

Södertörn University | The Department of Life Sciences

Master Thesis 30 hp | Environmental Science | Spring 2012

Forming and Communication of an Environmental Identity and Image

– The Case of Riksbyggen

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Abstract

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Stakeholder demands on corporations to take environmental responsibilities are increasing and an environmentally responsible image could add values such as competitive advantage and a better reputation. To create a favorable image the corporation needs to develop a strong and sincere environmental identity that involves the whole organization. The identity is the way that the organization perceives itself and its self-expression and an environmental identity is one of the multiple identities that an organization can have. Communication is important both internally for establishing the identity and externally to create an environmentally responsible image. The organizational members need to be informed and involved in the responsibilities that the corporation is taken to be able to communicate them further to important external stakeholder groups. This thesis connects theories on corporate and organizational identities with organizational communication, culture and image to explain how the environmental identity and image is constructed. A case study has been conducted on a large Swedish company in the building and property management industry, Riksbyggen. The empirical material has mainly been gathered from interviews and also from participant observations. Nineteen employees and one consultant involved in the environmental communication process were interviewed individually or in focus group. The results showed that the case study organization had created a strong corporate environmental identity with clear visions and symbolic representations. However, the organizational environmental identity where the organizational members identify with the environmental activities was not yet developed fully. One reason behind this is the lack of dialogue opportunities in the organization, which means that the corporate identity is communicated from a top-down perspective. An environmentally responsible image was not established at organizational level either, even if some local initiatives had been successful.

Key Words: Environmental Identity, Organizational Identity, Corporate Identity, Environmental Communication, Internal Communication, Corporate Social Responsibility

Acknowledgements

I would first of all like to thank Charlotta Szczepanowski for providing information and making the contact with the interviewees so efficient and for all her time and engagement in my thesis. I also would like to thank all the employees at Riksbyggen that obligingly participated in the interviews and focus groups. I would furthermore like to thank Mattis Bergquist, Pär Pärsson, Tina Ericsson and my supervisor Magnus Boström for helpful comments and support.

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1. Introduction

Society today is placing new demands on corporations. Stakeholders are increasingly pressuring corporations to take responsibility for their environmental impact. These environmental responsibilities are often included in the umbrella term Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). There is an ongoing debate about the meaning of CSR and the concept is often not very specific (Dahlsrud 2008:5f). However, one influential definition was presented by the Commission of the European Communities and this definition will be the foundation of this study:

Corporate social responsibility is essentially a concept whereby companies decide voluntarily to contribute to a better society and a cleaner environment [...] This responsibility is expressed towards employees and more generally towards all the stakeholders affected by business and which in turn can influence its success. (Commission of the European Communities 2001:4)

CSR is about taking stakeholder demands and opinions into account and the most beneficial way of doing that is to integrate these demands in the decisions and actions that the organization is taking. If the corporation takes an integrated approach to their environmental responsibility they will have great possibilities of getting benefits such as improved risk management, market position and organizational functioning from their activities (Morsing & Vallengren 2006:247ff). An integrated approach means that the corporation is either taking responsibility close to core business by improving existing operations or is developing new business ideas for solving environmental problems (Halme 2010:226).

Responsibilities taken outside of core business could instead be defined as philanthropy and involves activities such as charity, sponsorships and employee voluntarism not related to their business area. Corporations could certainly work with several types of responsibilities but both the financial and societal outcomes are potentially greater from the activities that are integrated into core business (Halme 2010:226). The environmental responsibility taken in line with the core business of a corporation has to be customized for that specific corporation and different industries need to base their activities on their unique preconditions. This often includes an environmental evaluation of the whole lifecycle of their products or services and changing ingrained routines at the offices (Grafström et al 2008:126f).

Taking sincere environmental responsibilities and communicating these trustworthily is a challenge today. It is especially challenging due to the increased speed and accessibility of

media that makes the corporate reputation more exposed now than it has previously been. The expectations on corporations are also higher today and stakeholders are demanding that corporations take responsibility for their environmental impact (Dawkins & Lewis 2003:185). A corporation's stakeholders are usually defined as individuals or groups that affect the operations of a corporation or are affected by the operations of a corporation. Relationships with various stakeholders are necessary to create long-term value of the responsibilities that the corporation is taking (Morsing & Schultz 2006:138f).

The building and property management sector constitutes a significant part of Sweden's total environmental impact (Toller et al 2009:59). Riksbyggen is a Swedish corporation that operates in this industry by providing building, property management and residential services. This means that they both act as property developer and work more long-term by also managing their housing cooperatives. As property managers they offer financial management, technical management and energy services. Riksbyggen's environmental impact takes different forms in both the stage of building, and rebuilding, houses and in the management of properties. Riksbyggen has the possibility to not only make new and old building more energy efficient, but also affect the residents living in their housing cooperatives to live more sustainable. Riksbyggen is now striving to create an environmentally responsible image and are developing an environmental identity. This case study will therefore explore how this organization is forming and communicating its environmental identity and image.

1.1 Research Problem

An environmentally responsible image could lead to competitive advantage, better reputation, consumer loyalty, legitimacy and enhanced employee recruitment and retention for an organization (Haugh & Talwar 2010:385). Image is the perception that external audiences have about an organization and an organization can manage their image to some extent but not entirely since other stakeholders also has influence. To increase the possibility of a favorable and credible environmental image the organization needs to establish a strong and sincere environmental identity. Identity is, in this context, the way that the organizational members perceive themselves and their self-expression (Hatch & Schultz 1997:357).

Communication within the organization is essential in creating an environmental identity because the internal audiences have to understand and believe in the environmental responsibilities that the organization is taking. If the employees do not participate in this identity construction the organization will face huge difficulties in establishing a positive image and will not be able to convince external audiences about the credibility of their actions

(Cheney & Christensen 2004:511). Despite that, the role of employees in corporate responsibility activities and communication is often neglected in research according to several recent studies (i.e. Bolton et al 2011:64, Dhanesh 2012:40, Frostenson 2007:7, Powell 2011:1366). This study will fill this research gap by developing an understanding of how a large organization in a critical industry is handling this situation.

To do that I will explain how an environmental identity is formed and communicated among key employees in my case organization, Riksbyggen. Due to the limitations of this thesis I will not be able to study the whole organization. I have therefore narrowed it down to include those employees that work with environmental and communication issues and employees that have close relationships with customers and municipalities. Customers, municipalities and employees have been identified as key stakeholders for Riksbyggen's environmental communication (Riksbyggen 2010:13) and are therefore in the center of attention in this study.

1.2 Research Objective

The aim of this study is to explain how an environmental identity is formed and communicated in an organization with the intention of developing an environmentally responsible image.

1.3 Research Questions

- What characterizes Riksbyggen's environmental identity and how do organizational members relate to this?
- What factors influences the way that the environmental identity is anchored in the organization? This issue will be explored in relation to the organizational communication, culture and image.
- How are Riksbyggen's environmental responsibilities communicated to key internal and external audiences?

2. Previous Research

Plenty of research has been made on how corporations communicate their social and environmental responsibility with external stakeholders (e.g. Hooghiemstra 2000, Morsing & Schultz 2006, and Ziek 2009) but the employee perspective and how the internal aspects affect communication are only recently getting attention from researchers. One topic with an employee perspective that has attracted some attention from researchers is organizational learning about sustainability and corporate social responsibilities. Implementing sustainability

values in an organization could present a challenge to the conventional operations of the corporation and therefore requires extensive organizational learning about these issues.

One example from this research perspective is a study by Siebenhüner & Arnold (2007). They have analyzed the internal and external factors for sustainability learning and change in six medium-size and large companies. One important finding is that change agents are important in the learning process. Change agents are individuals that create change through their own initiatives. They become particularly important when previous structures for learning about sustainability in the organization are lacking. Cramer (2005) has also studied organizational learning about corporate social responsibility. In her study about 19 Dutch companies the learning experiences took place at both individual and group level. However, learning on an organizational level was unattainable for all companies included in the study.

Haugh & Talwar (2010) has studied how corporations integrate sustainability across the whole organization. Organizational learning is, according to their study, a practical method used to reach this goal. Many employees are unaware of the sustainability strategies taken by their organization if it does not directly affect their work responsibilities. If they gain practical experience their knowledge will increase and they will most likely be more interested in and more committed to sustainability issues. Information about sustainability should not be restricted to certain groups of employees because if the organization wants to change the collective values and work with sustainability as a long-term goal these values need to be embedded in the whole organization. Sustainability should therefore be integrated in employee training and development programs to increase the awareness, knowledge and expertise of all organizational members.

Lauring & Thomsen (2009) has studied the implementation of CSR in the corporate identity of a large Danish corporation that is considered to be the leading actor in the field of social responsibility in Denmark. Their focus was on the practice of equal opportunities and non-discrimination at the international marketing department as an example of dealing with CSR identity on a local level of the organization. The authors suggest that better communication could be a solution to the gap between ideals and practice that comes when the employees do not understand the strategic goals of the company. Top management should also involve the internal stakeholders in the development of the strategy to adopt more contextually informed policies. They furthermore recommend that more research is conducted on how CSR ideals are practiced in organizations since they can see a research gap in this field.

A few other studies, like the article by Luring & Thomsen, have connected corporate environmental responsibility and organizational identity. Hooghiemstra (2000) is using the corporate identity concept to develop an understanding of the corporation's self-representation in relation to external stakeholders but does not at all handle the internal aspects of organizational identity¹. The article by Hooghiemstra is instead about corporate social reporting primarily from a legitimacy perspective where social disclosures are used as a strategy to change the public's perception of the organization.

A very recent study that is actually focusing on environmental identity from an internal perspective is a study about large enterprises in the manufacturing industry in Taiwan, written by Chen (2011). The author is presenting a new framework called the 'green organizational identity' that is used to explain how environmental issues become an integral part of the organizational identity. The environmental organizational culture embedded within the organization gives meaning to the interpretation of environmental issues within the organization. Together with environmental leadership the environmental organizational culture becomes the basis for the green organizational identity. All these aspects are positively related to green competitive advantage which is the ultimate goal for developing a green organizational identity. The study is the first in the field of environmental management to develop a framework based on the organizational identity concept. However, this study by Chen differs from my study by focusing on a management point of view instead of an employee perspective and by having a different cultural context.

Magnus Frostenson (2007) has studied the employee perspective of CSR in a Swedish context but does not specifically include environmental responsibilities in his study. The results from this study are that the demands on the employees could increase when an organization is implementing CSR activities. This happens when the employees have to acquire knowledge on the topic and perform actions outside of their ordinary work duties. Four elementary problems could arise in this situation. The *knowledge problem* that occurs when the employees are unfamiliar with the new concepts is one of these obstacles. *Relevance problems* could arise when the employees are supposed to connect ethical values to their own work situation. A *performance problem* connected with the new expectations that are put on the employees could also take place. Finally, a *normative disparity* could occur when the opinions about what is ethically correct differs between the management and the employees.

¹ More about the differences between corporate and organizational identity can be found in chapter 3.1.1

Two case studies show that the knowledge problem and the relevance problem are the greatest challenges for the organizations.

An in-depth longitudinal case study of a multinational energy company that has a well developed CSR identity was made by Bolton et al (2011) with data from 2005 until 2007. The study examines the organizational process of CSR in three stages: initiation, implementation and maturation. The authors argue that the employees of the organization become more involved in CSR activities as the process develops. The results of the study show that employees are of little concern when the company is initiating CSR activities and the case study organization focused on external affairs rather than internal. However, the employees are important links to the community so they became more involved in the implementation stage of the process. This second stage focuses on communication and engaging the employees in CSR activities because the employees are necessary to implement the vision into the organization. In final stage the employees are an integrated part of the CSR identity both as creators and benefactors.

The relationship between organizational culture and the development of a sustainable corporation has been studied by Rupert J. Baumgartner (2009). The author argues that if all aspects of sustainable development are not a part of the organizational culture then the efforts to develop a sustainable corporation are likely to fail because they will not affect the core business. Based on a case study of one of the biggest international mining companies the author concludes that if sustainable activities conform to the organizational culture then the risk of acting like ‘greenwashers’² is minimized.

Powell (2011) has done an overview of the research on what he defines as “the nexus between ethical corporate marketing, ethical corporate identity and corporate social responsibility” (Powell 2011:1365) with focus on the internal organizational aspects. He suggest that there is a need for further research on effective internal corporate communication, especially on the internal ethical corporate identity and CSR communication aimed at employees. The involvement and engagement of employees in CSR activities is an unexplored field where research on how this affects the internal corporate identity as well as the external corporate brand is needed.

This study of how the environmental identity is formed and communicated within a large organization like Riksbyggen will clearly be a valuable addition the research field. Many of

² Greenwashing is a concept used to describe what happens when companies use environmental rhetoric without reference to actual environmental activities (Baumgartner 2009:112).

the studies mentioned above focus on corporate social responsibilities from a philanthropic perspective and most of them do not discuss environmental responsibilities. My study will instead contribute with a discussion about the environmental responsibilities that an organization is taking in line with their core business since these responsibilities have greater possibility to create value both for the organization and for society (Halme 2010:226). I will furthermore connect theories about corporate and organizational identity with environmental communication to illustrate the importance that identity construction and communication has for the environmentally responsible image.

3. Theoretical Framework

The first part of the theoretical framework is closely related to organizational theory.

Organizational identity, which is the core theoretical concept of this study, is presented here. This part explains the differences between corporate identity and organizational identity and will also address the relationship between identity, culture and image. Communication is an important part of this process and the second part of the theoretical framework addresses organizational environmental communication, which takes both an internal and an external perspective. Finally, the last part of this section consists of a summary where environmental identity and environmental communication are connected.

Many theoretical concepts that will be introduced below are relevant for general organizational identity and communication as well as for environmental identity and environmental communication. The environmental identity can be explained as one of multiple identities that an organization have. Organizational environmental communication is, similarly, a part of the general organizational communication. However, the environmental identity and organizational environmental communication also has its special characteristics. Environmental issues are, for example, often complex and difficult to understand. Engaging the organization in communication about those issues could therefore be a challenge, especially if these issues lie outside of the everyday routines in an organization. Another aspect that is especially important in organizational environmental communication is that rhetoric and actions always go hand in hand, otherwise the credibility of the organization can be questioned by stakeholders. This chapter will bring extra attention to these distinctive features of the environmental identity and environmental communication.

3.1 Organizational Identity

The use of identity as a theoretical statement in organizational theory was formally introduced by Stuart Albert and David A. Whetten in their article *Organizational Identity* published in 1985. Their concept of organizational identity can be used in two ways; for scientists to characterize and define specific aspect of an organization and also as a self-reflection for an organization to characterize certain aspects of itself. Albert & Whetten defined the organizational identity as that which is the central, distinctive and enduring of the organization's character. The identity concept can be used to answer questions such as 'Who are we?' or 'What do we want to be?'. These questions are often raised in situations where problems occur and are ordinarily taken for granted (Albert & Whetten 2004:89f).

The meaning of identity is mostly linked to identification, it is a classification of the self that makes the individual recognizable and differentiated from others. Organizations make this differentiation by comparing themselves with other organizations. The identity is therefore constructed through interaction with others. This also means that multiple statements on identity are likely to be made in relation to different audiences and for different purposes. Hence, it is not possible to decide upon one ultimate statement on identity and multiple, equally valid, identity definitions will exist side by side in most organizations (Albert & Whetten 2004:92f).

Albert & Whetten's contribution on organizational identity has been very influential. However, later research (e.g. Hatch & Schultz 2002, Gioia et al 2004) has modified their view and has especially questioned the durability of organizational identity in Albert & Whetten's definition. Instead, Gioia et al (2004) argue that the organizational identity is dynamic and that the durability of the identity is rather misleading. They argue that the meaning of the organizational identity is changing continuously and is often redefined and revised by the organizational members in response to demands from the environment. Hence, organizational identity is not only an internal issue dealt with within the organization. Identity involves interactions and interrelationships with the outside world as well. Especially important for the identity process is the interpretations that the organizational members make of the feedback that they receive from external stakeholders on how they fulfill their expectations (Gioia et al 2004:350ff).

Organizational identity is an important concept both for research and in practice. Answering questions about identity will influence the entire operation of the organization including its culture and the communication strategy. Being aware of the distinctive parts of the

organizational identity is crucial in today's globalized society where organizations have to stand out from the crowd. Most organizations have multiple identities that are influenced in several directions by executives, employees, customers and other external stakeholders and it is often difficult to integrate all these complex perspectives. The organizations that succeed in managing their multiple identities have greater possibilities of creating competitive advantage by differencing themselves from their competitors according to Soenen & Moingeon. If the organization fails in managing their identities their multiple identities could become liabilities as well (Soenen & Moingeon 2002:14).

3.1.1 Corporate and Organizational Identities

Organizational identity and corporate identity are two different concepts that belong to different research traditions and can be distinguished from each other. Whereas organizational identity is discussed in organizational theory the concept of corporate identity is closely connected to marketing and communications research traditions. The different research traditions have developed their own concepts without integration but they are addressing almost the same phenomenon from different perspectives. They have begun to interact and multidisciplinary approaches (e.g. van Riel & Balmer 1997, Hatch & Schultz 2000, Soenen & Moingeon 2002) that address the connection between the organizational identity and the corporate identity have emerged (Soenen & Moingeon 2002:13).

Corporate identity is focused on how the central and characteristic aspects of the organization are represented and communicated to various audiences.³ Research on corporate identity is often focused on business relevance and how organizations are expressing themselves to differentiate their organization in relation to competitors and other stakeholders. A distinctive and recognizable corporate identity can add business value to the organization because it is generating a strong image. Graphic design symbols such as name, logo, trademarks, house style and other visual manifestations of the organization are closely connected to the corporate identity. Strategic elements of the organization such as the organizational vision, mission and philosophy is also discussed in the corporate identity tradition along with communication issues (Hatch & Schultz 2000:13f).

Organizational identity, as mentioned earlier, is often connected to the initial version of the concept presented by Albert & Whetten. Two approaches to identity can be distinguished

³ 'Profil' (Profile) is a concept that often is used in this context in the Swedish organizational communication literature and in organizational practice. 'Profil' is defined as the image that the organization wants to project on its external audiences and is almost equivalent to the corporate identity (Larsson 2008:113ff). I have chosen not to include the profile concept in this thesis since it is not internationally recognized.

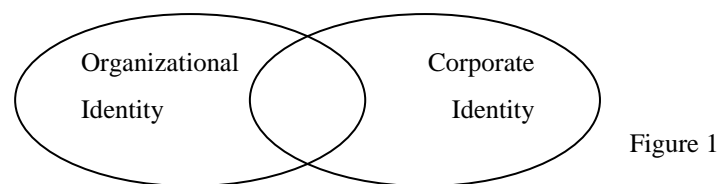
within the organizational identity tradition, namely the ‘identity of’ the organization and the ‘identification with’ the organization. ‘Identification with’ the organization includes discussions about the interrelationship between personal and social aspects of identity construction. Whether the members define themselves with the same attributes as the organization is an important issue for this part of this approach. The ‘identity of’ the organization is the basis for member identification and functions as a foundation on which the members build attachments and relationships with the organization on an organizational level (Hatch & Schultz 2000:15f).

One difference between the two identity concepts is that the corporate identity takes a more top management point of view whereas the organizational identity includes all members of the organization. The corporate identity involves choosing symbols to represent the organization and those decisions are usually handled by top management and external advisers but not all members. Organizational identity, on the other hand, focuses on how the members feel and perceive themselves as an organization and cannot be managed in the same way as the corporate identity. However, the aspects of identity influence each other in both directions. The corporate identity symbols become a part of the way that the organizational members think of themselves and the way that the organizational members think of the organization can be used when deciding upon symbols such as identity statements or logos (Hatch & Schultz 2000:17f).

The communication channels used can differ between corporate and organizational identities. Communication about corporate identity generally goes through mediated channels such as brochures, magazines or the internet. Communication within an organizational identity perceptive instead focuses on interpersonal relationships directly experienced in everyday behavior and language. Another aspect that could differ is the audiences that they address. Corporate identity aspects have mainly been designed for an external stakeholder audience while organizational identity takes an organizational member perspective and is focusing on the internal audience. The boundary between external and internal stakeholders is diminishing today which makes this distinction rather outdated. Different types of stakeholders now interact with each other and they can often act as organizational insiders and outsiders at the same time and receive information from many different types of communication channels (Hatch & Schultz 1997:356, 2000:18f).

Mary Jo Hatch and Majken Shultz (2000) argue for a cross-disciplinary view of identity and they believe that the identity of an organization has both corporate and organizational aspects.

They argue that the underlying phenomenon is the same from both perspectives. So even if they are analyzed from different hierarchical starting points and have different communication strategies both corporate and organizational identities essentially refer to the same thing. I will bring aspects of both organizational and corporate identity into this study following the integrated approach presented by Hatch & Schultz. The organizational and corporate identity perspectives do not exclude each other and are both valuable for a more complete view of identity as illustrated in Figure 1 below:



3.1.2 The Dynamic Process of Identity

Many critical voices are heard from various parts of today's society and organizations often struggle to maintain their identities in this increasingly networked world. Organizations are now accountable for much more than their financial performance when numerous stakeholders demand information about their responsibilities towards the society and the environment. In addition, the organizational members may have several different roles such as employees, customers, investors and community members at the same time. In these various roles the organizational members bring knowledge about the internal practices of the organization to the outside world and are consequently exposing the organization to public scrutiny. This means that the organizational culture becomes more open and available for stakeholders today, which makes the organization susceptible to opinions and judgments from the outside (Hatch & Schultz 2002:990).

The organizational culture is in this context defined as the implicit understandings, such as the assumptions, beliefs and values of an organization, that make meaning and contribute to the organization's self-definition. Hatch & Schultz (2002) has developed a model for how the organizational identity is theorized in relation to the organizational culture and the image. The organizational culture affects the internal definitions of identity and the organizational image affects the external definitions of identity. It all works in a process where the internal and the external definitions of identity also interact with each other. This process is referred to as the dynamic process of organizational identity (Hatch & Schultz 2002:991ff) and I will use this

process to describe how the environmental identity is formed and constructed in my case study organization.

Image could, like the concept of identity, have various meanings depending on the research tradition in question. One definition of organizational image from the organizational theory tradition was presented by Jane E. Dutton & Janet M. Dukerich. They argue that image is what the organizational members believe others see as distinctive about the organization. Hence, image is a construct in the mind of the organizational members according to this perspective (Dutton & Dukerich 1991:550). In disagreement with this view of image marketing and communication research often takes an external perspective of image. They argue that image is not in the minds of the organization, it is instead the perception of the organization that their audiences have (e.g. Cheney & Christensen 2004, Alvesson 1990).

Both definitions of image are useful concepts but it is important to distinguish what definition of image that is being used. In the dynamic process of identity (Figure 2) the concept of image is used in line with the marketing and communication perspective which means that image is the view of the organization that is held by external audiences. Since this is the most common way of defining image this study will also follow this definition. The image definition by Dutton & Dukerich (1991) that refers to the image in the minds of the organizational members is instead equivalent to the process of ‘mirroring’ in this model:

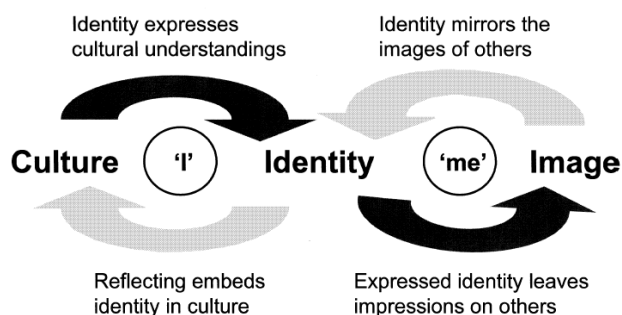


Figure 2 (Hatch & Schultz 2002:995)

The model of the identity process, Figure 2, shows how the organizational identity continuously is created, sustained and changed in relation to both the internal cultural understandings and the external image. First, in the lighter grey arrows, the identity is mirrored in stakeholder images. In this ‘mirroring’ process the organizational members will see themselves more or less positively depending on their perception of what others think. The organizational environment is important for identity construction and the identity is frequently redefined and revised as argued by Gioia et al (2004) earlier in this chapter. What other say about the organization is then complemented by the organization’s perception of

themselves in the 'reflecting' process. The external images and self-definitions by the organization come together in this process where the organizational members understand and explain themselves as an organization (Hatch & Schultz 2002:998ff).

The second process is illustrated by the black arrows. The cultural understanding of the organization is expressed through the identity here. Symbolic objects, values and assumptions are used as self-expression and their meanings are embedded in the organizational culture. The power that artifacts have in communication of identity lies partly in the way that they express the culture of an organization in this 'expressing' process. These expressions of culture are then used to impress others as strategic projection of the organizational identity in external communication or unintentionally in everyday behavior of the organizational members. In this 'impressing' process the organizational culture is influencing the organizational image. These efforts of projecting a positive image are vulnerable since outside sources, like the media, are providing images of the organization that differ from the organization's own perception. Hence, organizations need to develop an understanding about both their culture and their image to promote a balanced and strong identity, something which poses a great challenge to most organizations (Hatch & Schultz 2002:1001ff).

The 'I' and 'me' in the model are initially from the concept of identity that was presented by George Herbert Mead in 1934. Mead argued that the self could be both dynamic and social and separated between two parts of a person's self the 'I' and the 'me', which together form the whole person but can be separated by behavior and experience. The 'I' comes before 'me' in the social process and represents novel behavior and experience while 'me' is something that we are aware of that comes from our assumption of the attitudes towards us and is affected by expectations and social responsibilities (Mead 2004:30ff). As the individual identity the organizational 'I' and 'me' interact in the construction of the organizational identity. The 'I' in this model is therefore somewhere between the culture and the organizational identity. The 'me' is in a similar way located between the corporate identity and the image.

If there is a lack of balance between the impact of culture or image on the organizational identity the identity becomes dysfunctional. This means that the interests of either the organizational 'I' or the organizational 'me' are neglected (Figure 3). If the organization constructs their identity only relying on the organizational culture there is a risk that they could lose the interest and support from external stakeholders. This self-absorbed identity will be based only on how the organization expresses itself and will not respond to external

images. Organizations that work in this way often assume that stakeholders will care about their organizational identity the same way as they do but that is hardly ever the case. Instead this disparity between culture and image could be defined as ‘organizational narcissism’ (Hatch & Shultz 2002:1005ff).

Disparity the other way around, when there is a loss of organizational culture and the organization only defines itself through the eyes of external stakeholder images, is called ‘hyper-adaptation’. A hyper-adapted organizational identity occurs when the organization gives external stakeholder so much power over the organization that their own cultural heritage is abandoned. The organization is thereby losing their organizational values and basic assumptions so they can no longer stand for anything profound; image has replaced substance when this happens. This is generally not a permanent state for the organization but could happen in periods when the relationship between image and identity is broken and the image becomes a reflection of itself and not an expression of the culture. Stakeholders will likely turn away from both the self-absorbed and the hyper-adapted organizations because these organizations will not appear trustworthy. A strong and well-functioning identity is instead established when these extremes are balanced (Hatch & Shultz 2002:1010ff).

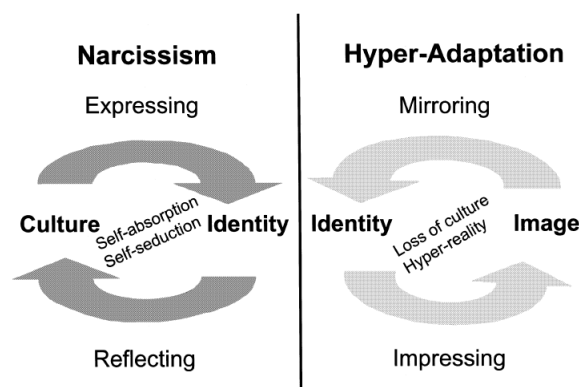


Figure 3 (Hatch & Schultz 2002:1006)

3.2 Organizational Environmental Communication

Organizational environmental communication is included in the umbrella concept of ‘organizational communication’, which contains many other activities such as public relations, investor relations and internal communication. Organizational communication is separated from other types of corporate communication, such as marketing communication, by its more long-term perspective. The goal of organizational, and environmental, communication efforts is not to immediately generate more sales. Another difference is that organizational communication frequently is initiated by demands from stakeholders to receive information about organizational activities. This is in contrast to marketing communication

which is directed towards particular target audiences for their commercial value.

Organizational communication, marketing communication and the more strategic concept of management communication are unified as corporate communication. Corporate communication is the overall term for all communication that an organization or corporation carries out (van Riel & Fombrun 2007:20ff).

Communication research does not generally separate internal and external communication nowadays. In the same way as the organizational identity and the organizational image is linked in a more complex world, the internal and the external communication is also closely intertwined. Hence, external messages become a part of the internal operations and employees become a part of a general audience for communication that contains both internal and external stakeholders. Bringing the issue of identity into corporate communications has presented two significant challenges for organizations today. The first is to draw the line between what constitutes the organization and what constitutes the outside world. The second is to be heard among all corporate messages that are present in a communication environment that have grown substantially with new information technologies (Cheney & Christensen 2004:510f).

However, internal and external communication is often separated when organizations are communicating in practice. The internal communication generally has lower status than external communication activities, such as marketing, where economic profit more easily can be measured. However, the strategic internal communication is just as important since it makes it possible for the organizational culture to spread and for organizational values to be anchored among its members. Internal communication is consequently fundamental for the whole existence of an organization. Effective internal communication is, among other things, necessary for coordinating departments and individuals to reach organizational goals (Falkheimer & Heide 2007:24, 79). Organizational communication about the environment can have both internal and external audiences. Both the internal and the external perspective of environmental communication will be elaborated in the following chapters.

3.2.1 Internal Environmental Communication

“The way that we communicate with one another about the environment powerfully affects how we perceive both it and ourselves and, therefore, how we define our relationship with the natural world” (Cox 2010:2). The same is most likely true on an organizational level; the way that the organization is communicating about environmental issues within the organization and with external stakeholders will affect how the organizational members perceive the

environment and their own role in the natural world. If the organization does not support active engagement in dialogue about these issues and is only communicating messages about these environmental responsibilities through official policy documents and memos then the employees may not feel that these messages are relevant for them (Morsing & Vallengren 2006:247f).

A strong environmental identity is created when environmentally responsible thoughts and actions constantly are a part of the organizational activities. If the organization does not integrate their environmental responsibilities in daily routines then there is a risk for ambitious policies to become just empty words. Many organizations fail in this integration because the environmental identity only has a corporate identity focus and is communicated top-down in hierarchical structures without room for dialogue. An organizational identity is instead produced and reproduced when members of the social unit interact. If the employees are not involved in the environmental communication process they will feel alienated from the corporate environmental identity. An organizational environmental identity where the organizational members identify with the environmental activities is consequently not established. If that happens they will not be able to communicate the environmental identity to external stakeholders and will not contribute to an environmentally responsible image (Laurin & Thomsen 2009:38f).

Traditionally, the internal communication structure often follows the hierarchy of the organization. Information travels from the management level down through several levels before it reaches the employees. The same way is then used for communication back up to the management level. Hence, managers at all levels of the organization are in this structure taking on huge responsibilities for communication and to customize information for their staff. Organizations are usually inundated with information which makes it important for managers to sift through all messages and decide what messages are relevant for the employees and how to communicate them further. There is generally not much room for establishing dialogue or providing feedback in this hierarchical structure. This hierarchical communication structure will most likely be ineffective in a large organization since it is slow and a lot of information could get caught on the way (Falkheimer & Heide 2007:80ff).

The implementation of an environmental identity is more likely to succeed if the organizational culture matches the sustainability strategies. Internal communication works to ensure that all members of the organization are identifying themselves with the environmental identity. The internal audience includes a variety of stakeholders that could vary from early

adopters to laggards and they do not have the same preconditions and requirements for information. These organizational members will therefore also vary in their ability and willingness to communicate the environmental identity in their duties and interactions with external audiences. The early adopters often form informal and formal networks. Those networks are particularly important when implementing the environmental identity and organizations could gain a lot from acknowledging these networks (Stuart 2011:144ff).

It is furthermore important that the information is consistent for internal and external communication so that the employees are able to respond to inquiries from stakeholders that challenge the credibility of the corporate environmental performance (Dawkins 2004:118). Organizations often have people responsible for communication at various positions in the hierarchy. It could be difficult to present coherent messages since these communication specialists often tend to consider the interests of their own department in front of the strategic interests of the whole organization. This could lead to fragmented and sometimes contradictory views of the organization. Structuring the communication material with visual coherence, common guidelines for decision making and with focus on core values that are integrated in all activities could be helpful in creating a more holistic perspective (van Riel 2000:163).

3.2.2 External Environmental Communication

Engaging people from the whole organization in corporate responsibility activities is vital. All parts of the organization need to be informed and prepared to communicate when the opportunity is given. Various members of the organization have relationships with a range of external and internal stakeholder groups. Hence, all organizational members need to be informed about the organization's environmental activities to communicate them further when they have everyday interactions with these stakeholders. The corporate communication departments often work as communication channels but other groups of employees could also have the same important function. The most effective and credible communication channels for getting a message out to external publics are generally informal sources where the employees play an important part (Dawkins 2004:116ff).

A strong environmentally responsible image is certainly not created by a marketing department. The whole value chain needs to be incorporated in the environmental image building if it is going to be sustainable. However, the public relations side of creating an environmental image is important as well in order to receive benefits such as a competitive advantage and better reputation. Customer and other external audiences need to be aware of

the environmental values and actions that the corporation stands for otherwise they have failed to create a positive image. By including the whole value chain in the environmental identity process the environmentally responsible image is created through dialogue where the values of key stakeholders, both internal and external, are taken into account (Heikkurinen 2010:144ff).

Communication is an important tool in stakeholder relationships and establishing dialogue with stakeholders is one of many corporate responsibility strategies. By involving stakeholders in the corporate actions the organization avoids forcing their own view on others. The organization is instead continuously negotiating their responsibilities and is including the expectations of important stakeholder groups in this process. The corporation can thereby receive legitimacy for their actions and positive support from stakeholders and these relationships are often mutually beneficial (Morsing & Schultz 2006:144ff). It is, however, always important that the form and content of the dialogue is suited for the context. It is also an advantage if the dialogue is adjusted after the organization's conditions such as the size of the organization, the complexity of the issue and to the level of ambition that the organization has (Lauring & Thomsen 2010:203).

Information about the corporate identity for an external audience is often communicated in official documents and, nowadays, on the company website. Signs and symbols work as expressions of the identity and symbolic elements are often used for identification with the organization (Albert & Whetten 2004:95). Symbolism is often an effective tool for communicating changes in corporate identities both for internal and external stakeholders since the sense of change becomes very apparent and visible through new symbols. Coherent symbolic representation is important for organizational community and could increase the opportunities for the whole organization to identify with the corporate identity. It also develops the organizational identity when members define themselves with the same attributes as the organization (van Riel & van Hasselt 2002:163f).

3.3 Summary of the Theoretical Framework

Organizations have multiple identities and the environmental identity is one of them. My argument, based on the theoretical framework, is that the formation and construction of an environmental identity in an organization is an important part in accomplishing an environmentally responsible image. In the same way as the overall identity of an organization is constructed in a dynamic process the environmental identity is influenced by both the internal organizational culture and the external image. It is possible to differentiate between

the corporate environmental identity, which is developed from a top-down perspective and consists of visions and symbols, and the organizational environmental identity that is based on the organizational members' identification with the environmental responsibilities that the organization is taking.

Environmental communication has both internal and external aspects that are closely related since the ultimate goal is to reach important external stakeholders. Communication is necessary for the organizational members to be informed about and believe in the corporate environmental identity. Establishing possibilities for dialogue within the organization is vital since an organizational environmental identity includes all organizational members and cannot be communicated from a top-down perspective. An organizational environmental identity is instead developed when the organizational members interact with each other. The organizational environmental identity is furthermore developed in relation to the external environment which means that the relationship and communication with stakeholders are important parts of identity construction.

4. Method and Material

This study follows a case study research design and this approach gives the researcher an opportunity to study one case comprehensively. I have selected the Swedish building and property management company Riksbyggen as my case study object. In this study I obtained in-depth knowledge on how this organization is forming and communicating their environmental identity. The case study research design gave me possibilities to go out in the field and take part of the organization to understand how they are constructing their environmental identity in a way that had not been possible with a different research design.

The data collection in this study is comprehensive which is common in case studies. The material used here are participant observations, individual interviews, focus groups and text material such as internal documents, websites and results from previously conducted studies about Riksbyggen. Using several ways of gathering material for a study is described as data triangulation and it works as a cross validation of the results. Hence, evidence from various types of sources is used to cross-check and to confirm the conclusions (Creswell 2007:208, DeWalt & DeWalt 2011:128). All these methods of gathering information have their own advantages and limitations and that will be elaborated in the following chapters.

4.1 The Case Study

The object for this case study is the Swedish cooperative (i.e. member-owned) corporation Riksbyggen that provides building, property management and residential services. The corporation is divided into two business areas; Property Management (Fastighetsförvaltning) and Housing (Bostad) that work with different activities. The Property Management area is the largest part of the organization and provides services to housing cooperatives such as financial and technical management. The Housing area is smaller and procures services from other companies in the construction industry for many of their projects. This business area is responsible for new construction, rebuilding and building renovation.

Riksbyggen has been selected for this case study due to several reasons; First, I consider it to be a representative case of a large corporation that is establishing a serious environmental commitment and is developing an environmental identity in the organization. Like most large organizations Riksbyggen has employees in offices located all over the country. This complicates communication and identity issues since it makes informal conversations and interactions unattainable. Being a part of the building industry makes it an even more interesting organization to study since the building industry has extensive impact on the environment, although construction at the same time is a necessary part of society. Secondly, Riksbyggen is in a phase where they are expanding their environmental activities and is very keen on communication what they are doing to their employees and other stakeholders. Since Riksbyggen has a cooperative ownership they also have a unique position to work more long-term and invest in environmental issues.

Finally, I was already familiar with the organization and had an established relationship with the Environmental and Quality Manager who made it possible for me to participate in the daily life of the organization and get in contact with the employees that I interviewed. Getting access to an organization is often a challenge for researchers. They could experience difficulties in getting individuals to participate in interviews and have a hard time building trust and credibility at the field site (Creswell 2007:138). None of these issues presented any problem in this case study; all interviewees showed interest in the study and participated without problem. Since I had the endorsement of the Environmental and Quality Manager I gained credibility in the research field. In conclusion, there are both methodological and practical reasons behind the case selection for this study.

One possible researcher bias that I could have in this study is that I am already familiar with Riksbyggen as an organization and I already knew the Environmental and Quality Manager.

Since that is one of the reasons behind why I have chosen Riksbyggen as a case for this study there is a subjective selection from my side. However, most of the interviewees included in the study are people that work at offices in other parts of Sweden and have work duties not related to my prior interactions with the organization. I did consequently not have any preceding relationship with these employees to avoid bias in the results.

The single instrumental case study used here is focusing on one case to illustrate how it could work when an organization is forming and communicating their environmental identity. Riksbyggen has its particular features and it may be difficult for me to make generalizations to other cases in a larger population. This case study therefore has its limitations when it comes to making generalizations but it is possible that it can say something about how it could work in other similar situations. Although making statistical generalizations from this study is impossible it is possible to make analytical generalizations (Yin 2009:43) from the results and as a result also contribute to a broader theory on organizational environmental identity.

In addition, only key people involved in the internal environmental communication was interviewed and it is therefore not possible to say anything about how employees in other positions of the organization perceive the situation. The research objective is not to study the whole organization because that is beyond the scope of this thesis. The focus is on key groups of employees that have major roles in the internal communication process and communicate with important stakeholders in their professional roles.

4.2 Participant Observations

I have combined several different methods for data analysis and one of them is participant observations. Participant observation as a method means that the researcher is taking part in daily activities, interactions and events of a group of people as a way of learning about both the explicit aspects and the unconscious aspects of their culture (DeWalt & DeWalt 2011:1). During the spring of 2012 I have been working with this thesis at Riksbyggen's head office in Stockholm which means that I have been doing participant observations on a daily basis for about four months. I have in this everyday experience of the organization been able to gain an understanding of the organizational culture. A long engagement in the field is a good way of building relations with the organizational members (Creswell 2007:207). The daily interaction with the employees was particularly helpful as preparation for the interviews and focus groups.

When a researcher spends a lot of time doing fieldwork there is a risk of ‘going native’. That is a situation when the researcher identifies herself so strongly with the research object, in this case the case study organization, that she becomes a part of the research object and does no longer see herself primarily as a researcher (Esaiaasson et al 2012:317). There was a risk of becoming too close to the interviewees especially since I worked closely with some of them at the head office. However, since I was not at all involved in the everyday routines it was rather easy for me to keep my distance as a researcher and the organizational members did not feel like my colleagues. Most of the participants in the study were not located at the head office in Stockholm which means that I only met them at the interview situation and had consequently no previous understanding about them or their workplace.

One of the major events in my participant observations was an education day in environmental communication for managers and communicators on November 28 in 2011 when I first experienced how Riksbyggen establish communication on environmental issues. I have also participated in a conference day involving the Environmental and Quality Coordinators and the Environmental and Quality Manager on March 13 in 2012. In addition to these large events shorter participant observations also took place in staff meetings and in everyday informal conversations at the office. On some of these occasions I also had an active role presenting my work to the staff at Riksbyggen, but my position was generally more inconspicuous.

I have used a particular notebook designated for field notes where I entered findings and thoughts that emerged during these participant observations. The field notes were particularly useful as background information when planning the interview guide and have also been valuable for cross-checking the information gathered in the interviews. The field notes have been analyzed in an iterative process looking for patterns and themes in the material that could be used to support the conclusions drawn from the interviews and focus groups (DeWalt & DeWalt 2011:179f). The goal has been to develop substantiated arguments based on as much information as possible from several sources.

4.3 Interviews

The main material used in the study comes from interviews conducted with employees at Riksbyggen. Thirteen interview situations took place during the study and nineteen representatives from the organization and a consultant that works closely with Riksbyggen have participated in the study. Two focus groups were several employees at the same position had a joint discussion was conducted. The first focus group was with the Environmental and

Quality Coordinators and the second included some of the employees at the Communication Department. The rest of the interviews consist of eleven semi-structured interviews with one person at a time.

The selection of interviewees has been strategic to find key persons who participate in the internal environmental communication process and who have the responsibility to communicate with important external stakeholders on environmental matters. I have collaborated with the Environmental and Quality Manager to identify employees in key positions. Some interviewees had experienced particular problems while others contributed with exceptionally positive examples and some did not stand out from the crowd in either direction. The selection of interviewees was a bit skewed at first since the selected interviewees showed particular engagement in environmental issues, but this was corrected by including additional interviewees who represented a more average interest in the topic.

The gender distribution is as even as it could be with eleven female interviewees and nine male interviewees. All communicators participating in one of the focus groups are women which made it difficult to have an exactly even distribution. The interviewees are furthermore located at offices in as many different parts of Sweden as possible to get a more diverse view of the communication process. To get perspectives from both business areas one of the focus groups and four of the individual interviews represent the Property Management area and five individual interviews represent the business area of Housing. The rest of the interviewees work in support services and one person is a consultant with the professional title 'Brand Strategist and Creative Director'.

4.3.1 Focus Groups

Focus groups are used to gather opinions about an issue and to better understand how people feel, think about the issue and how they communicate on the topic of interest. They are particularly useful to develop an understanding about the culture in an organization and to get the employee perspective of organizational issues. Focus groups work best when the participants feel comfortable and free to contribute to the discussion without feeling like they are being judged. The goal is not to come up with solutions to some problem or reach consensus (Krueger & Casey 2009:2ff).

Focus groups are distinguished from other group interviews because they emphasize the interaction among the participants and that the researcher uses this interaction in the analyses (Litosseliti 2003:3). A typical focus group can include four to ten participants and should always be small enough for everyone to participate and feel engaged. The participants are

selected because they have some characteristics in common that relate to the topic of the focus group (Krueger & Casey 2009:6f). This study contains two focus groups that were conducted with groups of employees on the same hierarchical position in the corporation. The selection of participants came naturally and all employees in the professional category were requested to join the focus group but not all of them were able to attend due to various reasons.

The first focus group was carried out with the Environmental and Quality Coordinators that belong to the business area of Property Management. The group consisted of six persons that came both from different regional offices and from the head office. All participants were gathered at the head office for a conference day and that was when the focus group took place. The second focus group contained three persons working closely together with information and communication matters at Riksbyggen's head office in Stockholm. Four participants were scheduled for this focus group. However, one person was unable to attend the focus group at very short notice which was unfortunate because a normal focus group should have at least four participants. We did the best of the situation and the discussion went well. The participants in both of the focus groups had similar work responsibilities and knew each other well which was an excellent starting point for discussion.

The questions in the focus groups were open-ended and the researcher's role was as a moderator of the discussion. An interview guide was used but there was also room for spontaneous questions related to the topics that were brought up in the discussions as described by Krueger & Casey (2009:7). Both focus groups were scheduled to 90 minutes each to give the participants enough time to elaborate on the topics for discussion without feeling time pressure. In reality the discussions lasted for about 75 minutes and then they came to an end since neither the participants nor the moderator had anything further to add. However, a typical focus group is usually a bit longer and last for about two hours (Krueger & Casey 2009:58). Since the participants already were gathered at the meeting place, were introduced to the topic in advance and knew each other very well that much time was not necessary for this study.

The process of developing the interview guide followed the guidelines from Krueger & Casey (2009:52ff). It started with a brainstorming about topics of interest for the study and was narrowed down to phrased questions that were carefully sequenced to follow a logical structure that moved from more general to specific questions. The interview guide was thematized from the research questions and contained questions about the participants' view of Riksbyggen's environmental performance, the internal environmental communication, the

corporate core values and their perception of the organizational image (See Appendix 1 and 2). The focus group interview with the communicators also included several questions about how the organizational communication works in general at Riksbyggen (Appendix 2).

Since all participants, including me as the moderator, have Swedish as their native language the interviews were conducted in Swedish and quotes used in the text were translated into English. The interviews were audio recorded and were supplemented with field notes taken during the interview. Video cameras are often used in focus groups to distinguish who said what but they could also make the participants uncomfortable. It was not necessary to make video recordings in this study since I became familiar to the voices of the participants and had no problem knowing who said what afterwards.

The recordings were then analyzed using abridged transcribing which means that relevant and useful parts of the focus group discussions were transcribed and comments not related to the purpose of the study was left out of the transcribing process (Krueger & Casey 2009:117).

The results of the focus group interviews were then analyzed in line with the theoretical framework since the aim of this study is to apply these theoretical concepts on my empirical material. The analysis could be described as a theoretical reading of the interviews without the use of any specific method. Theoretical reading can be criticized because there is a risk that the researcher makes biased interpretations and is only focusing on aspects related to the theoretical framework (Kvale & Brinkmann 2009:235ff).

The use of focus groups has also been criticized for several reasons and as all methods they could have disadvantages such as the influence that dominant individuals can have on the results. Other objections to focus groups could be that the respondents try to portray themselves as more reflective and rational than they are in reality. They could also 'intellectualize' their actions or simply make up answers, but these objections relate to all types of interviews or research conducted on people (Krueger & Casey 2009:13ff). There is furthermore a risk that the moderator conducting the focus group is intentionally or unintentionally biased or that it will be difficult to distinguish one person's view from the viewpoint of the group (Litosseliti 2003:21). By carefully planning my interview guide and being aware of the potential problems that could arise during the focus group situation I have done my best to avoid these risks.

4.3.2 Individual Interviews

The eleven individual interviews were conducted with individuals on different positions in the company working in various regions in Sweden. Four of these interviewees represented the

Property Management area and five represented the business area of Housing. In addition, the Environmental and Quality Manager who does not belong to any particular business area and an external consultant who works with brand strategies together with Riksbyggen were also interviewed. Most of the interviews were scheduled for 60 minutes but lasted between 35 and 70 minutes depending on how much time the interviewee could spare and if they wanted to add additional information outside of the interview questions.

The interviews were semi-structured and based on an interview guide where the respondents were given a lot of space to elaborate their own opinions on the topic. The interview questions were developed through the literature review and through the participant observations. Many interesting aspects that were used in the interview guide came up during my daily experience of the organizational culture and informal conversations with various employees. Basically the same interview guides were used in the individual interviews with Riksbyggen's employees. When I knew in advance that the interviewee could provide information about a particular problem or successful experience I prepared additional questions about those issues. The interview guide was thematized from the research questions and followed the same topics as the focus groups. It included questions about the interviewees' view of Riksbyggen's environmental performance, the internal environmental communication, the corporate core values and the interviewees' perception of the organizational image (See Appendix 3).

The interviews that were conducted with the Environmental and Quality Manager and the Brand Consultant differed a lot from the other interviews. These interviewees represented a sender perspective of the environmental communication and are responsible for strategically developing the communication material. These interview guides had a more open structure and it did not include as many questions as the other interviews. Instead they focused on topics that the interviewees could comment on to give the interviewees an opportunity to explain the purpose behind the communication initiatives that had been carried out (See Appendix 4 and 5). The environmental manager was, besides this interview, also continuously involved in the study and provided information when it was necessary during the process.

The interviewees are anonymous in the study so that they could feel free to bring up both positive and negative aspects of their organization without worrying about the implications that it could have on their work situation. All interviewees in the study have Swedish as their native language so the interviews were conducted in Swedish and quotes used in the text were translated into English. Most interviews were conducted face to face in Stockholm and in Gothenburg but some were made through a videoconference system due to spatial distance.

The videoconference system worked very well and a sense of a real meeting with the interviewees was established during the interview situation.

The interview recordings were transcribed almost in its entirety, but small talk that was irrelevant to the research objective was excluded to save time. The interviews with the Environmental and Quality Manager and with the consultant were recorded but only the most essential parts were transcribed with an abridged transcribing method (Krueger & Casey 2009:117). The reason for that was that the interviews contained a lot of information that was outside of the scope of this thesis. All the transcribed interviews were then analyzed using a theoretical analysis, in the same way as the focus groups. I have reflected theoretically on themes of interest from my interview material and compiled my interpretations in the analysis (Kvale & Brinkmann 2009:236).

4.4 Text Material

This part of the study is an analysis of the internal information on Riksbyggen's intranet, external website and in corporate documents and policies. This material has been used to complement to the results from interviews and participant observations with formally communicated messages within the organization. Studying the communication material that Riksbyggen has published internally about their environmental responsibility has especially been valuable as preparation for the interviews. This internal communication material consists of brochures about the sustainability plan, an environmental handbook (Riksbyggen 2011c) that is handed out to housing cooperatives and documents published on the intranet. External environmental communication on the corporate website and in the annual sustainability reports for 2010 and 2011 has also been valuable material to the study because they represent the identity that Riksbyggen is communicating to external audiences to attain a positive image of the organization.

In addition, the results from three previous studies about Riksbyggen have been used. First, a previous master's thesis that included a survey about stakeholder perceptions and expectations on the environmental sustainability reporting at Riksbyggen. It contributed with information about the basis for the environmental communication with stakeholders and the identification of various stakeholder groups (Häckner 2010). Secondly, a bachelor's thesis about change management at Riksbyggen has been used to confirm some of my findings about the organizational culture (Sandell & Wong 2011). The final study is an investigation made by an external communication agency in 2008 to 2009 to establish Riksbyggen's core values. About 40 in-depth interviews were conducted with employees, customers, suppliers and competitors

regarding their perception of Riksbyggen. The result was a creation of the corporate core values⁴. The meaning of these core values and how they have been established has been useful since these core values are a part of Riksbyggen's corporate identity.

5. Results and Analysis

This part of the thesis presents the results from the case study including information gathered from interviews, focus groups, participant observations and text material. The part contains an introduction to the case study organization, Riksbyggen, with a description of the organizational structure and overall identity. The results are then presented in line with the theoretical framework from the third chapter. The first part contains a description of the corporate and organizational aspects of the environmental identity and an analysis of how the identity is constructed in relation to culture and image. This part of the results is then followed by an analysis of the internal and external aspects of the organizational environmental communication in relation to environmental identity construction. The chapter ends with a summary of the most important findings from the case study.

5.1 Riksbyggen

Riksbyggen is a Swedish cooperative corporation in the building and property management industry that was established in 1940. The purpose was to give jobs to building workers at a time when Sweden went through a period of high unemployment and housing shortage. A cooperative owner structure means that the corporation is owned by its members and is more value driven than a regular firm⁵. About 350 000 people live in Riksbyggen's apartments today and the organization is mainly owned by building unions and housing associations. As mentioned earlier the organization has two different areas of business; first they work with property management services and secondly, they work with construction and renovation.

Riksbyggen have almost 2200 employees. The head office is located in Stockholm and the organization has about 300 offices all over Sweden. About 1800 of the employees belong to the area of Property Management while the area of Housing employs 140 people. The rest of the employees work in Support Services, which is not divided into business areas and most of these employees are located at the head office in Stockholm (Riksbyggen 2011a:40). The business areas are divided into regions and market areas that operate in various parts of the country. The organizational structure is illustrated below (Figure 4):

⁴ Riksbyggen's core values are presented in chapter 5.1

⁵ <http://riksbyggen.se/Om-Riksbyggen/Samhallsbyggare/> (2012-06-18)

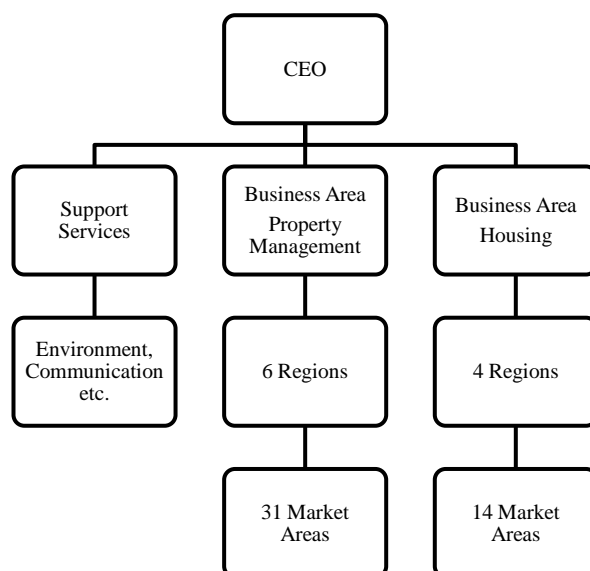


Figure 4: Riksbyggen's organizational structure

Riksbyggen's two business areas, Property Management and Housing, operate on different markets and have their own relationships with customers and other stakeholders. Most organizations have multiple identities; this is also the case for Riksbyggen. It has been evident through my experiences as a participant observer that Riksbyggen's business areas represent two separate organizational identities with their own culture, characteristics and expressions. Managing multiple identities and integrating complex perspectives of this kind could be difficult (Soenen & Moingeon 2002:14) and Riksbyggen is now striving to become a more united organization according to the interviewees. The values⁶ connected with the cooperative ownership are also part of the overall corporate identity and could be recognized as its own identity. Some interviewees identified strongly with these values while many of them did not put much significance at all into this cooperative identity.

Riksbyggen's overall corporate identity is based on three characteristic core values that have been developed to define what the organization stands for; long-term perspective, security and cooperation. *Long-term perspective* (Långsiktighet) means that Riksbyggen wants to be perceived as an organization that thinks and acts with a long-term perspective. They take long-term responsibilities by for example including environmental and quality aspects. *Security* (Trygghet) represents a secure owner structure, a safe employer and Riksbyggen also wants to be perceived as an organization that builds and manages its properties securely. *Cooperation* (Samverkan) means that Riksbyggen wants to be perceived as an organization

⁶ Cooperative values are for example participation, influence and community according to Riksbyggen's website at <http://riksbyggen.se/Om-Riksbyggen/Kooperation/> (2012-05-25)

that has a cooperative idea with participation, influence and community as their basic foundation (Core Values Investigation 2008/2009).

These values seem to be well integrated in the organization and are according to a majority of the interviewees a good description of Riksbyggen. When the interviewees were asked to describe their organization almost every one of them used the term ‘Långsiktighet’ (equivalent to long-term perspective) as a description of the organizational foundation. That the organizational members identify with these values indicates that these core values are a representation of the organizational identity as well as the corporate identity.

5.2 Environmental Identity

Different concepts can be used when talking about environmental responsibilities and Riksbyggen talks about environmental engagement and also about sustainability. They do not use the term CSR but their environmental responsibilities fit into the description of CSR made in the introduction (p. 1). When Riksbyggen is using the concept of sustainability they are including economic, social and environmental aspects (Riksbyggen 2011b) but the main focus has been on environmental activities. When the organization hired a brand agency about two years ago, they wanted to position Riksbyggen as an environmentally responsible organization and to make this area a distinctive part of their corporate brand.⁷ However, the most important strategy was to become a united Riksbyggen since the organization had been rather fragmented both between business areas and regions.

The corporate communication strategy has therefore been to focus on the perspective that makes Riksbyggen unique and that is the fact that they both build and manage their houses. Riksbyggen’s business operations are therefore characterized by an exceptionally long-term perspective. The environmental dimension is now included in almost everything that the Riksbyggen do and communicate but is not the distinguishing characteristic of the overall identity according to the external Brand Strategist and Creative Director. An important part of the environmental strategy is the sustainability plan that is developed under the concept ‘Mind the Planet!’ presented in the next chapter. The following chapters will then elaborate on how corporate and organizational aspects of Riksbyggen’s environmental identity are formed and how the environmental identity is related to the organizational culture and image.

⁷ The corporate brand is the overall strategy that the corporation uses to differentiate itself from its competitors. The brand includes name, logo, symbols etc. to provide expectations on the products or services that the corporation is delivering (Argenti & Druckemiller 2004:368f). The corporate brand spans the whole corporation and the environmental identity constitute a part of Riksbyggen’s brand. The brand concept is therefore much broader than the aim of this study and it will not be elaborated further in this thesis.

5.2.1 Mind the Planet!

Riksbyggen's environmental responsibilities are assembled into a sustainability plan that is named 'Mind the Planet!' (Planeten ska med!). This sustainability plan is divided into seven commitments that Riksbyggen is going to implement before 2014. Everyone within Riksbyggen should be aware of this plan and contribute in some way for the organization to reach their targets (Riksbyggen 2011b). 'Mind the Planet!' includes a line of graphical symbols (Appendix 1) to illustrate the concept and each of the seven commitments. These environmental commitments are:

1. We are helping our members to live more sustainable.

This commitment includes education of members; most prominently those members that are living in Riksbyggen's housing cooperatives. One of the most prominent examples of activities under this commitment is the environmental handbook. The handbook is under progress of getting distributed to all housing cooperatives. This handbook includes information about environmental activities that the cooperatives can work with to reduce their environmental impact (Riksbyggen 2011c). Other examples of this commitment are the yearly award that is handed out to the most sustainable housing cooperative and 'The Climate School' that exists in both an interactive version on the organizational website and as a study group. Riksbyggen is furthermore working to influence the public opinion and is participating in research projects to create better conditions for the members to live sustainable.

2. We have a service program that supports our customers towards a sustainable development.

The second commitment includes services such as energy saving in properties and 'Renoveringsverkstan' that provides good examples of renovation activities.

3. Our housing projects are setting examples for sustainable living environments.

Various characteristic projects both in new construction and rebuilding are under development to support this commitment. Riksbyggen is in these projects striving to provide innovative environmental solutions and act as a forerunner on the environmental arena.

4. We run goal oriented operations with clear incentives to work sustainable.

Riksbyggen has clear goals from corporate management level to create sustainable living environments. All employees at Riksbyggen are informed about the sustainability plan and the environmental activities. Some aspects, such as handing out the environmental handbook to housing cooperatives, are incorporated in the corporate reward system to give the employees extra initiatives to perform on sustainability activities.

5. We have created conditions and tools to work more sustainable.

The planet is taken into consideration in all processes and Riksbyggen has an environmental and quality management system that is ISO 14001 and ISO 9001 certified. This system also means that the organization is striving for continuous improvements in their performance. Riksbyggen is furthermore using a certification system called Miljöbyggnad to make sure that the construction of new properties follows certain procedures and are energy efficient. Suppliers and purchases are in 2014 supposed to be driven by sustainable measures.

6. Everyone within Riksbyggen contributes to our work towards sustainability.

All employees in the organization should have knowledge about how they can contribute to reaching these targets in their daily work situation. Riksbyggen's goal is to limit their carbon dioxide emissions by 30 % between 2008 and 2014. One important part of this commitment is changing all organizational vehicles into green cars.

7. Our sustainability work is known among customers, members and employees.

Their annual reports for 2010 and 2011 are sustainability reports that follow the GRI (Global Reporting Initiative) standards. These reports provide information about activities that they have done during the previous year to contribute to a more sustainable development completely integrated in their financial report. They are also striving to improve their environmental communication and the goal is to be able to educate and inspire both internal and external stakeholders.

5.2.2 Corporate Environmental Identity

The corporate environmental identity with its visions and symbolic representation is decided and communicated from a top-down perspective. The organizational environmental identity is what the organizational members collectively feel and perceive. They are not the same but complement each other and these differences are also visible in the empirical material that I have gathered. The corporate identity is generally developed for an external audience but the difference between internal and external perspective of identity communication is diminishing (Hatch & Schultz 2000:13ff). Riksbyggen's corporate environmental identity has been developed with both internal and external audiences in mind. The main focus so far has been on the organizational members to identify with the environmental responsibilities that Riksbyggen is taking.

Riksbyggen's corporate environmental identity consists of the sustainability plan under the concept 'Mind the Planet!' presented in the previous chapter. The implementation of this strategic plan is supposed to permeate all environmental activities in Riksbyggen and the

targets are set for 2014. ‘Mind the Planet!’ and the symbols (Appendix 1) are present in almost all communication material connected to the corporate environmental identity used for internal stakeholders and Riksbyggen is starting to use it for communication with external audiences as well. Coherent symbolic representation is important for the organizational members to identify with the corporate identity (van Riel & van Hasselt 2002:164) and Riksbyggen has put a lot of efforts into developing this concept.

The concept of ‘Mind the Planet!’ is developed from a top-down perspective established on a management level together with external advisers, as corporate identity aspects generally are (Hatch & Schultz 2000:17). It is the Environmental and Quality Manager that has worked together with the Brand Strategist and Creative Director to establish this corporate environmental identity that includes the seven commitments, the graphical illustrations, presentations, internal workshops, brochures and so on. The newly introduced environmental handbook that will be distributed to the boards of all housing cooperatives is also based on the sustainability plan and the graphical symbols (Riksbyggen 2011c).

Cramer argues that internalizing a CSR identity is easier if the organization has previous experiences of taking social responsibilities and the more integrated the identity is in the organization the easier it is to communicate their norms and values (Cramer 2005:256). Riksbyggen has a tradition of social responsibility by taking a long-term responsibility for their buildings and the organization has been ‘building for the community’ since it was founded in 1940⁸. Some interviewees argued that the organization could be better at using the social and cooperative values that are the foundation for the organization in a more modern way. “We are CSR intrinsically in our corporation all the time. We do not have to have it as a separate initiative” argues Market Area Manager 1.

Riksbyggen has now established a strong corporate environmental identity using symbolic representation and a clear vision about their environmental responsibilities in their sustainability plan. The organization is from a top-down perspective including an environmental dimension in all actions and communication. This corporate environmental identity could generate an environmentally responsible image and differentiate the organization from competitors. However, to really anchor and implement the environmental identity in the organization, an organizational environmental identity where the organizational members identify with the environmental activities needs to be developed.

⁸ <http://riksbyggen.se/Om-Riksbyggen/Samhallsbyggare/> (2012-05-25)

5.2.3 Organizational Environmental Identity

The seven commitments in the sustainability plan are written as ‘we are...’, ‘we have...’, and ‘our...’ to signify that the whole organization should be a part of these activities. This can be explained as the environmental ‘identity of’ the organization that works as a foundation for the organizational members to build relationships and attachment to as described by Hatch & Schultz (2000:16). By always including the planet into the environmental identity the natural environment also becomes visible as a stakeholder for environmental activities. Since the way that we communicate about the environment affects how we define our relationship to the natural world (Cox 2010:2) it is vital to establish an understanding about why the organization is engaging in environmental activities. The implementation of ‘Mind the Planet!’ has started with workshops for the organizational members and the employees that have participated at occasions had positive experience and it was a bit of an eye-opener as well.

Several of the organizational members that participated in the interviews also experienced that their relation to environmental issues had changed after these issues had been introduced at their workplace. Since Riksbyggen has started talking about environmental issues these interviewees have become more interested in reducing their own environmental impact in their spare time too. Some of them have for example bought green cars, used their cars less or have given energy savings priority in their home. They all believed that they had been affected by the changes that have been made in the organization. These organizational members are defining themselves with the same attributes as the organization through this interrelationship between personal and social aspects of identity construction in the same way as Hatch & Schultz (2000:15) explains the process of ‘identification with’ the organization.

Most of the interviewees could sense a genuine interest from the organization to work with environmental issues even though many of them argued that Riksbyggen could be better in various ways. However, many interviewees did not feel that the sustainability plan was something that they used in their daily activities. Everyone had heard about the concept but few of them could recount the content. The organizational identity is constructed through interaction with others and by comparison with other organizations (Albert & Whetten 2004:92f). The two business areas and all local market areas have a variety of competitors and stakeholder relationships. Hence, the expectations on Riksbyggen’s environmental identity are different in various positions in the organization. Multiple statements of identity are therefore made in relation to various audiences and the organizational members identify with the activities that affect their own relationships with stakeholders. They are not concerned about whether these activities are part of the sustainability plan or not.

When answering the question about who Riksbyggen are as an environmentally responsible organization the interviewees consequently thought of very different things. Most of them related it to the aspects that were most applicable to their own professional role in the organization. Account managers talked about waste management and energy saving services that Riksbyggen provides for housing cooperatives. Employees working with building projects emphasized green building certifications and technical aspects of construction and rebuilding. All these things mentioned are included in 'Mind the Planet!' and different types of employees focused on different commitments. The Environmental and Quality Manager also confirmed that the purpose of the sustainability plan is that the employees should focus on those commitments that are closest to their own work duties.

'Environmental leadership' was important for the establishment of an environmental identity in the manufacturing industry in Taiwan (Chen 2011:400). The results from the interviews at Riksbyggen showed, in a similar way, that initiatives from managers at local levels in Riksbyggen's large organization are crucial for the environmental activities. These managers become change agents and their personal engagement in the topic is often crucial for information and engagement in environmental issues to spread to local levels of Riksbyggen. Change agents are described as individuals who take initiatives and continuously come up with innovative suggestions for improvements. Previous research findings show that these change agents often are located in management positions and are important in the process of learning about sustainability (Siebenhüner & Arnold 2007:348).

Market Area Manager 2, who operates in a local market area of Property Management in the north of Sweden, has been the most successful change agent in the development of a local organizational environmental identity. He has created fun activities for customers, such as his own version of the climate school where people who live in Riksbyggen apartments have received the opportunity to participate in discussions and take trips to various places, such as wind turbines, where they can learn more about environmental issues. He has also been successful in establishing community relations with important stakeholders such as municipalities and the media. He argues that; "if you think that it is fun you will see possibilities, I see this as business opportunities as well and I think that it is fun to share our experiences" (Market Area Manager 2). The result of this is that his market area has been presented as a good example within Riksbyggen and most importantly a strong environmentally responsible image has been established in his region.

This Market Area Manager also shows that it does not have to be an interest for environmental issues that is the driving factor for a change agent. He says that he is interested in environmental issues “but one thing that lies deeper in me is marketing and business” (Market Area Manager 2). He argues that environmental issues have been very useful in marketing and generates good business in a long-term perspective. He always tries to read the environmental interest of potential clients and says that if the clients seem interested in those issues Riksbyggen’s environmental performance could determine if they get the business deal. He also argues that he receives so much positive feedback in return from his environmental initiatives that he does not understand why other do not follow in the same footsteps. New doors have opened in his market area and the municipality is for example using Riksbyggen to brag about the outstanding environmental responsibilities that are taken in the local area.

All interviewees agreed that Riksbyggen should take environmental responsibilities and that they wanted to participate in these activities as much as possible. None experienced any relevance problem and no normative disparity occurred unlike the results in the study by Frostenson (2007). The difference between Riksbyggen and the two other CSR initiatives taken by two other Swedish companies could lie in the nature of the CSR activities. As one interviewee described working with environmental issues; “No one can have a negative connection to it, you are either neutral or positive or very positive so it is a rewarding topic” (Market Area Manager 2). Other CSR activities that include ethically loaded concepts and ideas could instead be opposed by employees that disagree (Frostenson 2007:23).

However, the performance problems and knowledge problems related to implementing CSR activities in Frostenson’s study also arose at Riksbyggen. The lack of resources invested in environmental activities at Riksbyggen led to performance problems where the employees experienced an increase in their workload. Especially Account Manager 2 argued that he was encouraged to work with environmental activities but that it was something extra that was added on top of his other work duties so he did not really have time. Riksbyggen also have performance problems on an organizational level since they have high goals but the environmental activities that Riksbyggen has been carried out the last years are significantly relying on one person; The Environmental and Quality Manager. Some of the Environmental and Quality Coordinators argued that the organization is aiming very high but has not yet created conditions to follow up on their activities on many areas.

The Environmental and Quality Manager and the Brand Strategist and Creative Director experienced knowledge problems within the organization as well. This problem is for

example manifested in an uncertainty about what different concepts such as environment, climate and sustainability among the organization members. Another example is that few of the Environmental and Quality Coordinators that are assigned responsibility for environmental activities have any educational background in environmental issues which leads to disadvantages when they communicate information further. Many interviewees also argued that it was difficult to understand some concepts. One reason why a lot of market area managers do not use workplace meetings to talk about environmental issues is probably because they do not have enough knowledge.

Corporate and organizational aspects of the identity continuously influence each other in identity construction (Hatch & Schultz 2000:19). The results presented in this chapter indicated that the corporate environmental identity could be a good start of establishing an organizational environmental identity as well. All the interviewed organizational members show positive attitudes towards the creation of an environmental identity and generally identifies with the attributes of the corporate environmental identity. They want to help their members to live sustainable, they want Riksbyggen to be a forerunner in the environmental area and they agree with the environmental initiatives taken by the organization. Nevertheless, few of the organizational members really participate and influence the environmental identity due to its top-down perspective.

5.2.4 Culture, Identity and Image

Both the corporate and organizational aspects of Riksbyggen's environmental identity have developed a great deal the last four years. The organization did not have any significant environmental activities or strategies before they hired an Environmental and Quality Manager in 2008. Compared to their gigantic competitors in the construction industry they were rather late on track. Many of these large construction companies that the Housing area is competing with have more resources to invest in new technology, research and communication than Riksbyggen. It is therefore difficult for Riksbyggen to stand out from the crowd with their environmental performance in this industry. However, the competitors in the property management industry are not as prominent and Riksbyggen is in many ways a precursor on environmental activities in this market area.

The interviewees felt that the competitors believed Riksbyggen to be a serious actor in the industry, both in construction and in property management. Many interviewees also perceived Riksbyggen's general image as positive and argued that Riksbyggen has a well-known brand and a good reputation even though they did not feel that the general public really knows their

actual business operations. Employees at Housing mostly felt that Riksbyggen's property management services were the most well-known and the employees at Property Management often experienced the opposite. Almost all interviewees felt that Riksbyggen's image was a bit boring and some other more negative words like slow, old fashioned and low-key was brought up. However, some positive concepts were also applied to Riksbyggen's image such as stable, responsible and calm. The core values security, long-term perspective and cooperation were also mentioned in this context.

One interviewee experienced that Riksbyggen's corporate identity had changed from old and shabby into more youthful and modern the last couple of years due to the new profile that has been developed. He was very enthusiastic and argued that Riksbyggen is a sought employer that, for example, is investing in young people. Other interviewees could instead see a lack of coherence between the cooperative image and the organizational culture. The cooperative image with values such as participation, influence and community⁹ does not match the hierarchical structure inside the organization. One employee was especially dissatisfied with this discrepancy and argued that the organization is too controlled by managers and economics that it does not live up to its communicated image.

The employees interviewed from the business area of Housing were a bit dissatisfied with Riksbyggen's environmentally responsible image. Market Area Manager 3 wanted Riksbyggen to extend the communication towards the general public so that people would be more aware of the good things that Riksbyggen are doing both as an environmentally responsible organization and as a value-driven cooperative firm. He also felt that Riksbyggen stands for something better than what regular corporations in the industry do. The Project Developer compared Riksbyggen with another large construction company that has been successful in their environmental communication. He argued that it is difficult for the general public to value environmental activities and certification systems against each other, so the corporations that succeed in communication really achieve competitive advantage. "We can go and mutter in silence that we are twice as good but if no one finds out, what is the point of that?" (Project Developer).

The interviewees at the Property Management area were in general more content with the environmentally responsible image that Riksbyggen has. One reason is that the competitors are smaller and lack resources to invest a lot in their environmental performance in the property management industry. Employees that are not working in smaller market areas also

⁹ <http://riksbyggen.se/Om-Riksbyggen/Kooperation/> (2012-05-25)

compared Riksbyggen to smaller competitors with a less prominent environmental performance and they were also more satisfied with the environmentally responsible image. Some of them argued that Riksbyggen was a modern company and a forerunner when it comes to taking environmental responsibilities.

The organizational identity is very much developed in comparison with others. The fragmented view of the organizational image, which the interviewees presented, affects the organizational identity and culture in the 'reflection process' (Figure 5). The organizational members seem to agree that they were proud of their organization and the environmental responsibilities that it is taking. However, many of them expressed frustration over the fact that they have not succeeded in conveying that image to the general public. The lack of organizational pride has possibly also been reflected in the organizational culture, which is very modest as well.

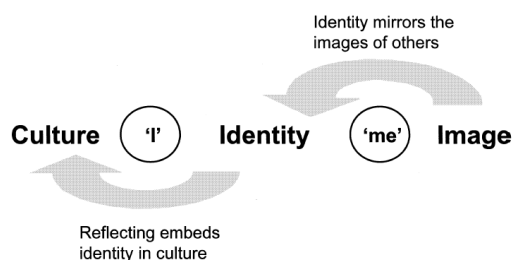


Figure 5 (Hatch & Schultz 2002:995)

The organizational culture at Riksbyggen is characterized by modesty, defensiveness and lack of initiatives from the organizational members due to a culture that supports the hierarchical organizational structure. The characteristics became evident both through my participant observations in meetings and daily activities and were also confirmed by many of the interviewees. The previous study, conducted by Sandell & Wong, about the organizational culture and communication related to processes of change at Riksbyggen also show similar results. These authors argue that it is difficult to implement organizational changes due to the fact that many organizational members resist changes from above. They could also see the lack of initiatives from many employees and that many organizational members feel that they cannot influence their situation due to the hierarchical structure. They could also see some rivalry between market areas that led to poor communication between various parts of the organization (Sandell & Wong 2011:23ff).

From my participant observations at internal meetings it was obvious that employees at local offices lack inventiveness. One example is when the Environmental and Quality Manager tried to delegate various tasks to the local Environmental and Quality Coordinators but they did not show any interest in taking on responsibilities. In addition, when they discussed the

division of work duties in the focus group they argued that it does not work as it is today but few of them could think of improvements so the discussion ended up without results on that topic. They argued instead that they need more steering from above which indicated that they are not used to taking own initiatives in their regions. One account manager at a local level of the Property Management area complained about the lack of environmental activities initiated from the organization centrally. He did not want to take own initiatives because he felt that it would have much more authority if it came from above.

That the organizational culture rarely supports bottom-up initiatives also became visible through the interviews. Account Manager 2 was, for example, not satisfied with the way that Riksbyggen is missing business opportunities when it comes to following up on energy audits that had been made on houses in his market area. The reason for this was that there were not enough staff and resources available to take on these operations. This employee also has a lot of ideas about how the environmental performance could be improved but does not feel that he has any way to communicate upwards in the hierarchy to affect the situation. The fact that this engaged employee had not been noticed outside of this region despite that fact that he has been involved in the local environmental network for ten years is also a sign of an organizational culture that does not take advantage of the opportunities they have at hand.

Riksbyggen also has an organizational culture of wanting to check things off lists and then move on to something new, according the external consultant. That has for example been apparent in their previous environmental strategy when they had forty improvements in a list that they fulfilled and then they were finished. Riksbyggen is working on changing this in collaboration with the external communication agency and has therefore developed the seven more comprehensive long-term commitments instead. In this way the environmental activities become more continuous. Working with environmental activities can never be finished if the organization wants to retain an environmentally responsible image; the activities need to continually be improved (Brand Strategist and Creative Director). The communicators also argued that Riksbyggen is expressing itself by communicating a bit about everything, often without a more comprehensive strategy. The cultural understanding about doing a little bit of everything is thereby expressed in the way that the organization communicates.

Riksbyggen has historically been a modest organization and that does not like to protrude, according to some of the interviewees. The organization still keeps a low profile both in general and when it comes to communicating about their environmental responsibilities. The interviewed employees were rather unanimous that Riksbyggen as an organization is not as

visible to the general public as these employees wish that it should be. The modest culture has led to a lack of pride in the organizational expression, the expressed identity does therefore not leave the impression on others that the organizational member's desire (Figure 6).

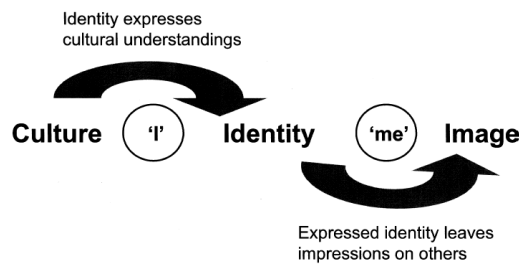


Figure 6 (Hatch & Schultz 2002:995)

Two employees who are involved in dialogues with municipalities on acquisition of land allocations argued that Riksbyggen need to be more offensive and try to establish competitive advantage on the environmental arena by investing in new technology. These investments might not make immediate profits but could be very valuable as communication tools and would be a way for Riksbyggen to establish itself as a leading organization when it comes to environmental issues. However, that would go against the modest organizational culture that does not work very hard to leave impressions on others.

5.2.5 Dysfunctional Environmental Identity

The change from not working strategically with environmental issues a few years ago to having prominent visions of becoming a market leader in these issues today has been quick. Some interviewees experienced that the shift has been too fast, for example Market Area Manager 1 argued that it is difficult for many organizational members to grasp the meaning of the sustainability plan. She also argued that perhaps seven commitments are too much and three or four would have been more appropriate to start with. The Environmental and Quality Coordinators expressed similar views when discussing the topic in one of the focus groups. Some of them experienced difficulties translating the commitments into more concrete actions that could be understood and implemented in the organizational activities.

It is important to have a balance between 'I' and 'me' (Figure 2, p. 12) in the construction of an environmental identity. This could be difficult if actions and communication do not conform to each other. Sustainable activities therefore need to be incorporated in the organizational culture otherwise there is risk of 'greenwashing' (Baumgartner 2009:112). When an organization reaches a state of hyper-adaptation (Figure 3, p. 14) there is an increased risk of 'greenwashing' since the environmental rhetoric does not correspond to environmental activities. Riksbyggen showed tendencies towards hyper-adaptation four years ago when they had not yet started working with their environmental commitments. That

resulted in accusations of ‘greenwashing’ for an advertisement where they did not have evidence to support their claimed responsibilities. These accusations have possibly affected the lack of confidence that the organization is showing towards communicating their environmental identity to the general public.

All interviewees argued that a lot has changed since the state of hyper-adaptation. One market area manager that started working at Riksbyggen three years ago was disappointed at first when the organization could not live up to her expectations. She did not feel that the way Riksbyggen was presenting itself in their external communication at that time was something that applied to its actual environmental performance. She feels that there is a big difference today when environmental activities are permeating all operations in a way that agrees better with the external presentation of the corporate environmental identity (Market Area Manager 1).

In the same way as symbolic representations are used for organizational members to identify with the organization, external audiences also need to identify with the organization to trust them and to start interacting with them. A new campaign is launched where one advertisement (Appendix 2) has one of Riksbyggen’s Environmental and Quality Coordinators holding a globe to symbolize that the planet always is included in ‘Mind the Planet!’. The advertisement is striving for sincerity and trustworthiness by not exaggerating what they are doing (Brand Strategist and Creative Director). This advertisement can consequently be seen as an example of balance in the corporate identity where a risk of ‘greenwashing’ is reduced.

Between the state of hyper-adaptation and the balance that is characterizing the organizational identity today Riksbyggen also showed tendencies towards narcissism (Figure 3, p 14). They did a lot of good things but did not communicate them to external audiences and did not involve these stakeholders in their activities. Many organizations assume that their stakeholders are as interested in their environmental activities as their own organization is but that is generally not the case according to Hatch & Schultz (2002:1007). Environmental and Quality Coordinator 6 referred to this as ‘greenmuting’ which is the opposite of ‘greenwashing’. The organization is then too careful in its communication and does not get any competitive advantage from their environmental responsibilities. Many interviewees were dissatisfied with Riksbyggen’s lack of an environmentally responsible image which shows that the organization still is a bit too careful in the external communication according to its members.

The change in Riksbyggen's environmental identity has gone from a rather hyper-adapted environmental identity into a more narcissistic environmental identity. The environmental identity is relatively balanced today but tendencies in both directions are still visible at various occasions as described in chapter 5.2.4. These changes in environmental identity can also confirm that organizational identities are continuously changing and do not have an enduring character. The environmental identity needs to be revised and redefined constantly if an organization wants to retain their image according to Gioia et al (2004:350). The demands on Riksbyggen's environmental performance from the general public will most likely increase in a steady pace and the organization has to keep up with society to maintain its image.

5.3 Environmental Communication

The difficulty to distinguish between internal and external communication is not only applicable for research, it was also apparent in the interviews with the employees at Riksbyggen. The interviewees were constantly combining these perspectives and do often not separate between information for external and internal audiences. Since the ultimate goal for most of the internal communication is to contribute to an environmentally responsible image a separation between internal and external perspectives is often unnecessary. Strategic internal communication is however important for the environmental values to spread within an organization (Falkheimer & Heide 2007:79). It is also necessary to reach the environmental goals that are stated in the sustainability plan and for the organizational members to learn about and identify with the corporate environmental identity.

It is important that the information about a corporate environmental identity is consistent for internal and external audiences (Dawkins 2004:118). Riksbyggen's communication material is using the same concepts and illustrations for internal and external use which is in line with this statement. The following chapters will elaborate on the internal communication by first exploring the communication channels used and then discuss the opportunities for dialogue in the organization. This section is followed by describing stakeholder relationships and dialogues that are established through customer events and community networks. This external perspective is then followed by an examination of the environmental communication with customers and municipalities, which are identified as key stakeholder groups.

5.3.1 Internal Communication Channels

The most common communication channels for the internal environmental communication have been identified through the interviews. Significant communication channels are documents published on the intranet, staff meetings where the managers communicate

information further to the employees at local offices, employee training and workshops and the annual sustainability report. Riksbyggen News, the internal magazine that is distributed to all organizational members, also includes plenty of articles about environmental issues and a few of the employees argued that they received information from that source as well. The environmental focus in this publication is on internal initiatives and not so much on activities towards customers. Since the interviewees showed more interest in environmental issues related to their work duties and their relationships with stakeholders many of them did not consider this magazine to be a valuable source of environmental information.

One interviewee that mainly works with new construction projects argued that the most important environmental information should be included in systems and templates for project planning. Since project managers cannot be experts on all topics related to their construction projects they have to have the essential information incorporated in the templates that they use and cannot be expected to collect information from various sources. This means that environmental communication from other channels is not really needed when the most important information is included in the systems which they already use in their daily work duties (Market Area Manager 3, Housing). However, the Environmental and Quality Manager argues that this is a huge problem because all relevant information is not incorporated in these templates as it is today.

The intranet is the most commonly used communication channel where documents and links are available. A newly developed guide for communication with municipalities and the newsletter called 'Latest News from Quality and Environment' can for example be found here. This newsletter is supposed to be used by the managers as support when they hold staff meetings. However, the administration of this publication, carried out by the Environmental and Quality Manager and the Environmental and Quality Coordinators, has not worked as well as it could due to lack of resources. Therefore, changes will be made. No newsletter has been produced in 2012 but a new type of newsletter that is integrated with the environmental management system will be developed in the future. Almost all interviewees had negative opinions about the intranet in general, that it is boring or dysfunctional. However, the section about environmental activities is new and was easy to find so they had no specific objections to about this communication channel.

Environmental issues are supposed to be standing items at all staff meetings. This works well at some local offices according to the market area managers who participated in the study. However, the employees at other positions did not experience that information about

environmental issues was brought up at these meetings. This indicates that the managers own initiatives are the driving force behind this channel of communication and if they are not engaged in the topic then the information will not be communicated further to their staff. Many interviewees (e.g. the Environmental and Quality Manager and the Environmental and Quality Coordinators) experienced that the communication halted at the managerial level of the market areas and that a lot of information did not reach the employees at lower levels in the hierarchy.

Employee training and internal workshops are common and effective methods for teaching the organizational members about environmental issues (Haugh & Talwar 2010:389).

Riksbyggen has used this method as a first step in the implementation of the sustainability plan. All interviewees showed positive attitude toward this initiative, which included some fun and creative aspects as well. The employees at local offices who work closely with customers and are not in managerial positions (e.g. Account Manager 1 and Sales Agent) preferred workshops as a communication channel for information about environmental issues. They argued that it is difficult for them to find time to read text information and this is not their top priority either. Half-day workshops every now and then were appealing even if it was difficult for the employees to remember all information that was brought up on the last occasion.

Workshops are an important communication channel, especially when a topic is newly introduced in the organization. Organizational members who have more knowledge, such as the Environmental and Quality Coordinators, meet other employees to educate them about various environmental issues for a few hours, like in a seminar. These workshops are a way of actually establishing dialogue between organizational members. In an organization where opportunities for dialogue are rare these occasions become particularly important. Many organizational members do not feel that messages about environmental activities that are communicated through official documents are relevant for them (Morsing & Vallengin 2006:247f). When they instead get to participate in activities and are able to receive feedback on their concerns they become more interested in the topics.

Sustainability reports are major tool for communication with both internal and external stakeholders for many organizations (Haugh & Talwar 2010:389). One of the main purposes of Riksbyggen's first sustainability report (Riksbyggen 2010) was its internal use according to the Environmental and Quality Manager. However, the interviewees seem to lack interest and a majority of the interviewees argued that they had not received any information on how they

were supposed to use this sustainability report. Some of them rejected it as it was too difficult for them to understand the content. This could either be an indication of their lack of knowledge or of their lack of interest because the texts are rather legible and designed for anyone to read. However, some engaged employees (i.e. Market Area Manager 2, Environmental and Quality Coordinators 5 & 6) used extracts from the report in internal and external presentations and handed it out to major clients. Riksbyggen is in spring 2012 presenting their second sustainability report (Riksbyggen 2011a) and this report is reviewed by an outside party unlike the report for 2010. The new sustainability report will perhaps be used differently since the concept has been tested and the report has been audited.

5.3.2 Internal Dialogue

“We have done a lot but we have not talked to each other about it, a classical problem” (Project Developer). This quote shows one of the biggest problems that Riksbyggen has in establishing an organizational environmental identity; the internal communication.

Riksbyggen’s internal communication generally follows the hierarchical structure in the way that organizational communication traditionally has been carried out. Managers become very important for the organizational communication in this structure since they are responsible for communicating messages further to their staff. Information often has to go through many organizational levels (Figure 4, p. 29) before it finally reaches the employees. This way of communication is often slow and a lot of important messages can therefore get caught on the way (Falkheimer & Heide 2007:80ff).

The Project Coordinator, who works at Housing, experienced that the employees at her office did not receive enough information and almost never talked about environmental issues. She could also see that the manager’s lack of interest in her market area was the cause. She furthermore argued that due to the hierarchical structure in Riksbyggen, where managers are essential to the organization, it becomes difficult to circumvent them in decision making. If the manager does not stand behind a suggestion or decision it will not have much impact. The opposite was also visible for Market Area Manager 1 and 2, working at the Property Management area, where their interest and engagement in environmental issues was the driving force for environmental initiatives in their market areas.

All three of the market area managers that have been interviewed in this study argued themselves that they have an important role in engaging the rest of the organizational members in environmental issues. Market Area Manager 3 who works at Housing was self-critical and claimed he does not use his interest in environmental activities, such as energy

savings, enough in his role as a manager. He continued and said that he could probably be better at communicating his own thoughts. Market Area Manager 1 at Property Management agreed and said that her role as a manager is to show that environmental issues are important so that individual employees do not feel that they engage in these issues without mandate. These interviewed managers seem to be aware of their own function but employees in other market areas did not experience that their managers had the same attitude and interest, which implies that there are considerable differences between regions.

The discussions with employees at the Communication Department in one of the focus group concluded that Riksbyggen does not have any particular goal to strive for dialogue within the organization. These communicators argued that one-way communication is the most common way of communicating within the organization but they wished to improve the possibilities of dialogue. They wanted to receive more feedback from other employees at different regional and hierarchical levels about the information that they are communicating. As it is right now they simply communicate messages without knowing how the information is received by their audiences. The ongoing project of developing a new intranet is actually examining the possibilities for employees to chat with each other but no decision has been made in regard to this. The focus group discussion was however leading towards a conclusion that the management level was not really interested in expanding dialogue opportunities, at least not at the moment.

Even though dialogue is generally not supported within the organization some of the interviewees stated that their main communication channel for information about environmental issues is through dialogue with the Environmental and Quality Manager. She cannot be everywhere all the time to support other employees and the lack of knowledgeable personnel in the environmental field makes it difficult for organizational members to receive feedback on environmental concerns. However, all interviewees that were in close contact with the Environmental and Quality Manager referred to these dialogues as a very positive element of the internal environmental communication, as they got a lot of engagement and quick feedback.

Several cultural problems have become communication problems at Riksbyggen because the organizational hierarchy does not support dialogue. This is especially true in the business area of Property management that employs a lot of people with various work duties, from managers to janitors. The employees working in the Housing area are a more homogenous group and the organizational members are more equal even though this business area consists

of almost the same hierarchical levels as Property Management. These employees experience better opportunities for dialogue and have more influence on their own work situation. This is for example visible in the way that one project developer who works in a region of Housing got his voice heard and created change by participating in the development of new communication material (explained further in chapter 5.3.5) whereas the Account Managers 1 and 2 in regions of the Property Management area do not feel like they have any one to go to with ideas and suggestions.

Internal networks can play an important role to promote sustainability activities in large organizations (Siebenhüner & Arnold 2007:349). Riksbyggen also lacks an organizational culture that supports the development of informal networks which makes the engaged individuals who work as change agents at regional offices rather lonely. Information about local initiatives does not generally reach other offices which means that good experiences do not spread to other parts of the organization. The hierarchical structure makes it difficult for bottom-up initiatives to develop even though previous research (e.g. Bolton et al 2011:68) shows that bottom-up initiatives are an important part of integrating CSR initiatives in the organization. Although it is difficult to achieve bottom-up initiatives, Market Area Manager 2 shows that local initiatives are not impossible. He has for example developed his own concepts that have spread in the organization and his market area is often highlighted as a good example by the management at corporate meetings and in internal magazines.

The Environmental and Quality Manager argued that there is a genuine interest from the corporate management level to work with environmental issues but that they sometimes invest in the wrong direction. Two examples of unfortunate decision making was first the creation of a climate school, something they invested a lot of money and effort into, but without examining the customer's interest for such an activity. The other example was the firm decision of changing all company cars into green cars, a decision that made on the corporate management level without consulting the rest of the organization. This issue was brought up by several interviewees in business area Property Management. Many employees were dissatisfied with the fact that it was a poor economic decision to replace existing vehicles, which were rather new and fuel-efficient with green cars. The phase-out could instead have been much slower and more cost effective (Account Manager 2).

However, the decision to change all cars into green cars was positive for the environment according to measurements that have been made. The sustainability report for 2011 showed that Riksbyggen's carbon dioxide emissions were reduced with 21 % from 2010 to 2011. This

reduction was mainly due to increased proportion of green cars that now represents 71 % of the total vehicle fleet (Riksbyggen 2011a:37). The Environmental and Quality Coordinators discussed this issue in the focus group and argued that the decision about green cars had been difficult to handle in their regions. They hoped that they would get an opportunity to turn it into something positive so that the organizational members would be more supportive. One Environmental and Quality Coordinator experienced a major lack of understanding from the employees in her region since some personnel were laid off to make savings and at the same time the organization underwent this expensive change of vehicles.

Both of these examples show that the organization does not use dialogue to communicate and receive feedback from internal, or external, stakeholders. This led to a situation where the decisions were not anchored in the organization. Decisions like these also make it difficult for the employees to identify with the organization's environmental decisions since they feel that they cannot influence them and do not support them. Managers become very important in a hierarchical organizational structure as Riksbyggen's. They have to take on responsibility for the environmental communication at all levels of the organization. The personal engagement of these managers is therefore often determining when it comes to the environmental activities in local market areas. Increased opportunities for dialogue and greater involvement from all organizational members in decision making are therefore desired by the interviewees.

5.3.3 Events and Networks

The literature about CSR and communication (i.e. Morsing & Schultz 2006, Luring & Thomsen 2010 and Dawkins 2004) generally emphasize stakeholder dialogue. This involvement with stakeholders in the community gives motivation in working and communicating about environmental issues. Signs of that are evident at Riksbyggen since the leading region on environmental performance and communication is the one working with close relationships to stakeholders (Market Area Manager 2, Property Management). Riksbyggen's organizational members are developing relationships and creating dialogue about environmental issues when they arrange customer events with environmental themes and when individual employees participate in networks or other activities in the local community. Some market areas have events for their local housing cooperatives. These events have different themes and a popular topic is environmental issues. The perfect example of this is a market area in the north of Sweden that organized events with environmental themes at 18 occasions during 2011. Market Area Manager 2 is responsible for this market area and he frequently uses his established relationships to invite various guests from the local community

to make these events more interesting. The amount of events differs a lot between market areas. Most of them had one or two environmental events during 2011 while some had none at all.

Market Area Manager 1 described these customer events as a venue for dialogue where representatives from Riksbyggen, housing cooperatives, municipalities and from relevant companies and organizations can meet and interact. All of the interviewees who have been involved in these events were very enthusiastic and proud about these occasions since they established good relations with customers, representatives from municipalities and representatives from companies that work with waste management, electricity and other environmentally related issues. It is also a way of turning environmental issues into something fun and interesting for all parties involved. This is not only a successful way of communicating with external stakeholders but also a way for the employees to learn more and become more involved. These events are therefore also contributing to the formation of the organizational environmental identity

The most engaged and enthusiastic employees (i.e. Market Area Manager 2 and Account Manager 2) are the ones who are involved in community networks with other companies and municipalities. In these networks they establish dialogues and share experiences on working with environmental issues. Employees that participate in community networks succeed at the same time to integrate environmental issues in their work duties and also reach out with Riksbyggen's message to external stakeholders. These results are in line with the findings from a study by Jacqueline Cramer who argues that interaction with external stakeholders play an important part in organizational learning about CSR. Employees that are involved in networks with other organizations learn from each other and these individuals often reach a higher form of learning. They could, by participating in these networks, understand the fundamentals behind CSR initiatives but it is hard for them to transfer these understandings to the rest of the organization (Cramer 2005:263ff).

Customer events and participation in local environmental networks help the creation of a positive organizational environmental identity on a local level. Involving stakeholders in organizational activities also improve the legitimacy of the corporate environmental identity according to Morsing & Schultz (2006:144ff). However, Account Manager 1 did not have any experience of customer events with environmental themes and was not satisfied with the internal environmental communication in his market area either. This account manager was also the least enthusiastic person when it came to Riksbyggen in general and the

environmental initiatives taken. They never talk about environmental issues on staff meetings at his local office or take the opportunity to make environmental issues into something. All these negative aspects hinder the establishment of an organizational environmental identity in his market area.

5.3.4 Communicating with Customers

For employees at the business area of Property Management the boards of the housing cooperatives are their main audience for communication on environmental issues. Differences on both regional and individual level were evident when it came to the interviewees' experience of these customers' interest in environmental issues. It was clear that the engaged interviewees also experienced a large interest from consumers about environmental issues while those employees that were not as optimistic and engaged argued that the customers did not care as much. Hence, personal interest and customer interest are connected and influence each other. If the employee does not experience any interest from the customers that he or she is interacting with the employee will not engage in Riksbyggen's environmental activities. It also works the other way around, if the employee does not engage in the environmental activities he or she will most likely have trouble convincing the customer that environmental issues are important.

Account managers everyday meetings with the boards of the housing cooperatives are an important way of communicating with customers. These account managers need to be informed and prepared to communicate when the opportunity is given. The environmental handbook (Riksbyggen 2011c) has been desired by Account Manager 2 a long time. He felt the information that was communicated about Riksbyggen's environmental services towards customers until now had consisted of empty words without any actual application to real services. This is also an example on how Riksbyggen is developing a more balanced environmental identity (as was explained in chapter 5.2.5) where activities and communication go together.

The housing cooperatives are also an important audience for published communication material in Riksbyggen's magazines and on the external website. A lot of this material has an environmental angle and the communicators argued that it was because it is a rewarding topic to write about and not because there is a corporate strategy to do so. They argued, however, that it would be good if there was a strategic plan for the environmental communication since no such plan exists today. Decisions about communication on environmental issues are today decided on an ad-hoc basis. This means that the employees working with communication

often have to rely on their own judgment about what they think is fun and interesting since they do not have any particular knowledge about what is worth communicating. In other cases they rely on the Environmental and Quality Manager to make decisions about what should be communicated which puts a lot of pressure on an already very busy manager.

The business area of Housing is responsible for selling new apartments to private apartment buyers. This group of consumers could be important stakeholders for environmental communication. However, individual apartment buyers do not seem to show any interest in environmental issues in their buying decisions. The Sales Agent working with selling apartments argued that the apartment's location and price are the factors that usually come up in the discussions and not the environmental standard of the house. The communicators and Market Area Manager 3 also confirmed this perception. The Sales Agent of business area Housing was the interviewee who showed the least problematic perspective of the environmental communication. He felt that everything worked fine and since he did not need that much information about Riksbyggen's environmental performance in his work duties he was satisfied with the current situation.

5.3.5 Communicating with Municipalities

The business area of Property Management works with representatives from the municipalities on, for example, customer events and local activities, so establishing a good relationship with the municipality is important. Market Area Manager 1 experienced that representatives from municipalities in general are very interested in Riksbyggen's environmental activities such as customer events. Several interviewees also argued that the municipalities seem to compete with each other to become the most environmentally responsible municipality and that the demands from these municipalities are strong, especially on the Housing part of Riksbyggen.

Employees at the Housing area have more business related contact with municipalities than employees at Property Management have. They interact with representatives from municipalities on many issues, but purchasing land is the most important issue since it is crucial to Riksbyggen's business operations. There are big differences between municipalities on how they express the demands on building contractors and that affects what types of information is necessary for the employees to have access to. In one municipality the demands on corporate environmental performance was clear from the beginning and just meeting up with requirements was enough. In another part of Sweden the demands were much higher on

corporate environmental communication since environmental performance was the determining factor for winning the deal on land.

Riksbyggen failed in the environmental communication with one municipality where the environmental performance could determine if Riksbyggen got a deal on land. Riksbyggen was interested in buying land and the land owner was a municipal housing company. The companies that were interested in buying this land all handed in a proposition that could be compared to a contest entry and one project developer was responsible for writing this proposition. Riksbyggen was not chosen and lost the deal. Since the municipal housing company is open about the selection process the project developer received information that it was the description of the environmental performance that was not good enough. Since Riksbyggen received high ratings on the other parameters the environmental performance became the determining factor according to the Project Developer at Housing.

Environmental performance and energy saving has become such a huge deal for this municipality and for the industry in general. The Project Developer argued that the development towards exceptionally strict environmental policies has been going on for about four years and it has been a fast shift. With hindsight the Project Developer also argued that he was not the right person to write about Riksbyggen's environmental performance in this proposal since he did not have enough knowledge. Riksbyggen therefore lost this deal mainly due to poor internal communication because Riksbyggen was not worse than the other companies in their actual activities, they failed in their communicating about them (Project Developer).

This is an example of how an employee working in a local office is managing to create dialogue with the Environmental and Quality Manager at the head office. He could thereby make improvements in the internal communication by helping the Environmental and Quality Manager to compile a guide for communication with municipalities. The issue of insufficient information is for the moment solved but the Project Developer is requesting continuous updates of this guide so that the information is relevant. However, the Environmental and Quality Manager does not have any specific plan for how that actually is going to be put into practice since there is not enough resources in the organization. The expectations on the internal environmental communication differ a lot between the employees that need to communicate with municipalities on environmental issues. Riksbyggen is therefore facing a communication challenge in meeting the needs from all these employees that have to deal with increasing demands from their local municipalities.

5.4 Summary of the Results

The results show that Riksbyggen has put a lot of efforts into establishing a corporate environmental identity by creating a sustainability plan and communicating its contents to the organizational members. This corporate identity contain clear visions and symbols but has not, at least not yet, developed into an organizational environmental identity since the employees does not seem to identify with these values. However, all interviewed employees argued that the environmental performance has improved a lot the last three years and they supported the initiatives taken by their organization. An environmentally responsible image has been developed at some local levels where the managers work as change agents and take own initiatives. The interviewees do not experience that an overall environmentally responsible image for the organization has been established and many of them are dissatisfied with the way that Riksbyggen present itself. They are requesting increased external communication efforts about the environmental responsibilities in order to establish a favorable image in the eyes of the general public.

Many of the problems that have emerged in the organization when it comes to anchoring an organizational environmental identity and image are derived from the organizational culture. Bottom-up initiatives and dialogue are generally not supported due to the hierarchal organizational structure, which means that the organizational members experience difficulties in affecting the decision making process. They are consequently not involved in the establishment of the environmental identity and this identity is, as a result, implemented from a top-down perspective. Managers at all levels of the organizations become very important in this structure, both for initiating activities and for communication about these issues. The organizational culture is furthermore signified with modesty and that is one reason behind the modest identity and a bit boring image that organization has.

The internal environmental communication goes through various channels such as the intranet, magazines and workshops. Managers are furthermore supposed to address environmental issues at staff meeting. That does not work successfully according to most of the interviewees, which means that a lot of organizational members are not reached by the internal environmental communication. The most successful communication initiatives are those that include something fun and engaging. Customer events, where Riksbyggen's employees, representatives from various organizations and municipalities meet customers to discuss environmental issues, are one particularly appreciated example of such activity. However, the regional differences within Riksbyggen are apparent when one local market

area arranged as much as 18 environmentally related events during 2011 whereas other market areas had none.

The external communication is rather modest, both in general and when it comes to environmental communication. One example when that has led to problems is a situation when Riksbyggen failed in communicating about their environmental responsibilities in interaction with a municipal building company, which led to the loss of an important business deal. A lesson seems to have been learned from this and the Environmental and Quality Manager have, together with a Project Developer, created a guide that work as support for future situations. There are, however, not enough resources available to keep this document updated, which means that similar problems most likely will occur in the future as well. Municipalities are the stakeholder group that showed most interest in Riksbyggen's environmental performance according to the interviewees but the regional differences are significant. This means that employees at various regions and positions within Riksbyggen experience different need for information about environmental issues which poses a difficult challenge for the organization.

6. Discussion

The problems and good experiences that have been brought up in this study are most likely true for many other organizations that are developing an organizational environmental identity. Since the corporate identity is decided and communicated from a top-down perspective it is much easier to enforce it on the organization. The organizational identity, which includes a feeling of identification among the organizational members, may then be a result of a successful implementation of the corporate identity. My results demonstrate that communication is an important part of establishing the organizational environmental identity. These results are supported by previous findings from Luring & Thomsen (2009) who show that if the organizational members do not participate in dialogue processes they will not feel ownership for the responsibilities that are introduced in the organization.

Luring & Thomsen also argue that the organizations that engage both internal and external stakeholders in a genuine dialogue are better at linking ideals with practice. Since the most common way for corporations to act is defensive and not responsive the establishment of genuine dialogue in the organization often includes a change of the overall corporate strategies (Luring & Thomsen 2010:214). Riksbyggen has successfully established dialogue with some external stakeholders by involving them in customer events and collaborating with

them in various networks. The most common way of communicating with both internal and external stakeholders is, however, defensive at Riksbyggen as well. Both internal and external stakeholders become involved in the later stages of most environmental activities which mean that many decisions are already taken and the possibilities for stakeholders to influence are therefore limited.

Managers are important as change agents at Riksbyggen and similar results have been presented in other studies as well (i.e. Siebenhüner & Arnold 2007 and Chen 2011). The study by Chen is, however, focused on the importance of top management whereas my study point to the relevance of local managers at the lower levels of the organization. Riksbyggen's top management is rather invisible in the interview results but is of course important as well since they determine the overall guidelines for the environmental strategies. That managers are vital for environmental initiatives is unfortunate because then the activities rely on the personal interest of this particular person. This becomes no problem when the managers are engaged individuals such as Market Area Manager 1 and 2 at Riksbyggen's Property Management area. However, most managers seem to pay more interest in other activities that generate more short-term profit. These managers have to learn to see the advantage in working with environmental issues and a communication challenges remains for the organization to reach out to them.

The results of my study indicate that organizations that are taking environmental responsibilities in line with their core business have few problems when it comes to getting the acceptance from the employees. These results differ from studies about CSR activities unrelated to the regular operations of the organizations (i.e. Frostenson 2007 and Bolton et al 2011). Frostenson's study shows for instance that several problems could arise for corporations that work with charity when the opinion about what is ethically correct differs between the employees and the corporate management. It was much easier for Riksbyggen get the endorsement from the employees when it comes to environmental activities since none of the interviewed employees showed any negative attitudes towards environmental issues. That the employees could see real business opportunities generated from the environmental activities was also a huge advantage when it comes to increasing their engagement.

Riksbyggen is unique in the way that they have developed a corporate environmental identity with its own line of graphical illustrations that the employees can relate to and appreciate. Integrating the environmental identity into the overall organizational identity will now be the next step for Riksbyggen. The result from this study indicates that the organization will have

lot to gain by connecting sustainability values with the corporate core values. Sustainability and long-term perspective, that is one of Riksbyggen's corporate core values, could potentially be connected to each other by clearly including environmental responsibilities in this long-term perspective. That the value of long-term perspective is already anchored in the organization and the employees identifies with this value makes a connection even more suitable.

Further research on the employee perspective of corporate responsibilities, and environmental responsibilities in particular, are needed. More studies that connect environmental responsibilities with organizational identity are also necessary to follow up on the results presented in this thesis. It would for example be interesting to see research that develops the relationship between the environmental identity and the organizational culture. My study showed that regional differences have a lot of impact on the development of an organizational environmental identity, but it was out of the scope of this thesis to go deeper into these cultural differences. Examining the differences between regional subcultures and 'sub-identities' in large organizations could therefore be a relevant continuation of the results from this study.

7. Conclusions

The aim of this study was to explain how an environmental identity is formed and communicated in an organization with the intention of developing an environmentally responsible image. A case study was conducted at Riksbyggen, which is a Swedish cooperative company in the building and property management industry. Riksbyggen has created a strong corporate environmental identity with clear visions and symbolic representations in a sustainability plan. However, an organizational environmental identity where the organizational members identify with the environmental activities has not yet developed fully. These results show that it is easier to communicate a corporate environmental identity from a top-down perspective than it is to establish an organizational environmental identity where the organizational member identifies with these values.

The main difficulty that appeared in the case study organization when it comes to anchoring the environmental identity in the organization was issues related to the organizational culture. Communication is important in identity construction and when the organizational culture does not support dialogue or bottom-up initiatives within the organization it will face difficulties in anchoring their environmental identity. The environmental identity becomes ad-hoc identity

that operates on the side of the overall organizational identity instead of being incorporated in all organizational activities. Local areas of the organization that successfully have created an organizational environmental identity also succeeded in establishing a local environmentally responsible image. Involving external stakeholder in these activities and turning the environmental initiatives into something fun has been a key to this success. The environmentally responsible image has not yet been created on an organizational level, according to the interviewees' perception.

The nationwide organization has various demands from stakeholders, and also different need for communication about environmental issues. The organizational members have consequently very different expectations on the internal environmental communication depending on the information necessary for their work duties and the requirements from local stakeholders. This caused problems in the case study organization due to several factor such as the lack of an environmental communication strategy and insufficient possibilities of involvement from the organizational members in decision making. Organizational environmental communication is consequently a complex issue where communication initiatives often need to be customized for various internal and external stakeholder groups. Reaching the whole organization is important for the establishment of an organizational environmental identity and the results show that the case study organization is not there yet.

This case study of Riksbyggen has filled a research gap by applying an employee perspective on environmental responsibilities and communication of these responsibilities. It has also contributed to increased knowledge on this topic by connecting theories on corporate and organizational identity with organizational communication, culture and image in order to develop an understanding about how an environmental identity is formed and anchored in an organization. The study is therefore a valuable addition to research about corporate social and environmental responsibilities.

Interviews

Focus groups

Environmental and Quality Coordinators 1-6 (Property Management), 2012-03-13

Communicators 1-3 (Support Services), 2012-04-02

Individual interviews

Project Coordinator (Housing), 2012-03-21

Market Area Manager 1 (Property Management), 2012-03-22

Market Area Manager 2 (Property Management), 2012-03-23

Account Manager 1 (Property Management), 2012-03-26

Project Developer (Housing), 2012-03-27

Sales Agent (Housing), 2012-03-29

Environmental and Quality Coordinator (Housing), 2012-03-29

Market Area Manager 3 (Housing), 2012-04-04

Environmental and Quality Manager (Support Services), 2012-04-12

Brand Strategist and Creative Director (Consultant), 2012-04-18

Account Manager 2 (Property Management), 2012-04-18

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Appendix 1: Interview guide, Focus group 1

Fokusgrupp med Miljö- och kvalitetssamordnare (90 min) 2012-03-13, 6 pers.

1. Hur skulle ni beskriva Riksbygges miljöarbete?

- På vilket sätt borde Rikbyggen ta ansvar för miljön?
- Sju åtaganden och "Planeten ska med!", hur används de?

2. Hur fungerar den interna kommunikationen om miljöfrågor?

- Hur får ni svar på frågor om miljö?
- Får du frågor från andra medarbetare eller utifrån om miljö?
- Hur svarar ni på dessa frågor?
- Ge exempel något som fungerar bra?
- Ge exempel något som fungerar dåligt?
- Hur använder ni "Planeten ska med"?
- Hur använder ni Intranätet – Miljöarbete?
- Hur använder ni hållbarhetsredovisningen?
- Upplever du att det finns intresse för miljöfrågor internt?

3. Hur upplever ni att bilden av Riksbyggen ser ut utifrån?

- Hur ser kraven ut på Riksbyggens miljöarbete?
- Upplever du att det finns intresse för miljöfrågor externt?
- Känner ni till vad som står på den externa hemsidan?

4. Känner ni till Riksbyggens kärnvärden (Långsiktighet, Trygghet, Samverkan)?

- Hur är det relaterat till ert arbete?
- Vad betyder det att jobba långsiktigt?

Appendix 2: Interview guide, Focus group 2

Fokusgrupp med informatörer (90 min) 2012-04-02, 3 pers.

1. Berätta om era arbetsuppgifter

- Hur arbetar ni med miljökommunikation?
- Varför har ni valt att arbeta på Riksbyggen?

2. Hur skulle ni beskriva Riksbyggens miljöarbete?

5. På vilket sätt borde Riksbyggen ta ansvar för miljön?

6. Hur får ni svar på era frågor om miljö?

7. Hur vill ni få information om Riksbyggens miljöarbete?

3. Hur fungerar den interna kommunikationen generellt i Riksbyggen?

- Finns det utrymme för dialog internt bland medarbetare?
- Strävar man efter dialog?
- Upplever ni att hierarkier är viktiga i organisationen?
- Skiljer sig kommunikationen mellan affärsområdena?
- Hur skapas externa dialoger (med kunder, media, kommuner)?

4. Vad är en miljöfråga för er?

- Hur ser ert privata intresse för miljöfrågor ut?
- Skulle ni vilja använda ert intresse mer i jobbet?

5. Hur fungerar den interna kommunikationen om miljöfrågor?

- Pratar ni om miljöfrågor när ni har möten?
- Upplever ni att det finns ett intresse för miljöfrågor internt?
- Känner ni att ni har tillräckligt med resurser och kunskap för att skapa en stark miljöprofil?
- Hur tycker ni att Riksbyggen ska kommunicera miljöarbetet?
- Ge exempel något som fungerar bra?
- Ge exempel något som fungerar dåligt?
- Vad innebär "Planeten ska med" för er?
- Hur använder ni "Planeten ska med"?
- Hur fungerar intranätet?

6. Hur upplever ni att bilden av Riksbyggen ser ut utifrån?

- Upplever du att det finns intresse för miljöfrågor externt?
- Har ni koll på hur Riksbyggens miljöarbete ligger till i förhållande till konkurrenter?
- Upplever ni att Riksbyggen är bra på något särskilt när det gäller miljö?
- Eller dåliga?

7. Riksbyggens kärnvärden är Långsiktighet, Trygghet, Samverkan.

- Hur är det relaterat till ert arbete?
- Vad betyder det att jobba långsiktigt?

Appendix 3: Interview guide, Individual interviews

Individuella intervjuer (ca 60 min), 9 st.

1. Berätta kort om dina arbetsuppgifter

- Hur kommer det sig att du började jobba på Riksbyggen?

2. Hur skulle du beskriva Riksbyggens miljöarbete?

- På vilket sätt borde Riksbyggen ta ansvar för miljön?
- Hur får du information om Riksbyggens miljöarbete?

3. Hur har du kontakt med kunder/kommuner?

- Upplever du ett intresse för Riksbyggens miljöarbete från dem?
- Känner du att du har tillräcklig kunskap om du skulle bli ifrågasatt?

4. Hur fungerar den interna kommunikationen i Riksbyggen generellt?

5. Hur fungerar kommunikationen i miljöfrågor?

- Hur får du svar på frågor om miljö?
- Får du frågor från medarbetare (eller utifrån) om miljöarbetet?
- Hur besvarar du dessa frågor?
- Pratar ni om miljöfrågor på APT?
- Ge exempel på något som fungerar bra.
- Ge exempel på något som fungerar sämre.
- Känner du till "Planeten ska med"?
- Vad innebär "Planeten ska med"?
- Hur använder du "Planeten ska med"?
- Hur använder du fliken Miljöarbete på Intranätet?
- Brukar du läsa "Senaste nytt om miljö och kvalitet"?

6. Hur upplever du att bilden av Riksbyggen ser ut utifrån?

- Hur ser kraven ut på Riksbyggens miljöarbete?
- Upplever du att det finns ett intresse för Riksbyggens miljöarbete?
- Känner du till vad som står på den externa hemsidan?
- Använder du hållbarhetsredovisningen på något sätt?

7. Känner du till Riksbyggens kärnvärden (Långsiktighet, Trygghet, Samverkan)?

- Vad betyder det att jobba långsiktigt?

8. Hur ser ditt privata intresse för miljöfrågor ut?

- Hur skulle du vilja använda ditt intresse i ditt arbete?

Appendix 4: Interview guide, Environmental and Quality Manager

Intervju med Miljöchef (90 min) 2012-04-12

1. Beskriv Riksbyggens miljöarbete från din synvinkel.

- Vad är målet?
- Hur ser skillnaderna ut mellan affärsområdena?
- Upplever du att det finns intresse för miljöfrågor inom Riksbyggen?

2. Hur skulle du beskriva Riksbyggens företagskultur?

- Ser du skillnader mellan affärsområdena?

3. Hur skulle du beskriva bilden av Riksbyggen utifrån?

- Riksbyggen i förhållande till konkurrenter (båda affärsområdena)?

4. Hur tycker du att den interna kommunikationen fungerar generellt?

- Finns det t.ex. möjlighet till dialog?

5. Hur fungerar miljökommunikationen?

Sammanställda kommunikationskanaler är:

- Hållbarhetsplanen ”Planeten ska med”
 - ”Senaste nytt om kvalitet och miljö”
 - Intranätet – Miljöarbete
 - Guide för kommunikation med kommuner (på Intranätet)
 - Personlig dialog
 - Utbildningar/Workshops
 - APT
 - System och mallar
 - ”Riksbyggen nytt”
 - Kundtidningarna
 - Miljöhandboken
 - Klimatskolan
 - Externa hemsidan
 - Hållbarhetsredovisningen
- Saknas något?
 - Hur fungerar de?
 - Vad är syftet och målet?
 - Vem vill man nå?
- 6. Riksbyggens kärnvärden är Långsiktighet, Trygghet, Samverkan. Hur är det relaterat till miljöarbetet?**
- 7. Övriga frågor**

Appendix 5: Interview guide, Brand Consultant

Intervju med konsult (60 min) 2012-04-18

1. Vad gör du för Riksbyggen?

- Hur länge har du arbetat med Riksbyggen?
- Vad har Riksbyggen beställt av dig från början?

2. Hur kommer miljö in i ditt arbete med Riksbyggen?

3. Hur skulle du beskriva Riksbyggens miljökommunikation?

- Har du sett några speciella problem?

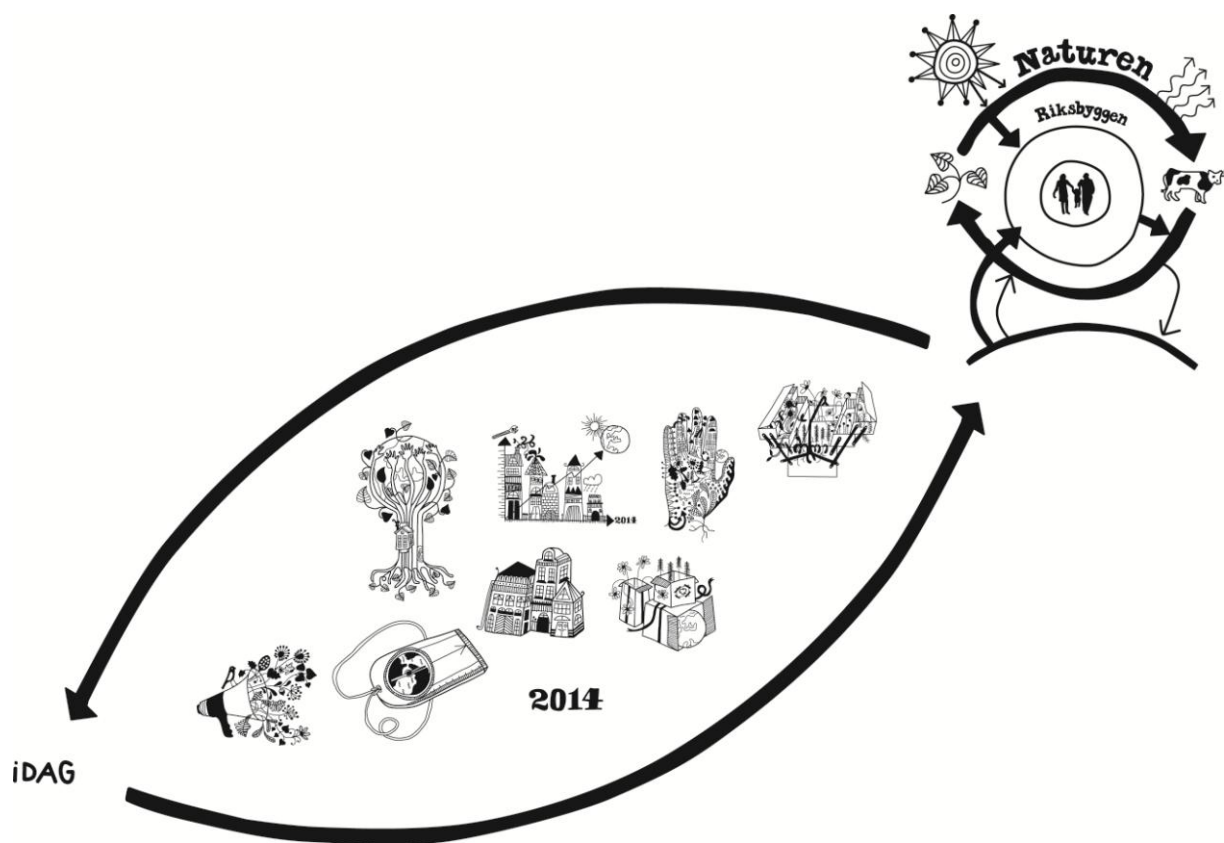
4. Hur upplever du att Riksbyggen jobbar med de här frågorna jämfört med andra företag?

- Kan du se att de kooperativa värderingarna gör skillnad?

5. Hur upplever du Riksbyggens företagskultur, identitet och image?

6. Övriga frågor

Appendix 6: Illustrations of ‘Mind the Planet!’



1. Vi hjälper våra medlemmar till en hållbar livsstil.



2. Vi har ett tjänsteprogram som stödjer våra kunder mot en hållbar utveckling



3. Våra bostadsprojekt är föredömen för hållbara boendemiljöer



4. Vi har en målstyrd verksamhet med tydliga incitament att arbeta miljövänligare



5. Vi har skapat förutsättningar och verktyg för att arbeta miljövänligare



6. Alla inom Riksbyggen bidrar till att vi arbetar miljövänligare



7. Vårt miljöarbete är känt bland kunder, medlemmar och medarbetare

Appendix 7: Advertisement



Planeten ska med!

Riksbyggen har tagit ett tydligt strategiskt beslut att bli ett hållbart företag. Vi ska helt enkelt med våra grundvärderingar om långsiktighet, trygghet och samverkan jobba för att som organisation vara hållbara. Men också skapa lösningar som gör att människor både kan bo bra i hållbara miljöer och själva bidra till ett hållbart samhälle.

Det är vår framtidsvision men också vad vi gör idag. Som företag har vi arbetat långsiktigt, ansvarsfullt och hållbart i över 70 år, både med bostäder, men även genom våra förvaltningstjänster.

Vill du veta mer om hur vi jobbar med planeten, ska du gå in på riksbyggen.se redan idag.

Vi utvecklar, förbättrar och förvaltar rummen som du bor och arbetar i.

