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Abstract

In previous research, attention is given to the travel and translation of ideas in order to capture how ideas flow and by whom. External actors, so called carriers, promote certain ideas and discard others, further playing a significant part in the institutionalization of ideas. The multitude of different carriers, their different promotion techniques and interconnectedness call for the need to study them in relation and differentiation to one another. Through a qualitative content analysis of documents, interviews and videos, we present a case study on carriers promoting the current idea of a circular fashion system. The investigated carriers are consultants, media, academia, NGO/NPOs and gurus. Alongside the previously identified sequential and parallel modes of translation, we find carriers promoting the travel of an idea jointly. Among the carriers studied, the findings reveal evidence of (1) linkages through cross-referencing, and (2) collaboration through funding, assignment and co-writing. Coupling the notion of blurred boundaries between carriers with ecologies of translation, the study finds carriers situating in different contexts and constellations, forming hybrids and hierarchies. Providing such evidence of a more complex scenery, we argue that the landscape in which carriers promote an idea is best understood as constituting webs.

key words: carriers, idea travel, idea translation, ecologies of translation, circular economy, circular fashion, institutional theory.
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1. Introduction

As modern organizations can no longer avoid the demands placed on them by their stakeholders, they need to a great extent react to institutional pressures in their surrounding environment in order to appear legitimate (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Meyer & Rowan, 1977). Pressures arise as ideas in the form of models, prototypes and templates, circulate to such extent that they become considered rational and necessary for organizations to adopt (Meyer & Rowan, 1977; Wedlin & Sahlin, 2017, p. 115). While early neo-institutional research investigates idea diffusion in relation to institutional isomorphism with the outcome of homogeneity (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Meyer & Rowan, 1977), a common argument found in the Scandinavian studies of institutionalization is that ideas do not diffuse in vacuum but are constantly translated as they travel between actors and settings (Morris & Lancaster, 2005; Sahlin-Andersson & Engwall, 2002, p. 5-6; Wedlin & Sahlin, 2017, p. 103). Subsequently, actors actively pick-up, adopt and incorporate new generalized and global ideas to fit different contexts (Czarniawska & Joerges, 1996, p. 13, 20; Sahlin-Andersson & Engwall, 2002, p. 5-6). Reacting to institutional pressures to gain legitimacy is therefore explained by Czarniawska & Joerges (1996, p. 34–35) to be an act of both conformism and creativity.

Which ideas that become widely adopted are not dependent on whether the idea in itself is powerful, but rather of whom is transporting, supporting and framing it (Czarniawska & Joerges, 1996, p. 23). The idea becomes taken-for-granted and institutionalized when it is embraced by certain actors (Wedlin & Sahlin, 2017, p. 105). Significant in the travelling routes of ideas are the connections between actors and the networks that enable the actual flow of ideas (Wedlin & Sahlin, 2017, p. 111). Ideas do not necessarily flow via direct interaction but are often mediated by other organizations and actors, so called ‘carriers’, e.g. consultants, media, academia, non governmental organizations (NGO)/ non profit organizations (NPO) and gurus who engage in translation activities (Sahlin-Andersson & Engwall, 2002, p. 3, 6). Carriers are active actors in regard to their influence in advising,
suggesting, codifying and framing certain ideas while discarding others (Hedmo et al., 2005, p. 197; Meyer, 1996, p. 244).

In recent years, we have witnessed the emergence and spread of the idea of a circular economy. Multiple actors across different sectors currently argue for the necessity of adopting more circular practices across industries to solve the global environmental challenges (Kiørboe et al., 2015). A circular economy, defined as a system that is “restorative and regenerative by design” aiming to minimize waste by system-wide innovation and redefinition of products and services (Ellen MacArthur Foundation, 2018), is presented as a case for various industries and nations alike (Murray et al., 2015; Kiørboe et al., 2015). The current efforts made to debate and adopt a circular economy in various settings, points to its ongoing path of becoming institutionalized (Murray et al. 2015; Kiørboe et al., 2015). In this process, we can identify several carriers discussing and promoting the idea of a circular economy in different contexts. A particular industry that currently faces pressures from multiple stakeholder demanding a more circular system, is the fashion industry. During the last years, fashion consumers have become increasingly aware of the current state of sustainability within the industry. (James & Montgomery, 2017; Todeschini et al., 2017) This is largely due to the fact that several cases of unsustainable practices in the industry have been highlighted by and placed under the critical lens of various actors (Barnekow, 2017; Dagens Industri, 2017; Hayes, 2017; Mellery-Pratt, 2017; O’Connor, 2017; The Swedish Government, 2017; Uppdrag granskning, 2017). The pressure to change arises alongside the demand for innovative and alternative resources, new production processes and overall new ways of consuming fashion, further departing from the current linear business model (Eder-Hansen et al., 2017; Macchion et al., 2018; Villa Todeschini, 2017).

1.1. Problem statement

Sahlin-Andersson & Engwall (2002, p. 74, 283) stress that further exploration is needed for different categories of carriers and their embeddedness in a larger network. Windell (2009, p. 374-375) convincingly shows how different carriers support and translate the same idea through different means as a result of having different reasons and contrasting audiences. Conclusively, carriers play various roles in the travel and translation of an idea (Engwall et al., 2010, p. 288-290; Windell, 2009). However, previous research in the field of traveling and
translating ideas have studied carriers by only comparing a few or in mere isolation from others (Engwall et al., 2010; Engwall, 2012; Furusten et al., 2012; Mazza & Alvarez, 2000; Sahlin-Andersson & Engwall, 2002; Windell, 2009). The lack of broader comparison has left a gap for further exploration of how carriers differ and relate to each other in promoting ideas.

As management ideas are seen as constantly moving and transforming (Sahlin-Andersson & Engwall, 2002, p. 285-286), the work of carriers in promoting the travel of ideas between contexts constantly take on new forms, further developing new carrier networks. From previous studies, we can witness emerging blurred boundaries among carriers as their activities expand (Engwall, 2012). Furthermore, Wedlin & Sahlin (2017, p. 103, 117) explain that actors interconnect with one another within and outside organizations, and highlight that institutions of ideas mix in profound ways in an ‘ecology of translation’. Through their work in promoting an idea, carriers make up a complex network as both ideas and they themselves interact and relate to each other (Wedlin & Sahlin, 2017, p. 113-114). As a result, the call for the need to further study them in connection to each other has been raised by e.g. Sahlin-Andersson & Engwall (2002, p. 283). Arguing for a more complex scenery reflected in Wedlin & Sahlin’s (2017) conceptualization of ecologies of translation, we claim that carriers should not to be investigated in isolation, but instead as a web, in relation to other carriers, coupled through the travel routes of ideas.

The reality of the unsustainable fashion industry as well as the multitude of platforms on which carriers actively debate for the circular model’s relevance, points to a dramatic shift in the coming years. Performing circular fashion is said to be a critical task, further highlighting carriers’ role in debating and promoting the subject. (Eder-Hansen et al., 2017; Macchion et al., 2018; Sahlin-Andersson & Engwall, 2002, p. 283; Villa Todeschini, 2017)

1.2. Purpose and research question

This thesis aims to investigate how different carriers work as promoters in the flow of a certain idea, mapping multiple carriers’ work in relation and differentiation to one another. With this thesis, we demonstrate a more dynamic and complex landscape in which ideas travel and through which carriers they progress. The above mentioned purpose will be fulfilled by answering the following question:
*How do carriers promote the travel of an idea across organizational boundaries?*

In order to investigate this phenomena, the study will look into the fashion industry and the idea of a circular fashion system. The fashion industry’s current paradox concerning circular business models is a debated topic, currently in need for further exploration.
2. Theoretical framework

The framework initiates with an introduction to early neo-institutional studies to help understand the adoption of circulating ideas as driven by institutional pressures. Bringing forward the role of actors, the more recent research on translation and travel of ideas is introduced in the succeeding section. Following a reasoning of the importance of external actors, a view of different types of carriers with interests is presented. Finally, carriers and their function are discussed as a larger network in an ecology of translation to give a theoretical understanding of the complex scenery in which they promote an idea.

2.1. Ideas and institutional pressures

Ideas are considered mental images and sounds (Czarniawska & Joerges, 1996, p. 20), taking the form of models and prototypes, spreading across organizational boundaries through imitation. Equally do ideas take the form of templates, circulating as they are used to evaluate practices. (Wedlin & Sahlin, 2017, p. 115) As ideas circulate, they shape organizations and the perceptions of them. This line of thought can be traced back to the study of Meyer & Rowan (1977) in which they claim formal organizational structures as reflections of rationalized rules diffused around the societal landscape. Meyer & Rowan (1977) laid the groundwork of neo-institutional research when explaining organization's prospects of survival to hinge on its legitimacy gained by ceremonially conforming to the prevailing institutionalized and rationalized concepts of organizational work. DiMaggio & Powell (1983) further develop this line of research acclaiming isomorphic pressures being the drivers behind the perceived irrationality of imitation, homogenization, power struggle and lack of innovation in organizational life that stand in contrast to the ideas of competitive markets and capitalism in Weberian terms (see Weber, 1952). Modern organizations then equally compete for political power and institutional legitimacy as for resources and customers; equally for social as well as financial fitness (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983).

Strang & Meyer (1993) build onto the research on organizational institutionalism when arguing that it seems unclear whether and when relations promote homogeneity, and thus
further call for the need to study the wider conditions under which *social relationships* lead to high rates of diffusion. Strang & Meyer (1993) suggest how diffusion is shaped and accelerated by theorized account of actors, concluding that ideas or rationalized rules diffuse at each’s own pace across organizational boundaries. Theorization heightens the level of abstraction and produces generalized models, ready to be communicated and diffused between more weakly related actors as well as theorists and adopters. Theorization promote diffusion even without direct relations, interaction and interdependence. (Strang & Meyer, 1993) Although not further developing their active role, Strang & Meyer (1993) are among the first to discuss actors and their intercorrelated linkages as a mechanism promoting diffusion, building a bridge to the Scandinavian research on institutionalism.

2.2. Travelling and translating by actors

During the 80’s and 90’s, an extended framework on institutionalism was called for by Scandinavian researchers (Czarniawska & Sevón, 1996; Wedlin & Sahlin, 2017). ‘Scandinavian Institutionalism’ depart from the traditional view by displaying organizational change, not as an anomaly in institutional isomorphism, but as something naturally occurring and part of the organizational norm. With re-examining organizational change, the new framework brought forward the construction of meaning, along with roles and rules, while it accentuates actors’ active participation in adopting and translating institutional ideas as a distinctive feature. (Czarniawska & Sevón, 1996, p. 3-5)

2.2.1. A call for relabeling: introducing travel and translation

As change was reformulated, the term *diffusion* became outdated and was replaced with the label *translation*, as proposed by Latour (1986, p. 267). The relabeling introduced a symbolic approach, including the richness of meaning and call forth the associations with movement and transformation (Czarniawska & Sevón, 1996, p. 6). Scandinavian researchers are concerned with where and *how* management ideas travel, through what means, as well as how they simultaneously transform (Czarniawska & Sevón, 2005; Wedlin & Sahlin, 2017). In such, organizational change is presented as a story about the ‘travel of ideas’ between settings (Czarniawska & Joerges, 1996). By travelling, generalized ideas are continuously picked-up,

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1 Diffusion is said to occur when ‘an innovation is communicated through certain channels over time among the member of a social system’ (Roger, cited in Strang & Meyer, 1993)
translated and materialized into local versions, objects, actions and models in a chain of translation (Czarniawska & Joerges, 1996, p. 13, 20, 32-34; Sahlin-Andersson & Engwall, 2002, p. 5-6). Nevertheless, the process may also be reversed: local ideas translated into generalized global ones (see theorization by Strang & Meyer, 1993). Conclusively, to paint a more complex picture, an idea transforms and materializes into objects which may later become disembedded and once more take the form of a general idea, traveling to another context in which it again can become materialized and locally re-embedded (Czarniawska & Joerges, 1996, p. 18, 22-23). Hence, the travel and translation of ideas become inseparable and never-ending processes leading to continuous change.

The term ‘travel’ serves as a metaphor emphasizing the importance of both time and space. While the local-global perspective explains how an idea travels through space, fashion helps understand its time aspect. (Czarniawska & Joerges, 1996, p. 20-21) Some ideas enter organizational life following patterns of fashion, coming like waves in a bell-shaped diffusion curve, while others stick around and become institutionalized (Abrahamson, 1996, p. 258). Translation practices are said to be guided by fashion (Czarniawska & Sevón, 2005, p. 10), and in such they become a paradoxical work of both conformism and creativity (Czarniawska & Joerges, 1996: 34–35). Ideas take a foothold, not through their importance and uphold power, but through the circulation by ways of translation (Wedlin & Sahlin, 2017, p. 105). Put differently by Czarniawska & Joerges (1996, p. 23) - “ideas left in books left on shelves do not travel, and no amount of satiation will help to diffuse ideas from closed libraries”.

2.2.2. Translating actors

It is not the properties of ideas but rather their theorization (Strang & Meyer, 1993), translation, materialization and presentation (Czarniawska & Joerges, 1996, p. 25) that enable circulation and wide adoption. However, none of these actions occur by themselves, but are instead engineered by actors (Czarniawska & Sevón, 1996, p. 24; Czarniawska & Sevón, 2005 p. 10). Actors within different settings figure out solutions to different actions, translating ideas between different contexts. It is the people, both users and creators alike, who energize an idea as they translate, package and transport it for their own or somebody else's use. (Czarniawska & Joerges, 1996, p. 23) Hence, why certain ideas prevail and others disappear is dependent on actors detecting an interesting story (Czarniawska & Joerges,
in different Czarniawska researchers stories translating Sahlin-Andersson models intellectuals, 2017). (Abrahamson, 1996) distinguishes between responsible actors as organizational participants, and professional others as people who shape and carry ideas in the environments surrounding the organization. Meyer (2014, p. 419-420) further captures these mediators as people managing the relationships that lie between the global rationalization and local structure. External actors are thus placed between those imitating and those being imitated, occupying a mediating role (Hedmo et al., 2005, p. 196). With bringing forth external actors, a mediating imitation mode is called for by Hedmo et al. (2005) as an addition to the traditional modes of broadcasting and chain. The broadcasting mode concerns an idea originating in one place and distributed widely (Hedmo et al., 2005, p. 196-197), and resembles diffusion studies by early neo-institutionalists. The chain mode came with translation studies and concerns the imitation and translation of an idea following previous imitations and translation (Czarniawska & Joerges, 1996, p. 34; Hedmo et al., 2005, p. 196-197). The mediating mode however concerns imitation promoted by external actors (Hedmo et al., 2005, p. 196-197).

Mediators have been studied under various labels: theorists (Strang & Meyer, 1993), bearers (Czarniawska & Sevón, 1996), editors (Sahlin-Andersson, 1996), fashion setters (Abrahamson, 1996), and carriers (Sahlin-Andersson & Engwall, 2002; Sahlin & Wedlin, 2017). The previously mentioned culturally legitimated theorists are defined as scientist, intellectuals, policy analysts and professionals who produce complex and highly integrated models and shape new policy domains, issues and interests (Strang & Meyer, 1993, p. 494). Sahlin-Andersson (1996) with the conceptualization of ‘editing rules’ give attention to translating actors under the label of editors. Editors are defined as the circulators of success stories for different patterns of action between organizations, exemplified as consultants, researchers, leaders and professionals (Sahlin-Andersson, 1996, p. 83-85). Equally do Czarniawska & Joerges (1996) discuss external actors under the label of idea-bearers. The different bearers are said to be professional consultants or political agents, constructing ideas into objects ready-made for travel (Czarniawska & Joerges, 1996, p. 36). Abrahamson (1996) discusses external actors in terms of powerful fashion setters, who compete against each other in the contest to prove which management idea brings leading management progress, further
turning it into a race of being perceived as valuable to the business community and as deserving societal support. Moreover Sahlin-Andersson & Engwall (2002) as well as Wedlin & Sahlin (2017) use the label carrier when studying organizations and different external individuals occupied in making ideas circulate.

All practical examples previously used: consultants, academic leaders, media professionals, NGO leaders, are concluded by Meyer (2014) as properly schooled professionals. Their ability to mediate derive from their schooled culture including the theory of modern rationalized formal organization, being familiar with globally-correct standards as well as local context (Meyer, 2014). Recalling Strang & Meyer’s (1993) reasoning on theorists, practices that are placed under scientific and professional analysis of theorists, have a higher chance of becoming rapidly diffused, concluding that external actors play a significant part in the spread of ideas. Significant in the research on actors, is that they are understood to bear very little action responsibility for organizational behavior and outcomes, as in contrast to internal actors (Meyer, 1996, p. 244). Their responsibility only stretches as far as producing and distributing ideas, leaving the potential costs of new ideas to adopters (Meyer, 1996 p. 250). This reasoning of the role of external actors has raised concerns. In his normative study, Abrahamson (1996) critically illustrates how external actors through promoting certain ideas with glitzy rhetorics, convince fashion followers and ensure constant progress.

2.2.3. Translation through editing

In order to capture how actors translate and transform ideas as they spread, Sahlin-Andersson (1996) introduce the concept of editing, seen as a process within translation involving continuous retellings of ideas. As ideas are translated, certain rules are applied that restrict and direct the translation process. The first set of rules emphasize the relation to the greater institutional context, the second concerns the formulation, labeling and story-telling of an idea, while the third set of rules underline the importance of logic and rationality, i.e. the ‘plot’, often referring to scientific findings. The process of translation can be assumed as a creative work, and while these rules identified throughout the translation process shed light on creativity, the translation process is also identified as characterized by conformism, traditionalism and control on social mechanisms. (Sahlin-Andersson, 1996, p. 85-88; Wedlin & Sahlin, 2017, p. 108-110)
2.3. Carriers

Carriers have a role in forming and delimiting institutions by spreading chosen practices and thereby promoting selected institutions, while embedded institutions simultaneously limit the circulation of ideas to different extents (Wedlin & Sahlin, 2017, p.112). Carriers discuss, interpret, occasionally legislate and certify some ideas as proper ones while stigmatizing others (Meyer, 1996, p. 244). The active work of carriers can then be summarized in the label ‘promoting’. Carriers promote selected ideas by translating them in relation to their reason and audience, and further enable ideas to travel. Carriers main concern is to set fashions in motion, as ideas act as a self-reinforcing spiral when gained enough speed. (Sahlin-Andersson & Engwall 2002, p. 277-282) Furusten et al. (2012) argue that the label carrier does not capture the external actors active role in translating processes. While acknowledging Furusten et al.’s (2012) call for a re-labeling, this thesis will refer to external actors as carriers. Nevertheless, carriers are still viewed as active actors in the travel of ideas, given that the process is inseparable with the act of translation (Czarniawska & Sevón, 1996).

The role of carriers develops as management knowledge broadens and they take on an expanded scope of activities, continuously finding new ways of circulating ideas. Borders between different carriers blur out as the activity base expands, enhancing the competition. (Abrahamson, 1996; Sahlin-Andersson & Engwall, p. 277-282) The commonly four identified examples of carriers are consultants, academia, media and firms operating on a multinational level. However, with an expansion of the carriers role, other types of carriers grow into greater importance, such as non- and intergovernmental organizations, experts and states. (Sahlin-Andersson & Engwall, 2002, p. 277-282) Mazza & Alvarez (2000) argue that the different roles of carriers in transferring management knowledge are blurred. Nevertheless, Mazza & Alvarees (2000) argue it essential to display the differences in which various carriers channel knowledge by investigating the work of each carrier separately:

2.3.1. Consultants

As consultants have a clear focus on efficiency, they are quicker than media and academia in embracing and spreading new ideas (Engwall et al., 2010, p. 291). Displayed as actors in chains of translation of management ideas, Furusten et al (2012) argue that consultants play
an active role as carriers and creators. Further, consultants serve as promoters of management ideas and rational diffusions (O’Mahoney, 2010 p. 205; Ruef in Sahlin-Andersson & Engwall, 2002, p. 94-95), translating ideas in order to make them fit into different operational contexts (Furusten et al., 2012). Windell’s (2009) study on the spread and proliferation of the closely related idea of CSR - from two different professional perspectives; consultants and academic researchers - can help us understand the translation of a circular fashion system by consultants. Windell (2009, p. 373-375) concludes that consultants translate CSR into business solutions, building rhetorics on economic arguments, constructing bridges between the diffuse definitions of CSR into applicable activities and strategies for business actors. Moral arguments are left out while the focus is instead set on commercialization of CSR as a business case in order to provide legitimacy in accordance with stakeholder demands. An idea presented as a business case concurrently develops consultancy services importance and the notion of consultants as experts. Thus, consultants’ translation of an idea through commercialization follows their self-interest. (Windell, 2009 p. 373-375) An important contribution in the understanding of consultants is Engwall’s (2012) later work focusing on the blurring boundaries between the consulting industry and academia, with business schools in particular. Engwall (2012, p. 365-385) argues for the blurring boundaries as consultancy firms consider business schools as role models resulting in consulting firms adopting practices that normally are associated with academia, such as publications, research and education.

2.3.2. Media

As in contrast to consultants and business schools, media is significantly slower in embracing and spreading new ideas (Engwall et al. 2010, p. 292). The late involvement corresponds to media’s historical role as reflectors of an idea’s adoption in real-life setting, and not proactive shapers of the idea (Mazza & Alvarez, 2000). Nevertheless, Mazza & Alvarez (2000) argue for a developed character where media takes a step beyond prefabrication of ideas. Media as of now, grant legitimacy to management ideas by displaying theories and practices proven to perform well through ‘high’ ideological statements less focused on technical descriptions. Ideas displayed in media take an ‘easy available’ approach and management ideas thus travel and commodify faster due to the easy acceptance and responsive character. (Mazza & Alvarez, 2000) In line with Mazza & Alvarez, (2000), Grafström & Windell (2011, p. 235-237) conclude that media not only work as distributors of knowledge, but also influence
the output. When linking ideas to business norms, acknowledged business rhetorics make ideas easier to grasp while concurrently relating ideas to larger questions, not only business concerns but morals and ethics in society (Grafström & Windell 2011, p. 235-237). Further, Rao et al. (2003) argue that journalist and media have equally been deemed important in social movements that lead to institutional change.

Buhr & Grafström (2007) analyzed business media’s role in ascribing CSR as an idea, explaining media as often drawing on a wider discussion of what currently defines management. Media displays stories of ‘heroes’ and ‘villains’, highlighting deviating practices, large firms and unexpected events regarding the idea. These techniques are often used to cast attention to the subject, while ‘heroes’ were more commonly highlighted in order to remain a positive emphasis. (Buhr & Grafström, 2007, p. 30) In congruence with Buhr & Grafström (2007), Pallas et al. (2016) argue for the importance of a positive coverage. A theatrical and storytelling focus are vital tools for media, while another important dimension concerns the right timing to call for attention. (Pallas et al. 2016) Further, Pallas et al. (2016) found that middle level managers, scientific personnel and spokespeople active in media also highly valued civic utility and scientific correctness when translating an idea. Blurred boundaries are not only discussed as occurring between consultants and business schools, but additionally media as they among other things engage in activities such as; textbooks, journals and the ranking of academia in newspapers and magazines (Engwall et al., 2010, p. 293).

2.3.3. Academia

In comparison to consultants and media, business schools are second to consultants to embrace and spread new ideas, this due to the lack of definitions as in the case of ‘management’ defined as a separate discipline. (Engwall et al., 2010, p. 291) Engwall et al. (2010, p. 288) further explain academia’s role to enter several fields, as they engage in activities such as tailored executive programs, graduate and undergraduate programs, publishing books and journals and even encourage professors to do consulting. Khurana (2007, p. 276) develops academia’s role explaining that their original role is transcending values of science i.e. the truth, services, knowledge and culture, working as marketable assets. Comparing consultants with academia, Windell (2009, p. 374-375) found a distinct difference, as academia does not search for the commercialization of CSR as a management idea.
Contrary to consultants, academia strives for knowledge expansion in the field with the intention of developing theory. As academia’s main stakeholders are researchers, theory development becomes a rational means in which they translate CSR. (Windell 2009, p. 374-375) Further, Windell (2009, p. 374) argues for academia’s role in the proliferation of an idea, drawing attention to the subject and in the process, they are seen as objective and trustworthy experts. Academia’s role as experts make them frequently hired as lecturers and consultants as academia’s objectivity is considered useful (Windell, 2009, p. 374).

2.3.4. NGOs and NPOs

Coule & Patmore (2013) investigates NPOs’ role in changing current institutions and argues that previous research have neglected NPOs as transformers of institutions. NPOs take on work in a normative and disruptive character, in order to problematize, rearrange, reconsider and shape boundaries set by institutions in social and symbolic contexts. Further, NPOs use different institutional logics and contrast them to each other, displaying insufficiency in current institutions emphasizing change. A combination of macro and micro level arguments is used by NPOs in order to put pressure on change in a local level organization. (Coule & Patmore, 2013) Djelic (2014) investigates a NPO promoting an idea, and while institutional entrepreneurship was identified, it did not relate to daring acts as is often the case, rather to a complex and ambiguous interplay between actors taking unpredictable forms. Thus, the role of a NPO in the travel of an idea is hard to define, as it seems to come down to the organizations’ interplay with others, rather than internal practices (Djelic, 2014). Building on to the understanding of NPOs in interplay and networks, Appe (2016) studies how NGOs diffuse and produce more than organizational information and knowledge, as NGOs take on collective forms displayed as networks forming collective texts. From the collective work, NGOs’ networks provide consistent sources of management practices guiding civic society. NGOs collaborative probe, accountability, definitions of sectors, strategies, discourses and capacity allocation guides organizations and actors in society, in order to make legitimate decisions through operations. (Appe, 2016)

2.3.5. Gurus

Groß et al. (2015) investigate gurus as an important carrier in the travel of different management ideas, emphasizing their importance, as previous researchers tend to focus a
great extent on media, consultants and business schools. Further, Groß et al. (2015) especially motivate guru’s role as an external actor in the travel and translation of an idea, as they act as filters and introducers to specific sensitive audiences. Gurus’ activities when introducing an idea, is specially characterized by an absence of organizational constraints, aiming for a ‘change is easy’ approach, free from verse internal organizational pressures (Groß et al, 2015). Groß et al. (2015) in line with Clark & Salaman (1996) and Haag & Coget (2010), argue that gurus perform through an inspirational and irrational approach rather than a practically relevant one, aiming for change in attitudes. Contrarily, Zairi (2013) highlights guru’s importance in spreading a management idea and in the process, gurus contribute with viability to the idea as well as practical knowledge. Seemingly, that leads to be a debate whether gurus provide practical relevance or not. Clark & Salaman (1996) distinguish between gurus and consultants, arguing for their different roles in idea translation due to the nature of work, as gurus take a central role in awakening consciousness among managers. For example, it is not unusual that an organization first listens to a guru to gain an understanding for an organizational dilemma and idea, and in the next step hires a consultancy firm to form the guru’s magic and ideas into concrete organizational action (Clark & Salaman, 1996).

Clark & Salaman (1996) identifies guru’s performance as modern organizational witchdoctor acts having power on organizational behaviour. Emotions and irrationality become key for guru’s success, lending success as relying on mystery and magic (Clark & Salaman, 1996). Tedeschi et al. (2011) detects a motivating factor for providing such mystery and magic to the audience, as gurus’ vulnerability lies in others imitating them. Haag & Coget (2010) in line with Clark & Salaman (1996), highlight the importance of emotions in guru’s leadership role, as they take a practical role, mixing leadership and management in profound ways guided from ‘what works’ rather than theoretical correctness. Emotional intelligence along with a strong role model figure in the specific field, is the ‘recipe for success’ (Haag & Coget, 2010).

2.3.6. Carriers’ interest

Abrahamson (1996), Furusten et al. (2012), Meyer (1996) and Scott (2003) argue that carriers are active participants in the spread of ideas with certain interests developed in their social context. As seen in the above section, consultants and academia transport an idea based on different self-interests: the translation becomes aligned with their own reasons and
interpretations and therefore different (Windell, 2009, p. 373-375). Sahlin-Andersson & Engwall (2002, p. 295) on the other hand argue that external actors like carriers have less of self-interest in relation to internal actors. Carriers have a more indirect role, deriving from their self-interests not explicitly aiming at changing an institution, but their actions may implicitly do so (Sahlin-Andersson & Engwall, 2002, p. 294). Therefore, Sahlin-Andersson & Engwall (2002, p. 283, 296) stress comparative exploration between different carriers as they have various roles and self-interests driving change.

2.4. Networks of carriers in ecologies of translation

As early as 1977, Meyer & Rowan concluded that the numbers of rationalized myths arising are contingent on the density and interconnectedness of relational networks in society. The greater the density of connections in a network, the higher the numbers of ideas being spread (Meyer & Rowan, 1977). Strang & Meyer in 1993 extended the research from merely studying the amount of ideas, to argue for the rate of diffusion as dependent on the level of interaction and exchange dependency between actors. Such conclusion highlight the importance to gain knowledge of the relational structure, orientations and influence of empowered actors in the task of mapping diffusion (Strang & Meyer, 1993). The metaphor of ‘travel’ between different settings indicates that ideas take certain routes requiring means of transportation, identified as connections between actors (Rogers, cited in Wedlin & Sahlin, 2017, p. 111) that further make up a relational system (Scott, 2003). Within organizational fields, individual actions by actors in translation processes are to be understood as contingent on the positions that actors occupy in relation to each other. While guided by actor’s identities, their actions are simultaneously shaped and reshaped as events and activities unfold. (Hedmo et al., 2005, p. 193) It is therefore not only the translation work by actors that is paramount for the spread of ideas (Czarniawska & Joerges, 1996), but equally the links that tie actors together. The chain and mediating mode of imitation and translation captures such complex interrelation and webs among actors (Hedmo et al. 2005). It is in the mediating work then, that carriers become relevant in networks. The flow of ideas throughout different contexts can be considered empowered by carriers and the networks in which they operate (Wedlin & Sahlin, 2017, p. 111).
By introducing carriers as relational systems, Scott (2003) extended the research on relational linkages and networks. Organizational decision-makers connect through various professional and business associations, international non-governmental organizations as well as through alliances. Alliances differ somewhat from the other connections as they are argued to reshape and blur the organizational boundaries. (Scott 2003) While Scott’s (2003) case study regarding alliances focuses on the adopting organization, a particular case of blurring of carriers was displayed in Engwall’s (2012) study on the growing interconnectedness between consultants and business schools. The findings of his study led him to suggest how future research should focus on the relationship between these two actors, but more important in addition to the broader discussion of the composition of the management fashion arena (Engwall, 2012). This is in line with Sahlin-Andersson & Engwall, (2002 p. 283) who call for the need to investigate carriers role in the flow of ideas: how they establish relationships with other carriers and actors, and how carriers choose to pick up, edit and translate selected ideas. Sahlin-Andersson & Engwall (2002) further stress researchers to investigate other carriers and their relationships, not only to consultants as they have, but to other carriers and constellations they encounter.

The four elements that constitute the translation process and are accounted for in the theoretical framework are object, carrier, context and contact (Powell et al. 2005, p. 239). Transformation in translation processes concerns both the translator as well as what is being translated (Czarniawska & Sevón, 2005, p. 8; Hwang & Suarez, 2005, p. 93). Applying the four elements to such reasoning, both carriers and object move across context through contact. Being more complex than explained by the chain mode of translation (Hedmo et al., 2005), ideas themselves interplay with each other through connections between actors, captured in the concept of ecologies of translation (Wedlin & Sahlin, 2017, p. 113). Wedlin & Sahlin (2017, p. 106), argue that ideas do not unfold in isolation but in relation to ideals, contexts and other ideas that are simultaneously transformed and translated. Ideas both build on and reinforce each other as they become intertwined in translation processes. Similar to ideas, are actors culturally embedded. Actors and equally carriers become themselves infused in different rational patterns formed in global settings. (Wedlin & Sahlin, 2017)
As institutions grow more complex and a greater amount of ideas spread, the dynamics attract analytical interest. The complexity rests in institutions, idea circulation and their increasing embeddedness in each other, reflecting the ambiguity of studying translation in a context characterized with both institutionalization and at the same time circulation of ideas. Further, each idea tends to be ambiguous in itself as ideas evolve each other, boosting the translation and simultaneously the institutionalization of a given idea. (Wedlin & Sahlin, 2017, p. 113-114) Wedlin & Sahlin (2017, p. 108) further embrace editing as reflecting such dynamic reciprocal processes. Translations of ideas are therefore accepted as a mutual editing process of different dynamics, where an ongoing translation takes place within and outside organizations by actors (Wedlin & Sahlin, 2017). Re-examining carrier’s interests, the embeddedness of ideas and actors is argued to stand in contrast to the more strategizing notion of actors (Wedlin & Sahlin, 2017, p. 119). While acknowledging a presence of interest, Wedlin & Sahlin (2017, p. 103, 119) propose translation and travel of ideas to be too complex, dynamic and institutionally embedded to be controlled or planned. Instead the travelling and translating become process-driven rather than interest-driven (Wedlin & Sahlin, 2017, p. 119).

2.5. Theoretical summary: actors in webs of translation

With early neo-institutional studies (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Meyer & Rowan, 1977), organizational legitimacy came to be understood as ceremonially conforming to the prevailing, institutionalized and rationalized ideas of organizational work, diffused across organizations. Forthcoming studies on institutionalization of ideas adopted a more symbolic approach in which the label diffusion was replaced with translation to include the richness of meaning and actors, calling forth the associations with movement and transformation (Czarniawska & Sevón, 1996, p. 6). Wider ideas littered around the landscape simultaneously travel and are translated into different contexts in a continuous process through global-local, time-space, transforming ideas into new forms (Czarniawska & Joerges, 1996; Strang & Meyer, 1993). Through theorization (Strang & Meyer, 1993) and materialization, the travel of an idea is intertwined with the process of translation (Czarniawska & Joerges, 1996).

Attention in later research is given to the travel and translation of ideas in order to capture how ideas flow and by whom (Czarniawska & Joerges, 1996; Wedlin & Sahlin, 2017, p. 108).
Concluding the significance of actors, it is the people, both as users and creators, who by translating, packaging and transporting for their own or somebody else's use, give energy to an idea (Czarniawska & Joerges, 1996, p. 23). Actors can either be external or internal to the adopting organization (Meyer, 1996) in which the former in this study are referred to as carriers. They operate as promoters of ideas, with the purpose to set trends and fashions in motion (Sahlin-Andersson & Engwall 2002, p. 277-282). Carriers can take various forms (Hedmo et al. 2005, p. 201), while this study pays attention to consultants, media, academia, NGO/NPOs and gurus. The various types of carriers promote ideas differently as they operate in different context and have different interests (Windell, 2009, p. 373-375). Some types are quicker than others in embracing and spreading ideas - consultants and gurus being early promoters, academia being far slower by focusing on theorizing and defining, and media being last, acting as reflectors (Engwall, 2010). NGO/NPOs are difficult to define due to their complex work in networks ( Appe, 2016; Djelic, 2014). In summary, different types of carriers have different editing rules - connecting to various institutional context, addressing different audiences and using different logics and story-telling accordingly (Sahlin-Andersson, 1996). As a result, studies have shown that the same idea is translated and transformed variously depending on the actor in question (Windell, 2009). However, multiple carriers also expand their activity base, blurring the boundaries between categories of carriers (Engwall, 2012). The above reasoning forms the first theoretical argument of this study - Carriers have different promotion techniques stemming from self-interests. Different types of carriers have different audiences and reasons, resulting in different interests.

Significant to the circulation of ideas is not only the translation work by carriers but equally the links that tie actors together (Powell et al. 2005, p. 239; Scott, 2003; Strang & Meyer, 1993). The connections between carriers serve as means of transportation, guiding the travel of ideas along certain routes (Rogers, cited in Wedlin & Sahlin, 2017, p. 111), forming the second theoretical argument - The travel of an idea is contingent on the connections between actors. Furthermore, the translation of ideas does not unfold in isolation, but in relation to ideals, contexts and others, making an idea circulate and grow powerful in an ecology of translation (Wedlin & Sahlin, 2017, p. 113), corresponding to the third theoretical argument - The translation of an idea is affected by the carrier's and the idea's embeddedness in a ecology of translation. Despite previous studies theoretically embedding and discussing actors
in a wider network, the empirical studies on carriers have not yet captured such ecology of translation, as carriers primarily have been investigated in isolation or only in comparison to a few. However, the blurred boundaries and embeddedness argue that carriers cannot be investigated in vacuum, but instead as a network, in relation and differentiation to other carriers, coupled through the travel routes of ideas, demonstrating a more dynamic and complex landscape in which ideas travel. To understand such complexity, this study investigates how the idea of a circular fashion system travel among carriers. By following the travel routes of the idea, we develop the chain mode of translation, embrace the mediating mode and inspired web analogy by Hedmo et al. (2005), depart from Abrahamson’s (1996) *translating actors in chains of translation* and instead treat carriers in *webs of translation*. 
3. Methodological concerns

This chapter is introduced with the study’s research approach followed by the choice of sample and data collection. Further, the choice of content analysis is developed, including a presentation of the used coding scheme and operationalization of variables. The chapter ends with a discussion concerning the limitations and critique of the methodological choices.

3.1. Qualitative abductive research approach

This thesis aims to investigate how different carriers work as promoters in the flow of a certain idea, mapping carriers work in relation and differentiation to one another. As previous research has not studied carriers in an extensive comparative way, this study modifies, clarifies and build onto existing research through an abductive research approach (Saunders et al., 2016, p. 149). Empirical results iteratively integrate with theory, making empirical findings and previous theory equally important in answering the research question (Saunders et al., 2016, p. 148). As this study investigates how different carriers spread an idea, in particular - a circular fashion system - with the aim to get a deeper understanding for the different carriers, an explorative focus is suitable (Saunders et al., 2016, p. 174). Drawing the analysis from words and not numbers, the study is of qualitative character, further corresponding to the explorative rather than confirmative nature of the research question. A qualitative study is flexible and allows change as a natural process, embracing rich empirical findings in order to build, develop and refine theory (Saunders et al., 2016, p. 185). It is explorative in the way it draws on the meaning of how different carriers promote the travel, further contrasting and mapping different carriers in the way they make a story flow.

To be able to study how different carriers promote an idea, a case study and a multi-method qualitative data collection was chosen. Documents from the selected set of carriers were collected and further complemented with interviews and secondary sources displayed in videos on carriers. Using documents, interviews and videos as data collectors to explore relations and differentiations between actors, content analysis becomes a suitable selection of method technique (Carliner et al., 2015; Mazaheri et al., 2013; Saunders et al., 2016, p. 308).
The results were presented as quotes, tables and short summarized texts, providing the reader a clear view on how we have contrasted and related carriers in making the idea flow. The choice of empirical presentation was inspired and developed from Grafström & Windell’s (2011) study, however focusing on several groups of carriers instead of one.

3.2. Sample and data collection

The idea of a circular fashion system was chosen as it is a rather unexplored but still current case. In order to capture how carriers promote such idea in relation and differentiation to each other: in a real-life setting and institutional context, a case-study was deemed suitable. The examined population in this study were five different types of carriers; consultants, media, academia, NGO/NPO organizations and gurus. Four types of carriers were identified from the theoretical foundation, as Engwall (2012), Furusten et al. (2012), Meyer (2014) Sahlin-Andersson & Engwall (2002) and Wedlin & Sahlin (2017) together present them as frequent examples of carriers. The fifth carrier - guru - was added after an initial empirical investigation, as they were recurrent in the case.

18 documents, 3 interviewees and 3 videos were selected through the different types of carriers (A complete list of data sources can be found in Appendix 1). The interviews and videos confirmed and added complementary information, serving as a background story to the selected documents. Using three different sources of data further permitted a triangulation, were a richer version of reality could be identified for each carrier (Bryman et al., 2010; p. 140). As different carriers act in various ways and produce output in various formats, they need to be captured accordingly. The triangulation also served as a confirmative tool to some extent, minimizing the researchers subjectivity following from qualitative research techniques, and further increasing the study’s validity (Bryman et al., 2010, p. 125-126, 140-141). Furthermore, the triangulation provided a deeper understanding on the how in this study's research question by in our case displaying carriers in the correct format.

The documents were identified through a ‘snowball effect’, starting from one of the authors of this study working at a Swedish NGO promoting fashion, and in particular a more circular fashion system. During the half year spent at the NGO, the author encountered many reports, forming a foundation of documents. The document selection followed the interpretation of a
snowball effect by Biernacki & Waldorf (1981): accelerated from a personal contact or informant of a certain subject, and as the snowball takes form one can only sit back and let the chain follow its own course. The amount of documents grew further as the snowball effect continued, with the underlying and steering goal of finding close to equal amount of documents for each category of carrier, enabling an analysis covering all carriers proportionately. Snowball sample take form through a network around the specific subject, and is a sample method repetitively used in qualitative research (Biernacki & Waldorf, 1981). In such, the snowball selection also enabled the mapping of a network of carriers, as discussed in our theoretical framework. A majority of the data presented was downloaded from websites, available to the public to ensure the study’s reliability and replicability. One qualification for the selected data was the content of our specific case: a circular fashion system. Specific search words - circular fashion and sustainability - were identified to maintain relevance for our case. In line with our contributing aim of exploring the current travel of the idea, the data collected was not published earlier than 2015. This study found its saturation in sample size as the research question and purpose were fulfilled, in line with a content analysis’ requirements (Elo et al., 2014).

The selection of the specific interviewed carriers was performed randomly and limited to finding interviewees having the time and interest to participate in our study. The interviews were of semi-structured nature, following an interview guide (Appendix 2), ensuring a certain level of flexibility corresponding to our exploratory purpose. The interviews were first conducted through skype, telephone or face-to-face, recorded and then transcribed to heighten the study’s reliability. The interviewees were proposed access to the interview guide in advance and were also given the opportunity to read the used material afterwards. Since one interviewee wished to be anonymous, the choice of keeping all interviewees anonymous was made. Specific videos were selected for the carriers who are best displayed in talk, rather than written words, e.g. dramatic and visionary story-telling by guru’s nuanced in talk and body language. Moreover, videos complemented the documents and interviews as the various storytelling between different carriers were more easily contrasted in moving picture.
3.3. Content analysis

Having an abductive approach, a qualitative content analysis is especially suited. Sonpar & Golden-Biddle (2008) present the argument that content analysis can develop existing adolescent theory, when the method is applied to qualitative data in particular. Such argument strengthen this study's choice of method, as the abductive approach aims at developing existing theory, setting different carriers together for further exploration.

Previous studies conducted through content analysis lack a generally accepted approach, and the researcher should therefore maintain a flexible mind when using the method (Sonpar & Golden-Biddle, 2008). As the definition is obscure, the method technique of content analysis comes in a wide variety of forms (Boettger & Palmer, 2010; Graneheim & Lundman, 2004). A content analysis provides a way of being systematic and objective throughout the data gathering process. With a qualitative approach to content analysis, access to subsequent analysis of fashions across different cases of actors is facilitated (Sonpar & Golden-Biddle, 2008) and is therefore suited for this study’s case. Further, Sonpar & Golden-Biddle (2008) argue that qualitative content analysis offers a structured way of categorizing data into distinct themes, maintaining objectivity and highlighting conceptual richness. As this study aims at exploring how different carriers promote the travel of an idea, a qualitative content analysis further allows an exploration custom to studying multiple actors. A content analysis works as a comprehensive method investigating our selected topic, making it possible to capture promotion activities of carrier in verse settings and in formats were they are best displayed.

3.3.1. Coding scheme and operationalization

From the theoretical framework, three summarizing theoretical arguments were identified (see table 1. Operationalization) that further served as a guide for the empirical investigation. By deriving from existing theory, but equally contributing to it, the empirical research and theory are tightly coupled, in line with the study’s abductive approach. In order to find patterns across the various data, the data collected were analyzed through a coding scheme (see Appendix 3) including pre-developed theoretically grounded categories and empirically found key words. Incrementally adjusting the coding scheme throughout the coding process corresponds to the abductive approach of this research and allows flexibility. Initially, a joint
coding of two articles and one interview was conducted by the authors to ensure a shared understanding for the coding scheme and give the study reliability and replicability. The remaining data was coded separately, but discussed jointly in cases of disagreements or unresolved questions.

In order to capture the first theoretical argument - Carriers have different promotion techniques stemming from self-interests. Different types of carriers have different audiences and reasons, resulting in different interest and translations - the three editing rules introduced by Sahlin-Andersson (1996) laid the foundation for the coding. The concept of editing is considered by Hedmo et al. (2005) fitting when studying translation of ideas as they often circulate in written form, further corresponding to the large data of documents in this study. Each of the three editing rules corresponded and resulted in three analytical categories dominant theme, dominant argument and dominant storytelling, elaborated from the study by Grafström & Windell (2011). Dominant theme concerns the main theme, context, issue and audience in the data by different carriers (Grafström & Windell, 2011), further corresponding to the editing rule of institutional context (Sahlin-Andersson, 1996). Dominant argument corresponds to the editing rule of logic (Sahlin-Andersson, 1996) and was captured in the coding by (1) identifying the main argument/rationale that carriers use to convince the audience of the importance of a circular fashion, (2) concluding whether circular fashion is presented as a threat or opportunity, and (3) whether qualitative or quantitative evidence was dominant. Finally, dominant story-telling corresponded to the editing rule of formulation (Sahlin-Andersson, 1996) and was captured in the coding by (1) identifying the actors that are given room to express their view of circular fashion and whether the content was (2) specific or general, and the tone (3) neutral or dramatic; (4) normative or descriptive.

The second theoretical argument - the travel of an idea is contingent on the connections between actors - was primarily captured by identifying cross-references between carriers in the documents, videos and interviews. By mapping the connections in a network, it was possible to follow the travel of an idea from one carrier to another, between different contexts. Moreover, the argument was obtained in empirical data by identifying and mapping alliances and collaboration between carriers, as in line with Scott’s (2003) reasoning and Engwall’s (2012) blurred boundaries.
In order to capture the third and final theoretical argument - *the translation of an idea is affected by the carrier’s and the idea’s social and cultural embeddedness in a ecology of translation* - the previous coding and findings of the editing rules from the first argument and the cross-referencing and alliances from the second argument were re-examined. To display the more complex landscape in which ideas travel and are translated, as in line with Wedlin & Sahlin (2017) we aimed at identifying (1) *linked* editing across different carriers and (2) *joint* editing across different carriers. With using the findings from cross-referencing, *linked* editing captured how the translation of a circular fashion system by one carrier was built on the translation of another in a chain of translation. *Joint* editing captured how different actors through alliances translate a circular fashion system for a common audience.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theoretical Source</th>
<th>Theoretical Argument</th>
<th>Captured in empirical data</th>
</tr>
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</table>
Presented as differences across types of carriers in 3 categories: (1) dominant theme, (2) dominant argument, (3) dominant storytelling, |
(2) Alliances |
| (Czarniawska & Sevón, 2005) (Wedlin & Sahlin, 2017) | The *translation* of an idea is affected by the carrier’s and the idea’s embeddedness in a ecology of translation | (1) analysis of *linked* editing across different carriers
(2) analysis of *joint* editing across different carriers |

Table 1. *Operationalization*

3.4. Limitations concerning methodology

The greatest limitation of the study concerns the given time frame, and so a content analysis that enables efficient analysis of large data sets with textual elements (Sonpar & Golden-Biddle, 2008) was considered suitable. However, the study might further be limited
by not including all the typical components of a content analysis. While data programs are often used as tools to reach a higher level of efficiency (Mayring, 2004), such tools were not used for two reasons. First, while the size of our data required some reduction through a coding scheme, it was not considered large enough to make the use of data program tools for keyword frequency counts and other statistical summaries more time efficient than manual counts. Second, data program-aided analysis may reduce the data to such extent that it fails to capture hidden meaning in texts (Sonpar & Golden-Biddle, 2008), something this study’s explorative aim wishes to apprehend. In addition to manual key word frequency counts, key words were analyzed in their specific context and in relation to the specific carrier, presenting the “speaker-by-key-word-in-context” (see Gephart in Sonpar & Golden-biddle, 2008, p. 806) in both quotes and tables. As a result, the content analysis in this study does not transform qualitative data to quantitative to the same extent as is usually done (Saunders et al., 2016, p. 608). Similarities to this study's qualitative nature were found in Gröschls (2010) work, highlighting manual coding as a way to capture an explorative focus, emphasizing further investigation in the subject rather than generalizable results.

3.5. Criticism

One of the key critiques raised towards using secondary data is the fact that the documents and videos may be created and published for different purposes (Saunders et al., 2016, p. 332), (1) to this study and (2) to other documents and videos. However, as what is presented plays a less important part than how it is presented, the validity of the study’s secondary data is not at risk concerning the potential gap between the documents and this study’s purpose. In order to minimize the risk of a potential gap between data sources’ purposes, the constant comparison of the data through content analysis enabled a certain flexibility to adjust variables throughout the coding process (Mayring, 2004). There might also be some validity issues concerning the choice of interviewing one carrier through telephone, as body language cannot be taken into account, otherwise so important and favourable when exploring participants responses and meanings (Saunders et al., 2016, p. 421). Conducting the interview via telephone was necessary for the interviewees participation and however the lack of body language, a telephone interview was deemed better than no interview at all.
Qualitative studies find the relevant information in words and the nature of words are complex and involve different meanings. Equally does a qualitative content analysis often find its problems and is criticized for its data reduction. The classifications and categorization reduces the amount of data to a considerable extent, and problems are thereafter found in different meanings of words, how categories are defined and how rules are arranged. (Weber, 1990, p. 15) In order to minimize doubt in reliability and reproducibility, the words were analyzed with great care. The reduction of data, the following classification and categorization was performed jointly by both researchers as much as the time frame for the study allowed, enabling the highest objectivity level possible and avoiding biased empirical conclusions. Sonpar and Golden-Biddle (2008) argue for this kind of arrangement to have a positive effect on qualitative content analysis.
4. Empirical results

This chapter begins with separately displaying the findings concerning the work and role of each carrier and comparing their dominant editing rules. In the following sections, carriers are presented all together to allow linkages and collaborations among them to be identified. The complete data list in Appendix 1 provides navigation when reading the empirical results.

4.1. Five different carriers promoting a circular fashion system

The study's empirical findings reveal that the investigated carriers used different and similar techniques when promoting the idea of a circular fashion system. An overview of these findings can be found in table 2.

4.1.1. Consultants

In the study's empirical findings, consultants dominantly discussed the case of a circular fashion system in relation to a management theme (5 out of 6). By using keywords such as; supply chain, business model and business strategy, they laid out a performance baseline for change in the fashion industry - “we have a first vision of a roadmap of how we could get there” (Video 3, 10:25). The discussion was directed to an international audience (6 out of 6) consisting of all fashion stakeholders while dominantly businesses. Furthermore, they used environmental arguments (6 out of 6), combining both qualitative and quantitative presentations techniques in an opportunistic way. The dominant storytelling technique had a specific, neutral and normative approach - “when we analyze, how, where this performance comes from, it’s widespread. Which is in principle good news. The main driver of performance is not price point, it is company size.” (Video 3, 01:47). Examples were displayed through best practices in businesses and innovations regarding circular fashion initiatives. In interview 1, the interviewee explained consultants’ role in forming businesses, by increasingly incorporating sustainability strategy in all cases and consciously directing the case towards sustainable solutions. The interviewee further explained consultants’ strive towards a competitive edge in the subject, gathering and analyzing data from an innovation project in order to develop their own strategic knowledge bank.
4.1.2. Media

Media presented the case using management as a dominant theme (6 out of 7), while the targeted crowd was a mix between business people, businesses, citizens and fashion stakeholders. An international context and environmental, qualitative and opportunistic arguments dominated the investigated data - “with a growing middle class in Asia and natural resources that are about to end, "buy and drop" becomes passé. Alternatives to cotton and polyester is the way forward.” (Document 18). However, arguments presented with an economic and legitimacy logic were also frequent. Even though opportunistic approaches were dominant, media’s sometimes threat-like formulations should be brought up as they were displayed in two articles in a dominant form (Document 13, 15) - “but what are the most pressing threats to fashion businesses, and what is the industry doing about them?” (Document 13). Examples were mostly displayed through business practices, in interviews and quotes, in a neutral and descriptive way, but shifted equally between fluffy and specific storytelling. Superlatives were used as for example “supertalent” (Document 17) and furthermore were persons and locations in question described using a storytelling technique - painting pictures with words.

4.1.3. Academia

With academia as carrier, three different themes were dominant; management (4 out of 7), R&D (4 out of 7) and Regulation & Politics (R&P) (3 out of 7). Likewise, the geographical context was both national and international and the audience further varied between policy makers, businesses, designers and all fashion stakeholders. Arguments were presented through an environmental logic, in a qualitative and opportunistic way - “keeping true to the core sustainability values, which are strongly tied to essential drivers such as fair trade, commitment to recycling, upcycling, and use of sustainable materials.” (Document 6, p. 770). The neutral storytelling technique was distinguisingly dominant through all examined data and documents were often introduced with various definitions. Furthermore, academia examined the idea through cases and business practices resulting in experiments and models. In the interview with Mistra Future Fashion - an academic umbrella organisation for various researchers within sustainable fashion - the interviewee explains the reason for being neutral - “We aim at providing objective facts, we do not want to come and say that a specific company
should do this or that - or that one way is better than the other - everything is built upon providing objective facts applicable to the entire industry” (Interview 3, question 3).

4.1.4. NGOs and NPOs

NGOs and NPOs displayed the case in two dominant themes, management (5 out of 7) and R&P (4 out of 7). The audience was a mix between consumers, policy makers, industry and fashion stakeholders. Geographically there was an almost equal division between international (4) and national (3) context. An interviewee explains the international context - “Nowadays we live in a global world, even though the organization is located in Sweden their supply chain operates globally, and so do we” (Interview 2, question 5). Arguments were presented as bound between environmental and economic logics, while moral arguments were also frequently found. Furthermore were arguments dominantly presented in a qualitative and an opportunistic way - “it has the opportunity to generate 160 billion euros of annual value by 2030” (Video 3, 04:30), with a prevailing storytelling technique of displaying best business practices in a specific, neutral and normative way. An interviewee explains the qualitative logic, complemented with quantitative and concrete examples - “I always have a dominant inspirational part when I give lectures in sustainability to various companies, but I mix them with concrete more technical examples that they can implement tomorrow in order to provide a concretization to the inspirational talk” (Interview 2, question 2).

4.1.5. Gurus

Gurus dominant theme for displaying the case varied continuously, including issues relating to historical & societal (H&S), management, R&P and R&D contexts. Further, they targeted a wide audience in all fashion industry stakeholders, all other complementary industries such as washing machine and detergent industries, and in some cases directed to everyone in the world. Correspondingly, the dominant geographical context remained international through all examined gurus. Video 1 displayed the context - “Changing into a circular economy is that system change, it becomes about changing the whole system” (Video 1, 02:14) - “A bigger system creating global flows” (Video 1, 02:24). Arguments were displayed through the triple bottom line combining economic, environmental and moral arguments in an opportunistic and qualitative way - “a new textiles economy presents an opportunity for delivering substantially better economic, societal, and environmental outcomes.“ (Document 2, p. 27) - “we are all
driven by the economy - and seem to have forgotten our values while we seek value” (Video 2, 01:35). The storytelling technique was dramatic, generalized/fluffy and normative through all examined gurus, and other actors were rarely used to convey the message - “everybody have their secret recipe and sauce, that's great, but maybe today in this shared information technology area, it makes more sense to create libraries that are searchable for everybody, secret sauces are going to be there anyway, but at least you have to set the menu correctly, so that the ingredients on the list are good ones” (Video 1, 14:56) - “it is time for us all to get together” - “it is going to take us all, and it is going to take forever - but that is the point” (Video 2, 13:18) - “fashion is a verb - go forth - fashion is endlessly and therefore fashion is a living thing” (Video 2, 13:18). These quotes display how gurus used metaphors in their storytelling technique. The gurus were characterized with extraordinary traits such as publishing world-known books and sailing around the world - twice.

| Consultants | Management theme towards an international audience, directed to; corporations | Environmental arguments displayed in an opportunistic, qualitative and quantitative way | Specific, neutral and normative storytelling, displayed through; business cases and innovations |
| Media | Management theme towards an international audience, directed to; business people, corporations, citizens and all fashion stakeholders | Environmental arguments displayed in an opportunistic and qualitative way | Neutral, descriptive, specific and fluffy storytelling, displayed through; business practices |
| Academia | Management, R&D and R&P theme, towards an national and international audience, directed to; policy makers, businesses, designers and all fashion stakeholders | Environmental arguments displayed in an opportunistic and qualitative way | Neutral storytelling displayed through; cases, business practices, experiments and models |
| NGO/NPOs | Management and R&P theme, national and international audience, directed to; consumers, policy makers, industry and fashion stakeholders | Environmental, economic, and moral arguments displayed in an opportunistic and qualitative way | Specific, neutral and normative storytelling, displayed through; business cases |
| Gurus | Management, H&S, R&P and R&D theme, towards an international audience, directed to; all fashion industry stakeholders, all other complementary industries, and everyone in the world | Environmental, economic and moral arguments displayed in an opportunistic and qualitative way | Dramatic, generalized, fluffy and normative storytelling displayed through; metaphors |

Table 2, Overview of carriers’ dominant; theme, argument & storytelling
4.2. Linked carriers

All 18 documents studied included cross-referencing to written reports by other types of carriers. As can be displayed in Table 3 below, documents written by consultants referred to all other types of carriers besides media, with guru being referred to most frequently. Consultants never referred to other consultants. Media referred to all other categories of carriers, with three categories being more frequent - consultants, NGO/NPOs and gurus. Academia referred to other academic research, gurus and NGO/NPOs. NGO/NPOs in turn referred to all types of carriers besides media, but most dominantly did their reports refer to other NGO/NPOs. Gurus mainly referred to other gurus, NGO/NPOs, academia and partnering consultants, but lacked any cross-referencing to media. Conclusively, gurus and NGO/NPOs where thus referred to most often, while media was the carrier least referred to.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Referring to/Being referred to</th>
<th>Consultants</th>
<th>Media</th>
<th>Academia</th>
<th>NGO/NPOs</th>
<th>Gurus</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Consultants</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media</td>
<td>yes*</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes*</td>
<td>yes*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academia</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NGO/NPOs</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes*</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gurus</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 3, Cross-referencing between types of carriers (* dominant carrier referred to)*

4.2.1. Cross-referencing among the documents studied

To illustrate how references across carries may be displayed, the cross referencing between the selected documents of this study is summarized in Chart 1 below. 13 of the 18 documents referred either directly to one of the other documents in the study or to the author(s) of them. A report written by a consultancy firm (Document 1), was referred to in two media articles and the specific consultancy firm was further referred to in another report (Document 11). The report with a guru as main author (Document 2) was referred to in 6 of the other documents. The report by a consultancy firm and NGO (Document 3) was referred to in 4 other
documents, and the specific NGO was referred to 3 more times. Mistra Future Fashion (NGO/NPO/Academia), authors of several reports (Document 7, 11 and 12), were referred to in 3 of the other 18 documents.

In a report by media and consultant (Document 4), cross-referencing could be captured in a traveling nature, linking several carriers together in the discussion of a circular fashion system. In a displayed section, the co-authored media interviewed one of the study's selected gurus. In the interview, the guru further referred to an NPO (author of Document 3) from this study - “For example, the Global Fashion Agenda is gathering commitments towards building a circular economy for textiles, to be achieved by 2020.” (Document 4, p. 64) Conclusively this example displays the travel of the selected case, first departing from an NPO, elevated by a guru and finally presented by media.

Another example displaying linkages between carriers is a report (Document 5) authored by an NGO/NPO organisation, as they build it around another report authored by consultants and another NPO (Document 3). The report begins with displaying a section of - “the pulse of the
fashion industry report re-visited” (Document 5, p. 10) where they re-examine the other report (Document 3), presenting its flaws and setting a new, by them argued, right focus - “...a fashion industry which does not rely on the addictive behaviour of its customers for growth and profit, or depend on the environment and society as a whole to pay the price. In other words, a business model that is fit for the future.” (Document 5, p. 15) - “toward true circularity, changing the DNA of fashion by internalising the best practices for sustainability” (Document 5, p. 15)

A report authored by an NGO/NPO (Document 10) formed suggestions for new policies regarding sustainable fashion, directed to the Nordic Council of Ministers. The report summarized the main national recommendations for further improvements concerning circular fashion. A link could be identified to the proposal by NGO/NPO/Academia (Document 7), prepared on behalf of the Swedish government, laying out a national suggestion for strategic improvements regarding sustainable fashion, only two year after document 10 was published. This linkage can further be confirmed by one of this study's authors, from working half a year in an NGO concerning sustainable fashion.

Another example linking carriers together is a media article (Document 13), using a statement from a co-author of a consultancy report (Document 3) from which it further builds its story - “Based on conservative projections, fashion brands’ profitability levels are at risk by at least three percentage points if they don’t act determinedly soon, says Javier Seara, the lead author of the Boston Consulting Group and the Global Fashion Agenda’s sustainability focused report, The Pulse of the Fashion Industry.” (Document 13) Noticeably, the consultant and author of the report (Document 3), Javier Saera, rarely used the above dramatic storytelling technique in either the document 3 or in video 3.

4.2.2. Cross-referencing through other means

Evidence of cross-referencing was also found in other ways besides coding. Throughout the empirical investigation key phrases connected to circular fashion were identified across the documents. These were among others ‘restorative and regenerative by design’ as well as ‘take-make and dispose model’. The key phrases were identified as originating from a report (Document 2) authored by a guru, but the document was not necessarily correctly referred to,
i.e., not always acknowledged. Furthermore did the report include a section called ‘in support of the report’ where various actors e.g. municipalities, businesses, NGO/NPOs, research institutes, were given room to comment on how the report by a guru served as a launchpad, catalyzer and signalizer by setting the stage for fashion businesses to embrace circular business models. The more qualitative part of the empirical investigation also found other evidence of how the carriers were linked to each other, as the same business-cases were used in storytelling across the documents, videos and interviews. Frequent businesses cases were outdoor and athletic apparel firms such as Patagonia, Nike, Adidas and Houdini, or larger groups and conglomerates such as H&M, C&A and Kering.

The interviews and studied videos also revealed that various carriers participate and meet on the same platforms such as debate forums and hackathons. NGO/NPOs served as hosts for these platforms, encouraging open discussion with honesty among various fashion stakeholder participants. Other carriers: gurus, consultants and media, all participated at such debate forums like ‘Copenhagen Fashion Summit’ either as speakers and/or audience. Furthermore, did cross-referencing occur in all videos; to absent carriers such as academia, to carriers in the audience as well as directly to previous or upcoming speakers.

4.3. Collaborating carriers

The majority of carriers mentioned the importance of collaboration between industry players as a result of the industry’s complex value chain and the critical environmental issue at hand. While this study does not aim at investigating what is said but rather how it is said, such finding is fruitful as it explains our initial struggle of categorizing the documents to a specific carrier. As seen in Table 4, 9 out of the 18 documents were either funded or commissioned by an external actor and/or co-written by carriers. For example, the same guru both operated as an individual and through her organization, both in isolation and in collaboration with other carriers, both financially independent and funded by an external actor. Moreover, while traditional academic articles were easy to categorize as ‘academia’, other articles written by individual researchers but funded or commissioned by NGOs and governments as part of a research project were not as self-evident.
4.3.1. Collaboration by external assignment and funding

Out of the 18 documents, 7 were either commissioned or funded by an external actor. In 6 out of those 7 documents, the principals or financiers came from a different background than that of the main carrier, e.g. an academic report (academia) assigned by the government (politics). The same 6 reports were also normative and had clear objectives. The difference regarding clear objectives in funded/assigned and not funded/assigned, was apparent in academic reports. However, the same results could not be found concerning consultants, as they tended to be normative regardless of having a financier/principal or not.

In independent academic articles, circular fashion was discussed in relation to R&D, to a various audience and with claims of descriptive nature. However, documents funded or commissioned by a government or transnational intergovernmental cooperation were identified as having the dominant theme ‘regulation & politics’, with the main audience being ‘policy-makers’ and the claims being normative. While politically independent, these reports had among others the aim of identifying and evaluating policy instruments (Document 11), and not seldom resulted in distinct policy and legislative recommendations (Document 7, 10, 12). The role of academia and research institutes in assignments by governments can be illustrated in the following quote - “...the government announces projects revolving sustainability development. In such projects, they wish to have different experts, in which we have been given the role (...) as objective provider of facts.” (Interview 3, question 3) Correspondingly, the dominant arguments did differ between academic research that was funded and not funded. The former held more arguments related to economic growth (Document 7, 10) mentioning ‘job creation’ and nations becoming ‘world leaders’, while the latter presented mainly environmental arguments. Furthermore, in cases where the financier or principal was external to academia, the content tended to be less technical than if they were from the same context or were non-existent. One report which was written by researchers,
commissioned by an elected region but part of a regional research project (Document 9), the authors explained the purpose of the report - “This is a feasibility study rather than a comprehensive scientific research, and this paper does not attempt to present a complete and scientifically proven model for circular textile economy.” (Document 9, p. 4)

In cases where research foundations or research projects were present as financiers or principals, various carriers presented the idea of circular fashion in relation to R&D issues. Consultants who otherwise related to ‘management’, included more R&D issues when reports were funded by research institutes. Equally did the coding highlight a difference between data sources by gurus who were funded and who were not. The same guru discussed circular fashion in general and fluffy terms and in relation to management in video 1 where she spoke independently, but included more R&D issues and became more specific and technical in her report funded by the C&A Foundation (Document 2).

4.3.2. Collaboration by co-writing

Out of the 18 documents, four of them were co-written by two or more contrasting carriers. In document 3 and 4, the carriers involved played an equal part as authors, while in document 2 and 7, one carrier was dominant and the remaining carriers were labeled as contributing author(s). Consultants were present as authors in three (Document 2, 3 & 4) out of four co-written documents. One report has a guru and her linked foundation as the main author (Document 2). The contributing author, also mentioned as the ‘knowledge partner’, was the management consulting firm McKinsey & Co. In the first part of the report, the idea of a circular fashion system is kept very general, and told through dramatic, threatening and normative language, with both quantitative and qualitative support. In the second part, the language is more neutral and the idea is illustrated through best-practices, presenting specific activities and steps to reach a more circular fashion system. If comparing guru’s acting independently (as in video 1 and 2) and guru’s in collaboration with consultants (Document 2), the apparent difference concerns the key arguments and story-telling. In isolation, guru’s tended to speak to the industry players morale, often using metaphors and remaining ‘fluffy’, while in collaboration with consultants, the idea becomes more specific with quantitative economic arguments in place. The collaboration is explained by the guru “We went to McKinsey for our first economic analysis, in order to understand the value.” (Video 1, 01:53)
In a co-written report (Document 3), a consulting firm and a NPO are both present as main authors. The same authors are also key speakers in a presentation (Video 3) in which they talk about the report. The video portrays the contrasting contexts of the two carriers. The consultant mainly focuses on presenting the idea of a circular fashion from a business perspective with economical arguments, summarizing with ready-made actions for industry players. The NPO representative equally uses economical arguments but mixes them with environmental and morale ones, overall presenting the idea in a more dramatic, normative and general way - “Now is the time to take action. Business as usual is simply no longer an option.” (Video 3, 04:50). The report then combines economic, environmental and moral arguments. Similar to the guru’s report (Document 2) is the consulting firm said to contribute as they - “analyzed this data in depth, and has complemented the input to get a representative metric on sustainability in fashion”. The report’s objective was to layout - “…a Landscape for Change and present pragmatic, concrete, and economical actions that are already available for producing palpable change.” (Document 3, p. 3), while - “The report promotes collaboration and innovation as main drivers to accelerate change.” (Document 3, p. 3)

In another co-written report, a consulting firm and business paper are introduced as co-authors (Document 4). As the report explains, the business paper is considered to contribute with their deep industry expertise and insider access, while the consulting firm offers - “functional, analytical and industry insight” (Document 4, p. 6) to give a - “rare blend of quantitative rigour and sharp-eyed qualitative insights about the fashion sector.” (Document 4, p. 6). Moreover, the idea of a circular fashion is presented in a neutral, yet normative tone. The report includes a series of executive interviews to - “...present a full picture of the ecosystem and bring to life the complex and multifaceted aspects of the industry” (Document, p. 4). In a proposal on behalf of the government (Document 7), the main author is a particular NGO representative, while researchers, other NGO/NPOs and industry players are co-authors. The document’s main focus is set on mapping the involved fashion stakeholders role in changing towards a circular fashion system as it lays a foundation for a collaboration platform. Further, NGO’s role as platform-creators were identified and again confirmed in the interview with an NGO representative - who in turn works for one of the co-writing NGO organizations.
In summary, studying the 18 documents, 3 videos and 3 interviews, the empirical findings reveal carriers using different and similar techniques when promoting the idea of a circular fashion system. Cross-references revealed linkages among carriers, and assignment, funding and co-writing disclosed collaborations in promoting the idea.
5. Analysis and discussion

The empirical findings of this study confirm past studies to some extent. Nevertheless, the travel and translation of the idea - a circular fashion system - promoted by carriers, proved to be more complex than previously laid out by precursors. Evidence of expanded activities and networks through funding, assignment and co-writing, together with identified hybrids and hierarchies, couple the notion of blurred boundaries between carriers with ecologies of translation. This study reveals a complex landscape through which ideas circulate, promoted by a web of carriers.

5.1. Multiple carriers’ roles in the same context

When investigating multiple carriers applied to the same case, each carriers’ role could be identified and analyzed, in relation and differentiation to each other. O’Mahoney (2010) and Ruef (cited in Sahlin-Andersson and Engwall, 2002) argue that consultants’ strengths lie in clear rational communication. This study's findings point to similar reasoning as consultants repetitively acted as ‘performance mappers’, providing a baseline for change in the fashion industry through clear rational means. As in line with Windell (2009) and Furusten et al, (2012) that businesses are consultants’ main stakeholders, consultant took a unique role as promoters towards business players’ sustainability agendas, when they could form all parts of businesses into matters of finding sustainable solutions by frequently using business keywords. These findings concurrently provide an explanatory factor to why consultants had the opportunity to direct business players towards sustainable agendas - as they work towards and together with them to a greater extent than other examined carriers. While Windell (2009) explains that consultants often spread and proliferate ideas through commercialization of business cases, the empirical investigation of multiple carriers found such specific promotion technique to be not unique to consultants. The majority of the investigated documents used such commercialization technique and even used the same examples.

As media promote the travel of a circular fashion system, they display third party opinions and statements, arguably striving towards civic utility and scientific correctness as previously argued by Pallas et al. (2016) to be important translation factors for media. Further, media
targeted a broad audience through opportunism and qualitative arguments conveying the case in an easy accessible way, further argued by Mazza & Alvarez (2000) as promotions techniques that increase the speed of travel. Painting pictures in words and success stories were frequent, corresponding to the reasoning by Buhr & Grafström (2007) and Pallas et al. (2016) to be media’s way of involving a larger discussion in society and drawing attention using theatrics. A legitimating media logic was also found, building onto Mazza & Alvarez (2000) argument that media seem to step beyond prefabrication of ideas when granting them legitimacy. Media’s occasional threat-like formulations were few in comparison to the opportunistic arguments. These finding point to the importance of opportunism in the case of media as it attracts attention, similar to what previous studies have shown (Buhr & Grafström, 2007; Pallas et al., 2016). Academia’s role was clearly set as neutral and objective fact providers of circular fashion towards a broad target audience and context, both confirmed in documents and interviews. Such empirical finding are in line with the work of Windell (2009) and Khurana (2007) explaining researchers main rationale as theory and science developers, portraying academia as objective and trustworthy. Windell (2009) further explains academia not aiming at giving commercialization arguments in the case of CSR. Contradictory, the empirical findings revealed academia to repetitively use business cases displaying a circular fashion system in relation to commercialization, arguably explained by academias fusion with industry actors to a large extent in this specific case.

As NGO/NPOs display and direct the case of a circular fashion system through various themes, audiences, geographical contexts, rationale and use both qualitative and quantitative arguments, the findings reveal a rather multiple-sided nature of NGO/NPOs, parallel to the study of Coule & Patmore (2013). From the empirical findings and explained by Coule & Patmore (2013), it reflects their normative and disruptive character; reshaping bounded institutions through different contexts. NGO/NPOs provided platforms for all fashion stakeholder where they could debate openly. This demanded a varied nature in NGO/ NPOs in order to remain open and flexible to all participating stakeholders’ origins. When gurus promoted the case of a circular fashion system, they operated through an even broader context than NGO/NPOs. Clark & Salaman (1996) describe gurus as organizational witchdoctors, frequently using emotional and irrational trigger points. Moral logics were regularly used in this study’s empirical findings, displaying emotion and irrationality through arguments. Gurus
remained distinctly fluffy in promoting the idea, a trait explained by Tedeschi et al. (2001) stemming from gurus’ fear of being imitated, and according to Haag & Coget (2010) forming an unreplicable role model. One examined guru in the case of a circular fashion system, was arguably taking the appearance as a strong role model, as her sailing around the world - twice - formed her decisiveness in saving the world from linear business solutions. Furthermore, by investigating gurus, their ‘secret recipe and sauce’ seem to be the constant use of metaphors. This can be explained by Groß et al. (2015) as gurus tend to go with an ‘change is easy’ approach conveying listeners to effortlessly grasp the change required by using metaphors known by many. Conclusively, various carriers promote the idea - a circular fashion system - differently, arguably stemming from carriers various contexts and agendas, in line with Windell’s (2009) arguments emphasizing translation for different self-interests.

5.2. Mapping a network of carriers - linked ideas in different contexts

The mapping of cross-references among the documents, revealed a network of carriers which in turn might give some clues on how the different carriers and their roles relate to each other. While both consultants and media referred to documents by other carriers, they never referred to another actor within the same carrier category. An explanation to such findings could be that unlike the other carriers, both consultants and media have a profit-driven nature guiding their self-interest, which further spurs competition to gain leadership within the category. Such reasoning on competition is not far fetched from the arguments of Abrahamson (1996). Furthermore, the lack of cross-referencing to media by other carriers disclose media as reflectors rather than proactive shapers of an idea, thus being slower at embracing and spreading ideas if borrowing Engwall et al.’s (2010) reasoning. However, as was also shown in the findings, media had an ability to reach a larger target audience and have ‘the last say’ in the matter, e.g. controlling the output, as previously argued by Grafström & Windell (2011). This could be illustrated in the case where media referred to a consultant co-authoring another report, and chose to display the more dramatic and moral angles, even though the report overall was found to be neutral and mainly using economic arguments.

The findings also revealed that academia mainly referred to other researchers, disclosing researchers as their main stakeholders, in line with the findings of Windell (2009). Content in academic documents included definitions, experiments and models, further validating
Engwall et al.’s (2010) argument on academia not being the quickest to promote new ideas for such reason. Nevertheless, the investigation also found researchers in non-academic constellations which may not only disclose academia engaging in expanded activities (as will be discussed below) but equally reveal a shift of their traditional role of spreading ideas at a slow pace, as according to Engwall (2010).

The initial difficulty of categorizing the documents which NGO/NPO co-authored also resulted in somewhat different findings concerning the cross-referencing. The referencing was most often to the NGO/NPO or their platform and events rather than their output in written form, in line with Djelic’s (2014) arguing that NPO’s role concerns their complex and ambiguous interplay and network with others rather than their internal activities. NGO/NPOs platforms such as Global Fashion Summit enabled cross referencing between other carriers, which further is an empirical example of how professional and business associations connect organizational decision makers, as discussed by Scott (2003). While the summarizing chart does not visualize this, NGO/NPOs become central in the network of carriers by actually endorsing the linkages between carriers. Finally and most interestingly, did the mapped network reveal a centrality around gurus, given that they were the carrier most referred to both directly and indirectly. Furthermore, the fact that gurus and their output was referred to by external actors as launchpads, catalysers and so forth, develops the reasoning of Groß et al. (2015) on gurus as introducers aiming at changing attitudes, and strengthens the arguments of Clark & Salaman (1996) in guru’s role in awakening consciousness for an organizational dilemma, further making gurus vital for the travel of an idea. The indirect reference made by carriers using key phrases from other carriers is in turn proof of an increasingly complex landscape where not only an idea, but equally certain translations of ideas become institutionalized, developing the notion of ecologies of translation (Wedlin & Sahlin, 2017).

The in-depth investigation of some crossferences revealed how carriers by being part of a network create means of transportation that enable the travel of ideas between contexts, as in line with Scott (2003) and Wedlin & Sahlin (2017). The case where a NPO was referred to by a guru, in an interview by media, as part of a co-written report with a consultancy firm, illustrate the complex travel routes of an idea and how translation processes are contingent on the positions that actors hold in relation to each other, previously theoretically laid out by
Hedmo et al. (2005). Furthermore, studying the work of carriers also captured how ideas can interplay with each other, as previously discussed under the notion of ecologies of translation (Wedlin & Sahlin, 2017). For example, the case where media referred to a consultant, reveals how media can take an idea in relation to ideas of management, told in a neutral descriptive tone, and make it easier to grasp and relevant for a wider audience, using normative and dramatic storytelling. Similarly does the case where a NGO refers to the report “Pulse of the Fashion Industry 2017”, co-written by consultants and a NPO, capture how ideas intertwine. The idea of a circular fashion system is originally discussed by a consultant and NPO in relation to growth and profitability, reflecting ideas of scientific management. However, when referred to by a critical NGO, ideas relating to sustainability are incorporated, forming a fusion of both themes and resulting in ideas of sustainable consumption. In such, the idea of a circular fashion system is not presented as a way to deal with both growth and scarce resources, but as something that questions growth in the first place. Finally, cross-referencing revealed that ideas do not only travel between cultural contexts, but equally between geographical contexts. The link between the national proposal (Document 7) and the suggestions for the Nordic Council of Ministers (Document 10) discloses how the idea of a circular fashion system is both discussed in a Nordic as well as national context, tying carriers together in a network stretching across national, international and transnational settings.

5.3. Assignment and funding as expanded activity - carriers in different contexts

As the findings revealed, it is not unusual that the work of carriers in promoting an idea can be assigned or funded by another carrier or external actor, that not seldom situate in other contexts than that of the carrier in question. Such findings strengthen the work of Engwall et al. (2010) on blurred boundaries between carriers as a result of expanded activities. Consultants engage in non-typical consulting activities such as reports on behalf of research institutes, and by such, become more like business schools in line with the reasoning of Engwall (2012) and Furusten et al. (2012). As the findings found researchers’ activities expanding from traditional academic articles to explicit policy recommendations for the government, did researchers equally become more like consultants as previously discussed by Engwall (2012). Furthermore, the finding build onto the discussion by Windell (2009) and Engwall et al. (2010) on academia being hired as experts or consultants for their objectivity and trustworthiness. Media also produced non-traditional texts such as larger reports,
something which Engwall et al. (2010) previously laid out. Equally was the output of NGO/NPOs often externally funded or commissioned by governmental bodies. Unlike the case with academia, such governmental funding and assignment did not lead to NGO/NPOs expanding their activities, as guiding civic society and organizations through their network is part of their traditional role (Appe, 2016). Whether or not gurus expand their traditional activities as a result of funding and assignment remains unknown as the lack of research on their specific traditional activities and output lend it difficult to compare findings.

As in line with Hedmo et al.’s (2005) discussion on carrier’s reshaping identities as events and activities unfold, expanding activities as assignment and funding led the investigated carriers to use other themes, arguments and storytelling techniques than those traditionally associated with. The editing rules of carriers was found to be dependent on the principal and/or financier of the document, e.g. academia using less technical language and including arguments connected to national growth if the principals/financiers were governmental bodies. To connect back to the previous sections, not only do ideas travel across contexts and interplay with each other, but equally do carriers situate in different context to which their editing rules become adapted. The findings suggest that while carriers are culturally embedded which in turn guides their editing rules (Sahlin-Andersson, 1996; Wedlin & Sahlin, 2017), they can similar to ideas become disembedded, act in other context and are further competent to change their editing accordingly. With these findings, it could also be suggested that blurred boundaries (Engwall, 2010; 2012; Mazza & Alvares, 2000) and the difficulty of categorizing carriers is contingent on carrier’s level of flexibility and/or need to move across contexts, for example when being externally funded. However, it can be discussed if the ability to move across contexts in turn might be dependent on the carrier’s extended network. This would be especially true in the case of NGO/NPOs who are known for their large network and bringing together different actors in debates (Appe, 2016), or as this study showed; also summits and hackathons. Not surprisingly then is the fact that NGO/NPOs are included in a variety of different documents, making them and their work difficult to identify, as Djelic (2014) previously argued. The landscape in which the travel and translation of ideas occur is thus more complex than previously laid out, as boundaries between carriers become blurred when carriers move across contexts and change their editing.
5.4. Co-writing as expanded activity - carriers in different constellations

Not only did the findings reveal funding and assignment as expanded activities, but equally did they identify carriers in different constellations by co-writing output. To build on the discussion on alliances blurring boundaries, as elevated by Scott (2003), the findings came across carriers jointly producing output and complementing each other’s skills. Studying those joint efforts in the empirical investigation disclosed collaborating carriers both combining and/or adapting their editing rules. As in the case of the report written by consultants and guru (Document 2), the dominant theme, argument and storytelling were multiple and mixed as the report showed editing rules typical for both carriers alike. In the two co-written reports by guru + consultant (Document 2) and NPO + consultant (Document 3), the various themes, arguments and story-telling of the different co-authoring carriers succeeded each other, in such that each co-author’s traditional editing was identified while being overlapping. This disclosed a sequential editing within the same report, and a joint/fused editing as a whole. However, the report co-written by media and consultants (Document 4), revealed compromise and adaptation from media. The report was normative, not unlike other reports written by consultants, but much in contrast to the traditional role of media (debate articles aside). Similarly to assignment and funding, carriers seem to adapt their editing to their collaborating partner, further arguing for a greater interconnectedness of carriers, than previously argued by researchers in the field.

Most documents, both co-written and not, urged further collaboration between carriers and industry players alike, on the basis of the environment being a pressing matter and above any self-interest. Such findings stand in contrast to Abrahamson's (1996) reasoning on fashion setters being competitive. However, beside NGO/NPOs - who themselves are strong advocates for collaboration - no collaboration was found among carriers of the same category (disregarding academic articles written by multiple researchers for obvious reasons). Further, gurus seem to draw advantage on collaborations to complement their skills. Strang & Meyer (1993) argue that theorists, who are properly schooled professionals speaking a local and global language, make ideas travel. While, gurus in the case of a circular fashion system do not always come from such backgrounds, what gurus lack in scientific and professional translation they get from collaborations in our investigated case. This seems to be a recipe for
success given the network centrality and praise in the referencing hysteria found around the report made by a guru and consultant. Firstly, a guru introduces and inspires a large audience for alternative ways of developing the fashion industry, and secondly, is supported by professionally schooled others and their knowledge, forming a sharp collaboration gaining superior attention compared to other investigated carriers.

5.5. Discussing a more complex scenery

In various collaborations, the translation and travel process becomes intertwined with carriers different contexts, creating fusion translations serving multiple carriers’ interests. The ideas take travel routes that are both parallel - translation occurring simultaneously between carriers in isolation - and sequential - translations succeeding each other as in the chain mode (Hedmo et al. 2005) -, but equally joint - translation by collaborating carriers. To build on Strang & Meyer (1993) proposal that interaction and exchange dependency among actors positively affect the rate of diffusion, the joint routes sets another dimension to the translation and travel of ideas, increasing the pace of travel. Both ideas and carriers find themselves in different contexts and constellations, forming hybrid carriers, and such growing embeddedness and interconnectedness between carriers further argues for a more complex scenery as in line with the ecologies of translation developed by Wedlin & Sahlin (2017).

Wedlin & Sahlin (2017) have previously argued against the strategizing nature of actors because of the dynamic, institutionally embedded and complex process of idea translation. While the adapted editing rules as a result of funding, assignment and co-writing would support such arguments, the findings also disclosed some carriers being competent to draw any collaboration to their advantage. For example, as the consultant explained, the innovation program in collaboration with a research institute did not directly lead them to their objective of becoming industry leaders, but it gave them a large knowledge bank from which they could learn and refine the competences that later could be used in their client assignments. Hence, indirectly serving their self-interest in gaining leadership. Equally, did gurus draw advantage in collaboration to gain professionally schooled knowledge.

Given that the findings revealed some carriers - gurus and NGO/NPOs - to take a central and dominant role in the network, implies a certain power structure and hierarchy among carriers.
in the promotion of a circular fashion. A power structure thus develop the initial work of Engwall et al. (2010) and their historical timeline i.e. some carriers being quicker to embrace and spread ideas. Equally did the findings show how some type of carriers adapted their editing rules to match those of the collaborating partnership or assignment, further revealing a certain power structure inside the collaboration. The analysis implies that the power structure between carriers in isolation and collaboration could depend on factors such as a strong self-interest as in the case of consultants, the ability to introduce an idea to a larger target audience as with gurus, and the ability and flexibility to actually move between and adapt to contexts as with NGOs/NPOs but equally consultants by appearing in multiple collaborations.

Carriers find diverse collaborations; media together with consultants, consultants together with gurus and so on. To build on the above reasoning on power structures, there seem to be both successful and less successful partnerships and hybrid constellations. Successful as in the collaboration between a consultancy firm and guru, displayed in the referencing hysteria to that specific report and partnership. Less successful, as in the collaboration between media consultants forming a joint report, since it was not referred to once by other documents in the investigation. These hybrid constellations seem to become vastly powerful or not that powerful in making an idea travel, arguably due to the match of each collaborating carrier’s nature. Factors providing trouble in the collaboration between media and consultants is arguably each of their competitive nature - media competing for readers and consultants competing for clients - leading to no one referring back to them. Other troubling factors could be the difference in purpose and the output of a report - when none of the two carriers traditionally provide material in such format - and by such take steps into unexplored territory.
6. Conclusion

The aim of the study was to investigate how different carriers work as promoters in the flow of a certain idea in relation and differentiation to one another. By answering the research question - *How do carriers promote the travel of an idea across organizational boundaries?* - the study found carriers in a web-like network, moving between different contexts and constellations in a far more complex landscape than previously acknowledged. With carriers, ideas do not travel in vacuum (Wedlin & Sahlin, 2017), but through cross-referencing, carriers promote the idea of a circular fashion system by placing it in different contexts and linking it to other institutionally embedded ideas. Carriers originating role is steered by self-interest (Sahlin-Andersson & Engwall, 2002). However, our study found that by collaborating with other carriers and external actors through funding, assignment and co-writing, carriers adapt their typical translation and travel of the idea. Besides more traditional sequential and parallel editing, our findings reveal joint routes, disclosing another dimension to the translation and travel of the idea. Conclusively, this complex scenery has implications for how we understand carriers to promote an idea.

The theoretical contribution of the study is the exploratively combined research on carriers - their editing (Sahlin-Andersson, 1996), network (Scott, 2003; Wedlin & Sahlin, 2017) and blurred boundaries (Engwall, 2012) - with the adolescent notion of ecologies of translation (Wedlin & Sahlin (2017). By combining these theories, we show that carriers are interconnected with other carriers, coupled through the travel routes of ideas, demonstrating a more dynamic and complex web. The empirical findings highlight carriers’ ability to act as chameleons when promoting the travel of a circular fashion system, further making them difficult to categorize. Equally to being components in the ecological system, the study demonstrates adaptability and transformability as present in the ecology of translation. Carriers both situate in different contexts, making individual carriers shift between categories, but are also embedded in each other through collaboration, further combining categories. The identified hybrid carriers are therefore twofold. Furthermore, the hierarchy and centrality of certain carriers reflect the natural order and predator-prey interactions that make up ecological systems. The hybrids and hierarchies identified thus contribute to and develop the notion of
ecologies of translation. With these above findings, we provide a methodological approach to successfully capture the ecology of translation that may inspire future studies on the subject. Contributing with a deeper understanding of how carriers promote an idea, organizations can in turn understand the nature of carriers and how they can best relate to and employ both carriers working independently and collaboratively. Equally can carriers understand their role in relation to each other, and how they best complement their skills and self-interests in order to lend collaboration desirable. The study also contributes to an exploration of the widely debated topic and spread of a circular fashion system, making us carriers of our own.

6.1 Limitations and future research

As the study found, multiple carriers argued for collaboration on the basis of the environment being a pressing matter and more important than the self-interest of carriers. The heavy emphasis on collaboration might thus be specific to the idea being spread, rather than a generalized finding. Such limitation of this study calls for the need to explore settings in which carriers collaboratively promote ideas, either single cases or multiple ideas in a comparative case study. Equally could such study isolate the editing implications deriving from funding and collaboration. Moreover, while not actively searching for it, the study revealed hierarchies and power structure between carriers. Nevertheless the study’s findings cannot draw greater conclusion regarding the factors that provide such hierarchies. Therefore future research may aim at identifying the mechanisms forming these structures as well as concluding the hierarchical order. Building on the findings, we propose paying closer attention to gurus situated in the top tier. While having identified hybrid carriers, the study is limited to providing only an initial understanding of the phenomena. How they work in practice, compromising and producing output remains unexplored and can be a topic for future studies. Furthermore, such studies could also identify ultimate combinations of carriers. We have argued for a more complex network, however institutionalization theory provides limited understanding for how such complexity emerged in the first place. A longitudinal research study could enlighten how such complexity came about by potentially relating it to larger structural changes and through other theoretical lenses. Finally, throughout the study, we have identified that the topic of circular economy has not been widely researched. However part of another discussion, but embracing our role as carriers, we still argue for the necessity of understanding and exploring the needed system change in several industries.
References

A


B


C


D


E


F

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G


H


J


Meyer, J. W. 2014. ‘Empowered Actors, Local Settings, and Global Rationalization’ in G. S. Drori, M. A. Höllerer & P. Walgenbach (eds), Global Themes and Local Variations in


# Appendices

## Appendix 1: List of data sources - documents, videos and interviews

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NR</th>
<th>Document - type</th>
<th>Document - title</th>
<th>Pages</th>
<th>Main carrier(s)</th>
<th>Contributing carrier(s)</th>
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</table>

Note: + means collaboration between carriers. / means carriers applicable to several categories.
Appendix 2: Semi structured interview guides

**Interview 1 - Consultant:**
Introducing ourselves and the research topic in broad terms.
May we record this interview with your permission?
Would you/your organization like to be anonymous?

General question:
1. Can you tell us about your work duties and responsibilities?

The carrier role:
2. Tell us about the report X?
3. Who does the report mainly target?
4. What were the initial thoughts behind the report - how did the report come about?
5. What was the aim with the report, the short and long term goal?
6. Can you tell us more about your source of knowledge in order to provide the report?
7. Tell us about the collaborations behind the report? Can you explain KTH - Royal Institute of Technology’s role in the report?
8. How do you think that you and your company can help with promoting a circular economy in the fashion industry?

Future prediction:
9. What are your thoughts about the future for circular economy/circular business models within the fashion industry?

**Interview 2 - NGO:**
Introducing ourselves and the research topic in broad terms.
May we record this interview with your permission?
Would you/your organization like to be anonymous?

General question:
1. Can you tell us about your work duties and responsibilities?

The carrier role:
2. Can you tell us about your activities and seminars regarding sustainability/circularity?
3. What is the main reasons for your organization to engage in such activities?
4. Who is your main target audience?
5. What do you think that your (and your organization’s) work regarding circularity can lead to in short and long term?
6. Can you tell us more about your sources of knowledge in the subject “circularity”?
7. Do you and your workplace have collaborations with others regarding circularity and sustainability?
8. Would you consider the relationships with others in the industry to be connected with
you in person or with the organization?
9. How do you think that you and your company can help with promoting a circular economy in the fashion industry?

Future prediction:
10. What are your thoughts about the future for circular economy/circular business models within the fashion industry?

Interview 3 - NGO/Academia “An academic research umbrella organization”:
Introducing ourselves and the research topic in broad terms.
May we record this interview with your permission?
Would you/your organization like to be anonymous?

General question:
1. Can you tell us about your work duties and responsibilities?

The carrier role:
2. What is the primary reason for your organization’s work within circular fashion?
3. In what way does your organization’s work contribute towards increased circularity within fashion?
4. Can you tell us more about your sources of knowledge in the subject “circularity”?
5. Besides publishing reports, can you tell us about your work towards circular fashion?
6. How would you describe your relations and networks with others working for sustainable fashion?
7. How would you describe your collaborations with others?

Your personal role:
8. In your role at the organization, how do you promote the development on circular fashion?

Future prediction:
9. What are your thoughts about the future for circular economy/circular business models within the fashion industry?
Appendix 3: Coding scheme

First theoretical argument examined through - editing rules:

**Dominant theme - institutional context**
- Theme (keywords):
  - Politics & regulation: (agenda, government, nation, public, municipality, tax relief, public procurement, policy rule, law, regulate, standard, legislation, guideline, ban, quota).
  - Management: (business, strategy, business model, supply-chain, revenue, efficiency, productivity, value chain, practices, economy).
  - Research & Development: (innovation, entrepreneur, development, research, technical, best-practice, design, open-source, evidence-base, incubators).
  - Historical & Societal (consumer behavior, tradition, system).
- Geographical context: local, national, international.
- Audience: citizens, corporations, consumers, shareholders.

**Dominant argument - logic**
- Rationale (keywords):
  - economic: (money, revenue, win-win, profitability, earning, margin, interest, EBIT, cost, value, competition, differentiation).
  - morale: (right, wrong, societal, ethical, livelihood, good, bad).
  - environmental: (sustainability, survival, planet, scarce resources, environment, renewable, recycling, health, ecosystem, footprint, climate, landfill).
  - legitimacy: (reputation, status, trust, stakeholders).
  - growth: (market share, maximize, GDP, economies of scale).
- Threat or opportunity?
- Qualitative or quantitative?

**Dominant storytelling - formulation**
- Actors: Best-practices, gurus, politicians, collaborations between parts.
- Conveyed through:
  - generalized or specific content.
  - dramatic or neutral tone.
  - normative or descriptive tone.
Second theoretical argument examined through - mapping:

Cross-referencing
- Cross-referencing to other types of carriers.
- Indirect and direct cross-referencing to other documents within the study - chart 1.
- Indirect cross referencing by common key phrases used among the documents.

Alliances
- Funding and assignment.
- Co-writing.

Third theoretical argument - re-examining editing rules and mapping:

Linked
- Chains of translation: the translation of a circular fashion system by one carrier is build on the translation of another through cross-referencing.

Joint
- Different actors through alliances jointly translate a circular fashion system for a common audience.