



THE ROLE OF ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE ON THE ROAD TO CORPORATE SUSTAINABILITY

*Including a case study of organisational culture within
Plus Retail and the success of its sustainability
performance*

The aim of this Master's Thesis, is to find the characteristics that can explain the success of an organisation to implement corporate sustainability policy, by answering the following research question: What characteristics of organisational culture can explain the success of the implementation of corporate sustainability policy in an organisation? This question is answered by conducting an extensive literature research on the concepts of corporate sustainability as well as organisational culture, and on what this culture ought to look like. This will be combined in the form of a framework consisting of seven characteristics of organisational culture that can have a positive impact on the implementation of corporate culture. Two existing frameworks are being used as red threads to fulfil the aim: Schein's model of organisational culture (1992; 1996a; 1996b; 2010) and the LEAPFROCS model by developed by Witjes (2017a).

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The role of organisational culture on the road to corporate sustainability

Including a case study of organisational culture within Plus Retail and the success of its sustainability performance

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IV. List of abbreviations

CC	-	Corporate Citizenship
CP	-	Cleaner Production
CS	-	Corporate Sustainability
CSR	-	Corporate Social Responsibility
EMS	-	Environmental Management System
EMAS	-	Eco-Management Audit Scheme
ESA	-	Environmental and Social Accounting
GRI	-	Global Reporting Initiative
IE	-	Industrial Ecology
LCA	-	Life Cycle Assessment
OC	-	Organisational Culture
OCM	-	Organisational Change Management
OCSD	-	Organisational Change for Sustainable Development
OL	-	Organisational Learning
PAR	-	Participatory Action Research
PDCA	-	Plan Do Check Act
PPP	-	People Planet Profit
SD	-	Sustainable Development
SQ	-	Survey Question
SR	-	Sustainability Reporting
TBL	-	Triple Bottom Line
TNS	-	The Natural Step

V. Summary for managers and change agents for sustainability

The central research question that is answered in this thesis is: What characteristics of organisational culture can explain the success of the implementation of corporate sustainability policy in an organisation? In case a manager or change agent has the task to implement successful CS policies throughout an organisation, the following should be taken into account.

As a start, it is important that a clear goal is set, and that the actions that will be taken lead to that goal. This prevents a gap between the organisation's goals and actions. This is to be done by developing a transparent vision and planning the change step by step, thereby including the employees that are responsible for each stage of the process. This change should be planned both on a short- and long term. Regular evaluation meetings should be included whereby feedback is given where, with the use of the PDCA-cycle the progress is evaluated and adjusted where needed. During these meetings, members of the operator-, technical- as well as the executive cultures should be present. The combination of different types of knowledge and experience enhances the level of organisational learning, and will result in more optimal solutions for possible issues.

Transparency and dialogue are furthermore important to create shared attitudes towards the change throughout the organisation. Dialogue and communication in this sense, function as the basis of every change. This also helps to overcome a potential resistance to the change. The implementation of a reward system could in addition help to overcome resistance to change. This, in combination with top-management commitment will increase the commitment to the goal by employees. The presence of an employee that functions as a champion for corporate sustainability can further support this commitment. Furthermore, collaboration within- and between departments should be encouraged to increase creativity and creative solutions.

As a last element, the concept of sustainability should be embedded throughout the organisation. In the ideal situation, sustainability can be accounted to as a basic assumption within the organisational culture of the organisation.

The combination and presence of the above-described characteristics can help to successfully implement corporate sustainability policies within the organisation.

Part I: What to expect?

1. Introduction

1.1 Problem definition and research questions

In the last decades, human-caused climate change with its corresponding negative impact on the earth's ecosystems (Röckstrom et. al., 2009) has become an acknowledged problem where (large) firms are regarded as one of the largest polluters (Lozano, 2013). Since organisations, also referred to as businesses and firms, can influence many people, they have the moral obligation to adopt more sustainable practices and through this, implement more sustainable processes and products in society (Baumgartner, 2009; Lozano, 2013). Therefore, corporations have the potential and responsibility to improve their sustainability performance and to help work towards a more sustainable world (Baumgartner, 2009; Lozano, 2013). In other words, organisations have the potential to change from an undesired and unsustainable status quo (SQ), to a more desired, more sustainable one, having corporate sustainability (CS) implemented successfully (Lozano, 2013). CS in this sense, is the output of a spectrum of inputs and processes with a focus on organisational change for sustainable development (OCSd) (Epstein & Buhovac, 2010).

During the last decades, organisations themselves also started recognizing their desired role on this road to CS (Lozano, 2012a). They started to notice that people, planet, profit, and not to forget the time-dimension, being the short, long- and longer term (see section 1.2), can't be implemented apart from each other. However, only few of these organisations seem to have been successful in implementing sustainability in their corporate practices (Lozano, 2012a, Doppelt, 2003). This can be explained by an increasing number of managers that seem to agree with the importance of a change for sustainable development (SD), but who experience difficulties in translating the developed strategies into successful action (Epstein & Roy, 2001).

During the last decades, OC with its social values embedded in the organisation (Schein, 2010) and its corresponding vision (Witjes, 2017a), is increasingly being regarded as an important factor related to organisational change in the literature (Schein, 1996; Schein, 2010). A conceptualization of the concepts *corporate sustainability* and *corporate culture* can be found in section 2: theoretical framework. However, multiple literature studies have found change efforts for SD within organisations to be rather insufficient due to a lack of planned (Lozano, 2013) *cultural change* (Linnenluecke and Griffiths, 2010). The presence or absence of a set of characteristics of the OC is hypothesized to have either a positive or negative influence on the success of organisational change. More specifically, the aim of this research is to find the variables that can explain the success of an organisation to implement corporate sustainability policies by conducting an extensive literature research on the topics of *corporate sustainability*, *organisational culture* resulting in *a framework of desired characteristics to establish this change* as well as by conducting a case study at Plus Retail in the form of qualitative interviews with, and a quantitative survey amongst, employees with different

functions and backgrounds. The following research- and sub-questions have been formulated to help to fulfil this aim:

What characteristics of organisational culture can explain the success of the implementation of corporate sustainability policy in an organisation?

- What is corporate sustainability?
- What is organisational culture?
- What ought an organisational culture to look like to implement corporate sustainability?
- What does the organisational culture of Plus Retail look like now?
- What recommendations on organisational culture can be given to organisations in general, and to Plus Retail in particular, for the successful implementation of corporate sustainability?

1.2 Societal relevance

1.2.1 Society

Non-sustainable practices can have major negative impacts on society and the environment. What is considered the largest disaster caused by an organisation in the industrial age, is the accident in a pesticide plant in Bhopal, India in 1984. More than 6000 people found their deaths and over 50.000 people suffered from decreases in their health long after the accident happened (Suk et. al., 2016). Furthermore, more than seven million people worldwide die annually because of air pollution (WHO, 2016).

Crutzen (2002) and Rockström et. al. (2009), have named this 'new era of human-caused environmental degradation' the *anthropocene*, a new epoch in which humans constitute the dominant driver of change to the Earth's System. Therefore, because of the large impact businesses can have on this pollution, and given of the large amount of people they can reach, they ought to reduce their negative environmental impact significantly.

Furthermore, as shortly highlighted above, one of the dimensions of sustainability is the time dimension. If businesses successfully want to implement CS, *future generations* should be taken into account. This can for instance be done by taking the *precautionary principle* into account. This is "acting cautiously, on the assumption that our knowledge of the effects of our actions is always exceeded by our ignorance" (Curry, 2011, p. 62). In other words, a firm should not conduct any actions that *might* have a negative impact in the future, because we have a responsibility here and now for the generations next to come.

1.2.2 Businesses

As shortly stated above, the difficulty regarding the successful implementation of CS often lies in the translation between the developed strategies into successful action. This is partially due to the focus most organisations have when it comes to implementing sustainability, namely a rather techno centric focus whereby the social aspects tend to be neglected (Lozano, 2012a; 2013, Witjes, 2017a; Stubbs and Cocklin, 2008). Another likely reason for the little success of businesses to implement sustainability is the cost-factor. Generally, making economic profit is being placed before social and

ecological factors. However, profit in this sense could also work as a driver for sustainability through for instance the attraction of more customers, and therefore should the organisation not be continued to be viewed solely as 'an economic entity' (Stubbs and Cocklin, 2008). This thesis finds its relevance in researching what the role of the organisational culture (OC) is when it comes to the above-mentioned difficulties.

Furthermore, businesses, and more specifically management teams, CEO's and change agents can use the results and recommendations of this research to successfully implement CS in their practices, by focusing on the social elements of their OC. In other words, this thesis can help businesses by providing specific characteristics of OC to implement sustainability and with that, as a first step, to *plan* the change (Lozano, 2012a) that is needed.

Also, this research addresses the means and steps to be taken by managers and change agents in order to successfully implement CS. This research can thus provide a proposition on how to translate a sustainability strategy into successful actions (Epstein & Roy, 2001), with its corresponding CS as an ultimate result.

1.3 Scientific relevance

According to Lozano (2013) and Witjes (2017a), social factors such as the culture of the company, the supply chain, and the way the company interacts with its stakeholders and internal departments and the environmental, social and time dimensions of sustainability are often being overlooked because there is a too large focus on technical solutions in current literature and practices. Only few organisations have been successful in implementing a change with a focus on the organisational *social* systems. This can be illustrated by what goals organisations seem to have for sustainability and by which means they use to reach these goals, namely an approach with a focus on "the whole-system, by changing products, processes and systems, so that waste is minimized, where resources are used more efficiently and effectively, in almost closed loops" (Lozano, 2012c, p. 44). This shows the need for more knowledge about how social factors can contribute to solving the sustainability problem (Stubbs and Cocklin, 2008). And it are these social factors that in this research are hypothesized to be variables that can explain why some companies do, and others do not succeed in implementing sustainable practices in their day to day operations.

According to Linnenluecke and Griffiths (2010), in order for organisations to implement more sustainable practices they will have to develop a sustainability-oriented culture. This research will contribute to the existing scientific literature regarding the role of OC in implementing sustainability. This is important because "there is still little insight into how the adoption of corporate sustainability practices can be achieved inside organisations" (Linnenluecke and Griffiths, 2010, p. 358).

Furthermore, this thesis contributes to the scientific body of literature on CS by using the socially-oriented part of the LEAPFROCS framework developed by Witjes (2017a). Since this is a rather new framework both developed with the use of existing scientific literature as well as practical knowledge (Witjes, 2017a; 2017b) for analyzing and estimating the success of the implementation of CS in organisations, it can add to further and more in-depth extensive research on this topic. Thereby it specifically contributes to the testing of the CS-part of this framework, where the cultural part will

make use of scientific literature which focuses on the model developed by Schein (1992; 1993; 1996a; 1996b; 2010) with a clear focus on this subject.

1.4 Research framework and layout of the thesis

1.4.1 Research framework

As can be seen in figure 1, several bodies of literature are researched before executing the case study. Literature on the concepts of CS and OC will help to operationalise these concepts, and will help to come to an understanding of when an organisation can be considered as being corporate sustainable, and/or to what extent that is the case. This literature research results in a framework of characteristics of OC that can explain the success of the implementation of CS within organisations.

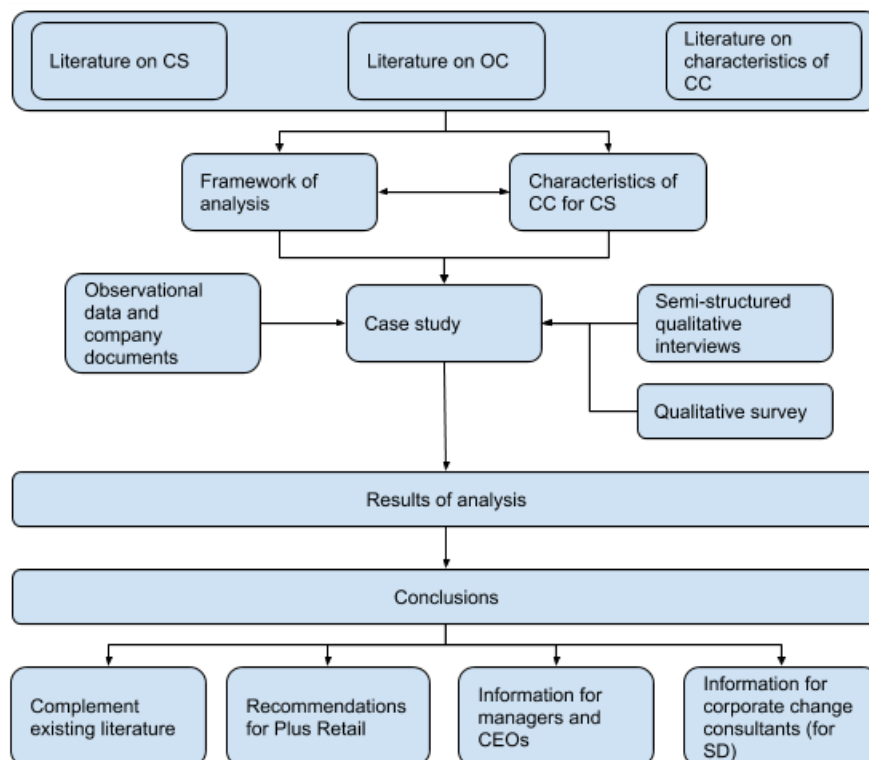


Figure 1: Research framework

1.4.2 Layout of the thesis

The next chapter contains the theoretical framework used in this thesis. This chapter includes the first three sub-questions relating to the operationalisation of the terms *corporate sustainability* and *organisational culture*, where the third sub-question includes the resulted framework with characteristics on how an OC ought to look like in order to increase its sustainability-success. Several existing frameworks and methods will be highlighted and explained in order to provide clear definitions of the terms and to understand the different points of view (social, technical and or whether or not they include a continuous feedback loop) these methods take. The last framework to be explained will be the LEAPFROCS framework since this part of this framework will be used to research CS in this thesis, and because this is a holistic framework developed by using both existing frameworks and practical knowledge from the field. The LEAPFROCS framework as the last framework discussed in this sense, can be seen as the conclusion and combination of the previously discussed frameworks and methods. Relating to OC, several studies conducted by Schein (1992; 1993; 1996a; 1996b; 2010) will be highlighted and used to present a clear overview and definition of the concept.

The third part of the research describes the method for the case-study at Plus Retail, whereas the fourth part includes the results of this case study. As a follow-up, recommendations will be given to organisations in general, and to Plus Retail in particular, followed by a discussion of the used method, propositions for further research and implications of this research. The thesis ends with a conclusion in which the main question is answered.

Part II: Theoretical framework

2 Theoretical background of the research

2.1 What is Corporate Sustainability?

2.1.1 Introduction and definitions from the literature

The term sustainable development has first been mentioned by the Club of Rome in their Report 'Our Common Future' (1987) and is defined as: "Development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (p. 47). This definition however, leaves room for own interpretation. This research focuses on the social part of CS within a firm, rather than the technical part. SD within a firm can be translated to one concept: Corporate Sustainability (SD). Many definitions and interpretations can be found in the literature, however in general all definitions include three dimensions, namely the economic-, environmental - and social dimensions, where Lozano (2013), specifically adds a fourth dimension, namely the time dimension (the short-, long and longer term).

As explained in the introduction, the ultimate goal of businesses, given their large responsibility and potential to make a change for SD, *should* be to implement SD within their operations, thereby combining profits with environmental and social gain on the short- and longer term. One definition was presented as proposed by Lozano (2013), namely "Corporate activities that proactively seek to contribute to sustainability equilibriums, including the economic, environmental, and social dimensions of today, as well as their inter-relations within and throughout the time dimension (i.e. the short-, long and longer-term), while addressing the company's systems, i.e. operations and production, management and strategy, organisational systems, procurement and marketing, and assessment and communication; as well as its stakeholders" (p. 33). Baumgartner (2009), presents a more compact definition: "the adoption of business strategies and activities that meet the needs of the enterprise and its stakeholders today while protecting, sustaining and enhancing the human and natural resources that will be needed in the future (p. 103). When it comes to direct management, van Kleef and Roome (2007) relate this to "management of business that recognizes its embeddedness in social, environmental and economic systems, and focuses on management and relationships to meet the environmental, social, and economic requirements of many different stakeholders in its networks" (p 43.).

It can be concluded that all definitions at least include the four dimensions of sustainability (social, environment, economic and time), whereas the time-dimension is included in the definition more specifically by some authors rather than by others. Furthermore, all definitions in a way, refer to the stakeholders who should be satisfied.

The next part of this chapter includes the most widely used 'tools' for the implementation of CS within an organisation. These tools will be explained in more detail in order to enhance the understanding of the term CS policies as defined above as well as to give an overview of the different

ways organisations try to reach the goal of CS. Where appropriate, it will be highlighted if and when certain tools seem to complement, overlap or contradict each other.

2.1.2 Tools for Corporate Sustainability

As a part of his PhD Thesis, Witjes (2017a) used data from four different search engines; Web of Science; Scopus; Google Scholar; and Google web search, in order to get an understanding of which tools for the implementation of CS policies were most commonly used in the past fifteen years by organisations to implement CS as an ultimate goal. It is important to have an overview of this data in order to conduct further research of which kind of tools organisations lean towards, and why they do so. Furthermore, it enhances the understanding of the concept of CS to give a wide overview of the different means and goals an organisation can work towards. This also shows the importance of a clear vision and mission decided upon by the organisation since this will (partly) determine what kind of tool is most likely to help generate positive outcomes related to CS. In other words, "The appearance of a tool in the search engines shows the attention and importance for specific tools as a support for the integration of CS within the organisational system" (Witjes, 2017a, p. 84). This is not to say that these tools are the ones most likely to help successfully implement CS. As was stated in the introduction, the rather narrow focus on technical tools and its most likely corresponding solutions is part of the reason that, so far, the successful implementation of CS is rare, or at least, not sufficient to solve the sustainability problem.

2.1.3 The top three most commonly used tools for CS

2.1.3.1 Environmental Management System

The first and most commonly used tool for CS is the Environmental Management System (EMS). This is not a pre-developed tool that can be used and assessed widely by firms throughout the world but can be given its own substance per organisation. It is an umbrella term for several CS certification schemes such as ISO 14001 and the Eco-Management Audit Scheme (EMAS) (see the next paragraphs). It is rather a 'soft instrument' voluntarily to be adopted (Hertin, Berkhout, Wagner & Tyteca, 2008). The use of this soft approach differs from the former most commonly used tools or drivers such as enforcement by law or through economic benefits (Hertin et. al., 2008; Arimura, Hibiki & Katayama, 2008). The EMS is therefore characterized as less hierarchical. Both a top-down- as well as a bottom-up approach, or a combination of the two, can be used. It can also be stated as follows: the goal of less environmental pressure by the firm is to be reached "by means other than the hierarchical prescription of legally binding rules and standards which can be enforced by public authorities" (Hertin et.al., 2008). Usually, implementing the EMS consists of "policymaking, planning, and implementation and review of the environmental policies" (Arimura et. al., 2008, p. 282). These steps are to be filled in by the organisation itself.

Besides the 'internal investments'-and efforts to implement an EMS entirely developed by the organisation, there are also voluntary and widely acknowledged 'external' certification schemes (Wiengarten, Pagell & Fynes, 2013). The most widely used and known scheme is ISO 14001. It includes guidelines on policies to reduce environmental impact, what the planning and implementation of these policies should look like, how it should be operated and eventually how to check these steps. Thereafter, where needed, extra steps will be taken (Wiengarten et. al., 2013).

The information about being ISO-certified should be transparent and thus available to the public. However, the ISO 14001 scheme does not require for companies to be transparent about their environmental information. It rather is presented in an incomparable format (Hertin et. al., 2008).

Another widely used scheme is the EMAS and according to the EMAS regulation which has the objective to be to promote continuous improvements in the environmental performance of organisations (Iraldo, Testa & Frey, 2009). The EMAS is different from other EMS since it also sheds light on the indirect factors that can contribute to environmental pressure. This means that for example, the practices and raw materials of a supplier, should also be taken into account when implementing the scheme (Iraldo et. al., 2009). The main difference between the EMAS and ISO-series is that ISO is recognized worldwide whereas the EMAS has a rather European base. Furthermore, in regarding some subjects, the EMAS has stricter rules than ISO (Lozano, 2012c).

Considering the implementation of EMS in organisations, the focus lies mostly on the innovation and improvement of technical processes (Iraldo et. al., 2009). In table 1 however, the social focus has been marked by a 'little x' since an EMS gives an organisation the possibility, and thus does not oblige an organisation to also include social developments within the organisation. The little x under continuous improvement can also be explained by possibilities to develop an organisations' own EMS: this can also mean that continuous improvement will not be taken into account.

2.1.3.2 Life Cycle Assessment

The second most-used tool to implement CS is Life Cycle Assessment (LCA). LCA is used to describe "the whole industrial system involved in the production, use and waste management of a product or service" (Baumann & Tillman, 2004, p. 19). In other words, it covers the entire life cycle of a product, from natural resource to end-product, or from the cradle to the grave (Robert, 2000). It thereby can be used to make a comparison between products (Ibid.).

In the process of conducting an LCA, every emission and step of the product system is being analyzed (Baumann & Tillman, 2004). By doing this, so called 'hot spots' of environmental pollution can be identified and with that knowledge, the environmental pressure of those parts in the production process can be optimized. This is an ongoing and never-ending process, as a continuous loop. However, economic and social factors are not included when conducting an LCA, nor is risk assessment (Baumann & Tillman, 2004). LCA thus has a rather technocratic focus. Besides the optimization of the above-mentioned hotspots, LCA's are being used for decision making, learning and exploration as well as communication within the organisation (Baumann & Tillman, 2004).

2.1.3.3 Sustainability Reporting

Whereas Sustainability Reporting (SR) is found to be the third most commonly used tool in organisations in total (Witjes, 2017), SR, according to Berzosa, Bernaldo & Fernández-Sanchez (2017) is found to be the most commonly used tool in businesses since it allows firms to compare themselves with other firms in a clear overview (Berzosa et. al., 2017). SR is defined by the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) as "the practice of measuring, disclosing, and being accountable to internal and external stakeholders for organisational performance towards the goal of sustainable development" (GRI, 2000, p. 43). Concerning SR it is important that all stakeholders are taken into

account for the assessment of sustainability in the report (Berzosa et. al., 2017). Since the definition does not include which characteristics of social and/or technical actions should be presented in the report, these boxes are checked with a small x. The continuous feedback-loop in general is not mentioned.

2.1.4 Other frequently used tools

Besides the three main tools that are discussed above, there is a large set of other tools that are being used in order for businesses to implement more sustainable practices. Lozano (2012c) distinguishes five parts in an organisation's operations that can have an impact on sustainability. These are: operations and production, management and strategy, organisational systems, procurement and marketing and assessment and communication. Each sustainability tool has its own characteristics with a focus on one or more of these parts of the operational system. In this thesis however, no distinction is being made between parts of the system other than technical or social, and whether or not they include a continuous feedback loop (see table 1).

2.1.4.1 A wide range of sustainability tools

The widely used tools for CS shortly discussed in this section are based on Witjes (2017a), Robert (2000) and Lozano (2012c.).

The concept of Cleaner Production (CP) is being used by firms to "continuously use integrated preventive strategies to process products and services, utilizing raw materials efficiently to reduce waste at source, and minimizing risks to the environment and society" (Lozano, 2012c, p. 17). It has a technical focus since it is used for the technical parts of process and product development. Corporate Citizenship (CC), on the other hand is more focused on the social rights and responsibilities that businesses have towards their stakeholders. This responsibility is meant to go further than compliance with laws, but also includes ethics and environmental profits (contribution to a better environment) and is thus a rather socially-oriented tool (Lozano, 2012c). Since it ought to be an integrated tool within the business strategy, but is not explicitly mentioned to be frequently verified, the continuous improvement-box is filled out with a small x.

The Natural Step (TNS) framework "is used for dialogue, problem solving, strategic planning, and as a guiding principle for the merging of ISO 14001 with strategic investment programs for business" (Robert, 2000, p. 245). It has three 'building blocks'. First, awareness must be created amongst the employees about the existence sustainability problem. This is a social factor. Secondly, in the production process, the four systems conditions of the earth should be taken into account, which includes the technical aspect. And third, a step-by step plan must be made for the long-term. Since the model is mostly build on dialogue, the technical box is checked with a small x. Industrial Ecology (IE) on the other hand, has a full technical focus since its aim is to "restructure the industry in the form of an ecosystem with materials flowing through inter-connections of production processes" (Lozano, 2012c, p. 21), thereby reducing total waste within the operational system. In the most optimal situation this results in an ongoing closed loop.

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) can include the following subjects: “stakeholder engagement and participation, product impact, health and safety, dealing with corruption, human rights and freedom of association, communication, reporting, disclosure, transparency, environmental production and management of resources” (Lozano, 2012c, p. 18). As the name and examples indicate, it has a social focus but does not necessarily focus on a continuous improvement. Also eco-labelling is a socially-oriented tool since it “aims to inform consumers of the environmental impacts throughout the production, consumption, and waste phases of products and services and, to a great extent, influence consumers’ behaviour towards more environmentally friendly consumption patterns” (Lozano, 2012c, p. 20).

2.1.5 The LEAPFROCS framework

2.1.5.1 Introduction

The LEAPFROCS framework is developed during the course of a PhD thesis (2017a) by researcher Sjors Witjes to help companies to work to their full potential related to CS. More specifically, it is developed to “contribute to CS integration research supporting an outcome-focused analysis of the efficiency of CS integration in the organisational system” (Witjes, 2017a, p. 128). It is a holistic framework developed both by using scientific literature on existing frameworks and models, as well as the researcher’s own practical experience in this field of work (Witjes, 2017a, Witjes, 2017b). Part of the framework is concerned with the social factors of CS and is of specific interest for this research relating to OC. Another part of the research has a focus on the physical dynamics or rather, the technical and measurable outputs (Witjes, 2017a). Therefore, the LEAPFROCS framework can be categorized as having both a technical as well as a social focus, whereas this research focuses specifically on the social side of CS.

2.1.5.2 Background and goal

LEAPFROCS stands for Leadership Enabling Accelerated Performance by Ferreting out Retrospectively the Organisational Integration of Corporate Sustainability. The goal is to help organisations to integrate CS into their organisational system by looking back at its past success on actions taken on this subject. The basis of this method and reflection can be found in the Triple Bottom Line (Witjes, 2017a) which combines people, planet and profit (PPP) in order to implement successful CS (Elkington, 2008). The LEAPFROCS framework helps to increase insights in the understanding of the three P’s. This will help the organisation to learn and self-reflect on the implementation of CS and to take steps or ‘leapfrogs’ towards CS. By doing so, the framework brings together three perspectives on an organisational system that are central in this research, namely continuous organisational improvement-, structure- and culture (Witjes, 2017a; Witjes, Vermeulen & Cramer, 2017). These elements are explained in the next paragraphs.

2.1.5.3 Continuous organisational improvement to enhance congruence between goals and actions

Witjes (2017a; 2017b) highlights the importance of congruence between goals and actions. When the goal of an organisation is to become corporate sustainable, the actions that are taken within the organisation should lead to this goal. In other words, there should not exist a gap between goals and actions in the organisations’ operational activities. Witjes (2017a) furthermore highlights that continuous organisational improvement can help to avoid this gap. Continuous organisational improvement can be explained by the Plan-Do-Check-Act (PDCA) loop as visualized in figure 2.

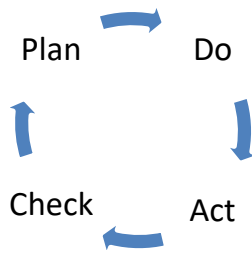


Figure 2: The continuous improvement loop in the form of a PDCA-cycle (Based on Witjes, 2017a; Pannatier, 2014).

Implementing the PDCA cycle helps to prevent a difference between the actual results of an action and the intended goal (Sokovic, Pavletic & Kern Pipan, 2010).

2.1.5.4 Three levels of analysis of organisational structure

Analyzing the operational structure on an organisation is important since it determines how an organisation can achieve its goals (Witjes et. al., 2017). Many different ways of analyzing the organisational structure can be found in the literature. However, the LEAPFROCS framework uses the three levels for the analysis of organisational structure as proposed by Barratt (2004) and Ouchi (1978) , namely the strategic-, tactical- and operational levels. This representation of the organisational structure can be found in figure 3 (Witjes, et. al., p. 135) below. These structural levels are chosen “as they can be applied for individuals, groups and the entire organisation” (Witjes, 2017a, p. 123; Lozano, 2014).



Figure 3: The strategic, tactical and operational levels of the organisational structure (Witjes et. al., 2017, p. 135)

The strategic level is concerned with planning and decision-making, where the tactical level covers the managers who have the task to translate the goals set at the strategic level into planning, goal-setting and actions (Witjes 2017a; Katz & Kahn, 1978). They are furthermore responsible for the implementation of these actions. In this way they are the link between the strategic and the operational levels (Witjes et. al., 2017). The operational level is then charged with the execution of the plans and is related to the core business of the organisation (Witjes, 2017a; Witjes et. al., 2017) Katz & Kahn, 1978).

2.1.5.5 Organisational culture

The third perspective that the LEAPFROCS framework includes is the organisational culture. The framework operationalises organisational culture by explaining the surface-, value- and operational levels. The next chapter however, uses the terms proposed by Schein (1992, 1996a, 1996b, 2010) namely, artefacts, espoused beliefs and values and basic underlying assumptions.

2.1.5.6 The use of integration mechanisms

Organisations develop mechanisms to support changes in their organisational system. These can for instance be in the form of regular meetings on specific topics, or policy documents (Witjes, 2017a). The classification of the mechanisms according to type, the focus of the organisational systems and the time perspective (Witjes, 2017a; Witjes et. al., 2017) can be found in table 1 below.

Type	Organisational System	Time
- Thoughts	- Physical dynamics	- Past
- Activities	- Social dynamics	- Present
- Interactions		- Future
- Data exchange		

Table 1: Classification of integration mechanisms (Based on Witjes, 2017a; Witjes et. al., 2017; Pannatier, 2014)

The classification thus occurs through four different types, being the thoughts of the employees before translating these into verbal communication or actions, the activities or actions that happen at a specific moment in time, the interactions which contains the way employees interact with different actors, both in- and outside the firm and the exchange of data regarding to organisational processes and their influence on people, the environment and profits (Witjes, 2017a; Pannatier, 2014). Furthermore, the focus of the organisational system can be classified as physical (technical) or social, as is the focus of this research. The time-element shows when an integration took place (Witjes, et. al., 2017), either in the past, present or is planned in the future. The focus differs per research since it should be tailored to the organisation's strategy (Ibid.).

2.1.5.7 The role of the LEAPFROCS framework in this research

The identification and classification of integration mechanisms by identifying different types of integration mechanisms is not included in this research because of the absence of long-term participation of the researcher in the company due to the time and scope of the research. Rather, the three LEAPFROCS perspectives of continuous improvement by focusing on the congruence between goals an actions, the organisational structure and the organisational culture are being used to research to what extent the characteristics of the framework used in this research are integrated in Plus's culture.

The organisational structure will be used in a slightly different form. The strategic- and tactical levels are brought together under the term *executive culture*, whereas the operational level remains in the form of an *operational culture*. A third culture is then added, namely the *technical culture*, as explained in the next chapter. The time-element is furthermore included in the case study by including questions in both qualitative interviews as well as in a quantitative survey relating to past-, present- and future actions.

2.1.6 The social and technical focus of sustainability tools

In table 2, an overview is presented of the above-explained tools for CS. It gives a clear understanding of the division between socially- and technically-oriented tools. This is to shed light on the problem related to the usual technical focus that most organisations adopt when it comes to implementing CS in the corporate practices, as explained in the introduction. Partially because of that problem, being the lack of a social focus, they overall seem to not be successful in the implementation of CS in their corporate practices. Thereby, an extra column is added, showing whether or not the tool has a specific focus on continuous improvement (Witjes, 2017a, or in other words, whether or not the time dimension of sustainability is included (Lozano, 2013).

Table 2: Tools for CS categorized on their focus

Tool	Technical focus	Social focus	Continuous Improvement
EMS	X	x	X
LCA	X		X
SR	X	X	
IE	X		X
CP	X		X
TNS	X	X	X
CC		X	X
Eco-labelling		X	
LEAPFROCS	X	X	X

As can be seen in the table above, the LEAPFROCS table covers both a technical and social focus as well as a continuous improvement loop related to the time dimension, where this research is concerned only with the social part of OC and the continuous improvement. It is in this regard interesting to see that only the TNS framework also covers these two aspects. However, according to Robert (2000), “the TNS framework is good for raising awareness and conveys a relevant understanding of what must be done on a principle level, but cannot be applied ‘hands on’, for instance as metrics” (p. 250).

This chapter has operationalised the term CS by using the LEAPFROCS framework, complemented with other literature. Since the importance of OC has been mentioned in the introduction and in section 2.1.5 on the LEAPFROCS framework, the following chapter will operationalise the term OC by analyzing the literature by Schein (1992, 1993, 1996a, 1996b, 2010).

2.2 What is organisational culture?

2.2.1 Introduction and definitions from the literature

As stated in the introduction, many different definitions of the term 'organisational culture' exist. However, generally these definitions acknowledge the term OC to include the organisational values that are corresponded and embedded throughout the organisations through norms, artefacts and that are observed in behavioural patterns (Hogan & Coote, 2014; Schein, 1996a, Schein, 2010). Since, in this research, the model of Schein will be used as a red thread-framework to understand the concept of organisational culture as well as to identify variables that shape and can change such a culture, the definition of Schein (2010) will be taken into account: *"A pattern of shared basic assumptions learned by a group as it solves its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, which has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems"* (p. 18). In this sense, culture is shaped, amongst others, by 'learning' (Ibid.).

According to Schein (1996a; 1996b), three different types of OC can be identified within a firm, namely the operator culture, the engineers (technical culture) and the executive level. How one can understand these differences and how to make them more congruent can be researched, Schein (2010) proposes, by conducting the research on three levels of culture. The three different types of OC and the levels are explained in more detail in the following paragraphs.

2.2.2 Schein's model of organisational culture

Throughout his career, Schein has conducted research in several fields such as organisational learning and change, career development and process consultation, but he mostly spent his career as a researcher in the social studies in OC (MIT, 2017). He has been very influential in the literature as well as in practice. Therefore, this research uses Schein's published work on OC to investigate the importance and substance of the concept.

First, the three types of OC that Schein distinguishes will be explained, where after the three levels of embeddedness in OC will be discussed. These will also play an important role in this research and the case study in order to find the values and characteristics that are present in Plus's OC and to be able to give a recommendation on how to implement CS more successfully.

2.2.3 Three types of organisational culture within an organisation

According to Schein (1996a; 1996b; 2010) a total of three different cultures can be distinguished in each firm, namely the operator-, the technical- or engineering- and the executive culture. In many organisations, these cultures however tend to lack alignment (Schein, 1996b) and therefore have trouble to collaborate and more importantly, fail to learn (Schein, 1996a; 1996b). An overview of the three cultures and their corresponding characteristics can be found in table 3.

Table 3: Three types of organisational culture within an organisation (based on Schein 1990; 1996a; 1996b; 2010)

Type of culture	The operator culture	The technical culture	The executive culture
Who	The operators	Engineers and designers	CEOs
Characteristics	1. Based on human interaction and collaboration 2. Each organisation has its own specific internal culture. It is therefore difficult to analyze 3. Practical knowledge 4. Dependent on each other's skills of communication, openness, trust and commitment	1. Preference for technical solutions with no human involvement	1. Financial returns 2. Part of a global culture 3. Distant from the human factor

2.2.3.1 The operator culture

The operator culture consists of the largest group compared to the other two cultures and is the group that usually is most visible (Schein, 1996a). It is thereby the only *internal* culture within a firm which is “based on its operational success” (Schein, 1996b, p. 9). Because every organisation develops their own internal culture with their own specific characteristics, it is also the most difficult one to operationalise and analyze on a broad scale (Schein, 1996b). The other two cultures can be part of a larger or even worldwide network of respectively engineers and CEO's.

In most firms, it is the operator culture that is being targeted by managers with new programs for change and organisational learning. However, this top-down approach is often not considered to be successful (Schein, 1996a). This is mainly because this group of people, rather than the managerial group, is most likely to uncover systemic failures and also learns how to fix these failures or to deal with them in order to keep the production going (Schein, 1996a; 2010). They are highly dependent on each other and moreover, their “levels of communication, trust, and teamwork are essential to getting the work done efficiently” (Schein, 1996b, p. 13). Despite the amount of rules and policies that are in place, the operators need to be innovative to a certain extent, beyond the top-management (ibid.). Practical knowledge is a characteristic that the other two cultures often lack.

2.2.3.2 The technical culture

This culture consists of the engineers and designers, in other words, the technocrats (Schein, 1996a) and are often part of a culture that exceeds the company they work for (Schein, 1996b) given their mostly corresponding educational background and line of thinking. The employees who work within this culture are responsible for the ‘core’ technology within the firm (Ibid.). Relating to Plus Retail, the department of e-commerce would be part of this culture.

Where the operator culture is mainly based on human contact, the technical culture rather favours technical solutions than human-involved solutions (Schein, 2010). In other words, they feel the need for “real engineering or basic design that drives them toward simplicity, elegance, and routinized solutions that often ignore the social realities of the workplace” (Schein, 1996a, p. 237). More specifically they often would like to *replace* people by machines, resulting in an underappreciated and threatened feeling by the operators. Thereby, the developed efficiency within the operator

culture as well as the gained practical experience will then be lost. Both groups will try to develop new programs and policies to be approved and executed by the next culture: the executives (Schein, 1996a).

2.2.3.3 The executive culture

The executive culture is the culture that is least internal since “if one looks at organisations worldwide, one can identify a global community of chief executive officers (CEOs) who share a common set of assumptions based on the daily realities of their status and role” (Schein, 1996a, p. 237). However, CEOs that have this status because e.g. they founded the company and family members of the entrepreneur do not seem to be part of this culture as such. This is because they seem more diverse (Schein, 1996a; 1996b).

The main focus of this culture is the financial accountability that leads to the ongoing goal of low prices with a corresponding profit as high as possible (Schein, 1996a). While following this goal, promoted CEOs realize that they become distant from the ‘human factor’ and are starting to lead as a control system (Schein, 1996b). This often leads to conflicts mainly with the operator culture, since most changes proposed by the operator culture come with costs, with initially uncertain returns. This means that “executives unconsciously collude with the engineers in wanting to minimize the human factor (Schein, 1996a, p. 138). This has a direct negative effect on collaboration, commitment and involvement (Schein, 1996a; 2010).

2.2.4 Three levels of embeddedness in organisational culture

According to Schein (2010), OC can only be assessed if the researcher acknowledges that there are three levels of embeddedness in culture. These levels range from having visible and physical characteristics to very deeply embedded, unconscious ways of behaviour, thought and feeling (see table 4), as briefly highlighted in the ‘general’ definition of OC (Schein, 2010; Hogan & Coote, 2007; Baumgartner, 2009). The three levels are discussed in more detail below.

Table 4: Three levels of embeddedness in organisational culture (based on Schein, 2010; Schein, 1996a)

1. Artefacts
- Physical and feelable structures and processes
- Observable (but difficult to understand the meaning of the behaviour)
2. Espoused beliefs and values
- Ideals, goals, values and aspirations
- Ideologies
- Rationalizations (these can be incongruent with the observed behaviour and observable artefacts)
3. Basic underlying assumptions
- Unconscious, taken-for-granted beliefs and values (they determine behaviour, perception, thought and feeling)

2.2.4.1 Artefacts

Artefacts include the circumstances or phenomena that one can see, hear or feel within a group or organisation. Also when a stranger enters the group or organisation for the first time, these phenomena are feelable. Examples of characteristics of this upper level of organisational culture are the physical environment, the language used and its documented list of values (Schein, 2010). Despite the fact that artefacts are most easy to see and feel, Schein (2010) does highlight the importance for a researcher to acknowledge that artefacts are extremely difficult to understand and

analyze. This means that it is easy to write about what you see, but this does not say anything about the reason why people behave in a certain way in an organisation or group. To understand the observed artefacts, the next step is to research the more deeply espoused beliefs and values (Ibid.).

2.2.4.2 Espoused beliefs and values

In this second level of culture, a shared value or belief eventually will transform into a 'shared assumption, the so called espoused beliefs and values. These beliefs and values can help a group on how to behave in certain stress situations (Schein, 2010). However, often the espoused beliefs and values are not congruent with the observed behaviour (Schein, 2010; Lozano, 2012b). In these instances, the "desired behaviour reflects the espoused values but are not reflected in observed behaviour" (Schein, 2010, p. 27).

Harris and Crane (2002), in their study about the greening of OC, identified three espoused company positions regarding the embeddedness of sustainability in the company line. First, a small group of interviewees found their organisations 'strongly supportive' of the salvation of environmental problems and were concerned about embedding sustainable development in their organisation. It must be noted here, that most of these interviewees were employed by non-profit organisations. The second company position, which included the largest part of the interviewees, acknowledged sustainability as 'increasingly important', however, other factors were found to be more important. Thirdly, there was a small group of interviewees whose organisations were 'entirely hostile' towards sustainability initiatives.

2.2.4.3 Basic assumptions

Basic assumptions are the "taken-for-granted, underlying and usually unconscious assumptions that determine perceptions, thought processes, feelings, and ultimately, behaviour" (Schein, 1990, p. 112). This level of OC is most difficult to analyze because of the unconscious element of the concept. They often are a result of long-held values, that overtime transformed into deeply held assumptions, the basic assumptions. For instance they "become taken for granted when a solution to a problem works repeatedly over time" (Schein, 2010, p. 27).

The following chapter presents a set of seven characteristics of OC for the successful implementation of CS in an organisation, distilled from the LEAPFROCS framework and the model proposed by Schein. Where needed, other literature is highlighted.

2.3 What ought an organisational culture to look like to implement corporate sustainability?

2.3.1 Introduction

In this section, the most important drivers within an OC that can explain the success of the implementation of CS policies within an organisation as found in the literature are explained. These drivers are a follow-up on the above-explained frameworks and models for either the establishment or measurement of OC and CS. The two models used complementally.

Where Schein's model of organisational culture provides information on the different levels of culture with a large focus on the human aspect of this, the LEAPFROCS framework as a whole extends this definition by including organisational structure and the time-element (past, present and future). In other words, in the previous sections frameworks and models are presented and explained, in particular Schein's model of OC and the LEAPFROCS framework by Witjes, whereas this section elaborates on the desired characteristics and outcomes of these tools in order to implement CS. For instance, both the framework and the model acknowledge organisational learning as an important characteristic of OC for the successful implementation of CS in an organisation. Thus, also in this part of the thesis, the framework by Witjes (2017a) and the model as proposed by Schein (1996a; 2010), serve as foundations for several of the drivers elaborated on below.

2.3.2 Congruence between goals and actions

As came forward from the elaboration of the LEAPFROCS framework by Witjes (2017a), one reason why organisations often seem to fail to successfully implement CS policies, is the presence of a gap between the organisation's goals and actions. Therefore, one of the characteristics for an organisation to successfully implement CS policies is that there is congruence between goals and actions. In other words, the actions that are taken within the organisation, should lead to reaching the goals that are set. As explained in section 2.1.5.3, the PDCA cycle can be an appropriate tool to achieve this congruence between goals and actions. An important characteristic that can help an organisation to achieve this congruence, is to plan its change, as is explained in the next section.

2.3.3 Planned change

As highlighted earlier in this thesis, an increasing number of organisations, and more specifically the managers, recognize the need for a change towards sustainability and ultimately, CS. However, according to Epstein & Roy (2001) "these managers are faced with the difficulty of not only crafting such a strategy, but also determining how to implement a strategy aimed at balancing the social, environmental and economic needs of both the company and society" (p. 586). In other words, crafting a strategy for CS as well the determination of the implementation have more potential if this change is planned (Lozano, 2012a). According to Lozano (2012a), planning an organisational change can help to decrease and guide resistance to change, that often occurs in case of large social changes (Harich, 2010). The ultimate aim of planned change ought to be to move from the recent SQ, to a better, or more desired SQ including CS (Lozano, 2012a; Harich, 2010; Lewin, 1947). In line with this research, the more desired SQ would be a more sustainable one.

2.3.3.1 A proposal of steps for planned change

Epstein & Roy (2001) in their article have developed a step by step approach for business in order to become more sustainable. The first step ought to research what the main areas of concern are in the process. For instance an LCA would be a good tool to look for these so called 'hotspots' related to environmental impact (Baumann & Tillman, 2004). Epstein & Roy (2001) call this the corporate and business unit strategy. Secondly, the sustainability actions should be determined. This strategy should be congruent with the strategy as set out in the first step in order to prevent a gap between the problem to be solved and the goal that has been set (Epstein & Roy, 2001; Lozano, 2012a; Witjes, 2017a). Another component during the second phase of this planning is to actually develop plans and programs to eliminate the negative factors. Thirdly, the goals ought to be very clear in order to clearly measure the sustainability performance of the firm. Indicators such as energy- and water consumption are valid indicators for measurement (Epstein & Roy, 2001). The fourth step of the framework is concerned with the reaction of important stakeholders. This should be taken into account since they partly determine the profits of the firm. A well developed marketing- and communication plan to inform the stakeholders about their improved sustainability performance can increase the amount of customers and willingness of e.g. suppliers. (Ibid.). As a fifth step the authors mention the importance of economic profit. Related to this it is important that the corporate financial performance is being monitored. More specifically, the actions taken to become more sustainable, ought to also increase financial importance. The framework concludes with a feedback where the whole process is being evaluated. It thereby recognizes that the process is never-ending and has to continuously start again at step 1.

2.3.3.2 Long-term vision

Since businesses need to make sustainable (economic) profits to survive, it is important that not only the change for the social as well as the environment has a long-term planning. Managers need to know the long-term impact of the strategy on corporate profits (Epstein & Roy, 2001). Also, as stated previously, the reactions of important stakeholders should be taken into account since they can both influence short- and long-term profits. It should however be noted here that this long-term view also brings "high levels of uncertainty and impacts that are often difficult to quantify" (Epstein & Roy, 2001, p. 587), what in turn makes it difficult to held potential costs related to the change accountable to the top-management. Therefore, top-management commitment is an important factor on the road to CS (also see paragraph 2.3.7.3). Furthermore, the change from the existing SQ to the more desired SQ also highlights the importance of a long-term vision within the planned change. This is because the change should be incremental and not too fast in order to prevent increasing resistance to change (see paragraph 2.3.7).

2.3.3.3 The continuous improvement loop

As stated earlier, Epstein & Roy (2001), in their proposed steps for planned CMSD, use a continuous improvement loop by finishing every process by a feedback session. Also here, the PDCA-cycle that is also used in the LEAFPROCS framework (Witjes, 2017a), can be an appropriate tool. This tool furthermore, can also help an organisation to learn. Organisational learning (OL) as a characteristic that can work as a driver for the successful implementation of CS is explained in the next paragraph.

2.3.4 Organisational learning

As already stated in the introduction, and as is highlighted by the continuous improvement loop (Witjes, 2017a) as visualized in figure 2, trying to reach CS is an ongoing process that initiates learning in an organisation. Schein (1993) finds the importance of OL in a rapidly changing environment and the need for shared understanding. Lozano (2012a) describes this process as a “journey for companies as they seek to continuously adjust and improve their internal activities, structure, and management, and how they engage and empower stakeholders (including the environment) to more effectively contribute to sustainable societies” (p. 276.). Since organisations need to improve infinitely in order to approach CS, an important concept within the organisation should be OL (Lozano, 2012a; Baumgartner, 2009; Schein, 1996; 2010). OL is thereby also considered to be a tool that helps address the so called soft social issues rather than the hard technical ones (Lozano, 2012a).

According to Schein (1996b) however, organisations still seem to fail to learn. This can be explained by the different language (Schein, 1993) and different focuses the three different cultures (the operator-, executive- and operational cultures) within an organisation have. Until the three cultures acknowledge that they have different assumptions about the organisation, Schein (1996b) predicts that ideas from the operator culture for more efficient processes will not be acknowledged, that technical innovations will not be used to the most efficient extent and that executives will have trouble to implement their ideas and policies throughout the organisation. The cultural level that however should be the first to start learning is the executive level. They should as a start learn to acknowledge that they are one of the three cultures, and not the main or ‘highest’ culture in the organisation (Schein, 1993).

Giving and receiving individual feedback within and between the different cultural levels furthermore, can be a tool that helps OL (Schein, 1993) and can on a broader spectrum reinforce collective learning as a group. Communication, dialogue and acknowledgement amongst the three cultures thus seem important characteristics of successful organisational learning as a characteristic for the successful implementation of CS policies.

The diffusion between these three cultures can also be one of the reasons why people show a resistance to change and seem to have difficulties in changing their attitudes and behaviour in favour of CS.

2.3.5 Changing attitudes and behaviour

As explained in the former paragraph, it is important to overcome resistance to change. Therefore, another key driver for organisational change management is changing the attitudes and behaviour of individuals, groups and eventually the whole organisation (Lozano, 2012b; Arif, 2016; Harich, 2010). In other words, “it is important to consider how much ready people are to involve in an activity” (Arif, 2016, p. 946). According to Lozano (2012), a total of 75% of all approaches for CMSD lack the social element related to culture and more specifically to attitudes and behaviour. This is considered the main reason why these approaches seem to fail.

Also Schein (1993) acknowledges the importance of attitudes and behaviour, and specifically highlights the importance of shared attitudes within an organisation regarding a subject, in this case CS. This is important because when the individual attitudes regarding a subject have changed collectively and speak the same language, a dialogue within a group can be formed where solutions can be sought to solve a problem (Schein, 1993) or for the purpose of this research, to plan steps for the successful implementation of CS policies. However before these attitudes can become shared, an initial resistance to change has often to be overcome.

2.3.5.1 Overcoming resistance to change

Harich (2010) defines this resistance to change as “the tendency for a system to continue its current behaviour, despite the application of the force to change that behaviour” (p. 37). He even argues that overcoming that resistance is the most important part of a shift towards CS, especially in solving complex social problems, as is the case in this thesis. This at least is so, when no clear goals are set to solve the problem. The planned change thus has to include a holistic approach (Lozano, 2012a) with no gaps between mission and vision (Witjes, 2017a; Witjes, 2017b).

In order ‘to push for the adoption of sustainability practices’ an awarding system throughout the organisation should be initiated (Székely and Knirsch, 2005, p. 629). These rewarding systems can work as a driver for CS as it promotes CS amongst the employees. When the rewards are clearly and explicitly related to actions that lead to the successful implementation of CS policies, the involved actors are more likely to make decisions in the direction of more sustainable practices. These changes in decision making are directly related to changes in behaviour that yield both short- and long-term changes. The presence of rewarding systems as such, can have impacts throughout the firm related to its embedded values, goals and the strategy to implement SD (Galpin, Whittington & Bell, 2015).

When people have the right attitude and therefore are ready for a change towards sustainability, a key driver is collaboration, as explained in the next paragraph.

2.3.6 Collaboration

As highlighted in section 2.3.4, dialogue is functioning as an important basis for successful OL. This is also the case with collaboration. Schein (1993) states that without dialogue and an individual attitude in favour of the intended change, collaboration is less likely to occur. According to Lozano (2008) furthermore, “individuals, groups and organisations must understand that by collaborating with each other is the fastest way to the overall optimum” (p. 502). This optimum in relation to this research, is the successful implementation of CS policies within an organisation. It is important that this thought is embedded throughout the OC.

The benefits of collaboration are that different perspectives, knowledge and approaches (Witjes, 2017a) of the different cultures (Schein, 1996b) together, which makes problem solving more likely (Witjes, 2017a; Schein, 1993; Lozano, 2007) and will result in the most optimal outcome (Lozano, 2007). Furthermore, it makes new business models, in this case towards CS, more likely to be implemented successfully. This is partly because the initial dialogue and resulting collaboration results in new ideas that can be helpful to implement the change (Witjes, 2017a). Important factors

that help successful collaboration are the exchange of information and the coordination of procedures within and between departments (Witjes, 2017; Lozano, 2007). This coordination can also be integrated- and related to the importance of planned change.

Collaboration however, can also results in more difficult decision making procedures and conflicts, especially in case a project or plan has failed (Witjes, 2017a). Collaboration within and between the different cultures and groups within an organisation can thus help to successfully implement CS policies. Especially the executive culture plays an important role not only in relation to collaboration, but can help implement CS policies as a whole. The importance of this characteristic, called *leadership* is explained in the next paragraph.

2.3.7 Leadership

In order to get people's attitudes 'right' to establish the desired change, leadership is considered a critical characteristic of OC in order to create this right attitude (Arif, 2016). Witjes (2017a) considers leadership to be an important structural factor within a company since it can provide the necessary actions to be taken relating to for example internal communication, training and communication about CS-related actions within the firm with external stakeholders. Lozano (2012b) furthermore considers leadership the main internal driver for change. In other words, leadership is the most important driver from within an organisation in order to foster a change in the employees attitudes towards the implementation of CS policies, and to make these successful. The characteristics that the leaders should have in order to successfully implement CS policies are explained below.

2.3.7.1 Transformational leaders

According to Ogbonne & Harris (2000), there is empirical evidence that leadership influences organisational performance. Specifically, so called 'transformational leaders' tend to have the most positive effect on this performance. These leaders are charismatic with clear visions for the future and try to change the culture in line with this vision (Bass, 1985). They are very enthusiastic and positive and with this attitude they tend to motivate their employees (Ogbonne & Harris, 2000). In the case of CS, such a leader with clear visions on the subject who genuinely backs up the importance of change in management for SD, has thus a greater chance of a successful implementation of CS then other types of leaders.

2.3.7.2 The role of change agents and champions as leaders

The first and most important leader, mainly given its initiative and managing role, should take on the role of a champion or change agent for SD in the organisation (Székely and Knirsch, 2005). This mainly seems the case in larger organisations. In smaller organisations however, according to Lozano (2013) and Jenkins (2006), the role of a champion can also be found in an individual in the middle-management when this employee is highly motivated in relation to the change. The champion is morally motivated by social values and acknowledges the need for more sustainable practices throughout the organisation. It is in this case it is *crucial* (Jenkins, 2006) that the top-management is fully committed to the change that the champion fosters, as is explained in section 2.3.7.3.

Jenkins (2006) proposes a four step scheme that includes actions to do for the manager in order to implement CS throughout the organisation, these are the following:

- 1 **Developing an understanding of CS and translating this into business principles.** It is in this regard important that the champion formulates a clear definition of CS with its corresponding values and principles within the firm.
- 2 **Targeting CSR activities appropriately.** The champion should support new ideas and the actions taken to implement successful CS policies.
- 3 **Overcoming challenges.** The champion should be creative and not treat challenges as failures. The champion should see them as opportunities to improve its CS policies and not think about 'money first'.
- 4 **Business benefits.** In relation to the former step, the champion should highlight the benefits that CS has for the organisation.

When the champion carries out the above explained actions, the champion conducts so called 'strong leadership' (Jenkins, 2006).

The main challenge these champions for sustainability face is "on how to manage and balance the internal, connecting external drivers and stimuli, so that the company can respond quickly to external stimuli, and promote and reward internal drivers" (Lozano, 2013, p. 42). This furthermore means that an important quality of a leader as a champion is being able to respond flexible to unexpected change and to the potential unexpected problems during the implementation of an intended change (Székely and Knirsch, 2005).

2.3.7.3 Top-management commitment

It is argued that an OCSD is not likely to be adopted widely throughout the organisation in case the top management is not fully committed to the task (Lozano, 2013). In the worst case, a lack of commitment can cause "an abrupt end to all initiatives" (Arif, 2016, p. 946). The task of the leader is then, both as a leader and a manager, to secure this commitment on the long term (Székely and Knirsch (2005).

It seems that, given the presented characteristics for the successful implementation of CS, an important factor within all characteristics is dialogue and communication. It seems to work as a red thread throughout the process related to all above presented characteristics. Therefore, dialogue and communication is not presented as being a separate characteristic.

2.3.8 The embeddedness of sustainability

The last characteristic that can explain the successfulness of the implementation of CS policies is the embeddedness of sustainability. This characteristic is directly derived from the model of OC by Schein (1992; 1993; 1996a; 1996b; 2010). The embeddedness of sustainability can occur in three levels: namely in the form of either artefacts, espoused beliefs and values, or as a basic underlying assumption. The implementation of CS policies would be most successful in case sustainability is fully embedded throughout the firm, and thus can be considered a basic underlying assumption. If this is the case, sustainability will play a prominent role in the organisation's day- to day practices and will be taken into account during every step of the process (Schein, 1996a, 2010).

2.4 The framework: all characteristics combined

In table 5, the most important characteristics of OC which are seen as drivers for the successful implementation of CS with their corresponding features are summarized. These characteristics form the analytical framework for the case study.

Table 5: Characteristics of organisational culture as explanation factors for corporate sustainability policies

1. The congruence between goals and actions
- The actions taken lead to the goals that are set by the organisation
2. Planned change
- Crafting a strategy: including a long-term vision with a continuous feedback loop
- Laying out how to implement the strategy
- Long-term vision
- The presence of a continuous feedback loop
3. Changing attitudes and behaviour
- The presence of shared attitudes
- Overcoming resistance to change
4. Organisational learning
- Within and between cultures and departments
5. Collaboration
- The exchange of knowledge and experience within and between departments
6. Leadership
- Transformational leadership
- Champions function as leaders
- Top management commitment
7. The embeddedness of sustainability
- The extent to which the concept of CS is integrated within the organisation in three levels: artefacts, espoused beliefs and values, or a basic underlying assumption

The following chapter contains the method that is used to conduct the case study at Plus Retail. This method will elaborate on how the above presented framework is used.

Part III: Method

3 Method

3.1 Case and sample strategy

The literature research as set out above, identified a set of characteristics of OC that can explain the successful implementation of CS policies within an organisation. These characteristics such as organisational learning and collaboration have been explained and operationalised by searching for additional literature on these topics. The next paragraphs explain the used method for the next part of this thesis, namely the case study and analysis of data.

3.1.1 Case study

The findings from the literature research have resulted in topics for semi-structured interviews with employees of Plus Retail: from top- and middle management to operational employees (Witjes 2017a), as well as in topics for a survey. The results of analysis provide an overview of to what extent the characteristics of OC are present at Plus Retail and how this can potentially influence the implementation of CS. With this information, a recommendation will be developed for organisations in general, and for Plus Retail in particular. Thereby, the research will provide information on CS and OC for managers and CEO's, as well as information for corporate change consultants involved with CS. The research furthermore complements the existing literature on the knowledge gaps as identified in section 1.3.

A case study will be conducted to research to what extent these variables are present or absent in one of the Netherlands' largest Retail companies: Plus Retail. This company is awarded to be the 'most sustainable supermarket chain', for the last few years, including this year. It is thus a frontrunner in the field of corporate sustainability in the Netherlands and is therefore chosen as a case study. This case study can complement the information found in the literature by testing whether or not the characteristics are present in Plus Retail's OC that were. Thereby, the aim is to test to what extent these characteristics are explicitly present in Plus Retail's corporate culture.

3.2 Operationalisation of variables

3.2.1 Variables related to corporate sustainability

By answering sub-questions 1 and 2, on CS and OC respectively, several definitions from the literature have been highlighted and explained whereby it is made clear to e.g. the reader, the change manager or the interviewees on how to interpret these concepts when using this thesis in practice, for further research or while answering the interview questions.

The application of the LEAPFROCS framework is based on several types of data such as company documents and interviews. These research methods are also applied in this research. The framework is furthermore based on Participatory Action Research (PAR). This is "a form of action research in

which professional researchers operate as full collaborators with members of organisations in studying and transforming those organisations” (Greenwood, Whyte & Harkavy, 1993, p. 177), which also works as a continuous learning-loop that is intended to establish an organisational change (ibid.). However, given the time and scope of this research sufficient long-term participation in the company is not achievable. The method therefore is limited to researching to what extent the characteristics that can help explain the successfulness of the implementation of CS policies within Plus Retail with the use of policy documents, qualitative interviews and a survey.

3.2.2 Variables related to organisational culture

When answering the second sub-question, on OC, definitions and interpretations from other researchers were presented in order to get a deeper understanding of the concept. The used literature is mostly based on previously conducted research by Schein (e.g. 1996, 2010), because it includes extensive research on the concept of OC. Schein’s model is explained and complemented by existing literature.

3.2.3 Variables of corporate sustainability and corporate culture combined

After a clear understanding of the concepts of CS and CC was established, the two were combined and complemented with additional literature. This resulted in a list of characteristics of an OC, where CS is also embedded. This could be seen as the ‘optimal situation’ for the successful implementation of CS policies in an organisation (sub-question 3). During this stage of the research additional indicators for every characteristic came up as found in other researches, frameworks and models. These findings resulted in clear explanations of the variables as used in this thesis. This is furthermore important for the interview stage, because the researcher should be able to clearly explain how to interpret a concept (e.g. CS), to avoid different interpretations and thus different types of answers from the interviewees. In other words, it is important to avoid the speaking of two different ‘languages’, in one interview.

3.3 Data collection

3.3.1 Literature research

The main topics of the interviews have come up during the stages of literature research in the form of the discovered characteristics of OC that are proposed to have a positive impact on CS. Thereby, the topics of the interview- and survey questions have been chosen by previously investigated documents of Plus Retail, mainly on the ultimate goal of Plus, and the means they use to get to this goal. This is important because part of the case study is analyzing whether or not there is coherence between the vision and mission of the organisation (documents), and the ultimate goal and means used to reach that goal (interviews) (Witjes, 2017a). In other words, are the interviewees working towards the vision and mission as in the organisation’s documents, visible not to only employees but also to customers, or to another goal? This will show to what extent there is a gap between Plus’s ultimate goals, and the actions taken to get there. Questions on for instance the presence of a continuous improvement loop are thus appropriate.

3.3.2 Case study at Plus Retail

The case study will be executed by conducting semi-structured interviews based on the findings of the literature research. The structure will be based on Schein's model of OC (1992) and by the LEAPFROCS framework. Appropriate literature that has served as additional information is the study conducted by Baumgartner (2009) on OC and leadership and the study conducted by Hogan and Coote (2013) on culture, innovation and performance in which Schein's model is tested,

More specifically, it is important that the interview questions focus on the goal of the research (Ogbonne & Harris, 2000). Since the focus of the research lies within the model by Schein and the framework by Witjes, the questions have a high focus on values, the presence of the found characteristics of CS in OC, and aim to find a gap between vision and mission.

3.3.2.1 Interviews

Semi-structure interviews will be held with operational employees, managers and directors of different departments of the organisation, both actively, as well as non-actively, involved in the organisation's CS programs. This is to test if the success of this organisation related to CS is to be attributed to the company's culture. Furthermore, since according to Witjes (2017a; 2017b), a gap between the organisation's mission and vision is part of the reason why only a few organisations have been successful in the implementation of CS policy, part of the interview questions have a focus related to this topic. More specifically, there is a focus on 'finding the gap', or looking for a lack of coherence between mission, vision and strategy (means). This is related to the concept of falsification: we can namely consider the answer on sub-question 3 relating to the ultimate OC for sustainability a theory which can be tested in practice, in this case at Plus retail. Falsifiability is considered 'a fundamental feature of science' (Okasha, 2002, p. 13). An interview technique that the researcher uses is to ask a question on a specific topic at the beginning of the interview, and asking the same question in slightly different words further along the interview. This is to test whether or not the answers of the interviewee are consistent. An overview of the interviewees can be found in table 6.

Table 6: Interviewees and their function at Plus Retail

Function at Plus Retail	Type of culture
Sustainability manager/member of the green team	Executive
Entrepreneur 1	Executive and operational
Entrepreneur 2	Executive and operational
Formula manager	Executive and operational
Cashier + E-commerce	Operational and technical
Project manager formula development	Executive and operational
Supermarket employee – vegetables and fruits	Operational

As can be seen in the table, the interviewees range widely in the type of roles they play in the organisation. As is explained in chapter 3, Schein (1990, 1996a) distinguishes between three types of OC within an organisation, namely the technical, the executive and the operational level. The two store owners and supermarket employees are all considered to be part of operator culture since they work in the stores themselves, operating Plus's formula and have direct contact with customers. The

supermarket employee working both as a cashier and in e-commerce however, is being regarded as both part of the operator- as well as the technical culture since part of this employees job is done, or related to, online technical practices. Both the project manager formula development and the formula manager are being regarded as executive and operational employees, since they have a large influence on the executive work in the supermarkets and work at the operational level, even before a supermarket is open for customers. They are not being regarded as the technical culture, but they do have close contact with them. Where possible, references will be made regarding the different cultures as proposed by Schein and as described above. Thereby, in order to conduct research that distinguishes different cultures within a culture, more interviews and PAR are required (Witjes, 2017a; Schein, 2010). This will be further discussed in the recommendations- and discussion section in the last chapter of this thesis.

3.3.2.2 Survey

Besides the qualitative interviews, a survey with closed questions has been sent out to the above-presented interviewees, as well as to supermarket employees. The supermarket employees cover the largest part of the filled out surveys, working at different departments such as the bread- or register departments. This is however corresponding to the composition of employees in Plus Retail's whole organisation, since the largest part of their employees work in the supermarkets.

The survey questions have been developed according to the characteristics or an organisation for the successful implementation of CS policy found in the literature. This means that for every characteristic, as for example collaboration, a question is specifically developed to test the level of collaboration that is present in the corresponding department within the organisation. All the survey questions have an answering scheme from 1 till 5, where 1 means *I do totally not agree* and whereby 5 means, *I do totally agree*. Also, one open question is included relating to how and in what field the employee thinks the most positive change can be made related to sustainability.

The questions throughout the survey consist of three parts: firstly, the interviewee is asked about its demographic information. Secondly, the interviewee is asked about its own thoughts and feelings about the subject and the culture within Plus as it is now. Furthermore, throughout the questions information is sought to indicate personal preferences and values as well as how Plus can move to a more desired culture for CS (Ogbonne & Harris, 2000; Lozano, 2013).

3.4 Analysis

The data found in the existing literature is operationalised and explained by analyzing each characteristic with its corresponding definitions and indicators as proposed in earlier qualitative as well as quantitative researches. The interviews conducted during the case study will then be transcribed in computer writing program Nvivo. Also, potential videos and/or pictures taken during this stage of the research will be imported in the program to give an overview of the artefacts that were visible for the researcher. The characteristics of OC for the successful implementation of CS policy that are found in the literature will be used as codes in Nvivo. The different elements and characteristics that are named by the interviewees, and that are observed and interpreted by the researcher, will then be linked to its corresponding code. As a result, the data is sorted and the

researcher will have a clear overview of the answers given by the interviewee that relate to certain characteristics. By analyzing these results it will be described to what extent the desired characteristics of OC as found in the literature are present in the culture of Plus Retail. The chapter ends with a table in which an overview is given of to what extent each characteristic is present in the culture of Plus. This classification can be found in table 7. The questions of the interviews and survey can be found in respectively appendix A and B.

Characteristic	Totally absent	Partially present	Fully present
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Table 7: Classification on to what extent a characteristic is present within Plus's OC

As can be seen in appendix A, question 16 of the semi-structured interview list does not specifically relate to either Schein or Witjes, of the characteristics found in the literature. The question however is included, since the research has a social focus, and happiness can be an indicator to test social sustainability by including it into qualitative questionnaires as well as in quantitative surveys (Hutchins & Sutherland, 2008). Also, the order of questions shows that the questions do not follow a certain 'structure' in which every characteristic is dealt with separately. The questions in this sense have been mixed, to avoid the possibility that a respondent will become biased when the researcher is continuing on a subject. This also allows the researcher to test the respondent's consistency in his or her answers.

Part IV: Case Study

4. What does the Corporate Culture of Plus Retail look like now?

In the first part of this chapter, Plus's corporate structure, and more specifically its CS policy is introduced with the use of policy documents and the organisation's website. Also, the researcher presents the first impressions, being the artefacts, when visiting either Plus's head quarters or supermarket. The second part of this chapter contains results of the interviews and survey. To keep a clear overview, the chapter follows the structure of section 2.3, by discussing the results corresponding with each characteristic as found in the literature.

4.1 Introduction

Plus retail is a cooperation with 221 entrepreneurs who own Plus supermarkets with a local character. The central concept within the supermarket chain is 'good food for everyone' with the characteristics of healthy food as well as environmental and animal friendly (Plus Retail B.V., 2016). In other words, its goal is to conduct a sustainable organisational management where the customer plays a central role with a focus on good food, for everyone, every day (Plus, 2016). Its ambition is 'to become the best supermarket in the Netherlands' (Ibid.).

4.1.1 CS within Plus: the four pillars

CS is on Plus's agenda for several years (Plus, 2017a). Their CS policy consists of a company strategy that is composed of four 'pillars'. This strategy is the responsibility of Plus's Green Team, consisting of several disciplines. According to the website (2016), being the most 'responsible' supermarket in the Netherlands (according to research panel Growth for Knowledge (GFK)), for the third time in a row, can be accounted to the Green Teams' strategy. The four pillars are explained below.

4.1.1.1 *A responsible origin of products*

The origin of products that are in Plus's assortment should be 'responsible' (Plus, 2017b). This means that producers get a fair price, and that the growth- and processing of food is done in a way that is 'as much as environmentally friendly as possible'. Also animal welfare is included in this goal. In doing so, Plus is helping its customers to buy more responsible products. This is especially the case with bananas, coffee and tea, which are all 100% fair-trade-labelled (Ibid.). An example of a way in which Plus is trying to embed fair trade products into society is through the so called 'banana-box', which is handed out to sports clubs as a way of sponsoring and local involvement (Plus, 2017b). This also adds to the next pillar of health and vitality.

4.1.1.2 *Health and vitality*

Plus's goal related to this pillar is to help people develop a healthier lifestyle (Plus, 2017c). This is an ongoing process of making food and drinks more healthy, whereby it is made easier for the customer to make healthier choices. Part of this process is to be as transparent as possible about the content of origin of food products and to provide for healthier alternatives. This also includes the employees. For instance, during breaks, healthy snacks are made available.

Helping customers and employees to make healthier choices is done in several ways. For instance: by focusing on fresh fruits and vegetables with weekly deals and by making Plus's house brand healthier. Concerning transparent packaging, the focus on children is interesting since the packaging of less healthier snacks for children don't have funny figures in contrast to a short time ago. Thereby, at the soda department a calorie meter is available as well as a sugar meter at the cereal department (Plus, 2017c).

4.1.1.3 *Responsibility for a better environment*

The goal of Plus regarding this pillar is to reduce the impact on the environment as much as possible (Plus, 2017d). Because Plus is succeeding to annually make their logistic programs more efficient, they have two stars of 'lean & green', which means that they are actively making their logistics more sustainable, are increasingly innovative in this area, that they calculate their CO₂-emissions thoroughly, that they make benchmarking possible and that they show retention regarding CO₂-emissions. They furthermore get 100% green power from wind-energy and a more local goal is to deliver groceries using electrical- or solar-energy-powered cars. Also waste management is an important factor regarding this pillar. For example, Plus supermarkets work together with local food banks to reduce the waste of good food (Plus, 2017d). Thereby, all supermarkets implement power-saving programs and the new supermarkets use closed cooling which use up to 25% less energy and where waste heat is re-used to warm the building, reducing not only costs for the entrepreneurs, but which also reduce CO₂ emissions further (Ibid.).

4.1.1.4 *Attention for people and society*

The focus in Plus's supermarkets is on good, responsible products and to give good customer service (Plus, 2017e). Also, a positive local contribution such as activities for children and the development of a safe living area are important factors. This is done by donating deposit money from plastics bottles to good causes and by sponsoring local sports clubs. The previously-mentioned banana-box is one of these manners. Concerning local noise disturbance, Plus uses techniques to reduce noise while (un)loading trucks (Ibid.).

Furthermore, Plus's employees are highly valued. Therefore, education is being offered within all levels of the company to give the employees the chance to grow in the organisation. The program that stimulates this is called PLUS Power. Furthermore, at the distribution centres, sports is promoted, periodical medical check-ups are offered and special lunches are organised to educate the employees about healthy food (Plus, 2017e).

A clear overview of the above explained pillars, together building upon Plus's CS strategy, is presented in table 8.

The four pillars of Plus's CS strategy			
A responsible origin of products <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Fair trade• Environmentally friendly• Animal welfare	Health and vitality <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Healthier alternatives• Care for employees• Healthy deals• Transparent packaging	Responsibility for a better environment <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reduce environmental impact• Lean & green• Green energy• Waste-management	Attention for people and society <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Local contribution• Donations and sponsoring• Employees are highly valued

Table 8: The four pillars of Plus's CS strategy (Based on Plus, 2016; 2017a; 2017b; 2017c; 2017d; 2017e).

4.1.2 First impressions

Several interviews have been held either at the head quarters of Plus Retail in Utrecht, or in one of their supermarkets. When walking into Plus's head quarters the first thing you notice is a large basket of fruit, free for all visitors. When walking past the reception desk, the visitor walks straight into the lunch room where all employees eat together and where fresh meals are being cooked. Also there is a lot of fruit available. The origin on the product however, was not transparent to the visitor. In the lunch-room a glass cabinet is situated in the middle with a set of Plus's rewards, including the newest sustainability reward from 2017. A large board is hanging on the wall impossible to miss by anyone who walks in this space, with large letters and text relating to Plus's goals. The first impressions for a visitor, or rather the artefacts that are directly visible seem informal and rather socially responsible and CS-oriented. A set of pictures taken at the head quarters can be found in appendix C.

On the other hand, when walking in to a Plus supermarket, the first focus is not clearly on sustainability. In some areas the focus on healthy and local food however, is made visible for the customers through information signs. The vegetables and fruit department however, does have a separate space for biological products, that is larger than the rest of the supermarkets. Also, the cooling-systems in the new supermarkets are using less energy than before, which is made visible for customers through information stickers on the windows.

The results of the interviews and survey as presented in the next section, will show to what extent the characteristics that can explain successful CS implementation are embedded in the organisation, and to what extent its practices, both at the executive- as well as the operational level, are related to Plus's goals and ambition.

4.2 Results

4.2.1 The congruence between goals and actions

The central goal according to the public website of Plus Retail is to execute a sustainable business management, - for the purpose of this research translated to CS - where its customers play a central role and where there is a focus on good food, for every person, every day (Plus, 2016). Furthermore, Plus's ambition is to become the best (service)supermarket chain in the Netherlands (Ibid.). Plus's two main goals related to CS are *becoming the best service supermarket in the Netherlands*, and there is a *focus on good food, for everyone, every day*. The results of these two goals as found during the analysis of both the interviews and survey are presented below.

4.2.1.1 *Becoming the best service supermarket*

When the formula manager was asked about Plus's goals, the importance of becoming the best service supermarket in the Netherlands was highlighted, which is intended to add extra values for its customers. This is being done for instance by employees always walking the customer to its desired product and by offering extra services at a special service desk near the registers. According to one supermarket owner, the employees in the supermarkets also receive training to implement Plus's policy regarding customer service.

According to the formula manager, sustainability is also embedded in this concept of customer friendliness- or service since Plus also wants to be a responsible actor in the local region. This is for example done by selling local products, participating in local initiatives and more recently in a few supermarkets, by adding to waste separation and recycling. The formula manager and both entrepreneurs state that these local actions are made possible, given the structure of Plus which allows its entrepreneurs a certain amount of freedom where they can choose which local products they want to sell on top of Plus's standard assortment, and to which local initiative they want to contribute. The last two however, are personal initiatives from the entrepreneurs, and thus are not within Plus's policy. The formula manager also highlights that some entrepreneurs tend to trot the concept of 'the best service supermarket' by offering more than they can handle. "They should know when to stop when their service is at their best", the formula manager says. Furthermore, Plus has a focus on becoming climate neutral. This is for instance being done by installing refrigeration systems which use 25% less energy than before, and by using led-lights in all new locations.

Also the supermarket employee at the vegetables and fruits department, highlights the importance of customer friendliness. According to this employee, within Plus it is important that customers are being treated friendly and that employees always want to help, that the assortment has something to offer for everyone, and that the customer can find easily what it is looking for.

In the supermarkets own policies, the customers also play a central role. For example, one of the entrepreneurs highlighted the importance of a satisfied customer. The focus hereby laid on the specific wishes of customers in the area in which the supermarket is located. One of the actions that were taken to respond to his customer's demand is to not cut prices on fresh articles that are one or two days before getting over date. The reason therefore is that the customers in that area value high quality products more than low prices and like to be assured that the products they buy are

qualitatively the best. They also like to pay more for that. Both one entrepreneur and the formula manager acknowledge that this sometimes results in a higher amount of loss of food and trash. He therefore finds himself in a difficult position since he highlights the high amounts of unnecessary packaging and loss of food. But as an entrepreneur he 'can't afford to lose this much money, as much as he would like to add to sustainability'. These actions however, have no long-term vision and are not planned ahead, since they are implemented 'as they come', as the entrepreneur said.

4.2.1.2 A focus on good food for everyone, every day

Concerning Plus's second goal, a focus on good food, Plus tries to give healthier products a more prominent place in the supermarket. Both the formula manager and the project manager formula development highlight this focus when developing and implementing Plus's formula into new locations. Also, Plus lets customers taste more and more healthier products while they shop, the formula manager says. This is done to inspire- and to make customers more aware of these products. Also, there is one employee who is mainly stationed at the head quarters who works on the 'good food' concept. However, according to the formula manager, this employee does not get enough freedom to implement new ideas since other subjects still seem more important, especially when the concept costs too much money.

Biological products are provided with special 'BIO' signs, making it easier for customers to find these products. At the vegetable and fruit department, the vegetable and fruit employee says, a special wall is arranged, containing all biological products of that department. However, this wall is not visible enough, comes forward from this interview. Also, every week there are deals containing biological and fair trade products, both the entrepreneurs, the cashier and the sustainability manager and green-team member said. However, the formula manager and the sustainability manager say that this could be more of a focus. Also the vegetable and fruit employee highlights this by stating that Plus is not distinctive enough by still offering many of the same deals as other supermarkets in the Netherlands do, also regarding biological products.

4.2.1.3 CS as a concept in the organisation

As explained above, Plus has its CS policy furthermore laid out in four pillars. On their website and in their documents, sustainability seems to play a central role, whereas the interviews indicate that sustainability as a concept is not yet embedded enough throughout the organisation. Also, the above-discussed congruence between Plus's goal and vision related to customer service and health backs this statement. Furthermore, the survey indicates that sustainability plays a rather average role on a daily basis, with a few outliers that totally agree with the statement as can be seen in figure 4 below. These outliers were entrepreneurs and green team members.

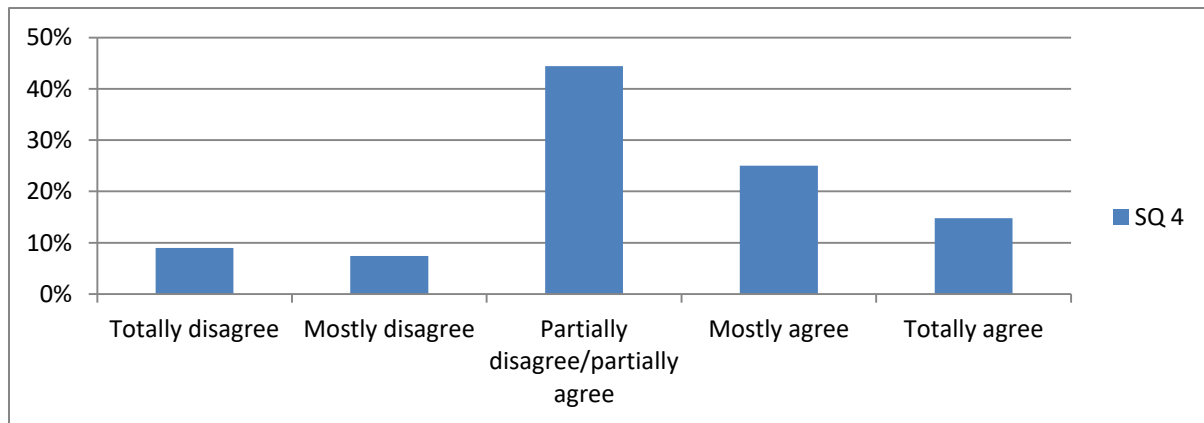


Figure 4: Response of employees to the statement "Sustainability plays a central role in the organisation"

The goals of becoming the best service supermarket and good food for everyone every day, seem to be on the good track in order to be reached. Actions are taken to reach these goals. However, Plus's CS policy is outlined in the four pillars explained above. It seems that a relation seems to lack between the goals as set out in these pillars, and the central goals as presented on Plus's website and policy documents. The four pillars of Plus show a total of four goals, whereas most actions are taken to reach the two goals as set out above. A responsible origin of products and responsibility for a better environment are being placed after the two 'main' goals.

4.2.2 Planned change

4.2.2.1 Long term vision

The formula manager is planning a change (read: the development of new supermarkets) by translating the developed formula according to which Plus works, into a direct plan for the equipment of the new buildings. She then communicates this plan with the suppliers and other stakeholders occupied with the building process. She hereby tries to use as much as possible renewable materials that last long-term, and that can be re-used after they have been discarded. However, she often faces difficulties when it comes to functionality, costs or the 'sticking to the original design by leaders'. The formula manager herself thus tries to plan long-term, however this often seems impossible because of other 'more important' factors.

The sustainability expert at Plus's so called green team, was specifically asked about their long-term vision. Her answer was straight forward: 'every year, a new plan for the following year is made'. Plus thus has a vision and strategy for the future related to CS of one year, which is rewritten annually. The project manager formula development however, tries to look beyond this policy by trying to look ahead at least five years when implementing Plus's policy and formula, specifically related to customer demands and sustainability developments within the supermarkets. This is explained in more detail in the next section.

As can be seen in figure 5, it is striking to see that most employees from different departments at Plus Retail believe there is a long-term plan at least covering the next ten years related to the implementation of more sustainable practices. As much as 87,5% of the survey respondents gave an

answer of 3 points or higher related to this question. 20,8% 'totally agreed' with the statement. Only 1 employee gave the answer 'totally do not agree', which was a member of Plus's green team.

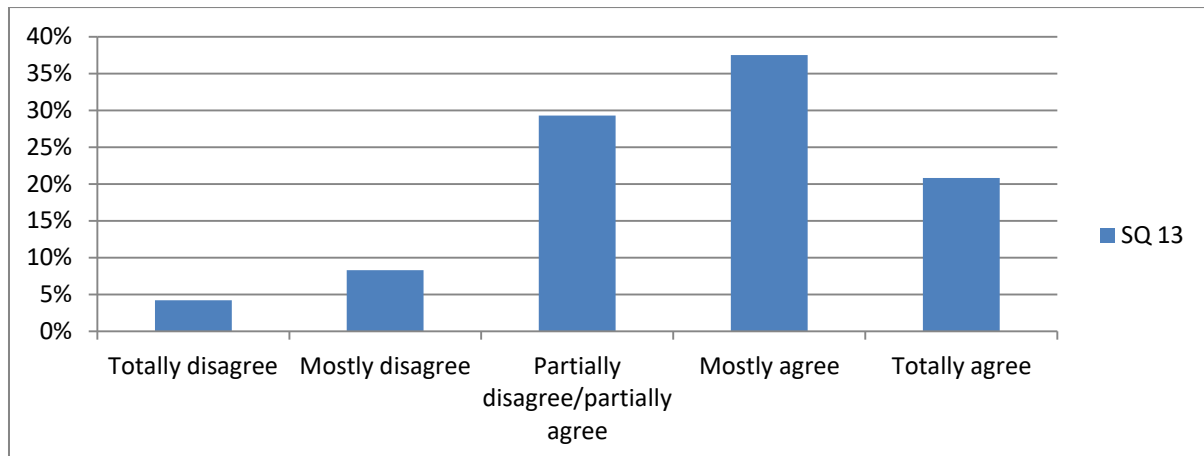


Figure 5: Response of employees to the statement 'Plus has a long-term vision (longer than 10 years)'

According to the formula- and project managers, sustainability should be embedded in your own lifestyle as well as 'in your DNA'. According to them, you will then as much it is possible within your field of work, take into account sustainability in the long-term, since this cannot always be laid out in a policy plan. This can partly be explained since there is both no continuous feedback loop nor a embedded cycle of continuous learning in place in Plus's day to day practices. The next section will discuss this further.

4.2.2.2 Continuous improvement loop

Also the project manager formula development, acknowledges that when a new supermarket is being built and set up, the customer is always consulted. This is done through a so called 'customer panel' where customers are asked for their wishes and demands by filling out online surveys. This allows Plus to 'follow the trends'. For example, ten years ago, the ratio between canned and fresh food was about 60/40, whereas recently this ratio has changed to about 50/50. During the interview, it is highlighted that the changes are incremental and almost invisible when looked at annually, but very much visible if compared to a decade ago.

Furthermore, a new concept, which they have been working on for the past few years, will be implemented in the new supermarkets '2.0'. Namely kitchens with live cooking will be available in the supermarkets in order to inspire and motivate customers to cook healthy meals, which in turn shows a coherence between the healthy vision which is highlighted in Plus's documents.

Since Plus's official CS strategy is being developed annually without evaluation, with a time span of one year, planned change with its corresponding elements is lacking in Plus's culture.

4.2.3 Organisational learning

From the interviews came forward that there is no program for ongoing OL present in the organisation. The interviewees all stated that making mistakes is human and that people can learn from their mistakes. However, the interviewees deal with mistakes and learning differently. One

entrepreneur stated that he chooses to work with a team of mostly young people and thus that they need to learn while working. This entrepreneur stated that when an employee makes a mistake this is firstly addressed with the involved employee and tries to explain how to deal with this in the future. It is considered per 'learning experience' whether or not this is to be shared with the team. The other entrepreneur stated that 'once in a while' teams per department came together for a meeting in which issues were discussed so that they can learn cooperatively. OL within departments thus seems to be present to a certain extent, however learning of different departments together does not seem to exist. The two supermarket employees stated that there were no programs or OL whereas they share their learning experiences between themselves on their own initiative. They both acknowledged that by solving issues as a team, OL occurs.

Also the project manager formula development and the formula manager state that OL occurs as a team, since it is implemented in Plus's OC that employees can give feedback to one another in case something goes wrong. The formula manager furthermore states that this feedback can also be given through a anonymous system that is in place. However, this manager also states that 'we are not so good at looking back'. There is thus no continuous improvement loop relating to OL. Plus is going 'too fast' when implementing new policies, without looking back to what was good and what was wrong, and what can be learned from this.

From the interviews thus came forward that there are no programs or feedback sessions implemented in the organisation that focus on cooperative learning amongst the employees. However, the survey results show that around 60% of the employees mostly or totally agree with the statement regarding cooperative learning, as can be seen in figure 6 below. The 60% that agreed with the statement were operational supermarket employees. There is thus a clear difference between the answers given by the executive and the operational culture. No clear indications have been found in the interviews or the surveys that can explain this difference. However, according to the literature (see section 2.2.3.1), in order to optimize the operational part of an organisation, the operator culture develops their own practices and learns to learn cooperatively in order to prevent or fix failures and to work most efficiently (Schein 1996b; 2010).

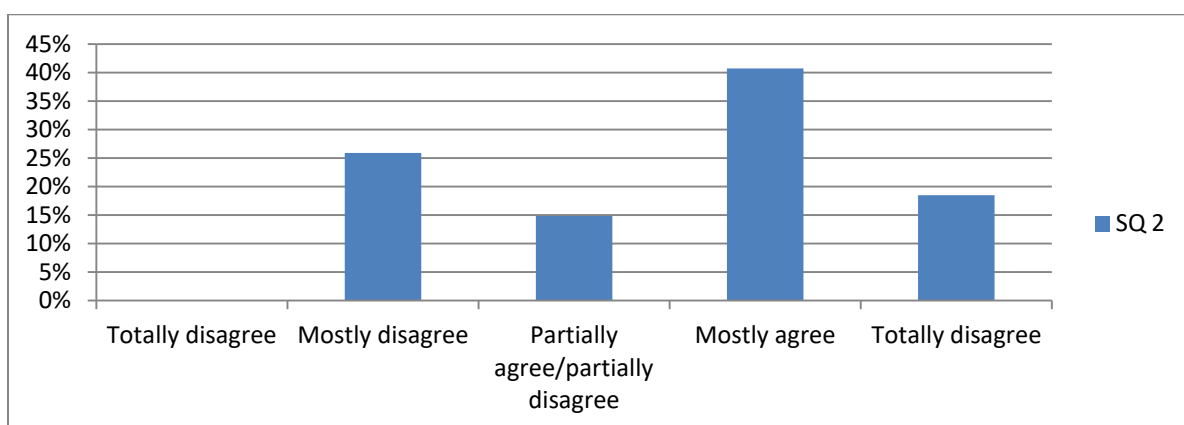


Figure 6: Response of employees to the statement 'Employees learn cooperatively from their mistakes'

These findings correspond reasonably with the results of the survey question related to continuous learning, as shown in figure 7. Overall however, the answers show a slight 'shift' towards disagreement, but still over 50% mostly or totally agrees with the statement. Also this difference between the answers by managers and higher employees and the operational level can be explained by the development of their own practices and corresponding learning.

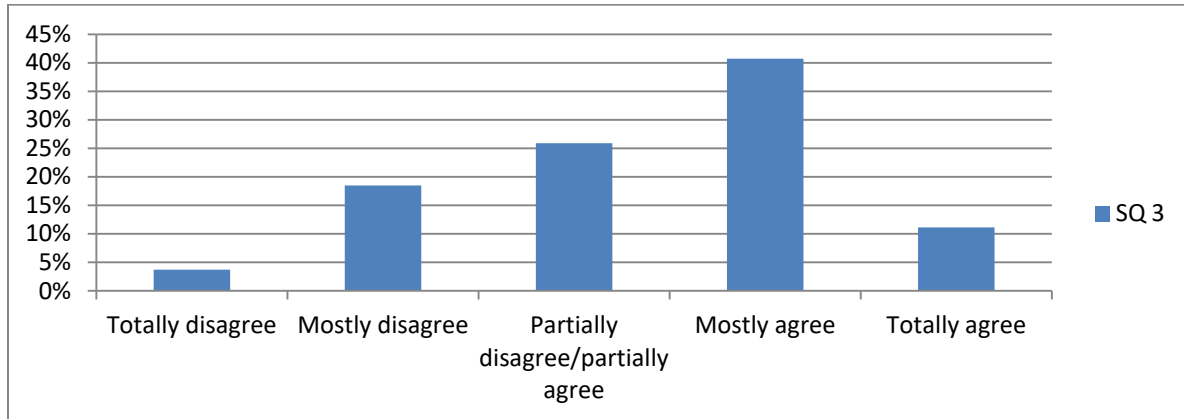


Figure 7: Response from employees to the statement "There is a continuous learning process, where by the use of feedback, the results are being revaluated"

OL is thus present to a certain extent. OL seems to occur within teams, and the entrepreneurs deal with learning experiences in their own unique way. Feedback is also given to a certain extent within departments which can have a positive influence OL, as stated by Schein (1993), and as discussed in section 2.3.4. The results in other words show that learning occurs naturally, but a continuous learning system is absent. Continuous OL could benefit by giving more feedback not only within, but also between departments. Furthermore, Plus could benefit from programs that foster OL between the three different cultures (Schein, 1996b; 1993). Therefore, there is room for improvement concerning this characteristic.

4.2.4 Attitudes and behaviour

As described in 2.3.5, shared attitudes towards a subject, in this case CS within Plus retail, are important for a policy to be implemented successfully. The interviewees all acknowledge and share the same attitude regarding the importance of a change towards more sustainable practices and also seem to acknowledge that they can reach a lot of people and thus can make a significant change. However, when trying to implement policies with a main focus on the social aspects of sustainability, thereby not mentioning the financial aspects, a difference between attitudes and a change in behaviour becomes clear. Both the formula manager and the green-team member said they were sent 'from pillar to post', when trying to change behaviour in correspondence with a certain attitude towards more sustainable practices, since no one seemed to know who can give permission for these projects. This shows a resistance to a behavioural change by the leaders. When there are positive financial aspects related to a sustainability project, as also acknowledged by the entrepreneurs, the shared attitude is more likely to be followed-up by a change in behaviour relating to the successful implementation of CS policies.

4.2.4.1 *Overcoming resistance to change*

During the qualitative interviews, it seemed that none of the interviewees experiences resistance to a change in the direction of CS from themselves, or from colleagues. Most employees within Plus, would agree with more sustainable policies. However, still other factors, mainly the financial aspect, play a more prominent role, resulting in a resistance to change. The executives are not against the implementation of more sustainable policies in case the costs remain low, and the prices of the products in the supermarkets will not increase significantly. According to the entrepreneurs, they always choose the most fair product, being environmentally friendly, best for animals, and best for the producers. When this is taken into account however, they also acknowledge that price and quality are still top priorities. A corresponding factor of resistance to change according to one entrepreneur is the customer. He feels the need for 're-education' of the customer that for instance, 'ugly vegetables' have the same quality as the ones with a perfect shape. Also the supermarket employees face this problem. Customers are least likely to buy products that have damaged packaging or are deflected. Transparency and the availability of information are important aspects when it comes to overcome resistance to change of customers, as the entrepreneurs, sustainability manager and the project manager formula development say.

As highlighted in paragraph 2.3.5.1, one way to overcome resistance to change as described in the literature, is by expectations from external stakeholders. Where the interviews only show a small influence by external stakeholders that push for a change towards the implementation of successful CS, the survey respondents seem the partially- to totally agree with this statement. A total of 43% of the respondents answered to mostly- or totally agree, as can be seen in figure 8. These employees however, often have different and more practical knowledge than CEOs, and have a more human focus, as also highlighted by Schein (1996a) and as described in paragraph 2.2.3.3.

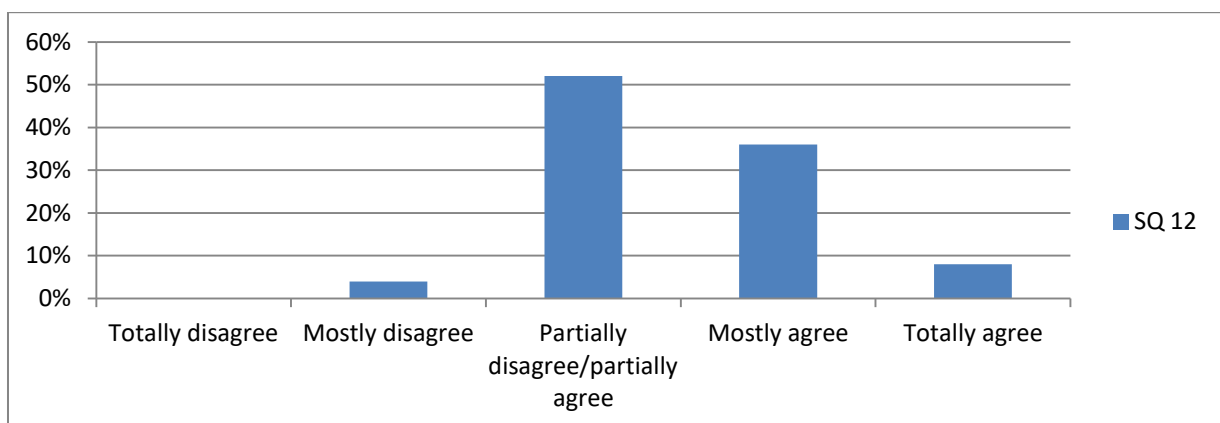


Figure 8: Response of employees to the statement "Plus is pushed by customers, suppliers and producers (the external stakeholders) to implement CS policies"

A positive attitude towards the implementation of CS policies seems to be present amongst most employees, including the middle managers. However, it seems that the higher managers show a resistance to change when the financial aspects remain unclear.

4.2.5 Collaboration

From the interviews resulted that collaboration is an important part of the OC of Plus. Mainly the interviewees that interact with the headquarters seem to value collaboration within and between positions and departments highly. Especially the project manager formula development, formula manager and one entrepreneur who has done internships at the headquarters explained that collaboration is the basis of projects. From the stages of initiation and development of new policies, to the implementation of these policies, employees from different departments with different backgrounds, as well as external stakeholders such as customers and suppliers are consulted and informed. Dialogue in this process serves as a foundation to come to compromises. It is also highlighted by the project manager formula development that this process of 'intense' collaboration might result in longer discussion processes, but will reduce potential issues during the implementation stage.

As shown in figure 9 below, in line with the results from the interviews, most of the employees answered to agree to a large extent that they collaborate within- and with other departments. However, still a small amount does not agree with this statement. These employees mainly work at the bread-, dairy- and meat departments, which are rather small fresh-product departments compared to the rest of the work floor, covering the so called 'groceries department', consisting mainly of pre-processed and packaged products.

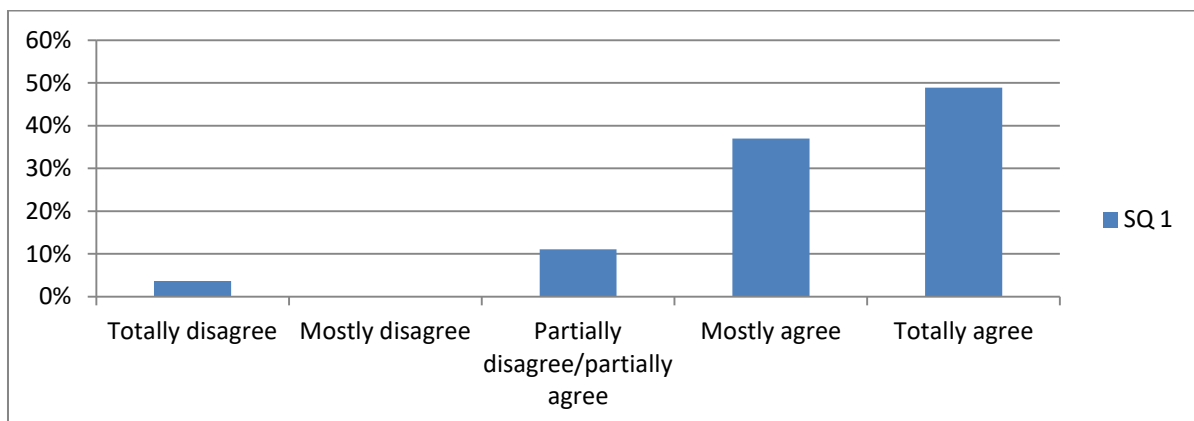


Figure 9: Response of employees to the statement "There is a collaboration within- and with other departments"

Collaboration plays a rather central role in Plus's operations. The concept seems integrated, especially at the headquarters. There seems room for improvement within the supermarkets in order to improve collaboration between departments.

4.2.6 Leadership

In order for a change in the employee's attitudes to occur, and more importantly, in their behaviour in favour of CS policies, leadership is the most important internal driver. As highlighted in section 2.3.7, the main characteristic of strong leaders is that they have a clear vision and goal for the future and that they try to change the OC in order to reach this goal. The sustainability manager highlights this characteristic of Plus using several examples. When Plus decides to start with a project, for instance creating a 100% fair trade coffee and tea assortment, or the implementation of 100% 'better life certified' meats within the supermarkets, a change is fostered throughout all departments so that the project becomes successful. These are seen as big projects with significant positive impacts on the CS performance of Plus. However, the sustainability manager acknowledges that it is 'one project at the time', without a next project being planned. There thus lacks a continuous focus on CS policies as a whole, but rather on one specific project at the time, also lacking long-term visions.

Also the entrepreneurs state that they have a certain vision in mind, without a clear plan on how to reach that vision. Also they implement projects one at the time. Thereby, both the formula manager and the project manager formula development, argue that CS plays a role in Plus's vision, but that the higher leaders are more focused on other aspects, mainly short-term profits.

As came forward, in correspondence with the interviews, more than 75% of the survey respondents mostly- or totally agree with the statement that their supervisor or manager is open to new ideas related to CS, as can be seen in figure 10. This means that the employees feel that the leaders have a positive and shared attitude towards the implementation of CS policies.

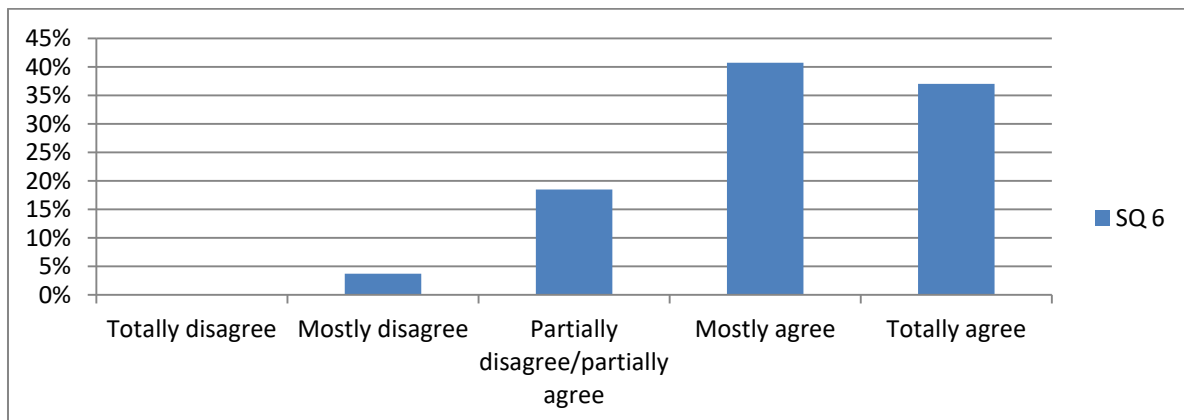


Figure 10: Response of employees to the statement "The supervisor or manager is open to new ideas related to CS"?

4.2.6.1 The role of change agents and champions

Resulting from the above, certain leaders such as entrepreneurs should not take on the role of change agents and champion for the successful implementation of CS policies, since they lack the motivation to push for sustainability policies when the money aspect lacks or is unclear, and they do not combine the environmental, social and economic aspects on the short- and longer term equally. From the interviews, the sustainability manager and the project manager formula development seem good candidates for the role of champions for the implementation of CS policies. This can be

attributed to their positions which can have influence on several departments within the firm, and their personal interest in the subject. However, one interviewee stood out above the pack, and that is the formula manager. This is not only due to her position and personal interest, but she also tries to implement policies that are not mentioned by other interviewees or survey respondents. One example of this is, the idea to develop dementia-friendly supermarkets. Through educational programs, these supermarkets would be more accessible and friendly to customers who suffer from dementia. Furthermore, the formula manager goes beyond the organisation and tries to live as sustainable as possible by for example, recycle products at home, eat ecological products and by isolating the house. In this way, formula manager could take on the role of a sustainability champion, which is closely related to the importance of top-management commitment as a factor that can help to successfully implement CS policies.

4.2.5.2 Top management commitment

From the results presented above, it seems that the top management is not fully committed to the successful implementation of CS policies throughout the organisation, especially when there is a lack of financial information- or profits, mainly on the short-term. Also the survey respondents back the findings from the interviews. Where figure 10 above shows a shared positive attitude from leaders towards CS, figure 11 below shows to a certain extent the opposite when money is involved. The results thus show that money can be a restraining factor for the top management to fully commit to the road towards CS, even though the will is there from both the executive- as well as the operator culture.

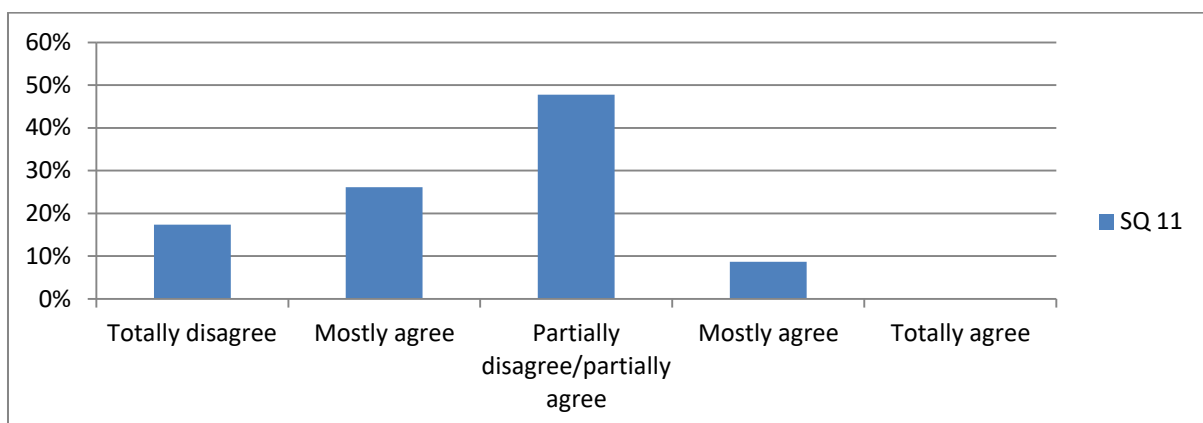


Figure 11: Response of employees to the statement "The leaders are open to a total stop of unsustainable processes and products, despite the costs"

Since when a project is started, there is full commitment of the employees to make the project successful, there is partial strong leadership. However, there is lack of continuous focus on CS, and other aspects, mainly short-term profits, seem to be more important. Furthermore, there is no CS champion in place with the power to implement new policies through concrete actions. The will seems to be present, whereas top-management commitment is lacking.

4.2.7 The embeddedness of sustainability in Plus's organisational culture

From the interviews resulted that mainly the social aspect, and specifically the friendliness for customers is an basic underlying assumption within Plus Retail. The care for its employees seems to go to the right direction but is classified as being an espoused belief and value instead of an underlying assumption. The formula manager for instance started dealing with illness, resulting in difficulties with walking. This manager has never experienced this illness to be a problem the organisation. Facilities were set in place and she was helped by other employees where necessary. The cashier on the other hand, was diagnosed with a form of muscular rheum six months before the interview took place. Often, she is in severe pain and fulfilling the fulltime job has become impossible. However, this employee has not had the same experience as the formula manager. The feeling of understanding and the presence of dialogue is lacking, and the solution of working less hours was made difficult. The existence of a plan by entrepreneurs and other leaders on how to deal with health issues seems to lack.

Furthermore, the amount of waste material mainly from packaging and food does not indicate embeddedness of sustainability throughout the organisation. One entrepreneur specifically addressed the, according to him, unnecessary packing. The role of the government was highlighted during this interview. Many products namely are obliged to be packaged in a certain way according to government regulations. These regulations should be revised in order to reduce (waste of) packaging. Furthermore, the entrepreneurs and sustainability manager argued that many campaigns conflict with the values of Plus and with sustainability. The sustainability manager for example highlighted a campaign in which customers could save up for a free helicopter flight. Campaigns like these conflict with the values within Plus since it mainly causes noise- and environmental pollution, while Plus wants to position itself as being sustainable. From the interviews thus came forward that sustainability is only slightly embedded in the OC of Plus. The interviewees take into account the social and financial aspects, and to a lesser extent the environmental aspect, all on the short term.

As can be seen in figure 12, all the respondents of the quantitative survey mostly- or totally agree with the statement that they are open to changes within the organisation related to sustainability. Following from the qualitative interviews, these results show that there is a will to successfully implement CS throughout the organisation and within all three cultures. However, as was shown in the results of section 4.2.1 on the congruence between goals and actions, this congruence still seems to lack. This could be contributed to the difference in assumptions, focus and knowledge of the difference cultures, and specifically between the executive- and operational culture as explained in section 2.3.4.

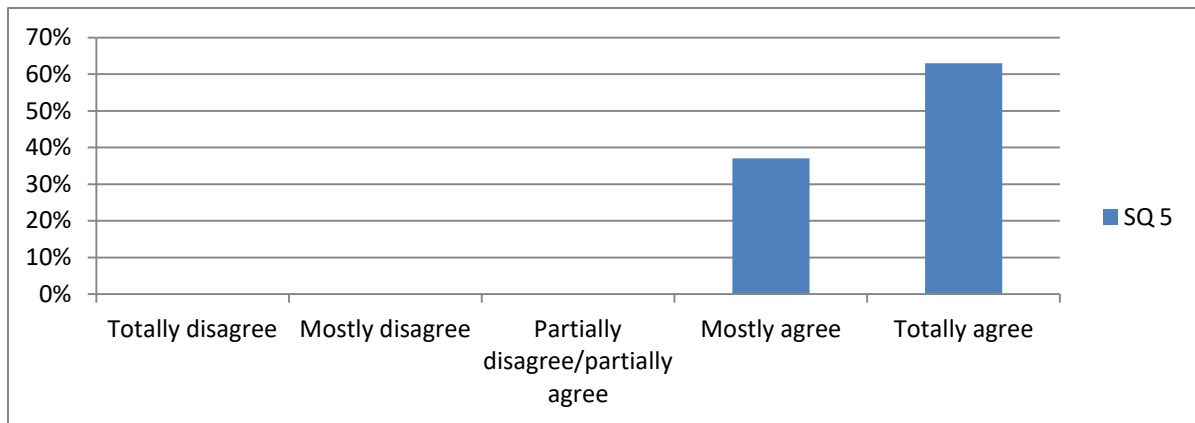


Figure 12: Response of employees to the statement “I am open to changes within the organisation related to sustainability”

Figure 13 below then shows that most of the employees think there can be done more by Plus in order to implement successful CS policies.

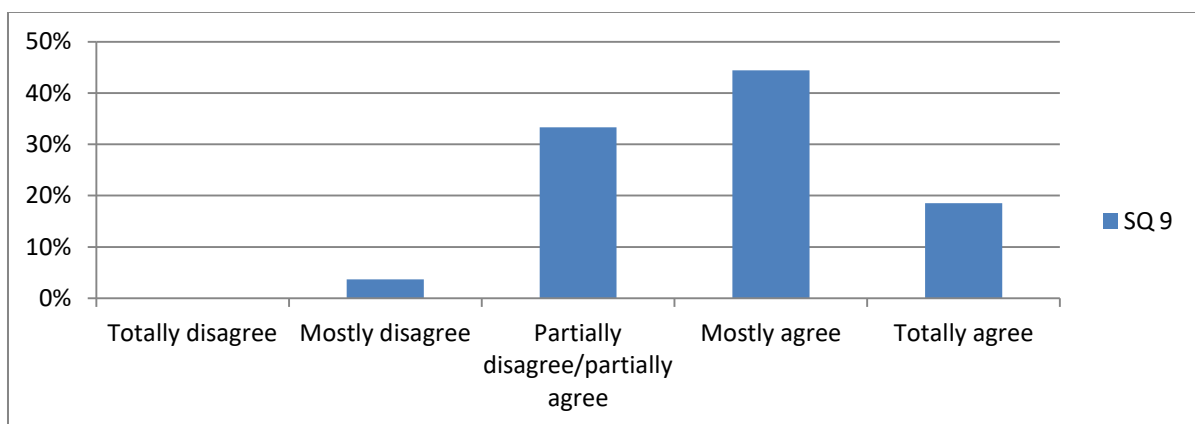


Figure 13: Response of employees to the statement “I think there can be done more within the organisation to reach CS”

Directly after the statement “to what extent do you think there can be done more within Plus as an organisation, to reach CS?”, an open question was included being: “If yes, what do you think can be changed?”. The answers that were given in the survey relating to this question, show that the same ideas en opportunities are recognized by mainly the operational survey respondents. Two issues were mentioned the most by the survey respondents throughout all departments, namely the waste of food and the amount of trash as a result of excessive packaging. However, as highlighted several times in this thesis, the cost-aspect seems decisive.

The will of the employees, excluding the opt-management, to reach CS can thus function as an opportunity for Plus Retail. There little to no resistance to change of this group in the direction of CS.

As came forward from the document research related to Plus’s vision on CS, the employees are highly valued. As can be seen in figure 14, by far the largest part of the employees feel this in the way that they are happy with Plus as their employer.



Figure 14: Response of employees to the question "Are you happy to have Plus as your employer"?

It seems that sustainability is a concept that is taken into account and that is valued to a certain extent throughout the organisation. Little resistance to CS is indicated amongst the employees. However, other factors still work as obstacles on the road to CS by Plus. Therefore, the embeddedness of sustainability with the OC of Plus is classified as being partially present.

4.2.8 The extent to which the desired characteristics are present in Plus's OC

Table 9 below shows to what extent the desired characteristics of an OC as proposed in this research that can explain the success of the implementation of CS policies are present in Plus's OC.

Table 9: The extent to which the desired characteristics are present within Plus's OC

Characteristics	Totally absent		Partially present		Fully present	
The congruence between goals and actions						
Planned change						
Organisational learning						
Changing attitudes and behaviour						
Collaboration						
Leadership						
The embeddedness of sustainability						

As can be seen, the main challenges for Plus are related to the characteristics of the congruence between goals and actions, planned change and leadership. The following chapter includes recommendations for organisations in general and for Plus in particular.

Part V: Looking forward

4 What recommendations on organisational culture can be given to organisations and to Plus Retail in particular, for the successful implementation of corporate sustainability policy?

4.1 General recommendations and implications for the implementation of successful CS policy

4.1.1 The congruence between goals and action

It is recommended to every organisation to develop a clear document, transparent to both employees and other actors describing its sustainability goals on the short- and long term. This document should also include clear steps to be taken with a planning including goals to be reached, by who this is done, by what time, and by using which means. Furthermore, a continuous improvement loop, such as the PDCA cycle, should be included with its own planning, meaning that it should be planned when and by who the sustainability policies are planned, done, checked and carried out.

Furthermore, this plan and its progress should be transparent to actors and should be regularly communicated with the employees throughout the organisations to increase willingness amongst them where this also provides knowledge and possibilities to implement the plan throughout the firm. Transparency, clear goals, a plan, specific employees that are responsible and regular evaluations of its progress seem very important for every organisation to increase the congruence between goals and actions.

4.1.2 Planned change

In order for organisations to successfully implement CS policies it is important that, after the goals have been set, the actions are planned. This plan should include the actions with a time schedule for the short- and longer term, the employees that are responsible for the execution of these actions, and should include scheduled meeting to evaluate on the actions. The steps and continuous improvement loop as discussed in section 2.3.3 and as proposed by Epstein & Roy (2001) could be used as guidelines for the planned change.

4.1.3 Organisational learning

Organisational learning is important to create shared understanding, as is explained in section 2.3.4 (Schein, 1993). This shared understanding can be created by developing a clear definition and explanation on how the organisation interprets the term CS. This definition with its corresponding goals should be shared with all employees throughout the organisation in order to get all employees to speak the same language when CS is concerned. It is recommended that the executive culture consults both the operator- and technical culture in order to get new ideas on how the goals can be reached. By doing this, the different types of employees can learn from each other. When, as a follow-up of these consults, actions are being planned, regular meetings should be held regarding the

progress of the implementation of CS policies. In these meetings, feedback can be given and the representatives of the different cultures together should look at the progress of the process. During these meetings furthermore, the different types of knowledge and experience keep being combined resulting in continuous learning. It is thus important to keep the dialogue going.

4.1.4 Attitudes and behaviour

In order to get shared attitudes and behaviour of the employees regarding the implementation of CS policies, dialogue within and between cultures and departments should function as a basis. The goals and actions to be taken by the organisation as well as the underlying reasons and visions should be transparent and shared throughout the organisation. When the process of implementation is put in motion, rewarding systems could have a positive impact on the successfulness of the implementation of the CS policies. It is therefore recommended to keep the dialogue going, and to implement a rewarding system regarding CS policies.

Furthermore, in order to create shared attitudes and to stimulate a change in behaviour in favour of CS, a central contact person should be available for employees. It should be clear, where and with who they can share ideas, ask questions and can request information.

4.1.5 Collaboration

Collaboration within and between departments, levels and cultures within the firm, from the initiation stage of a policy to its implementation- and evaluation stages, is an important aspect that increases the success of the implementation of CS policies. Regular meetings and visitations between cultures and departments could increase the collaboration within the organisation. Collaboration could furthermore result in a reduction of conflicts and issues during the implementation stages of the CS policies since all employees have collaborated and had the chance for compromises.

4.1.6 Leadership

It is recommended to any organisation to identify one specific leader for the CS program who has a clear vision which is shared continuously with the employees of the organisation. This leader should lay out this vision in clear business principles, is creative and is able to identify CS actions as beneficial for the organisation. This leader should be enthusiastic towards the subject and in this way motivates its colleagues and should have the power to create and implement CS policies. It is recommended to select a person for this role who has a moral motivation and who acknowledges the importance of the successful implementation of CS policies. This leader then functions as a champion for sustainability within the organisation.

4.2 Recommendations for Plus Retail

4.2.1 The congruence between goals and action

4.2.1.1 Becoming the best service supermarket

As comes forward in Plus's documents and the qualitative interviews, Plus seems to follow a good path when it comes to becoming the best service supermarket in the Netherlands. Plus should continue its program of training employees in this field as it is a policy carried out by the headquarters that is to be implemented at every supermarket location. By conducting further market

research however, they can continue to comply with customer demands regarding the offered service on a higher level. The continuous customer panel could be used as a short term solution for the improvement of this policy. However, a qualitative research including interviews with customers on several locations throughout the Netherlands, can offer an even better perspective.

The contribution to local initiatives regarding this goal seems to lack some steering from higher managers. The amount of freedom the entrepreneurs get is however experienced very positively, but can also make them wanting to become too involved which can decrease the quality of the actions. It is therefore recommended that sustainability-related actions are to be steered by policies developed by the head quarters that are to be carried out nation-wide. This subject namely lives the most amongst the employees, both the interviewees and part of the survey respondents. This includes both packaging and waste of food. For example, a new policy could be to oblige supermarkets to offer a discount on nearly-expired goods.

4.2.1.2 A focus on good food for everyone, every day

The goal of good food for everyone, every day, is on the right track with the implementation of new concepts and ideas. However, also regarding this aspect, money seems to play a more important role. It is recommended that within new initiatives, the concepts money and health are treated equally. Also, a long-term plan should be developed with clear steps to reach this goal. Thereby, it seems that the operational culture, being the employees within the supermarkets, have ideas on how to help reach this goal. It is therefore recommended that the employees of the operational level are actively consulted regarding this focus. Furthermore, the focus on 'good food deals' should be increased, where the focus on unhealthy alternatives should be decreased. In this way, Plus can also distinct itself from other supermarket chains.

4.2.1.3 CS as a concept within the organisation

The four pillars of Plus that determine what the CS concept means to the organisation are recommended to be laid out in clear policies. Where the pillars now work as a toolbox for the entrepreneurs to choose from, every policy should to a certain extent be implemented in every supermarket throughout the organisation. The entrepreneurs can then choose which pillar they want to focus on furthermore to meet de needs of their customers.

4.2.2 Planned change

The steps to be taken by Plus in order to reach CS, seem only slightly to be planned. Only in case a larger process is being changed, for instance the change towards 100% fair-trade coffee and tea, the steps are planned and executed to successfully implement the change. However, this is one process at the time, on the short term. It is highly recommended on the short term, to create a clear and long-term vision. It is furthermore recommended that this plan should include which employee is responsible for which action, since it seems rather unclear who has the ultimate responsibility regarding CS within Plus. Recently, Plus's documented and focused vision has a time span of one year. In order to successfully implement CS policies, a long term vision- and corresponding plan should be established. In this vision, more than one process should be taken into account. The actions taken should furthermore be evaluated in order to be able to make adjustments when

necessary. The continuous improvement loop contains clear steps to be taken by Plus when evaluating the plans and actions.

4.2.3 Attitudes and behaviour

Since the attitudes of the employees within Plus seem to be in favour of CS, this should be acknowledged by the executive culture as an opportunity. The challenge mainly lays in the attitudes of this executive culture. It seems that the idea that is embedded in this culture is that CS is at the expense from profit. When employees have ideas or want to implement certain projects where the financial consequences, either positive or negative, are uncertain they have trouble finding the right executive to share their ideas with. Therefore, it should be made clear who or what department is the central contact to share ideas with and where to elaborate on a plan related to CS. This could result into more initiatives from employees and potentially in the increase of profits.

Furthermore, Plus experiences that customers only buy the 'perfect' products. These are the products that have the right shape, colour, expiry date or packaging. It is highly recommended to implement policies where products which are not 'perfect', but have the right quality, are not wasted. Plus should then be transparent to the customers and should share information related to the reasons why certain decisions are being made in order to overcome this resistance to change from customers.

4.2.4 Organisational learning

OL occurs to some extent within departments, either by personal feedback between employees, by meetings per department or through natural processes within groups. To increase organisational learning at the operational level, it is recommended that regular meetings are being planned within supermarkets where members of different departments explain issues that they encounter and how these issues are being dealt with. This sharing of knowledge and experience can increase learning as a team of all departments and this new knowledge can result in more effective collaboration between departments and more effective processes. Since CS seems to be a subject that the employees are open to, these meetings can also result in changes in the process related to CS.

At the head quarters, OL occurs more between teams. However, since it often seems unclear which executive is responsible for what project, also here it is recommended that regular CS meetings are being planned between departments to share their projects and experiences. During these meetings, the employees of different departments can learn from each other and give input from different views. This results in a shared understanding of CS, which can result in the development and successful implementation of CS policies.

4.2.5 Collaboration

Collaboration seems an important factor in Plus's culture. This should be kept stimulated throughout the organisation as is done recently, main at the headquarters. Regarding the supermarkets, it is recommended that employees of the separate departments, come together in scheduled meetings, and help each other once in a while at other departments. This will shed light on the different activities each department works on. This will increase the collaboration at the operational level

since the employees have more information on with which department they should work together to improve their activities.

4.2.6 Leadership

4.2.6.1 The role of change agents and champions

Since it seems that the top-leaders of Plus have not taken up the role as change agents or champions for the successful implementation of CS policies, it is recommended that a sustainability champion is sought from within, or from outside the organisation. This person should not only be highly motivated and feel the moral obligation towards the subject but should also be committed to the subject in its personal life. Furthermore, none of the interviewees, including the interviewee and the survey respondents from Plus's green team, have an educational background or working experience in the field of sustainability. It is therefore recommended to create a separate function for a sustainability champion. An additional reason for this separate function is that the interviewees acknowledged that the workforce is relatively high, resulting in less time for sustainability projects. This function can be fulfilled either by a new employee with a background in sustainability, or by someone from within the company that can function as a champion. In the latter case, it is important that this employee will receive education on the subject of CS.

4.2.6.2 Top-management commitment

Since top-management commitment seems to lack, especially in case short-term profits are unclear, it is recommended to the top-management to look beyond the financial aspect. The environmental, social and financial aspects of sustainability should be weighted equally, where long-term improvements should also be taken into account. It is furthermore recommended to the top-management to become more involved with other levels and cultures of the organisation. As came forward from the literature research, top-management commitment will increase the success of the implementation of CS policies throughout the organisation (Arif, 2016; Lozano, 2013). A lack of it can result in an end of all initiatives. Since the employees themselves have shown initiatives concerning CS, top-management- and employee commitment can result into the successful implementation of these initiatives.

4.2.7 The embeddedness of sustainability within Plus's organisational culture

Since sustainability is only slightly embedded in Plus's culture, but since the will of the employees is there, there are opportunities for Plus to become successful when implementing CS policies. It is recommended to listen to its employees and follow-up on their ideas presented in this research. Firstly the headquarters should implement policies regarding waste of packaging and food throughout the whole organisation. These policies could take on the form of guidelines. In this way, the local entrepreneurs can complement these guidelines with local initiatives and needs. Secondly the weekly deals and campaigns should be evaluated. Excessive packaging that is often used for campaigns and resulting pollution should at least be replaced by more sustainable campaigns. These are two steps to start with, and should be implemented on the short-term, to become more sustainable both on the short- and longer term.

Part VI: Looking Back

5 Discussion, recommendations for further research and conclusion

5.1 Discussion and recommendations for further research

5.1.1 The congruence between goals and actions

Concerning sustainability as a concept within the organisation Plus, it is striking to see that the only employees who agreed with the statement (Q4, see appendix B) of sustainability playing a *central* role in the organisation were members of the green team and entrepreneurs. This could be because the members of the green team are working on Plus's CS policy regularly and are involved with developing new projects to make Plus more sustainable. However, this could bias them in their answers since they otherwise might feel like they 'rate' themselves as bad. Also for the supermarket owners this applies. Furthermore they knew that this research is about sustainability which might have influenced the answers, especially from higher managers such as green team members and entrepreneurs. Further research could eliminate this bias by conducting more qualitative interviews and quantitative surveys, without stating the subject of the research.

For more extensive use of the LEAPFROCS framework, and more specifically about the congruence between goals and actions, and to extent this research with additional information, it is important for further research to include PAR as a research method. Long-term involvement of the researcher within a company or group of people can grant a deeper understanding of the existing and underlying values of that company or group that might influence this congruence. Also, integration mechanisms can be identified and classified. This can help to improve its recommendations for the organisation as a whole. It thereby adds positively to a dialogue between the researcher and the company concerning its self-reflection and can help the company to learn from its previous actions.

5.1.2 Planned change

Planned change is considered an important characteristic for the successful implementation of CS policies. However, this often seems to be overlooked within Plus Retail. As came forward from the quantitative survey, most employees seem to think that Plus has a long-term plan, longer than ten years, related to CS policies and visions. It seems that this characteristic is taken for granted, without any reason to back this up.

Furthermore, it is possible that the responsible employee for the development of changes within the organisation Plus in general, is lacking knowledge on the concept. This also backs the findings of the case study that there is a need for a separate function related to CS. This employee should also be given the task to develop a long-term plan.

5.1.3 Organisational learning

The concept of OL has been analysed using the interview transcriptions and questions from the survey. The results show that learning within Plus occurs naturally in teams. The absence of programs to stimulate continuous learning however, does not mean that continuous learning is absent. PAR could potentially indicate that continuous learning does occur within these teams. More extensive knowledge of Schein's model of OC could help to analyze such patterns. Since the basic underlying assumptions are the most difficult and 'deepest' values to analyze, it is recommended that behavioural experts and psychologists are involved in further research.

Furthermore, one requirement of OL as set out in this research, has been the presence of a program, for example the PCDA-cycle to enhance OL. However, as a rival explanation, in case the concept had been defined differently, for example as the occurrence of natural learning within teams, the results may have been indicated as 'fully present'.

5.1.4 Attitudes and behaviour

Since most of the survey respondents are operational employees in the supermarkets who directly work with customers, the results of the survey question related to a push for more CS within Plus from external stakeholders can entail important information. Since the largest part of the survey respondents seem to partially- to totally agree with the statement of a push from external stakeholders to implement successful CS, this could be an interesting subject for further research. Possibly, further research can namely focus on a knowledge gap between 'the work floor' and the higher managers to see to what extent the customers actually want a change towards more CS within Plus's supermarkets. In other words, operational experience could be used more by CEOs. This might decrease the resistance to change that is visible amongst managers and CEOs.

5.1.5 Collaboration

It is interesting to see that collaboration seems to occur naturally within the organisation, which corresponds with the findings from the literature by Schein. Further research should dive in further into the mechanisms at work within these cultures. More qualitative interviews should be held amongst the employees from different levels to indicate where the need for collaborate programs is high. It is predicted that this need is highest in departments where collaboration is not occurring naturally.

5.1.6 Leadership

5.1.6.1 The role of change agents and champions

In the case of Plus Retail, the lack of the presence of a champion or change agent that is enthusiastic and fully committed to the implementation of successful CS policies is a small barrier to overcome. As the interviews indicated, the champions might already be present within the organisation. These employees however, are not granted the time- or the resources to implement these policies, and to develop their ideas in a creative way. This again, results in the need for a separate function related to CS.

5.1.6.2 *Top-management commitment*

The results have shown that the top management is not fully committed to the implementation of CS policies when the financial aspect is involved. This can be explained by the dependence on money by organisations, and mainly regarding the local entrepreneurs. Without profit they might not exist. Further research should focus on the impact of education and the provision of additional information and processes made available by the headquarters related to CS that can be easily implemented into these local businesses. It might increase the commitment of these entrepreneurs. This will however mean that at the headquarters, the higher managers from different departments must enter the dialogue about CS to establish shared commitment and really show their participation. Further research should include interviews and PAR to measure the willingness of these managers to see where changes in attitudes and behaviour are needed to make them fully commit.

5.1.7 The embeddedness of sustainability within organisational culture

As explained, Plus Retail has been chosen for the purpose of a case study because it is the most sustainable supermarket in the Netherlands. As the results have shown however, the embeddedness of the term sustainability within the firm, has been classified as 'partly present'. This could be explained by the method the GFK panel uses to measure supermarkets. The sustainability manager acknowledged during the interviews that Plus wants to keep its status and therefore uses the GFK's checklist to fulfil their demands. In this way, Plus's OC policy is adjusted to the requirements of the panel. This may be the reason that in this research, Plus has not been classified as fully sustainable, when according to the GFK panel it is classified as such. Further research should therefore make a comparison between the GFK panel and the literature in order to create similarities between the two. This will furthermore prevent the GFK panel to be used as a rival explanation for the findings in this research.

5.1.8 Discussion of method

The method used for the case study included in this research was conducting a case study with the use of company documents, qualitative semi-structured interviews and a quantitative survey. During the qualitative interviews, the interviewees did not seem to have an answer for every question. As came forward from the results above, the employees were not all aware of the sustainability goals and actions taken by Plus. However, it was interesting to see that by asking them questions and sometimes during a short conversation after the interviews were ended, the interviewee said that they became aware of the problem and started thinking about solutions that could be taken by themselves, only by talking about it. It thus seems that by entering the dialogue with employees and letting them think about actions, this could possibly result in improving sustainability within Plus's processes, without a follow-up in the form of new sustainability policies, for example. However, relating to the part of the aim of this research concerned with giving recommendations to Plus Retail, the amount of information retrieved from the interviews was limited. In order to give more valid and more specific recommendations, more qualitative interviews should be conducted, thereby taking into account a balance between the operator- technical- and executive levels. This can furthermore lead to more recommendations related to the optimization of processes between the three cultures.

The interviewees included in this research were previously informed about the topic. Further research that includes quantitative interviews should not inform the interviewees of the topic of the research in order to prevent biased- or socially accepted answers. Furthermore, this could prevent the interviewee from conducting own research on the topic.

In this thesis, the term profit was related only to the financial aspect. The results of this thesis might have been different when profit also included environmental profits. The cost-factor has played a large role in the results of the analysis. When for instance the environmental pollution has also be considered a cost-factor, different answers might have been given by the respondents.

The framework used in this research has in this case been used to test to what extent the factors that can explain the successful implementation of CS policies within Plus retail are present. However, this framework could also be used by other branches who intent to implement a social change throughout the whole organisation.

5.2 Conclusion

After conducting this research, the main question being: *What characteristics of organisational culture can explain the success of the implementation of corporate sustainability policy in an organisation?* can be answered by the following conclusion:

The success of the implementation of corporate sustainability policies within an organisation can be explained by the presence of a total of seven characteristics:

- 1 **The congruence between goals and actions.** The actions that are taken by the organisation should lead to the goals that are set.
- 2 **Planned change.** The goal of a planned change is to change the recent state of an organisation into a more sustainable state. The goals are more likely to be reached if the change is planned, both on the short- and long term. The PCDA-cycle can be a useful tool to help fulfil this change.
- 3 **Organisational learning.** The use of the PDCA-cycle furthermore can initiate organisational learning. This characteristic finds its importance in the creation of a shared understanding of, in this case corporate sustainability.
- 4 **Attitudes and behaviour.** Shared attitudes and behaviour find its importance in the solution of problems. When the employees throughout a firm share the same attitude, a dialogue concerning a subject can be initiated. Before this is the case however, potential resistance to the planned change should be overcome.
- 5 **Collaboration.** The successful implementation of corporate sustainability policies is more likely to occur in case there is collaboration between and within the different cultures. The combination of different types of knowledge and experience help to overcome issues more successfully.
- 6 **Leadership.** Leadership is considered to be the main internal driver for the successful implementation of CS policies. It is important that the leader is fully committed to the goal and has a clear vision and is able to communicate this vision throughout the organisation. The presence of a champion for corporate sustainability can furthermore increase this successfulness.
- 7 **The embeddedness of sustainability.** This characteristic is concerned with the integration of sustainability within the organisational culture. By analysing this characteristic the researcher can determine whether sustainability can be considered only an artefact, or if sustainability in the form of corporate sustainability is embedded as an espoused belief and value, or as the most optimal result, as a deeply embedded value.

For Plus the main challenges lay in the improvement of the congruence between goals and actions, planned change, mainly on the long term, and leadership. There seems to be a gap between the goals set out in the four pillars of CS within Plus, mainly regarding the pillars *a responsible origin of products* and *responsibility for a better environment*. The successful implementation of core CS policies developed by the headquarters could help reach these goals, rather than only let the entrepreneur decide which tools to use in the supermarket. The development of a short- and long-term plan with planned steps that lead to the ultimate goal can help Plus to become more successful in implementing its CS policies. It is important that it is made clear and transparent who is responsible for the implementation. Furthermore, champions for corporate sustainability should be identified which are granted a separate role within the firm. These champions can oversee the change. However, top-management commitment herein is an important factor that is still missing. The presence of a PDCA-cycle can help Plus improve the overall successfulness of the implementation of its CS policies.

Lastly it can be concluded that dialogue is the basis of all characteristics, and is thus a factor that should be fully embedded throughout an organisation's culture. Since collaboration and dialogue seem highly valued within the organisational culture of Plus, the challenges that lay ahead are achievable for Plus on the road to corporate sustainability.

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Appendix A: Interview Questions

Demografische achtergrond van de respondent

Naam:

Leeftijd:

Functie + werkzaamheden en jaren in functie bij Plus:

Opleidingen/academische achtergrond:

Wat is de reden dat je deze rol wilde uitvoeren bij Plus, waarom heb je deze baan genomen?

Waren er toen al dingen die je opvielen gerelateerd aan duurzaamheid en milieu? Heb je dit meegenomen in je overwegingen?

Organisatiecultuur bij Plus

Doelen en ambities, congruent?

1. Wat zou jouw persoonlijke doel zijn als het gaat over duurzame bedrijfsvoering, wat zou je ultieme doel zijn dat je wilt bereiken?
4. Weet je wat het ultieme doel is van plus als het gaat om duurzaamheid?
5. Weet je wat de waarden zijn die binnen Plus als organisatie gelden (kan alles zijn)? Welke van deze waarden vind je nou het beste bij jou passen, en welke het minste?
6. Hoe zou jij de cultuur van Plus veranderen zodat een norm of waarde die jij mist, meegenomen zal worden in de uitvoering? In hoeverre heb je hier de mogelijkheid toe? Via welke kanalen kun jij ideeën aanbrengen en wordt hiernaar geluisterd?
7. Als er een verandering aan zit te komen (bv. een nieuwe actie, nieuwe indeling van werkstructuur, nieuwe focus etc.), in hoeverre bemerk jij dan dat daar tegenin gegaan wordt? Hoe merk je dat dan? En de leidinggevenden, staan die open voor verandering?
8. De ultieme ambitie van Plus is om de beste supermarkt van Nederland te worden. Dat staat op de website. Wat denk je dat de term 'beste supermarkt' inhoudt?
9. Om de tot zover besproken doelen te halen, is constante verbetering essentieel. Hoe gaan jullie het doel halen? Is het stapsgewijs gepland, en wordt erop terug gekeken om het plan continu aan te passen?
10. Denk je dat het mogelijk is, om een 100% duurzame bedrijfsvoering te creëren?
11. Kun je aangeven hoe de uitvoering van duurzaamheid en de plannen daarvoor zijn veranderd in de afgelopen 10 jaar? Wat was er succesvol en wat niet, en hoe is dit aangepast?

Artefacten - de zichtbare en voelbare dingen

10. Welke zichtbare dingen heeft Plus gerelateerd aan duurzaamheid? Het gaat dus om alles wat je werkelijk kunt zien en voelen. Denk aan reclames, folders, posters, acties etc.

Basis principles

11. Gedurende de vorige vragen kwam er een aantal waarden naar voren die horen bij jouw organisatie, Plus. Denk je dat de artifacten die net naar voren kwamen, inderdaad die waarden onderstrepen? Bijvoorbeeld, wordt er inderdaad reclame gemaakt over waar Plus voor staat. Plus wil 'de beste' zijn en 'duurzaam' maar komt dat volgens jou genoeg naar voren in de zichtbare dingen?

12. Gebeuren er soms dingen op jouw afdeling of binnen de gehele organisatie Plus, die conflicteren met de gezette waarden gerelateerd aan duurzaamheid? Zo ja, worden deze dan opgelost, en hoe dan? En als ze niet worden opgelost, waar denk je dan dat dat aan ligt? Hoe kan het beter?

13. In hoeverre zijn 'fouten' van werknemers geaccepteerd. Wordt hiervan geleerd, en zo ja, hoe dan?

14. Zijn de 'supervisors' en managers aan het samenwerken wanneer het gaat om duurzame bedrijfsvoering? Of ligt dit echt bij één departement? En in hoeverre wordt jij aangemoedigd om samen te werken met anderen, niet eens specifiek wanneer het gaat om duurzaamheid?

15. Is er een beloningssysteem in jullie organisatie? Bijvoorbeeld wanneer iemand een goed idee heeft gehad en daarmee succesvol aan de slag is gegaan, of wanneer hij of zij 'gewoon' waardering verdient voor zijn/haar werk. Zo ja, hoe en wat kan ik me daar dan bij voorstellen?

16. Ben je blij dat je bij Plus werkt?

Appendix B: Survey questions

Alle vragen hebben een schaal van 1 tot 5, waarbij 1 betekent: helemaal niet mee eens, en waarbij 5 betekent: helemaal mee eens. Mocht je nooit in de situatie van de vraag hebben gezeten, probeer je dan in die situatie te verplaatsen en geef het antwoord waarvan je denkt dat die het meeste past binnen jouw organisatie.

Leeftijd

Functie binnen Plus

Aantal jaren werkzaam bij Plus

1. Er wordt samenwerkt met werknemers van dezelfde en/of andere afdelingen.

Helemaal niet mee eens ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Helemaal mee eens

2. Er wordt gezamenlijk geleerd van fouten.

Helemaal niet mee eens ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Helemaal mee eens

3. Er is een continu leerproces aanwezig waarbij door middel van feedback wordt teruggekeken op de resultaten.

Helemaal niet mee eens ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Helemaal mee eens

4. Duurzaamheid als concept binnen de organisatie speelt een vooraanstaande rol. Denk bijvoorbeeld aan gesprekken met collega's, projecten waarbij je betrokken bent of aanmoedigingen van duurzame initiatieven van je leidinggevende.

Helemaal niet mee eens ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Helemaal mee eens

5. Ik sta open voor veranderingen binnen de organisatie gerelateerd aan duurzaamheid.

Helemaal niet mee eens ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Helemaal mee eens

6. Mijn leidinggevende staat open voor nieuwe ideeën gerelateerd aan duurzaamheid.

Helemaal niet mee eens ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Helemaal mee eens

7. Het top-management is aanwezig bij duurzaamheidsbijeenkomsten- en vergaderingen.

Helemaal niet mee eens ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Helemaal mee eens

8. Het top-management is actief betrokken bij duurzame initiatieven.

Helemaal niet mee eens ☐ Helemaal mee eens ☐

9. Vind je dat er meer gedaan kan worden binnen de organisatie Plus om het doel van duurzame bedrijfsvoering te halen?

Helemaal niet mee eens ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Helemaal mee eens

10. Zo ja, hoe zou je dit doel willen halen?

11. De leiding staat open voor een gehele stop van niet-duurzame processen en producten, ondanks de kosten.

Helemaal niet mee eens ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Helemaal mee eens

12. Plus wordt aangespoord om een duurzame bedrijfsvoering door te voeren door de vraag van klanten, leveranciers en producenten (de externe stakeholders)

Helemaal niet mee eens ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Helemaal mee eens

13. Plus heeft een lange termijn visie (langer dan 10 jaar) als het gaat om duurzaamheid.

Helemaal niet mee eens ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Helemaal mee eens

14. Hoe blij ben je met Plus als werkgever?

Helemaal niet blij ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Heel erg blij

Appendix C: Artefacts: Pictures



Tabel1: Plus's lunchroom. Translation of the sign: Plus is a cooperation of proud supermarket entrepreneurs. Our common goal is a sustainable business management where the customer is central.



Tabel2: Free fruit for employees and visitors

The role of organisational culture on the road towards corporate sustainability



Tabel3: Award cabinet

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