Unlocking the transformative potential of Agenda 2030

Investigating strategies for engagement in multi-stakeholder environments

Master's thesis at the Challenge Lab

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Cover:
[The 17 Sustainable Development Goals presented in the document *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* published by United Nations in 2015. A more thorough description of the Agenda and the goals can be found on page 9.
Photographer: Nickhil Sharma]

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Abstract

To address the sustainability challenge outlined in the United Nations document Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development within the given time-frame is by many perceived as a difficult, yet urgent and necessary task. Such a task requires incremental change to be complemented by processes of societal transformation, and such transformation requires multi-stakeholder engagement. The work presented here takes its starting point in West Sweden, where indications point towards low engagement with the Agenda among organisations and an uncertainty regarding the implications of the transformative nature of the Agenda. This thesis therefore seeks to engage with the following research question: *How might the transformative potential of Agenda 2030 be unlocked in a multi-stakeholder environment?* To answer this question, a Transformation lens as an analytical framework was created to help identify elements suppressing or supporting transformation. Additionally, interview data on current engagement with, and attitudes towards Agenda 2030 was collected from representatives from organisations in West Sweden and analysed by thematic mapping. In parallel, a document analysis based on the Transformation lens helped identify transformative elements in existing recommendations regarding engagement with the Agenda. The Transformation lens highlighted elements such as the need for a vision of sustainability, settings for learning and experimentation and transformation of the current socio-technical system, all while ensuring engagement from diverse stakeholders. With that said, the most common current engagement with the agenda does not challenge the current system. However, potentially more transformative ways to engage were described both by academics in interviews, and in documents. This shows a gap between current practices and existing recommendations. Additionally, the interviews and documents did not problematise the same things. For example, resistance to change was a rather central topic in the interviews but not at all addressed in the documents. Based on the identified elements and the gaps, we created a set of recommendations on how to work more transformatively with the Agenda in multi-stakeholder environments. The main aspect in these recommendations is to ensure time and space for reflections, both individually and in groups within organisations as well as across multiple organisations. Topics to reflect upon are what is the desired vision for sustainability, what the next step could be in realising that vision, and what roles different actors have and what the interaction between them should be. Additionally, reflection upon how safe spaces for continuous learning and experimentation could be created to complement more mainstream activities in today's organisations. This set of recommendations may provide initial stepping stones to help organisations engage with Agenda 2030 in a way which transforms not only themselves, but also have positive impact in the networks in which they operate.

Keywords: sustainability, sustainable development, transformation, United Nations 2030 Agenda, SDG, multi-stakeholder, collaboration

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Lists of abbreviations

Agenda 2030	Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development
GRI	Global Reporting Initiative
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
MLP	Multi-Level Perspective
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SDSN	Sustainable Development Solutions Network
UN	United Nations

1. Introduction

'*Transforming our world*', as the agenda published by United Nations in 2015 was named, presents a comprehensive plan for what sustainable development in the upcoming 15 years could look like. As apparent from its name, the Agenda not only suggests incremental improvements, but rather promotes transformation processes in society which seek to change systems on a more fundamental level (UNGA, 2015). However, although progress has been made in the years since the Agenda 2030 was published, the efforts are still not considered sufficient to meet the Sustainable Development Goals outlined in the Agenda at the given timeframe (Eurostat, 2017; United Nations, 2017).

However, this thesis was not conducted according to the same procedure as most theses at Chalmers University of Technology (Chalmers). Instead, it was written at the Challenge Lab where part of the thesis process is to identify a topic to address and formulate a research question, and to connect with a thesis partner, a supervisor, and stakeholders relevant for the topic. Therefore, before going deeper into the specific topic of this thesis, the Challenge Lab as well as the process which led up to the topic is presented. Thereafter, a background to the topic Agenda 2030 and the need for transformation is given, before the purpose, aim, scope and delimitations of the thesis is presented. The section ends with a presentation of the outline of the thesis and its chapters.

1.1 Thesis context

The Challenge Lab is an arena with students from all Master's programmes at Chalmers can meet to conduct their theses on sustainability transitions in multi-stakeholder settings. This section shortly describes the Challenge Lab and the investigation process which resulted in the topic of this thesis: Unlocking the transformative potential of Agenda 2030 in multi-stakeholder environments.

1.1.1 The Challenge Lab

In 2011, three "*building blocks*" to support a bigger transition towards sustainability were identified at Chalmers: to "*create a neutral arena/organisation; build on individual engagement and involvement; and communicate a clear commitment from the management team*" (Holmberg et al., 2012, pp. 222–223). As a response to this strategy, the Challenge Lab

was founded at Chalmers in 2014 to provide a platform for students doing their master's thesis to address complex issues regarding sustainability transitions from an inter- and transdisciplinary perspective (Holmberg, 2014). A more thorough description of Challenge Lab can be found in Holmberg and Larsson (2017).

Students are seen as a neutral actors, not representing any particular interest (Holmberg, 2014). This feature can grant the students access to various groups, and through due to their ability to be "*simultaneously non-threatening and challenging, a feature crucial to the kind of change society greatly needs*" (ibid, p. 97), they can have the ability to connect various groups of stakeholders to together face sustainability challenges. The students with their natural curiosity could therefore support the neutral arena sought after in the Chalmers sustainability strategy, while their interest and engagement could be used to inspire change in the broader society around them.

To further strengthen the neutrality, the physical location of the Challenge Lab is in one of the science parks connected to the university. This location, near academia as well as industry, facilitates interaction between the participating students and stakeholders from the Triple Helix (academic-industry-government (Etzkowitz & Leydesdorff, 1995)) along with other, for the addressed challenges, relevant actors such as NGOs and civil society groups. This neutral space allows for the students to invite and interact with diverse set of stakeholders to together address the sustainability challenges.
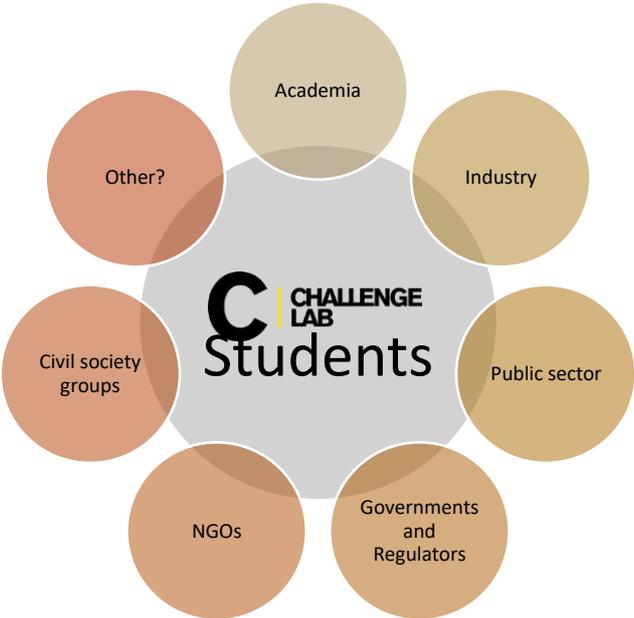
Figure 1.1 Examples of stakeholder groups the students might interact with through Challenge Lab

Throughout the Lab, students work closely with stakeholders from various backgrounds. The interaction starts in the preparatory courses *Leadership for sustainable transitions* and *Managing stakeholders for sustainability* where dialogues with stakeholders help the students identify sustainability challenges, ongoing projects/initiatives, and societal trends. Dialogues and stakeholder interactions then continues throughout both Phase I and Phase II or the thesis. This process of early and regular interactions builds relationships and trust between students and stakeholders, which allows the students to ask questions not normally raised in

the target organisations and through that access information to really understand the issue they are trying to address (Holmberg et al., 2015).

The students participating in the Lab are guided in a backcasting process combining an outside-in perspective with and inside-out perspective. The outside-in perspective consists of methods, theories and knowledge about sustainability, system thinking and transition management, while the inside-out perspective is based on self-leadership, strengths, and motivations, as well as tools for dialoguing and trust building (Holmberg, 2014). This inside-out, outside-in combination is applied in a backcasting approach, where the students are encouraged to lead change with a desired future in mind.

The thesis process at Challenge Lab is divided into two phases. In Phase I, all participants jointly create a framework for a sustainable society described by principles on a broader scale. Thereafter, though a series of workshops and stakeholder dialogues, sustainability challenges based on the gap between the desirable, sustainable future and the current situation are identified, alongside leverage points where these challenges can be addressed. Often, these challenges and leverage points are found in between responsibilities held by actors in traditional silo-structures, reinforcing the need to address them in an collaborative, experimental way including diverse set of actors (Holmberg & Larsson, 2017). The challenges and leverage points are then used as input for Phase II where the students divide into pairs where each pair choose one leverage point to address for the rest of the thesis period. At this stage, the pair also establish contact with a supervisor and engage stakeholders relevant to the topic.

In the 2018 edition of Challenge Lab, 15 students representing eight nationalities and eight engineering masters programmes participated. This thesis is one out of eight theses conducted at Challenge Lab during spring 2018.

1.1.2 Identifying a thesis topic

This thesis followed the process described in the previous section, where the thesis process is divided in two phases. This section briefly describes Phase I, that is to say, the process to identify and select the topic of this thesis.

Phase I had a duration of 4 weeks and was aimed at going from a broad understanding of sustainability into specific sustainability challenges in a local context. The context for this year's Challenge Lab edition is West Sweden, the region in Sweden where Chalmers University of Technology is located. During this phase, all participants in the Lab worked collaboratively as one group with guidance from the Challenge Lab staff.

1.1.2.1 Method for identifying the topic

As mentioned in the previous section, the process followed in the thesis is *backcasting from sustainability principles* (Holmberg, 1998; Holmberg & Robért, 2000). This methodology is by Holmberg and Robért described as:

> *a methodology for planning under uncertain circumstances. In the context of sustainable development, it means to start planning from a description of the requirements that have to be met when society has successfully become*

sustainable, then the planning process proceeds by linking today with tomorrow in a strategic way (p. 293)

The methodology used at the Challenge Lab is based on four steps adapted from (Holmberg, 1998): (1) Framing a sustainable future based on personal values and sustainability principles, (2) Understand the current system in relation to the sustainability principles, and based on that identify gaps and challenges, (3) Designing conceptual solutions in leverage points that can bridge the gaps, and (4) Identify feasible ways/strategies to realise the future solutions concepts (Holmberg & Larsson, 2017). Phase I mainly covered step one to two.

In step one, a framework of principles covering four dimensions of sustainability (ecological, social, economic, and well-being) was created. The principle framework was used to guide step two, where the current situation was analysed in relation to the principles to identify gaps and challenges.

To gather data about the current situation, strategy documents, and documents about ongoing initiatives in the region were gathered and read. Additionally, several stakeholder dialogues were held, both in the preparatory courses (see Section 1.1.1) and with stakeholders invited for Phase I. From the data, ongoing initiatives and potential barriers were gathered, but also intervention points where stakeholders saw potential for making transformative changes. Together, the data was analysed according to the Multi-level Perspective, dividing the system into regime, niches, and landscape (Geels, 2005).

The goal of the data collection was to identify so called leverage points, which are points where a small intervention can lead to big system changes (Meadows, 1997, 1999). These leverage points were described by the four questions *what* – the identified challenge and topic, *why* – the rationale for why it would make a difference to address it, *how* – a preliminary idea of how to address the challenge, and *who* – one or more stakeholders which would benefit from a solution and possibly want would want to engage in the process.

1.1.2.2 *Our outcome of the topic identification process*

The evaluation of the current situation revealed multiple potential gaps to address, of which three independent but interrelated gaps were chosen for this particular thesis. These were visions for sustainability, multi-stakeholder collaborations to address sustainability issues, and the use of and engagement with Agenda 2030.

First, although many organisations and projects are addressing sustainability issues, a lack of shared visions for a desired future and including holistic approaches on how to reach that future were identified. Instead, it was reported that the organisations often are guided by multiple separate policy documents, and that these often are peripheral to the core activities and operations. Additionally, the visions, ambitions, and strategies vary greatly between organisations. Furthermore, it was brought up that there is lack of resources assigned to sustainability related issues and that employee initiatives are sometimes suppressed by managers due to perceived need for control by and accountability towards top managers.

Secondly, multi-stakeholder collaborations were perceived as necessary to transform society and address the challenges connected to sustainability that the society is facing. Actors from

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academia, industry, the public sector, and civil society were all seen as important contributors to understand and address sustainability challenges. At the same time, several stakeholders expressed that collaboration involving multiple actors was problematic and not frequently occurring. The collaboration includes both intra- and inter-organisational collaboration and was theorised to partly derive from a culture of silos which limits the interactions between different groups. Additionally, some indications pointed towards professional cultural clashes and low levels of trust between the different actors which could also be hindering collaboration.

Thirdly, and interestingly, despite the conversations focusing around sustainability and sustainable development, and despite Sweden's commitment to Agenda 2030: Neither the Agenda, nor the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) presented in the Agenda were referred to by the stakeholders during the dialogues, with only one or two exceptions. They were not given much attention in the documents studied to understand the current situation either. This suggests that there may be a weak link with the SDGs at the regional and/or local level. Alternatively, there could be lack of motivation for communication about the SDGs.

As just mentioned, three topics were identified. First, the need for a common vision to collectively guide the efforts for sustainable transformation; second, the need for more collaboration, particularly for collaborations that break the current silos; and third, an unattended potential for the SDGs to provide a common and universal vision, one that could potentially bring people together across disciplines.

Together these three independent, yet interrelated, topics formed a leverage point: to use the SDGs as a unifying vision to support a transformation towards sustainability in a collaborative way. We therefore posed the following initial question:

How can the SDGs be used to promote sustainable transformation?

To investigate the validity and relevance of this question as a focus for the thesis, a short desk research around the current use of SDGs was conducted, as well as short discussions with a few stakeholders. This process identified a big interest as well as several efforts to work with the Agenda 2030 in Sweden and around the world. In Sweden, the interest spans both the national and regional level, including public and business sectors, academia and the civil society. However, the identified efforts were often only focused on the SDGs and seem to be mainly at initial stages of trying to understand how to work with them. Alternatively, the SDGs were used as a "check-list", aspects to tick off as considered within projects or organisations without deeper reflection of their consequences and possible wider implications. During this investigation, the focus expanded to Agenda 2030 as a whole and not only the SDGs, as we became aware of how the SDGs would need to be seen through the context of the rest of the Agenda 2030 document to support transformation. Resulting from the preliminary findings from the validation, the topic, with the extension of attending to the whole Agenda 2030, was therefore seen as relevant and motivating starting point to contribute to the knowledge body of sustainability transformations and Agenda 2030 engagement.

1.2 Topic background

Today, many challenges connected to sustainability are of global scale: climate change has both origin and effects globally, poverty can be found in all countries and regions, and inequality is a challenge both within and between countries. As a consequence, it is often acknowledged that the sustainability challenges that the world is facing cannot be addressed by small, and isolated efforts, instead, even local efforts must acknowledge the global complexity and involve partners from all over the globe to collaborate (Hirsch Hadorn et al., 2006).

In 2015, United Nations launched a new agenda for sustainable development named *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* (UNGA, 2015) aiming to "*shift the world into a sustainable and resilient path*" (p. 1) and unite global efforts in a transformation towards a sustainable society. To achieve its vision of transformation, the Agenda requires *transformative change*, i.e. changes that include "*profound changes [...] in production and consumption patterns and energy use through legislation, regulation and public policies*" and "*changes in social structures and relations, including addressing the growing economic and political power of elites*" (UNRISD, 2016, p. 3). Looking at these examples, it is implicit that organisations, governments and individuals all must engage with the Agenda beyond the business-as-usual practices, and that all three dimensions of sustainability (ecological, economic and social) are to be considered (UNGA, 2014; UNRISD, 2016).

Apart from the need for transformation, the Agenda also recognises the need for partnership. Not only does it state that "*all countries and all stakeholders, acting in collaborative partnership, will implement this plan*" (UNGA, 2015, Preamble), but Goal 17 ("*Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development*", ibid, p. 14), is specifically devoted in this aspect. This is not surprising considering that sustainable development is usually described as a wicked problem and as such requires the collaboration of multiple stakeholders (Roberts, 2000).

However, it is not an easy task to transform our world as the Agenda suggests. Unsustainable traditions, attitudes, structures must be replaced by sustainable alternatives (EEA, 2017; O'Brien & Sygna, 2013; Roorda et al., 2014), and new types of partnerships involving multiple stakeholders must be created (Roberts, 2000; Waddock et al., 2015). Nevertheless, it is necessary if the world should become sustainable, and the Agenda might be a platform to support it.

1.3 Aim and research question

The universal acceptance of the Agenda at the political level, its transformative character, as well as the wide range of critical areas that the SDGs address make Agenda 2030 an important and potentially powerful policy document. It is therefore not surprising that the Agenda has received attention globally and across the public, private, academic and civil society sectors. It is unclear, however, whether current engagement with the Agenda does indeed go beyond business-as-usual practices. As already explained in Section 1.2, such engagement is imperative if the intended sustainable transformations are to be achieved.

Our findings during Phase I (see Section 1.1.2) suggest that current engagement with Agenda 2030 is not sufficient to fulfil its transformative potential among some key stakeholder in West Sweden (and possible also elsewhere), and that Agenda 2030 has potential to transform society, but that this potential is often not tapped into. Additionally, collaboration is preferable for addressing sustainability challenges. Therefore, the aim of this thesis is to identify elements supporting transformative engagement of Agenda 2030 in multi-stakeholder environments and develop recommendations that may support realising the Agenda's transformative potential. This will be done by investigating the current engagement with, and attitudes towards the Agenda 2030 with a focus on West Sweden, but also existing documents with recommendations on how to work with the Agenda.

Building on the initial research question presented in Section 1.1.2.2, our research question was reformulated to:

> *How might the transformative potential of Agenda 2030 be unlocked in a multi-stakeholder environment?*

This question will be answered by, in current practice in relation to the Agenda among organisations present in West Sweden, and in existing recommendations regarding implementation, engage with to the following sub-questions:

1. *What key elements can be found that either support or suppress transformation?*

2. *How might these elements be used to initiate transformation in multi-stakeholder environments?*

1.4 Scope and limitations

There are many ways in which the abovementioned questions could be addressed, however, some delimitations were made.

Firstly, the initial investigations which gave rise to the topic was done in the West Sweden region. The focus of this study is therefore transformation in a Swedish context, more specifically in West Sweden region with focus on the city of Gothenburg. Data sources are however not only limited to this area, as external stakeholder, such as international organisations or experts on national level, are considered to have valuable knowledge to understand both the West Sweden context and Agenda 2030 and transformation in general.

Secondly, to identify what currently is blocking transformation and therefore needs to be addressed, but also recommendations already available, a broad approach was taken. This means that input was collected from multiple sources to gain a general understanding of the situation instead of a detailed scrutinization of few sources. Hence, only one or two data sources is used for each organisation, with the exception of the testing organisation where more sources were considered to also gain an understanding of the organisation in general.

Thirdly, as the topic for this thesis is *unlocking* the potential for transformation, the focus is put on early interventions to be made. Attention is therefore not given to implementation of change processes or later stages of the change

1.5 Thesis outline

To facilitate for the readers, the different chapters and a short summary of their content is described below.

Chapter 1, this chapter, introduces the topic, the research setting and this thesis.

Chapter 2 starts by introducing Agenda 2030 including a brief historical background and a description of its content. Thereafter, an introduction to theories which was used for this thesis is presented, theories covering sustainability, transformation, system thinking and stakeholder theory.

Chapter 3 presents the analytical framework, a Transformation lens which was created to evaluate whether later identified elements potentially could help initiate, guide, or accelerate processes of transformation.

Chapter 4 describes the research process and the methods which were used at different stages of the study.

In *Chapter 5*, the findings from the study is presented. This includes results and a subsequent analysis of the results.

Chapter 8 presents a synthesis of the findings from different sources and by that a summary of issues to attend to for transformational change based on the Agenda 2030.

Chapter 7 contains a set of proposed recommendations based on the findings and the synthesis on how to engage with Agenda 2030 in a transformative way.

Last, but not least, *Chapter 8* is dedicated to discussions of the findings and recommendations, and their relations to theory and methodology. This chapter also includes knowledge contributions made by this thesis and suggested areas for future work.

2.
Theoretical Framework

This chapter presents theories and concepts that are central to this study and form the theoretical framework that was later used to interpret the data collected throughout the study.

2.1 Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals

The historical context as well as the content of the Agenda 2030 are both helpful to understand what the Agenda 2030 is and what it aims to fulfil. These are presented in this section.

The background of the Agenda 2030 can be traced back through a number of milestones related to sustainability through the history of United nations. An early milestone was the Conference on Environment and Development in Stockholm in 1972 (UN, 1972), the first major conference where for the issue of environment where acknowledged as a question of international interest. 15 years later, in 1987, the definition of sustainable development as "*development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs*" (WCED, 1987, sec. 2.1) was presented alongside a call for a common effort to work towards sustainability.

The first global agenda for sustainable development, Agenda 21, was presented in Rio 1992 (UN, 1992). The agenda addressed issues connected to social, economic, and ecological dimension of sustainability, but also promoted the strengthening of marginalised groups. It was confirmed by 178 world leaders and was set to be reached until year 2000. Agenda 21 had several positive implications on the global development, for example to emphasise the need to put "*sustainable human development at the heart of development*" (UN, 2012, p. 5), to produce international laws connected to sustainable development, and to emphasise the need to consider multiple stakeholders and include them in co-creative processes for sustainable development. However, few of the aspirational goals were met (United Nations, 2012).

In year 2000, Agenda 21 was replaced by the United Nations Millennium Declaration, an agenda aiming to reach eight new sustainability goals by year 2015 (UNGA, 2000). The goals, which covered aspects such as poverty, education and health, were directed towards improving the conditions for people in developing countries. Huge efforts were mobilised in

the name of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and by the end of the time span, in developing countries the number of people suffering from extreme poverty had decreased from 47% in 1990 to 14 % in 2015, the imbalance between boys and girls attending primary school had been erased, and new HIV infections has decreased with nearly 40% (UN, 2015). In other words, important progress was made. However, the MDGs were criticised. Fehling et al. (2013), for example, pointed out in their meta-analysis of limitations of the MDGs that only a relatively small group of experts barely including representatives from developing countries generated the goals and that therefore "*political agendas influenced the structure of the MDGs*" (Fehling et al., 2013, p. 1111), that the one-sided focus on development countries which did not encourage engagement in industrialised countries, and that the MDGs only reflected a narrow share of sustainability issues and human needs.

When the post-2015 agenda process started in 2012, there was an understanding that the new agenda must build on the knowledge gained from the previous processes (UNGA, 2014). As previously mentioned, one criticism against the MDGs was the non-inclusive creation process, so the post-2015 agenda process was done in the opposite way. Millions of people contributed with their thoughts through online and offline dialogues and surveys. Leaders of national and local governments, academics and experts, business representatives, youth groups, and civil society groups from all over the world were represented in the process, which lead to a global interest even before the agenda was officially launched (UNGA, 2014). Additionally, the outcomes of multiple previous summits were reaffirmed and included in the agenda. The agenda got the name *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* and was in September 2015 signed by 193 world leaders.

Agenda 2030 (UNGA, 2015) consists of several parts, where the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), shown in Figure 2.1 and Table 2-1, might, as of today, be the most well-known. However, the other parts are just as important, as they address the questions *what, why, how* and *who*. The Agenda presents a vision, alongside 17 goals, 169 targets and 230 indicators of what should be prioritized to achieve a sustainable world (IAEG-SDGs, 2016; UNGA, 2015). The vision intents to stimulate and guide actions between 2016-2030 with the aim to "*free the human race from the tyranny of poverty and want and to heal and secure our planet*" while ensuring "*no one will be left behind*" (UNGA, 2015, Preamble). Additionally, the Agenda recognises the need for a collaborative effort of all actors in society through global partnerships to realise the Agenda, with national governments having the responsibility for follow-up and review and translation of the Agenda to the national context.

Some keywords words often referred to in the UN processes of the Agenda 2030 are important to understand its intention. First of all, the Agenda is meant to be *transformative*, meaning it is intended to radically change all aspects of our world that contributes to non-sustainability. In a summary of the post-2015 process, the United Nations write:

> *Transformation is our aim. We must transform our economies, our environment and our societies. We must change old mindsets, behaviours and destructive patterns. We must embrace the integrated essential elements of dignity, people, prosperity, planet, justice and partnership. We must build cohesive societies, in pursuit of international peace and stability. And we must prioritize good international solutions through the prism of the national interest of every Member State* (UNGA, 2014, para. 159)

Secondly, the Agenda 2030 is *universal*, meaning that it is relevant for all countries and all actors. The meaning of universal is two-fold, both pointing towards how the Agenda is directed to everyone and therefore must be a joint effort of everyone (Sachs, 2012), but also towards that the SDGs cannot be said to be achieved until they are being met everywhere, leaving no one behind (UNGA, 2015).

Lastly, the Agenda and the SDGs should be seen as *integrated and indivisible*. The SDGs link the three dimensions of sustainability, social, economic and environmental, together "*in a balanced and integrated manner*" (UNGA, 2015, para. 2). The Agenda also recognises the interconnection between the SDGs, that activities towards one goal have consequences on other goals and that therefore the SDGs should be treated as one unit and not as a set of discrete goals to address one by one (International Council for Science, 2016; Singh et al., 2017; UNGA, 2015).

Figure 2.1 The sustainable development goals presented as logos

Table 2-1 The 17 Sustainable Development Goals presented in their full form

1		End poverty in all its forms everywhere
2		End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture
3		Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages
4		Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all
5		Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls
6		Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all
7		Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all
8		Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all
9		Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation
10		Reduce inequality within and among countries
11		Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable
12		Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns
13		Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts
14		Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development
15		Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss
16		Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels
17		Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development

2.2 Sustainability and sustainable development

As previously mentioned, sustainable development is defined by the UN as "*development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs*" (WCED, 1987, sec. I.2.27). The same document, also known as the Brundtland report, highlights three dimensions of sustainability, namely ecological, social and economic, as well as the importance that all three can be simultaneously fulfilled for sustainable development to be realised (Du Pisani, 2006). Despite this, it is only recently that all three dimensions are beginning to receive equal attention.

In 2015, Holmberg (2015) proposed a framework of four dimensions, to incorporate the well-being aspect of current and future generations. More recently, the framework has been presented as a lighthouse model (Holmberg & Larsson, 2018). Since this model has been used in this thesis, it is explained in more detailed below.

The Holmberg framework can be thought of as a set of principles within which development remains sustainable. In this model, each sustainability dimension is described by a set of conditions (or principles) that must be fulfilled to achieve sustainability. The three (out of four) socio-ecological principles for ecological sustainability are described in detail in Holmberg (1998) and Azar et al. (1996). Social sustainability refers to those conditions that preserve our ability to live together, whilst economic sustainability refers to distributing resources within and between generations. Conditions that ensure well-being take inspiration from a study by Max-Neef et. al (1989) where he proposes that human well-being is achieved when nine needs are fulfilled.
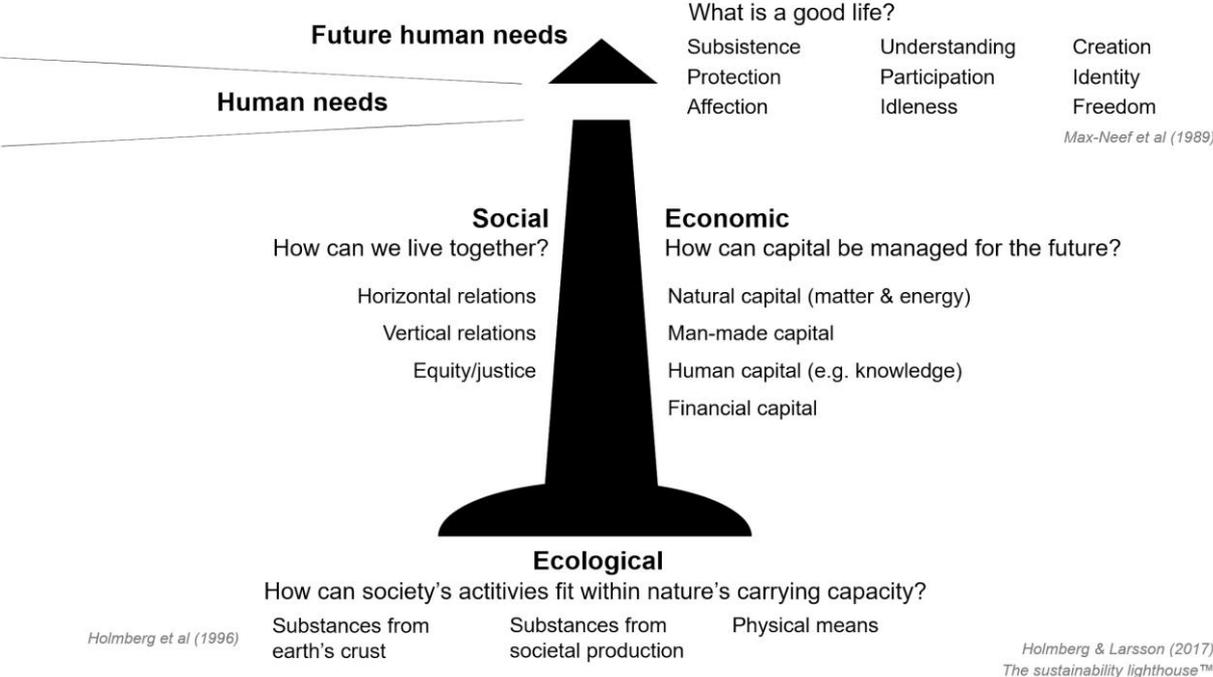
Figure 2.2 The lighthouse model for sustainable development (Holmberg & Larsson, 2018)

Starting from the requirement to simultaneously fulfil all the dimensions, it is clear that sustainable development is both complicated and complex, a so called wicked problem (Andersson et al., 2014). Like most wicked problems, they involve many stakeholders and no

clear answer to neither on what the actual problem nor possible solution is (Rittel & Webber, 1973).

2.3 Transformation

The Agenda 2030 calls for a transformation, something that is implied already in the title *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*. But what is included in the concept of transformation? Put in simple terms, transformation can be described as a fundamental change of a system (Elzen et al., 2004; EEA, 2017; Grin et al., 2010), often "*abrupt, non-linear and disruptive*" (EEA, 2017, p. 16).

Transformation is commonly discussed within the field of sustainability (E.g. Grin et al., 2010; Loorbach et al., 2017; Westley et al., 2011), due to the need to fundamentally change the current, unsustainable system into a different reconfiguration to achieve sustainability (Loorbach et al., 2017; Sachs, 2015). The desired outcome of such transformation has been identified to vary across different contributions (Mccrory et al., 2018), but has for example been described as solving societal problems (Loorbach, 2014; Loorbach et al., 2017), to reach resilience and stay within planetary boundaries (Park et al., 2012; Rockström et al., 2009), to ensure transfer of the "*desirable features of the current world for future generations*" (O'Brien & Sygna, 2013, p. 3), or, as in the Agenda 2030, fulfilling the 17 SDGs with focus to eradicate global poverty (UNGA, 2015).

Transformation towards sustainability requires interventions on system level, where addressing root causes of unsustainability in current systems should be sought for. Consequently, a wide range of aspects are suggested to be addressed, from institutions, structures, economic and financial systems, policy and regulatory systems and power relations, to world views, beliefs, mindsets, lifestyles and values (EEA, 2017; Meadows, 1997; Roorda et al., 2014), as they all interact and influence each other. In summary, there is a need to address *personal*, *political* and *practical* aspects in order to manage transformation towards sustainability (O'Brien & Sygna, 2013; Sharma, 2007).

If transformation is essential to reach sustainability, the question arises, can it be engineered? The common answer among researchers seems to be no, however, this does not mean that transformations cannot be influenced. Firstly, the theory on leverage points (Meadows, 1997), explains how certain interventions work as levers, sparking changes with effects rippling throughout the system. These ripples are especially strong when the intent or design of the system is challenged (Abson et al., 2017). It can therefore be argued that transformation can be purposefully induced or initiated. Secondly, transformation can be guided, for instance through addressing problem solving in multi-stakeholder settings and providing spaces allowing for experimentation where the learning outcomes are incorporated into standard activities (Geels, 2005; Roorda et al., 2014). Thirdly, transformation can be accelerated, for example by purposeful spreading of ideas and solutions, and integration of them into ongoing practices.

2.4 Systems thinking and a multi-level perspective

The complexity, uncertainty and interdependency of sustainability transitions, as well as their dynamic nature, call for a systems thinking approach (Williams et al., 2017). Systems thinking suggests a holistic view and analysis of systems and problems. Rather than breaking eventual problems in the system down to individual components, addressing them one by one; focus is placed on all components and how these are interconnected, including how they change over time.

Reaching a sustainable state requires a shift in the current socio-technical systems towards a more sustainable one. Geels (2002, 2005) propose a multi-level perspective to explain how transitions in socio-technical systems occur (Figure 2.3). According to this model, multiple innovations (technological *niches*) that are in some way linked lead to the creation of a new socio-technical *regime* where the regime can be explained as "*dominant and stable configuration in a societal system*" (Loorbach et al., 2017, p. 605). Changes in the external environment (*landscape*) can create "*windows of opportunity*" (Geels, 2005, p. 685), where the new regime can challenge and eventually replace the old socio-technical regime.
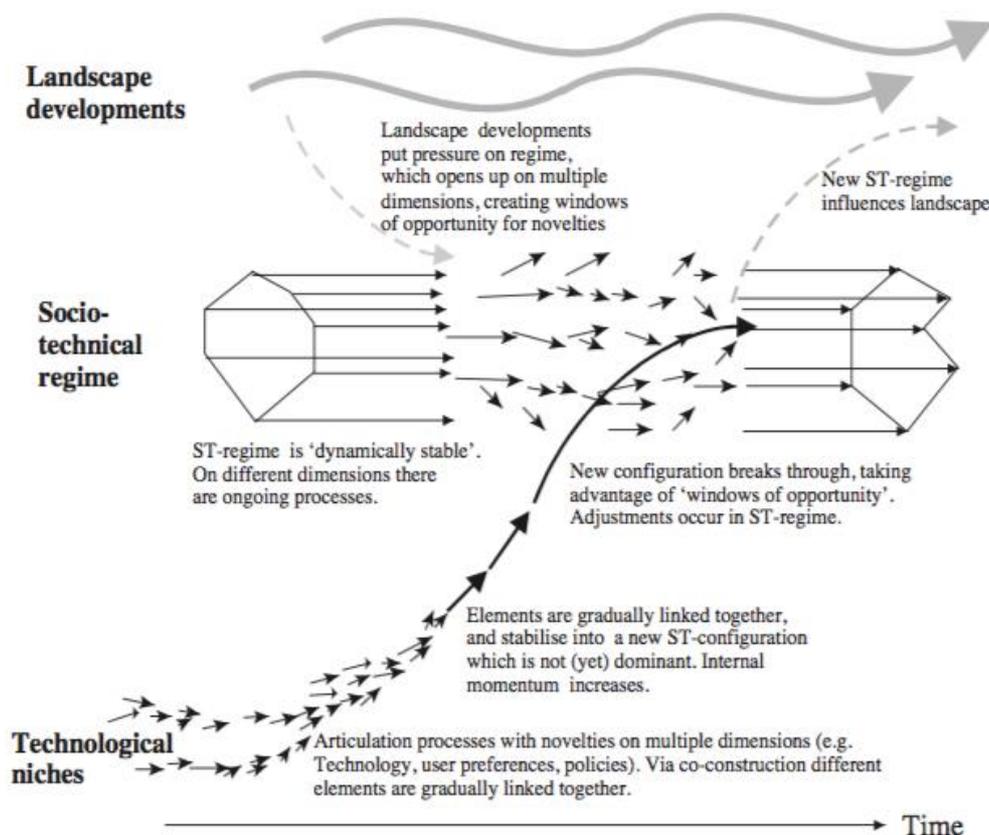
Figure 2.3 Multi-level perspective on transitions, figure from Geels (2005)

Such mapping of a system can lead to the identification of leverage points, namely points within the system where an initially small change eventually can lead to a bigger shift (Meadows, 1997, 1999). Meadows suggested 12 points, ranging from more shallow interventions such as adjustment of constants, parameters and numbers, to deep interventions which questions the system and its goals and intents. Later it has been argued

that although the more shallow ones might be easier to adjust, only the deepest leverage points have the possibility to transform systems towards sustainability (Abson et al., 2017).

Figure 2.4 shows the leverage points identified by Meadows with increasing potential of causing a shift, from shallow to deep, going from left to right.
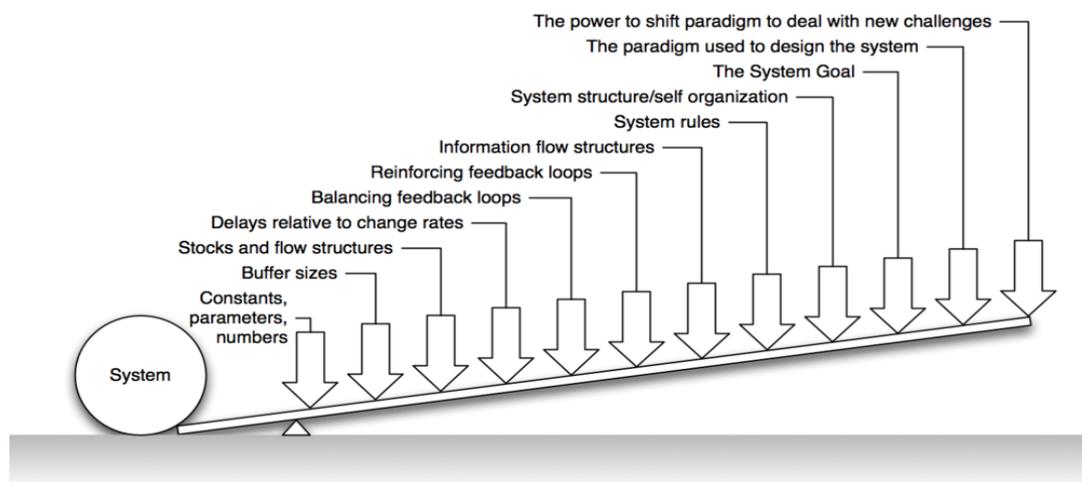
Figure 2.4 Leverage points by Meadows (1999) *visualised by Composite Creative* (2014)

2.5 Stakeholder theory

Stakeholder theory recognises the need to manage and engage a wider group of interested parties than the shareholders of an organisation. This idea was first put forward by Freedman, who defines a stakeholder as "*any group or individual who can affect or is affected by the achievement of the organisation's objectives*" (Freeman, 2010, p. 46). In addition, the normative perspective of stakeholder theory argues that stakeholders have an inherent value and a legitimate claim in an organisation's activities based solely on their interest in that organisation (Donaldson & Preston, 1995).

The importance of stakeholder management issues is widely recognised in the business world, and it is reflected by the extensive literature studies in this topic, as well as in the multiple models used for stakeholder identification and management (Bryson, 2004). In general, stakeholders must be identified, prioritised and appropriate levels and methods of involvement must be selected.

For sustainability transitions, where multi-stakeholder involvement is needed, the decision of who to involve and to what extent is difficult but acknowledged of central importance. Here, a distinction must be made between involvement and influence: involving stakeholders does not necessarily mean allowing them to influence decision-making. Edelenbos and Klijn (2005) describe fives ways of involvement, with increasing levels of influence: informing, consulting, advising, co-producing and co-deciding. Thus, different stakeholder can be invited to participate with different expectations on engagement and involvement. For example, stakeholders with high interest and/or high power are usually invited for a high level of engagement. Correspondingly, investing resources on engaging low interest stakeholders is less likely to be beneficial (Jeffery, 2009).

In relation to addressing complex sustainability issues, the value of involving a wide range of stakeholders from a diverse backgrounds is commonly acknowledged (Mikalsen & Jentoft, 2001; Reed, 2008). First, it is recognised that there is a need to involve society in order to change the current regime. Second, there is a need for collaboration between different actors. The concept of the triple helix (Section 1.2) has been expanded to the quintuple helix, to include not only academia, industry and the public sector, but also civil society and the natural environment (Carayannis & Campbell, 2010, 2014, 2012). Carayannis et al. (2012) focus on the transfer of knowledge between these different actors. However, complementarity in power to influence, culture and perspectives are also likely to be important when addressing complex sustainability issues.
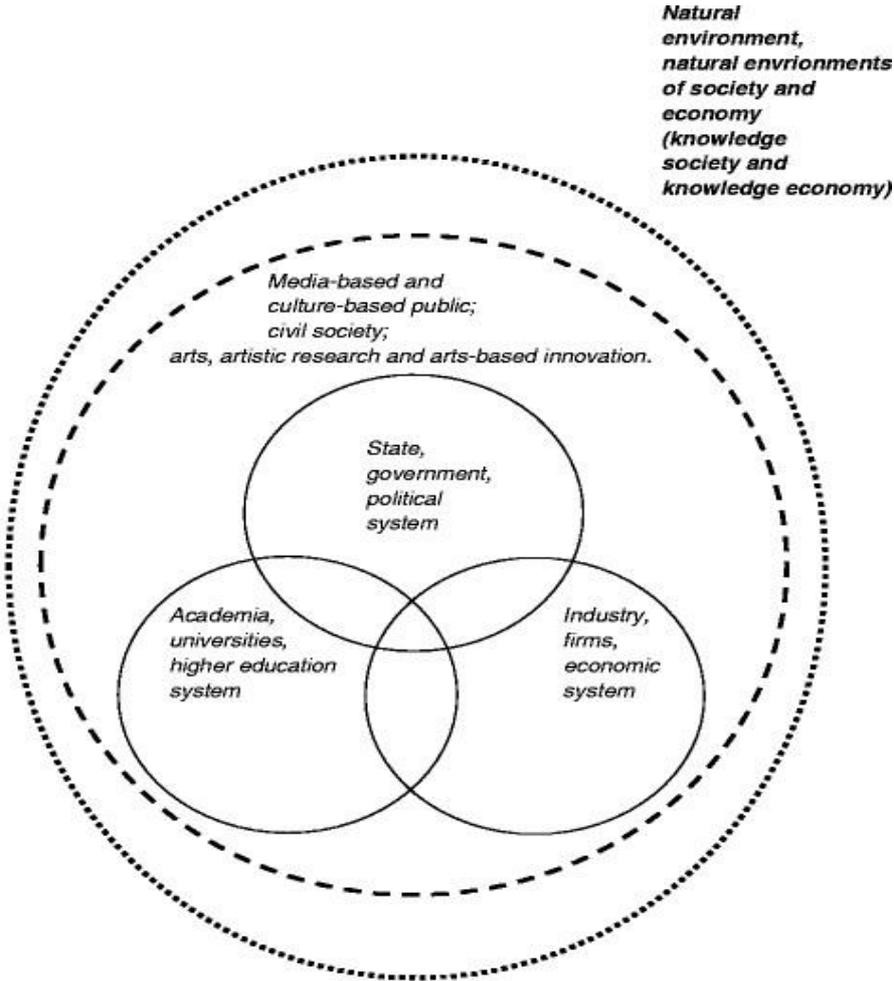
Figure 2.5 The quintuple helix innovation model (Carayannis & Campbell, 2010) *describing how the triple-helix actors academia, industry and public sector operates* (Etzkowitz & Leydesdorff, 1995) *within the societal sector, which in turn is limited by natural environment*

Once decisions are made on who to involve and to what extent, one needs a set of appropriate tools for stakeholder involvement. Below, the main tools used in Phase I of this study (Section 1.1) and later in the stakeholder interviews and feedback session (Chapter 4) are described.

2.5.1 Stakeholder dialogues, dialogue facilitation and dialogic leadership

Dialogues is one possible way to involve stakeholders. Leroux (2017) makes a clear distinction between five different forms of dialogues. In short, these are:

1. *Information* - Stakeholders are informed.
2. *Consultation* - Stakeholders are invited to give their input.
3. *Discussion and debate* - Stakeholders present their opinion in an effort to influence and convince each other.
4. *Thinking together* - Stakeholders are open to the point of view of the other parties to reach mutual understanding and learning.
5. *Deep dialogue* - Issues that are beyond intellectual understanding, such as feelings and the subconscious, are considered.

Going from 1 to 5, there is an increase in the extent of information flow, from unidirectional (1-2) to multidirectional (3-5). There is also a shift in the aim of stakeholder involvement from informing towards co-producing and co-deciding (see Section 2.5) when *thinking together* (4) or practising *deep dialogue* (5). By being open to others' opinions, as one is in 4 and 5, trust is built within the group, collaboration is supported, and collective thinking can be achieved (Sandow & Allen, 2005). Additional benefits of involving stakeholders through such dialogues are that it incorporates multiple perspectives and it becomes a more democratic process; presumably leading to a better and more widely accepted results (Van De Kerkhof, 2006).

Any form of dialogue requires facilitation to ensure the smooth and fruitful realisation of the process. Facilitating a dialogue appropriately requires preparation, practice, specific skills and appropriate tools. For example, it is important to be impartial and neutral, where impartiality refers to avoiding to align with any one side, whilst neutrality refers to regarding all opinions as different perspectives rather than positions one agrees or disagrees with (Leroux, 2017). One important tool for a facilitator is dialogic leadership, as it "*can dissolve fragmentation and bring out people's collective wisdom*" (Isaacs, 1999, p. 2). According to this type of leadership, as a facilitator you should consider four functions during a dialogue: "*speaking your true voice and encouraging others to do the same; listening as a participant; respecting the coherence of others' views; and suspending your certainties*" (Isaacs, 1999, p. 4). To fulfil these functions, the facilitator should seek to develop and practice four skills (Figure 2.6):

- *Listening* - listen deeply and with an open mind to what others are saying, without imposing one's own interpretations, so that we reach a shared understanding
- *Respecting* - allow others to express their opinion and try to make sense of the true meaning of what they are saying
- *Suspending* - suspend the certainty that one's point of view is the correct one, without dismissing it but express it instead in a way that others can understand it
- *Voicing* - voice what is true for one's self
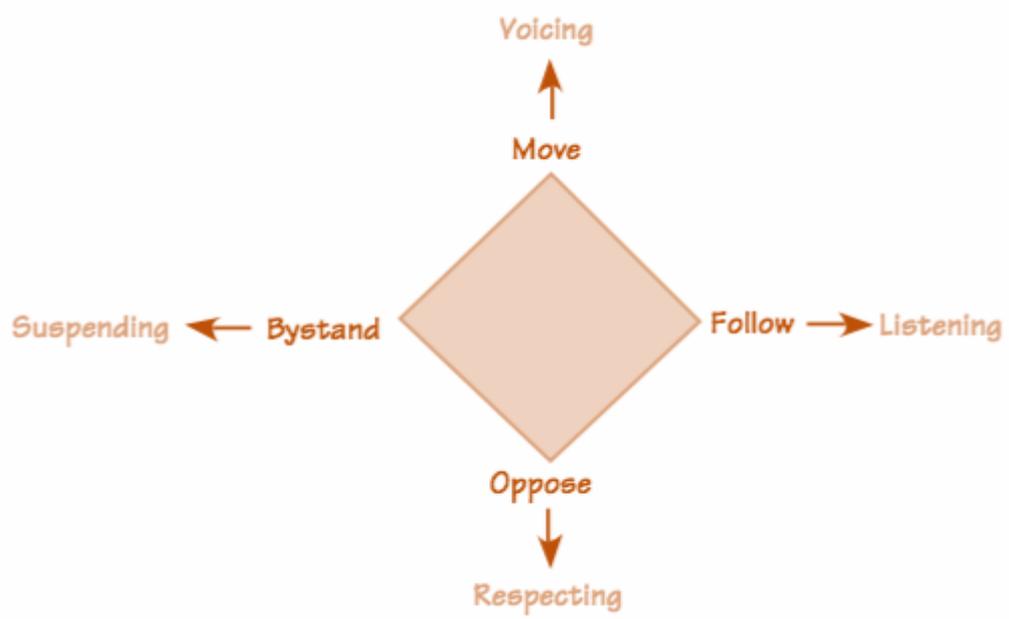
Figure 2.6 Four practices for dialogic leadership (Isaacs, 1999)

3. Analytical framework: the Transformation lens

To answer our first research question *What elements can be found that can support or suppress transformation,* we aimed to conduct interviews to reveal current practices and analyse documents to extract existing recommendations with regards to how to engage with the Agenda. To support the extraction of relevant data from the documents, and to evaluate the current practices and existing recommendation for their transformative potential, it was necessary to create an analytical framework that could be used for this purpose. This analytical framework was named the Transformation lens. The Transformation lens is described below, while its application is described in the next chapter.

The lens is primarily informed by conditions of transformation that are presented by Loorbach et al. (2017), Meadows (1997, 1999), and the Flagship report published by UNRISD (UNRISD, 2016)[1]. Loorbach et al. was selected as a recent and comprehensive study that is highly relevant for our research question as it reviews sustainability transition research. As it identifies the main shared concepts in this field, it provides insights to what could be a commonly accepted framework for sustainability transitions. Meadows was chosen for its concept of identifying leverage points, which potentially could induce transformation. The Flagship report was included since it specifically seeks to interprets Agenda 2030's transformative purpose.

Conditions of transformation were identified in the documents above based on the active contribution of these conditions in driving sustainability transformation as assessed by the documents' authors. They were also selected to be in agreement with our own knowledge and understanding of sustainable transformation. They were summarised or directly extracted from each document and compared. When similarities were found, they were grouped together into criteria and broken down again into sub-criteria (Table 3-1). The sub-criteria were then re-formulated as indicators of transformative potential, specifically designed to answer the research question and sub-questions.

Finally, the indicators were grouped in four categories based on their potential to purposefully initiate (category I), guide (categories II and III) and accelerate (category IV) sustainability transitions. The four categories are described below, and the indicators are summarised in Box 3-1.

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[1] This document will be referred to as Flagship report.

3.1 Initiate

Initiate refers to the preconditions that need to be in place for transformation to begin to take place. The main topic identified in the Transformation lens refers to having a vision to work towards and a strategy to reach it.

I.   Vision of and strategy towards sustainability

Starting from the vision of reaching sustainability, this set of indicators examine the requirements that presumably need to be fulfilled for sustainability to be realised, as well as the strategies that need to be employed in order to achieve this vision. As a first requirement, all three sustainability dimensions, as well as the interlinks between them, need to be considered. This requirement comes directly from the Agenda 2030, and it is based on the UN definition of sustainability (Section 2.1). Second, the vision of sustainability needs to be shared by those that are to implement it since collaboration is required for the vision to be achieved. This can be at an organizational level, but it can also be on a wider scale. The Agenda itself aspires for this vision to be global. In terms of the means to reach sustainable development, two factors are highlighted. One is the need for long-term planning in order to reach a sustainable future. The second is the need for indicators to systematically monitor the progress towards sustainability.

3.2 Guide

Guide refers to the supportive framework that needs to be in place when sustainable transformation is under way. Two conditions were identified in the lens: the need to learn/experiment and the need for collaboration.

II.   Learning and experimenting

This refers to the need for learning and experimenting as a means to reach a new state, in this case of sustainability. A learning/experimenting cyclic process, see Figure 3.1, can be used which consists of reflecting, rethinking, reshaping and experimenting. The starting point of this process is reflecting on the current situation, both individually but also within groups, such as a department or an organization. The *current situation* can refer to thoughts, actions, relationships, roles, knowledge, language and practices. The next step of rethinking refers to looking for new possibilities to change this current situation in a way that supports the vision of sustainability. Reshaping refers to planning and implementing actions that are taken as a result of the previous steps. Finally, experimenting allows testing those actions in practice. Repetition of this loop will mean an evaluation and adjustment of those actions so that they can better support reaching the vision of sustainability defined above.

III.   Collaboration towards a common goal

This refers to the need for partnerships and collaboration in order to achieve the Agenda 2030 including its SDGs. On the one hand, the link between local actions and global effects must be understood and supported, as required by the Agenda. On the other hand, engaging multiple stakeholders is a condition necessary for sustainable transformation (Section 2.5). These stakeholders may come from different sectors of the quadruple helix, but they could also come from marginalized groups that are not organized in formal structures.
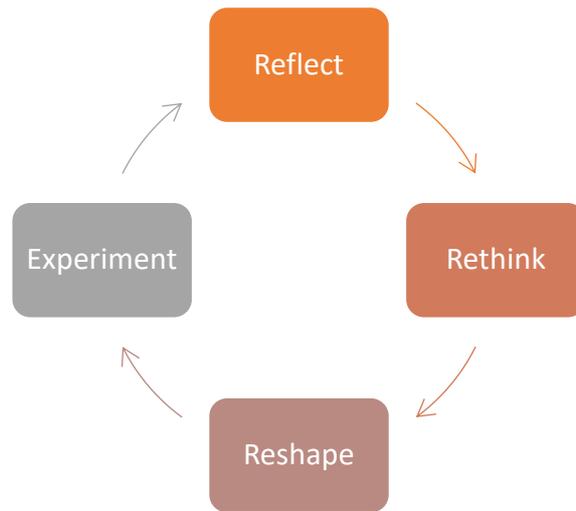
Figure 3.1 The learning cycle recommended for transformative learning. Inspired by Loorbach et al. 2017.

3.3 Accelerate

Accelerate refers to those conditions that could contribute to shifting the current system towards a sustainable state at a faster rate. The conditions are framed in the context of socio-technical systems (Geels, 2005).

IV. Transformation of socio-technical systems

This refers to the need for transformation of the current unsustainable socio-technical system to a new and sustainable one, and the conditions that contribute to this transition. The transformation can be thought of as the result of two major components, that need to work in complementarity. The first component is questioning, disrupting and destabilizing the current regime or status quo, and particularly those aspects that are suppressing reaching a sustainable state. The second component is supporting innovative and/or transformational alternatives to become main stream options and replace the current regime. These alternatives can target transformation at different levels, for example technological, social and organisational.

Table 3-1 Data supporting the Transformation lens

Flagship report and Meadows leverage	Loorbach et al. 2017	Criteria	Sub-criteria	Indicators *What elements could support or suppress:*
Lift voices of multiple groups, especially groups usually not heard	Pay attention to multiple actors including radical outsiders, frontrunners, marginalised groups	Promote multi-stakeholder involvement and inclusion	Lift voices of multiple groups Pay attention to groups not usually heard e.g. radical outsiders, frontrunners, marginalised groups	engagement of multiple stakeholders, including ones not normally heard?
Consider all 3 aspects of sustainability from the start	*"Create a shared future orientation and guiding values"* (p.608)	Create a shared vision of sustainability as a guide	Create a shared future orientation Consider all aspects of sustainability	creating a shared vision of sustainability, based on guiding principles for example, and all aspects of sustainability are equally considered?
Support and allow for test beds	Create *"space for experimentation and diversity in the short term, allowing for new solutions and ways of organising to emerge"* (p.608). Experimentation can be at the technological, organisational, place-explicit, and governance levels. (experimentation can be transition arenas, scenarios, experiments)	Support experimentation with solutions and new ways to work	Create, support or allow for test beds Create, support or allow experimentation at the technological, organisation, place-explicit and governance level	the existence of "space" for experimentation with solutions and new ways to work?

Flagship report and Meadows leverage	Loorbach et al. 2017	Criteria	Sub-criteria	Indicators *What elements could support or suppress:*
Share and spread knowledge within and between stakeholder groups	Learning-by-doing and doing-by-learning *"Social learning: reshaping interactions, roles, knowledge, language and practices"* *"Reflect, rethink, and reshape"* thoughts and actions	Support transformational learning	Support sharing and spreading of knowledge Support Learn-by-doing or do-by-learning Promote or allow for reshaping interactions, roles, knowledge, language and practice Promote of allow for reflecting, rethinking or reshaping thoughts and actions	reflection, rethinking and reshaping of thoughts, actions, relationships, roles, knowledge, language or practices?
Question and challenge established world views and paradigms Challenge status quo regarding power structures, economic structures etc	Empower/use strategies that can destabilise the current regime and/or lead to institutionalisation of emerging transitions *"mobilise and empower disruptive innovations and transformative capacity"* (p.612) Change needs to occur at the systemic level, and result in a qualitative change in the current social system	Challenge current systems	Question or challenge established world views and paradigms Challenge status quo regarding established societal structures such as power and economic structures Promotes or supports a qualitative change in the current social system Empower or use strategies that can destabilise the current regime	challenging the current system towards reaching sustainable state?

Flagship report and Meadows leverage	Loorbach et al. 2017	Criteria	Sub-criteria	Indicators *What elements could support or suppress:*
		Promote institutionalisation of innovative and transformative	Empower/use strategies that lead to institutionalisation of emerging transitions	institutionalisation of innovative and transformative
Long-term horizon aim for long-term impact Aim towards the origins of a problem, not the symptom of it		Plan long-term	Plan with a long-term horizon Aim for long-term impact Address the origins of a problem, not the symptoms of it	long-term planning towards a sustainable future?
Consider both local and global consequences and effects		Consider local and global consequences and effects	Consider both local and global consequences and effects	the understanding of the global and local impact of one's actions?
Transformative change involves multiple actors, and transparent and democratic political processes involving all those actors are also part of the 'transformation we want'		Increase transparency	Increase transparency	an increase in the level of transparency?
		Promote democracy	Promote democracy	an increase in the level of democracy?
	Systematic transition monitoring and evaluation	Monitor progress towards transformation	Contribute to systematic transition monitoring or evaluation	the evaluation of progress towards sustainable transformation?

Initiate

I. Vision of and strategy towards sustainability

What elements could support or suppress:

Q1. creating a vision of sustainability, based on guiding principles for example, that is shared and where all dimensions of sustainability and the interlinks between them are considered?

Q2. a long-term perspective towards a sustainable future?

Q3. evaluating the progress towards sustainable transformation?

Guide

II. Learning and experimenting

What elements could support or suppress:

Q4. the existence of "space" for experimentation with solutions and new ways to work?

Q5. reflection, rethinking and reshaping of thoughts, actions, relationships, roles, knowledge, language or practices?

III. Collaboration towards a common goal

What elements could support or suppress:

Q6. the understanding of the global and local impact of one's actions?

Q7. engagement of multiple stakeholders across different sectors, including ones that are marginalised and not normally heard?

Accelerate

IV. Transformation of socio-technical system

What elements could support or suppress:

Q8. challenging the current system towards reaching sustainable state?

Q9. the institutionalisation of innovative and transformative solutions to sustainability challenges?

Q10. an increase in the level of transparency?

Q11. an increase in the level of democracy?

Box 3-1 Indicators of sustainable transformation supporting Agenda 2030. Element refers to a tool, process, guideline, behaviour or opinion extracted from interviews or document analysis. Each indicator is labelled as Q1-Q11 for ease of reference.

4. Method

The thesis was conducted according to the current Challenge lab process described in Section 1.1, and it therefore consists of two phases, namely Phase I and II. Phase I was a preparatory phase that led to the identification of the research question. Phase II refers to the work done to address the formulated research question: *How might the transformative potential of Agenda 2030 be unlocked in a multi-stakeholder environment?* This section describes the research process applied in Phase II to address the research question, and a visual representation of the whole research process is visualised in Figure 4.1

In general terms, the research process of Phase II consists of four steps: collection, generation, testing and ending as follows:

1. *Collection*: data were collected from interviews with stakeholders and from written documents describing how to engage with Agenda 2030. In the initial stages, this work served to validate our Phase I preliminary findings and our research question. Later, the findings were analysed using the Transformation lens described in Chapter 3, and the outcome became the foundation for step 2: *generation*.

2. *Generation*: the findings were synthesised to generate a set of proposed recommendations on how to engage with Agenda 2030 in a transformative way.

3. *Testing*: feedback regarding these recommendations was obtained during a workshop with Johanneberg Science Park, an organisation coordinating multi-actor collaborations, which seeks to engage with the Agenda.

4. *Finalise*: the feedback was used to verify and improve the proposed recommendations.

Step 1 is described in Sections 4.1 and 4.2., step 2 in Section 4.3, steps 3-4 in Section 4.4.

Phase I — Preparation

Phase II — Collect, Generate, Test, Finalise

Challenge Lab process:
thesis topic identification

Interviews

Documents on
suggested processes

Data collection

Transformation lens

Analyse

Theories

Synthesise

**Create generic
recommendations**

Stakeholder feedback

**Feedback
and evaluation**

Improve and finalise
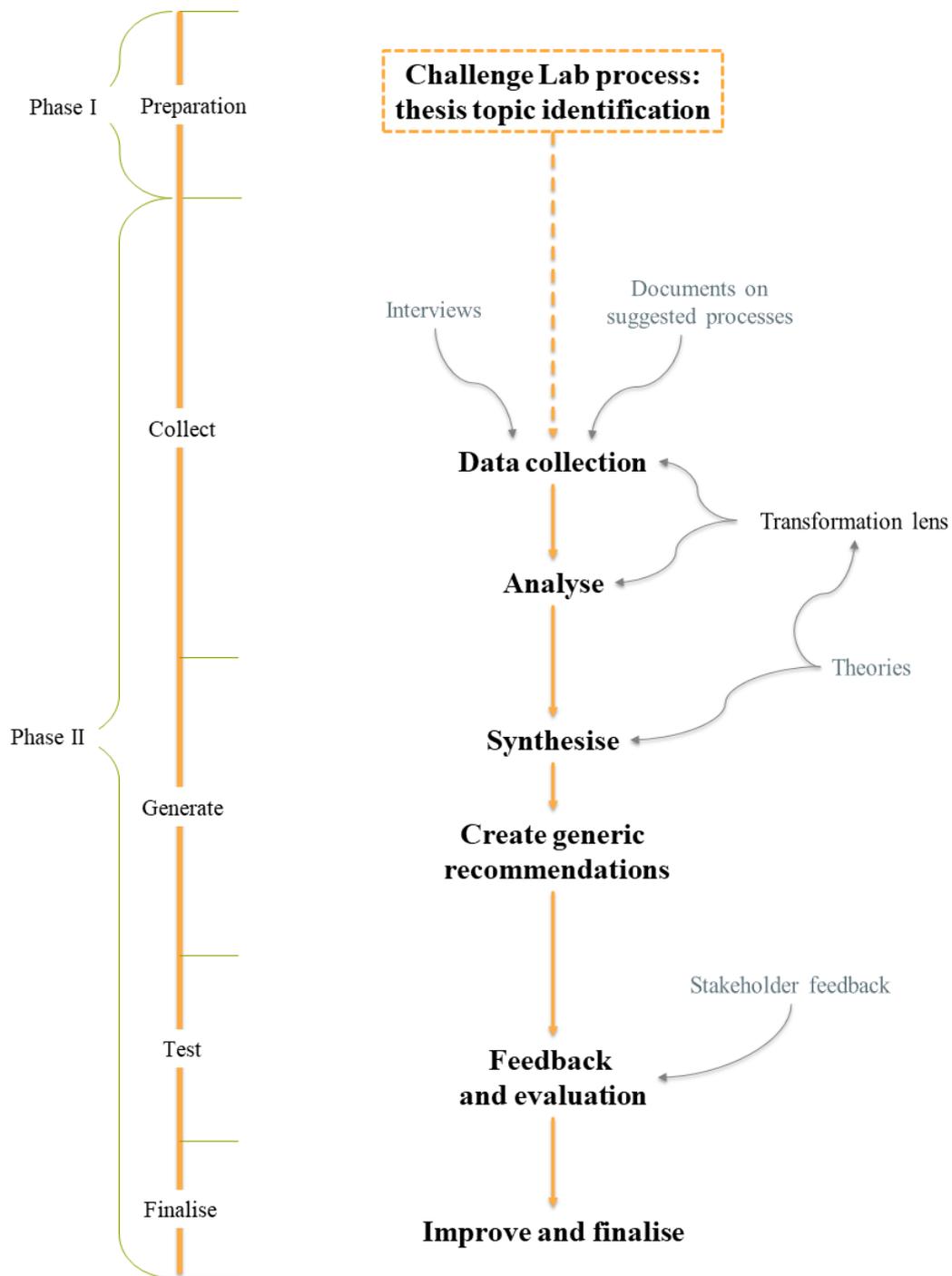
Figure 4.1 Outline of research process

4.1 Stakeholder interviews

This section will describe the process of conducting, interpreting, and analysing stakeholder interviews. The aim of the interviews was two-fold: (i) to identify elements supporting or supressing transformation and (ii) to learn more about the organisation in which testing later would be conducted.

Interviewing is a method which allows for the researchers to collect qualitative data regarding "*views, experiences, beliefs and/or motivations of individuals on specific matters*" (Gill et al., 2008, p. 292). These insights can be used to generate a deeper understanding of the topic covered in the interview.

In brief, the semi-structured interviews were used to collect data, while thematic network mapping was used for analysis. As part of the analysis, the Transformation lens was used to interpret the transformative potential of the findings. The process is visualised in Figure 4.2.

1. Interviewing followed by
digitalisation of notes

2. Extraction and coding
of relevant material

3. Generation of themes and thematic networks

Transformation lens
(Indicators of sustainability transformation)

4. Evaluation of extracted data
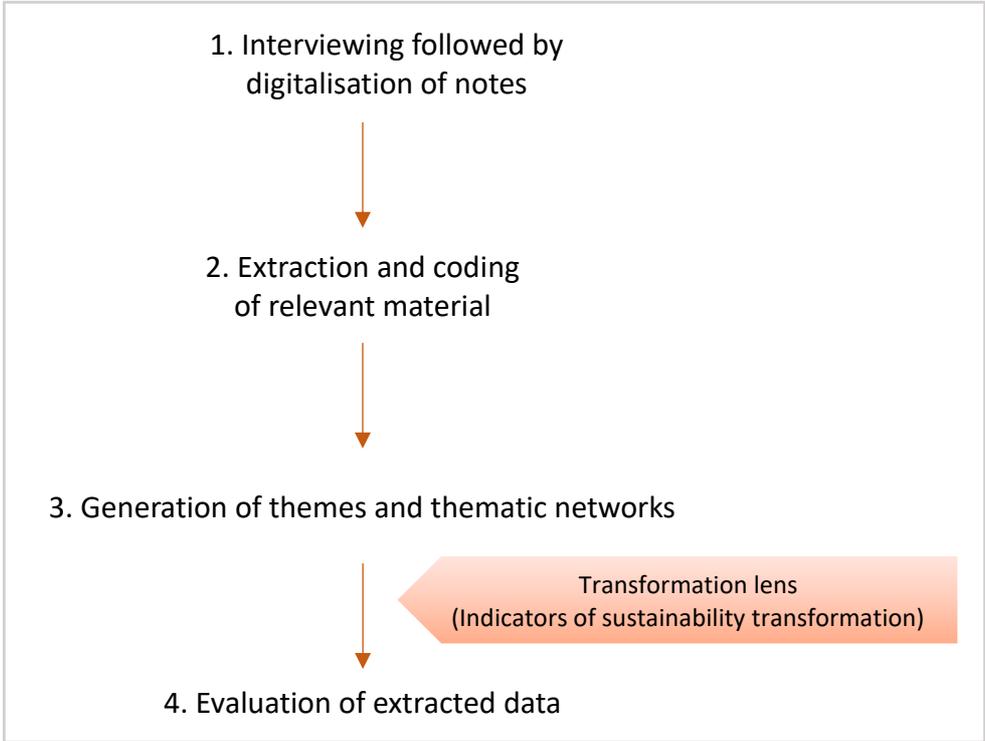
Figure 4.2 Overview of the steps taken to gather and analyse interview data

4.1.1 Conducting the interviews

Interviews were conducted with 18 individuals representing 10 organisations (including the organisation where recommendations later were tested, see Section 4.4). These people were identified through "snowballing" (Yin, 2011) where each interviewee was asked for recommendations on other individuals or organisations to contact. From the recommendations, interviewees were chosen to together cover all perspectives in four areas: geographical focus (local, regional, and national level), societal segment (industry, academia, public sector, and civil society), type of Agenda engagement (policy making, consulting and implementing), and responsibility within the organisation (executives, managers, employees,

consultants). A list of represented organisations can be found in **Error! Reference source not f ound.**.

Table 4-1 Table of the organisations represented in the stakeholder interviews. For each organisation, its geographical focus, the societal segment it represents, and in what way it engages with the Agenda 2030 is presented. The organisation where the recommendations later were tested is marked with an asterisk.

Organisation	Geographical focus	Societal segment	Agenda engagement
Chalmers University of Technology	Local/regional /national	Academia	Consulting
Development Perspectives	Local (Ireland)	Civil	Consulting
FN-förbundet	National/local	Civil	Consultant
Johanneberg Science Park*	Local	Industry	Implementing
PwC	Local (Sweden and England)	Industry	Consultant
SDSN North Europe	Local	Academia	Consulting
Sveriges kommuner och Landsting (SKL)	Local/regional /national	Public	Consulting
The Swedish Agenda 2030 delegation	National	Public	Policy maker/ consulting
Västra Götalandsregionen (VGR)	Regional	Public	Implementing/ policy making
Västtrafik	Regional	Public/ industry	Implementing

In total 16 interviews were held, each with one to three interviewees present. The interviews were conducted either in person at the interviewees offices (seven interviews), through Skype (four interviews) or through phone (five interviews). The interviews lasted between 15 and 130 minutes, with phone calls between 15-30 minutes and Skype and live conversations ranging from 70 to 130 minutes.

Both authors of this thesis participated during the interviews: one person led the conversation while the other one took notes by hand and filled in with questions and clarifications when needed. The interviews conducted in person or through Skype were after approval from the interviewees recorded with either a mobile phone or a computer software. During phone interviews, no recordings were done. All interviewees were granted anonymity when participating. After each interview, the notes were digitalised. Additionally, supported by the recordings, information that was missed or misinterpreted in the notes was adjusted, and descriptive quotes were added. This material laid the foundation for the interview analysis described in next section.

For the interviews, a semi-structured setup based on an interview protocol (Yin, 2011, p. 139) made it possible to have a living conversation while still being able to control that all topics of interest were covered. Additionally, probing was used to seek for clarifications when answers were vague and to deepen the understanding of the reasoning behind the answers (Yin, 2011). The protocol was based on nine topics, shown in Table 4-2, which together covered the aspects why, how, when and who in relations the Agenda, but also other aspects such as what

sustainability is and what would be required for change to happen. The choice of topics was done to identify elements, such as opinions, actions, and recommendations which either supported or suppressed transformation. As the interviews proceeded, more knowledge was gained regarding the topics and therefore, the details in the interview protocol was continuously updated to confirm previously gained knowledge and expand with new knowledge, but one example of an interview protocol can be found in Appendix A.

Table 4-2 Topics covered in stakeholder interviews

Vision/definition of sustainability
Intention, purpose and vision with Agenda
Incentives for engaging with Agenda
Current and desired engagement with the Agenda
Roles/responsibilities in fulfilling the Agenda
Role of networks and collaborations in achieving the Agenda
Challenges and barriers engaging with the Agenda
Opportunities and strengths with Agenda
Transformation and change

From Phase I it was assumed that the Agenda is often not used in a transformative way (see Section 1.1.2). To investigate these assumptions in the context of this thesis, the first interviews put more emphasis on the topics "*Current and desired engagement with the Agenda*" and "*Intention, purpose and vision with Agenda*", to allow for verification of the assumptions. As will be shown in Section 5.1.1, the findings were in line with the assumptions and consequently the research topic could be considered relevant and the process could continue as initially planned.

As mentioned above, one purpose of the interviews was to gain information regarding the organisation in which testing of the generated recommendations later would be conducted. This was done through four interviews with three employees: three with the CEO and one with two project managers. During the interviews, in addition to the topics discussed in the other interviews, topics such as organisational structure and processes for internal reformation were addressed. This knowledge was used to design a workshop where testing of the recommendation could be done with content adapted for the organisation (see Section 4.4).

4.1.2 Mapping and analysis of interview data

The data from the interviews were interpreted through thematic mapping, which is a method to identify common themes within sets of data and interpret them in relation to theories and the dataset itself (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2012).

Thematic mapping is done by identifying reoccurring patterns within the data set and group them into themes which can be reported and interpreted (Aronson, 1995; Attride-Stirling, 2001; Braun & Clarke, 2012). The first step of doing this is to collect extracts from the notes. From each interview, all quotes or comments which addressed any of the topics from the

interview protocol, or in any other way relating to the research question was extracted. An extract could therefore be a description of the current state, a process for doing something, an observation, or an opinion. The extracts were grouped together under the respective topics. Furthermore, the extracts which did not fit into any of the existing topics but still added knowledge relevant for the research questions were collected and grouped as *miscellaneous*.

The next step was to identify themes within the extracts and map them into networks which was done according to the process proposed by Attride-Stirling (2001). In the theme identification process, the extracts were coded, issues discussed under each code identified, and preliminary themes which encapsulated the issues as well as underlying assumptions to the issues were created. These themes were then clustered into networks of themes relating to similar matters. These steps were iterated until all major insights from the data was captured within the themes and the themes could be said to represent the data (Attride-Stirling, 2001). In doing this, the definition of theme was taken from Braun & Clarke (2006, p. 10), that a theme should "*capture something important about the data in relation to the research question, and represents some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set*".

When a draft of the thematic network map was created, the other person verified the themes. The mapping were considered done when both researchers were satisfied with the identified themes and networks, which means when all data addressing the research question were represented in the themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2012), the themes reflected the content of the data, and the conditions regarding internal homogeneity and external heterogeneity (Patton, 1990), themes are non-overlapping and internally consistent, were fulfilled.

As a final step of analysis, the Transformation lens described in Section 3 was applied to the themes and networks. By doing this, elements that presumably supported or suppressed transformation could be identified and gathered, later to be used in the generation of recommendations.

4.2   Document analysis

An analysis of documents describing how to engage with Agenda 2030 was performed according to Bowen (2009). Briefly, the method was first used to extract data on current recommendations on how to engage with Agenda 2030 (Section 4.2.1). Subsequently, it was used to identify elements that could support or suppress transformation (Section 4.2.2). Finally, the method was adapted to investigate the transformative potential of the extracted elements. Document analysis was used in combination with the analytical framework (Chapter 3), as described in detail below (Section 4.2.2).

4.2.1   Document selection

A snowball approach was used for initial document selection: documents were found during desk research on Agenda 2030 and background research in preparation for stakeholder interviews. In some cases, they were mentioned by the interviewees. Subsequently, documents were selected for analysis based on the following criteria (adapted from Bowen, 2009):

- Relevance to the research purpose
- Authenticity and credibility: documents are published by a credible organization that is largely independent of the UN and retrieved from the original source
- Representativeness: actors of the triple helix are represented by at least one document to include academic, industry and public-sector perspectives

4.2.2 Document analysis

The document analysis was performed in four steps, as described below and summarised in Figure 4.3.

First, documents were read to obtain an initial understanding of their content. Content was found to mainly consist of tools, recommended actions, processes and guidelines.

Second, data was extracted from each document according to the following questions:

a. *For whom* are the recommendations written?
b. *What* do the recommendations contain?
c. *How* do the recommendations suggest engaging with Agenda 2030?
d. *Why* do they recommend engaging with the Agenda in this way?

This data was summarised and is presented in Appendix B.

Third, data relating to each indicator of the Transformation lens (Chapter 3) was extracted from each of the document summaries. This allowed focusing on data that relates to transformation. When appropriate, extracted data were supplemented based on the reader's own understanding of the entirety of the documents and by revisiting the original source. Documents were revisited several times to ensure that sufficient and relevant data were extracted.

To help extract data specifically relating to transformation, key words derived from the indicators were used (codes). The codes were selected so as to focus but not unnecessarily limit the search of transformative elements. For example, *vision* was chosen over *shared vision* (Q1), *long-term* over *long-term perspective* (Q2) etc (Table 5-6). All codes are presented in Section 5.2. The codes were used to search the extracted information and identify issues discussed across the different sources. Using these codes also served to collectively look at the issues discussed by each source and to thus derive elements that were common across all documents.

Finally, once described, the elements were assessed for their potential to support or suppress transformation. In order to do this assessment, the analytical framework together with additional knowledge from theories and the Agenda was applied.
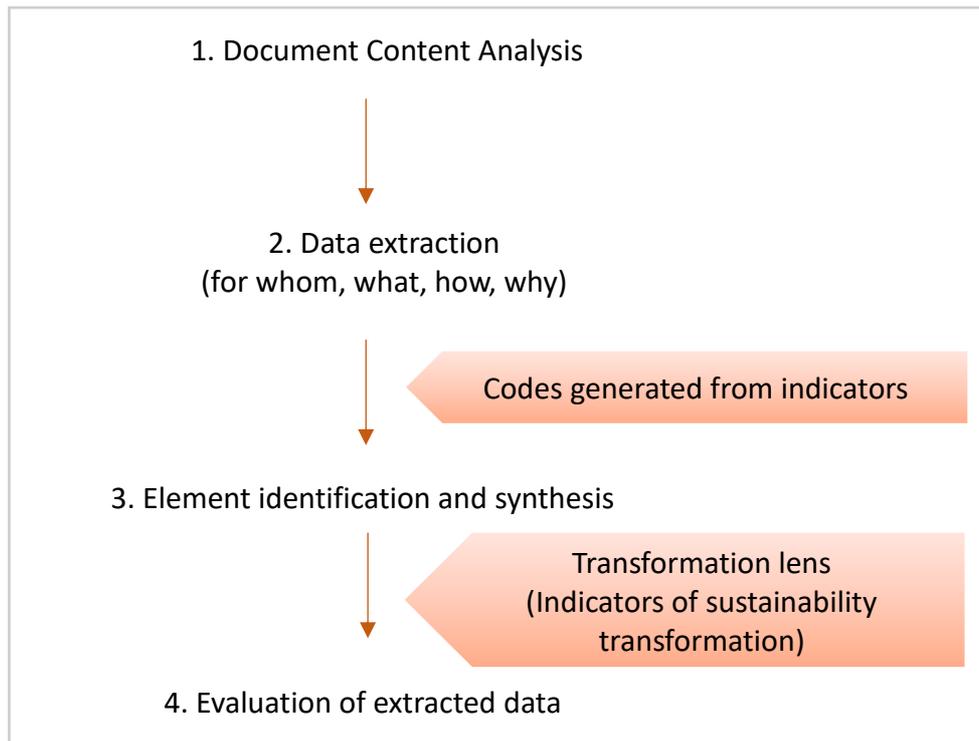
Figure 4.3 Method used to extract and evaluate data from documents. Document content analysis involves becoming familiar with the content of each document (step i). This was followed by data extraction (step ii). Element identification and synthesis was done by applying indicator-derived codes to the extracted data and, when necessary the original documents (steps iii). Identified elements were judged for their transformative potential using the Transformation lens.

4.3 Generating our recommendations

To generate our recommendations, key elements in the documents and interviews were identified, and their importance was evaluated based on the Transformation lens. Within these elements, similarities, overlaps and complementarity as well as differences and contradictions were identified and used to create our recommendations. Additional theories from published literature were incorporated into generating the recommendations when needed.

4.4 Stakeholder feedback session

The generated recommendations were tested to evaluate their relevance and applicability. This was done through a stakeholder feedback session, which will be described below.

To test how the recommendations were received in an organization, a workshop was held with 10 of the 18 employees at Johanneberg Science Park, a science park connected to Chalmers University of Technology with sustainability in its core (Mats Berg, Personal Communication, March 1, 2018). In the workshop, the participants got to experience parts of what is found in the recommendations through dialogues in a World Café setting (Brown et al., 2001) which allowed them to have generative dialogues and collectively explore the questions. Further documentation about the workshop can be found in Appendix C.

5. Results and analysis

This chapter describes the data and conclusions that were obtained from the interviews and the document analysis, in the light of the Transformation lens. In the last section of the chapter, these insights are combined and elements to consider for transformative engagement are presented.

5.1 Stakeholder interview findings

Two categories of results, each accompanied by a set of sub-categories, came out from the stakeholder interviews: descriptions of current engagement and attitudes towards the Agenda. The examples of how the represented organisations currently engage with the Agenda provided a background to understand the attitudes. Both these categories will be described in the following sections.

5.1.1 Current engagement

A range of different types of engagement with the Agenda was identified. However, these could be clustered into three groups where each group shared some distinct characteristics. The three clusters were: *backwards confirmation*, *forward guiding*, and *teaching/counselling*. However, there were no distinct borders between these clusters but rather a continuum. This section will describe the clusters and discuss the transformative potential (as described in Section 3) in each one of them.

5.1.1.1 Backwards confirmation

Figure 5.1 A graphical representation of the engagement described as backwards confirmation, the SDGs are used as a check-list to compare ongoing or planned initiatives against.

The most common type of engagement could be described as backwards confirmation, where an action was initiated and then compared to the Agenda, or more often compared to the

SDGs. This way of engagement often results in business-as-usual approaches, possibly with incremental changes towards sustainability. There were several versions of backwards confirmation.

The first type of observed backward confirmation was to either only look at ongoing actions and remark how they relate to the SDGs, or to prioritise contribution to goals where connections to already ongoing activities are obvious.

> *For now [we] only engage with SDGs on level 'which ones to we contribute to' to write it in sustainability report [i3]*

> *Mostly, what I have seen is that they [other organisations] choose different goals that they want to work more with or where they feel 'we can contribute more in this field' [i5]*

The second type of engagement is to use the SDGs as a checklist to decide whether projects or initiatives is allowed to continue or not.

> *We do a little project description, that is our own process that describes the [organisation's] part in a big project. [Before, we] wrote something about the environmental and wrote something about the social. But now we […] take this picture [the SDG map] and make a mark which one of these that you relate to, and perhaps describe one line about it. So instead of writing something about economic sustainability then in that case it's like do you mean responsible consumption or someone else. [i9]*

> *[We] plan to use the SDGs to screen projects at the beginning, when the project is an idea. If the project relates to, say 3 SDGs, then go ahead with it, if not, drop it [i8]*

The transformative potential of this type of engagement is questionable. The first indicator of the Transformation lens concerns initiation of transformation, which includes visioning, strategizing, long-term planning and evaluation. In backwards confirmation, strategizing and visioning for sustainability existed to some extent, for example in setting the Agenda or the SDGs as something to aim to fulfil while more developed visions for sustainability were either not created or had a more peripheral role. More often, sustainability was an additional parameter to consider on top of many other parameters such as profitability and traditional ways of working. As sustainability visions to strive towards often were absent, neither long-term planning towards sustainability nor evaluation criteria for the sustainability transition were made available.

Another factor potentially important for transformation is a safe environment with space for reflection and experimentation. This was partly present in the backwards confirmation type of engagement. Often, reflection could be seen during comparison between ongoing or planed initiatives, and actions to the Agenda 2030 or the SDGs. When these reflections were used to adjust the activities, learning loops were more likely to be created which potentially support transformation. However, in some cases, the reflection stopped at the stage of comparison without using the generated knowledge to adjust future activities.

5.1.1.2 Forward guiding
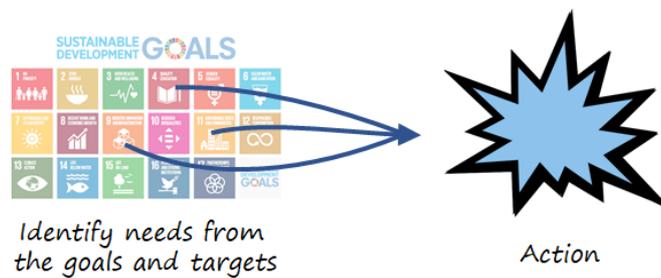
Figure 5.2 Visual representation of forward guiding, where the sustainability Agenda 2030 are put in the core of an organisation and are used as a vision to guide initiatives.

The other way of engaging is to use the Agenda to guide all decisions and actions. In such engagement, the desire is to transform the society towards a more sustainable state and doing so by acknowledging the interaction both between the aspects of sustainability and between different parts of society. Additionally, the need to multi-stakeholder engagement was emphasised as critical to understand the interactions and generate new solutions.

> *New initiatives, and new companies – to have this kind of thoughts with them as they start up is very important. To not have a business idea and then try to add on sustainability, but rather using the goals and sustainability as a driver for them. [To ask] 'how can we as a company or organisation contribute to a sustainable development and the SDGs?' [i13]*

> *Few people have knowledge enough to assess impact on all goals, you need to include more people with diverse or expert knowledge in the evaluation, and other people to question your reasoning [i11]*

This type of engagement was, however, only described by some interviewed academic representatives and not observed in any interviewed organisations. The difficulty in finding such engagement was also confirmed by some interviewees.

> *I have not found any good examples of organisations who has put Agenda 2030 at its core yet, but I'm sure there will be soon. [i11]*

> *Nobody in Sweden is working with the SDGs in a strategic manner [i18]*

Although no organisations completely guided by the Agenda were observed during the interviews, examples exist of organisations who are taking a considerable step in that direction. In these cases, the Agenda is often used as a vision against which the organisation evaluate themselves to identify areas either in need of improvement or where contributions to society can be made. Additionally, the vision is used to reshape strategies to align with the ambition set by the Agenda:

> *Carlsberg are in their sustainability report connecting clearly to the Agenda, connecting their efforts and actions to how it will contribute to the goals, but they are doing it by saying 'here's the bigger picture, we are supporting Agenda2030, but here's our 5-year goals'. [---] the SDGs are the visions, but then the company break it into stepping stones, a 3-year or 5-year plan to get there [i4]*

[one Swedish municipality] scrapped their old strategy documents, and [evaluated] what is the need for sustainable development? So they, I think they had 35 or 50 strategy documents and now they boiled it down to three [i6]

Engagement of the forward guiding-type is potentially transformative, as it is in line with several transformational components of highlighted as important in the Transformation lens. For example, a joint vision for sustainability is created and used to guide the action, something which supports planning and strategizing over longer time-span. Additionally, a vision is something to compare activities against to both find activities not in line with the vision and adjust them, but also to identify areas which need to be addressed.

Another factor important for transformation is multi-stakeholder involvement, something which also was addressed in the forward guiding. Here, a diverse set of stakeholders were acknowledged to support understanding of impact and effects, but also to support each other in realising ideas and solutions.

Although most factors highlighted in the Transformation lens were not touched upon or discussed when speaking of this type of engagement, forward guiding still seem to be a good start in acting in a transformative way.

5.1.1.3 Educate and consult
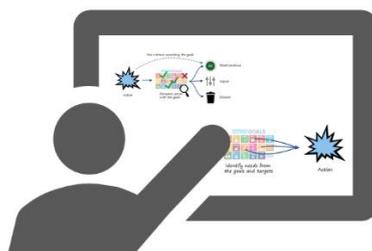
Figure 5.3 Representation of educate and consult where actors help other actors in engage with the Agenda 2030, for example through couching or by providing material and tools.

The third category of engagement did not focus on internal actions, but instead on coaching others as several organisations saw their main objective as to help others engage with the Agenda. These organisations provided education material, tried to spread awareness of the Agenda, and helped others understand its content and identify how they could engage with it.

[we are working with to] raise awareness of that companies are prioritizing the wrong things. [i4]

[we provide] education material and posters to use during exhibitions and during projects in schools or at workplaces [i7]

[we] are teaching about the background of A2030 [i7]

We arrange workshops [in which we are] allowing adults to experience the SDGs [i15]

Some documents from these educating organisations are analysed in Section 5.2.

When it comes to guiding others, the potential for transformation depends strongly on what is recommended. If the recommendations are in line with the items touched upon in the Transformation lens, the potential for transformation is stronger compared to if they only suggest superficial alterations of current practices. The quality of the recommendations is therefore dependent on how the organisation which are providing them understands the purpose and implications of the Agenda.

5.1.2 Attitudes towards the Agenda

In the thematic analysis of the interview data, four themes came out: three connected to the aspects of the Agenda 2030, and one theme regarding transformation in general with focus on resistance to change. These themes, *Society as a system*, *Building competence together*, *Sensemaking and contextualisation*, and lastly *Resistance to change*, will be presented and in the following sections. In each section, a graphical representation of the theme is presented in the form of a network map. The transformative potential of each element is indicated with red or green in the network maps and is further discussed in the end of each section.

Society is a system

The first theme, shown in Figure 5.4, revolves around how the Agenda 2030 highlights the society is a system, and thus point to the need to consider multiple aspects simultaneously when making decisions.
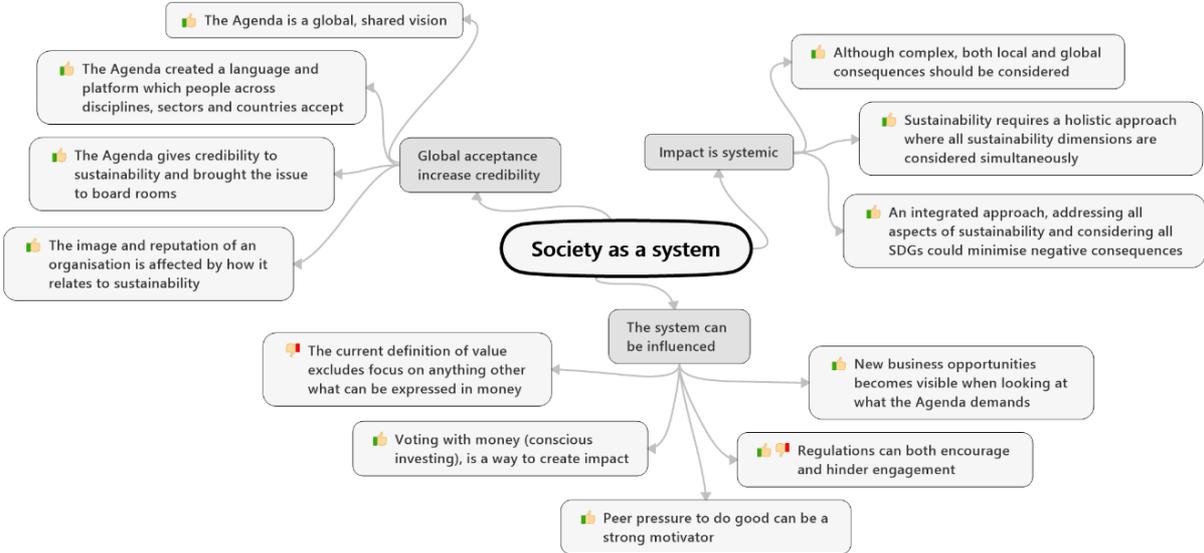
Figure 5.4 Thematic network for "Society as a system"

Impact is systemic
While some more than others, all interviewees emphasised the need to look at our world as one system, where action taken in one end have consequences in other ends. Attention would therefore have to be given to the integration of the different dimensions of sustainability, the interconnections between the SDGs, and to impacts on local and global scale; something which the Agenda were perceived to facilitate the understanding of.

Some interviewees noted how the way the Agenda 2030 is written created an understanding of how actions taken on local level might have global consequences, and likewise, how global challenges require actions to be taken on local level.

> [The Agenda 2030] raises awareness of the local responsibility and how it links to the global aspects. From the local level to the global level that we're all part of, that even though we're local, we're part of the global. And that is what the Agenda is about. [i6]

> what we do here affects the possibility to reach the goals globally [i7]

In addition to the local-global systemic impact, interviewees discussed how the Agenda linked the different aspects of sustainability and highlighted the need to address them all simultaneously to act sustainably.

> the Agenda actually, much stronger than before have all three dimensions interlinked, the three dimensions of sustainable development interlinked, and that the goals are interlinked with each other. So you can't just choose to be environmentally sustainable, but you have to meet the three domains. That is kind of new to people in Sweden ([i6])

There interconnections between the SDGs were also acknowledged, including how addressing one would have impact on other goals.

> I think there is something very clever in the way all targets link together. That actions in one area have impact on other areas. There are lots of knock-on consequences, solving one impacts lots of others. And their designed in that way to fit together in a holistic set of goals. [i4]

Although the need to integrate the aspects was seen, to work with all of them in practice was sometimes perceived as a challenging task, partly due to organisational setup which keeps different expertise separated.

> As it is now, it [the work with the sustainability aspects] is pretty divided. We have said that they are a unity, that we should work with all of them together. But practically, it might be a bit challenging to get them all together [i18]

The system can be influenced
The second subtheme of society as a system acknowledges that the system can be influenced. This relates to how actors within the system do not have to be passive but can influence their system and shape it in a more desirable way.

Maybe the most striking example of this is connected to finance, value, and perceived success. It was pointed out that measurements of success today are to narrow, only considering financial performance without taking potentially negative consequences in other areas into consideration.

> Economics has previously gotten it a bit wrong, only thinking about financial returns and not at all thinking about social and environmental impact [i4]

our way of measuring economic growth for instance, it's not sustainable because you could have a fantastic economic growth today, but it's completely unsustainable regarding resources, regarding people, et cetera. So I think we need to look at that, how we measure things financially. Because today the economic system only measures a very narrow part of what is actually economic growth. There are so many costs that you don't include in that dimension, [---] the cost for depression, the cost for exhaustion, costs for children's mental health that is not very good. I think those costs are enormous, but we don't know how to count, how to make them part into the economic system. [i6]

This was seen as a big barrier, but also something very hard to break.

I think that if we agree upon that we need to make a difference, because the climate change or development is affecting all of us much more than we probably thought of. We cannot do this in a system working with old business models, calculating money and value creation in the same way as we used to do [i8]

Traditionally, financial aspects have been the main consideration, and it's pretty hard to discontinue with that [i18]

On the other hand, attempts to alter this was mentioned, such as investors judging possible investment on positive SDG impact

As an investor it is possible to vote with your money. What do you invest in? [i1]

There are quite a lot of organizations putting pressure on investors [to in turn] put pressure on their investee companies to be looking at the goals. There's definitely a kind of shareholder and investor pressure, because companies answer to their shareholders [i4]

Not only investors could create pressure. Conscious choices to disregard organisations demonstrating certain types of behaviour, or to promote politicians manifesting actions towards holistic sustainability was mentioned as ways for both civilians and organisations to encourage other actors within the system to change priorities.

But there is peer pressure across countries. There is people pressure on governments. There's the power of the UN. There's an element of citizens voting with their feets, or voting out governments that aren't doing what they want [i4]

Additionally, organisations can affect their networks, especially suppliers, and in that way encourage them to act differently.

Big companies have acknowledged their role as active actors in society, that they are part of the ecosystem affecting both multiple goals and multiple actors. Medium and small org has previously only focused on themselves and their vicinity but has also started to acknowledge how they affect or are affected by the societal system. [i5]

There are probably the really big companies who have power all the way down the supply chain that will make the difference. So probably it is critical that big businesses are doing things differently. [i4]

A second example which showed up was how policies and regulations had the ability to influence those affected by it. One example was how the regulation on sustainability reporting brought attention to sustainability among actors who previously did not consider it.

> *Many companies (especially smaller) had not considered sustainability before. By law they have to consider the aspects environment, social aspects and personnel, human rights, anti-corruption, but many are also relating to some SDGs that are connected to those aspects. [i5]*

However, the downsides of policies and regulations were also acknowledged. Policies and regulations were seen to hamper the possibility for exploration, due to many and strict rules which had to be followed. Additionally, long time horizons for plans and long processing times for alterations were experiences as barriers for change.

> *Policy decision is a very long process and I think that is going too slow sometimes. And that the challenge is, if we really are interested in making a change, a measurable difference, we are not always controlling those decisions. But we try to involve all politicians, usually local. [i8]*

> *In Sweden, there are a lot of laws, rules and regulations, and plans that need to be strictly followed, and can be barriers when trying to introduce a change. [---] To change these rules and regulations takes a lot of time. Some regulations eg the detailed plan has a 15-year time frame [i10]*

> *[i17]: We are working in so long processes, with plans and strategies. And then suddenly this [Agenda 2030] comes. But then we already have our old strategies and everything. I mean, we are changing slowly but steadily towards a focus on this. But one cannot change everything at once, there is so much… [18]: Well, one can conclude that society consists of existing structures which takes time to add new things into*

Global acceptance generates credibility

The Agenda 2030 has become a document to gather around. Was by many seen as a shared, global vision, and could potentially help people unite across sectors and disciplines to work towards sustainability.

All interviewees mentioned in one way or another that the Agenda can be seen as a shared vision on sustainability for the whole world to adhere to and strive towards.

> *[The Agenda 2030 is] the closest thing the world has to a strategy. It's a universal strategy that all governments have signed up to. [i4]*

> *The Agenda is a national commitment, a common or shared target to work towards [i2]*

> *[The SDGs] kind of concretises what sustainability is and shows what the long-term goal is. [i14]*

This was by many perceived as a strength as it would help actors all over the world work towards a common goal. Additionally, the Agenda created a language and a set of principles which people with diverse backgrounds all could sign up to which made it easier to meet

across sectors and disciplines as a least common denominator was established through the Agenda.

> *The SDGs are very important as they provide a shared language to talk about sustainability [i11]*

> *I think the goals opened up for discussions across borders. Within disciplines, between disciplines and within different sectors. You can have something to talk about a common topic, because the Agenda addresses it in a way that allows to have those interdisciplinary discussions [i12]*

Apart from creating a shared language and vision, the wide spread acceptance of the Agenda also lifted the sustainability to forums where it had not been. One sustainability consultant described how his work previously was seen as a niche but within the last few years he more and more often got invited to participate in meeting not directly related to sustainability to bring his perspective – something which was seen as an effect of the credibility the Agenda had given to sustainability.

> *one thing that is changing is that sustainability for many years was set in the CSR-department in a separate little team, looking at the energy policy or what their suppliers do; sort of small things. One thing that has changed is that is has moved into the boardroom. I think the SDGs have moved the conversations to the boardroom [i4]*

> *Sustainability has gone from being a niche market within [the organisation] to be more central, especially since 2016. Now me and my sustainability colleagues are invited to participate in meetings not centred around sustainability, just to make sure that perspective is considered. [i4]*

In the light of the Transformation lens, using the Agenda 2030 as a vision it potentially supporting transformation. By being perceived as relevant and interesting for so many, it has the potential to unite and facilitate engagement and collaboration between multiple stakeholders. It was also seen as clarify and highlight interactions, both across geographical scale and between the different dimensions of sustainability.

Furthermore, the Transformation lens points out some potential suppressors in the theme. Although regulations could support transformation by forcing actors to rethink and act differently, it was also perceived as a barrier which to some extent interfered in both the ability to experiment and to adopt and institutionalise already existing promising solutions. Additionally, the economic system and its one-sided focus on monetary value was perceived as a barrier and something in need for change. Some efforts were, however, present to challenge expand what is defined as valuable.

5.1.2.1 *Building competence together*

A nearly related theme revolves around how competence must be built together to fulfil what the Agenda requests (See Figure 5.5). A key point in this theme is that no actor or no country alone can fulfil the Agenda or create global sustainability, it must be a joint effort. On the

other hand, the way the Agenda was created and accepted by the world has facilitated this common effort.
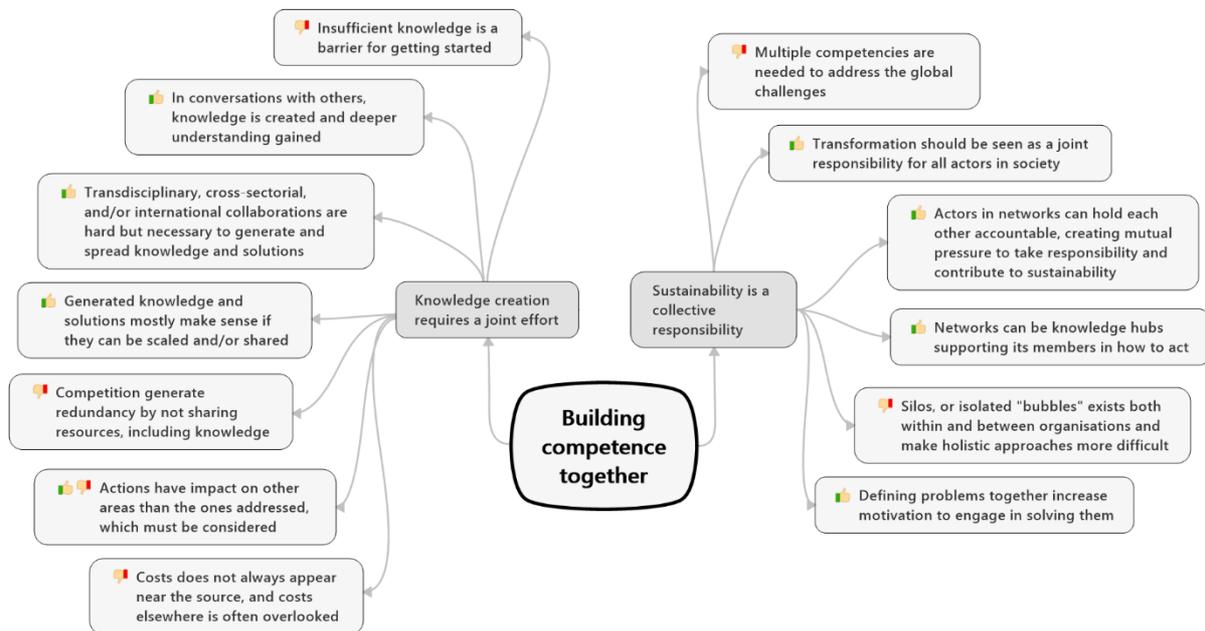
Figure 5.5 Thematic network for "Building competence together"

Sustainability is a collective responsibility
The second area which was prevalent was how actors are mutually dependent, and therefore how the responsibility for reaching sustainability must be shared.

First, actors, and individuals, should see that they have a part in affecting whether the world become sustainable or not. When it comes to addressing Agenda 2030, the whole society must collectively make an effort, each actor with the knowledge they have.

> *[It is] necessary to look at Agenda 2030 in a triple-helix kind of way. Because no-one actor alone can solve this. [i11]*

> *Each department has come to understand that they have a responsibility towards the SDGs. [i16]*

When one actor in a network start to act based on sustainability, it often has ripple effects throughout the network, which would make more actors take responsibility and reconsider their actions.

> *Companies who are using the SDGs or are driven by sustainability often affect and have an impact on their systems: customers, partners, suppliers. [i5]*

Additionally, sharing responsibility by sharing resources was perceived as a way to support the sustainability transition by sharing practises.

> *[We contribute to the transformation that the Agenda speaks about by] addressing the challenges with a lot of partners, and together we can do things in a quicker way and find new solutions to take us quicker to sustainable solutions and that can make a change on the climate, for people and the globe. [i9]*

Although sustainability was perceived as a shared responsibility among the interviewees, barriers were mentioned which might complicate embracing the responsibility. The first one is to get people to accept that they should take responsibility at all.

> *Sustainability is the responsibility of everyone. But most people don't view it like that. [One issue which must be addressed is therefore] how can we broaden the feeling of responsibility towards sustainability? [i11]*

A second often mentioned barrier towards collaboration and shared responsibility is so called silos: isolated patches within society where information is not exchanged. These silos can be found both externally between organisations and between work groups and departments within one organisation. To break silos and form new types of organisations was a big desire among the interviewees, but at the same time a big challenge as it would require different ways of thinking and interacting than what exists today.

> *One of the challenges of sustainability is that all challenges are connected and getting that knowledge of how everything is connected seem to be difficult as we all live in this silo-world [i11]*

> *[the by far most common discussion is the] discussions about the silo structures and how to change them and what we need to do. That would be the number one topic in discussions. And also, of course methods, how can we find methods to get away from the silo structures? And that is also within the private sector. They see the same question, both within the private sector but also in touch with the public sector. [---] By far the silo structures are a pointed out as one of the major problems. [i6]*

> *Currently some efforts are in place to overcome the silo effect, but it is difficult for people to change their set way of working and break the silo [i18]*

Knowledge creation requires a joint effort
Only taking collective responsibility for fulfilling Agenda 2030, is not enough, as much knowledge also must be generated. The interviewees saw the need to both share knowledge for support the change towards sustainability, but also to learn from each other. However, a culture of competition was identified as a barrier towards this knowledge sharing.

Insufficient knowledge was also identified as one barrier for engaging with the Agenda. For example, some of the more frequent questions to organisations providing guidance was reported to be in the line of *what does the Agenda say, and what does it mean for us?*. Further, "*how have others tackled the questions?*" [i7] was frequently asked, which shows an interest in learning from what others have done.

Sharing knowledge and collaboration was perceived as a method to reach sustainability. People from diverse backgrounds could have the strength of connecting more perspectives and by that both be more innovative, but also avoid negative consequences by helping each other see how decision have impact on other areas.

> *There are lots of them [people that want to collaborate], a lot of companies that knows that it's not good enough to do on your own. You need to collaborate*

because you have more knowledge and you can do things in a better way and a new way, [by having] other fields influence into your area and your field, so that creates innovation when you combine different fields in the society [i9]

The best way [to think in new ways] is to discuss with people from different sectors. So if you're still within the university, you speak with people from another faculty. Then you can see [...] that you have different ways of looking at it, looking at what can be done and how can it be done, depending on if you are an engineer, a natural scientist or if you come from the humanities. So from a university perspective I believe it's very important to open up those kinds of discussions. It will lead to other ways of thinking and acting, not just doing it a little bit better [i12]

when you have partnership [between different sectors], when you talk to each other and get these aspects [consequences on other areas from a decision that one actor is taking], you can see that OK, so maybe that is not such a good idea if that will be the effect. So how can we do things differently? I think that is one thing that is really needed for the Agenda [i6]

Additionally, sharing and collaborations were perceived as necessary to spread ideas and solutions and, in that way, let the solutions create value for more people, but at the same time it is hard.

I think we would need to expand our international network to find counterparts in the rest of the world in different kinds of areas, and get those possible partners involved in the projects here so they can see first-hand how they can take the best of the projects and introduce in their home countries. [However], we still haven't figured out how, how should we do this kind of collaboration? Because they would like a contract between themselves and somebody here in Sweden and we are struggling a little bit [i8]

Protectionism and competition were seen both as barriers to sharing and in extension to reaching sustainability. Competition was perceived as both strengthening silos and preventing resources to be utilised efficiently.

I think there are many who tried to do more or less the same thing and others because they're so sometimes also a, almost like a competition. But I see that if, I mean all actors are needed for this and all that, we need to pull our resources together. Uh, so there is no room for doubling our actions. We need to, we need to share. [i6]

We have built the society that to some extent is based upon competition and to winning, and in that system not everybody could be a winner [...] We need to find a different kind of mindsets in this. Exactly how we don't know. [i8]

The transformation lens lifts multi-stakeholder engagement as important for transformation, just like many of the interviewees acknowledged collaboration and partnerships as helpful when addressing sustainability issues and expressed an interest for more collaborations. Additionally, knowledge sharing was perceived to support a transition by allowing learning from each other and thus spreading of good examples. However, several factors which impedes working together were mentioned, such as silos and competition.

In term of multi-stakeholder engagement, the Transformation lens emphasise the need for inclusion of marginalised groups. This perspective was, however, overlooked in the interviews, and not brought up by any interviewee.

5.1.2.2 *Sensemaking and contextualisation*

In the previous section, it was shown that the Agenda 2030 pointed at the need to address issues and actions from a systemic point of view and in a collaborative effort. However, to really make something happen, old structures might need be replaced and new practices incorporated into the ongoing work. The network corresponding to the theme is shown in Figure 5.6.
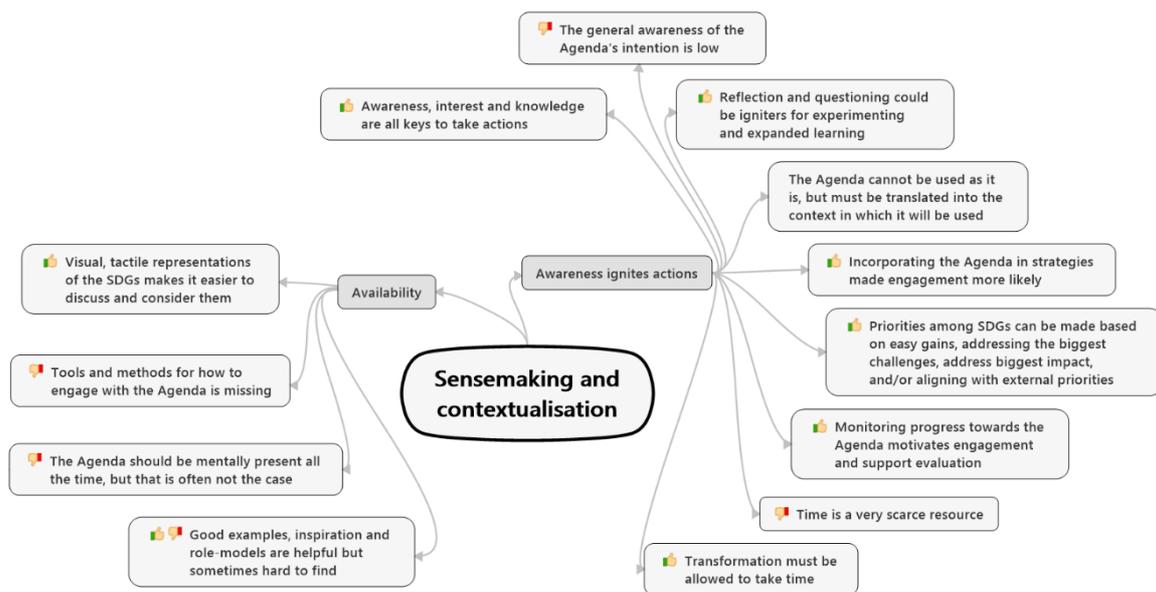
Figure 5.6 Thematic network for "Sensemaking and contextualisation"

Awareness ignites action

> *Raising awareness is the first step in getting people to do something [i4]*

This is a quote summarising a reoccurring idea among the interviewees that the awareness of the content, but also the mere existence, of the Agenda was too low in society in general, but also within the organisations the interviewees represented. One necessary step towards realising the Agenda would therefore be to spread awareness of its existence.

> *The knowledge level regarding sustainability must increase across the organisation. [i3]*

> *The first step [to work with SDGs] is to introduce this concept to the employees here, my colleagues, and then we should make this more formal when we develop projects. [i8]*

When awareness is there, there must be reflection on what the Agenda 2030 mean for that particular organisation. This cannot be done without translating the Agenda into the context of the organisation and reflect on what consequences it has.

> *you need to know that [the Agenda] exists and then you can sort of work your way down [to] what it means. And as we've been touching on several times that you also need to understand how this actually mean something to your local… That it actually has significance for you as well and what you do, how it relates. I think that's why we're talking about this translation [i6]*

Part of the translation means to identify already ongoing activities which are in line with the Agenda and hence should be kept and strengthened, but also to select where to focus the contribution. When the organisation is aware of their actions in relation to the Agenda they could deliberately start to act more in line with the Agenda.

> *you need to break down these very visionary goals, and also help people to translate them into their context so that they don't get overwhelmed by that the goals are so big and overwhelming. And so get passive rather than active. We're trying to say that, of course you cannot do everything all the time. You need to sort of break down and see how, what am I going to do, what is my piece? [i6]*

> *We recommend our members to look at the SDGs to try and interpret them and understand what they mean for them. Which [of the SDGs] are they already involved in, which ones could they be involved with, and how does it [the direction given by the SDGs] 'go' with their other strategic goals/documents that they must follow? [i16]*

Additionally, establishing indicators to measure progress might facilitate the evaluation of whether the development is going in a desirable direction. Measuring and monitoring is also a way to signal importance and create focus.

> *I think it's as long as you have targets that you can measure and meet, then you, sort of set new targets, new ambitions [i6]*

> *What gets measured gets done. The MDGs didn't have indicators, but the SDGs does [i8]*

There was, however, one detail which often were brought as a barrier between awareness and actions: time. Time for reflection, for acquiring new knowledge, or time to experiment and investigate in new methods. Similarly, change processes were perceived as requiring time and not being possible to rush.

> *We are always running to reach a deadline, but to stop like this, and get time to reflect on why we do things and what we actually should do is really valuable [i10]*

> *That [having time and room to reflect on one's actions] is extremely difficult [i8]*

> *Sometimes you just have to give it time. A baby takes 9 months to deliver no matter how many resources you put into the effort and how many speed-ups attempts you make. A transformation cannot happen overnight, to change a mindset takes time, and that time must be allowed [i1]*

The time shortage and pressure to constantly deliver was therefore experienced as something that slows down processes aiming for more radical change.

Availability

Closely connected to awareness is availability, referring to both mental and physical availability. To have the Agenda and the SDGs easily accessible was pointed out as important and helpful for acting in line with it. Additionally, tools, methods and procedures guiding engagement was pointed out as potentially helpful but currently missing.

The visual representation of the SDGs was pointed out as a useful mediator for discussing engagement with the Agenda. As an example, during the interviews conducted face to face almost all participants used the printed SDG map as a support to point at while expressing their thoughts. The helpfulness in having them physically available was also noted as a way to support and include sustainability perspectives in discussions

> *I would like to have a process where when we formulate projects, we should introduce this [the SDG map] as you have done, put it on the table and discuss [i8]*

Another perspective for keeping the sustainability discussion alive is mental availability. Techniques to constantly keep the Agenda in the back of the mind was therefore seen as potentially helpful and supporting transformation. One interviewee shared how he had heard that the board members of another organisation distributed the goals among themselves to ensure that all perspectives always were considered in all discussion.

> *it would be good if you have them [the goals] in mind all the time and not only pick them up every month. Have them influence your whole life all the time. [i9]*

Similarly, low availability to methods and tools to practically work with the Agenda 2030 was perceived as making it harder to engage with the Agenda. This was perceived as slowing down the engagement within society as the initial step to engage with the Agenda seems high.

> *Business didn't know where to start, they didn't have the tools [i4]*

> *I think we need better tools for doing this [assessing the positive and negative effects projects might have on the SDGs] [i8]*

> *People in environmental/sustainability manager roles are looking for systems or tools as this is what they are used to work with [i11]*

Several elements in this theme could be problematic when looking at them through the transformation lens. First, the issue of time pressure is possibly preventing learning by neither allowing existence of spaces for experimentation nor for reflection and rethinking. Additionally, time pressure might also prevent long-term planning, as short-term aims takes all focus.

Secondly, awareness is an important element both to challenge the current system, and to reflect and rethink. It is therefore potentially hindering transformation that the awareness and knowledge of the Agenda, along with methods and tools to work with it was perceived as low.

However, potentially supporting elements could also be found. One existence is methods to increase the mental and physical availability of the Agenda to use it as guidance to question the system. Additionally, the awareness of the need for translation of the Agenda into the local context, including indicators for monitoring shows an awareness of that the vision must be included in the operations and not only something spoken about.

5.1.2.3 Resistance to change

The last theme which was identified was not connected to the Agenda 2030, but rather to the transformation implied by the Agenda. Although major changes were recognised to be necessary, they were also a source of distress and unease. The resistance connected to change could be grouped in two categories: unwillingness to try new things, and resistance towards changes proposed by others.
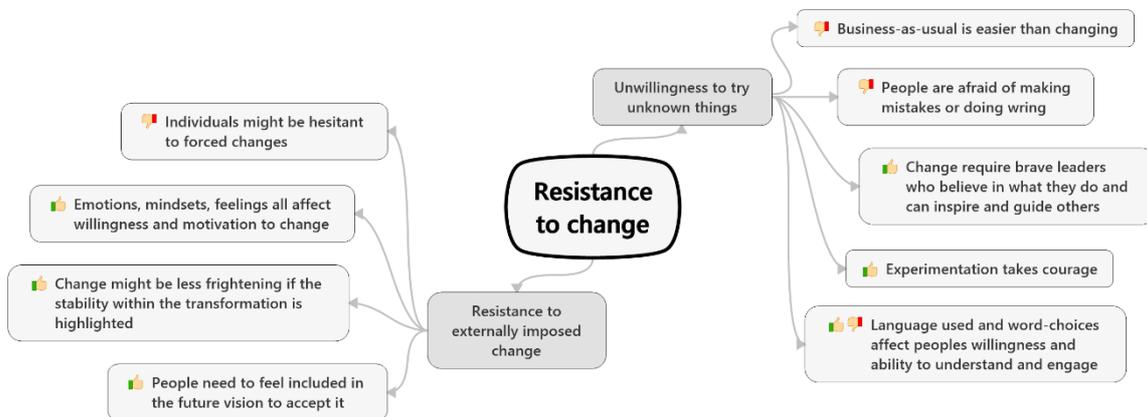
Figure 5.7 Thematic network for "Resistance to change"

Unwillingness to try new things
Initiating transformation is about trying to do things in different ways, or to make "*a million small beginnings*" [i1]. However, sometimes there seems to be resistance in trying to do things differently. For example, it was perceived as "*easier, more comfortable to do what you've always done*" [i13].

> *Medium sized companies who has just started to do this [sustainability reporting], they want to do business as they have always done business. They don't want to acknowledge hunger in the world [i5]*

Fear of doing something wrong, and how those mistakes might lead to negative consequences could also be a hinder for initiating change. If hesitation were already prevalent, interviewees voiced a fear that misdirected attempts might have negative consequences and create more resistance for future attempts

> *Acknowledge what is at stake when a brave leader trying to change something fails - giving ammunition to the 'no' voice. This could lead to a scenario that is worse than if they did not try to make the change [i1]*

One organisation tried to mitigate the fear of failure by arranging specific time slots where perceived failures where shared and used as sources for learning

> *We have had 'failure lunches', where people share mistakes they have done and then you talk about it and you learn from it. [i12]*

The importance of good leadership and role models was also brought up as a key to lower the threshold for trying. Leadership was spoken about in wider terms than only formal leaders, but rather in terms of people and organisations who set an example, lead the way, and dare to do something different. The following three quotes captures the general discussion regarding leadership:

> *Transformation often means that you must give up something, and that can be very hard. For example, if you have been a climate denier, it takes a huge effort to confess you now agree that the climate effect is real. In these situations, it helps to have role models: respected people who publicly announce, 'previously I didn't know, but now I know.' [i1]*

> *I think you need really need brave leaders that can inspire your companies and are not so afraid of doing wrong [i8]*

> *People should be a bit more courageous. [i12]*

Resistance to externally imposed change
The second source of resistance comes from externally imposed changes. Göran Carstedt, TEDx speaker and senior position holder within amongst other organisations IKEA, Volvo and Clinton Climate Initiative, once said "*What if people don't mind change, but they do mind being changed?*" (Carstedt, 2017, p. 110). This quote summarises the potential barriers identified during the interviews, that there might be an unwillingness to accept changes imposed by others.

> *One of the most central issues in the transformation, but also a major barrier as people might not be ready to change their lifestyles in a big way. They are not ready for it [i11]*

> *Nature has the law of force and counterforce. If you put your hand against someone else's and push a little, that person will automatically push back. It is the same principle when introducing change or alterations: people will automatically respond with a push-back. What you must do is to think about how you can act to not activate that counterforce more than necessary. [i1]*

Externally imposed changes would always be needed, though, and three possible ways to increase the acceptance were suggested. Firstly, the question *why* something must be done could be addressed. This would let individuals formulate their personal rationales for changing, which could support an internalised reason for the actions which might be easier to accept, and therefore do.

> *[the] environmental movement was very fast on talking how – technology, policies etc. but the personal why was overlooked. It is easy to assume we have a common why, but it doesn't need to be that. My why can be completely different from your why. In society there are a lot of different why's and some people might not even have a why [i11]*

Secondly, it was suggested to focus on positive aspects of the change, how it would be beneficial for the person (or organisation) resisting.

> *We need to find a way to better explain that change can sometimes be very positive. To do this in a different kind of way [because] people are usually happy about change if that is positive for them directly [i8]*

Thirdly, highlighting what would remain stable could make the uncertainty that change beings less daunting, and therefore easies to accept.

> *[Show] what should and will be kept. That makes people feel safer which makes it easier to accept that some things around that core will be done differently [i1]*

Fourthly, and lastly, it was suggested to be "*inclusive*" [i11] when discussing change, to help individuals see that they "*have a part in that desirable future society*" [i11], and by that make the future less daunting.

The area of fear and resistance to change is barely covered by the Transformation lens. However, it can be related to the indicator on space for experiment, where space also could refer to a mentally safe space with the conclusion that fear and resistance are oppressing transformation. Additionally, the desire to stay in the current stage is also likely to suppress implementation of new solutions. These factors are therefore potentially major barriers for transformative change.

Covered in this theme is also leadership, which is equally not explicitly addressed by the transformation lens. However, the way leadership is spoken about in terms of role models and brave people who lead the way makes it possible to interpret it as potentially supporting both rethinking, but also challenging of the current system and institutionalisation of good solutions, and is therefore possibly supporting transformation.

5.2   Document analysis findings

This section summarises existing recommendations on how to engage with Agenda 2030 and the SDGs. The recommendations have been mainly extracted from relevant documents, i.e. documents that are directed towards organisations wishing to engage with Agenda 2030 and fulfil the selection criteria (Sections 4.2.1 and 5.2.1). In a few instances, additional or overlapping information was obtained from individuals during interviews or by contacting them directly via mail. Additional information is indicated as *personal communication*, whilst overlap was used to triangulate extracted data. Finally, additional information was also obtained from relevant webpages, as referenced.

5.2.1   Selection of documents for data extraction

Currently, there is high interest with Agenda 2030, and this is reflected in the large number of organisations seeking to engage with the Agenda as well as the plethora of related documents. Selecting documents to include in this study was therefore not an easy task. The final document selection was done according to the criteria described in Section 4.2.1, in an effort to obtain a representative and credible, rather than a complete, collection of documents.

Table 5-1 shows how the documents selected fulfil the criteria. The specific documents selected are presented in Table 5-2.

Criteria for document selection	Document/Organisation
Relevance to the research purpose	Documents are recommendations directed towards actors from different sectors on how to engage with Agenda 2030, the SDGs and/or sustainable transformation. An initial screening of the documents' transformative potential was done based on the authors' understanding of transformation, and their knowledge of the content of the Agenda.
Authenticity and credibility: documents must be published by a credible organization, that is largely independent of the UN, and retrieved from the original source	Documents are published by SDSN, PwC, Future-fit Foundation and the Swedish Agenda 2030 delegation. SDSN has been initiated by the UN but remains UN-independent. Documents were retrieved from the official sites of the corresponding organization.
Representativeness: actors of the triple helix must be represented by at least one document to include academic, industry and public-sector perspectives	Academia is represented by SDSN, industry by PwC (for-profit) and Future-fit foundation (non-profit) and the public sector by the Swedish Agenda 2030 delegation.

Publishing organisation	Document title	Reference
SDSN	Getting Started with the Sustainable Development Goals - A Guide for Stakeholders Getting started with the SDGs in universities SDG Impact assessment tool	(SDSN Secretariat, 2015) (SDSN Northern Europe, n.d.)
Future-fit Foundation	Future-fit Business Benchmark Future-fit Business Benchmark Methodology Guide Release 2.0.4	(Future-Fit Foundation, 2017) (Future-Fit Foundation, 2018)
PwC	Make it your business: engaging with the Sustainable Development Goals Navigating the SDGs: a business guide to engaging with the UN Global Goals Measuring and managing total impact: A new language for business decisions SDG Selector tool	(PwC, 2015) (PwC, 2016) (PwC, 2013) (PwC, 2018)
The Swedish Agenda 2030 delegation	I riktning mot en hållbar välfärd	(Swedish Agenda 2030 delegation, 2017)

5.2.2 Summary of the data extracted

For each document, data was extracted to answer each one of the following questions (also presented in Section 4.2.2):

a. *For whom* are the recommendations written?
b. *What* do the recommendations contain?
c. *How* do the recommendations suggest engaging with Agenda 2030?
d. *Why* do they recommend engaging with the Agenda in this way?

A summary of each document is presented in Appendix B. Key findings from each source are summarised in Table 5-3 and Table 5-4.

Table 5-3 Summary of key findings from documents, part 1.

	SDSN guide	**SDSN Impact Assessment tool**	**Future-fit Benchmark**
For whom	Quadruple helix	Quadruple helix	Business
What	Presentation of important aspects of Agenda Actions to take when preparing to engage with Agenda Tools for designing strategies and roadmaps to reach the SDGs	A tool to assess positive and negative impact on each SDG	A systems-based approach to how business should be operating so that it will reach a sustainable state, where sustainability is defined by its three dimensions
How	A derived 5-step process is suggested	A self-assessment questionnaire	23 Break-even goals a business much reach in order to not cause harm 20 Positive pursuits a business can strive towards in order to have a positive impact
Why	Increase societal awareness of what must be done Strengthen partnerships	Support reflection and learning around the aspects of sustainability	Based on system conditions that are transformative Definitive set of goals to reach sustainability that must be met by all businesses

Table 5-4 Summary of key findings from documents, part 2.

	PwC recommendations	**PwC Selector**	**The Swedish Agenda 2030 delegation**
For whom	Business	Business	Public sector in collaboration with different social actors
What	Set of guidelines, tools and processes on how to engage with SDGs in a strategic level, and how to engage with individual SDGs	One-step, online tool that shows which SDGs are relevant to work with, depending on industry and geographical area	A translation of the Agenda into national context, in terms of priority areas, actors that need to be involved and initial steps and actions that need to be taken
How	Incorporate SDGs in all aspects of business including operations, planning, strategy and reporting Have a holistic view of the SDGs and the interlinks between them rather than cherry pick those that seem easiest or more relevant to work with	Once the industry and/or geographical area of interest are selected, the relevant SDGs are shown	Define six priority areas for Sweden Specify the need for the entire society to become involved Increase knowledge of Agenda 2030 and interest for sustainable development Need for reshaping of government administration
Why	Embed change such that business performance aligns with governmental goals and civil society expectations	Help business start engaging with the SDGs by pointing those goals that are relevant to them	Comply with Agenda 2030 requirements of adaptation to the national/local context Support the need for long-term change

5.2.3   Transformative elements identified in documents

Transformative elements in the documents studied were identified by seeking answers to the questions presented in the Transformation lens as described in Chapter 3. The questions from the lens is restated below:

What elements could support or suppress:

Q1. creating a vision of sustainability, based on guiding principles for example, that is shared and where all dimensions of sustainability and the interlinks between them are considered?

Q2. a long-term perspective towards a sustainable future?

Q3. evaluating the progress towards sustainable transformation?

Q4. the existence of "space" for experimentation with solutions and new ways to work?

Q5. reflection, rethinking and reshaping of thoughts, actions, relationships, roles, knowledge, language or practices?

Q6. the understanding of the global and local impact of one's actions?

Q7. engagement of multiple stakeholders across different sectors, including ones that are marginalised and not normally heard?

Q8. challenging the current system towards reaching sustainable state?

Q9. the institutionalisation of innovative and transformative solutions to sustainability challenges?

Q10. an increase in the level of transparency?

Q11. an increase in the level of democracy?

This was done in order to answer the first research sub-question:

> *What elements can be found that either support or suppress transformation in existing recommendations regarding implementation?*

The results are presented below.

5.2.3.1 *Initiate - Vision and strategy towards sustainability*

This section presents transformative elements that relate to vision and strategy that are transformative and can lead to a sustainable state.

Q1 – What elements could support or suppress creating a shared vision of sustainability, based on guiding principles for example, where all aspects of sustainability are equally considered?

This indicator identifies the need of a vision to guide sustainable transformation (*forward guiding* described in Section 5.1.1.2). This vision must be shared and inclusive of the three dimensions of sustainability. In most of the sources studied, there is no explicit mention of a vision of sustainability that could serve to explain why one needs to engage with Agenda 2030. Instead, the main focus is around realising the SDGs (PwC and SDSN), reaching "Future-fitness"[2] or working on Priority areas[3]. The potential of these three goals to provide a transformative vision, as defined above, was examined.

On the one hand, the SDGs provide a globally shared vision. However, when they are the main focus of the recommendations, the three sustainability dimensions are somewhat overlooked despite the fact that each SDG is designed to incorporate them. Moreover, focusing on the SDGs often leads to working with one or two SDGs only (referred to as cherry-picking by PwC), disregarding their holistic nature (PwC, 2015)which is dictated in the Agenda.

On the other hand, the concept of "Future-fitness" is built on fulfilling the three sustainability dimensions and this is highlighted throughout the Future-fit Benchmark. However, this

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[2] Future-fitness as defined by the Future-fit Benchmark refers to reaching a state where humanity is flourishing "*within the carrying capacity of our planet*". (Future-Fit Foundation, 2018, p. 6)

[3] Six priority areas for Sweden, based on Agenda 2030, that are cross-sectoral and balance the three dimensions of sustainability. (Swedish Agenda 2030 delegation, 2017)

concept is limited to the business world. Similarly, the Priority areas also take into account the three sustainability principles as clearly documented by the Swedish Agenda 2030 delegation.

In summary, alternative visions of sustainability relating to Agenda 2030[4] exist (Table 5-5). By discussing these visions in the context of the Agenda, the link to the three sustainability dimensions is more likely to be preserved. Using the SDGs as part of the discussion supports having a shared vision at a global scale.

Table 5-5 Summary of proposed visions of sustainability in relation to their potential of being shared and encompassing the three dimensions of sustainability

Proposed vision	Shared vision	Sustainability dimensions
SDGs	Global	Overlooked
Priority areas	Sweden	Clearly stated
Future-fitness	Business sector	Central

Q2 – What elements could support or suppress long-term perspective towards a sustainable future?

Long-term perspective is identified in all documents analysed as important for reaching a sustainable future. The issues relating to long-term perspective that are discussed can be grouped in three categories: mindsets, engagement and desired end-results (Figure 5.8).

Firstly, mindsets that are supportive include having long-term thinking beyond current politics, log-term perspective in perspective and long-term commitment. Secondly, with regards to engagement, the overarching recommendation is to engage with the SDGs on a strategic level. This can be manifested in a number of ways such as:

- processes that describe how to engage with the SDGs in a step-wise manner, starting by selecting SDGs or areas to focus on
- structural changes in the organisation so that SDG implementation is better supported
- methodologies to help with long-term planning, such as backcasting
- tools that help design long-term strategies, such as tools that help predict risks and opportunities in engaging with the Agenda

Finally, the desired end-results of long-term perspective include achieving the Agenda 2030/SDGs, embedding the SDGs in the organisation, or becoming sustainable. It can be concluded that long-term perspective requires strategic engagement supported by the appropriate mindset and guided by the vision of reaching a sustainable future, as this is defined by the Agenda, the SDGs or more broadly.

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[4] For information on how the Future-fit Benchmark relates to Agenda 2030, visit http://futurefitbusiness.org
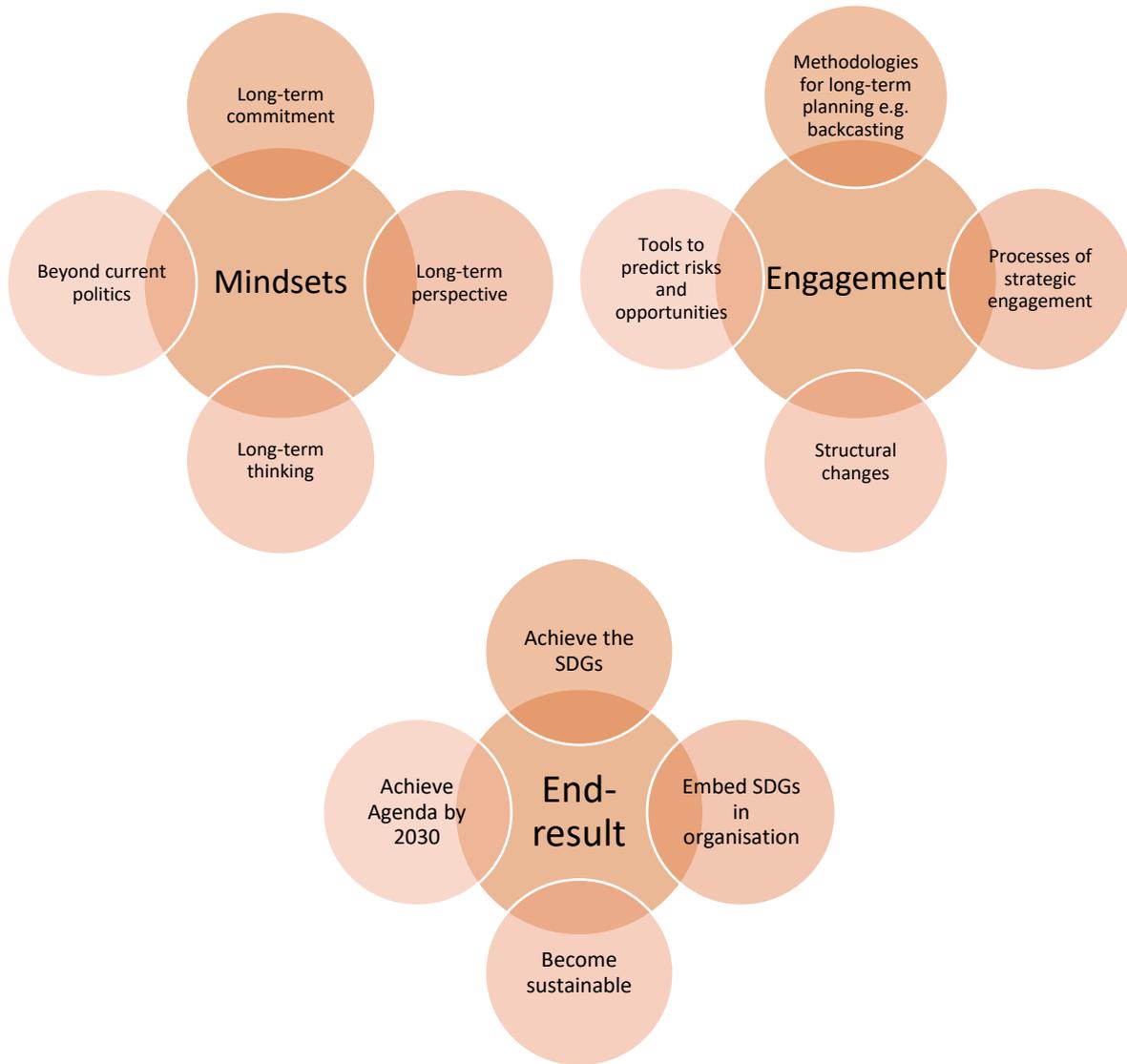
Figure 5.8 Summary of issues relating to long-term perspective discussed in the documents. Issues can be grouped into three main categories (mindsets, engagement and desired end-result).

Q3 – What elements could support or suppress the evaluation of progress towards sustainable transformation?

The need to use indicators to monitor progress towards achieving the SDGs is acknowledged in all sources. Monitoring progress has important functions in directing strategies as well as ensuring accountability (SDSN Secretariat, 2015) Moreover, it can be a powerful incentive for organisations, particularly in the business sector, to engage with the SDGs. That is because organisations could gain or lose legitimacy, customer support and investment capital depending on their performance as measured by a metric system that monitors progress towards achieving the SDGs (PwC, 2015).

However, there seem to be several factors that could hinder monitoring progress towards sustainable transformation. For example, many of the existing metric systems consist of numerous indicators and require input from a large body of data; and it is not rare that some of this data is not available for a specific country. Consequently, using indicators can be a daunting task. When it comes to reporting performance to customers and investors, having a universal metric system is more likely to be a strong incentive for organisations (Future-Fit Foundation, 2018), presumably because the interested parties will already be familiar with it and they can make direct comparisons between organisations. This currently is not the case as multiple metrics systems exist, e.g. Future-fit indicators, PwC's TIMM framework, GRI indicators etc. In some cases, there is even mention of the organisation creating their own indicators as needed or adjusting existing indicators to national, regional or local context (SDSN Secretariat, 2015), adding additional levels of complexity.

In conclusion, progress monitoring using indicators is recommended as it has positive contributions to the path towards sustainability by ensuring direction and accountability. However, some work is needed to carefully select and use appropriate metrics. These need to be relevant and meaningful for the organisation and not unnecessarily demanding as this may lead to inaction (Patton, 2017).

Table 5-6 Summary of elements from document analysis related to category one, Initiate, in the Transformation lens

Indc.	Indicator - What elements could support or suppress:	Code	Issues discussed	Element
I/Q1	creating a shared vision of sustainability, based on guiding principles for example, where all dimensions of sustainability and the interlinks between them are considered?	Vision Sustainability dimensions Dimension interlinks	SDGs Agenda Future-fitness' Priority areas Cherry-picking[5]	SDGs, priority areas emerging from Agenda 2030 or "future-fitness" can serve as a shared vision of sustainability Cherry-picking SDGs involves a risk of losing sight of their interlinks and holistic nature Sweden has extracted national priorities from the Agenda
I/Q2	long-term perspective in perspective towards a sustainable future?	Long-term Perspective Sustainable future	Strategy Prediction Priorities Selection SDG interlinks Cherry-picking Methodologies Tools Structural changes Perspective Commitment Thinking Politics	Engagement with the SDGs at the strategic level is recommended Embed the SDGs in strategy and operations Methodologies that support long term planning, eg backcasting, need to be used Tools that determine which SDGs to focus on, eg by predicting opportunity, can support creating a strategy towards achieving SDGs Tool and methods evaluating risk of not engaging with SDGs can be incentives Selecting and prioritising specific SDGs, areas lagging behind, or areas of national importance is suggested as a strategic initial step towards a sustainable future Long-term perspective in planning is needed if a sustainable future is to be reached Long-term thinking beyond politics is needed Achieving the Agenda requires long-term commitment Structural changes in the organization need to be applied
I/Q3	evaluating the progress towards sustainable transformation?	Progress Evaluation Sustainable transformation Monitoring	Indicators Purpose Accountability Data collection Tools/methods Current state	Indicators guiding progress towards SDGs need to be used Multiple indicator systems exist, some comprehensive Tools to evaluate current system exist The purpose of monitoring progress is to follow progress, direct strategies, ensure accountability and license to operate

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[5] Cherry-picking refers to selecting one or two only SDGs to work with.

Learning and experimenting

This section looks into learning and experimentation that needs to take place for Agenda 2030 to be realised, as these are manifested in the documents analysed.

Q4 - What elements could support or suppress the existence of "space" for experimentation with solutions and new ways to work?

The concept of experimentation is not explicitly mentioned in any of the sources analysed. Instead, there is direct or indirect mention of innovation that needs to take place at two levels: technological and organisational. The need for technological innovation is primarily explored by one source (SDSN), and it specifically restricted in development of data collection and statistical methods needed for monitoring progress (SDSN Secretariat, 2015). The need for organisational innovation on the other hand is more widely acknowledged. The discussion revolves around the need for reshaping the roles of the government and the business sector (following section) as well as the need to make organisational changes that require long-term commitment (previous section). Dedicating resources towards innovation and testing is also mentioned.

Although there is no direct mention of experimentation, the Future-fit Foundation has incorporated training, feedback and revision steps in the application of the Benchmark, in order to improve their documents and recommendation (Future-Fit Foundation, 2017). Training workshops will be offered, and participation in these as well as processes to incorporate feedback from early adopters are open to all. This approach is not a formal framework set up specifically for experimentation or learning. However, it could be thought of as an invitation for experimentation in the form of a potential collaborative learning loop that is inclusive and goes beyond geographical borders.
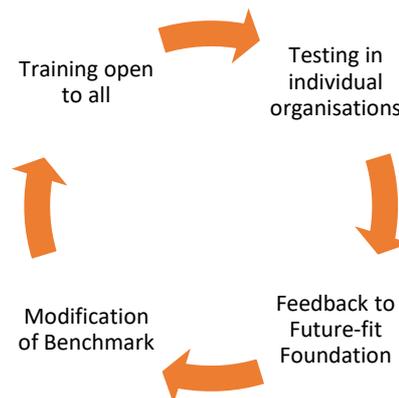
Figure 5.9 Potential Collaborative Learning Loop set up by the Future-fit Foundation

In short, the need for innovation and learning to reach sustainability is acknowledged and this need can serve as a driver for bringing change. Yet the link between either innovation or learning and experimentation has not been clearly made in any of the recommendations.

Q5 – What elements could support or suppress the reflection, rethinking and reshaping of thoughts, actions, relationships and roles?

There is a call for reflection, rethinking and reshaping in all documents studied. The aim is to revisit and improve current relationships, roles, practices and actions so that they will be better suited to support sustainable transformation.

In terms of relationships and roles, it is acknowledged that the government needs to become a leader and a coordinator of the sustainability transformation; and to better facilitate the transition to sustainability by improving its administrative work. Similarly, it is recognized that the business sector needs to revisit its role and contribution to the socio-environmental system, so that it relates to both society and the environment. With regards to its contribution, the business sector needs take responsibility for impact the entirety of its actions, as these span across the entire system and the value web (suppliers, operations, products and society, as defined by the Future-fit Benchmark (2018).

In terms of improving actions and practices through reflection and rethinking, a first step can be trying to map one's current situation in relation to the SDGs. This is exemplified by tools such as the SDSN Impact Assessment tool which is largely dependent on reflection and self-assessment of an organisation's current practices with regards to the SDGs (SDSN Northern Europe, n.d.). Mapping the current situation and relating it to achieving the SDGs can then lead to reshaping one's actions and practices (e.g. SDG backcasting recommended by SDSN (2015). Indeed, this type of mapping is unanimously recommended as the first step of any attempt to engage with the Agenda.

Another important point raised is the need for creating new practices where the impact on SDGs is prioritised alongside business objectives (PwC, 2015). However, specific examples of such practices are not given. Instead, examples of how organisations have engaged with one or two SDGs are widely available (PwC, 2016).

In conclusion, there is a call for the different actors to increase the awareness of their role in the socio-environmental system and to reshape their actions accordingly. Some tools are provided to aid this process, but more guidance is needed.

Table 5-7 Summary of elements from document analysis related to first part of category two, Guide, in the Transformation lens

Indic.	Indicator - What elements could support or suppress:	Code	Issues discussed	Element
II.a/Q4	the existence of "space" for experimentation with solutions and new ways to work?	Experimentation New solutions Innovation	Testing Resources Learning	Technological and organisational innovation is needed Resources must be invested in areas lagging behind, supporting innovation Collaborative learning loops (which will include training, testing, feedback and modification) need to be incorporated in the pathway towards sustainable development
II.a/Q5	reflection, rethinking and reshaping of thoughts, actions, relationships, roles, knowledge, language or practices?	Reflect Rethink Reshape	Practices Actions Learning Knowledge Relationships Roles Leadership Responsibility Accountability Expectations Improvements Current state Tools Language Terminology	Relationships, roles and actions of the different actors involved need to be revisited and improved Government needs to act as a leader and coordinator, facilitate the road to sustainable development through better administration Business needs to be placed in a social/environmental context, and respond to society's expectations Business' accountability is multidimensional and extents to the entire socio-ecological system, and the entire value web Reflecting to map one's current situation in relation to SDGs is recommended as the first step of engaging with SDGs Tools that support reflecting on organisational impact/contribution to SDGs have been developed Organisational structures and practices that support achieving the SDGs need to be created New terms are generated to complement new ways of thinking

Collaboration towards a common goal

Q6 - What elements could support or suppress the understanding of the global and local impact of one's actions?

In agreement with the requirements of the Agenda, the recommendations identify that local actions have a global impact as well as the fact that the SDGs are global goals and as such they must be achieved on a global level. There is also an understanding that individual organisations have an important role to play at the geographical area they operate in and that achieving the Agenda will be realised through the collective effort of local actors. At the same time, there is a focus on how the national context sets priorities to work on. Examples include SDSN recommending focussing on areas lagging behind in comparison to national goals (SDSN Secretariat, 2015), PwC recommending focusing on individual SDGs depending on the priorities of a given country (PwC, 2016, 2018) and the Swedish Agenda 2030 delegation setting national priority areas (Swedish Agenda 2030 delegation, 2017). Indeed, SDSN recommends that indicators monitoring progress are adjusted to the national/local level, whilst PwC provides both a process and tools to identify which SDGs are important and should be prioritised in relation to country context[6]. To conclude, the contribution at the local level will lead to achieving the Agenda globally, whilst the local context sets the priorities to focus on (Figure 5.10).
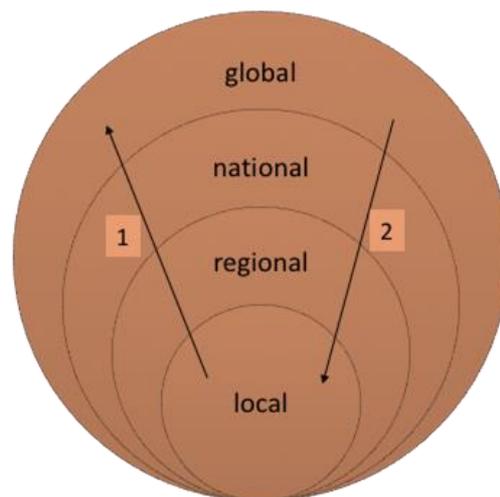
Figure 5.10 Summary of global-local links as presented in the recommendations. 1: achieving SDGs at the local level will lead to achieving them globally, 2: the SDGs described in the Agenda and indicators used to follow progress need to be adjusted to the national/local level.

Q7 – What elements could support or suppress engagement of multiple stakeholders, across different sectors, including ones that are marginalised and not normally heard?

SDSN and the Swedish Agenda 2030 delegation refer to multi-stakeholder engagement directly, and both identify the need for collaboration between multiple actors. SDSN justifies this need by pointing out that the different expertise, abilities, perspectives, incentives from actors of the quadruple helix are valuable for achieving the Agenda (SDSN Secretariat, 2015). Multi-stakeholder collaboration is in general poorly addressed by sources from the business sector; neither what type of collaboration nor how this can be achieved are considered to any significant extent. Instead, what is mentioned is that since businesses are part of the socio-environmental system, they need to consider their impact on others or that businesses need

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[6]PwC does not clearly state how SDG prioritisation differs to cherry-picking.

to obtain a *license to operate*[7], partly by aligning the organisation with the expectations that others (customers and government) have of it. Therefore, it can be argued that organisations need to engage their stakeholders in order to understand them and respond accordingly, however this is neither clearly stated nor addressed in any other way.

In terms of how this engagement could be achieved, SDSN focuses primarily on recommending a leader and coordinator role for the government where the government leads actors from other sectors and helps them perform their role towards achieving the SDGs (SDSN Secretariat, 2015). There is also a mention of discussions and dialogues as important tools for engaging stakeholders from different sectors by the Swedish Agenda 2030 delegation (Swedish Agenda 2030 delegation, 2017).

In summary, multi-stakeholder engagement is far from being a central issue in the recommendations studied, although some do point out the importance of multi-stakeholder engagement in reaching sustainability and the use of dialogue as a tool to engage stakeholders.

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[7] License to operate refers to the compliance with governmental law as well as the acceptance of a company's conduct by the general public based moral/ethical grounds.

Table 5-8 Summary of elements from document analysis related to second part of category two, Guide, in the Transformation lens

Indic.	Indicator - What elements could support or suppress:	Code	Issues discussed	Element
II.b/Q6	the understanding of the global and local impact of one's actions?	Global Local	Sustainability challenges National priorities Local context Collaboration Targets Indicators Tools	Sustainability challenges are global whilst everyone has a role to play in solving them Collaborative effort where everyone contributes within their geographical reach and area of action SDGs and their targets can be prioritised based on national and/or local context and needs Indicators needed to be adjusted from global to national/local level Tools that help prioritise SDGs according to country exist
II.b/Q7	engagement of multiple stakeholders, across different sectors, including ones not that are marginalised and not normally heard?	Stakeholders Engagement Sector Triple helix	Collaboration Partnership Coordination Multiple perspectives Competition Expectations Incentives Society Interaction	Collaboration between multiple actors is needed The different expertise, abilities, perspectives, incentives from actors of the quadruple helix are valuable for achieving the Agenda Government as a leader, coordinator and facilitator of other social actors working towards sustainability Discussion/dialogue and sharing of information with actors from multiple sectors is good practice for working towards the Agenda Actors need to gain license to operate Expectations of actors from other sectors need to be well-aligned with the expectations that you have for yourself

5.2.3.3 *Accelerate - Transformation of the socio-technical system*

Q8 – What elements could support or suppress challenging the current system towards reaching a sustainable state?

There are two main types of challenges to the current system that the recommendations describe: challenging how established societal structures operate and introducing qualitative changes to the current state of the societal system (Loorbach et al., 2017).

Societal structures to be challenged refer to governments and politicians (power structures), and businesses (economic structures). Instead of focusing on party politics and the gain of votes and power, strategies and actions need to be beyond current politics or governments. Similarly, businesses need to change their mindset towards systems-based thinking. The system-based thinking includes creating value for the system, rather than focusing only on maximising company profit and business objectives, as well as taking responsibility of the entirety of the organisation's actions and impacts. These results are summarised in Table 5-9.

Regarding qualitative change in the system, it is recommended to replace the barriers of silos, and the focus on short-term political or economic gain with broad commitment, long-term perspective and clear political action. Specifically to the Agenda 2030, cherry-picking the SDGs needs to be replaced by a comprehensive engagement that considers the SDGs holistic nature (Table 5-9).

In summary, it is suggested that the various actors involved in sustainable transformation may need to reach a mode of operation that extends beyond their own short-term interests in order to serve the aim of fulfilling the Agenda.

Table 5-9 Summary of challenges to the established societal structures and qualitative changes in the system, as presented in the documents analysed.

Type of challenge	Regime in current system	Change proposed
Operation of established power structures	Party politics gain of votes/power	Strategies and actions need to be beyond current politics/governments
Operation of economic structures	Maximise profit, business objectives	Systems-based thinking for businesses
Qualitative change	Silos Short-term gain	Broad commitment Long-term perspective Clear political action
Qualitative change (relating to the Agenda 2030)	Cherry-picking SDGs	Comprehensive engagement with SDGs

Q9 – What elements could support or suppress the institutionalisation of innovative and transformative solutions to sustainability challenges?
The recommendations provide resources that facilitate incorporation of the Agenda in organisations. For example, they provide "translations" of the Agenda that are actionable and understandable, and tailored to specific sectors. Processes for how to engage with the Agenda

that can be adjusted and followed are described, as well as indicators that allow progress monitoring.

Q10/11 – What elements could support or suppress an increase in the level of transparency/democracy?

Neither transparency nor democracy are issues that are directly addressed by the sources studied. Elements relating to these principles exist, but these are not specifically aiming to increasing transparency or democracy. For example, it is recommended for businesses to report progress towards reaching the SDGs and to be open about their actions and impact. These recommendations are not made for the sake of increasing transparency but in order to build trust, gain a license to operate and be more competitive. Similarly, democracy could be supported as a by-product of actively engaging multiple stakeholders, for example if these stakeholders are invited to participate in discussions and decision-making.

Table 5-10 Summary of elements from document analysis related to category three, Accelerate, in the Transformation lens

Indic.	Indicator - What elements could support or suppress:	Code	Issues discussed	Element
III/Q8	challenging the current system towards reaching a sustainable state?	System Regime Mindsets Sustainable state	Politics Policies Business Systems-based approach Responsibility SDGs Comprehensive	Broad commitment and long-term perspective are needed Strategies must be beyond party politics Coherence needs to be beyond current government Clear political action is needed Business is part of the socio-ecological system and must create system value For a business, achieving the SDGs should be equally important as the business objective Businesses need to take responsibility for the entirety of their actions and impacts A comprehensive engagement with the SDGs is required
III/Q9	the institutionalisation of innovative and transformative solutions to sustainability challenges?	Innovative Transformative Sustainability challenges Institutionalisation	Indicators Agenda understandability Agenda actionability Process	Indicators to monitor progress towards sustainability challenges may help transformation Processes for implementing SDGs is have been developed "Translations" of the Agenda in a language that can be more easily understood are available "Translations" of sustainability (the Agenda, 'future-fitness') to actions that can be taken are available
III/Q10	an increase in the level of transparency?	Transparency	Reporting Openness	Publicly report progress towards SDGs Be open about your actions within and between organisations and groups
III/Q11	an increase in the level of democracy?	Democracy	Engagement Dialogue Multiple stakeholders	Actively engaging different social actors is recommended Creating communication channels with different actors is recommended

6. Synthesis of the results obtained from interviews and documents

This section presents the synthesis of the results obtained from the interviews (Section 5.1) and documents (Section 5.2).

The synthesis was done by revisiting the results to identify the main issues raised by each source (interviews and documents). By comparing and reflecting over these issues and how these are discussed in each source, similarities, overlaps, complementarity and reinforcing concepts as well as differences and contradictions were identified.

The search aimed to answer questions such as the following:

- What are the issues that are addressed in a similar way by both interviews and documents and how are these discussed in relevant literature studies? How do they relate to the Transformational lens?
- How can the *existing recommendations*[8] and/or literature studies be used to address the barriers, difficulties and problems that organisations encounter when engaging with the Agenda (as identified in the interviews)?
- What are the conditions that need to be fulfilled according to the Transformational lens, but are not present in either the interviews or the documents?
- What are the gaps and contradictions between issues raised in interviews and issues addressed in documents. Could these gaps be addressed by relevant theories in the literature and, if so, how?

Finally, in light of the answers to these questions, some recommendations on how to engage with Agenda 2030 are then suggested. The synthesis results are presented below according to their potential to initiate, guide or accelerate transformation.

6.1.1 Initiate

Engagement pattern - Vision or business as usual?
If the Agenda is to be addressed in a transformative way, it needs to be incorporated to the vision of organisations, and this vision needs to be translated into strategies and actions. As

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[8] With the term *existing recommendations,* we are referring to the recommendations found in the documents studied, as opposed to our recommendations that are introduced in this Chapter and summarised in Chapter 7.

Bonn and Fisher (2011) put it *"the organization's vision needs to reflect the organization's commitment to sustainability and sustainability needs to be part of the strategic decision-making process as well as the strategy content"* (p.6). This understanding is reflected in the *forwards guiding* approach, described in both interviews (Section 5.1.1.2) and documents (Section 5.2.3.1), according to which the Agenda/SDGs are to be used as a vision to guide all actions. However, the most common current engagement pattern is that of *backward confirmation* (Section 5.1.1.1 and PwC documents) according to which the Agenda/SDGs are incorporated into business-as-usual operations. This pattern of engagement is more likely to lead to incremental changes rather than transformation.

The discrepancy between the need for transformative engagement and the current non-transformative practices must be addressed. According to the interviews (Section 5.1.1.3), insufficient awareness of the Agenda, its content and implications seem to be hindering more transformative engagement, whilst there is a strong interest and willingness to work with the Agenda. It is therefore proposed to *educate and consult* (Section 5.1.1.3) individuals and organisations that want to engage with the Agenda with regards to its content and intention as a step towards more transformative engagement.

What should guide sustainable transformation – the Agenda or the SDGs?
For a vision to guide sustainable transformation, two criteria need to be fulfilled: it needs to be shared and it needs to at least acknowledge the social, economic and environmental sustainability dimensions (the Transformation lens, chapter 3). From the interview and document analysis, it is not clear how the Agenda or the SDGs could fulfil such a role.

Regarding the Agenda as a shared vision, several different views on what the Agenda is supposed to fulfil were presented in the interviews. Either the aim is that all the SDGs should be met, that the societal system should be adjusted, or that the entire global society should be transformed. There is not one shared view. Regarding incorporation of the three sustainability dimensions in the vision, when the Agenda is the focus in documents or interviews, the three dimensions are present in the discussion. However, when the focus is shifted from the Agenda to the SDGs, the three dimensions are often overlooked (both in documents and interviews). It could also be inferred, though this was not stated directly by the interviewees, that focusing on the SDGs leads to aspiration for implementation/goal fulfilment, while keeping the Agenda in the centre highlights the need for system change where eventual goal fulfilment becomes a consequence.

According to the analysis above, the Agenda provides a vision that is transformative, whilst the SDGs in isolation do not. However, the SDGs do seem to be a more powerful communicator of sustainability than the Agenda, as there is higher awareness around the SDGs: they are more visual and recognisable, and they were discussed as a common and global language of sustainability by several of the interviewees. They therefore pose a greater potential of serving as a basis for a shared vision.

By acknowledging both the value and complementarity of the SDGs and the Agenda, it can be argued that a middle way must be found so that neither the transformative potential of the Agenda nor the communicative power of the SDGs is lost. Increasing knowledge and awareness of the Agenda (content and meaning) and the sustainability dimensions, together

with increasing awareness of how these are linked to the SDGs may be this middle way leading to a transformative vision.

Increase knowledge and awareness regarding the Agenda

One question that remains unanswered is how to go about educating, consulting and increasing knowledge and awareness of the Agenda. Taking inspiration from the Challenge lab and one of its approaches on how to interact with stakeholders, we proposed using dialogue as a tool, as this is defined by a *thinking together* approach[9] (Leroux, 2017) and dialogic leadership (Isaacs, 1999). As explained in Section 2.5.1, dialogues in such a framework lead to building of trust and collective thinking (Sandow & Allen, 2005), which can presumably promote co-creating a vision that is shared between individuals in an organisation (Van De Kerkhof, 2006). Internalisation and ownership of the vision is likely to increase the motivation and engagement with it (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

Strategies guided by the vision

Organisations are recommended to engage with the SDGs at a strategic level (document analysis, Section 5.2.3.1). According to the documents studied, two conditions need to be fulfilled for this engagement to contribute to the Agenda. The first is that organisations need to work with all three sustainability dimensions and the second is that they need to address the interlinks between the SDGs. During interviews, both these conditions are acknowledged as important but difficult to implement in practice, presumably because of the wide scope that is involved. There is therefore a gap between what is recommended and what is perceived as possible in practice.

The documents themselves provide an answer to how this gap could be addressed: as a first step when engaging with the Agenda, it is recommended to narrow down the scope by prioritising areas or SDGs to work with. This is rather contradictory to the condition of looking at the interlinks between the SDGs, but it may be an approach to overcome the initial dilemma of *where to start from* that, if left unanswered, could lead to inertia and inactivity. Therefore, narrowing down the scope of initial engagement, whilst keeping the Agenda as a vision and the knowledge of the holistic nature of SDGs alive may be a way to bridge the gap between transformative and non-transformative engagement.

Some interviewees also report a lack of practical tools and processes guiding how to engage with the SDGs. However, the documents do in fact recommend linear, step-by-step engagement processes. Therefore, it may be necessary to increase awareness about resources that support engagement with the Agenda that are already available. These could be used as a starting point and adjusted according to the specific context they are to be applied, where context could refer to the type of sector, the type of the organisation, the local context etc. For example, SDSN has already provided a process specifically tailored for universities c

All documents consent to a linear, step-wise approach when engaging with the Agenda. Support for the suitability of a linear approach when dealing with complex transitions is provided in the literature (Hrebiniak, 2006). According to Hrebiniak (2006), managing large, implementation-related changes in a long-term horizon is best achieved by sequential

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[9] *Thinking together* - Stakeholders are open to the point of view of the other parties to reach mutual understanding and learning (from Section 2.5.1).

changes as this removes the complexity of the change. However, taking inspiration from the field of sustainable transformation, an agile rather than linear approach may be preferred. This approach can incorporate iterations where every step is preparing from the previous iteration and where low-hanging fruits are collected along the way to balance the long-term aims with short-term gains (Holmberg & Robért, 2000). Iterations with continuous reflecting on *where are we* and *where are we going* support keeping the focus on the Agenda as a vision even if the initial steps of engagement involve working on selected SDGs or priority areas.

A disadvantage of such a process is that it requires time, and this seems to be clashing with the realities of organisations where time is often limited (interviews). This problem of time is not addressed either in the documents or interviews. Collecting low-hanging fruits may be a way to compensate for the time-consuming process.

Current contribution to the Agenda
As a second step of the recommended process of engagement, it is suggested to translate the Agenda into the organisation's context and relate it to what the organisation already does towards meeting the Agenda or the related national priorities. The value of this step is revealed in light of the interviews where it has been mentioned that organisations may be contributing more than they realise, and helping an organisation realising this can be a motivating and encouraging starting point.

6.1.2   Guide

A framework for experimentation
Supporting the existence of "space" for experimentation is identified as a transformative element (Transformation lens, Chapter 3). "Space" can be physical, mental or a resource such as time and money. Experimentation refers to using transition arenas, exploring alternative scenarios and experimenting to allow new solutions and ways of organising to emerge (Loorbach et al., 2017).

In the documents included in this study, some examples of experimentation are mentioned as recommended practices. These include:
- Investing in technological and organisational innovation that needs to take place
- Using collaborative learning loops
- Practising reflection, rethinking and reshaping
- Using appropriate language that supports the transformation process

What is absent, both from documents and interviews, is the mention of any framework that could support experimentation. Since mistakes are intrinsic to experimentation, a framework that addresses the fear of making mistakes is likely to be needed, as this fear was identified in the interviews as a barrier to bringing about change.

What are the conditions needed for experimentation to occur in a "safe" environment where mistakes are accepted and used as a resource for further learning? Sandow and Allen (2005) suggest that these conditions include trust, openness and a common purpose amongst the members of such a framework. Conversely, in the absence of these conditions, fear arises (Sandow and Allen, 2005). Therefore, we recommend investing in increasing trust between

actors, within and between organisations. Addressing the fear of making mistakes is a condition that must be met in transformation processes (Avelino, 2009).

A framework for experimentation can be formal such as a transition lab (for example the Challenge lab) or informal such as a self-organising social system, as described in Sandow and Allen (2005) for example. One potential benefit of a formal framework is that it could also facilitate experimentation by providing an environment where more flexible rules and regulations apply, a need pointed out in some of the interviews.

Outcomes of learning processes - evaluate and reshape your role in the current system
An approach that is complementary to experimenting and is also identified to contribute to transformation is learning via reflecting/rethinking/reshaping. This learning process is in fact highly present in the documents where actors from all sectors are encouraged to reconsider their roles and actions in light of Agenda 2030. A major part of these recommendations relates to looking at one's role through a systems-perspective lens. For example, an organisation viewed as part of a socio-environmental system needs to re-evaluate how it relates to the components of that system. This could involve answering questions such as:
- How does the organisation relate to its stakeholders?
- What are the organisation's responsibilities to its stakeholders?
- How is the organisation linked to the wider system?
- What are the consequences of these links?

Collaboration
Considering that partnerships are central for achieving the Agenda to the extent that one goal (SDG 17) is dedicated to them, it is surprising that this issue is not central to the current recommendations and it is inadequately covered by the documents studied. For example, forming partnerships is not included in the processes recommending how to engage with the SDGs.

However, there is an understanding that knowledge from one perspective only is not sufficient to understand the complex challenges, nor to come up with the solutions needed to achieve the Agenda, and this is found both in documents and interviews. Trans- and interdisciplinary and cross-sectorial collaborations are required to allow the different expertise, abilities, perspectives, incentives from actors of the quadruple helix to come together. This understanding is expressed in both interviews and documents, as well as literature studies (Ayuso et al., 2011; Carayannis et al., 2012).

On the one hand, this type of collaboration is challenging due to silo structures encountered across all sectors and the tradition of competition that prevails in the business sector. On the other hand, Agenda 2030 was perceived by interviewees as a possible solution to overcome these divisions by offering a shared, global vision to work towards. Thus, a potential step to help organisations go beyond these silo structures could be to reflect on current and potential partnerships with other social actors and how these could be directed towards contributing to the Agenda.

6.1.3   Accelerate

Resistance to change arising from external factors
The path to sustainable transformation requires challenging the current unsustainable system (whether defined as socio-environmental, socio-technical or other) to help bring a change towards a sustainable one (Geels, 2005). This is likely to be met with resistance from the established regime and ways to mitigate such resistance are needed.

Challenging the current economic structures was discussed in both interviews and documents. More specifically, current performance metrics used by the business sector were identified as a barrier, and thus in need of change to allow for truly transformative engagement with the Agenda. The problem stems from the fact that metrics are restricted to reporting financial performance, omitting any other impacts that business activities may have. Similarly, interviews identify that too strong a focus on monetary value erodes the system and makes organisations neglect social and ecological consequences. Additionally, costs or savings caused by an action might show up elsewhere in the system, but this is often not considered in today's economy. There is a need to redesign the economic system with focus on measurement of value that extends beyond monetary value.

One suggestion to address this need is to replace measuring profit with measuring the value a business brings to the socio-environmental system (Future-fit Benchmark). As explained in Section 5.2.3.3, this is part of a fundamental change in business thinking (from focusing exclusively on own interest to systems-thinking, from short-term to long-term gain). As the entire current system is built around business models, value creation and measurements that are primarily serving the goal of generating profit within one organisation, interviewees predict and also emphasise that the current economic structures might be difficult to change.

However, organisations need to be legitimate with regards to rules and regulations but also public opinion, and this need could act as a leverage point towards inducing a positive change. PwC call this gaining the license to operate. In interviews and documents, it is identified that the government, investors and consumers can have power over organisations; governments via the laws they create, investors and consumers by the choices they make in investing or buying. These choices can be based on information beyond indicators of financial performance, for example by attending the triple bottom line, where both economic, ecological and social impact is indicated (Smith & Sharicz, 2011).

If metrics are to be used by organisations to attract investors and customers, we postulate that these will probably need to be tailored towards this purpose and they may need to comply to criteria such as (1) universal and few to allow for comparisons to be made, (2) simple to understand so that they can be used by the general public, (3) easy to calculate so that they do not lead to inaction (Patton, 2017). This is perhaps a leverage point for organisations that wish to move in that direction can take advantage of, PwC highlights the license to operate/interviews the legitimacy.

Resistance to change arising from internal factors

The interviews highlight two internal factors, i.e. factors that originate from within the individual, as sources of resistance to change. The first is resistance to change when this change is externally imposed. The second is an unwillingness or fear to try new things.

Resistance to externally imposed change can be mitigated by including people in the process of change by discussing, for example, why the change needs to happen and what the positive consequences can be. Including individuals in such discussions may help internalise the objectives of the upcoming change and increase the motivation to be part of this change (Ryan & Deci, 2000). A complementary approach, recommended by both literature and interviews, is to use appreciative inquiry: identify the positive first, and build upon that to bring change (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005).

The unwillingness to try new things can be combated by a culture that embraces failure and brave leadership that dares to try new things and can act as role model.

What is surprising is that issues relating to resistance to change are not addressed at all by the documents studied, despite being both an importance issue in practice and a widely-studied research area (Armenakis & Bedeian, 1999; Armenakis & Harris, 2009).

7. Recommendations for unlocking transformative engagement with Agenda 2030

The recommendations presented below are the aggregated result of interview and document analysis conducted during our thesis. They are meant as guidelines for who wish to begin to engage with the Agenda in a transformative manner, particularly for people in decision making positions. Whilst we argue that the Agenda explains *why* a sustainable transformation is needed and the SDGs describe *what* areas to focus and work on, our recommendations address *how* this can be done: some of the actions that can be taken towards realising the Agenda.

The recommendations stated below are divided into three main parts based on their potential role to purposefully initiate, guide and accelerate sustainability transitions. The recommendations should not be seen as a prescription to follow step by step, but rather inspiration on actions to take where the sequence in which the recommendations presented represent one possible approach. However, there is one exception, as we recommend actors wanting to engage with the Agenda to start by getting familiar with the Agenda 2030 document and initiate a dialogue about what it means for the organisation as well as the individuals of that organisation.

7.1 Initiate: Preparations before engaging with Agenda 2030 realisation

The first category of recommendations consists of preparations: things that could be done as first steps, prior to more concrete actions that aim towards realising the Agenda.

Increase the level of knowledge and awareness regarding the Agenda, its purpose and content

Agenda 2030 presents an ambition to "transform our world" by describing, in general terms, what must be done, by whom, and by when to achieve global sustainability. The core of the Agenda is the 17 Sustainable Development Goals which are universal, integrated, interrelated and balance the three dimensions of sustainable development: the social, the economic and the environmental (United Nations, 2015). To each goal belongs a corresponding set of targets and indicators. As a first step, organisations need to allow individuals to familiarise themselves with the document's content sufficiently so that important aspects, such as the Agenda's purpose, are not overlooked or misinterpreted.

Suggested actions to address this issue
- Dedicate time for all members of the organisation to read the Agenda and discuss what it means for them in their roles
- Keep the sustainability discussion alive with regular time slots for explorative dialogue
- Investigate how the connections between Sustainability with its three dimensions, Agenda 2030 and the SDGs are perceived within the organisation
- Ensure an awareness of how the SDGs are interlinked, and how actions focusing on one goal have direct and indirect impact on achieving the other goals, locally and globally
- Talk about the Agenda in forums involving customers/suppliers/partners to raise the collective knowledge and awareness of its content

Reflect upon your current and future contribution to the Agenda

Whether consciously engaging with the Agenda or not, every actor influences it. One of the first steps towards moving to a new, more sustainable direction is to understand this contribution. Therefore, the current contribution to the Agenda needs to be assessed, and positive and negative impacts need to be identified first. At the same time, there is a need to reflect on the desired future contribution of the organisation to the Agenda in order to have a clear destination of where the organisation wants to be in the future. Finally, the barriers towards reaching this destination need to be acknowledged in order to be addressed.

Suggested actions to address this issue
- Create a sustainability vision describing what society you want to live in, preferably by involving multiple actors both within the organisation and external actors
- Identify what you already are doing that supports the Agenda and your vision, and strengthen these activities
- Evaluate how your activities are contributing to, or opposing the national/regional priorities regarding areas to address
- Decide where you want to put your main contribution towards the Agenda, (without overlooking the other aspects)
- Evaluate what actions you can take here and now which are in line with the sustainability vision and which could be stepping stones for further engagement. Also identify where policies/laws/regulations are blocking initiatives and investigate how these blockings could be overcome

Develop a strategy according to the vision of the Agenda

Once the vision is in place, the strategy towards reaching that vision needs to be planned out. On the one hand, the strategy needs to aim to embed the Agenda content and intention in all aspects of the organisation. On the other hand, it needs to be pragmatic and actionable. In addition, metrics are suggested to follow up organisational performance towards achieving Agenda 2030 and to give guidance for future direction.

Suggested actions to address this issue
- Ensure an integrated approach to the SDGs and sustainability challenges, where all three dimensions of sustainability are considered

- Develop an agile, iterative approach to engage with the SDGs that is adjusted to your specific context, by taking inspiration from existing recommended process
- Aim for iterations towards a bigger vision, take many small steps. Prepare resources for the next step
- Focus on low-hanging fruits, such as quick revenues if you are a business, to see quick progress
- Focus on problem areas to tackle what is lagging behind
- Select indicators for checking that progress is made in the direction of the agenda and adapt these to your organisation's context. Evaluate these regularly as progress is made and more knowledge is gained

7.2 Guide: Conditions for moving towards achieving the Agenda 2030

These recommendations refer to aspects of the environment within the organisation that can guide the path towards achieving the Agenda.

7.2.1 Create space for learning and exploring new ideas

As the path towards achieving the Agenda is largely unknown, a learning cycle of experimentation, reflection, rethinking and reshaping has a central role to play and needs to be supported. For this cycle to function and be productive, trust needs to be created and safeguarded.

Suggested actions to address this issue
- Think about how you can create space (time, physical, mental etc.) where reflection, rethinking and reshaping can happen
- Think about how you can increase trust among actors, within and between organisations
- Create loops for collaborative learning (training, testing, feedback, modification)
- Create a culture that views mistakes as learning opportunities instead of failures and reconsider the language of the organisation to support this culture.

Evaluate, and if necessary redefine and reshape, your role in the current system with respect to achieving the Agenda

Every organisation is part of a system: a network of stakeholders, a society, an ecological context etc., and as such it is affected by or affects others within that system. The organisation therefore needs to come to an understanding of what that system consists of, which parameters and actors it includes, what its boundaries are and why those specific boundaries are selected, as well as what impact the organisation has or could have on the system.

Suggested actions to address this issue
- Reflect and define what system you consider yourself to be a part of. What is your role/position within this system? Can this role be redefined and reshaped to better support the Agenda?
- Reflect on the value you bring to the system, as opposed to the value you bring to your customers/shareholder/immediate partners etc. Reflect on the concept of value: can

it be redefined from value to customers/shareholder/immediate partners to value to the system? Can more aspects than economic value be measures and communicated?

- Evaluate external expectations (from government, civil society, investors, partners etc.) and see how they can guide/inspire new relationships, interactions, roles, actions and structures etc.

Form partnerships and collaborations based on the Agenda as a guiding vision

Partnerships are central for achieving the Agenda and need to be strengthened. It is through collaboration that the Agenda can be achieved, and significant effort must be placed in that direction by all actors involved.

Suggested actions to address this issue
- Reflect how you currently integrate voices of different actors in society, and how you can reshape this interaction to increase diversity, especially relating to marginalised groups
- Reflect on how you relate to actors/potential partners around you; are they competitors or potential collaborators? Think about how partnerships which support resource sharing can be initiated and actively engage in them
- Evaluate your network, is it trans-sectoral? Transdisciplinary? Can you provide expertise to someone else, and someone else enrich your knowledge?
- Think about how you could enable others/your partners to fulfil their role in reaching a sustainable state and reshape your role to include actions in that direction

7.3 Accelerate: Addressing the need for transformation

The recommendations below address the need to change the current socio-technical system in order to reach the sustainable state described by the Agenda.

7.3.1 Challenge the current system

For transformation to occur in desirable pathways, the current system needs to be challenged. This includes challenging beliefs and mindsets, power and economic structures, established technologies, laws and regulations, silos etc. In parallel, providing incentives for improvements can speed up the process of change.

Suggested actions to address this issue
- Reflect what lock-ins you see hindering sustainability in the system and how you can contribute in unlocking them
- Challenge the way organisational performance is currently measured (e.g. the economic definition of value), both through actions and lobbying
- Lobby for need for nationally/globally accepted indicators for evaluating progress for sustainability (compare with GDP)
- Include requirements of SDG compliance for partners to create peer pressure

7.3.2 Assist change

Change is a necessary yet difficult and time-consuming process that is often met with resistance. Thus, if change is to happen and be successful, it needs to be facilitated.

Suggested actions to address this issue
- Help people feel empowered regarding the future, that they have the ability to impact what will happen
- Be open and transparent about what will happen, and do not underestimate the importance of explaining why
- Allow the change to take time
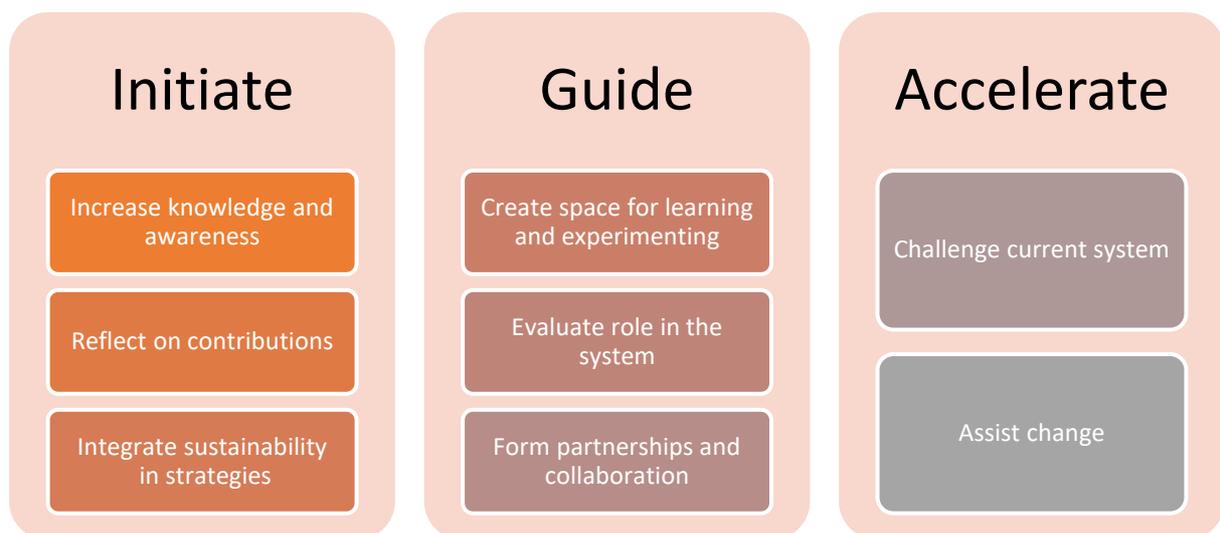
Figure 7.1 Summary of the proposed recommendations

8. Discussion

The study and the research question

Agenda 2030 calls for a transformation of our world, and transformation is also a central concept discussed in the field of sustainability. However, our study of current engagement, attitudes, and recommendations towards the Agenda showed that transformation does not necessarily follow from engaging with the Agenda. It is therefore relevant to ask what it would take to unlock this call for transformation that the Agenda expresses.

This thesis does not claim to provide *the* solution to the question how to engage with the Agenda to fulfil its transformative potential. However, it provides a set of actionable suggestions aimed towards people that have a desire to engage with the Agenda; recommendations that try to bridge the gap between what is theoretically transformative, what the Agenda requires and what organisations can realistically start doing at the moment they decide to engage. Importantly, although the recommendations must be considered as a starting point, they are still aiming towards the higher goal of sustainable transformation.

With that said, several aspects found to be important and necessary for sustainability transitions, both from transition theory, the documents, and the interviews; aspects such as the use of a vision for sustainability, strategies to realise the vision, presence of spaces for learning and experimentation, as well as collaboration and partnerships across disciplines and sectors. Interestingly, these aspects coincide with the identified challenges that lead up to this thesis topic: the need for sustainability transformation, perceived lack of shared vision, perceived need for more multi-stakeholder collaboration, and low engagement with Agenda 2030. Fortunately, as shown in the interview findings, the Agenda 2030 was seen as to be a strong candidate for being a shared vision and a platform on which to build collaborations, while a collaboration and shared sustainability vision both are supporting factors for sustainability transformations.

Apart from the abovementioned aspects, the study also lifted many more aspects which could unlock the transformative potential in Agenda 2030. However, as this thesis only focused on one set of elements and factors which might facilitate the transformation, we did not do any evaluation on whether some are more transformative than others. Therefore, the results should be seen as a contribution to the body of knowledge and not a definite answer to the question.

Interesting findings

Some findings stood out from the rest. Firstly, the most common type of engagement found in the study, that is varieties of backwards confirmation, does most likely not lead to any

bigger transformation. There seem to be several factors affecting why this this is the most common type of engagement. One of them seem to be inertia, that business-as-usual is easier and more familiar and therefore tempting to continue with. Another reason could insufficient awareness of that the Agenda exists and low knowledge and understanding of what the Agenda 2030 (and not only the SDGs) really says. A third reason which was mentioned was unavailability of tools and methods on how to engage with the Agenda. The latter is, however, not true, as there is a plethora of documents online providing guidance and suggesting actions, tools and interventions, some which were examined in the document analysis of this thesis. Further work could therefore be to investigate the gap between what is available and what is known and how available knowledge better can reach to those who are in need for it. The abovementioned factors are all affected by perceived insufficiency of one specific resource: time. Time to gain acceptance of changes, time to expand the understanding of what the Agenda 2030 implies and to spread that knowledge, time to invest in searching for and learn about available recommendations, tools and methods, and time to explore and test alternative ways of doing things more in line with the intention of the Agenda. To consciously set aside time for these could therefore potentially be a good investment in preparing for the future by supporting transformation.

A second finding which stood out was a theme which showed up throughout the interviews: fear and resistance to change. Although the discourse is prevalent in literature on organisational change and organisational transformation (see for example Waddock et al., 2015; Weber & Khademian, 2008; Welbourne, 1995), the topic is, with few exceptions (see for example Avelino, 2009) addressed in the sustainability transitions and transformations discourse. The magnitude and importance of this finding is hard to interpret, as the phenomena neither was prevalent in the documents nor in the literature on transformations or sustainability. Additionally, the topic was not a focus in the study and was hence not given appropriate time to invest. However, since it was perceived as an important barrier, this is an area where future work is needed to investigate the impact of fear and resistance and how it can be mitigated in a sustainability context.

In addition, one central insight from the study can be drawn from the learning journey that both we as authors, and the participants in the feedback session did. During the interviews, as well as in some of the documents, the SDGs were discussed more separately than in the context of the Agenda 2030 as a whole. Additionally, much of the visual communication material around the *Transforming our world* document focus on the SDGs (see for example the SDG map shown in Figure *2.1*). There is a risk, though, in not viewing the SDGs in the context of the Agenda. The Agenda in its whole tells a story of transformation and new ways to operate and interact in the global society, while the SDGs are a set of goals to be met but which also together contributes to that transformation. Without that context, the SDGs could therefore be any other set of goals to work with one by one, something which might not lead to major societal changes. However, this insight of the complementarity between Agenda 2030 and the SDGs was also a discovery journey we as authors did while working with the thesis, and which occurred in the stakeholder feedback session with Johanneberg Science Park. In the beginning of the project, the focus was on the SDGs only, but the initial investigations lead to an understanding of that only looking at the SDGs would be insufficient; focus had to be more on Agenda as a whole to unlock transformation. By looking at the Agenda through the Transformation lens, it became even more clear that the goals alone do

not lead the way to transformation, but the keywords used in the UN discourse of the Agenda, *transformation, universal, integration* and *indivisibility*, in combination with the goals do. The importance of that insight was verified in the stakeholder feedback session, where the participants from Johanneberg Science Park previously only focussed on the SDGs, but during the workshop realised how the whole Agenda would need to be considered which sparked a discussion to re-think their practices.

Main contributions

One major contribution of this study lies in the development of a Transformation lens, a set of indicators that can be used to evaluate the transformative potential of data extracted from interviews or document analysis. This Transformation lens is by no means a comprehensive analytical framework. It is a starting point that served the purpose of this study by providing a compass to steer the authors through the large volume of data collected towards what in that is transformative.

However, the Transformation lens was, out of time constraints, based on only three sources. This was sufficient for the purpose it served, however, several aspects important for transformation is not included in the lens. This also became evident from the results which revealed several aspects which was perceived as barriers or supporters but not considered in the lens. Additionally, with a wider lens both more problematic and more supportive elements might have been found. A future work could therefore be to expand and/or improve the lens with the incorporation of additional theoretical studies on transformation/transition theories and for use both in practice and in future studies.

A second contribution of this study is that it provides a snapshot of how organisations in the west of Sweden currently engage with Agenda 2030. It paints a picture of the understanding, the knowledge and the type of engagement that organisations have in relation to the Agenda and the SDGs; the underlying intention and motivation for current and future engagement; and the difficulties, doubts and barriers that organisations and individuals face when in the initial stages of engaging with the Agenda or the SDGs. The results show that there is a desire to engage with the Agenda, yet there is lack of knowledge of its content. Barriers that many faces include silos and lack of time. The extensive scope of the SDGs and how to balance that with other organisational objectives have also been highlighted as issues that are difficult to address.

The study was however only based on organisations in initial stages of transformation, and thus does not represent the whole pictures. Neither organisations which does not engage at all, nor organisations which have come far in their integration process were interviewed. These areas are therefore recommendations for future studies to further expand the knowledge about what could be or would have to be done in the light of the Agenda 2030.

Apart from gaining an overview of current engagement, these results were combined with current recommendations and theories, to generate a set of recommendations on how to engage with Agenda 2030 (presented in Chapter 7). In summary, the recommendations suggest increasing the awareness of the Agenda and its transformative content; preparing for new ways of working which are guided by sustainability, and allow learning and challenge current unsustainable practices. Moreover, the Agenda 2030 states, and transformation

research suggests, that this should be done through partnerships and cross-sectorial collaborations.

This thesis, and the set of recommendations which it provides, cover several issues which we have identified that would need to be addressed to unlock transformation, alongside suggestions on how the Agenda 2030 could support the process. Although they are far from comprehensive, they could hopefully provide a nudge in the right direction and contribute with guidance for potential leverage points where interventions and actions could start, actions which could transform our world.

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Appendix

Appendix A. Interview template

Who:
Background:
Purpose:
Date, time:

Intro
- Record? Time?
- Who are we,
- Our thesis, Current state

Background
- Who are you, your role
- Your professional connection to SDG

General
- Definition of sustainability
- Relevance of A2030

A2030 purpose
- What do you see is the purpose of A2030?
- How is A2030 intended to be used?
- What are the strengths with the agenda? Challenges/weaknesses?
- The goals are pointing towards 2030, what should have happened by then?

A2030 actions
- How do you currently engage with the goals?
  - When, how, who,
  - Integration (goals, organisations, sustainability dimensions) considered?
- Why do you engage with/want to engage with A2030?
- How do you aspire to work with SDGs?
- What are the challenges you see in reaching this aspired state?
- Role of A2030 in collaborations
- Do your partners approach you regarding A2030/sustainability? With what type of questions?

Actions vs purpose
- What is your role in reaching the goals?
  - Locally? Globally?
- Will the agenda be met with your current/aspired engagement?

Change/transformation
- When you want to change something, how do you do?
- What elements are important for successful change?
- What does transformation mean to you?

Network
- What is your role in your network?
- What is the role of your org. in society?
- What possibilities do you have to affect the priorities/actions of your network?
- In what ways does your network have an impact on what you do?

Outro
- Other perspectives we have missed?
- Who could we speak to
- Other resources we could look at
- Related processes we should know about

- What are your main take-aways or insights from this interview?

Appendix B. Description of the documents used in document analysis

SDSN guide "Getting Started with the Sustainable Development Goals - A Guide for Stakeholders"

Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN) was formed in 2012 on initiative of the former UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, as a global network of universities and knowledge institutions that would help prepare for the post-MDG agenda. Today, the network aims to increase and spread knowledge around the SDGs and to *"promote practical solutions for sustainable development"* (SDSN Australia/Pacific, 2017, p. 17). This includes producing documents with recommended actions and tools to work with SDGs. *Getting Started with the Sustainable Development Goals - A Guide for Stakeholders* and the *SDG Impact Assessment tool* are two main outputs of this work and as such, they are presented below. The guide is presented below, and this is followed by a description of the tool.

For whom

The guide is aimed for the quadruple helix: universities and research institutes, businesses, local and national policy makers, and civil society individuals and groups. However, there is a strong focus on what governments should do and how governments should lead other sectors in prioritisation and guidelines for financing.

What the guide includes

This guide introduces the background of the sustainable development work from the Brundtland report to the MDGs and finally to the formulation of the SDGs. It then goes on to present the SDGs and strategies to reaching them.

First, it highlights the following aspects of the Agenda as central for its understanding (SDSN Secretariat, 2015):
- The five key themes: people, planet, prosperity, peace and partnerships
- The *"five key opportunities for development"* (p.10): inclusive, universal, integrated, locally-focused and technology-driven
- The need for goal-based planning

Second, it recommends actions to take when preparing to implement the Agenda.
- Use long-term thinking, that goes beyond political parties
- Adhere to the 2030 timeframe
- Make the changes in policies, programs and investments that are needed to achieve each goal
- Focus on targets but in a local/national context
- Create appropriate organizational structures
- Apply effective multi-stakeholder engagement and coordination. The need for collaboration between the different actors of the quadruple helix is highlighted.

Third, it describes tools for designing strategies and roadmaps to reach the SDGs.

- Backcasting is recommended as a best practice for long-term planning, and as such it can be used to "*help to define the policies, institutional and technical reforms, public investments, and partnerships needed to achieve the SDGs by 2030*" (p.21).
- Understanding the financial needs for reaching the SDGs is important so that resources are mobilized towards meeting those needs.
- Monitoring progress towards the SDGs using an indicator framework is needed. The purpose of this is to direct strategies and resources towards areas that are lacking behind, to follow up progress and ensure the accountability of stakeholders. Creating this framework requires collection of reliable data that should be instigated by governmental authorities yet supported by all actors of the quadruple helix.

How to engage with the Agenda 2030

A process for engaging with SDGs was derived from the SDSN guide. This is described in more detail in the following section and summarised in Figure A- 1. The derived process consists of five steps:

1. Map current situation by carrying out a temperature check. A temperature check involves selecting 2-3 broad indicators per goal, which together cover the essence of that goal. For example, select "*Mortality rate, under-5 (per 1,000 live births) and Life expectancy at birth, total (years) use available*" as indicators for SDG 3, Good Health and Well-being (p.14). Investigate the current state based on up-to-date data. The outcome will be mapping of both areas that are lagging behind the national goals (gaps) and areas where knowledge is missing. This step should be done in a multi-stakeholder setting involving national and local representatives from public sector, industry, academia and civil society groups.
2. Prioritise and select gaps: Based on the outcome of the mapping, a selection should be done of which areas to focus on. These areas could be selected to either close the biggest performance gaps or catch low-hanging fruits in order to see quick progress and through that spark engagement. Areas selected should in any case support "*the broader transformation towards sustainable development*" (p.14) which includes having positive impact on more than one goal.
3. Identify needs and actions: When the current state is mapped, and priorities are set, it is time to plan for closing of the gap. Here a backcasting process is recommended to, in a long-term perspective, identify necessary steps needed to be taken to reach the desirable future defined by the selected priorities. In this step it is also important to consider financing strategies. Also, the multi-stakeholder involvement, including from groups often excluded from decisions making such as youth, minorities, or disadvantaged groups, is important to make use of the expertise and multiple perspectives found among the various stakeholders.
4. Mobilising resources: Each stakeholder has their own expertise and ability to contribute. Additionally, each group have their own incentives. When each actor identifies their role in achieving the Agenda, they can create a patchwork of actions which together support realisation of the Agenda. To achieve this step a need for partnerships is identified.
5. Measurement and follow-up: To know whether progress is made or not, measurements are needed. These should be developed both within organisations, but also on regional and national levels. The multi-level follow-up ensures both that

individual actions are progressing, but also that the aggregated efforts lead in the right direction.

Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 4	Step 5
Map current situation	Prioritise and select gaps to focus on	Identify areas in need of transformation and actions needed to be taken, including strategies for financing	Mobilise resources and divide responsibilities for execution	Select appropriate indicators and methods for measuring current state and progress

Figure A- 1 SDSN process summary. Adapted from (SDSN Secretariat, 2015)

This process was triangulated with a process recommended by SDSN for universities described in SDSN Australia/Pacific (2017). Although not identical, the two processes closely resemble each other.

Additional aspects presented as important throughout the document in relation to how to achieve the goals are:

- The need to have both global and local perspectives. For example, when determining which indicators to use in step 5, these should be globally applicable but nationally and regionally relevant.
- The need for innovation at organizational and technological level. At the organizational level, it calls for government to take a more active role in coordinating the various actors. At the technological level, the requirement for innovative data collection and statistical analysis is highlighted.

Why an organisation should follow this process to engage with Agenda 2030

The SDSN process is suggested to promote increased societal awareness of the actions that must be taken, as well as create a platform for forming partnerships. Through the initial investigation and prioritisation process (steps 1 and 2), big groups will become aware of what needs to be done and can, through that, identify their role in materialising the Agenda. In addition, the broad stakeholder involvement and long-term perspective in planning facilitates engagement which can bridge tenures sitting governments and other societal leaders.

SDG Impact Assessment tool

The SDG Impact Assessment Tool is created to support a learning process for the actor using it, by "*challenging a user to reflect on the holistic and transformative aspects and barriers to scalability*" SDSN Northern Europe. (n.d.). It is created by SDSN Northern Europe and is yet to be fully funded and become publicly available. The information presented below was triangulated with interview data.

For whom

It is created in order to be used by various societal actors wishing to assess their impact on the SDGs.

The SDG Impact Assessment Tool is meant to be used for evaluation of targeted items such as initiatives, products, services, or processes.

How the tool is used

Through a self-assessment questionnaire, the user gets to reflect on what impact the targeted item have on all the goals an all the targets. The tool consists of two sequential steps:

1. The participating organisation answers a self-assessment/self-reflection questionnaire which allows it to identify knowledge gaps.
2. The answers are reviewed by an expert to assess their validity.

Although the learning process achieved through the self-assessment is the most important part of the outcome, the result of the assessment is presented through a visualisation of 17 bars, indicating positive or negative impact both direct and indirect, as well as identified knowledge gaps.

Why this tool should be used

Sustainability is, according to the creators, too complex to allow for simple classifications of 'sustainable' or 'not sustainable'. It is therefore relevant to create tools to support reflection and learning around the aspects of sustainability.

This tool highlights the integrative aspect of the goals, both through direct and indirect impact and can through that help the user "avoid lock-ins, sub optimizations and other pitfalls when it comes to sustainability" SDSN Northern Europe (n.d.).

Future-Fit Business Benchmark

For whom

An open source initiative for companies and investors.

What is the Benchmark

The Future-Fit Business Benchmark (Future-Fit Foundation 2018) is a tool aiming to help businesses become "Future-fit", i.e. reach a state where they are contributing to "*humanity to flourish within the carrying capacity of our finite planet*" (p.6).

As a starting point, the Benchmark applies a systems-based approach, according to which businesses are dependent on society; and society in turn is dependent on the environment. Consequently, a business must create *system value*, i.e. value not only for itself measured by financial terms, but also for society and the environment. In this way, a business has an overall positive contribution and becomes "Future-fit".
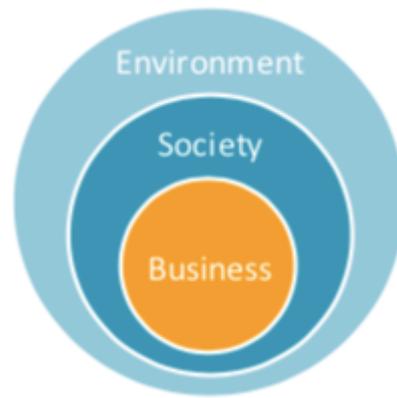
Figure A- 2 A systems perspective of business (adapted from Future-fit Benchmark Methodology, p.12)

To determine what positive contribution is, the Benchmark takes inspiration from the Framework for Strategic Sustainable Development (Broman & Robert, 2017),which identifies eight system conditions that society must meet in order to be sustainable. Three of these conditions refer to the limits within the environment can operate, whilst the remaining five refer to the corresponding societal limits. (maybe include them in appendix). For a company to be "Future-fit", it must act so that it does not breach any of the eight system conditions. In Future-fit terms, the business and its operations have a neutral impact on either society or the environment, and this is defined as the break-even point. Importantly, this break-even point much be reached across the entire business value web, i.e. suppliers, operations, products (and those linked to them) and society (other organisations and institutions and physical infrastructure).

How will a business become future-fit

The eight system conditions are translated into a number of business goals:
- 23 Break-even goals that describe the minimum that every company *must* do in social and environmental performance so as not to cause harm.
- 20 Positive pursuits that describe what companies *may* do in order to contribute over and above the break-even point towards "future-fitness".

Progress towards these goals is monitored by the break-even indicators and positive indicators, respectively.

A detailed description of these goals is beyond the scope of this thesis and can be found in (Future-Fit Foundation, 2018). Figure A- 3 presents the break-even goals and their relationship with the value web, so that the reader to gain an understanding of how the goals are formulated and the extent of their scope.

Future-Fit Business...	...*must reach these Break-Even Goals*	Where in the value web this applies			
		Suppliers	Operations	Products	Society
Fosters Wellbeing	Community health is safeguarded	1	✓		
	Employee health is safeguarded	1	✓		
	Employees are paid at least a living wage	1	✓		
	Employees are subject to fair employment terms	1	✓		
	Employees are not subject to discrimination	1	✓		
	Employee concerns are actively solicited, impartially judged and transparently addressed	1	✓		
	Product communications are honest, ethical, and promote responsible use			✓	
	Product concerns are actively solicited, impartially judged and transparently addressed			✓	
	Products do not harm people or the environment			✓	
Respects Nature	Energy is from renewable sources	1	✓		
	Water use is environmentally responsible and socially equitable	1	✓		
	Natural resources are managed to respect the welfare of ecosystems, people and animals	1	✓		
	Operational emissions do not harm people or the environment	1	✓		
	Operations emit no greenhouse gases	1	✓		
	Operations do not encroach on ecosystems or communities	1	✓		
	Products emit no greenhouse gases			✓	
Optimizes Resources	Operational waste is eliminated	1	✓		
	Products can be repurposed			✓	
Strengthens Society	Procurement safeguards the pursuit of future-fitness	1	✓		
	Business is conducted ethically				✓
	The right tax is paid in the right place at the right time				✓
	Lobbying and corporate influence safeguard the pursuit of future-fitness				✓
	Financial assets safeguard the pursuit of future-fitness				✓

[1] Companies must strive to improve the operational future-fitness of their supply chains over time; such supplier impacts are captured indirectly by the goal *Procurement safeguards the pursuit of future-fitness.*

Figure A- 3 Future-fit break-even goals (Future-Fit Foundation, 2018)

Why a business should apply the Benchmark

The only direct claim for transformative potential in the Benchmark document refers to the system conditions which "*foster radical innovation, by highlighting the path to a flourishing future without prescribing any specific courses of action*" (p.24). However, the transformative nature of the Benchmark also lies in the fact that "*it definitively sets the standard that all companies must meet*" towards "*a future that is economically inclusive, socially just and environmentally restorative*" (Future-Fit team, personal communication).

PwC's Recommendations, tools and processes

For whom

Businesses wanting to engage with the SDGs

What is included in the recommendations

PwC have published a series of documents on aiming to help businesses engage with the SDGs. These are:

- *"Make it your business: Engaging with the Sustainable Development Goals"* which explains the basics behind why and how businesses should engage with the SDGs (PwC, 2015).
- *"Navigating the SDGs: a business guide to engaging with the UN Global Goals"* which provides more detailed guidelines for engagement with each individual SDG (PwC, 2016).
- Several documents describing tools and processes that PwC has developed to help businesses engage with SDGs.

How business should engage with the SDGs

According to *Make it your business: Engaging with the Sustainable Development Goals*, business needs to engage with the SDGs at a strategic level. The SDGs must be given a central role in all aspects of the organization such as operations, planning, strategy and reporting. The ultimate aim for a business engaging with the SDGs would be to create new work practices where the impact on SDGs is prioritised alongside business objectives, rather than working with SDGs in a specific showcase project. Therefore, business needs to be prepared for long-term commitment, rather than expect quick-fix solutions.

In addition, businesses must "*have a holistic view of how SDGs interlink with each other or if positive impact in one area creates negative impact on another*"(p.4). It is accepted that businesses need to start somewhere, therefore starting from those SDGs that seem most relevant makes sense. However, this needs to be backed up by "genuine understanding" of the SDG framework (p.12).

For detailed information about how businesses should engage with each individual goal, the reader is advised to consult the corresponding PwC document *Navigating the SDGs: a business guide to engaging with the UN Global Goals*. For the purposes of this thesis it suffices to say that this document encourages interested parties to consider how issues that are central for each SDG are linked to their business. This is done by posing relevant questions. For example, SDG 1 (no poverty) is linked, amongst other issues, to fair wages. Together with that comes the negative publicity that a business can attract, if it does not comply with this condition. Businesses are thus asked to consider whether they pay their staff according to a fair or living wage in all countries of operation.

PwC argues that engaging with SDGs at a strategic level is necessary for businesses to be in line with governmental policies, citizens priorities and values and society's that businesses will have a significant contribution to the SDGs. In relation to governments, SDGs are expected to guide national policies and regulations. Therefore, the issue is "*not about business implementing the SDGs - it's about business having a strategy that, at the national level, is goal-congruent with government ambition*" To be able to embed change such that business performance aligns with governmental goals, engagement at the strategic level is required. In relation to citizens, they expect businesses to apply SDG in their core business activities rather that periphery, focusing only on projects or reporting. They also require companies to be more accountable and transparent. Finally, PwC points out that making SDGs part of culture and everyday practice is needed in order for them to be achieved.

PwC also addresses the need for holistic engagement with the SDGs rather than cherry-picking individual SDGs. First, the consultancy acknowledges that it is the intention of the SDG framework to be addressed as a whole, including looking at the business impact on all goals. Second, they point out that cherry picking may lead companies to address what seems easy rather than what is of importance. Third, cherry-picking is not enough as far as government and citizens are concerned.

According to PwC, the guidelines they provide on how to engage at strategic level and how to address individual SDGs are needed in order to clarify the SDGs in terms that the business world can understand and apply, and thus help with the implementation process.

What is included in the PwC tools and processes and how should they be used

Three tools that are relevant to the SDGs are presented by PwC and are briefly descried below:

- The *SDG selector* is a simple, one-step tool that shows which SDGs are relevant to work with, depending on industry and geographical area.
- The *SDG Global Goal Business Navigator* is a four-step diagnostic tool that allows companies to identify which SDGs are important to them, and which ones they should address first.
- The *Total Impact Management and Measurement framework* (TIMM) is a tool that allows businesses to asses, monitor and provide evidence for the impact of a specific action, for example importing raw material. The tool allows the user to determine positive and negative impact on economic, environmental, social and tax parameters.

A generic process of 5 steps is recommended to businesses that want to engage with SDGs, and this involves:
1. Awareness – understand why to engage with the SDGs
2. Prioritisation – determine which SDGs are most relevant to your organisation, using SDG Navigator
3. Strategy and implementation – determine where the organisation is currently with respect to sustainability challenges, what its priorities are, based on commercial/environmental/social importance, and where it wants to be in the

future. Based on this information determine targets and KPIs to monitor progress towards these goals.

4. SDG strategy analysis – measure impact of the company's actions and performance using the TIMM framework
5. Reporting – report the organisation's progress towards the SDGs

Since the *Navigator* and *TIMM framework* are not open source, these tools and the generic process which involves using them have been excluded from this study.

Why PwC recommends these tools and processes

Tools and processes are necessary for businesses to engage with the SDGs effectively and to facilitate incorporation of SDGs in all aspects of the organization. Specifically, the SDG navigator helps to overcome the "first barrier" that businesses face when wanting to address SDGs, which is to understand how a business currently aligns with the SDGs.

The Swedish Agenda 2030 delegation

The Swedish Agenda 2030 delegation is a delegation appointed by the Swedish government with the task to support and stimulate the implementation of Agenda 2030 in Sweden. More specifically, the delegation is to create an overarching plan of implementation as well as bringing forward best practices. This is on-going work, but the initial recommendations are described in a document entitled *I riktning mot en hållbar välfärd* (Swedish Agenda 2030 delegation, 2017), and this was the document selected for this study. Due to time constraints in combination with the fact that documents from the delegation are only available in Swedish, a selection of pages to study in detail was made (p.88-9, 103-9).

For whom

The delegation is mainly addressing the national and regional government of Sweden. However, the need of collaboration between different social actors, as well as the role of government in including these actors, is highlighted.

What is included in the document

The document focuses on interpreting the Agenda 2030 in the Swedish context, as indeed is recommended in the Agenda itself. Thus, six priority areas are identified and recommended to form the basis for Agenda 2030 implementation in Sweden. These areas are:

1. An social and gender equality society
2. Sustainable Cities
3. Single-use and circular economy
4. A strong business community with sustainable business models
5. Sustainable and healthy foods
6. Strengthening Knowledge and innovation

These areas are "*cross-sectoral, which means that they span several policy areas and several of the objectives of Agenda 2030, balancing economic, social and environmental dimensions*" (p.88). In addition, this document includes proposed actions that can be taken for each priority area.

How the priority areas should be addressed

The delegation acknowledges that Agenda 2030 implementation in Sweden is at an early stage and this is taken into account in the proposals that are made. Proposals include:

- Promote broad engagement of communities and other social actors by engaging in dialogue
- Increase the knowledge around the Agenda in Sweden and raise interest in sustainable development, starting from the national government and moving all the way to the local civil society
- Create conditions for "*long-term, integrated, coherent and coherent efforts*" that are independent of the current government and are based on a consensus at the political level (p.103, translation)
- Ensure that the goals are clear to all actors, and social, economic and environmental sustainability are accounted for
- Monitoring and evaluation of the progress of implementation needs to be in place and performed by external/independent parties. Similarly, there is a need for impact assessment that shows both positive and negative impact and accounts for all three dimensions of sustainability
- Sustainable development must become an objective of government administration, alongside current requirements of being innovative and co-operative

Why these actions must be taken

The delegation makes proposals using Agenda 2030 as a starting point. In particular, it points out the requirement for translating the Agenda into national and local context as it is stated in the Agenda and the need for long-term planning and engagement in order to tackle the complex and multiple issues.

Appendix C.   Stakeholder feedback workshop

The stakeholder feedback session was a 2.5-hour workshop held on May 4th 2018. During the workshop, 10 employees from Johanneberg Science Park participated in interactive dialogues.

Figure A-4 Agenda and overarching question for the workshop aimed to receive stakeholder feedback on the recommendations.

	Wanted outcome	Question(s)
Dialogue 1: Awareness of the Agenda	Awareness of what the Agenda says and what implications it has for JSP and for each individual in their professional roles	What does the agenda say, and what implications does it have on me professionally and for the way we work at JSP?
Dialogue 2: the Impact and actions	Deepening the understanding of what role JSP has in society, and how they from that perspective contribute to sustainability	Based on the implications identified in the previous dialogues: what does JSP already do in addressing these, what "low-hanging fruit" can be seen and acted upon, and what bigger challenges would need to be addressed? What roles could JSP have in reaching a sustainable state in the bigger societal system?

Table A-1 The questions which guided dialogue one and two.

Support for Workshop with JSP May 5th

Framing

- Welcome and Thank you for taking time
- Who are we
    - Our names
    - Thesis project: Agenda 2030 and what could be done to use it as key in transforming society towards a more sustainable state
- The why for the workshop: two-folded
    - we have created set of recommendations, will let you experience some of them to question our thinking and learn from you on how it works" in reality"
    - help you reflect on the agenda and how it is relevant for you
- Why the Science Park
    - Show a commitment and desire in sustainability not only for themselves but for society. Have an ambition to do everything on a sustainability foundation
    - People approach them to collaborate already, Have the mandate to invite many different partners for collaboration
- Sustainability
    - Emergent discussion on what kind of society we want to live in:
        - Want to give them time to reflect on this together
- Question of the day(board)
- Introduce flow of the day (board)

Check-in

- Introduce check-in: a method for becoming more present
- Introduce pop-corn style: "when you're hot, you pop"
- Question: Name. Why am I here today?

Introduce agenda

- "We don't know how much you know already, but we will give a brief introduction"
- Generated in a collaborative way with input from millions of people worldwide
- The agenda consists of several parts:
    - what the goal of it is
    - why it exists,
    - how it should be implemented and monitored and by who
    - 17 goals with 169 targets and 230 indicators
- Accepted by almost 200 countries: this should be the aim to realise by 2030
- Important keywords:
    - Universal: applies to all countries and all actors within the countries need to take part in realising it
    - Integrated: all goals are connected and influence each other.
    - Indivisible: sustainability cannot be reached without addressing all goals, from both environmental, social and economic perspectives
    - Transformative: Is meant to radically change the society towards sustainability

Dialogues

For us
1. Introduce the topic and rules
2. They talk
3. Signal when 5 min and 2 min are left. Hand out post-its at 5 min left
4. End by each group reading their summary aloud to the other group

Instructions to them
- Divide in 2 groups
- Question at each table. Not meant to find "the answer" to, but inspire an explorative conversation
- Build on what the others say
- Visualise the conversation: use the paper, pens, maybe post-its to record what is said through words and figures. Use lines, arrows etc to show connections. Make notes in English.
- When 5 minutes are left we will hand out a bigger post-it to summarise most important of what has been said. This will be shared with the other group. We will also say when 2 min remain.

Group discussion

- Introduce secretaries, remind of English
- Present the questions in groups. About 10 minutes each

Our next step

- Introduce our recommendations:
  - o Increase knowledge and awareness regarding the Agenda
  - o Reflect upon your current and future contribution to the Agenda
  - o Evaluate your role in the current system
- Use feedback and insights from this workshop to rework our recommendations
- Final presentation
  - o Present our findings, including some things we think can be done to be more transformative

Check-out

Question: What is your pearl of the day? = something worth remembering and bringing from the workshop