Integrating Sustainability

A study of consultants’ translation of the Integrated Reporting framework in a Swedish context

Master’s Thesis 30 credits
Department of Business Studies
Uppsala University
Spring Semester of 2015

Date of Submission: 2015-05-28

Anne Kihlström
Klara-Lotta Larsson

Supervisor: Gunilla Myreteg
Abstract
The present study examines how legitimacy is created in consultants’ translation of the Integrated Reporting (IR) framework in a Swedish context. The aim was to understand which logics from the sociology of worth (SOW) the consultants’ translation of the IR framework will build on in making it a legitimate practice in a Swedish context. The study employed three aspects presented by Patriotta et al. (2011), where actors provide justifications in order to attain legitimacy, to describe the translation process. Boltanski and Thévenot’s SOW was applied to discern what logics that were present and compromised upon in the translation process to make the IR framework a legitimate practice in a Swedish context. The present study mainly found the logics of fame, industrial and market, but other logics was also found in the process of making a legitimate translation of the IR framework by the consultants. Thus resulting in a broad compromise of logics, generating potentially vague and ambiguous statements of sustainability. If integrated reporting is the future for corporate reporting, then these dominating logics in the translation of the IR framework might set the tone for the sustainability reporting that will be spread by consultants in a Swedish context.

Keywords: Integrated Reporting, IR Framework, Sustainability Reporting, IIRC, Sociology of Worth, Legitimacy, Consultants, Translation of Management Ideas, Sweden
Acknowledgements
We would like to thank our supervisor, Gunilla Myreteg, Senior Lecturer at the Department of Business studies at Uppsala University, for her feedback and encouragements during our process of writing the thesis. Moreover, we would also like to express our gratitude toward the respondents in contributing to our research by putting time aside from their busy schedules to be interviewed.
Table of Content

1. Introduction ........................................................................................................................................... 1
   1.1 Background ........................................................................................................................................ 1
   1.2 Problematization ............................................................................................................................. 2
   1.3 Research Question & Aim of Study ................................................................................................. 4
   1.4 Contribution ..................................................................................................................................... 4

2. Theory ...................................................................................................................................................... 6
   2.1 Theoretical Background .................................................................................................................. 6
      2.1.1 Experts, Audit & Sustainability Accounting .............................................................................. 6
      2.1.2 Sustainability and Integrated Reporting .................................................................................. 8
      2.1.3 Role of Consultants & Translation of Management Ideas ..................................................... 10
   2.2 Theoretical framework .................................................................................................................... 11
      2.2.1 Theoretical Point of Departure ............................................................................................... 11
      2.2.2 Sociology of Worth ................................................................................................................ 12
      2.2.3 Summary of Theoretical Framework ...................................................................................... 14

3. Method .................................................................................................................................................... 16
   3.1 Research Strategy ..........................................................................................................................., 16
      3.1.1 Qualitative Data Collection - Semi Structured Interviews ..................................................... 16
   3.2 Research Process ..........................................................................................................................., 17
      3.2.1 Choice of Literature and Source Criticism .............................................................................. 17
      3.2.2 Operationalization ................................................................................................................ 18
      3.2.3 Selection of Respondents ....................................................................................................... 19
      3.2.4 Development of Interview Guide ......................................................................................... 21
      3.2.5 Execution of Interviews ......................................................................................................... 21
      3.2.6 Analysis of the Interview Material .......................................................................................... 22
      3.2.7 Presentation of the Key Findings ............................................................................................ 22
      3.2.8 Ethics in the Research Process ............................................................................................... 22
      3.2.9 Reliability & Validity ............................................................................................................ 22

4. Results ................................................................................................................................................... 24
   4.1 Respondents’ Presentation of Rationales in Line with Socially Accepted Definitions of the Common Good ........................................................................................................... 24
      4.1.1 General Opinions .................................................................................................................... 24
      4.1.2 Interpretations of Objectives and Goals with IR ................................................................... 24
      4.1.3 Integrated Reporting Written for Different Stakeholders ..................................................... 25
      4.1.4 Analysis ................................................................................................................................... 25
   4.2 Respondents’ Active Engagement with Competing Definitions of the Common Good .......... 26
      4.2.1 The Balance Between Concrete and Complex Statements & Use of Language ................ 26
      4.2.2 Auditors and Swedish Law as Barriers to the Use of the IR Framework ............................... 27
      4.2.3 Utilizing Transparency ......................................................................................................... 27
      4.2.4 Different Divisions, Different Perspectives ......................................................................... 28
      4.2.5 How Consultants View Their Role in Creating Integration ................................................ 28
      4.2.6 Analysis .................................................................................................................................. 29
   4.3 The Requirement of Specific Competencies in Developing Effective Justifications to Construct Convincing Arguments and Accounts .................................................................................. 31
      4.3.1 Comparability and Individuality in What to Report on .......................................................... 31
      4.3.2 Finding Relevant Aspects to Include in the Integrated Report ............................................. 31
      4.3.3 Beyond Reporting, Changing Internal Processes of Corporations .................................... 32
      4.3.4 ... and Changing How Consultancies Work ....................................................................... 32
      4.3.5 Analysis ................................................................................................................................... 33

5. Conclusion & Discussion ...................................................................................................................... 35
   5.1 Conclusions ...................................................................................................................................... 35
   5.2 Discussion & Suggestions for Future Research .............................................................................. 36

6. References .............................................................................................................................................. 39

7. Appendix ............................................................................................................................................... 42
1. Introduction

1.1 Background

There is a plurality of meanings stemming from every word we use when phrasing our thoughts into sentences, these are subject to different interpretations, hence, how we choose to understand things and what then creates our expectations has great room for variation. Depending on the morals of different people and organizations, the concept of worth can be ambiguous when put in a context, in this sense, the value of something might be different from its price (Stark, 2009). Stark (2009) refers to the creation of a value as something that occurs not only in one single way but through multiple principles of evaluation.

The multiple principles in the process of value creation are reflected in the justifications made in society and are referred to as sociology of worth (SOW) by Boltanski and Thévenot (2006). The SOW are divided into six different logics, consisting of the logic of the: market, civic, industrial, domestic, fame and inspiration. These logics affect how we make sense of things and can help us understand how values are interpreted in modern economies (van Bommel, 2014). Annisette & Richardson (2011) were early to apply Boltanski and Thévenot’s Justification theory and the SOW to analyze and discuss issues in accounting research. Annisette and Richardson (2011) highlighted the advantage of using the six logics of the SOW to understand the processes of measurement and comparison of worth and values in society and argued that this is useful in the scrutinizing of accounting issues.

The development of standards for companies to follow in their sustainability reporting has been an evident part within the research field of corporate sustainability (Azcárate, Carrasco & Fernandez, 2011). Back in the eighties, the Brundtland Commission report made an attempt to concretize sustainability, stating that sustainable development is about equity, both intragenerational and intergenerational (Buhr, Gray & Milne, 2014). Reporting initiatives concerning sustainability emerged in the following chronological, but of course overlapping order: employee reporting, social reporting, environmental reporting, and in recent years the initiatives has had other labels of a more hybrid nature (Buhr et al., 2014). The initiatives for these standards have varied from disclosure requirements of multinational companies, country specific corporations and industry specific companies with aim to evaluate and provide guidelines for reporting of environmental issues, social and ethical issues as well as health and safety issues (Azcárate et al., 2011).

Buhr et al. (2014) critically questioned if individual organizations’ sustainability accounting is meaningful at all. Further, (Grey, 2010) claims that sustainability has gotten lost in corporate speak, more concerned with communicating favorable narratives and less with taking responsibility. It has also met critique for being a vague concept making it adaptable to many heterogeneous sectors and companies where its voluntary nature make it an inefficient way to report (Windell, 2007; Cooper & Owen, 2007). Engwall and Sahlin-Andersson (2002) describe how it is increasingly reported that organizations are becoming more and more similar in terms of how they are presented and accounted for. Gray (2010) argues that the
discourse of sustainability is unchallenged through the repetition and use of its ambiguous term in reports, whereas Malsch (2013) claims that its flexible applicability to fit a broader audience creates room for constant negotiations in the adaptation of existing standards. Pallas and Fredriksson (2015) claim that organizational structures, processes and responsibilities can be presumed to be responses to expectations in their environment. By complying with norms and ideas held by stakeholders in their environment, organizations reduce risks of disruptions in their operations. One form of uncertainty/risk in the organizational environment stems from moral imperatives, for example a change in expectations on corporate social responsibility (CSR) (Pallas & Fredriksson, 2015). In the strive for legitimacy, corporations adapt to the socially constructed norms, beliefs and values that are considered desirable and proper by society (Suchman, 1995).

1.2 Problematization
As investors and other stakeholders are increasingly relying on nonfinancial aspects to evaluate potential investments, there is pressure on companies to disclose their sustainability engagement (Hughen, Lulseged & Upton, 2014). The International Integrated Reporting Council (IIRC) has created a globally accepted framework for financial reporting that is integrating information on sustainability with financial data, which was released in December 2013, called Integrated Reporting framework (IR in sort) (Hughen et al., 2014). There is an increased use of integrated reporting among companies and the trend is reflecting an increased demand on the reporting of non-financial aspects such as social and environmental issues (KPMG, 2013). A purpose with integrated reporting is to reflect the relation between economic, environmental and social governance with the financial aspects and their effects on long-term performance (Hughen et al., 2014). It is supposed to give a more complete picture of how the company is creating value over long time (Hughen et al., 2014). The IR framework is principle based with the intent to create a balance of prescription and flexibility to take into account the individuality of organizations but also to achieve an adequate degree of comparability between them (The <IR> Framework, 2013).

There are researchers claiming that integrated reporting is the future for non-financial reporting (Eccles & Saltzman, 2011; Hughen et al., 2014). Azcaráte et al. (2011) criticized the activities of sustainability ordained from existing standards and guidelines for not contributing enough to the development of sustainability. To change status quo, indicators measuring environmental, social and economic aspects of sustainability must be integrated in a combination of connecting an organization's business performance with the state of its environment (Azcaráte et al., 2011). The IR framework is a relatively new publication in the field of sustainability reporting, and therefore, to our knowledge, not much research has been done on the IR framework. Van Bommel (2014) performed a study on integrated reporting in the Dutch reporting field using the SOW and concluded that the multiplicity of meanings for the value of the IR framework leaved great room for how to interpret it and also strong influence of professionals advancing their commercial agendas. It was further claimed by van Bommel (2014) that in order for the IR framework to become a legitimate practice it has to find a compromise between different logics of valuation. The SOW has also been used in a
study by Patriotta, Gond and Schultz (2011) in order to discern activities taken by different stakeholder groups to maintain legitimacy through an organizational scandal. In line with the previous statement by Pallas and Fredriksson (2015), Patriotta et al. (2011) claim that certain occurrences might disrupt the business-as-usual for organizations, challenging the legitimacy as the social contract between an organization and its institutional context could be questioned. This can create a need to build arguments and justifications for what is being questioned in order to retain legitimacy. We see the emergence of a new reporting framework as a disruptive occurrence for organizations that might challenge their legitimacy and urge them to justify their operations towards their stakeholders. By translating the IR framework, and finding a balance between stakeholder interests and norms in their social context, the organizations maintain their legitimacy. In the face of a disruptive event, such as a scandal or new reporting framework, Patriotta et al. (2011) claim that actors should justify their position towards their audience by providing rationales that are in line with the social definition of the common good and also actively engage in conflicting definitions of it claimed by different social groups.

In order for the justifications to be effective, convincing arguments had to be created, requiring specific competencies (Patriotta et al., 2011).

Engwall and Sahlin-Andersson (2002) stated that it is commonly known that managers hire consultants to handle issues that they neither have the competence, nor capacity to handle or resolve. In the consultants’ construction of convincing arguments, the success of a service connected to a management idea offered by a consultant is dependent on the communicability of it, the service flows better when it is easily understood by the clients (Rövik, 2002). Making the service communicable requires that the consultants are able to disseminate the management knowledge connected to it, in order for them to package or frame it in a way that is appropriate in the setting it is to be sold, and attach an attractive and commonly communicated label (for example BPR, TQM etc.) to make it easily understandable to the client (Windell, 2007). This interpretation process whereas a concept is freely construed to fit the agenda of the consultant, leaves considerable room for the rendering of a concept, resulting in different behaviors and accounts in the different settings to which it was translated (Furusten, Werr & Alexius, 2012). Ultimately resulting in an array of embodiments under the same named concept (Windell, 2007). Engwall and Sahlin-Andersson (2002) argue that the use of consultants have become institutionalized through state regulation, industry norms and the urge to succeed in business. With the role of experts, consultants are producers and validators of knowledge laying the ground for corporate decisions (Malsch, 2013).

It has been claimed that corporate reporting has gotten lost in corporate speak, not becoming anything else than just narratives and not contributing to change status quo of corporate sustainability. Consultants in the role of experts act as interpreters and by producing knowledge they can freely construe the meaning of sustainability practices to fit their agendas, which is argued to be driven by the commercialization of sustainability services. The IR framework is a fairly new idea on how to report on corporate sustainability and have so far not gained real ground in the Swedish context. Hence, we consider it to be in an early phase in the translation process of becoming a legitimate practice in the Swedish context where influencing consultants now are setting the tone for its continuous development. In
order for the IR framework to become legitimate it must be given a value. The value creation, as above mentioned, occurs through multiple principles of evaluation in society (logics of worth), reflected in SOW, resulting in a compromise between them. As the IR framework is principle based and surrounded by a multiplicity of meanings concerning the valuation of sustainability and with the influencing role of consultants as translators, it is not certain which logics, from the SOW, that the compromise will consist of. It has been claimed that integrated reporting is the future for non-financial reporting. However, if the IR framework as a legitimate practice would be dominated by a logic derived from making money, one could question if the IR framework will contribute with any real changes within the field of sustainability accounting and transform it into something else than just narratives. By discerning what logics are present early in the translation process of the IR framework into a Swedish context it opens up for an early questioning and critical standpoint towards its contribution to the development of sustainability reporting.

1.3 Research Question & Aim of Study
This leads up to the research question of the present study:

*How is the Integrated Reporting framework translated by consultants into a Swedish context?*

In the present study, we are guided by the notion that consultants engage in the translation process in the legitimizing of the IR framework. The aim of the present study is to understand which logics from the SOW the consultants’ translation of the IR framework will build on in making it a legitimate practice in a Swedish context.

1.4 Contribution
Patriotta et al. (2011) looked upon the process of justifications in the case of disputes over legitimacy, examining how different stakeholders used justifications in order to maintain the legitimacy of institutions relevant to their activities. The current study makes use of the process of justifications by Patriotta et al. (2011) in order to explain in further detail what aspects the translation process include, where justifications are presented by consultants in order to make a legitimate translation of the IR framework in a Swedish context. By looking at the use of justifications by consultants, the present study academically contributes with a perspective of what a translation process with regard of a reporting framework may look like. This is done by examining how the consultants justify their translations by providing rationales in line with the common good, engage with competing definitions of the common good held by different stakeholders, and use their competencies to construct effective justifications. By treating the translation as a process where justifications are made, the study discerns which logics from the SOW that are present in the translation process of the IR framework by consultants into a Swedish context. Van Bommel (2014) performed a study on integrated reporting in the Netherlands using the SOW and concluded that the IR framework has to find a compromise between different logics of valuation to become a legitimate practice, leaving great room for how to interpret it. Since the van Bommel study was carried out in the Netherlands it is of interest to conduct a similar study in Sweden to broaden our understanding of how the interpretation of the IR framework is carried out in a different
national context. The IR framework has been said to be the future of non-financial reporting and we seek to understand what logics the legitimate practice of the IR framework will consist of, which could create an awareness of what direction the development of sustainability reporting is heading in a Swedish context.
2. Theory

In the first part of the following section a literature review will be presented as the foundation for the used theories and concepts in the current study. It starts with a review of a section of sustainability accounting and its characteristics are presented with the involvement of experts. Then, sustainability and integrated reporting are presented. Further, literature on the role of consultants as carriers and translators of management ideas is put forward. In the second part of the chapter the theoretical framework is presented. This part starts with an introduction by reviewing the literature from where the present study has found its inspiration. Then, Justification theory and the Sociology of Worth are presented. The theory section ends with a summary and a review of how the presented literature and concepts will be used and applied in the analysis.

2.1 Theoretical Background

2.1.1 Experts, Audit & Sustainability Accounting
Within the area of accounting, requirements on reporting for sustainability have been growing over the past decades (Buhr et al., 2014). The development of standards and certifications of social responsibility have made companies strive to align their business strategies and operations with sustainability (Malsch, 2013). Power (1994) refers to the “audit society” where companies make themselves auditable in order to gain trust and legitimacy, whereas, Shore and Wright (2000) also argue that corporations actively adapt their own image in order to become auditable. Pallas and Fredriksson (2015) stated that corporations comply with norms and ideas in their environment to reduce risks and uncertainty and become legitimate. The above mentioned is useful in our study as it could imply that corporations comply with the ruling logic of the context where they operate in the process of gaining trust and legitimacy, hence, justifying their operations by conforming to the rules of the IR framework.

CSR as a management idea have been claimed to be adopted into organizations with the motif of reputation building as a mean of pursuing profit maximization (Cooper & Owen, 2007; Ioana & Adriana, 2014). It has also met critique for being a vague concept making it adaptable to many heterogeneous sectors and companies where its voluntary nature make it an inefficient way to report (Cooper & Owen, 2007; Windell, 2007). Malsch (2013) discuss what he considers to be the economization of sustainability and CSR. He claims that the economization of these concepts is a result of rationalization efforts where the introduction of social and moral thinking into business is justified on a logic of profitability. This statement made by Malsch (2013) is in line with the dominating logics that van Bommel (2014) found in the framework of IR, which was a compromise dominated by the market and industrial logics.

The rational morality of the market is claimed by Malsch (2013) to be aligned with the practices of CSR through the work of professional actors such as accountants and consultants. He claims that decisions made by corporations are increasingly being based on
technical analyses by these professional actors. The decision making process is increasingly based on the rationality and efficiency of the market, where consultants take the role of experts. With legitimate tools for the production of knowledge and its validation, experts act as spokespersons to the non-human objects (for example frameworks) which are characterized as being efficient and true (Malsch, 2013). It is interesting in the perspective of our thesis to look at the process of how professional actors such as consultants are contributing to the creation of company reports as implementers of knowledge, justifying the logic of profitability and compromising values in the realm of the rational moral of the market.

Gray (2010) raised critique against the accounting of sustainability for not being able to measure and take into consideration the complex reality that the accounts are seeking to interpret. He compares the accounts of sustainability by narratives of local organizational events expressing the relationship between the organization and its stakeholder and surrounding environment. These accounts are criticized by Gray (2010) for not offering any evidential grounds for what is actually being stated in official reports. Gray (2010) argues along with Malsch (2013) and van Bommel (2014), that the pervasive narratives of sustainability are comprised of a win-win cocktail of economic achievement and social responsiveness.

According to Malsch (2013), accounting firms provide clients with instruments used to support companies in their production of sustainability information that are considered to consist of standardized definitions and general measurements in order to appeal a broad audience and to offer flexible applicability for a range of different purposes. The constructed disclosure standards and codes of conduct are adaptable to fit the conditions of activity of every individual organization and are therefore always possible to renegotiate (Malsch, 2013). The voluntary nature of activities with regard of sustainability gives companies the possibility to choose their own approach towards it (Ditlev-Simonsen, 2010). The repetition of the sustainability term and compromises made leave the discourse unchallenged and these accounts become communicators and constructors of reality (Gray, 2010). Adopting socially responsible practices is characterized by problem solving between different stakeholders (Malsch, 2013). Malsch (2013) highlighted the mediating role of regulatory frameworks, and argued that taking every stakeholder criteria of what is socially, economically or ethically acceptable information to disclose into accounts would be impossible as these are often contradictory. Rather, frameworks should be concerned with reaching a satisfactory compromise.

Azcárate et al. (2011) highlights the importance of indicators that measure the environmental, social and economic aspects of sustainability and that they must be integrated to offer a holistic view of sustainability for the company. Further, it is also required to connect a company’s business performance with the state of its environment. These two must be combined in the reporting on environmental, social and economic aspects, in order to contribute to the development of sustainability and the abandonment of the status quo (Azcárate et al., 2011).
2.1.2 Sustainability and Integrated Reporting

Financial reporting is considered a legitimate procedure due to its inclusion of standards for measurement, reporting and auditing, control and measurement systems as well as information technology to rapidly capture and aggregate data (Eccles & Saltzman, 2011). Eccles & Saltzman (2011) state that financial reports have however been criticized for its complexity making it difficult for users of the reports to grasp its content. Further, the backward looking trait of financial reports and the lacking information regarding risks that are taken by the organization in order to create shareholder value has raised questions whether shareholders are given a fair and correct picture of the organizational performance (Eccles & Saltzman 2011). Eccles and Saltzman (2011) state that what is also missing in the purely financial reports are environmental and societal aspects of organizational performance, which was initially information of interest for other stakeholders than shareholders. In sustainability reports corporations can communicate this information and meet these requirements for transparency towards their stakeholders (Gray, 2010; Malsch, 2013). By including the non-financial data a company is also being transparent about its long-term financial picture (Eccles & Saltzman, 2011). Investors are to a greater extent relying on other data than just the financial when making investments and other decisions and are therefore putting pressure on organizations to disclose information on sustainability (Hughen et al. 2014). In order for corporations to disclose trustworthy presentations of its performance it is claimed that the reports also need to include non-financial data (Eccles & Saltzman, 2011).

Pedersen, Neergard and Pedersen (2013) mention that reporting on sustainability has been considered an important part of corporations’ communications for decades. Further, it is claimed that with a focus of becoming legitimate in the eyes of stakeholders other than investors, companies have adapted to institutional pressures and reported their CSR initiatives according to institutionally set up standards guiding their sustainability reporting. One of these standards that have been spread worldwide and is used by thousands of organizations in their reporting for sustainability is the Global Initiative Reporting (GRI) (GRI, 2015). The GRI framework provides guidelines and principles for sustainability reporting that organizations can make use of in their reporting on economic, social and environmental impacts and performance (globalreporting.org). The GRI framework has been developed into different updated versions with the latest one called G4 helping companies to focus on only important sustainability impacts and provide information that is critical to stakeholders and the business (GRI, 2015). Sweden is one of the countries that to a certain degree requires sustainability reporting, obliging companies to report on environmental and social activities (Eccles & Saltzman, 2011; Pedersen et al., 2013). Since 2008, the Swedish government requires every publicly owned company to present their sustainability reports following GRI with a purpose of being a role model for other Swedish organizations (Näringsdepartementet, 2010).

GRI as a provider of sustainability reporting standards have been criticized for not contributing to a sustainable development (Azcárate et al., 2011), whereas Ioana and Adriana (2014) claim that one way for organizations to contribute to the development of a sustainable society is by using integrated reporting. The newest framework to guide corporations in their
sustainability reporting is the Integrated Reporting (IR) framework developed by the International Integrated Reporting Council (IIRC) (The IIRC, 2015). IIRC is a global coalition consisting of investors, regulators, companies, NGO’s, standard setters and the accounting profession with the view that the next step in corporate reporting is the communication about value creation (The IIRC, 2015). According to the <IR> framework (2013) the main purpose of an integrated report is to provide investors with information on how an organization creates value over time and the standards are of voluntary application. In being principle based, the IR framework has the intention to create a balance between prescription and flexibility to take into account the individuality of organizations and also to achieve comparability (The <IR> Framework, 2013). An integrated report should aim to be concise, advocating a more cohesive and efficient approach to corporate reporting that is jargon-free and understandable (<IR> Framework, 2013). Further, the IR framework claims to benefit all stakeholders such as employees, customers, business partners, suppliers, legislators, local communities, regulators and policy-makers. A fundamental part of the IR framework is the six capitals, which aims to encourage the organizations to consider all forms of capitals that they use or affect, however, organizations do not have to report on every capital (The <IR> Framework, 2013). The capitals presented are; financial, manufactured, intellectual, human, social-relationship and natural. In figure 1 the capitals are described in relation to an organization's value creation, business model and external environment (The <IR> Framework, 2013).

Buhr et al. (2014) criticize the IR framework from being derived from an investor perspective, and they argued that there are other stakeholders that have more important claims to the development of sustainability reporting, further, they do not believe that it is the investors that drive the demand for accountability and sustainability information. On the other hand, it has also been claimed that the IR framework will decrease the confusion and information dissemination with having separate reports (Ioana & Adriana, 2014).

![Figure 1. Description of the value creation process (The <IR> Framework 2013, p. 13)](image-url)
2.1.3 Role of Consultants & Translation of Management Ideas

Laws, regulations and agreements as well as norms govern and assure corporate responsibility, creating a constant change in time and space of prevailing views and norms (Czarniawska & Joerges, 1996; Morris & Lancaster, 2006). Institutional theory discusses how ideas of what we think are appropriate behavior shape the actions of corporations as they seek to gain legitimacy (Windell, 2006). As a company communicates that it is acting in accordance to these beliefs it has a positive effect on the corporate image (Hatch & Schultz, 1997).

Furusten et al. (2012) discuss the relationship between consultants and their clients and the roles played in the adaptation and translation of management ideas. The authors found that these actors together play an active role in the re-interpretation and re-articulation of popular management ideas, leaving considerable room for interpretations. It has been argued that consultants play a significant role in processes of organizational change, and that there are few organizations that venture into a change process without the support of consultants (Engwall & Sahlin-Andersson, 2002; Armbüster & Kipping, 2002). More commonly it is known that managers hire consultants to handle issues that they neither have the knowledge, nor capacity to handle or resolve (Armbüster & Kipping, 2002). Engwall and Sahlin-Andersson (2002) argue that the use of consultants have become institutionalized through industry norms, state regulation and the urge to succeed in business. Czarniawska & Joerges (1996) described consultants as travelling salesmen that go around to corporations with suitcases filled with quasi objects (general management ideas) that can be translated into localized management ideas. The authors place consultants in the “spiral of translations” which is the process by which management ideas are spread and interpreted. Consultants transmit different kinds of management knowledge to their clients, and a common task is to translate general management trends and adapt them into the daily routines of their clients (Furusten et al., 2012). Armbüster & Kipping (2002) argue that consultants have become the main transmitters of management knowledge.

Windell (2007) examined the role of consultants in the commercialization of CSR in Sweden. Although the research examines the emergence of CSR in general, we find the points raised on how the process of translating the ideas into the Swedish business context are valuable to use to improve our understanding of how the IR framework is translated into a Swedish context. Windell (2007) found the commercialization process of CSR through consultants in Sweden had three main stages; (1) labeling, (2) packaging and (3) mobilizing. In the first stage, the many ideas of what was socially responsible actions for corporations was diffused and put onto one fluffy label, making it easier for the consultants to raise awareness and use general arguments of what was considered responsible corporate behavior. In the second stage, the fluffy ideas of CSR were translated and packaged into saleable services, linking problems and solutions. Further, making it easier for the consultants to translate the fluffiness into their own areas of expertise rather than putting the ideas into one tangible form. In the third and final stage the consultants had to sell the concept of CSR to their clients by convincing them of the value of their service, promoting stories of economic success and building commercial arguments. This process resulted in a clarification and simplification of
CSR, making it a management idea easily understood by organizations (Windell, 2007). The translating and labeling process mainly performed by consultancies results in broadly diverse services being sold and carried out under the same label (Armbüster & Kipping, 2002; Windell, 2007).

Windell (2006) argues that we can expand our knowledge of the interrelations between the institutional model of the organization and ideas about organizational behavior, by examining why and how the idea of CSR is constructed. Rövik (2002) examined why and how successful management ideas and standards came to be prosperous, in this study a few points were lifted that are especially relevant to our study. The successful management ideas needed to become commoditized, meaning that they could be transformed into products, like the IR framework, in order to be marketed to companies throughout the world. Rövik (2002) points out that an important factor for a standard to gain success is that it is in line with the logic of the market and that it is universalized. This means that the standard considers all organizations to be more or less similar systems, with parallel needs, and the standard itself is based on the logic that it can produce positive results independently of where or to which kind of organization it is applied to (Rövik, 2002).

As mentioned earlier, in audit society it is claimed that companies make themselves auditable in order to conform to the need of being monitored, and by adapting to these practices companies gain legitimacy (Shore & Wright, 2000; Power, 1996). Furthermore, Rövik (2002) states that successful management ideas downplay variations between organizations and emphasize similarities. In order for the organizations to successfully adapt a management standard they should communicate, more or less, the same components as commonly accepted as legitimate (Rövik, 2002).

Theory on the travel of management ideas is applied in the present study to explain the present study’s approach toward the rendering and dissemination of the principles of the IR framework. Despite the IR framework not being defined as a management idea, the theory of the translation of management ideas is according to us, appropriate to understand the consultants’ translation of the IR framework into a Swedish context.

### 2.2 Theoretical framework

#### 2.2.1 Theoretical Point of Departure

We have been inspired by the article “Towards a legitimate compromise” by Koen van Bommel (2014). The study focuses on the possibilities and difficulties on the development of a legitimate way of accounting for sustainability that is integrated with financial information. Van Bommel (2014) used the Sociology of worth (SOW) to analyze the emergence of the IR framework in the Dutch reporting field. To become a legitimate practice acceptable to society, the IR framework is a compromise between multiple logics and hence avoids clarifications, making it acceptable and legitimate but fuzzy and ambiguous in its expression on how to account for sustainability. Further, van Bommel (2014) found that the use of the IR framework can be seen as driven by professional actors such as accountants and investors,
propagating mainly the industrial and market logics. Van Bommel (2014) was not the first one to use the SOW in the field of accounting. Annisette & Richardson (2011) were early to apply Boltanski and Thévenot’s Justification theory and the SOW to analyze and discuss issues in accounting research. Annisette & Richardson (2011) highlighted the advantage of using the SOW to understand the processes of measurement and comparison of values in society and argued that this is useful in the scrutinizing of accounting issues. We consider the above mentioned to be useful when looking at the translation of the IR framework as it is translated by consultants into a Swedish context.

In Boltanski and Thévenot’s (2006) Justification theory, the institutional environment is consisting of many different logics that all have legitimate forms of the common good, where legitimacy is achieved by competent agents in the public debate. These agents are able to manipulate the logics through justification whose efficiency depends on how they are constructed and put forward (Boltanski & Thévenot, 2006).

2.2.2 Sociology of Worth
Boltanski and Thévenot (2006) argue that there are multiple ways of justification in our society, these are divided into six logics and are referred to as sociology of worth (SOW). They are the logics of the; market, civic, industrial, domestic, fame and inspired. Stark (2009) argues that these factors contribute to a sense of multiple bounded rationalities as one person could be governed by several logics. These logics affect how we make sense of things and could help us understand how values are interpreted in modern economies (van Bommel 2014).

Annisette and Richardson (2011) summarized the attributes of the six logics of the SOW. They described how the logic of civic is characterized by the notion that the common good as the collective welfare, and that this should come at the expense of one’s self interest. The industrial logic constitutes evaluation in the terms of technical efficiency, expertise, planning and long-term growth. The domestic logic is governed by personal needs and traditions, and people are assessed and given a value based on a hierarchy of trust. In the logic of the market, people and things are assessed and classified on the basis of market performance. Worth in the logic of fame is determined by public opinion and prominence, and measured by popularity. The inspired logic is recognized by creativity and uniqueness (Annisette & Richardson 2011). In the justification of what is considered valuable, actors refer to the common good, which varies between multiple logics (Boltanski & Thévenot, 2006).
Van Bommel (2014) used the SOW to clarify the process of reaching agreements, through the creation of compromises among the different logics that he also found different elements of in his study. The durability of the IR framework as a legitimate compromise is questioned by van Bommel (2014) due to difficulties in finding a common interest, the avoidance of clarification and the maintenance of ambiguity. An important part of the process of reaching a compromise is to find consensus in an adequate term, a formulation that is acceptable to all actors (Boltanski & Thévenot, 2006). According to van Bommel (2014) the compromises between logics leads to values that are vague concepts of sustainability as it is a prerequisite to find legitimacy in a broader audience.

Patriotta et al. (2011) claim that in the disputes over legitimacy, it is necessary for social actors to present justifications for their positions towards an audience. This includes three related aspects. The first aspect is that “…actors have to provide rationales consistent with socially accepted definitions of the common good” (Patriotta et al., 2011, p. 1805). The second aspect is how “…actors may have to actively engage with competing definitions of the common good held by different social groups” (Patriotta et al., 2011, p. 1805). The third and final aspect is that “…the development of effective justifications in such contexts requires specific competencies with regard to the construction of convincing accounts and arguments” (Patriotta et al., 2011, p. 1805).

The SOW is based on the assumption that there is not one single or broad definition of justice in our society, rather, Boltanski and Thévenot (2006) hypothesize that there are at least six logics determining means in which an action can be considered just. These logics are

Table 2. Summary of the attributes of each logic (Annisette & Richardson 2011, p. 233)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Civic</th>
<th>Industrial</th>
<th>Domestic</th>
<th>Market</th>
<th>Inspired</th>
<th>Fame</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Higher common principle</td>
<td>Civic duty</td>
<td>Efficiency, performance</td>
<td>Tradition, hierarchy</td>
<td>Competition, Rivalry</td>
<td>Inspiration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State of worthiness</td>
<td>Representative, free, official, dependable</td>
<td>Effective, functional, understandable</td>
<td>Benevolent, well laid, wise, sensible</td>
<td>Desirable, valuable, useful, winner</td>
<td>Beauty, different, original, spontaneous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human dignity</td>
<td>Freedom, democracy, civil rights</td>
<td>Work, energy, activities</td>
<td>Comfort, ease, judgment</td>
<td>Self-interest, desire, consumption</td>
<td>Love, passion, creativity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List of subjects</td>
<td>Electors, office holders, members, representatives</td>
<td>Professional, experts, specialists</td>
<td>Father, king, expert, boss, stranger, chief</td>
<td>Competitors, clients, buyers, sellers, sellers</td>
<td>Visionary, child, artist, woman, fairy, criminal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List of objects</td>
<td>Tools, resources, methods, plans, norms, tasks</td>
<td>Good numbers, etiquette, titles, rank, gifts</td>
<td>Wealth, consumer goods and luxury objects</td>
<td>Wealth, consumer goods and luxury objects</td>
<td>Spirit, body, dress, the unconscious</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Investment formula</td>
<td>Renunciation of personal interests, solidarity, struggle</td>
<td>Rejection of selfishness, duty, obligation</td>
<td>Rejection of selfishness, duty, obligation</td>
<td>Rejection of selfishness, duty, obligation</td>
<td>Risk, deter, calling into question</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relation of worth</td>
<td>Membership, delegation</td>
<td>Mastery</td>
<td>Responsibility, responsibility, authority, honor</td>
<td>Possession of the goods desired by others</td>
<td>Independence, uniqueness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Test</td>
<td>Demonstration in favour of a moral cause, assembly</td>
<td>Test, control, launch</td>
<td>Family commons, celebrations, marriage</td>
<td>Council of deals, transaction, contract</td>
<td>Adventure, quest, journey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Form of evidence</td>
<td>Formal, official</td>
<td>Measurable criteria, statistics</td>
<td>Oral exemplars and anecdotes</td>
<td>Monetary value, prices, benefit, pay back</td>
<td>Emotional, Semiotic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time formation</td>
<td>Perennial</td>
<td>Long term planned future</td>
<td>Customary path</td>
<td>Short-term flexibility</td>
<td>Rapture, revolution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State of being “small” for “deficient”</td>
<td>Division, isolation, individualism</td>
<td>Authority, lack of productivity</td>
<td>Impediments, insufficiency, treachery, vulgarity</td>
<td>Undesired, lost, poverty</td>
<td>Habit, routine, “regular”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Notes</td>
<td>This refers to the common capacity of all humans to rise to occasions in the service of the common good; this refers to the sacrifice of the private pleasures associated with lesser states of worthiness; this specifies the relation of order among states worthiness; this is the modality of knowledge appropriate to the world under consideration.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
individually colonized with distinctive subjects (people), objects (things), qualifiers, relations, systems of classification and forms of legitimacy. Combined, these factors determine the ways in which people interact in terms of justification in each logic (Annisette & Richardson, 2011). In line with this, Gray (2010) describes how meaning is the result of an intricate relationship between an object and an observing subject. In the context of our study, the IR framework could be seen as the object and the consultants as observing subjects, and in this interaction and compromise between different logics of worth, the meaning of the IR framework takes form in a Swedish context.

When multiple logics are present, stability is attained by a compromise between logics (Boltanski & Thévenot, 2006). These kinds of compromises are fragile and often subject to criticism (Annisette & Richardson, 2011; van Bommel, 2014). A way to stabilize a compromise between logics is to attach an object to the compromise, an object that is relating to the common good of the different logics (Boltanski & Thévenot, 2006). The object helps the subjects of each logic to accept the compromise and hence, stabilize it. It is further described that, compromises between logics are more easily reached when the objects attached to it are ambiguous, for example when an object is used that can fit into the definition of the common good of multiple logics (Boltanski & Thévenot, 2006). According to van Bommel (2014), the SOW can be used as a toolbox to break down and analyze what logics a legitimate compromise consists of.

2.2.3 Summary of Theoretical Framework

As corporations adapt to expectations of society in order to stay legitimate, changes in societal expectations such as those stemming from CSR can create the risk of disruptions on the corporate operations if the organization is not responding to these changes (Suchman, 1995; Pallas & Fredriksson, 2015). We see the emergence of a new reporting framework as an occurrence that might challenge the legitimacy of organizations creating a demand for consultancy services connected to the new framework. From this standpoint the consultants are seen as translators as the IR framework is adapted into a Swedish context. Theory from the translation of management ideas and consultants in the role of experts, producing and validating knowledge, are used in order to identify how the IR framework is adapted and interpreted by consultants, and hence translated into a Swedish context to become a legitimate practice.

In order to analyze the translation process of the IR framework, three aspects explaining how social actors present justifications for their positions towards an audience in case of legitimacy disputes, provided by Patriotta et al. (2011), will be used as a theoretical framework. The first aspect is that actors must present rationales that are in line with definitions of the common good that are considered as socially accepted. The second aspect is that involved actors need to engage in an active way with different social groups’ competing definitions of the common good. The third aspect is that specific competencies are required in developing effective justifications when constructing convincing arguments and accounts. These three aspects are used to define the translation process where justifications are presented. Van Bommel (2014) claimed that, in order for the IR framework to become a
legitimate practice, there must be a compromise between logics from the SOW. Since we aim
to describe how legitimacy is created in a compromise of logics in the translation process of
the IR framework into a Swedish context, the SOW will be used in the current study to
discern which logics that are present in the process of translation. The logics of the SOW that
will be used are the logics of the; civic, industrial, domestic, market, fame and inspired.
3. Method

This chapter begins with a section presenting the methodological choices made based on the research strategy including research and methodological approach, and choice of data collection. In the second section the research process is described with a critical stance discussing literature and theory selection, operationalization of three aspects with regard of how to measure the translation process of the IR framework into annual reports by consultants. Further, selection of respondents, development of the interview guide, execution of interviews and how empirical data has been analyzed and presented as key findings are described. The section ends with a review of ethics in the research process and the dimensions of reliability and validity.

3.1 Research Strategy

The current research is based on a deductive approach. According to Saunders, Thornhill and Lewis (2006) the starting point in a deductive approach is to develop a theoretical framework based on a review of relevant and significant literature for the topic to test it on the collected empirical data. The three aspects presented by Patriotta et al. (2011) on how legitimacy is maintained in the production of justifications by actors created the lens by which the empirical data was examined together with the logics in the Sociology of worth (SOW). Literature on the role of consultants as translators of management ideas guided us in identifying the consultants as active in the translation of the IR framework into a Swedish context.

The methodological approach in this research paper was interpretative. This is a perspective that considers that the world is constantly being constructed by social actors in the creation of meaning in group interactions (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2010). The interpretative approach in this particular study is reflected in the assumption that the IR framework is translated by social actors such as consultants, in the process of constructing integrated reports for their clients. Extensive research have been performed on the translation and travel of management ideas, and in this sense we are using this extensive body of research to understand a relatively new and underresearched phenomena, which is how the IR framework is translated by consultants into a Swedish context. Previous research on consultants translating the IR framework has, to our knowledge, not been performed, and research on the IR framework in itself in the context of Sweden is a clearly underresearched area.

3.1.1 Qualitative Data Collection - Semi Structured Interviews

We used qualitative data collection since the aim of the current study was to identify how legitimacy is created in the translation process of the IR framework by consultants into a Swedish context. To understand how legitimacy is created in the translation process we sought to identify how justifications, containing different logics as derived from the SOW, were provided by the consultants. We wanted to ask questions that would clarify how the consultants reason and refer to the IR framework in order to discern and interpret what logics are compromised upon to achieve legitimacy in the translation process. Our primary data was
collected through semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured interviews have the character of opening up for less structured discussions between the observer and the respondent (Saunders et al., 2006). The observers have themes and questions covering the area of research where questions are asked in a random order depending on the direction of the discussion (Saunders et al., 2006).

Our questions, which are presented in Appendix I, were sorted into the three different aspects presented by Patriotta et al. (2011) to facilitate the analysis of the data. However, based on the nature of the interviews, questions was sometimes discussed on a random basis independently of what aspect they belonged to. The purpose of this was to encourage the consultants to reflect upon the IR framework without restraint, in order to capture their translation of it. The interview questions gave direction to what aspects of the IR framework that was to be discussed and assured that relevant topics were discussed with regards to the present study. As this research was conducted in a Swedish context and sought to explore the relatively underresearched field of integrated reporting, we considered our research to be of an interpretive kind where the semi-structured nature of our interviews were well suited.

Critique could be raised against using interviews in academic research as they are usually made up to fit the narrative of the research, and the content of these interviews will therefore be nothing more than the “truth” according to the chosen narrative (Silverman 1997). We are aware of our respondents subjectivity, and that we might have influenced them during the interviews, therefore we tried to structure the interview questions and interview sessions so that the influence of us as researchers on our respondents was as little as possible, for example trying to make our questions as non leading as possible.

3.2 Research Process

3.2.1 Choice of Literature and Source Criticism
When choosing literature for the current study, the research question and aim steered the direction in the search for relevant sources. The main source of literature in this paper was books and research published in recognized academic press. These sources have been complemented by the use of non-academic web pages for clarifying information on specific topics and the <IR> framework report produced by the IIRC. We recognize that the theories and knowledge stemming from our sources are not value free, and hence it has been critically assessed by the amount of citations, publication date and outlet, the context in which it was published and relevance to this study, before they were used to form arguments in this study.

The starting point of our literature review was a search on other research papers on the IR framework. As the IR framework is a new framework in the field of sustainability accounting, literature on this topic is highly relevant as it is recently published. However, this also makes it less cited or explored with different research approaches. From previous academic studies we were inspired by the theory of Justification, this theory stems from a sociological research tradition, to validate our connection between our chosen topic (the IR
framework) and justification, we therefore focused on finding research that had used this theory to analyze accounting issues. Research on accounting issues connected to sustainability and CSR in general was collected to provide the reader with a context and support our analysis of the issue with the new IR framework, to bridge the gap between this research and the IR framework we focused on finding acknowledged research on the two topics. Our sources on this bridging topic were mainly found by reading the sources of van Bommel (2014) study, and the sources of these papers. Selection in this snowballing manner can be criticized as it might circle certain opinions and miss out on contrasts, we therefore complemented this selection by keyword searching for sustainability, CSR, accounting, integrated reporting, on scholarly databases. The fact that this study focused on the relatively underresearched accounting practice of integrated reporting, inherently limited the amount of research in this field at the point of execution of this study. The literature used on the translation of management ideas have to a great extent been performed the Swedish context making this body of research highly adaptable to current research as it is performed in the same context.

### 3.2.2 Operationalization

A basic assumption of the present study is that organizations need to be legitimate in the context where they operate. This entails following trends and presenting effective justifications for their existence, which is mainly done by their corporate communication and annual reports. The IR framework is in the current study interpreted as a new trend, and a new form of legitimacy for corporate reporting and communication. As the IR framework in itself is principle based, and as van Bommel (2014) identified that it possess attributes of avoiding clarifications and being ambiguous in terms of how sustainability is to be reported on, there is room for interpretation when translating the IR framework into a Swedish context. Literature on the translation of management ideas and consultants in the role of experts contributes to the present study by attributing the consultants the role of interpreters and translators in the process of making the IR framework a legitimate practice in a Swedish context. For the IR framework to become a legitimate practice there must be a compromise between different logics, which is done in the translation process. In order to analyze and clarify what the translation process is, the present study makes use of the three aspects for maintaining legitimacy as presented by Patriotta et al. (2011) earlier in the theoretical framework. The current study considers these aspects as necessary for consultants to go through in the translation process in order for the IR framework to become a legitimate practice. These aspects are:

- **Aspect 1:** actors must present rationales that are in line with definitions of the common good that are considered as socially accepted.
- **Aspect 2:** actors need to engage in an active way with different social groups’ competing definitions of the common good.
- **Aspect 3:** specific competencies are required in developing effective justifications when constructing convincing arguments and accounts.

In order to examine aspect 1, we asked our respondents questions on how they interpret the objectives of IR and what their general opinion is of the framework. In asking the
respondents on how they perceive the objectives and their opinion of the framework, we sought to identify the rationales they provided based on what they perceive as legitimate and in line with the common good in a Swedish context and corporate communication and annual reporting. As an example the presentation of a rationale was later on in the analysis interpreted to be derived from the logic of fame in the statement of respondents saying that one main drive for their clients to start working with integrated reporting is that they want to be at the forefront of sustainability accounting. In the logic of fame, the perception of the common good is based on the value of being renown and getting fame through the recognition in a broad audience.

To examine aspect 2, we asked our respondents questions regarding the existence of conflicting values, in applying integrated reporting, and how they would overcome these. In asking these questions we strived to understand how the respondents take into account, the different perspectives on sustainability held by different stakeholders, i.e. engage with the competing definitions of the common good stemming from different logics.

When examining aspect 3, we asked our respondents about important and critical moments of the adaptation of the IR framework into a Swedish context, such as prioritizing what to report on and how to formulate it. In doing this we strived to understand how our respondents in the translation of the IR framework with the use of specific competencies, developed effective justifications when constructing convincing arguments and accounts.

Through the use of the three aspects, the present study considers the necessary steps in the translation process to create a legitimate practice of the IR framework as it becomes established into a Swedish context. The SOW, divided into six different logics; civic, industrial, domestic, market, fame and inspired, was used to analyze the empirical data gathered under the three aspects of the translation process. In doing so, the current study identified what logics that are present and compromised upon in the consultants’ translation process of making the IR framework a legitimate reporting practice in a Swedish context.

3.2.3 Selection of Respondents
Saunders et al. (2006) describes the need to select a sample population, as surveying the entire population usually is impossible due to the time and budget constraints of the research project. As the current study adopted a qualitative methodology, the sampling method have been guided by a non-probability selection of respondents and focused on techniques of self-selection and snowballing. Non-probability sampling suits our study as it was, at the point of execution of the study, hard to frame the population and our time constraint gave us limited resources to turn every stone. When using non-probability sampling it is innate that the probability of the sample being representative of the population is low (Saunders et al., 2006), hence, we did not aim at making generalizations based on our findings. Rather, with its interpretive nature, the study aimed to investigate and sought new insights in the underresearched area of the consultants’ translation of the IR framework in a Swedish context.
When selecting our respondents the criteria was that they were consultants with previous experience and/or knowledge from working with the IR framework. Despite their knowledge and experience within sustainability reporting, the consultants with no experience from working with the IR framework, that we came in contact with, were excluded from the current study. We were not, in our selection criteria, bound by the size of the firm, the type of consultancy firm, or the specific position of the respondents. Hence, no strategic choices have been made with regard of similarity or dissimilarity between our respondents from consultancies. They all have the role of translators when they participate in the process of interpreting the IR framework. The respondents were found by online searches with the keywords “Integrerad Rapportering+Sverige”, this way we found reports published on integrated reporting made by consultancies, we then contacted the consultancies and people responsible for the production of the reports. We also found respondents by searching member registries and reports published on industry associations’ webpages of FAR and PRECIS. We contacted the consultancies that were mentioned in contexts of integrated reporting, sustainability reporting, investor relations and communication.

In combination with the above mentioned self-selection sample, we also got a tip on a company and specific representative to interview by one of our first respondents. According to Saunders et al. (2006) this kind of sampling is commonly referred to as Snowball sampling, and is useful when it is hard for the researchers to identify members of a desired population. It also has inherent biases, such as the fact that respondents might identify people that are similar to themselves, resulting in a homogeneous sample. As argued previously, our respondents similarity or dissimilarity is not of interest in our study, therefore, we did not consider the respondents selected in this manner to be of risk to the validity of this study.

In order to provide the reader with an understanding of the respondents’ relevance to the study, the respondents are described in table 1. According to Dalen (2015) the researcher need to find a balance between creating validity for the study, motivating why the respondents are relevant to the study, and respecting the respondents privacy, not revealing information about them that could let the readers know who they are. The respondents are anonymous, and presented by company, type of company, their professional title and length of interview. A more detailed description of the respondents’ individual experience can be found in Appendix II.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondent #</th>
<th>Company</th>
<th>Type of Company</th>
<th>Respondent’s Role</th>
<th>Length of interview</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Respondent 1</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>Corporate Communication Consultancy</td>
<td>Senior Consultant, Co-chief of Sustainability team</td>
<td>33 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondent 2</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>Corporate Communication Consultancy</td>
<td>Senior Consultant, Co-chief of Sustainability team</td>
<td>43 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondent 3</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>Corporate Communication Consultancy</td>
<td>Advisor</td>
<td>48 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondent 4</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>Corporate Communication Consultancy</td>
<td>Communications Consultant</td>
<td>31 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondent 5</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>Corporate Communication Consultancy</td>
<td>Director</td>
<td>51 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondent 6</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>Corporate Communication Consultancy</td>
<td>Senior Director</td>
<td>42 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondent 7</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>Audit and Advisory Consultancy</td>
<td>Head of Internal Audit, Risk Consulting Division</td>
<td>61 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondent 8</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Corporate Communication Consultancy</td>
<td>Senior Consultant</td>
<td>65 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondent 9</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>Audit and Advisory Consultancy</td>
<td>Partner Sustainability Division</td>
<td>50 min</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1. Information on the Respondents

When determining sample size the researcher can collect and analyze data until the collection of additional cases does not give any new useful information (Guest, Bunce & Johnson,
Our sample size was determined by the study’s timeframe, willingness of respondents to participate, the scope and methodological approach of this research project. These factors are also mentioned by Guest et al. (2006) as important parts of a consideration for determining a sample size. As the study was performed in the early days of using the IR framework in the Swedish context, the population size was fairly small, as a limited amount of consultancies had the experience from working with the IR framework. We conducted nine interviews with consultants. After compiling the interview material and taking the aspects mentioned in this section into consideration, we deemed our total sample size of nine respondents as saturated and sufficient to answer the research aim and question of the present study. All the interviews were recorded and transcribed.

3.2.4 Development of Interview Guide
When writing our interview questions we linked them to our research question, and the three aspects as presented in the operationalization. From these we established a set of topics that we wanted to discuss, which were then broken down into more detailed questions. The interview questions are presented in Appendix I. Lantz (2007) stated that the content and order of the interview guide should be critically reviewed and tested through trial interviews before being used for data collection. Preparation interviews were performed with one of the consultant respondents and a representative of one of the consultancies that provided a respondent, in order to test the draft of the questions and to gain a better understanding of the issues concerning the translation of the IR framework into a Swedish context. The preparation interviews refined the questions and the selection of respondents as we got a better understanding of the issues and the people working with them. The preparation interviews were not included in the empirical material of this study.

3.2.5 Execution of Interviews
The respondents participating in the present study was presented with a description of the study and personally agreed to participate. The respondents were offered to be anonymous and to read through and to approve the quotes used before the study was finalized. By letting the respondents be anonymous in the present study, we sought to avoid what Saunders et al. (2006) refer to as respondent bias. Having anonymity among respondents encouraged them to speak freely about the topic, as the findings are not traceable to specific individuals. This aimed to contribute with good reliability of the findings.

The current study aimed to investigate the translation of the IR framework into a Swedish context. The respondents in this study all happened to have Swedish as their mother tongue, which coincides with the mother tongue of us as researchers. Therefore, all the interviews were conducted in Swedish in order to get the best understanding of the respondents’ knowledge and to make the respondents comfortable in expressing themselves. The empirical material presented in this paper has been translated to English. We strived to get the most accurate translation, preserving the meaning and essence of the original phrasing. The empirical findings were carefully translated and the empirical part of the research paper and the original statements were reviewed by an external party.
3.2.6 Analysis of the Interview Material
In line with the research strategy, what Saunders et al. (2006) refer to as pattern matching was used when analyzing the data. According to Lantz (2007) a first task in this process is to search for some content-defining dimensions. This entailed using the three aspects as defined in the operationalization in combination with the theoretical framework as a mean to classify and explain the findings and guide in the determination of interesting dimensions. This categorization of gathered data in the present study aspired to increase the understanding of the study’s research question and aim, by providing a more comprehensive understanding of the details that the study consists of.

3.2.7 Presentation of the Key Findings
Reduction of the gathered data is a necessary part of the analysis in presenting key findings (Lantz, 2007). This reduction should be done based on the objectives of the research and should aim to answer the research question. Data reduction leaves room for considerable biases (Lantz, 2007), and we were aware about the risk of omitting certain aspects that could have been deemed irrelevant but that might not have been so, and data could also have been taken out of its context and wrongfully analyzed. Additionally, there was also a risk that we in the reduction of data simplified and lost the complexity and nuances of the data. With an awareness of these aspects the raw data was repeatedly assessed to make sure that the key findings were expressed as they were originally found.

3.2.8 Ethics in the Research Process
According to Saunders et al. (2006), researchers should be aware of ethical concerns throughout the whole research process, and also consider what consequences the research might have on those affected by or involved in the study. In the early stages of contact with our respondents we clarified that the purpose of our research was not to point fingers or criticize how they work with sustainability. Rather, we communicated that they would help us shed light on how they translate the IR framework, and that our analysis of this would be aimed at better understanding this process in relation to the IR framework and Sweden, not the interpretations of specific individuals or organizations. Saunders et al. (2006) stress that the researcher should let their respondents know their rights. Therefore, the purpose of the current study was made clear to the respondents and the subject and interview questions were sent out in advance to those of the respondents that asked for it.

3.2.9 Reliability & Validity
One aspect with performing interviews is the presence of personal views and perceptions of the respondents, which is related to the reliability dimension in a study (Saunders et al., 2006). As the purpose of the present study was to examine how the IR framework is translated, it was necessary to capture the views and opinions of consultants with regard of the IR framework, making subjectivity of the respondents an important part of the process of investigation. In order to achieve reliability in the current study we sought to include a representative sample of respondents. When using a qualitative method for data collection, the data can always be criticized for being derived from a specific and predetermined scenario where subjectivity is inherent, hence, the results become difficult to value and
generalize (Lantz, 2007). Another aspect of reliability is the observer bias referring to the different interpretations of the replies that could be made by the observers (Saunders et al., 2006). When analyzing the results of consultants’ translation of the IR framework, the observer bias can possibly be an issue affecting the reliability of this study.

A study with good validity is measuring what it is suppose to measure and therefore findings are to a great extent reflecting the reality of what is being observed (Saunders et al., 2006). The IR framework is relatively new into a Swedish context of financial reporting, leaving consultants with a lacking knowledge and experience within this new framework. This might have an impact on the validity of the study as the consultants’ earlier experiences with other reporting frameworks could color their reasoning concerning the IR framework. To maintain a good validity we as observers ascertained that reflections and discussions in the interviews were made with the focus of the IR framework by repeating the subject of our research during the interview.
4. Results

In the following chapter the empirical findings of this study is presented and analyzed. The chapter is divided into three sections in accordance with the previously identified three aspects of the translation process, which was presented in the theoretical framework of the present study. Under each section, the empirical findings are first presented, and then they are analyzed. In order to create a structure, the empirical data is presented under subheadlines that emerged during the compilation of the material.

4.1 Respondents’ Presentation of Rationales in Line with Socially Accepted Definitions of the Common Good

4.1.1 General Opinions

When asked about their general opinion of the IR framework, all but one respondent in this study expressed an overall positive view on it. On the more positive side, Respondent 1 described it as a development of accounting practices that feels natural. Respondent 5 stated that there is a need to include sustainability in corporate communication in a way that is relevant and this can be achieved with the use of the IR framework. On the other hand, Respondent 9 had a less positive opinion about the IR framework, but believed that the companies themselves could benefit from integrated reporting by making a materiality analysis about the societal effects of their own business. However, the respondent also claimed that the report in itself is lacking as a good base for decision-making for the investors as it is very complicated to correctly reflect the complex reality of the company on only 40 pages. “How will I be able to, in a pedagogical way, describe a very complex organization, with a turnover of many thousands of people around the world, on 40 pages, that gives sufficient information for me to make the decision whether to buy shares and apply for jobs there?” - Respondent 9

A couple of respondents expressed that there is a low maturity on the market, few corporations know exactly what the framework entails, but the respondents have observed that many are interested in implementing the framework. “...it feels like there is a general desire for, or a general willingness to become more integrated and that there is a consensus that the integrated approach is an attractive way to talk about sustainability.”- Respondent 5

Moreover, respondents 4, 8 and 9 pointed on a knowledge gap and that many of the corporations they have met or worked with are not prepared to start reporting fully integrated according to the IR framework.

4.1.2 Interpretations of Objectives and Goals with IR

Several of the respondents described that one main drive for their clients to start working with integrated reporting is that they want to be at the forefront of sustainability accounting. Respondent 3 believes that companies are motivated to use integrated reporting as accounting for sustainability, since the information contributes to create trust and safety for the brand making it a business opportunity. Respondent 4 expressed that the transition to integrated
reporting is a progressive development or process, but the fact that there is no assurance or audit of an integrated report, makes it hard to draw the line of what an integrated report actually is.

According to Respondent 5 the IR framework is supposed to provide investors with a better understanding of organizations’ sustainable value creation, but the respondent also believed that if an integrated report is done correctly it can create a better understanding of why sustainability is substantial to the organization.

4.1.3 Integrated Reporting Written for Different Stakeholders
Respondent 8 expressed that integrated reports are written for all stakeholders, but perhaps primarily for investors, customers and owners, but also for potential employees and the entire industry. Respondent 5 claim that in most cases, companies are primarily directing their sustainability communication toward customers, investors and employees. Respondent 6 highlights the importance for companies to gain the trust of customers, making them an important stakeholder group in the formation of integrated reports. The respondent also considered employees an important group of stakeholders for companies in order to be able to recruit people.

4.1.4 Analysis
Among the respondents, different views and perspectives have been discerned regarding the IR framework. Despite the lack of knowledge about the IR framework among companies, Respondent 5 said that there is a common view that integrated reporting is an attractive way of talking about sustainability. The willingness to communicate according to what is considered attractive in the field of sustainability accounting when expressing worth in prestige and public opinion is much in line with the logic of fame (Annisette & Richardson, 2011). Several of the respondents mentioned that being at the forefront of sustainability accounting is a main drive for reporting integrated, and Respondent 3 mentioned IR as a business opportunity, these motivators are much in line with the monetary values and competition in the logic of the market (Annisette & Richardson, 2011). Respondent 5 also said that an integrated report aims to give the readers a better understanding of why sustainability is important to the organization, being much in line with values of respectability and responsibility within the domestic logic (Annisette & Richardson, 2011). The various expressions of values by the respondents could be seen as in line with what Patriotta et al. (2011) stated on providing rationales consistent with the common good.

In being principle based, the IR framework give room for individual adaptation and interpretation among actors, resulting in a variation of its meaning. How the meaning of the IR framework is created could be discussed through the explanation by Gray (2010) on how an object in the meeting of an interpreting subject gets a meaning. In this sense, as observing subjects, the consultants’ and organizational members’ different views of the IR framework, the object, create various meanings of it. This could also be connected to how Furusten et al. (2012) described the active participation of different actors in the re-interpretation and re-articulation of management ideas. Gray (2010) argued that sustainability accounting struggles
to interpret a complex reality, a similar argument was presented by one of the respondents, saying that a negative thing with the IR framework is that it is lacking as a base for decision making as it is impossible to explain a complex reality in just a few pages.

As discussed by the respondents, integrated reporting is being used to communicate with different stakeholders, not just the investors. It is used in the recruitment process of new employees, to gain the trust of customers and it also provides investors with insights on companies’ value creation. In the attempt of communicating to a broader audience, the translation of the IR framework in Sweden could be seen as an effort to please the many by providing rationales consistent with several logics, making it a legitimate compromise between several logics, but, vague in its expression of sustainability values.

4.2 Respondents’ Active Engagement with Competing Definitions of the Common Good

4.2.1 The Balance Between Concrete and Complex Statements & Use of Language

Respondent 7 believe that a way for companies to identify what to report on is to use information gathered in the dialogue with different external stakeholders. In line with this, Respondent 2 claimed that relevant aspects to report on are identified by taking into account different stakeholders’ opinion.

The respondents were asked if they thought that the six capitals in the IR framework are compatible with how corporate reporting usually is carried out. The majority of the respondents replied that they consider the six capitals to be useful in the process of reporting for sustainability. Respondent 9 saw the six capitals as a convenient way of talking about sustainability with clients, and Respondent 5 considered the six capitals to be very applicable in sustainability reporting due to their broad and general features. Respondent 4 stated that the six capitals in the IR framework do not make organizations present new information, rather, it requires a change in the presentation of information that was communicated in previous reports.

Respondent 4 said that organizations should strive to be concrete and make their integrated reports easier to understand, and said that companies should explain it as they would to a seven year old, since it should not be hard for anyone to understand an annual report. Respondent 8 says that it as a good exercise for many corporations to follow the guidelines of the IR framework and simplify their reports. And in line with Respondent 4, Respondent 8 said that companies should “explain it (their business) so that my first grader can understand it”. Respondent 3 sees a challenge in how companies can pedagogically express themselves since everyone could be considered the target group for their integrated report. According to Respondent 9, one of the great things with the IR framework is that it encourages the companies to reflect on the inputs, output and outcomes of its operations, if this is done graphically, companies can avoid jargons and at the same time make the report more easily understandable and concrete.
4.2.2 Auditors and Swedish Law as Barriers to the Use of the IR Framework

The time perspectives in the IR framework are according to Respondent 5 useful for creating a structure when making a basic analysis of a company’s operations. However, companies rarely communicate externally through these time perspectives, as there is an unwillingness of expressing oneself too definite, especially with regard of the long-term perspective. Respondent 5 also explained how sustainability reports have an important function, since no laws or regulation hinders companies to have a visionary stance, whilst content in annual reports are controlled through laws and auditing. Both Respondent 7, 8 and 9 expressed how the time perspectives in the IR framework can be difficult to operationalize in the annual reports of organizations since the Swedish annual accounts act restricts how forward-looking the organization can be in the annual report, and that auditors then put breaks on how sustainability is presented in accordance to IR framework. Respondent 3 claim that there is a certain difficulty with regard of the time perspectives in the IR framework, as they usually become nothing more than just forecasts. What the consultants can help with is to clarify what is relevant information and what are purely expectations. Respondent 9 stresses that the future in itself is very uncertain, even if an organization have hopes and ideas that they plan to follow through on, it might not be fair to put a number or strategy on something that in itself is very fuzzy and uncertain.

Respondent 9 said that in order for the integrated reports to become anything more than pure marketing, the bar needs to be set high or some sort of regulation is needed, and that the integrated reports need to be fully audited. On the contrary, Respondent 7 believe in the market’s self-regulatory power, and argued that a regulation on integrated reporting would be very unfortunate. Further, the respondent explained that many organizations are acting on a multi-national arena, making it questionable who that should be responsible for creating and enforcing those laws.

4.2.3 Utilizing Transparency

Respondent 2 said that how and what transparency generally is, depends very much on who you are talking to and what kind of company it is, and that some think it is good while others find it scary. Respondent 8 said that as a communications consultant you focus on working proactively with the clients and help them choose a few areas that they are willing to communicate about quite openly, and dare to be transparent about. “It is very much about holding your client’s hand as a consultant.” - Respondent 8. Respondent 7 also talked about the fact that organizations often want something or someone to hold their hand when it comes to being transparent with their sustainability reporting, and referred to GRI and its list of requirements as a common comforter for organizations. Respondent 8 thinks that the way to go about transparency will be a combination of choosing issues that can be measured and combining it with aspects that are more visionary and harder to measure, otherwise it will be difficult to show any kind of positive development in the report from year to year. In line with this Respondent 9 stated that “I would be surprised if companies went out with a forecast which indicated something else than an upward pointing trend”. 
4.2.4 Different Divisions, Different Perspectives
Many of the respondents described the duality of corporate reporting, and how financial and sustainability reports up until now generally have been handled and written by separate parts of the organization. Respondent 4 refers to it as two separate tracks in corporate reporting. Respondent 7 claimed that one difficulty with reporting integrated appears if the company is not working in an integrated manner, which makes it hard create a good integrated report. For the companies not having a fully integrated business, this will be a big challenge. Respondent 3 believes that some companies will have a difficulty to report integrated as they are organized in clear divisions (pipelines/silos) where there is a lacking amount of contact between them. Respondent 5 claims that, in order to create an increased awareness of the importance of sustainability, it is necessary that the most conservative people in the company that otherwise do not see the value of sustainability also understand why it is important. Respondent 3 said that it is necessary to make the analysis on how to connect a company’s circumstances with its strategy, which is sometimes problematic due to the presence of politics inside companies, making it hard to agree upon one common picture.

4.2.5 How Consultants View Their Role in Creating Integration
According to Respondent 5, they as consultants do not put any pressure on their clients do integrated reporting as it takes a lot of effort for the companies and it takes time to prepare. However, the consultants sometimes sweepingly talk about an integrated approach with their clients so they can start the journey towards becoming more integrated. The consultants with specialist knowledge provide companies with sustainability trends and public opinion and also to formulate their corporate story. According to Respondent 5, companies also need support when it comes to sustainability, in what concepts to use, what to communicate and what to not communicate. Respondent 7 said that they do not sell many projects based solely on integrated reporting, rather they pitch integrated thinking and integrated strategy, and integrated reporting becomes a foundation from which to start the process. Respondent 3 explains that when clients are looking to use the IR framework, the consultants work as a sounding board. “We help them both to develop an outline, how to go about it, what you need to describe, but then also provide assistance in the analysis itself in how it will be produced.”
– Respondent 3

Respondent 5 considers some companies to be better equipped than others to take an integrated stance. The respondent considers companies with good internal cooperation and discussions between the divisions involved in the creation of reports, to be more suitable to take the first step toward an integrated report. Several of the respondents said that they as consultants arrange workshops to gather everyone and to create conversations among people with different responsibilities in the company. The respondents saw great benefits with having the CEO and other people in leading positions in the company participating in these workshops, partly to confirm that the consultants have the right understanding of the company but also to create awareness among top decision makers, since they are the ones that decide to implement and follow through with integrated reporting.
4.2.6 Analysis

As stated by one respondent, there is a challenge in how companies in their integrated reports can express themselves pedagogically as they are communicating to a broad audience. This shows that, even though vague definitions are being used as stated by Malsch (2013), there are difficulties in the translation of the IR framework into annual reports in order to find a compromise on how to meet the interest and values of different stakeholder groups. The IR framework is striving to create conciseness in how companies are reporting, and at the same time researchers such as Van Bommel (2014) claimed that in order for frameworks such as the IR framework to be legitimate it must have the character of vagueness and ambiguity to meet the needs of different groups of social actors. Our respondents outlined several stakeholders as being the important target group for companies when using the IR framework and therefore their opinions might be taken into consideration when companies are deciding what to include in their reports. The majority of the respondents claimed that they considered the six capitals in the IR framework to be useful in sustainability reporting, and one of the respondents stated that the good applicability of the six capitals is due to their broad and general features. This could be connected to what Malsch (2013) referred to as the instruments provided for accounting, containing standard definitions in order to create reports that are appealing to a broad audience. According to another respondent the six capitals do not make organizations present new information, rather the IR framework requires a change in how organizations present and communicate their information. Taking several stakeholders into account when writing an integrated report could be interpreted as engaging with competing definitions of the common good held by different social groups.

A barrier to the implementation of the IR framework have been identified and mentioned by some respondents, is that the time aspects mentioned in the IR framework are not compatible with the Swedish Annual Accounts Act. This could be seen as derived from the logic of civic, being driven by the notion to follow the law (Annisette & Richardson, 2011), respondents stated that companies in their integrated reports limit their expression of sustainability values according to the current law. Complying with the law implies a compromise upon the degree of transparency having implications for the communication of the long-term value creation in the annual report, which is one of the actual aims of the IR framework, and mainly derived from the industrial logic, which values a long-term planned future (Annisette & Richardson, 2011). A compromise between these logics becomes apparent as the respondents stated that they would express long-term value creation within the boundaries of obeying the law when establishing their integrated reports, this compromise favoring the civic logic.

One respondent also explained that the time perspectives in the IR framework can be used to structure the analysis of the company’s operations, but they are rarely communicated to an outside audience as the company might feel that they are stating something that is too definite. This can be seen as a compromise between the industrial logic, where time formation is planned long-term, and the market logic where time formation focus on short-term flexibility (Annisette & Richardson, 2011). In order to not risk their legitimacy by stating something that cannot be achieved on the long-term, respondents expressed that
companies in their integrated reports, compromise on the transparency of its operations expressing only the short-term, hence, being driven by the market logic. However, it was also stated by Respondent 8 that transparency in an integrated report comes from the combination of showing issues that can be measured and also more visionary aspects that are harder to measure. The companies might have to compromise on the visionary expression, as it might limit them from showing a positive development from year to year. In line with this, Gray (2010) argues that the sustainability accounting of companies is comprised of a win-win cocktail of economic achievement and social responsiveness. One can also refer to the opinion of Malsch (2013) about the existence of an economization of sustainability and that moral thinking in the world of business is based on a logic of profitability. This is also echoed by Respondent 9 who said that he would be surprised of corporations wrote integrated reports showing any other trend than one pointing upward. The above mentioned in regards to transparency, can be interpreted as a combination of avoiding the unwanted states of being deficient in the logics of industrial (lack of productivity), domestic (inconsiderateness), fame (being banal) and market (loss and undesired) worth (Annisette & Richardson, 2011). Avoiding these states could be compared to what Pallas & Fredriksson (2015) mentioned, as corporations strive to become legitimate, they comply to norms and ideas in their environment in order to reduce risks and uncertainty.

It was evident in the empirical data that the respondents all had a view that in order to be able to report integrated, there is also a need to organize integrated inside the company. It was stated that an integrated structure of the company requires that people, in different divisions with different perspectives, come together and cooperate to create an integrated thinking. Several of the respondents argued for the need to involve different divisions of a company in the discussions and work with sustainability, it should not only be an issue to the sustainability group. It was among some respondents claimed to be a challenging process to find a compromise among different units inside companies of what to report on. To facilitate the development of corporate sustainability, Azcárate et al. (2011) argue that organizations need to integrate indicators of environmental, societal and economic aspects and also connect its business operations to the state of its environment. One respondent described that the new integrated way of working and including non-financial aspects in the integrated reports has created new issues for organizations and that they as consultants act as sounding boards in understanding and balancing the information merged, from the previous annual report and sustainability report, into the integrated report. To unite the financial and sustainability reports into an integrated report requires a compromise between the logic of market, governed by opportunism and liberty, and the civic logic, advocating a renunciation of personal interests. As previously stated, engaging with competing definitions of the common good, as in the case of deciding which information to include in the integrated report, is according to Patriotta et al. (2011) a prerequisite to reach a legitimate result that is accepted by different social groups. Some respondents talked about their role in unifying organizational divisions when it comes to implementing the IR framework. They arrange workshops and create platforms for discussion among organizational members with different perspectives on which aspects of sustainability that is important to the organization, helping
the organization to reach a compromise on what to report on. In this sense, the consultants are active in the process of engaging with competing definitions of the common good.

4.3 The Requirement of Specific Competencies in Developing Effective Justifications to Construct Convincing Arguments and Accounts

4.3.1 Comparability and Individuality in What to Report on
Respondent 5 believed that for the company to be comparable is more in the interest of others than the company itself; “Do you want to tell your own stories in your way by using key indicators that you think are relevant or do you want to start measuring something that you would never measure, only to be comparable to someone else? In that sense, IR offers much more freedom and flexibility than GRI and I believe that makes it more attractive to many companies."

Respondent 6 said that there is no real consensus on what is meant by value creation in sustainability terms. If you look at companies there are many who report on their value creation, but the presentation and choice of parameters vary a lot. The respondents were asked if they believed that the IR framework, which is principle based and not as slotted in what to report on like the GRI, will lead to greater variations in what the corporations are reporting on, or if the organizations will want to follow others to make themselves comparable. Respondent 8 reflected on this and stated that the next step is probably that the parameters of integrated reporting will become more standardized, and that even though there is now the opportunity to specialize and be unique in what the organizations are reporting on, the organizations will start reporting on the same things as their competitors are doing. Respondent 6 believes that standards on how to define value creation in integrated reporting will probably emerge as the IR framework gains more ground.

4.3.2 Finding Relevant Aspects to Include in the Integrated Report
“New frameworks are of course extremely consultant friendly, because in order for the organizations to implement them in a successful way, they want an external party...” - Respondent 1

Respondent 2 stated that company representatives are typically blinded by their closeness to their own organizations, resulting in “hemmabblindhet” meaning that they might not see or understand relevant sustainability aspects to include in their integrated reports. According to Respondent 7, an important part of finding relevant aspects to include in the report, in order to be become more specific and clear in accordance with the IR framework, is to focus on only the critical parts of a company and communicate that; “this is what is important”. Companies should dare to focus on what is really important to them and motivate it. It requires a thorough work from the start, that you have made your homework, trying to understand different stakeholder perspectives by including them rather than solely having the organization's sustainability group brainstorming stakeholder perspectives without any
external influence. The consultants work as facilitators by contributing with ideas and also challenge inside perspectives with an outside view. In order to carefully choose what a company should communicate to be transparent but still concrete, Respondent 7 usually ask companies whether the information being brought up is relevant for the core business. In line with Respondent 7, Respondent 5 claims that consultants have an important part in the creation of an integrated report, but there must be an integrated thinking in the company, as the organizational members possess the greatest knowledge of their business activities. Respondent 5 claims that the materiality analysis need to include a broad selection of people in the company, like product developers, people from the sales organization and investor relations etc.

The respondents had different opinions on what a physical integrated report might look like. Some respondents (7, 9) talked about an integrated report as a new and potentially separate report, while other respondents (1, 4, 8) talked about doing it as an integrated annual report with details in separate specific sustainability reports or online. Further, respondents (3, 5, 7, 8) said that they had met companies that thought an integrated report should be a union of the annual report and sustainability report as one document, or the integrated report as an extra chapter in the annual report.

4.3.3 Beyond Reporting, Changing Internal Processes of Corporations…
Almost all of the respondents in this study argued that for integrated reporting to work in Sweden, there is a need for the organizations to adapt an integrated structure. According to Respondent 5, in order to use the IR framework in a good way, a company needs to organize differently when producing their integrated report, to achieve an integrated thinking. Respondent 8 argued that one cannot sit and do a sustainability report in one part of the organization, do the annual report in another division, and then in a third location create the corporate communication that is distributed to stakeholders. If it is done in this manner, there is a huge risk that the results are not connected. As a consultant you have an important role in unifying the communication, and then automatically end up in matters concerning internal affairs. Respondent 8 goes on to argue that with the development of current demands on corporate communication, especially now that the clients want to develop integrated reports which is relatively new and therefore surrounded by great uncertainty; “you enter as a communications consultant but become a sounding board, much like a management consultant”

4.3.4 ... and Changing How Consultancies Work
Respondent 9 described how they as consultants work with integrated reporting with clients. Usually they come in and help the client to combine the non-financial issues with the financial statements in the annual report, and build a good cohesive message. The process of including non-financial issues in the integrated reports have raised new questions for their consultancy, for example; what does that mean for us as auditors? How do we review an integrated annual report? Respondent 9 goes on to describe how this has created some extra work internally at the firm, with them as consultants having to explain to their auditing colleagues how to assess and understand the “new” information presented in an integrated
report. In this sense, Respondent 9 believes that it has created new ways for them to work between the consulting and auditing divisions, working more integrated.

4.3.5 Analysis
A majority of the respondents mentioned that a critical moment when companies decide to start with integrated reporting is to do a materiality analysis in order to only report on what is critical for the organization’s core business. As the IR framework is principle based, it gives organizations the possibility of being comparable, reporting on the same thing as others, or the possibility of communicating uniqueness by strictly only reporting on factors critical to their business. It was claimed by a respondent that even though the IR framework give companies the opportunity to be unique in what to report on, organizations will report on the same things as their competitors. Rövik (2002) discuss that in order for organizations to successfully adapt a management standard they will report on the components that are commonly accepted as legitimate. Pallas and Fredriksson (2015) elaborated on this, stating that organizations do this to avoid risks and uncertainty. Respondent 6 is expecting a development of standards within the IR framework to define what value creation means, a concept that for now is lacking a real consensus. The logic of fame as a value is discerned as companies are accounting on the same things as their competitors copying the successful cases, in order to get recognition in the public opinion. According to one of the respondents, an argument for doing integrated reporting is to be in the forefront in the reporting field, hinting once more for fame as a present logic of worth in the translation of the IR framework among consultancies. If management ideas are emphasizing similarities and are downplaying variety between organizations as argued by Rövik (2002), the similarities of reporting integrated might suggest an emergence of industry norms on how to report integrated, with the standards and measurability of norms, this stems from what Annisette & Richardson (2011) described as industrial logic with a focus on efficiency and performance. The industrial logic and the logic of fame appear to be increasingly present in the justifications of how sustainability is expressed in integrated reports in a Swedish context.

All of the respondents expressed that the IR framework is not yet used to a great extent by Swedish companies, and many of the respondents believe that it will take time as companies also need to change how they work internally in order to become integrated, and not just change the way of reporting. As this might be a big step for companies to take, one of the respondents said that they as consultants do not start by proposing a shift to an integrated way of reporting, rather, they tell their clients to start with an integrated approach. Another respondent said that they do not sell services based solely on the IR framework. They rather use integrated reporting as an inspiration to sell an integrated thinking and integrated strategy to their clients. As claimed by Windell (2007), consultants in the commercialization of management ideas, put labels on these ideas in order to more easily explain them and create and understanding for their clients. This process could also be compared to the objectification of compromises as explained by Boltanski and Thévenot (2006) whereas the compromise is attached to an object, in this case the labels; integrated thinking, integrated strategy, integrated approach. These objects can be interpreted as legitimate within several logics, stabilizing the compromise but also making it ambiguous in its meaning.
As Malsch (2013) states, sustainability frameworks are generic and vague making them flexible in their applicability. Therefore it is very much up to the individual firm to decide what they want to communicate and be transparent about. As stated by several of the respondents, they as consultants can help companies to identify what aspects to report on, this is in line with Engwall and Sahlin-Andersson (2002) that argued that managers hire consultants to handle issues that they neither have the knowledge, nor capacity to handle or resolve. The respondents described that, with an outside perspective they as consultants can contribute with new input, and by asking the right questions their clients can improve their ability to identify aspects to report on that are relevant to their core business. This recognizes the consultants as actors with specific competences in the process of constructing convincing accounts and arguments, as stated by Patriotta et al. (2011) to be important in legitimacy maintenance. This was further supported by the statement of Respondent 1 who said that new frameworks are extremely consultant friendly as organizations are in need of an external party to implement them in a successful way. In the role of contributing with specific competencies, both respondents 8 and 9 reflected on the fact that integrated reporting not only demanded new collaborations within an organization, but that it also affected them as consultants, in order to build a good and cohesive message for their clients, have had to take on new roles, both externally and internally.

As identified in the empirical findings, there is a lacking agreement of what the final and physical document of an integrated report is. According to Windell (2007) consultants recommend legitimate practices and can therefore create need to be able to sell certain services which is made possible through the relatively vague labeling of IR. Further, it was also described that in the step of packaging the management idea, consultants avoided clear definitions but rather kept it fluffy. It can be interpreted that the many ideas of what integrated reporting should look like is as a part of the fuzzy packaging action described above. One could suggest that it is in the vested interest of consultants to use their positions as experts (as described by Malsch, 2013) and possessors of what Patriotta et al. (2011) refer to as certain competences, in their translation and commercialization of the IR framework to maintain an ambiguity of what the actual product should be, creating a need for consultation and maintaining their status as experts.
5. Conclusion & Discussion

In this section we conclude the findings of the present study. Implications of these conclusions are discussed and suggestions for future research are presented.

5.1 Conclusions

The aim of the current study was to identify how legitimacy is created in what was constructed in the translation process of the IR framework by consultants into a Swedish context. SOW, divided into the logics of the civic, industrial, domestic, market, fame and inspired was used to analyze what logics were present in the translation process and made up the compromise in making the IR framework legitimate. In the construction of a legitimate translation of the IR framework into a Swedish context, logics were found to be stemming from several logics of SOW, making it a legitimate practice made up of a broad comprise mainly between the fame, industrial and market logics. Resulting in a translation of the IR framework into a Swedish context that is vague and ambiguous in its statements of sustainability.

In the first aspect, multiple logics have been discerned from the respondents’ translation of the IR framework in Sweden. When explaining what is driving the development to use the IR framework in corporate reporting, respondents provided rationales based on the logic of fame implying a strive to achieve prestige, the logic of market considering it a business opportunity, and the logic of domestic to exude respectability and responsibility. The provision of such rationales could be seen as what Patriotta et al. (2011) presented as in line with the socially accepted definitions of the common good. Communicating to a broader audience by providing rationales consistent with multiple logics makes it a compromise, hence, vague in its expression of sustainability values.

Under the second aspect, respondents described how they take several stakeholders into account when writing integrated reports, which are interpreted as respondents engaging with competing definitions of the common good held by different social groups both inside the organization among different divisions, and outside the organization. In deciding which sustainability values to write about in the integrated report, respondents implied a compromise between the civic and market logic, wanting to show a positive development from year to year. In complying with the Swedish laws, a compromise between the civic and industrial logics resulted in the respondents favoring the following the law, and civic logic, and limiting their expression of visionary elements. A compromise was found in the respondents’ reflections upon the time perspectives in the IR framework encouraging transparency in how to report on value creation over time. It resulted in the respondents favoring to report on short term over long term, implying a priority of the market logic over industrial. Further, with regard to transparency in general in the IR framework, the respondents mentioned that they would be transparent to a certain extent, by not being transparent about everything there are less things to be criticized for. This could be interpreted as a combination of avoiding the unwanted states of being deficient in some
logics, such as lack of productivity (logic of industrial) and losses (logic of market), lack of considerateness (logic of domestic) and being banal (logic of fame). Throughout the process of engaging with competing definitions of the common good, we observed the consultants as facilitators of the compromises taking place, as they claimed to help organizations to take different perspectives into account and hence, find compromises between them.

When referring to critical moments of the adaptation of the IR framework, as covered in the third and final aspect in the translation process, we found that respondents mentioned perspectives that could be interpreted as stemming from the industrial and fame logics, the former referring to following industry norms and the later when striving to be similar to successful competitors in the use of the IR framework. The consultants considered themselves as actively involved in the execution of integrated reports, confirming their role as possessors of the certain competencies instrumental to the construction of effective justifications as presented by Patriotta et al. (2011). We also found that the respondents put several labels on their translation of IR, and we analyzed that these labels could be seen as legitimate within several logics, stabilizing the compromise of different logics in the translation process, but also making the translation of IR ambiguous in its meaning. And, we also inferred that it might be in the vested interest of the consultants to maintain an ambiguity of what the end product of the IR framework should be, creating a need for consultation and maintaining their positions as possessors of specific competencies, needed to attain legitimacy in the translation process.

In comparison with the findings of van Bommel (2014), who found that the IR framework was mainly a compromise between the industrial and market logics, governed by the interests of professional actors such as accountants. The present study mainly found the logics of fame, industrial and market when the IR framework was translated by the consultants as professional actors in a Swedish context, which implicates a slight difference from van Bommel’s (2014) findings. This implies that a legitimate approach towards the use of the IR framework is based on efficiency and planning, competition and a business case, reputation and brand building. If integrated reporting is the future for corporate reporting, then this translation of the IR framework might set the tone for the sustainability reporting that will be spread by consultants in a Swedish context.

5.2 Discussion & Suggestions for Future Research
Despite that the study is limited to one particular framework and geographical context, its results might be useful for similar studies in other national contexts where the IR framework is in an early stage of being translated by consultants as in the present study. This research examined the translation of the IR framework in a context with low maturity in regard of knowledge and experience of the IR framework, lacking in norms and standards, allowing consultants involved in translating it into a Swedish context to shape and influence it quite freely. Furthermore, the study could also be used when exploring how other principle based frameworks are being translated by influencing actors, such as consultants, by giving great
room for individual interpretation, however with certain caution as every principle based framework posses certain characteristics that might differentiate it from other frameworks.

A limitation to the present study is the fact that only consultants were interviewed, in future studies, it could be of interest to include other stakeholders, such as company representatives and investors to get a more nuanced picture on different approaches to the translation of the IR framework. Or, it might also be of value to combine a qualitative approach with a quantitative employing text analysis of annual reports based on the IR framework in order to discern what logics they consist of.

After having performed the interviews, we saw a pattern in how the respondents viewed the IR framework, having different views on the framework and their role in the translation process of it, which we interpreted to be depending on what type of consultancy firm they work at. The respondents working at a corporate communication consultancy had a more visionary stance, whilst the respondents from the audit and advisory consultancies had a more skeptical stance towards the prospect of expressing sustainability values through integrated reporting. The different approaches to the understanding of the same object, underlines the influence different actors (observing subjects) have on the translation (sense making) of the IR framework (object), which might entail that different consultants will spread different translations of the IR framework. The consultants’ different translations of the IR framework might be interesting to look at in further studies on the translation of the IR framework in a Swedish context.

Our respondents argued that there are certain aspects of the IR framework that is not compatible with the Swedish law, in that the framework encourages to transparency of value creation over long time implying a stance that is visionary, something that is restricted in the Swedish annual accounts act. In that aspect, there are limitations in how the IR framework can be used. What significance will the IR framework have in Sweden if it is not compatible with the law? The constraints of the law initially compel a need to compromise in order to follow the Swedish law when adapting to the IR framework. In this aspect it encourages an incomplete or partial use of the IR framework in Sweden, which previous voluntary frameworks have been criticized for. It could be of interest to compare the findings in the present study to a similar study in a national context where the translation of the IR framework is not limited by law, to see how that translation turns out and if industry norms emerge. By identifying what logics the translation of the IR framework are compromised upon, before the framework has become fully established in a Swedish context it can be assumed that this compromise are open for changes, perhaps making it possible for actors to influence the translation before, and if, standards emerge. As shown in the present study, questions are raised on whether nations or industry norms should regulate IR? Or, should it be regulated at all?

The respondents, viewed as translators of the IR framework, are in agreement that the framework creates a need for internal integration among different divisions inside
organizations to also be able to create a good integrated report. This implies the possible emergence of a framework that contributes to the development of sustainable organizations in terms of implementing sustainability aspects into the entire organization. In the perceived necessity to strongly connect an integrated reporting to an integrated organization, the IR framework is used as a vessel to drive internal change. There is however a risk that the necessity to adapt internal operations to the standards of the IR framework might be perceived as a challenge through increased costs and a lack of knowledge hindering its establishment among Swedish companies. If adopting the IR framework is perceived as too much of a challenge, institutional actors might develop a silent acceptance for a ceremonial adaptation making it possible for organizations to stay un-integrated and still be perceived as legitimate through integrated reporting, or opting to not report integrated at all.

The various logics presented in the translation of the IR framework into a Swedish context might indicate that it is becoming a standard that is vague and ambiguous, resulting in Swedish companies using the framework as an excuse for reporting on sustainability in a fuzzy and limited manner. We also found indications that the legitimating process of the IR framework is a matter of reaching an acceptance on what aspects of sustainability to take into account, internally among different organizational stakeholders. This could have implications for the role of consultants as possessors of certain competences working with sustainability reporting, by creating increased demands on communication consultants as creators of legitimate communication to be more internally engaging, being active facilitators of the internal stakeholder dialogue. And also on the consultants in general to advise auditors on how to assess sustainability information in the annual reports, making them more comfortable in their audit of it. It would then also be interesting to in future studies explore if the role of the consultant change in the translation process. As the IR framework is in its cradle in the Swedish context, it could be of value to examine the translation process of IR in the future if the framework gain real ground in the reporting field. We believe that the translation might evolve over time, depending on various changes in the social context of the consultancies translating it.
6. References


Hesse-Biber, S. N. & Leavy, P. 2010. The practice of qualitative research. 2nd ed. Los Angeles: SAGE.


## 7. Appendix

### I. Interview Questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Operationalization</th>
<th>Interview Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aspect 1: actors must present rationales that are in line with definitions of the</td>
<td>• Vad är er generella syn på IIRC:s IR ramverk?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>common good that are considered as socially accepted. In order to examine aspect 1,</td>
<td>• Varför använda ni er av IR ramverket när ni arbetar med andra kunder? Vilka drivkrafter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>we asked our respondents questions on how they interpret the objectives of IR and</td>
<td>• Vad oppfattar ni er målet med IR ramverket? Vad är er kunders främsta mål med IR och</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>what their general opinion is of the framework. In asking the respondents on how</td>
<td>• hur stöttar ni dem för att uppnå dessa?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>they perceive the objectives and their opinion of the framework, we sought to</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>identify the rationales they provided based on what they perceive as legitimate</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and in line with the common good in a Swedish context and corporate</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>communication and annual reporting.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aspect 2: actors need to engage in an active way with different social groups’</td>
<td>• Vilka anser ni vara styrkorna/tördfelarna med att redovisa integrerat?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>competing definitions of the common good. To examine aspect 2, we asked our</td>
<td>• Vilka anser ni vara svagheter/nackdelarna med att redovisa integrerat?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>respondents questions regarding the existence of conflicting values, in applying</td>
<td>• Har ni mött svårigheter i arbetet med andra kunder i implementeringen av IR i dera</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>integrated reporting, and how they would overcome these. In asking these questions</td>
<td>• Och i så fall, hur har ni kommit över dessa?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>we strived to understand how the respondents take into account, the different</td>
<td>• Till hur stor grad styr den integrerade ambitionen er kunders hållbarhetsredovisning?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>perspectives on sustainability held by different stakeholders, i.e. engage with the</td>
<td>• Finns det andra drivkrafter?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>competing definitions of the common good stemming from different logics.</td>
<td>• Finns det aspekter i IR ramverket som inte är förenliga med er kunders redovisning?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Hur balanserar ni IR ramverkets krav på ökad transparen och att samtidigt reducera</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• komplexiteten i redovisningen?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Hur ser ni på förhållandet mellan att kommunicera det som gör just er kunders företag</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• speciellt vs att framställa dem som jämföbara mot andra företag i rapporteringen?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• IR ramverket ställer krav på att företagen till så stor utsträckning som möjligt ska undvika</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• jargoner och för generiska termer när hållbarhetsengagemang uttrycks, hur ser ni på detta</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• och hur skapas balansen i användandet av dessa i de integrerade rapporterna?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Upplever ni att språket i rapporteringen av hållbarhet har förändrats i och med IR?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• År det mer eller mindre konkret i uttrycket av hållbarhetsvärden och skapande?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aspect 3: specific competencies are required in developing effective justifications</td>
<td>• Hur arbetar ni med IR ramverket tillsammans med andra kunder?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>when constructing convincing arguments and accounts. When examining aspect 3, we</td>
<td>• Hur ser ni på er inverkan i upprättandet av er kunders integrerade rapporter?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>asked our respondents about important and critical moments of the adaptation of the</td>
<td>• Hur tolkar ni kraven på upplysningar som ska lämnas i en integrerad rapport?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IR framework into a Swedish context, such as prioritizing what to report on and</td>
<td>• Vilka aspekter av IR ramverket är speciellt viktiga för er redovisning och hur</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>how to formulate it. In doing this we strived to understand how our respondents in</td>
<td>• identifierar man dessa?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the translation of the IR framework with the use of specific competencies, developed</td>
<td>• För vem uppfattar ni att er kunder skriver sin hållbarhetsredovisning? Vilka intresse-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>effective justifications when constructing convincing arguments and accounts.</td>
<td>• arer viktiga och hur motiverar ni varför de är det?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Hur värderar ni och er kunder hållbarhetsaspekter (tx. risker) som inte har ett</td>
<td>• Får vi också tala om hur ni mer konkret och de viktigaste aspekter när ni redoviserar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>uppenbart materiellt värde? Vilka principer/ramverk styr?</td>
<td>• med andra kunder i och med IR?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Vilka personer hos er kunder deltar i upprättandet av integrerade rapporter och</td>
<td>• Hur värderar ni och er kunder hållbarhetsaspekter (tx. risker) som inte har ett</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vilka roller har de? Vem kan vad, har det uppsättning allt om vad som ska lyftas fram?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• IR ramverket avser att få företag att redovisa värdeskapandet av sin verksamhet</td>
<td>• Skapar det nya samarbetet mellan kundernas olika enheter (tx. CSR-ansvarig och</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>på kort, medellång och lång sikt? Hur ser ni på användandet av dessa tidsaspekter?</td>
<td>• redovisningsansvarig osv.?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Hur presenterar och säljer ni in projekt relaterade till IR? År det kunden som kommer med ett behov eller är det ni som får presentera det för dem?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondent #</td>
<td>Company</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>---------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondent 1</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondent 2</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondent 3</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondent 4</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondent 5</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondent 6</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondent 7</td>
<td>E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondent 8</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondent 9</td>
<td>G</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>