cannot be a set of separated initiatives but rather has to be implemented into all parts of the business (Cranfield School of Management, 2012). Therefore, adopting organisational sustainability is highly concerned with innovations in entire systems; changing lifestyles, products and processes. Scientists claim that we are unconsciously living in a “post normal time” where so much about the future is uncertain. The systems and structures society has been running on are no longer sufficient under these new circumstances. Hence, adapting to the current sustainability challenges requires these systems to be carefully remodelled (Wals & Schwarzin, 2012).

Furthermore, sustainability is often explained through the triple bottom line model developed by Elkington (1998). The model explains the sustainable organisation as one that considers social justice, economic prosperity, and environmental quality. It is a concept of multidisciplinary nature as it creates a fundamental ripple effect on the local, national and global surroundings (Elkington, 1998). In order to achieve a balance between
these three fundamental pillars of sustainability, different strategies exist, with key activities such as waste management, cultural change and corporate social responsibility (CSR) (Whittington, 2006). The latter is concerned with social awareness and the managerial effort to treat stakeholders in a socially responsible manner (Shah, 2019).

Organisational sustainability is concerned with creating long-term value for multiple stakeholders and society at large, which can appear challenging for many companies given stakeholders’ diversity in interests and expectations (Moizer & Tracey, 2010). This involves managing risk and capturing opportunities for sustainable development, as well as forging new strategies into the business purpose, all the while being transparent to stakeholders (Cranfield School of Management, 2012). A stakeholder is defined as any actor that has an interest in shaping a given reality because s(he) is affected by it (Mielke et al., 2017). Thus, a stakeholder could be an individual, a company, an association, a non-governmental organisation, or anyone involved in some way. In fact, according to Herremans, Nazari, & Fereshteh (2016), sustainability as a concept was created to answer stakeholders’ demands and their rights to be well informed about the organisational standards of performance, as such it is vital to nurture a close collaboration and manage a favorable relationship with them (Freire-Suarez, 2014).

Nevertheless, little focus is currently on the root cause of sustainability challenges like lifestyle and lack of awareness. Most studies focus on the unsustainable effects on society of the latter but a correlation between sustainability and individual’s mindfulness has recently been unearthed and is being object of research in diverse fields including neuroscience (Doty, 2016), psychology (Koger, 2015) and education (Powietrzyńska, Tobin, & Alexakos, 2015). Few studies have yet analysed the sustainability-mindfulness nexus in depth, and thus knowledge is still scarce (Ericson, Kjonstad & Barstad, 2014; Wamsler et al., 2018).
2.2 Mindfulness

Mindfulness is generally defined as the ability to have a clear mind and to intentionally pay attention to the present moment. Purposely looking at the flow of thoughts, practitioners learn about the nature of their mind and become inherently more aware of the self (Kabat-Zinn, 2015). This ancient eastern tradition with roots in the Buddhist philosophy (Vu & Gill, 2017) has been introduced to the West in the 1970s with a more secular approach, in order to better suit the Western culture and ideologies (Purser & Milillo, 2014). Ever since, mindfulness has been object of research, mainly in terms of psychological and clinical studies based on individuals. However, Purser and Milillo (2014) define such approach simplistic since de-contextualising the practice, its complexity and its origins are left out. Mindfulness should not be limited to “paying attention” and to “reduce stress” but focus should be on developing awareness about the internal and external world.

Although the practice is individual and the effects vary among persons, a significant presence of the following benefits has been recognised: reduction in stress, anxiety and depression (Warneke, Quinn, Ogden, Towle & Nelson, 2011), a higher control of emotions, an increase in wellbeing (Hülsheger, Alberts, Feinholdt, & Lang, 2013), development of friendships (Waugh & Fredrickson, 2006), increase in creativity, empathy and cognitive flexibility (Bryant & Wildi, 2008). The reason behind these outcomes seems to be the rising of positive emotions given by mindfulness, which counterpoise negative emotions hence reduce depression and anxiety. These positive emotions are also associated with an increase in the mind's potential and openness (Fredrickson, Cohn, Coffey, Pek & Finkel, 2008).

2.2.1 Corporate Mindfulness

Academic’s interest has been growing significantly in the last two decades; beyond individual practices the field of corporate mindfulness is being explored since recently (Purser & Milillo, 2014). This is defined as the ability to recognise difficulties within the organisation and to act promptly (Vogus & Sutcliffe, 2012) or the ability to adapt a
behavioural response according to the set of stimuli you are faced to (Levinthal & Rerup, 2006).

The modern workplace is characterised by increased distractions such as emails and meetings; an unintended consequence is that employees feel overwhelmed by information and, in an attempt to process all this data, often end up stressfully multitasking (Hallowell, 2005). However, the human brain is not able to do multiple actions at the same time, instead the brain shifts focus from one action to another and acts out of autopilot. This is time and energy consuming, resulting in efficiency and job contentment decrease (Bawden & Robinson, 2009). Additionally, as the mind is busily overloaded with information it is less reactive to make new, creative, connections and individuals’ average life-contentedness decreases. In fact, the emergence of psychosocial risks and hazards in the workplace i.e. stress, burnouts, depression, are a growing phenomenon (Dean & Webb, 2011).

2.2.2 Organisational Impact

Internal and psychological changes have been shown to impact employees’ well-being significantly more than changes in the external work environment (Nhat Hanh, 1999). The ability to stay focused on one task can improve among the many things: efficiency, teamwork, memory, customer service, safety, commitment and resilience at work (Hougaard et al., 2016). Corporate mindfulness has, in fact, been associated with enhanced job performance in terms of organisational behaviour and performance, individual efficiency at work and predisposition to innovation (Van Gordon et al., 2014). However, the impact of mindfulness trainings will greatly depend on the degree of organisational implementation, namely if it regards top managers, middle managers and/or front-line employees (Vogus & Sutcliffe, 2012).

Nevertheless, according to Purses and Milillo (2015) the modern westernised version of corporate mindfulness does not consider the values and wisdom of the Buddhist approach (Bodhi, 2011). This might lead to the absence of ethical premises and compassion; essential features for a positive impact. An empirical example is the concept of
mindfulness as a tool for stress reduction, introduced by Kabat-Zinn (1982), which has been extensively adopted to increase organisational profit and productivity (Hyland, 2015). The result is the creation of a lucrative business which takes advantage of the Buddhist knowledge (Vu & Gill, 2017). In fact, mindfulness needs to be interconnected with compassion and selflessness, in order for a successful implementation to take place (Hougaard & Carter, 2018).

Research on mindfulness is growing and great focus is put on behavioural aspects and links with sustainable development (Brown & Kasser, 2005). The scientific literature includes connections between mindfulness and among the many topics: subjective well-being (Jacob & Brinkerhoff, 1999), connection with intrinsic values (Brown & Kasser, 2005) and reduced consumption patterns (Ericson, et al., 2014). Despite the potentials of extending the scope to society as a whole, the majority of studies focus on the individual level (Wamsler et al., 2018). Interest in the inner dimensions i.e. values, mindset and culture has been growing and as a consequence academic’s interest for mindfulness has been growing as well given its ability to connect individuals with their inner self (Wamsler & Brink, 2018).

2.3 Mindfulness & Sustainability

Already in 1999, Jacob and Brinkerhoff analysed the impact of mindfulness on individual’s subjective well-being. What the authors found out is that, as individuals practice mindfulness, they are generally more satisfied with their lives and the desire of external pleasures, like material possessions, decreases. As they consciously choose a simpler lifestyle their environmental impact might decrease. Another explanation for sustainable behaviour is that mindfulness increases brain flexibility which reduces the attachment to habits and opens up individuals to changes (Ericson et al., 2014). However, when it comes to corporate mindfulness and sustainability, knowledge is scarce. The existing evidence on the effectiveness of corporate mindfulness and the effects of mindfulness on individual’s sustainability suggests mindfulness-related sustainability could be related to organisations as well.
Siqueira and Pitassi (2016) explore the role of mindfulness in sustainability-oriented innovations which aim to benefit society. To be successfully implemented, different spheres of society need to be involved, namely: government and policies which support innovations, firms and organisations who develop business models as well as individuals who are engaged and willing to foster a process of change. In combination with a proactive organisational culture and socio-political context, individuals practising (value-based) mindfulness can influence the organisation by converting their creative ideas into sustainable innovations (Siqueira & Pitassi, 2016). Mindfulness alone is not sufficient but, with the right circumstances, it can trigger sustainability initiatives within organisations. Indeed, mindfulness trainings have the ability to shape the brain and influence how we think (Powietrzyńska et al., 2015), a promising quality for change processes like the development of a resilient and sustainable society (Wamsler & Brink, 2018).

2.4 Organisational Change

The examination on organisational change (OC) is crucial in understanding organisations (Tilt, 2006) and additionally, it has become essential for businesses today to undermine change within the organisation to keep up with competition and other challenges. A global growing business environment has set the norm of continuous change to sustain existence and success of organisations (Al-Haddad & Kotnour, 2015). Tilt (2006) argues that there is a common consensus of research showing that a strong commitment in dealing with environmental issues must follow a form of change in organisational culture and/or attitude. Since one of the main focuses on mindfulness is attitudes, there is a potential linkage between the implementation of corporate mindfulness and organisational change.

There are many different appearances of how change can take place (Al-Haddad & Kotnour, 2015) but this study focuses on ‘planned’ and ‘unplanned’ organisational change. One can understand that common practice for OC is that it takes place over time and regarding planned OC it is important to have a strategy, plan and time-frame to increase the probability of success for systematic change. Traditionally change methods
have consisted of small transitions that are mainly steered by management (top-down) while more recent methods are more cyclical and integrative. Thus it requires continuous improvement and includes steps like creating awareness, planning, implementing, evaluating and lastly integrating the applied changes, while creating a vision that involves people and that can become part of the organisational culture (Al-Haddad & Kotnour, 2015). Furthermore, according to Maimone and Sinclair (2014), OC can also be of the nature that it is unplanned and emergent as in an organisations’ daily operations new ideas may be discovered from other parts of the organisations than merely the management, that is bottom-up. This type of emergent change is crucial for increased flexibility in organisations as systems based on managerial control cannot ‘predict the predictable’ as continuous change is also present in the external environment. Most likely is nevertheless that both types of change described are highly relevant and that organisations that have an inclusive organisational culture will face both types of OC (Maimone & Sinclair, 2014).

The failure rate of change management is high as less than 30 percent of change initiatives actually succeed (Beer & Nohria, 2000), and recent studies show that this rate is not improving (Al-Haddad & Kotnour, 2015). This has naturally led to the fact that change management, in terms of how to successfully implement change, is one of the main topics in organisation (Ashurst & Hodges, 2010).

2.4.1 Resistance to Change

With any undergoing change in an organisation, there are likely to be different responses from the participants. Because change is of such importance to organisations for their survival and success it becomes evident that resistance to such becomes problematic. Especially employee cooperation is important when an organisation establishes new conditions that differ from current ones (Furst & Cable, 2008).

This study follows the view of Furst and Cable (2008) on RTC as a form of organisational discord engaged by individuals where change feels personally unpleasant or inconvenient. RTC can be manifested in the failure of engaging in behaviour towards
change, or a more proactive anti-change behaviour, like speaking out in public and actively trying to prevent its implementation (Herscovitch & Meyer, 2002). Some possible reasons behind RTC can be that members’ own goals, motives, interests and needs differ from those of the organisation (Furst & Cable, 2008). As such, some common complexions of resistance to change according to Oreg (2003) are cognitive rigidity (tendency to be close-minded and think differently), lack of psychological resilience (ability to cope with change is low), and reluctance to giving up old habits.

Here the importance of management and leadership to organisational change and managers ability to motivate employees and stakeholders to make the desired changes can be observed. The central idea of many RTC literature is that involvement from the affected parts is key to help reducing resistance to change and create a more positive attitude since this enables people to actively take part in shaping the change (Peccei et al., 2011). Furthermore, this is of particular importance as organisations are attempting to transition towards a more sustainable practice.

2.4.2 Management & Leadership

Incorporating mindfulness training is an active action towards organisational change and planned organisational change does in turn connect to organisational management and leadership (Battilana, Gilmartin, Sengul, Pache, & Alexander, 2010). Management has undertaken many definitions, like the process of carrying out tasks with help of people and other resources (Drucker, 1974) or as the execution of all that is important to accomplish a system of tasks (Nicholas & Steyn, 2008).

Managing change can be very stressful due to its associated uncertainties and it poses emotional, psychological and physical pressures (McCaskey, 1982) and thereof leadership becomes of importance since this is linked to the outcomes of organisational change. As argued by Mahmood, Basharat and Bashir (2012) management and leadership are two overlapping terms which go hand in hand and are complementary to each other. There is growing evidence that leadership characteristics affect the failure or success of change initiatives of an organisation (Battilana et al., 2010).
Leadership can be defined as a procedure where an actor influences and directs other people to achieve a common goal or objective (Northouse, 2007) and is the person to ensure that an organisation is on the right course (Winston, 2004). According to Gioia, Patvardhan, Hamilton, & Corley (2013) change leaders are people with new and creative visions, who can ensure the change is accepted within the organisation and that the affected actors are ready for it. Those leaders who successfully can deal with these uncertainties arising in times of change will attain impact and authority and turn into key people within the organisation (Thompson, 1967).

Furthermore, for change to succeed in the long-term, which has been proven to be more challenging than short-term change, strong leadership that actively involves employees during the process is needed. Human behaviour and participatory action research can be powerful components when dealing with long-term change as people's’ attitudes towards change positively can affect it when their past experiences are being valued (Al-Haddad & Kotnour, 2015).
3 Methodology & Method

3.1 Methodology

The first part of this section presents the methodology of the research, which includes the chosen research paradigm, research approach and research design. Secondly an in-depth description of the qualitative method of the study is provided, which includes the data collection, interview structure, credibility, data quality and data analysis, followed by a discussion on ethical considerations.

3.1.1 Research Paradigm

Research paradigm is part of the research methodology and refers to the type of philosophical framework that serves as a base of how research is being carried out. The same phenomenon can be studied in different ways depending on the approach adopted and, in research, the philosophy is determined by the perception of reality. This will underlie the chosen strategies and techniques for data collection and analysis (Collis & Hussey, 2014).

One of the two paradigms identified by Collis and Hussey, positivism, perceives phenomenon objectively hence from a scientific perspective. The newness of the topic at hand as well as its individuality were the main reasons for not adopting such approach; the lack of existing knowledge and the limited number of implementations of corporate mindfulness affected the ability to yield scientific significance in the study. Acknowledging the subjective nature of mindfulness and the diverse subject matters that are being consolidated in this study, the approach to answer the research questions is interpretivist. This states that reality is dependent on the observer, who will interpret phenomenon subjectively (Collis & Hussey, 2014). Such principle mirrors the study as it is based on interpreting the understanding of individuals, who have participated in CBMTs, and then applying the given results on company level. Hence, there is room for various interpretations and heterogeneous observations resulting from the same interview.
3.1.2 Research Approach

Building on the fact that this study will follow an interpretivist research philosophy, the reasoning will be inductive. The scarceness of existing theories hinders a deductive approach since this aims to test hypothesis statistically (Ghauri & Grønhaug, 2010). No initial hypotheses are formed at the beginning rather the study is based on learning from experience. The selected research approach leaves room for alterations of the study, should new evidence be revealed and is thus appropriate for a scarcely researched field. Another justification for adopting an inductive approach is that the true nature of the research findings will not be discovered until the study is completed. The objective of interpretivism is to find patterns from the collection and observations of data in the form of an empirical reality, thus explaining the phenomenon. Theories and hypotheses are then formed to add up to the existing knowledge and open up the field for further research (Bryman & Bell, 2015).

3.1.3 Research Design

The design of a research reflects the choices in terms of methodologies and methods made with the aim of fulfiling the purpose of the study (Collis & Hussey, 2014). A multiple case study is the design chosen for this study, which consist of an in-depth observation of the phenomenon and its context through various techniques (Yin, 2014). The ability to analyse the phenomenon in regard to its context and the consequent ability to identify mechanisms and correlations with external factors are the main reasons for choosing such approach. As aforementioned, the dependability of sustainability on multiple factors make it essential to consider the topic within its context. The lack of existing studies explains the choice of having two cases and comparing them; the aim is to comprehend the correlation between organisational mindfulness and sustainability as deeply as possible and, more specifically, to identify patterns and how different contexts could potentially affect the cases (Lin, 1998). In fact, using multiple cases may lead to greater understanding of the phenomenon compared to a single case study, where the insights may not be sufficient to extend them to a greater scope (Yin, 2014).
The research will be exploratory in nature; hence it will focus on delving deep into the questions at hand and discovering new findings to be tested in future studies, rather than to build theory. In fact, an exploratory research is appropriate for cases when extensive knowledge is lacking as it aims to create deeper knowledge about a phenomenon or a problem and it allows for flexibility (Collis & Hussey, 2014). The main reason for not choosing either a descriptive or a casual approach is the newness of the field as this represents a hinder for getting conclusive findings; another reason is the limited sample size of the study (Ghauri & Grønhaug, 2010).

3.2 Method

In research, methods coincide with the steps and tools used in order to meet the purpose of the study (Ghauri & Grønhaug, 2010). The two main methods to run a research are quantitative and qualitative; the first consists in collecting large amount of data then tested statistically while the latter is based on analysing a small sample from a certain context which is interpreted by the respondents rather than by logical procedures. This research will be qualitative due to its reliance on the human experience and the respondents’ perceptions of their daily work environments. As such, knowledge is subjective and has to be treated with neutrality by the researchers (Collis & Hussey, 2014).

3.2.1 Data Collection

The process of selecting the cases has been a bumpy road. Initially there was an agreement with a company providing CBMT services, and the case samples were supposed to be selected from their database of clients. However, due to drawn out responses and uncertainties in their engagement, the authors decided to start looking for alternative solutions. The selection was restricted to companies who have undertaken a corporate mindfulness training, by certified trainers, and who are still devoted to the practice of mindfulness. The authors contacted around 20 companies, found through articles on
Google about CBMTs. Given the difficulty to find companies with these features and a willingness to engage with an in-depth analysis, follows the choice of limiting the study to two cases. Analysing two cases similar to each other is driven by the intention to have common denominators in terms of context and consequently analyse the findings more in depth (Mills, Durepos & Wiebe, 2010). In fact, for each company 3 employees were interviewed; these hold different positions and all practice corporate mindfulness.

The study is based on primary data, defined as knowledge derived from its point of origin (Collis & Hussey, 2014), which was collected through interviews. This tool was selected given the subjectivity, complexity and multi-dimensional factors affecting organisational change. In addition, it seemed appropriate to have semi-structured interviews, allowing for the interview subject to divert and potentially bring up new ideas which could then be integrated into the study. The secondary data used in the research consists of the main articles and journals tackling the field of study as well as information about the companies already available on the internet (Collis & Hussey, 2014). This was used to strengthen or confute the empirical findings.

Another important method was to physically meet the participating companies and perform the interviews in person as this allowed for more careful observations of the work environment, organisational culture as well as emotions and behaviours of employees. The authors spent indeed a whole day at each company, running interviews and observing the working environment. Follow ups through email were used, when needed.
3.2.2 Interviews

3.2.2.1 Interview Questions

The aim of the interviews was to explore if there existed a potential change in attentiveness and mental presence since the respondents started practicing CBMT, and to discover what underlying motivations, emotions and situations that could provoke a changed organisational culture. Questions about the individual understanding of employers, their companies, and the general work environment were asked in addition to questions regarding the personal experience of mindfulness practice and sustainable development. Particular attention was directed towards exploring the incentives behind the change, whether it is incorporating corporate mindfulness or initiating organisational sustainability.

The interviews were structured in a way to get as much organic information as possible about change processes and sustainable development. Thus, scenario questions were included in order to capture the respondents’ attentiveness towards sustainability. These questions were placed at the beginning of the interview to avoid the respondent anticipating the direct connection to mindfulness and sustainability. In addition, specific questions about the mindfulness journey were asked, followed by questions about particular aspects that may have influenced sustainability. Indeed, the word ‘sustainability’ was not introduced until the very end in order to grasp information on factors influencing the adoption of sustainability and to avoid biased responses.

The professional position of the interview subjects varied between employees, managers and leaders. Thus, the interview questions were adjusted for each type of respondent in order to gain the most relevant information from each interview. This was done, not only to ensure the most effective approach for the research, but also to respect the time each respondent was contributing with. In addition, all interviews were conducted in Swedish (their mother tongue) in order to create the most comfortable environment while not limiting their ways of expressing themselves to language barriers.
3.2.2.2 Semi-structured Interviews

In order to perform in-depth exploration of the respondents’ perceptions, the interviews were semi-structured, thus allowing for new ideas to be brought up during the course of the interviews. Semi-structured interviews are suitable when more than a few of the interview questions are open-ended and requires further question based on a specific answer. The topics can therefore be reordered after need, and new topics can be introduced based on the proceedings of the interview. As such, this approach is suitable for an interpretivist research since the aim is to understand the interview subjects, their motivations, feelings and underlying values when it comes to corporate mindfulness and sustainable development. In such a manner it was important not to restrain their answers. Thus, the majority of the interview questions were shaped open ended, allowing for more of a story telling dialogue. A semi-structured interview approach is labour intense, however yields deeper insight and more detailed information (Adams, 2015).
3.2.3 Credibility

Especially important in a qualitative study is to ensure credibility in order to establish trustworthiness of the data collection and analysis of research (Shenton, 2004). Furthermore, triangulation is a technique which consist of using multiple research methods and data from various sources when studying a phenomenon in order to increase the ability to interpret findings. It serves the benefit of bringing multiple perspectives in a study, while also increasing credibility and decreasing researchers bias (Denzin, 2009).

In order to get a comprehensive understanding of the topic, a multiple case study design was chosen. This allowed for an exploration of different organisational cultures and work environments and provided more accurate results rather than relying exclusively on one case. Additionally, the focus was on interviewing employees with different organisational positions within the same company, in order to ensure strong credibility of research and triangulation. Furthermore, the aim was directed towards understanding the effects which the practice of CBMT could provide for companies in different contexts. For this reason, it was important that all researchers had a comprehensive knowledge of all topics included in the frame of references in order to be able to develop the interview questions and avoid interview bias. The respondents’ answers were complemented by observations and notes on their emotions and body language, and the findings of the study have been individually interpreted by the researchers before collectively being compared and analysed. Hence, the data has also been compared across cases, all for the purpose of increasing credibility and thus resulting in triangulation.

3.2.4 Data Quality

To ensure data quality in empirical social research, Yin (2014) suggests four common tests that are relevant to case study research; construct validity, internal validity, external validity and reliability. However, internal validity is only applicable for explanatory or causal studies and not for exploratory research and it will therefore not be applied in this study.
3.2.4.1 Construct Validity

Construct validity is about identifying operational measures that are correct for the concept being studied as case study research often fails to develop these. To increase the construct validity, one tactic is to use multiple sources of evidence (Yin, 2014). In this study, the frame of reference is built on key findings from various peer reviewed articles to define sustainability, mindfulness and organisational change and explain how these are interconnected, in order to theoretically present the foundation of the study. Moreover, as mentioned previously, both primary and secondary data are used in the data collection stage to further increase the construct validity accordingly.

3.2.4.2 External Validity

External validity deals with the domain of knowing whether a study's findings can be generalised regardless of the used research method; this is greatly impacted by the research questions’ construction (Yin, 2014). In case studies, the research question(s) should preferably start with ‘how’ or ‘why’ in order to strive for external validity. For this reason, the first research question in this study has been developed accordingly. The second research question however starts with ‘what’ and the authors are aware that arriving at an analytic generalisation in this case may be more difficult. Yet, because of the newness of the research field the authors found it too specific and early to ask ‘why’ before understanding what aspects of mindfulness (if any) that influence organisational change.

A case study tactic to help striving for external validity is to use replication logic in a multiple-case study. This study follows the case of literal replication which is defined by Yin (2014) as “the selection of two (or more) cases within a multiple-case study because the cases are predicted to produce similar findings”. By having a two-case study instead of single-case study the possibility of direct replication for this study is raised vastly (Yin, 2014). The authors also attempt to ensure replication logic by having a detailed description of research questions, background, research design, empirical findings, interpretations and conclusion; hence, facilitating similar research contexts which are expected to produce similar results.
3.2.4.3 Reliability

Reliability addresses measurements, their precision and accuracy. It proclaims that a repeated research should lead to the same findings and conclusions (Collis & Hussey, 2014). However, it is not to be confused with replication as reliability puts emphasis on the ability of doing the same case again rather than replicating the results of one case by doing a different case study (Yin, 2014). As such, the authors have been documenting the steps of the research very thoroughly as an attempt to facilitate the research being conducted again and thus also increase the reliability of the study.

3.2.5 Data Analysis

The process of the data analysis began with the interviews being transcribed right after they were conducted, in order to facilitate the process and to give the authors an overall idea of the collected data and how it can be approached. As the authors listened to the interviews and read the transcriptions, observations were summarised, and specific highlights and patterns were noted and given specific labels. These recurring themes played a key part in the respondents’ answers to the interview questions. Hence, the method used is thematic analysis which aims to identify and analyse recurring patterns emerging from the empirical findings (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The authors chose this method instead of content analysis, discourse analysis, grounded theory or template analysis (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2016), given its flexible approach and the study’s qualitative nature. Four themes emerged from this process: change, culture, leadership and stakeholder engagement, as these were commonly spoken about verbatim or could be discovered through implication. Furthermore, the mindfulness and sustainability journey were included in the analysis as these overarching concepts are highly relevant to answer the research questions.

The unearthed themes were analysed in two parts; internally and externally. First, an internal analysis procedure was conducted for each case, consisting of a comparison of experiences and respondents’ perceptions within the same company. This part followed
an interpretative approach as data was explained out of the researchers’ understandings (Collis & Hussey, 2014). In the second part the data was analysed across cases in order to find divergences and similarities (Collis & Hussey, 2014) that could be crucial for answering the research questions.

Furthermore, the empirical findings are based on a narrative inquiry as a way to describe, explain and understand the human activity captured in the interviews. This is a way of paying attention to multi-layered meanings in the narrative context and to share the nature and order of events at particular times, as it is acknowledged that stories are embedded in social context (Bold, 2012).

To connect the emerging themes to the research questions the authors derived a model with the purpose of visually presenting the interface between mindfulness, stakeholder engagement, organisational change and sustainability adoption. Hence, the main conclusions from the analysis have been embedded in the model.

![Process overview of data analysis.](image)

### 3.2.6 Ethical Considerations

This research taps into a sensitive subject for a lot of companies; their developments in sustainability. And as such it is important to be mindful and prioritise the dignity of the companies, whatever the results of the research might be. In order to prevent any harm in this regard any requests for anonymity was accommodated, and the companies were presented in a respectful, while still truthful, way in the thesis. Moreover, the authors ensured transparency on the purpose of the study and obtained full consent before going forward with the interviews. In order to facilitate trust and create a good base for collaboration, clear communication was performed regarding the confidentiality of which
the resulting interview data would be treated. The companies were also informed of their rights to withdraw their research contribution at any given moment.

Another important ethical consideration concerns the capability of objectiveness by the researchers. As sustainability students, the passion for sustainable development could result in an unconscious resistance to any results pointing to a negative effect of CBMT. If a desire to find a positive correlation exist, the authors might unconsciously act on that urge, which in turn could be destructive for the authenticity of the research. However, as the ultimate purpose was to contribute to sustainable development, objectivity throughout this research was prioritised, and as researchers the consciousness of this ethical issue was constantly present. Moreover, this research is financially independent which further ensures impartiality.
4 Empirical Findings

The overall findings and experiences of the respondents are presented below; divided into Tenant & Partner and Yasuragi. The empirical findings start with the companies’ respective mindfulness journey followed by the recurring findings labelled; change, culture, leadership and stakeholder engagement. Lastly, the sustainability adoption is presented.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Company</th>
<th>Industry</th>
<th>Respondent</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Years at the company</th>
<th>Years of mindfulness practice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tenant &amp; Partner</td>
<td>Property Service &amp; Consultancy</td>
<td>Lina</td>
<td>Property Consultant</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Ulrika</td>
<td>Project Leader</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Lisa</td>
<td>HR Manager</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yasuragi</td>
<td>SPA &amp; Hotel</td>
<td>Jimmy</td>
<td>Spa Manager</td>
<td>7½</td>
<td>3/4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Liza</td>
<td>Property Director</td>
<td>2½</td>
<td>2 1/2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Sunniva</td>
<td>CEO</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3/4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 4. Overview of the Cases*
4.1 Tenant & Partner

When walking into the office of Tenant & Partner, a consultancy for property services and for designing work environments, the authors observe a relaxed and friendly environment. The company's main service is to help customers move to new facilities, negotiate lease agreements and make sure the new location is ready for move-in. The authors are greeted by the smiling Office Manager standing by her desk, upon which a book titled “The Integral vision” lays. The first respondent, Lisa, arrives to give us a tour, and she immediately comes off as an energetic and comfortable person. For a company specialised in developing office spaces, it is no surprise that the office has a very modernistic, unique and inspiring vibe. The office does not seem very big as it is divided into many smaller environments, along with a bigger impressive common area where employees can socialise, play ping-pong and work-out.

The first interview is with HR Manager Lisa, who dives right into the story of the life changing developments that have taken place during her nine years at Tenant & Partner. Her way of answering questions guides the authors through her thought process and it seems important for her to give an honest response. She is not afraid of changing her mind and gesticulates a lot to emphasise her views. Laughing and smiling, she fills the room with a pleasant and laid-back feeling.

In the second interview, the authors are acquainted with Property Consultant Lina, whose job is to bring forward premises-strategies, to help customers figure out how to use their premises and how they should be developed to function optimally. She seems calm and confident as she enters the room. A short while into the interview her passion for sustainability becomes evident as she talks of the organisation’s responsibility on this planet and their huge potential of helping others.

In the late afternoon the authors meet with the last interviewee of the day; Project Leader Ulrika who, like Lisa, is a long-committed employee who has been working at T&P for nine years. She gives direct yet reflective answers and often speaks of ‘gaps’ between situation and reaction, showing her capability of deep behavioural analysis.
4.1.1 The Mindfulness Journey

Lisa was introduced to mindfulness through work about five-six years ago. Back then she was part of the management board, whose members were the first ones to get involved. Lisa laughs while telling the story:

“Torbjörn (CEO) asked if we were interested in a leadership program with mindfulness focus and we said yes, blissfully unaware of the fundamental change it would bring.”

(Lisa)

The CEO had practiced mindfulness for about 15 years and longed for an organisational culture where every single employee could be ‘a hundred percent who they are’; an organisation focused on individual values. The CBMT, consisting of both meditation and exercises, is not obligatory but she has continued practicing ever since. The few who did resist the development have eventually chosen to leave the company however, the vast majority of responses were positive. Lisa describes how several of her colleagues were intrigued by the program and asked if they could join too. Lina tells us that, through mindfulness, she experienced an enhanced capability of separating thought and action and identified the so called ‘gap’ in between.

“By creating space based on emotion and thoughts I allow myself room to think about what is happening and why I want to act in a certain way.” (Lina)

This capability has not only improved interaction between colleagues but also towards customers. Ulrika says that if employees are in balance and in good health this will affect the customers as well and if everyone at T&P feels this way, she believes it contributes to a more sustainable workplace. In addition, customers are clearly curious about their mindfulness training and have shown interest in learning what they are doing.

Moreover, mindfulness has brought a sense of acceptance in difficult situations. Lisa admits that she thought the main result of mindfulness training would be to learn how to focus on one task before tackling the next but that was not the result at all in her opinion,
rather she can more easily accept her way of being and that she is not perfect. This enhanced awareness made her more thoughtful, not only of herself but also of the surroundings and of how her actions affect other people. As a result, she became more empathic, more thoughtful and careful. Lisa also thinks she used to be more naive before because she thought she knew everything. Now she has realised there are multiple perspectives to take into consideration and she is more concerned not to step on anyone's toes. She does not really believe there are any negative side effects to mindfulness training, however in some ways she wishes she could go back to a carefree state of mind.

4.1.2 Change

All three respondents think that change and innovation are very significant for their organisational culture; to constantly think about what they could do better. In fact, customers often request new things, forcing the company to understand more about new areas.

“It is really important; we need to be alert and innovative and problem solvers in every project.” (Ulrika)

For internal projects it is up to the employees to take hold of situations where change is needed. Lisa says ideas ‘pop and bubble’ everywhere however, she admits, they have to improve communication about new initiatives. Lina confirms, saying that, with their busy schedules, innovative ideas are not coordinated which leads to inefficiencies; sometimes someone has a bright idea and wants to implement it, only to realise it already exists. Despite this downside, the choice to leave the hierarchical structure was to avoid having 65 people sitting with their arms crossed and rather enable everyone to take active part in the organisation. Today, T&P understands that initiatives should come from the people who are actually experiencing the problem.
4.1.3 Culture

When Lina first started working for Tenant & Partner, the culture was a lot harder, more focused on performance and highly goal-oriented. Previously, those who managed to sell the biggest shares of projects were considered the best performers. It was so much more about achieving a certain level before the end of the calendar year but after the implementation of mindfulness all of that felt irrelevant; instead they started focusing on finding patterns and discovering trends. Currently, it is more about supporting colleagues and contributing to the organisational development.

“*The company has grown so much, not just in terms of employees but in terms of awareness. We have progressed in a direction where we work a lot with values - our own values and the company’s values, and our business idea and vision didn’t feel like it mapped with the new alignment*” (Ulrika)

Before, their vision was to be the world leading tenant consultant which also felt utterly irrelevant after the implementation of mindfulness. Today, it is much more about doing better things in order to have a positive effect on stakeholders and contribute to a more sustainable planet. Lisa explains that the greatest challenge for her is to manage the company in the best possible way, keep employees and customers happy, while benefitting society as much as possible and being a profitable business.

Moreover, they focus more on what someone is doing well, rather than what they are doing badly, and how they can utilise people's passions and competences. This has resulted in employees daring to show themselves more vulnerable and to share their faults.

“*Our strategic platform is built on trust and authenticity and we appreciate each other for who we are; that everyone has different abilities and that all of us truly believe in the idea of developing ‘value-creating workplaces’. ”* (Lisa)
The respondents use ‘transparency’, ‘trust’, ‘development’ and ‘self-leadership’ as keywords in the company; and Lina describes an organisational culture of togetherness and kindness.

“I believe many people here think of Tenant & Partner as a great workplace and want to spread that experience to others, it is our mission and what we attempt to do for our customers. [...] The organisational culture is essential for work performance; there is an understanding for making mistakes and it is that sense of safety that allows me to radiate confidence and be present with customers, knowing that I have the best support possible.” (Lina)

4.1.4 Leadership

Lina experienced a rather grand change in the managers and their relationship to employees since starting CBMT. As managers got better at communicating, the entire work environment improved and ultimately made them all work better together. Her experience is that managers learnt to be present, even under pressure and stress. She believes they were able to have constructive dialogues in a way that had not existed before, making discussions more efficient and solving problems much faster. About one-two years ago, when the hierarchical management structure started feeling outdated, the leadership group decided to make a complete remodel of the system and replaced it with ‘self-leadership’, a ‘network structure’ and a system without traditional managers and hierarchies.

“With that change I felt like we went from a problem-oriented company to a solution-oriented company over night.” (Lina)

4.1.5 Stakeholder Engagement

Today, Ulrika feels like T&P is a much more friendly company compared to when she started working, and she believes this feeling is applicable to everyone in the company.
According to her, mindfulness led to a more open and sharing culture, which she believes have made it easier to talk about more intimate topics among employees.

“We dare to show ourselves vulnerable in a much broader sense and we dare to share our flaws.” (Lisa)

She further describes that there is no condescending talk about colleagues in the workplace, on the contrary people are open and comfortable talking to anyone, and if there is a dinner or conference it does not matter who they sit next to. She finds it is important that newly hired employees get the same opportunity to practice mindfulness to avoid any gap between new and routined employees. At the same time, it is equally important that routined employees continue the training in order to keep the practice alive, and not to fall back into old habits. In addition, Lisa believes the practice of mindfulness has given the company a greater understanding of the volatility of life and the acceptance of ups and downs, both in terms of private life and of organisational performance. Moreover, they communicate a lot about mindfulness to the surrounding world, and many of those contacting T&P seeking employment are already on that track and often have a sustainability-oriented way of thinking.

4.1.6 The Sustainability Journey

Tenant & Partner used to have an external sustainability consultant up until two and a half years ago, when Lina became responsible for the organisational sustainability. The position was created due to their intention of influencing society in a better direction. Sustainable development makes the company more attractive as a partner, due to the growing interest among organisations, and creates value for employees who feel proud of what they are doing. Given her new role, she tries to talk about sustainability in inspiring ways and to awaken the sustainability question early on, otherwise time and money are often prioritised. At the same time, mindfulness gives them the ability to pause and observe the world which makes it easier to feel engaged. Ulrika explains that sustainable thinking is of great value for the company, something that became more evident about two-three years ago when the goals and visions of the company were updated. Particularly
in relation to their new alignment where the whole society is to be considered as a central part of their work.

“We have a planet that need to survive for our children and grandchildren and if we can we want to contribute to that.” (Ulrika)

Some examples of T&P’s sustainability work are to increase biking, handle waste and look over sustainable and environmentally certified material options for new rental agreements. In addition, Lina is developing tools to help the organisation make more sustainable choices in projects. She is also involved in development projects in the industry to drive the sustainability mindset. These efforts are communicated to customers and as such they are capable of affecting people outside their organisation.

Furthermore, Ulrika believes that it is vital for businesses to be open for changes that creates positive long-term outcomes for all stakeholders. T&P has been working with its values, both personal and organisational, to fit the new business idea. Also, with mindfulness Ulrika feels like the general awareness for sustainability has increased. Additionally, customers’ demand for sustainability has increased during the past year, showing their appreciation and interest in the subject. Lisa adds that from a work perspective, it is not only about the planet but also about human beings, and it is primarily in this aspect she feels sustainability issues have been highlighted at the company.

4.2 Yasuragi

Yasuragi is located in a calm and beautiful area of Nacka Municipality and when approaching you walk through a lush forest and then the traditional Japanese red gates, torii. From the entrance, you are overwhelmed by the soothing Japanese-inspired atmosphere, the wonderful scents, and the luxurious furnishings.

Upon arriving at Yasuragi we are greeted by Jimmy who immediately gives us a warm welcome and radiates his light-hearted energy. After a quick tour around the building he invites us to sit down in one of their conference rooms. As we start the interview he is
relaxed and recumbent in his chair; he looks happy. Jimmy has been in his role as Spa Manager, or ‘director of the Japanese spa’ as they call it internally, for almost eight years and is today taking care of a bit over 100 employees in total. He smiles when we ask him about the fundamental values for Yasuragi and he mentions keywords like tranquillity, calmness and the Japanese DNA.

Later we meet Liza who is perceived as a composed, laid back and confident person; she takes her time before reacting but gives direct answers. She keeps referring to the company as the ‘house’ which she describes as a familiar, down-to-earth environment. They strive for the same goals throughout departments and do not feel any division among these. The bottom-line for Yasuragi is that employees feel good when they are at work which permeates through the whole house and affects interactions with customers. Liza has been working at Yasuragi for about two years as Property Director and is also in charge of Sustainability.

For the last meeting of the day we meet Sunniva, CEO at Yasuragi since 2015. She walks into the conference room with a sense of calmness, her voice is resolved yet gentle and from the very beginning she is perceived as a mindful and compassionate person. When asked about the organisation's fundamental values, she states without hesitation:

“It is to make the world to a better place for everyone. It is our job.” (Sunniva)

4.2.1 The Mindfulness Journey

The mindfulness program was introduced around four years ago and has ever since been mandatory for the management teams followed by voluntary training for other employees; being a spa offering yoga and mindfulness classes the practice has not been limited to the management. At Yasuragi it is common practice to start meetings with a short meditation led by Jimmy, who has been specially trained to hold these sessions. He says that it boosts effectiveness since it gives people a chance to become more present and let go of stress and anxiety for a moment.
After the mindfulness program, Liza’s way of working has changed as she finds it is easier to restructure and prioritise, overall she feels calmer. Also, she is no longer as scared of changes since she can more easily focus on the bigger picture and see its potential. Being more mindful, Liza also realised that work is not everything.

“I feel I give more value to life.” (Liza)

Sunniva tells us the choice of mindfulness was out of fortuities and that, regardless of the tool used, she believes they would have achieved a similar outcome. She admits that the training is very costly but, since she started practicing, she finds herself to be happier and more conscious than before. She also says it is easier to think things through rather than react instinctively.

4.2.2 Change

On May 1st 2017, Yasuragi closed down the Japanese spa for eight months due to a total renovation of the building with the goal of opening a new and improved spa that would be noticed on the European market. During the renovation period great focus was on strategic choices and on starting a culture of trust and respect. Indeed, all respondents find a substantial difference between Yasuragi before and after the restoration. The feeling of trust and community among workers has increased a lot, they have meetings where they discuss these topics and they practise how to communicate better. Liza adds that they have introduced a unanimous uniform, regardless of one's position and department, which impacted the organisation a lot by bringing managers and employees closer together.

4.2.3 Culture

Early in the interview Sunniva starts talking about Yasuragi’s cultural journey; this organisational change started around three-four years ago with the will to work inside-out.
“We stopped dividing people into segments like customers, employees and so on; we started talking about human beings.” (Sunniva)

They realised that leaders had an overwhelming workload and started thinking about self-leadership since it gives leaders time to develop and to focus on creating trust. Hence, the decision to train co-workers on emotional intelligence, and mindfulness became their tool. She describes it as a bumpy road nevertheless it gave positive results from the early stages. Beyond increases in efficiency, calmness increased and employee’s private life improved; they became more aware of the impact they had on other individuals. Employees started talking about issues which therefore got resolved easier. She believes decisions are nowadays taken out of calmer situations which inherently leads to wiser decisions. Indeed, all interviewees mentioned an enormous cultural shift in the past years; the words used to describe the current culture are loving, trust, reliance and safety.

4.2.4 Leadership

The CEO talks about the board’s dedication to mindfulness, how they have been observing the whole process closely and how they are supporting and motivating each other despite resistance and hesitation. With the CBMT it got easier to find the organisation's core values and to find a meaning in their work; to make the world a better place for everyone. Indeed, everyone that comes to Yasuragi, regardless of his/her relation to the company has the right to feel good when s(he) leaves. Personally, she has become more aware of the power of being a leader and its impact on the whole organisation as well as of her body language. Indeed, she does not want to let anyone out of her office with stomach-ache because she is having a bad day or for any other reason. Liza defines sustainable leadership as leading by example and listening to employees. Given her visibility in the house, she believes this to be very impactful. Since practising mindfulness, she is more present as a leader both in meetings and in everyday work, and she has become more mindful of the importance of her own wellbeing in order to do her job efficiently. Also, Jimmy talks about the importance of communication, the significance to live and learn and to always be there for employees to make sure that there is no ‘we vs. them’ feeling between employees and managers or different departments.
Indeed, his office is strategically located down at the spa in order to be approachable to his co-workers.

Sunniva also plays a great role in Yasuragi’s commitment to society as she is taking an active role to spread the importance of emotional intelligence and of self-leadership in the workplace. She therefore holds lectures about their work and successes with the aim of inspiring other leaders and organisations.

“I find it to be extremely important. It is my personal vision to leave a footprint in the Swedish business industry so that we become good leaders [...] My generation must make the way for a world for you to live in and let you have a good workplace; after all we spend 70% of our time at work. So, we must change the way of leading.” (Sunniva)

She explains how other businesses and leaders listen eagerly because of how profitable Yasuragi is; there is a misconception that if you deal with soft values (caring for your people) you cannot be profitable. Since the company combines soft leadership with high profitability, they create a new business model. As Sunniva is now completing her journey at Yasuragi she feels confident the work she initiated will only grow stronger.

“I opened the door, but it would never have been possible without everyone’s commitment; now it lays in the culture and it spreads around.” (Sunniva)

4.2.5 Stakeholder Engagement

Sunniva tells us about the last office party where, to her surprise, everyone was so close to each other despite the space available. Indeed, there was no division among departments or small groups of friends, which Sunniva believes to be extremely rare in organisations. There is a cohesion among co-workers and a familiar environment permeates in the house. Liza feels that employees who practice mindfulness have the ability to open up, which is important for the sense of community they have.

“You notice that everyone is incredibly proud to be working at Yasuragi.” (Jimmy)
Employees are incentivised to come up with new ideas as they are the ones encountering day to day operations. The management welcomes any sort of new idea and none is rejected because, as explained by Sunniva, bad ideas often lead to good ones. Moreover, staff normally welcomes and trusts the undertaken decisions because they know these have been thought through.

According to Liza, they want staff to be engaged in sustainability and to drive changes. Therefore, surveys are sent to employees, in order to measure their knowledge in sustainability, and to customers, to measure their perception of Yasuragi’s work. In addition, Jimmy explains that in 2012 they started holding yearly conferences with sustainability focus where exhibitors were challenged to describe their sustainability work. In fact, he can see that their sustainability work has a ripple effect since many companies look up to Yasuragi. The same thing applies to their suppliers as the size of Yasuragis’ deliveries forces their suppliers to become more innovative and sustainability oriented as they push for more environmentally friendly products. Every year there is also a control where suppliers have to fill out a form, to check their alignment with Yasuragi’s requirements.

4.2.6 The Sustainability Journey

Sustainability has been at the core of the company for many years with focus on four branches: economic, leadership, social and environmental. Environmental sustainability is very important for Yasuragi and is one of the six guiding principles for brand development, through which all decisions have to pass. A couple of weeks before the author’s visit, solar panels were installed on the roof, providing an example of their focus on long-term investments. Yasuragi is also SVANEN and ISO 14001 certified.

Before renovating the SPA, Yasuragi had a sustainability manager position which was later incorporated into Liza’s role. The thought was to refine already established changes rather than working on new ones. However, Liza admits the lack of time from her side which recently led to the recruitment of a Sustainability Supervisor. She believes
sustainability has been a strong focus throughout the renovation process while sustainability focus in daily activities has unfortunately been decreasing. The hope however, is that the new supervisor will make it a priority again. Afterall, they have been working actively on long-term sustainability investments all along, showing that the topic has not been completely set aside, yet the lack of time resulted in less engaged staff.
5 Analysis

This section reflects on the data from the empirical findings and is divided into three parts; the first two parts analyse each case separately and the third analyses across the cases. It presents an analysis on how corporate based mindfulness training affects sustainability adoption and influences organisational change.

5.1 Tenant & Partner

5.1.1 The Mindfulness Journey

From the interviews, it is evident that employees at Tenant & Partner are experiencing fundamental changes resulting from their mindfulness training. Nevertheless, respondents did not experience all the expected outcomes based on the literature. For example, rather than increasing the ability to stay focused (Hougaard et al., 2016), respondents found that mindfulness acted as a tool to accept the current situation for what it was and to not overthink it. Even more interesting, is the fact that Lisa noticed the gap between expectation and actual outcome showing her capability of deep analysis and reflection of her behaviour, which is also characteristics of mindfulness (Purser & Milillo, 2014).

Respondents also experienced heightened contemplation and empathy (Bryant & Wildi, 2008) which have made employees observant of the world around them and of the people affected by their actions (Purser & Milillo, 2014). As such, a clear linkage between the CBMT and a new openness to other perspectives can be observed as well as a consideration for others’ welfare on a broader scale (Powietrzyńska et al, 2015).
5.1.2 Change

Mindfulness brought about a complete organisational change as T&P’s values and culture were progressively remodelled and the traditional hierarchical management was removed to be replaced with a flat-organisational structure (Heery & Noon, 2017). Judging by the way the story is told, it seems likely that the need to change the old hierarchical system was a consequence of mindfulness training, rather than a planned or expected outcome (Maimone & Sinclair, 2014). The resistance throughout the change process was low, however it unfolded in a very natural way. There was no particular strategy to tackle employees who could not identify themselves with the new culture, rather the problem got solved on its own as these individuals chose to leave the company (Oreg, 2003). The authors believe that the size of the company and the overall cohesive and proactive mindset might have played a role in this outcome (Vogus & Sutcliffe, 2012).

5.1.3 Culture

Furthermore, Tenant & Partner previously had general values for everyone at the company, but after the introduction of mindfulness they became more interested in individual values (Brown & Kasser, 2005) and more curious about their employees and their particular passions. It seems they became more aware of the uniqueness among their employees and thus wanted them to take more space while feeling encouraged to be exactly who they are. This shift shows that their previous traditional structure had to some extent prevented the company from developing. Indeed, with the new system they became more purpose driven than profit driven, changing the organisational culture completely (Hendersen et al., 2015).

5.1.4 Leadership

The new structure allowed the company to break the traditional way of operating from top to bottom. Managers became more relatable after being brought to the same level as everyone else and as a consequence, employees felt more comfortable in the workplace
Moreover, the change in management structure resulted in ideas starting to emerge from all directions (Maimone & Sinclair, 2014) which resulted in increased openness (Fredrickson et al., 2008), engagement (Vogus & Sutcliffe, 2012), creativity (Bryant & Wildi, 2008) and flexibility (Maimone & Sinclair, 2014).

5.1.5 Stakeholder Engagement

With the new organisational culture respondents noticed a blossom of appreciative inquiry as focus shifted from what they were doing bad to what they were doing good and thus felt more appreciated at work (Vogus & Sutcliffe, 2012). As such, it seems mindfulness provided an appropriate tool to comprehend how compassion and positivity could be used to achieve higher employee wellbeing (Jacob & Brinkerhoff, 1999). The authors also perceive that this cultural change allowed workers to look inside and share their internal journeys which resulted in an increased sense of togetherness (Bryant & Wildi, 2008). The fact that they were all going through a common journey got them closer to each other and allowed them to freely express themselves, further enhancing employee wellbeing (Hülsheger et al., 2013).

Furthermore, the enhanced sense of reflectivity and openness has shown to improve respondents’ communication skills with people in their surroundings in terms of control, calm and confidence. As such, mindfulness seems to have provided an overall reception and service improvement for customers (Hougaard et al., 2016), to the point that they are reaching out and actively initiating engagement (Freire-Suarez, 2014). Moreover, it is evident that employees at Tenant & Partner have high ambitions for the company and want to affect society in a positive way. Lisa described how society became a central part of their vision after the implementation of mindfulness (Shah, 2019). In addition, the way all three respondents talk about sustainability implies awareness regarding the company's potential in society; creating positive ripple effects through their work which is further strengthened by their mission of creating meaningful workplaces for their customers (Doppelt, 2003).
5.1.6 The Sustainability Journey

Environmental sustainability has not been a priority as of late. However, as mindfulness has raised urgency of the issues (Ericson et al., 2014), commitment and initiatives are implemented in terms of internalising sustainability at the company (Tilt, 2006). As stated in the empirical findings, Lina was the first employee to be assigned a sustainability position after the previous external consultant. This is a great step as sustainability is being further incorporated into the business (Caprar & Neville, 2012), but it is still in the infancy phase and thus very limited. It is possible that comprehensive knowledge about the environmental pillar is lacking and has therefore not been implemented into the core of the business yet. Nevertheless, all three pillars of sustainability are present to some extent and employees have a more or less comprehensive understanding of what it entails.

“We create workspaces that add value to the user, and we integrate solutions that are effective both for people and the planet” (Tenant & Partner, n.d.)

In fact, when it comes to decision making sustainability is said to be a vital factor (Tenant & Partner, n.d). However, as the company had a more performance driven structure before the implementation of mindfulness it is evident that they previously had a much bigger economic focus compared to the remaining two pillars of sustainability; environment and society (Elkington, 1998).

Furthermore, Lina talks about an ‘innovation force’ in companies today which makes them capable of creating a more purpose driven business, operating to contribute to a better world throughout the process of developing workplaces for their customers; also referred to as a circular business model (Siqueira & Pitassi, 2016). From her words it can be perceived that it is a question of responsibility and long-term scope, which enables Tenant & Partner to create shared value and actively strive for organisational sustainability (Bateh et al., 2013). It is hard to say at what level Tenant & Partner would have been considering sustainability without her. However, from the empirical findings, it is evident that mindfulness makes it hard for them to ignore the urgency of sustainable development, as it opens up the mind to a long-term perspective and becomes a tool to observe the world; in other words a good base for sustainability (Ericson et al., 2014).
5.2 Yasuragi

5.2.1 The Mindfulness Journey

The mindfulness journey has greatly impacted Yasuragi and its employees as the practice raises both external and internal awareness, rather than being limited to stress reduction (Purser & Milillo, 2014). Indeed, beyond enhanced efficiency, the authors observed increased life-contentment, empathy and the development of a bond among employees (Bryant & Wildi, 2008). The more relaxed climate led to more thought through decisions, affecting organisational performance as well (Van Gordon et al., 2014).

5.2.2 Change

It is clear from the empirical findings that mindfulness is related to the cultural change Yasuragi has been experiencing. Talking with the CEO, it is revealed that mindfulness was implemented with the underlying aim of increasing empathy and social skills of co-workers; hence it is the scenario of planned organisational change (Al-Haddad & Kotnour, 2015). The initiative came from the top, specifically from the board, and it can be observed it coincides with Sunniva’s entrance in the company. This may not be a coincidence as, based on the respondents’ answers and the researchers’ impressions encountering the CEO, it seems feasible that this change was driven by her.

Moreover, Sunniva and the board were mindful throughout the change process. They were aware of the possible outcomes and carefully observed reactions in order to open up for dialogue with the remaining staff (Al-Haddad & Kotnour, 2015). Thus, employees were able to get involved, which also made them more inclined to adapt to the upcoming changes (Peccei et al., 2011). Some degree of resistance to change was inevitable (Oreg, 2003) but, despite the first difficulties, the board continued to motivate and involve staff. This demonstrates the importance of decisive leadership to achieve a successful outcome (Battilana et al., 2010).
Taking advantage of the already changing physical environment and the renewal of staff, Yasuragi introduced new values, routines and structures. This prevented resistance to change as a recently hired employee is more open to a new working routine and a new working environment since s/he is facing transformation regardless, rather than a long-serving employee who already has a set of routines (Oreg, 2003).

Liza and Jimmy, being former employees, had the opportunity to stay throughout and after the renovation. In this case, mindfulness seems to have acted as an effective tool to prevent resistance to change as practitioners may have acquired brain flexibility and are consequently more open and more prone to changes (Powietrzyńska et al., 2015). In fact, the authors observed a sense of deepness, openheartedness and thoughtfulness as respondents were capable of thinking beyond their individual interest, which ultimately bolstered their cognitive flexibility, psychological resiliency and willingness to give up old habits (Oreg, 2003).

5.2.3 Culture

A significant outcome of CBMT is the creation of a culture based on trust and openness which, in a very short time, got to the core of the company (Brown & Kasser, 2005). Furthermore, the training enhanced employees’ engagement and their adoption of the changes (Furst & Cable, 2008). This is the bottom-line for long-term sustainability practices (McKinsey, 2014), however it is important to note that mindfulness alone cannot bring about changes of this scale since a proactive environment and the support of leaders are needed (Siqueira & Pitassi, 2016).

One of the efforts to achieve this state was the introduction of an identical uniform for everyone regardless of their position. Even though the respondents were on managerial levels at the company, it was impossible for the authors to spot their professional position only from their clothes.

Many times, leaders are perceived as distant but looking alike made them seem more approachable (Battilana et al., 2010). Moreover, as leaders are trained on how their role
relates to the new organisational culture, they are more mindful of their impact and the importance of listening and having a dialogue. In fact, employees are likely to see their leaders as role models and be reluctant to embrace changes unless managers embrace the culture first and practice what they preach (Northouse, 2007).

5.2.4 Leadership

Another factor that triggered the introduction of CBMT was the will to focus further on self-leadership (or sustainable leadership as it is called internally) which consists of developing cognisance about the self and the ability to look inside in order to better control your feelings and actions (Bryant & Kazan, 2019). Thus, it is possible that the previous years’ work on self-leadership was necessary to prepare for this change both in terms of the board’s openness and of the culture (Caprar & Neville, 2012). Yasuragi has been working with self-leadership since 2012 (Yasuragi, 2012) but mindfulness was not introduced until 2015. All respondents confirm that this is where things started shifting for real. In order for leaders to develop their emotional awareness, dedication of time is needed (Bryant & Kazan, 2019), and this was delivered with the mind program. But again, it seems that Sunniva is responsible for bringing the work on self-leadership to the next level, stressing even further the pivotal role she played in the whole change process (Battilana et al., 2010). In fact, she states:

“Self-leadership, personal responsibility and compassionate leadership is the only right way of making people feel good [...]. It is not something hazy rather something every wise, business-oriented, leader must take into consideration” (Yasuragi, 2016).

5.2.5 Stakeholder Engagement

The initial spur was to improve customer’s experience at Yasuragi since, as reported on the spa’s website, “customers is what matters the most to us”. They realised that to make others feel better it is important to feel good yourself first hence the decision to invest on employee wellbeing in terms of mindfulness (Yasuragi, 2016). As such, the will to have a positive influence on a broader scale can be observed. Moreover, respondents
experienced effects on many layers of stakeholders, like families and friends and other businesses (Waugh & Fredrickson, 2006): as stated it spreads like rings on water. The CEO explained that the introduction of CBMT coincided with the shift of focus to ‘people’ instead of classifying them into categories.

5.2.6 The Sustainability Journey

Yasuragi’s engagement within sustainability is well known (Nordström, 2012) and the company’s proactivity has been recognised by numerous awards in regard to their working environment and their environmental commitment (Yasuragi, n.d.). Moreover, the mindfulness journey seems to have deepened the social pillar of sustainability as leaders are more mindful of their impact and of the importance to feel good at work (Hougaard & Carter, 2018). As Sunniva stated, it made the company’s vision clear and made employees connect deeper with this (Brown & Kasser, 2005).

Of interest is that, with the reopening, the role of a Sustainability Manager was taken out and as a consequence environmental sustainability has been decreasing ‘on the floor’. However, the decision did not appear to be the result of lost interest in sustainability, rather it seemed like the aim was to strengthen it. The intention was to internalise it into all leadership positions, but the workload and the intensity of the changes caused a shift of focus. Nevertheless, they seem to be mindful about this and to take proactive decisions like re-employing a sustainability supervisor (Cranfield School of Management, 2012). It seems feasible that these new circumstances led to sustainability being even more at the core of the company as the new culture was set. Diminishing the environmental sustainability could be a reaction to new circumstances hence it may be just a phase. Indeed, they state:

“The training leads, among many things, to better decision making, stronger teamwork, it brings sustainable development and improves the social working environment”

(Yasuragi, 2016).
5.3 Comparison

5.3.1 The Mindfulness Journey

For both cases, it can be observed that the role of leadership and CEOs personal interest in mindfulness have been major factors for introducing and going through with changes (Gioia et al., 2013). Furthermore, introducing changes in an organisation might arise uncertainties and hesitation among employees, and the active role leaders have taken in creating new and creative visions has proved important for a successful implementation (Thompson, 1967). This has, without doubt, turned them into key people in the organisations and employees’ level of trust in their leaders is perceived as very high.

As discussed in the separate cases, the outcomes of CBMT are alike also in the sense of the positive enhancements in employee engagement (Hülsheger et al., 2013) and organisational culture (Wamsler et al., 2018). However, the nature of the outcomes differs in terms of planned versus unplanned organisational change as shown in the figure below (figure 2). In the case of Tenant & Partner the restructure of the old managerial hierarchies started about a year ago, although the company had already gone through a complete cultural transformation which had been ongoing since the implementation of mindfulness in 2013 (Tenant & Partner, n.d.). In turn, being a case of planned organisational change, Yasuragi had a clearer path (see 5.2.2) as the company introduced mindfulness with the intentional aim of connecting to their core values which naturally led to more holistic sustainability. As such, it can be observed that both cases, despite different journeys, end up with enhanced sustainability adoption.

Figure 2. Timeline overview of the two case studies.
The training is however costly and has been possible to undermine for both Tenant & Partner and Yasuragi because of their strong economic foundations. Hence, it can be interpreted that in order for corporate mindfulness to be relevant, a company has to be doing well financially in the first place. This means that other companies, who do not have the same financial securities or do not exist to make a profit, might miss out on the opportunity of implementing CBMT and the positive outcomes it brings. Thus, in a corporate context mindfulness training can currently be seen as a ‘luxury’ or ‘elitist’ feature for companies rather than a practical tool for enhancing sustainability adoption.

Furthermore, considering that the procedure of finding companies on the Swedish market that are practicing CBMT was proven difficult it is fair to say that, although on the rise, it is still a new phenomenon on the market. Thus, a common denominator for the two cases is that they are both early adopters. The term early adopter indicates a person or a business who uses a new technology or product (in this case CBMT) before others and is likely to pay more than others for it (Rogers, 2003). In other words, implementing mindfulness training in companies today is a unique feature despite all the existing research showing a vast number of positive outcomes (Bryant & Wildi, 2008; Fredrickson et al., 2008; Hülsheger et al., 2013; Van Gordon et al., 2014). Although this would be a logical step, investment of time and money into employees’ emotional intelligence, meaning a set of competences that influence how individuals feel and interact (Goleman, 1998), is still in the infancy phase. This shows that already before incorporating mindfulness training the companies had a forward thinking and a mindset open to trying out new methods and strategies, something that also connects to the likelihood of the process of adopting sustainability (Caprar & Neville, 2012).

5.3.2 Change

The appearance of the changes differs between the cases (planned or unplanned) yet, what is interesting is the fact that for both cases organisational change occurs after introducing corporate mindfulness. For Yasuragi, the change was planned and the reconstruction of the spa was seen as an opportunity to restructure the whole organisational culture.
Mindfulness then became a useful and successful tool in focusing on emotional intelligence. For Tenant & Partner, the change to a flat organisation became a reaction to the culture that evolved from the new focus on mindfulness and employee wellbeing. This in turn made old firm structures seemingly misplaced and this gap between the new corporate mindset and the old firm structure can then be seen as one factor leading up to the need for organisational restructure.

Moreover, as both companies are of smaller size, it is possible that they had a stronger opportunity to implement CBMT into the whole organisation. The holistic distribution of CBMT can thus be an explanation for the success in changing the organisation and an attempt to avoid clashes between mindfulness practitioners and non-practitioners (Vogus & Sutcliffe, 2012).

5.3.3 Culture

Looking closer, it seems that in both cases a human-centred mindset was already present intrinsically. For instance, Yasuragi was working on self-leadership before the introduction of mindfulness, yet it is with the introduction of mindfulness that it got cohesively implemented. As individuals dedicated more time to reflect, they achieved self-development and got connected to their core values. Hence, one of the most valuable gifts of mindfulness seems to be the ability to stop and self-reflect, since many times busy schedules hinder individuals from noticing the present state of mind (Kabat-Zinn, 2015).

Moreover, both organisations experienced changes in the organisational culture, which is the bottom-line to meet the current sustainability challenges (Tilt, 2006; Wals & Schwarzin, 2012). However, the process of adopting sustainability differs vastly among the companies (see 5.1.6 & 5.2.6) and may be explained by the cultural differences among the cases (Caprar & Neville, 2012), which got unearthed once mindfulness was introduced.
5.3.4 Leadership

In both cases, the hierarchical system deflated as it did not make sense any longer. This is most evident for Tenant & Partner who completely abandoned the traditional hierarchical system. However, the fact that Yasuragi uses a uniform work outfit for all employees and managers no matter the position, is a clear statement that they are as well suppressing the old hierarchical structures to enhance self-leadership. This shows that employee engagement, being one aspect of stakeholder engagement, plays a key role for both cases in influencing organisational change (Furst & Cable, 2008).

However, the divergent nature of change led the process to be implemented with different levels of awareness. While Yasuragi has more of a clear management processes with conscious goals, T&P seems to handle opportunities as they appear thus decisions seem to be less consciously connected compared to a context of planned organisational change. Based on existing literature, leaders play an important role in how change is embraced (see 2.4.2) hence how you lead is important and will highly affect the outcomes of the changes. Yet, it is interesting to observe that despite divergences in managing the process, both cases led surprisingly to similar results (see figure 2).

5.3.5 Stakeholder Engagement

At both companies, the practice of mindfulness enhanced awareness about the variety of stakeholders’ interests. For example, the need of employee wellbeing in order to secure customers’ satisfaction and the need to take environmental responsibility to secure future generations’ wellbeing. Despite the complexity, these are essential for successful sustainability implementation. In both cases, these were gradually integrated into the operations (Moizer & Tracey, 2010) thanks to the cooperation of actors like management, employees and suppliers.

Moreover, mindfulness greatly improved employee wellbeing. Yet, it can be observed that there is a risk for clashes appearing between employees undergoing CBMT and those who are not. Despite the training being optional, people who are no longer mentally in
line with the new company template, who are in a state of cognitive rigidity or reluctant
to giving up old habits (Oreg, 2003) may feel disconnected from the rest of the
organisation (Furst & Cable, 2008).

5.3.6 The Sustainability Journey

Taking a closer look, the pre-existing open and innovative mindset could also be a reason
for adopting sustainable thinking into the organisations (Caprar & Neville, 2012).
Already in 2012, before introducing mindfulness, Yasuragi worked with sustainability in
the project ‘Feel good, do good’ (Yasuragi, 2012); confirming this mindset (Caprar &
Neville, 2012). Likewise, Tenant & Partner’s proactivity and positive work environment
could be spotted already in 2010, being awarded first place in ‘Great Place to Work’
(Tenant & Partner, n.d.). As sustainability has already been constituting the business
actions, the introduction of mindfulness can be seen as a way of bringing their
sustainability work to the next level while it could also be the other way around (Haxhi
& van Ees., 2010).

Yet, interesting enough, the sustainability focus in terms of environmental sustainability
decreased for both cases at some point. In both companies there used to exist a
sustainability manager (Yasuragi) or external sustainability consultant (T&P), whose
primary focus was to drive these types of questions in the daily operations but currently
both organisations are operating without a specialised manager/consultant. From one
viewpoint this might be seen as a step back for the companies as they do no longer have
anyone specialised in the area. However, it can also be observed that the sustainability
paradigm has been internalised into the companies’ culture to the extent that these issues
are still addressed in daily operations. This means that knowledge and drive for
sustainability have not necessarily been lost, considering the pre-existing mindset
(Cranfield School of Management, 2012). Moreover, both cases currently seem willing
to take their sustainability work to the next level which has resulted in Lina becoming
responsible for sustainability within Tenant & Partner, and a sustainability supervisor
about to be employed in Yasuragi.
5.4 Closing the Gap

To summarise, a model (see figure 3) has been derived from the findings and the existing literature. The cases show how corporate mindfulness training leads to stakeholder engagement as it makes individuals more empathic and connected to core values (see figure 3: 1a). This development is interconnected to organisational change as engaged individuals are more likely to change behaviours and adapt to new situations. Which, in turn, results in even deeper stakeholder engagement due to the enhanced sense of community and openness in the workplace (see figure 3: 2). Furthermore, CBMT has also shown to be directly connected to organisational change as the need of new values and culture becomes unearthed (see figure 3: 1b). As such, the integration of organisational change and stakeholder engagement leads, in both cases, to the adoption of sustainability (see figure 3: 3).

Figure 3. Mindfulness-Sustainability Nexus Model (MSNM).
6 Conclusion

In this section the key findings of this study are presented, and the two research questions are answered.

To conclude, the findings suggest that corporate mindfulness is connected to change processes and sustainability adoption; in fact, all these three elements appear to be interrelated. The practice of mindfulness seems to enhance awareness also within the social and environmental spheres; respondents became more aware of their impact on others, both as leaders and individuals, and of their role to secure a planet for future generations. However, as emerged from the existing literature, corporate mindfulness can also be used as a tool to create a lucrative business where the only purpose is to increase efficiency and profit (Purses & Milillo, 2015), and it is therefore vital that ethical values are integrated with the practice in order to reach sustainability related outcomes. A distorted version of mindfulness may otherwise spread to other businesses, altering its philosophy and effects.

RQ1: How does corporate mindfulness training affect sustainability adoption?

Due to an emphasised sense of mental awareness, it appears that respondents could not ignore the sustainability challenges and as a result they inevitably started taking action toward it. In both cases, sustainability was implemented before the CBMT, yet the practice led to a more holistic approach. Mindfulness enhanced the capability of behavioural and perceptual change which are essential aspects of sustainable development (Ericson et al., 2014). Indeed, mindfulness alone cannot endorse the whole process of adopting sustainability, rather the support of leaders and stakeholders’ engagement are needed along with a holistic organisational change; while it is important to note that the pre-existing culture plays an important role in preparing for CBMT implementation and ensuring its success.
RQ 2: What influences does corporate mindfulness have on organisational change?

Mindfulness appears to enhance practitioners’ cognitive flexibility and reflectiveness hence, it becomes easier to think beyond the individual perspective and observe a broader scope of perceptions. In turn, this results in an increased ability to empathise, engage and accept new developments which is further strengthened by wise leaders, meaning leaders who are mindful of their impact on employees and the organisation as a whole. Moreover, a significant outcome of CBMT seems to be the natural development of change processes and the rapidity of which changes are embedded at the core of the organisations. Yet, for changes to be embraced, stratagems along with an environment of openness and engagement are needed.
7 Discussion

This section is used to discuss how the research of this study contributes to existing literature, followed by sections on managerial implications, limitations and suggestions for future research.

7.1 Theoretical Contribution

The study contributes to the existing literature by exploring a newly researched field as it gives a slight indication of the fairly unexplored nexus between corporate mindfulness and sustainability. While Wamsler et al. (2018) argue that mindful individuals are more aware of the social and environmental challenges as well as of their individual impact, this study contributes to the existing theory by arguing that it is also applicable on an organisational level. Moreover, leadership, culture and stakeholder engagement are identified as key actors in the process of influencing changes.

7.2 Managerial Implications

This thesis may be inspiring and beneficial for multiple actors, like companies seeking organisational change, dedicated to enhance their sustainability work. It can also be of interest to leaders aspiring to be more mindful of their impact on employees, other stakeholders and the organisation as a whole. Employees can also be triggered by the empirical findings to grow their own attentiveness and reflectivity. Moreover, it may be relevant for any stakeholder wishing to change the way business is operating.
7.3 Limitations

As the study follows an interpretivist research, the data is to some extent dependent on the researchers’ perceptions of the world and the relation to the topic being studied. A limitation could therefore be the authors themselves; how the verbal information, body language and emotions being expressed by the respondents are interpreted. In addition there may be little or no evidence to support the answers received from the respondents. A question might be answered based on how the respondent wishes (he) would perform or based on what they think the authors want them to say. However, in order to prevent this, open-ended questions have been asked without directing the interviewee.

Furthermore, the authors had little say in the selection of respondents except for the request of at least one interviewee on top management level and two other employees from each company, all undertaken CBMT. The final result was five females and one male respondent, an unbalance between the genders which could result in biased and misleading conclusions.

Another important limitation to bring attention to is the small sample size. As employees and managers from two companies were interviewed and compared, the sample is in fact a poor representation of Swedish organisations. This is due to the difficulties involved in receiving positive responses from the companies contacted. Many of the companies had performed CBMT several years ago and never continued, and thus did not find logic in participating in the research while others just did not have the time to engage in the project. This case study had to consist of no less than two companies in total however, the support of a larger sample would have been welcomed (Collis & Hussey, 2014).

As mindfulness is an internal journey the effects can vary among individuals, and the level of consistency in the practice will affect the outcomes and the personal experience. This limits the study in the sense that it is hard to measure how much “effort” the participants have put into the practice.
7.4 Suggestions for Future Research

Further research on the sustainability-mindfulness nexus is needed in order to understand the full extent of this relationship’s nature and how it expands beyond companies already working with sustainability. The authors suggest future studies to follow cases throughout the whole mindfulness journey, from the very beginning of the mindfulness implementation, and observe the effects in the following years; thereby also performing in-depth research on the role of leadership in such a context. It is also recommended to perform a quantitative study in order to measure changes and overcome said limitations, hence reach a bigger scope. Overall, future research on how mindfulness can drive organisations to become more sustainable would be highly valuable for society by suggesting how companies can adapt faster and more efficiently to the current sustainability challenges of our world. Moreover, the authors acknowledge the need to research the resistance to accept corporate mindfulness, the reason for the rejection and how to overcome it. This is considered important given the issue of employees leaving the company and the need to include other perspective on the CBMT process.
8 References


United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), (2015). *Adoption of the Paris Agreement*. L.9 (1)


9 Appendix

9.1 Interview Questions

Introductory questions

- For how long have you been working in the company?
- What is your title and what is your area of responsibility?
- From your viewpoint, what are the fundamental values in your organisation?
- How would you describe your organisational culture?
  - Would you say this culture affects the firm outcomes? How?
- From your viewpoint, have organisational values and culture been evolving in the past years?
  - In what way?

Imagine the following scenarios

- You/an employee have an innovative suggestion which will reduce the environmental impact of your company. However, it will be costly to transition hence high costs in the first years with long term benefits. How do you think you/your boss and the board would act?
- You get an email by a customer asking more clarification about working conditions in your supply chain. What would you do?
- An employee is particularly stressed and this is affecting the working environment of the whole department. How would you react?
- One day you realise there isn’t a recycling station in your department. What would you do about it? (can you relate to this?)
- The board takes a decision which will affect the way you have always been managing emails. How would you react?
CBMT questions

- When did you start the CBMT?
  o What initiated your decision to participate in the program?
- Have you been practicing mindfulness ever since?
  o Is it up to you or do you have mindfulness scheduled during work?
    - What made your company decide to continue?
    - What made you decide to continue?
- How has the CBMT changed your perception of the meaning of work?
- From your viewpoint, in what way has your attention/presence at work changed?
- What was the greatest change you noticed after completing the program (compared to before)?
  o How did the change become apparent to you?
- How do you feel mindfulness has affected you as an individual?
  o How did it change your work performance?
  o From your viewpoint, how has mindfulness affected your creativity level?
  o How would you say the CBMT has affected your ability to separate work and leisure?
  o Have you experience any side effects?

Management & Leadership questions

- How has it been to drive this change?
- What has been the overall response?
- Have you experienced any resistance to change?
- How do you feel your leadership has affected the work environment and employee wellbeing?

Sustainability questions

- From your viewpoint, how important is innovation in your job?
  o How do you value innovation?
- How would you say new projects or initiatives are usually born in your company?
• How do you communicate between workers about new projects/initiatives?

• In what way do you think it is relevant to engage other parties who are affected by the business practice?

• In your job, who do you collaborate with other parties who are affected/interested in the business practice (stakeholders)?
  o Who do you think are affected (directly and indirectly) by the company’s’ operations?

• From your perspective, what is the greatest challenge you encounter in your job?

• Do you ever discuss sustainability issues with your colleagues?
  o During meetings?
  o Is it on your agenda?

• What does organisational sustainability mean to you?

• From your viewpoint, when did the company start working/caring/acting towards more sustainable performances?

• Do you feel the sustainability work has been evolving?
  o in what way?
  o To what extent is this important to you?