Behind the Scenes: Media Industry Stakeholders Collaborating Towards Sustainability

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Abstract: The aim of this research is to discover ways that multi-stakeholder platforms for collaboration can be instrumental in the efforts of the media industry to achieve compliance with sustainability. Industries have gained awareness of their responsibilities towards environmental, social and economic welfare, and the media has a powerful role within society. The media industry's behavior is reflected both through its impacts of business operations as well as media products. The premise of this research suggests that an effective platform model fosters interpersonal, stimulating and energizing conversations amongst stakeholders in a neutral and friendly environment. In collaboration with various media stakeholders and showcasing an existing UK-based platform, the Media CSR Forum, and in investigating its structure and membership dynamics, it was possible to gain insight of common challenges for media companies. We identified the potential for platform models to help media companies plan strategically with the Framework for Strategic Sustainable Development. Strategic planning for sustainable development can help the media industry to face the challenge that their current contribution to un-sustainability represents and become a key player for sustainable societies.

Keywords: Media Industry, Sustainable Development, Sustainability/CSR/CR, Multi-Stakeholder Platform for Collaboration (MSPC), Framework for Strategic Sustainable Development (FSSD), Forum.
Statement of Contribution

This thesis is the result of a creative, collaborative and dynamic process fueled by the diversity of our backgrounds and interest in the media industry and the way it works behind the scenes. Potential hurdles such as having a philosopher and a political economist, both keen writers, trying to summarize their thoughts into a structured, ‘plain and simple’ report was balanced by the cunning comments and remarks from our engineer in computing science. The probable biasing of our observations was also avoided thanks to fruitful debates around the different practices of Eastern media – Western media. All challenges met only helped to develop creative and stronger means to ensure the communication flowed openly and nothing external could hinder the quality of the research and its content. Skype and googledocs became our most exploited sources, not only for tracking our interviews to collaborators but to host our master brainstorm cresol, our “ZEITGEIST.”

All three of us participated fully and intensely in the thesis process. Work was divided evenly and discussed widely. Even when the tasks for writing different sections were distributed among us, the content was reviewed together. Feedback on content clarity and style was always given in a critical and constructive way. We are certain that a research of this sort and the resulting outcomes would not be the same without the unique traits, strengths and experience of each of the team members. It was a privilege and an “absolutely, totally awesome” opportunity to discover the intricacies of creating a case study, interviewing such diverse set of collaborators and discovering skills within ourselves that would have otherwise remained unused.

As a team, we had equally important roles and performed the same activities, proving that multi-stakeholder collaboration is indeed a great way to achieve whatever goal we set our minds to accomplish. A research where high-fives, mind mappings, task list writing, constant laughter, sketching and doodling abounded amidst long and rich discussions, cannot be described as anything but inspiring and fulfilling.

Karlskrona, June 2010.
Georgina Guillén, Jennifer Katan, Bin Xu
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A wide network of scholars, media analysts and representatives of various departments within the media industry provided invaluable feedback, insight and recommendations for our findings and suggestions.

The kind and open support, motivation and interest from our peers and advisors were crucial. Our thesis supervisors, Zaida Bárcena and Treva Wetherell guided us through a fascinating process of learning and discovery that would not have been the same without their help amidst the energy, enthusiasm and participation of our classmates and staff of the Masters in Strategic Leadership Towards Sustainability programme.

Lastly but not less important is our most sincere thanks to these people that always encouraged us to go after our dreams and make them happen: our families and friends, scattered all over the globe but always present.

Inspiration, camaraderie and an innovative subject that engaged and motivated people to collaborate with us, were the main drivers of this research. "Behind the scenes..." emerged from our tracing backwards from citizen's consumption of mass media content, to how media is made from the source, seeking the areas where genuine responsibility for society and the environment stood out as a priority. What we found was quite interesting and certainly a great starting point for further research.

Ginnie, Jen and Bin (Will)
Karlskrona 2010
Executive Summary

Background and Research Questions

The concept “Mass Media” normally evokes images of television and radio shows, newspapers, magazines, social media, YouTube, and so on. Audiences consume these services to be informed, entertained, and to some extent, to be educated. Media products are the offspring of a myriad of businesses, journalists, artists, writers, producers, and even you, all clustered under the label “media industry.” Modern media companies, though autonomous, partake in a vast web of interconnected information through time and space. Seeking a joint sustainability effort somewhere within this web, we discovered and investigated real platforms that host media company representatives and stakeholders to discuss Corporate Social Responsibility. We sought ways that these forums’ impact cascaded from behind the scenes of the media industry, to individual media companies’ sustainable business operations working within society within the biosphere.

Taking a systems approach to the media industry offered us the opportunity to identify some media-specific sustainability challenges, such as freedom of expression, transparency of process, impartiality and balance, accessibility and media literacy, among others. The reality of a diverse range of media companies dealing with multifaceted issues makes collaboration within the sector, a requisite for meeting problems successfully. In leaving aside their differences as competing companies, stakeholders that gather in media forums for collaboration are committed to sharing innovative sustainability practices, knowledge, stories of success, and concerns, as a way of addressing the sustainability challenges they face as media sector representatives.

Therefore, scoping the study around these platforms for collaboration elicited the research query: In what ways can Multi-Stakeholder Platforms for Collaboration (MSPCs) be instrumental for the media industry to move strategically towards sustainability?

In order to answer the research question, we, the authors studied the sustainability challenges for the media industry and developed a set of sub-questions:
Sub-Question 1: What do future Multi-Stakeholder Platforms for Collaboration look like as tools for collaboration to help the media industry move closer to sustainability?

Sub-Question 2: What are the current barriers and opportunities that affect the use of Multi-Stakeholder Platforms for Collaboration as tools to support the Media Industry towards sustainability?

Sub-Question 3: What recommendations can be made for Multi-Stakeholder Platforms for Collaboration within the media industry?

Methods

This research was designed as a qualitative model since the results were developed through 5 concrete actions according to Maxwell’s Interactive Model for Research in order to answer our research questions.

Our methods included extensive literature review, data comparison and showcasing an existing platform for stakeholders in the European media sector, the Media CSR Forum in the UK. During this process, a series of interviews and surveys were carried out to gather more information from experts of the media industry and participants of different MSPC models.

Brainstorming sessions endorsed all findings and the results were strengthened through the application of various tools for data validation, the creation of a report of preliminary results that was sent to collaborators and commented on by them as means of feedback.

Results

We found that the greatest potential of MSPCs today for sustainability lies in their inherent facilitation of engagement. When used correctly, MSPCs are powerful drivers of productive, open dialogues and strategic action plans. Additionally, they provide an opportunity for media companies to share their best practices when it comes to certain challenges, such as media literacy, citizenship, transparency, ownership, among other issues.

Our results also revealed a deeper barrier for MF to operate strategically to help the media industry move towards sustainability is the lack of clear purpose that the forum has for media companies and also a long-term vision for the forum itself. However, by identifying the key sustainability issues for the media industry and “mapping the landscape” MF is somehow
introducing the first step to baseline creation and providing cues for a vision building. Our research also uncovered a variety of emerging factors affecting the potential of MF for helping the media industry move towards achieving sustainability.

Results indicated that funding is an important aspect of a good-working and sustainable platform. Without good return on investment (whether the investment is money, time, or intellect), initiatives like MF are doomed to fail. How to make the topics relevant to everyone regardless their line of business or level of CSR progress is one of the biggest barriers of MF.

Based on all the information gathered and distinguishing the elements of creative tension for the companies in the media industry, we also found a handful of opportunities for MF and settings alike to operate more strategically. These included opportunities such as how to build trust, keep motivation high, and select the right speakers and topics for the collaboration in order to overcome barriers to strategic use for helping the media industry move towards sustainability. Today, few media companies around the world are utilizing MSPCs such as forums and theme conferences, and our research found that the Media CSR Forum based in UK is one of those types of working forums that have been capable to develop and improve itself over the years.

However, there are concerns about the relevance of topics that are discussed in the forum, financial barriers, lack of shared vision and other obstacles that are hindering the use of the Media CSR Forum as an instrument for the media industry to move towards sustainability. The methods section showed how we collected and analyzed the data and how it revealed that the relevance of the topics to discuss is extremely important because of a forum group’s diversity. Representatives from media companies attending work in a variety of departments and there are also from different businesses; some are broadcasters, others are publishers.

Considering the challenges and opportunities depicted by our diverse collaborators and the introduction of Strategic Sustainable Development, it was possible to recognize how some MSPCs, such as MF met and overcome challenges and are providing insightful information that can be used for backcasting and support the efforts of the media industry to achieve compliance with sustainability.

We identified 10 elements for successful MSPCs based on the most important assets for sustainability today and in the future. These elements
elaborate on MSPCs ability to provide a space where different stakeholders, media competitors and experts alike, can get together and explore solutions for issues that have been identified by the industry, make actions happen, monitor each other’s progress, and eventually move towards sustainability as an industry.

Discussion

Results from research and interviews proved the enormous potential of using MSPCs as a tool for sustainability strategy of media companies. It was clear to us that media stakeholders meeting to discuss, share, educate and be educated about media-specific CSR and sustainability issues with peers and stakeholders within the industry is a stimulating and worthwhile activity for all involved. We find the model that Media CSR Forum executes is particularly successful and helps to promote social sustainability. Reflecting on its mechanisms has developed the 10 elements for success that boost ideas and recommendations for future media forums.

Using the maintenance of a garden as a metaphor for ensuring a colorful and lively forum, we think that proper “forum gardening” is essential for maintaining the effectiveness and long-term (sustainable) incentive for MSPCs. Reinvigorating the forum structure with new and interesting education, members, workshops, and stakeholder input is key for a stimulating experience of forum members. Referring to the Garden Metaphor, “weeds” are details that include paying heed to use of resources and waste in the execution of media forum meetings. Meeting on a constant basis, such as the quarterly meetings that Media CSR Forum members enjoy in the UK, is a great way to ensure that information is always renewed and relevant, much like media headlines.

More time, investment and nurture will help keep MSPCs such as the Media CSR Forum a vibrant, diverse and colorful tool for media companies. The barriers that emerged from our research include minimal time to deal with the forum’s organizational tasks, resource and financial investment in the experience of the Media CSR Forum respondents, as well as an unclear forum purpose and direction for the members’ involvement as a team. More specific barriers such as lacking of a vision for the Forum, disparity of knowledge and experience among members and lack of progress indicators and no strategic planning, were also some of the obstacles we found MSPCs face with these days.
We believe that incorporating MSPC membership and maintenance into a media company’s sustainability strategy is worthwhile and requires full devotion of all those involved. Each member could offer her/his research and communicative skills towards keeping the MSPC model alive thus fueling a more motivated and sturdy forum. Cross pollination of ideas from forum members to their respective companies is also essential to keep incentive high and maintain the relevance of topics covered at the meetings. We believe that an MSPC not instrumental to sustainability is one that indicates little or no results within a company. Lack of indication of results means member companies invest their money into fees and send individuals to attend meetings without seeing return (whether it be in the form of information, new methods, strategy ideas, etc) for the media company.

Long-term, instrumental for sustainability, MSPCs could strategize forum meetings so that goals and methods of communicating the forum content to the rest of the media company that one member represents can be realized. We think that MSPCs should not be merely a space for opening isolated and abstract subjects of CSR conversation during the time of a meeting, and closing this dialogue at the meeting’s end. Instead, MSPCs such as the Media CSR Forum could be more beneficial for companies if they provide ways and incentives to effectively spread ideas outside the forum ‘walls’, and take a systems perspective on their approach to subject matter.

This could mean incorporating the FSSD as a planning tool for strategic sustainable development that helps MSPCs to finding out how are they contributing to the systematic violation of the Sustainability Principles, support them in their decision making processes and helping them in the selection of tools that will provide sufficient return on financial and time investment so that robust MSPCs can effectively contribute to the sustainability progress of media companies. In turn effective MSPCs in the media industry could spark more informed citizens who trust in media, contributing to a more sustainable society.
Glossary and List of Abbreviations

**Backcasting:** A planning methodology in which a future desired outcome is envisioned, and then steps are planned and taken to work towards that future (Robinson 1990 (cited in Ny et al. 2006) and Dreborg 1996 (cited in Holmberg and Robèrt 2000)).

**Brain Print:** The residual influence of media output on audiences. The extent of influence is difficult to measure, yet studies imply that media communication will impact citizen’s behavior and purchasing behavior (Mapping the Landscape: CSR Issues for the Media Sector, 2008).

**Collaboration:** When more than one individual, group or organization actively decide to work together to achieve a shared goal or vision (Archer, Fei, Petzel 2009).

**Corporate Responsibility (CR):** Mix of responsibilities that every company faces, namely economic, legal, ethical and discretionary. It implies a responsibility that is beyond voluntary as it emphasizes legal and economic accountability. Companies have CR obligations, not just options, even when legal compulsion is minimal (Blowfield and Murray 2008)

**Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR):** Concept whereby companies integrate social and environmental concerns in their business operations and in their interaction with the stakeholders on a voluntary basis (Grayson 2008)

**Creative Tension:** Expression used to describe the gap between the current situation and the most desired future (Senge, P. 1990)

**Deutsche Welle Global Media Forum (DWGMF):** MSPC created in 2007 by the German broadcasting company, the Deutsche Welle, with the purpose of organizing conferences of social concern where stakeholders from all over the world could find a place to share information, discuss and create deals for improving livelihoods worldwide.

**Forum:** A place, or medium where ideas and views on a particular issue can be exchanged (Oxford Dictionary 2010).
Media Corporate Social Responsibility (MCSR): The media industry is accountable for their material and significant environmental, social and governance impacts and issues (Grayson 2008).

Media Industry (MI): Companies whose primary business is the generation of content for information and entertainment. They use diverse channels (radio, TV, printed, internet) to reach different audiences (Guillen, Katan, Xu 2010).

Media Literacy: The ability to access, analyze and respond critically to, and benefit from, a range of media (How Media Is Made, 2010).

Media Stakeholders (MS): Representatives of players and networks involved in the business of media (Guillen, Katan, Xu 2010).

Multi-Stakeholder Platforms for Collaboration (MSPCs): Setting where members of different companies within the same industries get together to share practices, discuss and learn about subjects of common interest (Guillen, Katan, Xu 2010).

Social Media: Media that is created by users rather than institutions. Social media tools include e-mail, blogs, wikis and other social computing applications that allow individuals to broadcast information to their peers, communicating effectively without the use of traditional media outlets (Archer, Fei, Petzel, 2009).

Sustainable Development (SD): Development which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (“Our Common Future”, UN, 1987).
# Table of Contents

Statement of Contribution...........................................................................................................ii
Acknowledgements....................................................................................................................iii
Executive Summary ......................................................................................................................iv
Glossary and List of Abbreviations ............................................................................................ix
Table of Contents .....................................................................................................................xi
List of Figures ............................................................................................................................xiv

1 Introduction ..............................................................................................................................1
   1.1 The Sustainability Challenge.................................................................................................1
   1.2 Strategic Sustainable Development (SSD) ...........................................................................3
      1.2.1 Principles for Sustainability ..........................................................................................3
      1.2.2 Considering the Larger Picture: A Framework for Strategic Sustainable Development ........................................................................................................4
      1.2.3 Terminology Used to Describe Sustainability: ‘SD’, ‘CSR’ and ‘CR’ ..................................................8
   1.3 ON THE AIR: Sustainability Opportunities for the Media Industry .....................................10
      1.3.1 A Systems Approach to Sustainability for the Media Industry  ........................................11
      1.3.2 Multi-Stakeholder Platforms for Collaboration (MSPCs) in the Media Industry .............12
   1.4 Our Research ......................................................................................................................13
      1.4.1 Purpose ......................................................................................................................14
      1.4.2 Scope ......................................................................................................................15
      1.4.3 Case Study: Media CSR Forum, London ........................................................................17
      1.4.4 Research Questions ..................................................................................................20

2 Methods ...................................................................................................................................21
   2.1 Research Design ...................................................................................................................21
   2.2 Research Development Process ..........................................................................................23
2.2.1 Step 1. Literature Review .......................................................... 23
2.2.2 Step 2. Brainstorming ............................................................... 23
2.2.3 Step 3. Interviews and Interactive Data Gathering ................. 24
2.2.4 Step 4. Analysis of Preliminary Results and Feedback ...... 26
2.2.5 Step 5. Validation of Results ...................................................... 27
2.3 Expected Outcomes ........................................................................... 27

3 Results ........................................................................................................ 29
3.1 Results from Interviews and Surveys ............................................. 29
3.2 Elements for Success ............................................................................. 29
3.3 MSPCs Here and Now – The Baseline Analysis ......................... 34
  3.3.1 Existing Opportunities ................................................................. 34
  3.3.2 Current Obstacles ......................................................................... 37
3.4 Recommendations for MSPCs .......................................................... 43
  3.4.1 Strategic Recommendations for successful MSPCs .............. 44
  3.4.2 Operational Recommendations ................................................. 45

4 Discussion .................................................................................................... 48
4.1 Opportunities for MSPCs in the Media Industry ...................... 48
  4.1.1 Discussing Elements for Success ............................................. 49
  4.1.2 Guidance for Using MSPCs ......................................................... 50
4.2 Obstacles for MSPCs .......................................................................... 52
  4.2.1 Too Much Ado about Nothing? ................................................. 52
  4.2.2 Irrelevance of Topics and Lack of Indicators of Success ..... 53
4.3 Opportunities for MSPCs in Other Industries ............................. 54
4.4 Strengths and Limitations of the Research ................................. 54
4.5 Suggestions for Further Research .................................................... 56

5 Conclusion ................................................................................................... 58
References ...................................................................................................... 60
Appendices ..................................................................................................... 72
  Appendix A - Interviews and Surveys. General Information ........ 72
Appendix A.1 Overview.................................................................72
Appendix A.2 Interviews to the Media CSR Forum Members ......73
Appendix A.3 Interviews to Other Media Stakeholders ............74
Appendix B - Interviews: Questions and Respondents .............76
Appendix C - Survey Questions and Respondents......................80
Appendix D - Surveys Summary of Responses .........................81
Appendix E - Report of Results Outline and Overall Feedback from Collaborators .................................................................84
Footnotes ..........................................................................................86
List of Figures

Figure 1.1 Sustainability Principles ................................................................. 3
Figure 1.2 Framework for Strategic Sustainable Development .................... 5
Figure 1.3 Mapping the Landscape: CSR Issues for the Media Sector ...... 11
Figure 1.4 General Research Scope ................................................................. 15
Figure 1.5 Research Scope in Context of FSSD ............................................. 16
Figure 1.6 Matrix of Media CSR Forum Members and Stakeholder Organizations ................................................................. 19
Figure 2.1 Interactive Model for Research Design ......................................... 21
Figure 2.2 Research Development Process .................................................... 22
Figure 3.1 Rogers and Dearing Agenda Setting Model ............................ 32
1 Introduction

The Media sector – broadly defined – could become the dominant industry of the 21st century. No other industry will so powerfully influence how people and politicians think about corporate social responsibility (CSR) and sustainable development (SD) priorities (Good news & Bad 2002, 1). How can the media industry help accelerate society towards sustainability?

1.1 The Sustainability Challenge

The technological shifts of the last few decades have resulted in a “shift of human consciousness towards an increased awareness of complex global activities that affect society as a whole” (Lallana and Uy 2003, 10). Across the world, citizens have become an integral part of technological change and social media, and are exposed to enormous amounts of information. Meanwhile, in the pursuit of meeting our needs, new paradigms and conflicts keep emerging, presenting different barriers for humans to thrive harmoniously and indefinitely on earth. Some of these complex global challenges include rundown ecosystems, overpopulation, scarcity of clean drinking water, peak oil and shrinking forests. These are only some of the obstacles the planet faces for hosting a healthy and complex species such as humans (WWF 2008, 1, 4, 5). These issues are, at this moment, “putting the well-being and development of all nations at increasing risk (WWF 2008, 2). Why then does humanity struggle to rise together and alleviate these circumstances? The problem is not a lack of courage, but rather a misperception of reality (Broman, Holmberg and Robèrt 2000). Ideally, the intimate exposure of current issues to individuals via a myriad of media channels should certainly inspire positive societal shifts. If many citizens are now aware and conscious of global problems, the logical action is to generate solutions for the well-being of society. Yet, response from ever-connected global citizens seems to be lagging. Perhaps an overall sense of the larger picture is the missing link between awareness and action. Access to countless sources of information tends to maintain the illusion that today’s complex problems are separate from each other. On the contrary, all activities are tightly interrelated and systematic (Robèrt 2000).

The 1987 United Nations Bruntland Report initiated the conversation about the interconnectedness of social, economic and environmental problems and how their health will inevitably determine the conditions for a future society (Bruntland 1987). The sustainability movement has been growing
since, and now the concept is one of the most debated subjects of
cornerstone. Amongst, politicians, journalists and citizens, as
demonstrated in the 2009 United Nations Climate Change conference,
Cop15, in Copenhagen Denmark and mentioned by our collaborators.

Shrinking natural resources combined with increasing societal demands
result in life on Earth dwelling in a systematically more dangerous and
toxic environment (Robèrt 2000). The planet’s biosphere, in order to
support enormous amounts of complex life forms, needs to be able to
maintain massive “stocks and flows of natural resources”. The increasing
rate of systematic human exhaustion of these natural resources is limiting
Earth’s ability to regenerate the amount needed to meet the needs of
mankind and current ecosystems in time (Robèrt 2000).

Yet when materials from the Earth’s crust are combined with materials
from the biosphere (for example, burning fossil fuels) along with new and
foreign substances produced by mankind being released into the biosphere,
at a rate that makes equilibrium difficult for the planet; the biosphere
becomes “toxified”, or a toxic environment for life. In other words, with
our current practices in place, the Earth can sustain healthy human life less
and less as time goes on (Broman, Holmberg, Robèrt 2000). In fact,
according to World Wildlife Federation’s Living Planet 2008 Report,
humanity’s demand on living resources “exceeds the planet’s regenerative
capacity by about 30 per cent”, which means we would need three more
planet earths to sustain our current activities forever (WWF 2008, 2).

A choice exists for mankind: to see this reality as it is from a realistic
overarching perspective and accept the challenge of change, or, to continue
living without precaution until conditions ultimately worsen for mankind.
As mentioned earlier, a systems perspective is essential to ease the
confusion of the many complexities about global sustainability. Un-
sustainability has not been the result of a series of disconnected negative
impacts on nature and society, but is rather due to “underlying systemic
errors of societal design” (Robèrt 2000).

Developing solutions by taking a reactive ‘case-by-case’ approach is futile
due to the increasing number and severity of problems that constantly arise.
In order to elucidate reality and the measures needed in this severe scenario,
systematic errors need to be eliminated (Robèrt 2000).
1.2 Strategic Sustainable Development (SSD)

Then, how can society work to eliminate the above mentioned systematic errors of design? Indeed, an active, interconnected approach to sustainable development could help mark the trail for industries and businesses within society towards a more sustainable way of existence. This is why this thesis explores both the concept of “sustainable development” within society and furthermore, to deciphering ways of strategic planning towards sustainability, to help us plan together to arrive collectively at a world that is more sustainable.

1.2.1 Principles for Sustainability

To simplify the shared sustainability challenge without reducing its importance, a group of scientists and academic collaborators agreed in the 1980s on the very minimum conditions needed for earth to support current human and animal species sustainably. The four scientific sustainability principles, outlined below, were developed initially by Karl-Henrik Robèrt and John Holmberg along with academic peers. They are based on a scientifically agreed upon worldview and were developed collaboratively (Ny et al. 2006).

This thesis thus assumes the following basic principles for sustainability:

*Figure 1.1. Sustainability Principles. (Holmberg and Robert 2000; Ny et al. 2006)*

These principles are universal enough to be used when planning for and assessing sustainable development in almost any scenario.
Everything we do that has an environmental impact falls under principles one through three. One may congratulate themselves for being environmentally sustainable if they do not in any way contribute to systematic increases of substances from the earth’s crust into the biosphere (ex. fossil fuels), or manmade substances such as pesticides and plastics, or physically degrade nature in any way (ex. overharvesting, drought, etc).

Sustainability principle four, social sustainability, is concerned with social systems and is equally as significant as the first three principles. After all, living in a sustainable world means that human are able to meet their needs and that social systems are able to continue to survive and prosper, instead of degrading to a state of distrust amongst each other, violence, and eventually chaos. Sustainability principle four reminds us that though an inhabitable planet is certainly based on scientific conditions, human inhabitants must be able to meet their needs in order to thrive perpetually. Should we manage to comply with principles 1-3, humans still depend on a minimum amount of social trust and cohesion to flourish for generations to come. In the current situation of growing numbers of people living within a society that systematically constrains their capacity to meet their needs, there is grave potential for a rising period of violence, fear and alienation (Ny et al. 2006). When it comes to human needs, we regard Max Neef’s definition of nine fundamental needs to be suitable: participation, subsistence, freedom, leisure, affection, understanding, identity, creativity, and protection (Max-Neef 1991). If we allow conditions of nature to worsen, then degrading social conditions will follow. Maintaining a strong, diverse and vibrant social fabric is essential for overall sustainability.

1.2.2 Considering the Larger Picture: A Framework for Strategic Sustainable Development

Through a scientifically rigorous, peer reviewed definition of sustainability as part of planning for any complex system, it was possible to determine a framework for sustainability planning and apply it worldwide. The Framework for Strategic Sustainable Development (FSSD) was developed by Dr. Karl-Henrik Robert in collaboration with a network of scientists and it is also known in the business world as The Natural Step framework since many of its concepts have been internationally applied and promoted through the NGO “The Natural Step International”.

4
When planning for strategic sustainable development, individuals and organizations can easily lose sight of the higher purpose of strategy and drown in the details. How do switching the office light bulbs, easing-up on power usage and producing annual CSR reports really contribute to movement towards a sustainable society? Does something more fundamental need to be considered, and if so, how do long-term strategies fit into the higher purpose? Since its development in the early 1990’s, many companies, organizations and individuals have adopted the use of the Framework for Strategic Sustainable Development (FSSD) as a guiding compass for developing their sustainability strategies from a more informed perception of society within the biosphere, and using strategic guidelines to lead them towards success. Influential enterprises such as NIKE, Starbuck’s, MacDonald’s, and IKEA have found that applying the FSSD as a planning tool for sustainability provided simplicity, clarity, and motivation for those involved (Nattrass and Altomare 1999, 2002). The framework offers a shared language through the scientific sustainability principles, uses a “systems perspective” (appreciating intricate links and causal relationships amongst units in a system), and practically applies across cultures, organizations, learning forums, and individuals (Nattrass and Altomare 2002, 67). Its structure is as follows:

![Figure 1.2. The Five Level Framework for Strategic Sustainable Development](image)

The FSSD consists of 5 levels that are intended for planning within the complex system of the biosphere. The first level is concerned solely with perceiving and understanding the system in question. All systems have complex mechanisms that must be appreciated and understood first and
foremost before planning and decision-making occurs. And, in any organization, and with any entity or individual, responsible decision-making will determine its relative longevity.

The system level of the FSSD contains the reality of an entity’s place within society, within the biosphere. The systems level is valuable in its ability to unify practitioners’ understanding of the overall system, as it highlights the dynamic relationships between ecological and societal systems, and can moreover help to easily identify one’s place within this complex system. In this way, the FSSD is an elegant framework and can help to provide an overall perspective of the interconnected nature of the challenges taking place at the systems level.

Within the success level of the FSSD then, are the conditions we must comply with for living sustainably on the planet. The four principles for sustainability are based on the planet’s natural laws and were formulated to help contextualize overall basic requirements to comply with to maintain the Earth’s capacity to sustain life over time (Figure 1.1). These natural laws identified at the system level include basic science concepts, laws of physics, thermodynamics, complex systems and eco-systems balances for ecological sustainability, and diversity, human needs, interdependence and social organization among others for social sustainability (Robèrt 2000).

Accordingly then, a successful state or reality within the system should be sought in order to optimize its functioning. For example, the human body functions in multifaceted ways, where each part plays an essential role for the whole. The overall ‘success’ of a human body (system), depends on a multitude of factors that affect its resilience and health. Various chemical imbalances in a body can take place that may have to be recognized and altered in order to rejuvenate or maintain a healthy state. A successful body will be one that operates within the principle requirements of a body’s needs. For global sustainability then, success depends on minimum compliance with the sustainability principles by society (Figure 1.1).

The strategic level of the FSSD is built on backcasting from the vision of success in the biosphere. In this way, the strategy will be logical, guiding principles used for decision-making during the planning process ensure that planners will arrive, step-by-step, to sustainability. Naturally, every level of society must begin to strategize towards a sustainable world, from individuals to organizations, to governmental policy (Robèrt et al 2007, xxvii). Steps in the right direction must be flexible and able to adjust to the
changing conditions of society. Measures must hence be systemic changes that apply on a fundamental level, or a different way of thinking. Rather than acting as soon as a conflict arises, backcasting from principles means planning for the future, so that negative societal impacts and pollution are avoided before they become harmful to nature and people (Broman et al 2000).

Like in a game of chess, where every move is informed by the principles of success (rules to win the game), our ‘moves’ and actions as humanity should be informed by scientific principles for sustainability. Of course, in doing so, one must always assess today’s operations against the vision of success in order to determine the necessary dynamic actions needed to move forward in the right direction.

The FSSD demands the following three-prioritization questions be asked about each action being considered as a step towards an improved future:

- Does this action move in the right direction: towards success?
- Is the action flexible enough to be altered for unknown circumstances?
- Does the action provide sufficient return on investment for the continuation of the process?

When working within the context of the FSSD, the action level includes the strategic steps towards success within the system, and finally, the tools level is for determining techniques, instruments, management methods, etc, to implement these actions. Actions and tools are what ultimately help an organization, individual, and society move towards compliance with success/global sustainability. Taking a whole-systems perspective to every planning process can be daunting because it is easy to become confused about the intricacies of relationships and interplays in society, an organization, or even amongst individuals. Given the wide and complex scope of the global sustainability challenge, the Framework for Strategic Sustainable Development is a useful structure to apply to any system. It helps provide perspective about an entity’s unique role within society, within the biosphere, and can help to spark imaginative action towards a vision of success.
1.2.3 Terminology Used to Describe Sustainability: ‘SD’, ‘CSR’ & ‘CR’

In his book, the Next Sustainability Wave, Bob Willard explores the importance of terminology for a company or an organization when it comes to complex issues such as social and environmental impacts. Willard frankly supposes that too much terminology can be “a speed bump on the road to corporate sustainability” (Willard 2005, 14). Albeit the labels “Sustainable Development”, “CSR” and “CR” have embedded ideas and developed from distinct origins, outlined below, this report will use the term ‘sustainability’ as a far-reaching notion.

Having just explored a comprehensive definition of ‘sustainability’, it is important to consider the subject of language for the sake of clarity. This paper considers Strategic Sustainable Development (SSD), which includes ‘strategy’ to be different from sustainable development (SD), which is more general. SSD has a particular direction and dynamic planning process, and implies a vigorous and calculated approach when planning towards sustainable development.

The FSSD, then, is a tool for strategic planning that employs SSD within an overall context that is useful for maintaining an educated broad scope, and monitoring detailed progress within the overall system. When properly used, it can be most effective in genuine implementation of actions, which can then lead to real progress within a system and ultimately tangible societal change.

How then, does SD intrinsically differ from regular corporate terms that are popular today in many industries, such as Corporate Responsibility (CR) or Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)? In their work on Corporate Responsibility, Blowfield and Murray (2008) refer to three historical periods, during which the nature of business’ relationship with society has changed significantly: the Industrial Revolution, the mid-twentieth-century welfare state, and the era of globalization. Each period has raised new issues about the role of business in society, but many of the issues only remain relevant from one era to the next (Blowfield and Murray 2008, 43). Moreover, our research found that different media companies entitle their sustainability reports inclusively, CSR reports, CR reports and Sustainability reports, denoting that the terms are synonymous when it comes to reporting business progress. CSR and CR have distinct origins as concepts, however.
Traditionally, *Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)* is a concept whereby companies integrate social and environmental concerns in their business operations and in their interaction with their stakeholders on a *voluntary* basis. It is about enterprises deciding to go beyond minimum legal requirements and obligations stemming from collective agreements in order to address societal needs (European Commission for Enterprise and Industry, 2001).

Similarly, *Corporate Responsibility (CR)* encompasses the mix of responsibilities that every company faces, namely economic, legal, ethical and discretionary, which categorize the ways businesses manage their relationship with wider society. Unlike CSR however, CR, implies a responsibility that is beyond voluntary as it emphasizes legal and economic accountability. Companies have CR obligations, not just options, even when legal compulsion is minimal. This is the meaning of economic responsibility, whereby "responsibility is defined not only in terms of making a profit for shareholders, but also in terms of producing goods and services that society wants" (Blowfield and Murray 2008, pg 15 and 21).

So, in this case, a more focused and unified approach is the only way to make the sustainability message relevant for business executives. To clear up confusion, Willard suggests to “pick a label, any label.”

For the sake of this research, “sustainability” is defined by compliance with the four principles of sustainability as described in section 1.1.1. Whether an organization addresses their socio-ecological concerns under the umbrella terms CSR, CR, SD or Sustainability, each term denotes the ubiquitous three legged stool of sustainability: economic, environmental and social responsibility for societal well being (Willard, 2005). Though it is important to mention that organizations use these terms even without demonstrating their understanding of what they imply. For clarity purposes, this paper will use 'sustainability' when referring to the necessary global compliance with the sustainability principles to perpetually sustains society.
1.3 ON THE AIR: Sustainability Opportunities for the Media Industry

*Media companies, as businesses themselves, should behave responsibly. Like any other business in any other sector, they need to understand their most material and significant environmental, social and governance impacts and issues; and seek to minimize negative environmental and social impacts, and maximize positive impacts (Grayson 2008,2).*

It is no question that Mass Media constantly permeates society. The lives of global citizens have been radically different since the bombardment of assorted channels of media content. The sources of channels vary, and messages are quite often disconnected with the ‘zeitgeist’ of societal activities. Yet these separate messages reach and are consumed by millions daily. For this reason, the media has a transformative effect on the thoughts and actions of individuals. Various media outlets expose largely disjointed reporting about global sustainable development in their content, partly due to its complexities and illusion of remoteness. Headlines will vary from one hot story to another, barely skimming the weight of importance of issues such as ‘climate change’, ‘biodiversity’ or ‘the food crisis.’

A coherent underlying message is often nowhere to be found. On the other side of exposed content lies the heart of the media industry (MI). The MI is vast, layered, and powerful. There are a multitude of responsible individuals that are only loosely related to content creation, if at all. As such, the MI is comprised of many working businesses’, each occupying a place within society, each having a desire to sustain. In the late 1990’s, the media industry faced a shocking reality when it found itself ranked as one of the highest polluters, equally as harmful to society and the environmental as some companies in the oil and mining industries (Toennesen 2010). This ‘news’ or, wake-up call, generated a response of self-awareness and shame across the industry. Next came the reaction to demands from the public for a more responsible and trustworthy media industry as reported by our collaborators.

**Navigating the Media Industry’s Challenges.** In order to improve, specific issues within the industry first had to be identified. We will point to the current issues that emerged as ever relevant and important in recent studies. The most recent CSR issues sweeping across the media industry in Western countries are listed in the matrix:
1.3.1 A Systems Approach to Sustainability for the Media Industry

Interestingly, there is a misalignment between words and actions with the media industry having serious socio-environmental impacts. The information that media develops and puts out is frequently critical of every industry except itself. Grayson remarks that there is “very often a conspiracy of silence within the media on their own ethics” (Grayson 2008). We know that the media is anything but silent in most situations, but when it comes to reporting on its own challenges and impacts on society and nature, there exist some barriers and coherence.
These barriers run deeper than the final media product, and, like every industry, media companies are meeting sustainability challenges from their internal business operations through the content they expose. But with a powerful voice and sway on public opinion, many would argue that the media industry has a larger sustainability mission than other businesses, and that lasting public trust in the industry is the golden ingredient for its prosperity. Webb asserts in Grayson’s paper that “it is how much trust we have in the media that will determine which firms survive and prosper, and which fail, in the current business turmoil media businesses find themselves floundering in” (Grayson 2008, foreword). As mentioned in the “Mapping the Landscape” Survey (Mapping the Landscape 2008, foreword) “media has a responsibility to foster a more ecologically and socially sustainable society”. Like all industries though, too many disparities amongst media companies and stakeholders on the subject of CSR can prevent tangible change.

1.3.2 Multi-Stakeholder Platforms for Collaboration (MSPC) in the Media Industry

Planning Together for SSD in Complex Systems Collaboration is a key ingredient for the levels of society that need to implement significant changes in complex systems. At the organizational, economic and governmental levels, where multifaceted societal events play unique and separate roles in human activities, straightforward planning for everyone is extremely difficult and almost impossible (Robèrt 2000). When planning together, groups tend to function worse intellectually than any one person on his/her own. Maintaining coherence of actions from large groups of people is tricky because of diverse opinions and life experiences. On the other hand, there is enormous opportunity that a group of people can realize on a much more effective scale than individually, should they share the same aspirations. There is significantly more intellectual power in a team, than in an individual. Diversity in this case offers multiplied capacity and strength from the combined skills of many individuals. If the participants discuss and agree on the fundamentals of the system in which they participate, they can accomplish marvelous features. Such as the social movement against bleached toilet paper that banned this product from supermarkets in Sweden by 1989 (Stackelberg, 1989) and many other campaigns for diverse causes through history (Ethicalconsumer, 2010)
Collaboration amongst peers and groups of people is then surely needed in order to plan strategically for sustainable development. Contrary to historical overcoming of extreme hardships over short periods though, sustainability needs to be a long-term, informed investment with shared dedication. Social media is making parallel collaboration easier and more efficient across the globe, and is, according to some communications/media specialists, the future style of human enterprise (Steffan 2009). Human consciousness is becoming ever more connected by virtue of media and technology, and a growing self-consciousness (Rifkin 2009). This thesis hence expands from the idea that collaborating for SSD is not only likely, but necessary for mankind to continue to flourish as worldly conditions become systematically more complex.

In order to enable a strategic approach towards sustainability within the media industry, coalesced engagement around the issues is essential. Because of its almost omniscient reach, the media industry has an exciting opportunity to engage both the business and the public in action for a common purpose. Innovating towards a more sustainable future needs to be a collaborative effort. When it comes to the media industry specifically, the right changes first need to be made behind the scenes, before unified and meaningful conversation about sustainability can be the norm in media content. J. Confino of the Guardian Media Group touches on this in an article written for his blog on stakeholder engagement. The new opportunities of social media (such as blogs) allow for interactive engagement between media companies, the audience, and various stakeholders. Confino finds that collaborating at the roundtable openly and discussing the results transparently in person and online could help everyone to gain a common understanding of the impacts of the business of media (Confino 2009). In an investigation of the history of the media industry’s sustainable development, we found that different forums for stakeholder dialogue started to emerge, most of them gatherings for thematic conferences, and some others designed for sharing scholarly papers, accountability practices and even best-practice sharing. An important differentiation is the ownership of a forum. If it is organized by a particular media company, it is likely to be a space for sharing information where stakeholders from the international community converge; whereas the spaces managed by non-media related companies (such as consultancy firms, or government) tended to be local initiatives where representatives of the industry gather to discuss common issues.
1.4 Our Research

1.4.1 Purpose

Due to its remarkable role in communicating to citizens, we believe the media has great responsibility to provide services not only to self-sustain as a series of popular businesses, but to make a unique contribution to more conscientious future societies. We have found that this area of study, namely, the matter of deciphering the approach to sustainable development across the media industry, is a novel realm of research. Our investigation sought inspiring current initiatives taking place in the landscape of media, and it appears that MSPCs are an exciting first step for media companies to move forward to an original and vibrant contribution to a more sustainable society. Our research questions follow from this premise.

The purpose of this thesis is to explore ways that MSPCs can be instrumental as tools for collaboration for the media industry to advance towards sustainability. Outlining the strengths and obstacles of MSPC developments in the media industry (i.e. how are they currently helping and hindering the media industry in moving towards sustainability?), researching ideal traits of what makes an effective forum, and developing recommendations to current and expected forums will help direct and substantiate the purpose of this research. To this end, the research was designed to:

- analyze MSPCs as tools within the larger concept within SSD for the Media Industry
- explore current effective initiatives,
- outline progressive measures,
- brainstorm ideas for successful MSPCs,
- shed light on current barriers MSPCs face and
- outline opportunities for media companies using MSPC models for strategic planning towards sustainability.

With this initiative in mind, along with similar ones that are occurring now in the media industry, we look at potential ways the media can take an effective collaborative approach to strategic sustainability planning, though joining together in settings where open conversation is possible. To that end, we study the effectiveness of collaboration tools, Multi-Stakeholder Platforms for Collaborations (MSPCs), of supporting media companies towards sustainability.
1.4.2 Scope

Our scope takes place behind the scenes of what citizens are exposed to. We are interested in how stakeholders within the media industry can collaborate towards sustainability in MSPCs, which could, in turn have a ripple effect on all areas of media production.

![Figure 1.4. General Research Scope](image)

As demonstrated in the figure above, this research focuses on the potential of platforms for multi-stakeholder collaboration within the media industry designed to generate conversation about sustainable development. Collaborating with a growing multi-stakeholder platform from the UK, the Media CSR Forum, our subject examines this case study as part of a growing concern for sustainability issues in the media industry. The media industry addressing these common issues might contribute towards the common goal of shifting society towards sustainability.

To this end, our audience will be individuals who are interested in sustainability within the media industry, within society, within the biosphere. Our report thus studies Media CSR Forum in London, a CSR industry club created by the UK media industry in 2001. It is not owned by a particular media company but managed by a non-media party (Acona); through the organization of meetings, conferences and surveys they include other non-media organizations in discussion of the industry’s challenges to meet their responsibilities as corporate citizens.
Figure 1.5. Research Scope in the context of the FSSD

To clarify our scope within the Framework for Strategic Sustainable Development, we studied where MSPCs would be useful in the larger context of sustainable development. Since MSPCs are tools for collaboration that are intended be instrumental for sustainable development, we explored their place within the elegant context of the FSSD to help us assess their usefulness as such. We investigate their strategic utility when being used to help shift the media industry closer to sustainability within society, within the biosphere. It also must be considered that MSPCs are one tool of many tools and concepts that could be useful for the sustainability practices and strategies of media companies.
1.4.3 Case Study: Media CSR Forum, London

Our case study emerged as the only working neutrally-hosted platform which was initiated by media companies (or, industry-led) in the Western media climate today. The Media CSR Forum (MF hereafter), the UK-based initiative of media companies, originating from a cry for help to improve common practices and understanding of CSR for the UK media sector. Acona, a consultancy that deals with sustainability developments and gives CR advice across industries, is the neutral host of this unique collaboration platform. Acona has three ‘industry clubs’: one for the media sector, one for publishing companies, and another for awareness of cultural diversity (Industry Clubs 2008).

The teams at Acona are devoted to fostering responsibility for society and the environment into businesses’ strategies, operations and reporting (Acona 2008). Their rationale about hosting industry platforms for collaboration is that cooperation amongst businesses with each other and knowledgeable stakeholders to share best practices is one of the most effective ways to tackle the complex sustainability issues that these industries confront as part of society.

The Acona website (Acona 2009) lists four advantages for companies engaging stakeholders in collaborating this way:

- A common view of CR issues affecting a sector
- Information sharing – learning from each other
- Greater leverage – pooling resources to pay for projects
- Bigger impact – a higher profile than any member could attract individually

The Media CSR Forum then, is organized and run by Acona and contains twenty of UK’s largest media companies as members. The forum is designed for media companies to talk amongst each other about CSR issues that are unique to the media sector. The group meets quarterly, and usually invites a relevant stakeholder organization (for example, the World Wildlife Federation, and more, see figure 1.6) to contribute to the conversation and offer expertise. Each member company pays a yearly membership fee. The forum members ‘range from public service broadcasters, to academic media and conference organizations, to advertising agencies’, and include ‘editors, HR Directors, Company Secretaries and Auditors’ (Media CSR Forum 2010).
The collaborative work of the Media CSR Forum includes (Media CSR Forum Report 2009):

- Developing an understanding of the implications of CSR for media organizations;
- identifying areas for prioritization;
- sharing best practices;
- engaging with stakeholders and
- running collaborative projects on key issues.

The forum is an informal venue where representatives of different media businesses come together in an interpersonal discussion about CSR education and initiatives, which are addressed in survey reports, workshops and conferences.

The Media CSR Forum is a unique forum model in which there is a powerful opportunity to be reproduced in other countries. As a multi-stakeholder platform that initiates open conversation between competing companies in the media industry about sustainable practices, the MF has potential to serve as model for improving sustainability strategies in the media industry across the world. The UK forum is a working example of the effectiveness of a neutral space along with trust amongst stakeholders in developing a unified and strategic, systemic approach to CSR issues. Inherently, MSPC models such as MF are diverse, self-organized, and interdependent. Their purpose is to reach consensus around issues relevant to the industry and individual companies, determine codes of conduct and become accountable to the society they serve. The participants in such an all-inclusive and transparent space are ideally enriched by their peers and have valuable contributions to the common goal of sustainable development both for the forum and ultimately for their own company.

Running forums for collaboration in the media industry ultimately aims to catalyze CSR actions using the tactic the media industry knows best: communication. In the case of the MF model in London, ‘multi-stakeholder’ refers to all forum members who are representatives of large media companies in the UK, and the organizations that contribute to the knowledge and enhancement of the meetings. Figure 1.6 is a matrix of the members of the MF, and some stakeholders who contribute to relevant topics and attend MF meetings.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Members</th>
<th>Stakeholders</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BBC</td>
<td>Intellect UK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BSkyB</td>
<td>The South East Media Network</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Channel 4</td>
<td>One Young World</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EMI</td>
<td>The Prince of Wales Corporate Leaders Group on Climate Change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Global Radio</td>
<td>C-Change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guardian Media Group</td>
<td>Big Bang Lab</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informa</td>
<td>10:10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IPC Media</td>
<td>Econometrics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ITV Pic</td>
<td>Twenty Fifty &amp; MTV Foundation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media CSR Forum</td>
<td>Ethical Trading Initiative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pearson</td>
<td>The Publishers’ Database for Environmental Paper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Random House</td>
<td>UK Refugee Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reed Elsevier Group Plc</td>
<td>Arts Shadow Minister</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TF1</td>
<td>WWF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trinity Mirror plc</td>
<td>Julie’s Bicycle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turner Broadcasting System Europe Limited</td>
<td>Ammado</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Business Media plc</td>
<td>The Institute for Public Policy Research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Virgin Media</td>
<td>International Alert</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WPP</td>
<td>Futerra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yell</td>
<td>Goldman Sachs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Business in the Community</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 1.6. Matrix of Media CSR Forum Members and Stakeholder Organizations (Media CSR Forum 2010)**
In what ways can Multi-Stakeholder Platforms for Collaboration be instrumental for the media industry to move strategically towards sustainability?

Sub-Question 1: What do future Multi-Stakeholder Platforms for Collaboration look like as tools for collaboration to help the media industry move closer to sustainability?

Sub-Question 2: What are the current barriers and opportunities that affect the use of can Multi-Stakeholder Platforms for Collaboration to support the Media Industry towards sustainability?

Sub-Question 3: What recommendations can be made for Multi-Stakeholder Platforms for Collaboration within the media industry?
2 Methods

After becoming familiar with Maxwell's (2005) *Interactive Model for Research* we understood that effective research design is not linear, and is better executed using an interactive and multifaceted approach since it is a process that requires a constant review of research objectives, redefinition of concepts and various processes of feedback for validation and presentation of reliable results. Therefore, we decided to apply this model for designing our research, maintaining a constant critical awareness of assumptions, methods research questions, and goals throughout the research process. Under this flexible design model, the primary Research Question (RQ), and the three sub-questions (SQ) were answered using various tools and methods. These supported us to build a comprehensive, robust and significant research process.

2.1 Research Design

"Design in qualitative research is an ongoing process that involves ‘tacking’ back and forth between the different components of the design, assessing the implications of the goals, theories, research questions, methods, and validity threats for one another. It does not begin from a predetermined starting point or proceed through a fixed sequence of steps, but involves interconnection and interaction among the different design components." (Maxwell 2005, 3)

![Interactive Model for Research Design](image)

*Figure 2.1. Interactive Model for Research Design (Maxwell 2005)*
Considering the broadness of our original intent – understanding how the interaction of stakeholders affected the actions and content of media products – and after drafting our research questions, Maxwell’s approach allowed us to find literature around the processes of media creation as business and create a background reading list (Gash 2000,10). During extensive literature review and brainstorming processes, we undertook a very specific set of actions, each of them allowed us to move forward by adjoining information to answer our research questions and validate our findings with robust data.

Actions ongoing throughout the entire research process on a continuous, uninterrupted basis.

1. Literature review: It happened from the very beginning of the research and helped to define the Research Question.
2. Brainstorming: Started later than the literature review it ended later as well since was crucial for results drafting and validation.

Time specific actions – performed to answer a specific sub-question.
3. Gathering data through interviews and surveys
4. Preliminary results and feedback
5. Validation

Each of these actions helped us to go through each of the research sub-questions (SQ). The Figure 2.2 presents the flow of the research by action and question answered.

Figure 2.2. Research Development Process. RQ: Research Question, SQ: Sub Questions. A: Actions (steps) performed
2.2 Research Development Process

2.2.1 Step 1. Literature Review

Literature review was important for the entire research and provided us with a more informed perspective of the results (Neuman 1997, 89). The aim of the literature review was to create links between the body of knowledge (SSD) and the model studied: Multi Stakeholder Platforms for Collaboration (MSPCs). For that purpose, literature on Strategic Sustainable Development and specialized publications on CSR and CR became the primary source of information on the industry’s concerns regarding sustainability and strategies different companies have been developing in order to meet the challenges of a society that increasingly demands more responsibility from media companies as businesses and not only as providers of information. A second type of publication, sustainability or CSR reports from the members of the Media CSR Forum, helped to build understanding about the case study and get more information for creating a statistical model that helped to validate some of our assumptions regarding the value MF provides and also supported the validation of the information gathered through interviews and surveys.

The research question and all the sub-questions were answered with the information retrieved through this step.

2.2.2 Step 2. Brainstorming

Defined as one of the most well-known tools for creative thinking and group process for problem solving (Isaksen 1998, 2), all the literature reviewed was widely discussed amongst the team members and copious brainstorming made possible to identify the relevant issues for the research and how to tackle them.

In general, before and after each interview, a debriefing session took place to comment on the key findings of the conversation and link them to the assumptions coming from the literature review or other interviews.

Brainstorming was also the most colorful path for summarizing our findings and move on to the next stages of the research, thus answering each of our three sub-questions.
2.2.3 Step 3. Interviews and Interactive Data Gathering

Although the documentation on CSR is vast, the specific cases of the media industry are not that widely spread if not through the companies' reports, criteria for accreditations, rewards and public. Hence, reviewing CSR reports became a crucial activity for sourcing information for validating the interviewees' input. “By virtue of its reciprocity and interaction, dialogue is taken as superior to the one-way comúniqüês of mass media and mass culture” (Peters 1999, 33) This statement holds true even when studying the companies that create the content of the mass media and how they communicate within each other in the context of an MSPC.

Sub-Questions 1 (future vision) and 2 (baseline analysis) were both answered through this step and provided the notions for drafting the elements for success to be validated through feedback sessions and peer reviews.

With the interviews and surveys it was possible to identify the barriers, opportunities, actual status and vision of our case and send a report with preliminary findings to our collaborators and receive feedback from them. It is also important to mention that social media channels were used as input for interviews rather than as literature, thus participation in blogs and follow up belongs to the action of interactive data gathering. The team participated in the discussion for CSR reporting in a recent debate taking place amongst our collaborators, and the responses to this blog post were also valuable in helping us answer our research questions.

For collecting evidence about the case study, we used 4 sources: documentation, archival records review, interviews and indirect participant observation (performed through surveys). The process not only included multiple sources of evidence that converged on the same set of facts and findings, but also allowed us to build up a database and find explicit links between the questions asked, data collected and conclusions drawn, which are important qualities for validating a case study (Yin 1994, 78)

The total population targeted was of 42 individuals and they were interviewed or responded a survey depending on their time availability, the breakdown by type of interaction is presented in section 3. Half of the sample is represented by the members of the Media CSR Forum and manager, a total of 21 entities (20 companies represented by 1 individual although not necessarily only one person participates in the forum events. After gathering the data and formulating a set of preliminary results, a
report to collaborators was created and feedback sessions happened for validation purposes. The final outcomes are the ones presented in section 3.

**Structuring the Questionnaires and Interviews**

**Overview**

- The average time for answering the 4 questions was 10 minutes.
- A fifth question, related to the right of remaining anonymous when reporting the results, was included.
- The only control question was the job title of the respondent.
- Five different sets of questionnaires were developed for the interviews and 2 different surveys (one per target group)
- Interviews lasted 45 and all were done through skype or phone call.
- The response rate was 40% of a sample of 42 representatives of the European media industry divided into two populations: the Media CSR Forum Members and the group denominated “Other Media Stakeholders” In both populations, respondents were given the option to remain anonymous and were invited to participate in the feedback sessions.

**Interviews and surveys to MF members.**

- Total sample, including manager: 21 people
- Interviews: 5
- Surveys online: 2 (both requested to remain as anonymous contributors)
- Because of privacy policies, we were not meant to have any direct contact with the members and the manager distributed our survey during the members’ meeting in March. Various members agreed to be personally interviewed declaring they found the subject very interesting and were willing to get to know more about it.
- Geographical distribution: United Kingdom
- Job description: All respondents belong to the directing/managerial boards of the CSR units of their companies. This does not necessarily imply direct involvement with the company’s management board but a high level on the hierarchical top-down structure.
- Feedback providers: 1. The Media CSR Forum manager. The MF members that collaborated in the interviews requested to have the information sent through the manager.
Other media stakeholders.
- Total sample: 21 people
- Interviews: 3
- Surveys online: 5 (three respondents requested to remain anonymous)
- E-mail questionnaires: 2
- Response rate: 47%. Having almost half of the population responding provides a significant relevance to the information such sample provide (Yin 1994,123) although our interpretation of these results is not presented in this section but as part of our discussion.
- Geographical distribution: Undetermined (Global. Non-UK sample)
- Job description: Most of respondents are mainly senior executives / advisors or freelancers, academics and active content producers.
- Feedback providers: 4.

More detailed information about the questionnaires’ structure is presented on Appendix A. Appendix B contains the description of the groups.

2.2.4 Step 4: Analysis of Preliminary Results and Feedback

A brief 5-page report with preliminary findings was sent to all the collaborators along a short 5-question evaluation for structuring their feedback around their understanding of the research. The report, though briefly explaining the FSSD and the research questions, was centered on the results and discussion points. Appendix E contains the structure of the report of results as well as the summary of the feedback received.

This step was crucial for consolidating the answers to SQ3 – recommendations that can be made for MSPCs - and subsequently elaborating the list of elements for success that were to be validated in order to answer our Research Question.
2.2.5 Step 5: Validation of Results

This is a research that investigates platforms for stakeholder interaction, the next action was to analyze all the data gathered and validate it so the results were understandable, unbiased and relevant (Pohl and Hirsh Hadorn 2007) to the Media Industry, media forum managers and experts on strategic sustainable development (SSD). The feedback sessions with the collaborators as well as reviewing a proper incorporation of the SSD elements to the final findings, were the backbone of the validation process. Input from our advisors and peers helped us to strengthen our confidence on the transparency and applicability of our results. As presented in the next section, this final step not only provided the conclusive answers to our SQ3 but made possible to identify similarities between findings, cluster them, and create the list of elements for success suggested for making MSPCs more instrumental towards sustainability, thus responding our Research Question. The list resulting of the brainstorming and feedback sessions provided 10 comprehensive, non-rival (meaning that they can happen simultaneously without constraining the realization of other activities) and reinforcing elements. We were not aiming for a specific number of elements but for a clear set of recommendations and it is important to mention that the resulting 10 elements do not follow any other particular rationale but those above enlisted.

2.3 Expected Outcomes

Unfortunately, there is little broad documentation on the media industry’s tactics towards sustainability challenges, except for simply mentioning the industry in various reports on corporate responsibility such as the one called “The Business Case for Corporate Responsibility” issued by the BITC in 2003. This may be due to the fact that ‘media industry’ is an enormously vast and complicated title. Most public documentation would have to be generated from media companies themselves, each with a unique operation style. Media companies are now producing more and more sustainability related materials, and more relevant CSR reports, yet it was a difficult topic to dig up from much further back in time.

Keeping in mind that media companies refer to sustainability using many labels, such as Corporate Responsibility and CSR, our next step was to identify “hot-spots” for our research outcomes. These are:
Find details such as how MSPC are compliant with the Sustainability Principles and also identify innovative ways for MSPCs to incorporate elements of strategic planning towards sustainability that could enhance the strategies of media companies’ current sustainability practices; hence, we would be able to come up with clear recommendations for MSPCs to be instrumental for backcasting within the Media Industry.

On this line, we also expect to find a way to provide guidance from a systems perspective of sustainable development so FSSD could be used both as tool within MSPCs and as a recommendation to media companies in their planning processes.

We also assumed that peer to peer conversations about challenges they share as an industry were regular practices and that the notion of “Multi-Stakeholder Platform for Collaboration” would be associated to these conversations. Therefore, both interviews and surveys include a question aiming to test the accuracy of this supposition.
3 Results

This section is divided in 4 parts; the first presents the methodological overview with the general findings of interviews and surveys. The second are the resulting 10 elements for MSPCs that we expected to develop as part of our research and knowledge about sustainability; part 3 corresponds to the findings of MSPCs’ current reality and the last results enlisted are those of our recommendations.

3.1 Results from Interviews and Surveys

As presented in the figure 2.2, the literature review, interviews and surveys were one of the main sources of information. Two factors made the interactive data gathering process thorough and sound: having a 9-year old forum that is developing and gaining importance among companies in the industry such as the Media CSR Forum and the collaboration of its members, and the participation of experts in one or various activities of the Media Industry across the world. Thanks to the literature review, we identified other media forums, such as the annual Deutsche Welle Global Media Forum (DWGMF) conference in Germany, yet none coincided with our understanding of MSPCs as tools for collaboration as much as our case study. Nonetheless, these other forums, especially the DWGMF gave us a good insight to identify strengths and weaknesses of our case study and this was important for the elaboration of some outcomes.

3.2 Elements for Success

Our Sub-question 1, What do future MSPCs look like as tools for collaboration to help the media industry move closer to sustainability? prompted us to use our research to identify a set of 10 Elements from which MSPCs members can backcast as part of their planning for strategic sustainable development. These tips were recognized to serve as valuable and constructive elements to refer to when building effective and resolute MSPCs in the media industry. They are intended for the European or North American media sectors, due to the area of research.
10 Elements for Successful Development of MSPCs in the Media Industry:

1. Comply with the Sustainability Principles. Backcasting from principles is a systematic planning process that provides straight-forward vision of a successful outcome that depicts a sustainable society where the activities of the individuals and organizations do not contribute to systematic violations of the Sustainability Principles as presented in figure 1.1. Our study on MSPCs showed the following result regarding this element for success:

2. Model the forum as a tool for empowerment and inspiration. Either for the CSR unit/team in a specific media company or a freshman in the team, MSPCs offer strength in numbers, accumulated wisdom, and has means to support new teams to get connected with the entire company network.

"We enjoy whenever the members have a new person starting in the CR team, they would normally call us to have a chat with the person, to give a better overview of the sector as a whole then, working as an introductory agent, a sort of welcome committee"

PhD. Christian Toennesen. MF manager

During his interview, Hart mentioned that CR works for media as any other good story. He states simply that “everyone looks around the world for best practices, it is useful to see what others are doing, and some things work and others do not, it doesn't matter where it is: a good idea is a good idea, doesn't matter where it comes from.” It is along this notion that some media companies can find the value of platforms like MF, because, also in Hart’s words, the “Media CSR Forum brings people together and initiates the conversation, what each individual or company makes out of it is completely up to them.”

3. Host open conversations in real spaces. MSPCs are spaces of trust amongst stakeholders of the media industry where participants freely and openly share thoughts and concerns for knowledge sharing on behalf of the company they represent. Thus promoting accountability to each other. All respondents mentioned interpersonal communication fosters genuine commitment.
The results depicted by this principle make MSPCs a great opportunity to:

- enable good for peer-to-peer dialoguing and promote face-to-face interpersonal interaction.
- encourage external stakeholder interaction and information sharing. Dialogues are open and inclusive to non-media parties, including NGOs, academics, government and representatives of other industries interested on interacting with media stakeholders.

“It's a new profession, a new management discipline. It is appropriate and right for companies to collaborate and share ideas. You don't share everything, but the MF brings companies together to share learning and explore commonalities to explore as industry and helps to developing best practices.”

Yogesh Chauhan, BBC's Chief Adviser on Corporate Responsibility & Environment

"We try to get together the most important people in the area, try to make an interesting mix of people who normally don't meet, scientists NGO's, international organizations, AND media on the topic of Climate Change, why doesn't anybody do anything about CC and how are the media involved in this problematic area?"

Wilfried Solbach. Deutsche Welle Global Media Forum. Project Manager

4. Keep it glocal: Address global challenges locally. Although unsustainable living is a global concern, MSPCs get people talking about the reality their companies face in a particular, local context.

“There is a very simple principle here. The demand for the forum, the demand for the network, must come from the companies. So if you want to put together a NGO forum, the demand must come from the NGO sector. If you want to put together an industry forum, the demand for this forum must come from the industry. It is not something you can sell to them. This is exactly what happened with the Media CSR Forum. We are an industry-led forum. [...] The whole idea of the forum is that it reflects member-based priorities. In Europe or US, it will be very different from the UK. “

PhD. Christian Toennesen. MF manager

5. Manage diversity strategically. In order to manage a diverse group of people who have different positions and relevance to the industry is difficult unless it is directed and managed strategically. Anticipating the diverse opinions and momentum that can come from sharing ideas and information, and having a success vision ahead of time will help to make the best out of the time the group spends together. To make this happen MSPCs organizers must be aware that:
• inclusive planning is essential
• relevance of topics need to be all-inclusive and planned for by backcasting from this principle
• introducing of new stakeholders to the conversation on a continuous basis is important

Good opportunities for the diversity of MSPCs can be found in introducing more stakeholders to the forum discussion and doing it through the means these stakeholders use, in other words, give the audience its righteous place and the sustainability agenda will remain competitive (Rogers and Dearing 2000, 269).

Figure 3.1 shows how diversity has an impact on the way agendas are set and the relation that the media agenda has with the public and the policy makers, being aware of these relations is one of the elements that make MSPCs a tool for understanding relations within the different actors in society from the perspective of the Media Industry and the role it plays.

Figure 3.1. Rogers and Dearing agenda setting model (Rogers 2000)
6. **Enable a platform for raising awareness about sustainability.** MSPCs help to establish a clear current reality assessment with forum members about sustainability challenges for the media industry, and also global sustainability challenges. During his interview, Marks voiced that many audience-driven initiatives are overlooked by traditional media makers, and how broadcasters are using unfashionable methods of delivery and the most of money comes from distribution. So, broadcasters, in their role of public servants, need to find ways in which they can build conversations about sustainability with society.

7. **Promote a robust forum purpose.** This means that more than just “passing around the ball”, participating media companies will gain understanding, insight and willingness to engage in something meaningful as industry, or “scoring” together, if using the football-team analogy. The MF demonstrates action and commitment through how dialogue can trigger action and commitment, such as is the case with media literacy, an initiative from the members that MF has been developing during the last three years.

8. **Enable spaces for co-creation.** Trust is key for having an open, transparent and genuine conversation. Beyond that, the intent of a tool for collaboration is to generate opportunities for peers to work together towards a common goal. For this to happen, it is important MSPCs remain a neutral host for optimal collaboration and trust, title the forum neutrally. Our case study has Acona, a non-media organization, hosting the activities of the forum, however, this principle does not imply it is compulsory to have a non-media party as host, but that the MSPC is free of “branding” such as naming it with the name of one of the members (e.g. “Channel XY Media Forum”). MSPCs are the space where a sample group of the local media sector takes on an active role behind the scenes and talk. They collaborate, leading to potential creation of headlines, yet also internal operations strategies, changes and ideas, aiming for tangible results. Conversations happen in a round-table space and the meeting is hosted in a friendly atmosphere. What MF manager, Dr. Toennesen mentioned as the reason of success behind MF’s initiatives is that the forum “is not trying to sell anything, all the research is PUBLISHED and our relation is for discussion, not pitching, it’s genuinely a platform for collaboration and nothing else.”
9. Enable dynamic and transparent channels for sustainability reporting. Since annual ‘CSR/Sustainability’ reports are the tool that media companies have in common for communicating their efforts towards sustainability to their stakeholders and customers, it is important that MSPCs promote discussion on better ways to report and communicate on how the media companies can truly engage their audiences. Our recommendations section elaborates more on the opportunities MSPCs can explore for complying with this principle.

“CSR reports can never catch up with the speed the media works. The media industry’s CSR efforts should be communicated in a more interactive and continuous way than a yearly report.”

Fabian Pattberg. Sustainability/CSR Reports Expert.

10. Design self-sustaining MSPC models. MSPCs are not organizations that have an “official” status thus their operations must be carefully designed to enable an adequate financial management and proper resources’ allocation (funds, human, time). It is important to organize an MSPC which is self-sustaining, that is, design a platform model that has balanced stocks and flows of money, time and dedication by organizers. MSPCs need to be sustainable and proportionate.

3.3 MSPCs Here and Now – The Baseline Analysis

The second sub-question, what are the current barriers and opportunities that affect the use of MSPCs as tools to support the Media Industry towards sustainability? aimed to provide a clear understanding of what the current strengths and weaknesses of MSPCs are and allowed us to present a set of opportunities and obstacles MSPCs are facing.

3.3.1 Existing Opportunities

Current Level of Compliance with the Sustainability Principles. Our research does not demonstrate any significant violations of the SPs, when considering our case study, and the concepts of MSPCs in general. MSPCs are ideally not wasteful (and even less so than many ‘green’ summits) and depend on few resources to function. This being said, we identify their compliance with the sustainability principles as an enriching opportunity
for these tools to be implemented, as their overall effect is contributing to sustainability at the same time as being resource-friendly.

Our assessment showed that as local forums they ideally will not carry large carbon footprints to gather individuals for collaboration. However, we identified potential areas of impact from the model employed by the Media CSR Forum in London since they meet quarterly, they depend on space and speaker availability, fees, office materials, urban transportation, amidst other logistical arrangements. Other elements of risk for MSPCs could be presented as mere extravagance in the organization of the meetings. Currently, the resource consumption is small, yet we are concerned that material use, unless paid attention to, could be increased unnecessarily.

Analyzed in terms of compliance with the Sustainability Principles, the areas of possible impact are here:

- Environmental Principles (I-III): common administrative concerns such as resource usage, energy, and carbon footprint. Creating a forum with take-away material such as pens or brochures for a non-calculated number of participants could lead to waste of resources. Catering services also represent a potential source of waste.

“"We meet here four times a year, have lunch, people mingle and discuss what's happened since last meeting [...] we attend presentations and debate afterwards [...] members present the work going on to create media-sector supplement, key obstacles and so on [...]”

PhD. Christian Toennesen. MF manager

“"Most media companies seem to be very self-centered and have their own view of reality. As long as there is no openness coming from the inside of each of them, changes are not so feasible.

A sustainable media industry would be that which has the integrity of the people as top priority. This is the absence of exaggerations, dramatization, sensationalism and all the things they avail these days to make more money.”

Survey Respondent

- Social Principle (IV): Relevance of topics for members of the MSPC could lead to exclusion, or biasing the content towards a specific set of interests other than the mutual perspective of the participants. Potential use of the MSPC in ways that hinder society’s knowledge about media CSR practices.
These areas of possible impact are general observations, and could vary from forum to forum, as well as change throughout time according to the habits of a particular forum. We did not analyze the impacts of the particular forum activities of our case study, but rather focused on use of resources as an area of general concern for long-term forum planning.

*Deliver Compelling Services of Sharing and Collaboration.* Through dialogues and generating shared understanding there is an opportunity for engaging the media community beyond their mere business operations and generate true collaborative schemes. Catherine Puiseux, from the French media company TF1 and the newest member of MF explains their involvement with MF as the logical next step for sustainability “since there are few media players engaged in CSR in France, we really need to expand our views and look to those that rating agencies refer to as ‘best in class’ in the industry […] The Media CSR Forum helped us finding a way to connect when we knocked on their door. Now we are sharing with the UK’s media companies and we have come to take some steps together […] we exchanged our approaches with the BBC to be certain to develop tools that are not too different from one side of channel and another”.

*Existing Momentum of the Case Study.* The Media CSR Forum in London represents a compelling opportunity, and leads other industries by example in the ways that it is managed, structure and executed. The more we talked with the members of the MF and compared their views of collaboration with other members of the industry, the clearer the answer about the need of starting by looking for neutral spaces where the business representatives can talk about “social and environmental concerns” (C. Falcone) and then move into more structured settings for having these conversations.

*Incorporating Diverse Range of Tools and Expertise into Forum Meetings.* MSPCs offer the possibility of exploring diverse tools for reporting their activities, showing the opportunity for incorporating guidelines such as those from the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) for the media industry, thus improving their connection with the public they provide services for. Designing and using current tools such as the “Mapping the landscape” survey and topics under debate as steppingstones for their envisioning and planning activities. MSPCs are a tool for collaboration through generation of information.
Collaboration on Joint Projects. Although the only ongoing project the Media CSR Forum has is the Media Literacy one, the way it has been developed presents the enormous potential for joint projects MSPCs offer.

“Who will be able to come up with the proper scheme that will set the terms for the bargain struck between company and society needs?”

Jo Confino. Executive Editor and Head of Sustainable Development for Guardian News and Media

Media’s Time Advantage. MSPCs in the media industry can lead to cutting-edge brainstorming because media forums intrinsically must keep up with the times in order to be effective. When a group of people who are all ‘in the know’ of current headlines and issues, on a local or global level, join to talk, there is amazing potential in waves being created that effect the community and developing projects that anticipate fleeting headlines and plan for the larger picture. In his newest blog post about “How companies can move beyond CSR to embed sustainability into their core operations”, Jo Confino of the Guardian Media Group remarks “how far away it now seems when companies, at least those in the public eye, could think only about their bottom line with a few pennies thrown at community projects to show they care. Corporations are having to grapple with an ever-growing list of key issues that cover the three pillars of sustainability – social, environmental and economic (Confino, & Drummond, April 2010).

“It’s time to reinvent CSR. In fact, it’s time to reinvent business strategy. In the last two years, companies have been transforming. Now, recession is being replaced by reinvention. The shapes have been unclear. But today the fog is lifting and a new shape is beginning to emerge. The new shape has a name. It is sustainable business. A sustainable business acts to achieve short, medium and long term success”

John Drummond, CE of Corporate Cultures. At the Guardian’s Sustainability Blog. April 2010

The fact that Jo Confino is part of the Media CSR Forum steering committee with Acona, and participates in forum meetings, sharing best practices, and encouraging other media companies to reinvent their CSR into Sustainable Business Practices, displays what potential forums can have in positive ripple-effects across an industry.
3.3.2 Current Obstacles of MSPCs

We identified some external barriers that emerged from within media companies that deeply impact the use of MSPCs. These external barriers include inconsistent vision of a sustainable media company and the lack of a systemic approach, of connection between issues, even more, lack of a common language for measuring progress amongst companies. Below we outline some general and practical barriers that MSPCs face as tools for collaboration in the media industry.

Lack of Clear Forum Purpose and Vision. To be a worthwhile space for collaboration, MSPCs must make sure their purpose is clear to the members and stakeholders. This obstacle is directly influenced by external members’ activity when it comes to sustainable development. Currently there is a fragmented understanding and approach to sustainable development, as well as plenty of ‘sustainability terminology’ discrepancies amongst companies. The review of Media CSR Forum’s 20 company members’ CSR annual reports demonstrated:

- Popular emphasis on ‘charity’ work as sustainability measures is mixed with environmental activities. Some, like United Business Media 2008 report include a list of the organizations they support and activities they sponsored whereas others just list the NGO’s they have alliances with. The Media Report 2009 of IPC makes a distinction between CSR and “Environmental sustainability”, other reports do not even have a section for their environmental or community activities at all.
- At the end of the day what the companies are reporting are sustainability and the terms are ecological issues vs social issues. Concerns of employee well-being are mixed with donations to NGOs and disclosure of information to auditors. (Channel 4 2008 “Report to the Members” is a great example of this.) Some companies decided to publish their CSR reports as a chapter of their regular reports to shareholders. This practice is not recommended if the company lacks of a clear and long-standing strategy (Pattberg 2010). In our analysis of reports, we found out that those ranked as “more complete” in terms of clarity and quality of content were published by the “most experienced” members (e.g.: the founders of MF) whereas those reports that scored poorly were those that contained some information about the company’s CSR practices as part of their financial report to shareholders.
- There is little connection between attending the forum meetings and having an understanding of the overall sustainability challenges for the
industry. Sometimes companies were not represented in MF due to shortcomings such as having only one person in the department.

This situation results in a disjointed approach to sustainability. An example is that the activities of the Media CSR Forum can sometimes be considered “reactive” since they focus on one CSR issue at a time without a distant aspiration to aim for as a group. This happens mainly because the forum hosts representatives from all types of media businesses. Mr. Chahuan commented it would be helpful to break discussions into groups per sector, for example, radio people talking to radio people, so conversations would become more in-depth and meaningful. Current MSPCs in the media industry do not have a ‘sustainable’ vision of success.

Based on the way that reports present their memberships and affiliations enlisted along indexes and awards, companies membership of MSPCs is sometimes presented as a PR strategy, rather than having a genuine commitment to change as an industry, they are arranged out of demand from the companies for advice.

“The main weakness of the Media CSR Forum is that it's trying to cover too many paths and sectors, TV, magazines, websites, newspapers, advertising companies, etc. It is very difficult to really focus attention and It's difficult to get consensus on projects.”

Jo Confino, Executive Editor and Head of Sustainable Development for Guardian News and Media

Unlike DWGM, that aims to become a “must go” conference for all media stakeholders, the case study, MF, lacks a concrete long-term vision for the forum. On the other hand, when we asked the manager of Deutsche Welle Global Media Forum about his vision of how the forum could become a ‘must go’ conference, he answered jokingly that he doesn’t have a recipe, if he had one, he would be very rich.

This situation represents a risk for long-term incentive because media companies are investing their time and resources into something somewhat ambivalent, without conviction of a clear purpose for the meetings. Though shared may get lost if participants can’t justify their attendance with a vision of what specific future benefits for the company come from attending the forum meetings. Founder and steering committee member Jo Confino expressed feeling “ambivalent” when it comes to the direction of the Media CSR Forum due to the reasons outline in his quote above.
A more robust forum purpose, or, raison d’être, to unify the forum members in a joined meaningful experience could result in less fragmentation of ideas and more tangible benefits for company members.

“(I am) not familiar with (the MF’s) objectives, they’ve been experimenting with styles of meetings to keep the dynamics refined and improving but there’s not a moment of being wrong/right or that changes work better or worse… it is just a dynamic that helps the network mature with time”

Yogesh Chauhan, BBC’s Chief Adviser on Corporate Responsibility & Environment and founder of the Media CSR Forum. Former member of the Steering Committee

No Progress Indicators to Measure MSPCs Success Within the Media Companies. There are not many studies available about the impact of media industry activities in the same sense of measures for environmental impact of industrial activities. The indicators are therefore difficult to identify and manipulate. The Global Reporting Initiative that is launching the set of indicators for the Media Industry in 2010 will soon address this shortcoming. Catherine Puiseux pointed out: “Once issues are identified, we must imagine the actions and indicators, and they have meaning only if they measure progress and one day allow comparability. It also needs to be worked out together one day and then normalized. The media industry has not yet found a better way other than companies talking about their CSR efforts, not even within themselves.”

“This internal situation has a sound effect to the outside as we could see with the report review. An MF debate indicated companies are fragmented in communicating their understanding of social demands and their actions to bridge these gaps. There are no common indicators to measure if the objectives are being met and it also provides wide disarray in what readers

Jo Confino in The Guardian Sustainability Blog, 2010
can expect from a CSR report. The Media Industry’s quick pace results in yearly reports being outdated and MSPCs content may present the same situation if not having a direction to pursue. This lack of indicators is connected to the absence of a vision for the forum’s success. This issue is addressed in the discussions’ section.

“To expect to set the strategy for these companies is a rather naïve vision or naïve idea. Setting the strategy for the companies happens within the companies. It doesn’t happen in the forum. A forum can only provide inspiration and insight to other stakeholders’ thinking. It’s not a forum for setting the strategy.”

*PhD. Christian Toennesen, MF manager*

**Disproportionate Relevance of Topics Among Forum Members.** The existing variety of levels of experience amongst representatives and participants of the forum was brought up a few times during interviews, and seems to be a major area of discrepancy and one of the primary inhibitors of idea-spreading. MF manager Dr. Toennesen mentioned that representatives are from different media companies at various levels of CSR and sustainability experience, and work in different departments. Ensuring that forum topics are relevant to all members is one of the biggest challenges that the MF currently faces.

Our findings revealed that the relevance of topics is extremely important because of forum group diversity. With members from discrepant working positions and representing varying sector categories (as mentioned, such as radio, television, magazines, newspapers, etc) and different departments within these companies (CSR, Social Communications, Environmental Issues, etc) a fluid group dynamic is difficult to achieve. The strategy towards addressing their sustainability issues as reported in the company’s CR reports have little to do with the subjects discussed at MSPCs. As Yoguesh Chahuan, Chief Adviser Corporate Responsibility at the BBC mentioned, the forum is partly for sharing content of the CSR reports and contribute useful bits of a company’s strategy, but not to draft other member’s strategies. Even more, depending on the speaker and issue of a particular meeting, different people from the company will attend. Jo Confino, from the Guardian, seconded this notion. Since all companies are at different levels of compliance with the sustainability principles, and most companies are on a different page of the landscape of CSR for the industry, the discussion topics must remain very general to be relevant for all members.
Funding and Resources. Although the membership fee helps to maintain the activities of the forum going, specific projects, such as the media literacy one, develop very slowly. Jo Confino from the Guardian introduced the Media Literacy project, which has been under development for three years since there is very little money invested in it. Mr. Chahuan indicated that MF is not the only media forum and that there is a small degree of competition, as companies choose which forum to join as members. But as an industry-led initiative, MF should be able to surpass this “competition” once having a more tangible financial ROI. Other MSPCs, such as the DWGMF have funding as part of their goals, thus it is easier for them to identify and quantify sources. Their purpose, however, is not becoming a profitable entity but since they depend on the budget from the parent company, the Deutsche Welle, they simply aim for their expenses to break even.

Uneven Experience and Expertise Amongst MSPCs Members. This obstacle not only staggers the depth of discussions and makes MSPCs topics reach the peril of irrelevance but stagnates possibilities of developing joint projects and keeping MSPCs as a tool for collaboration based on meaningful conversations and co-creative efforts. This situation is related to the structure of the companies. Organizational (corporate structure) blocks the internalization of the CR commitments and messages, making sustainability efforts the result of what is called a “headless initiative” because of CR departments may be “one man show” as defined like this by various collaborators. In other words, many media companies still have only one or two people in their CSR departments, and if this person fails to attend the meetings or is does not transmit the relevance of the meeting outcomes and possible new CSR and sustainability strategies to the company’s management board and/or the rest of the organization, the company may lack means to develop a long term, robust and strategic approach to sustainability that is aligned with the rest of the sector’s best practices and it will be reflected in their participation in MSPCs.

“Media CSR Forum doesn't deal with the core business in media. CSR managers, who attend the forum in most cases, are just capable of talking but not (always) having any power (to make) changes.”

Jo Confino, Executive Editor and Head of Sustainable Development for Guardian News and Media
Traditional Media Hype can Lead to Irrelevance of Meetings. Our interviews revealed it is important to maintain topic relevance in the meetings, follow the headlines’ command to a certain extent, and constantly spruce-up the workings and agendas of forum meetings in order to keep such a diverse group interested and enthused. The “media hype” phenomenon is another challenge for the usage of MSPCs in the media industry, as the climate is relentlessly changing. “Losing momentum” is one of the risks of media dynamics, as Confino and Solbach mentioned in their interviews, the forum has to keep itself relevant and at the same speed the media industry moves and calls for a constant “headline topic” to maintain the interest of all involved parties. The industry needs to re-establish and reaffirm the effect. Some interviewees’ main concern (and ours) is implied in the question: How long are the MSPCs organizers going to be able to keep the pace?

3.4 Recommendations for MSPCs

Based on our research findings, the third sub-question “What recommendations can be made for MSPCs within the media industry to help move society towards sustainability?” is answered in two types of recommendations: strategic and operational. Both of them are explained below.

3.4.1 Strategic Recommendations for Building a Successful MSPC

For planning MSPCs strategically, forum organizers should keep the larger context of sustainable development in mind and could backcast from the 10 Elements of Success for MSPCs in the Media Industry (section 3.2). The following recommendations are specific and designed to help forum managers make precise decisions that comply with these Principles of Success.

Opportunities for Applying the FSSD in the Planning Processes of Forums. As Marks mentioned during his interview, for the media industry the challenge these days “Is not about content, is about context” and this how MSPC, with the support of the FSSD can not only instrument the efforts of
the media industry to become responsible corporate citizens but help them to strategically move towards sustainability. It is clear MSPCs are not meant to create an overarching, unique vision for the entire industry, however, creating a vision of successful MSPCs based-on compliance with the 10 Elements for Success of MSPCs outlined in section 3.2 is possible by:

- Using strategic guidelines with 3 prioritization action questions: is this action making an adequate use of resources for the forum? will it be a step in the direction towards success? (or is it irrelevant to the success of the forum?) is it a flexible stepping stone that can keep up with the pace of media headlines?

- Taking the right actions towards success, inviting contributors, WWF, Goldman Sachs, Intellect UK and many other collaborators, all of them providers of information, tools and eagerness to collaborate with the industry. Strategic sustainability requires patience, long term planning, comprehensive, robust indicators, characteristics that at first glance do not represent the dynamic and pace of the media industry, the media stakeholders are fully aware of this situation and one of the objectives of their collaborative efforts is to keep sustainability relevant in their agendas by inviting members of other non-media related organizations, motivate each other through practices’ sharing and even by pulling the strings of competition.

- Analyzing and implementing tools that are instrumental for enhancing forum meetings and provide variety and relevance to the content, such as presenting the FSSD and its applicability as a planning tool to help media companies with their internal visioning, operations, and backcasting from SPs towards success (in this case, sustainability for the particular company) Visioning in this case is useful because it is helpful in reminding us that, as humans, we have the talent and skills to co-create a bright future for societies to come (Steffan, 2010)

- Empowering conversations can have remarkable results, and MSPCs, as well as being best-practice sharing, industry-specific forums, could also be spaces for energetic debates and discussions about the higher purposes they deal with.
3.4.2 Operational Recommendations

The internal mechanisms of MSPCs are important for a smoothly-running forum. We think about this sort of strategic forum maintenance with a ‘gardener’ metaphor in mind. ‘Landscaping’ media MSPCs will have lots to do with knowing what to conserve (like a gardener knowing how to nurture soil), and what to ‘weed-out’. The clear vision of a gardener is to maintain a healthy, robust, colorful and thriving garden. Managing the chemistry in forums for fostering meaningful discussions is not dissimilar to maintaining a healthy garden. Many variables are at stake which need careful attending to, such as water, sunlight, soil nutrients, and so on. ‘Gardeners’ of forums focus on “eliminating or reducing the obstacles to growth of new initiatives…they focus on the system, gain an understanding of the organizational functions, culture and institutional structure and are able to mitigate the constraints to change” (Senge, 1998).

Landscaping for a forum model such as MF could mean developing new incentives for membership as times quickly change, adapting subject matter to fickle media headlines, and continuing to build and strengthen stakeholder relationships with non-media organizations. In the case of interactive forums with media companies, “a climate of constant renewal is essential” (Robèrt et al 2007, 199). The recommendations for MSPCs to be compared to a beautiful, well taken care of garden are divided in two categories: Forum Structure and Managerial Structure.

Recommendations for the Forum Structure.

- Reinvigorate regularly. MSPCs such as Media CSR Forum web together very busy individuals whom work in a quick-paced, cutting edge and volatile industry. Casual interpersonal communication (i.e. via telephone and face-to-face) is crucial for this dynamic and it is a ‘rule of thumb’ for MF, according to the manager, and a great test of the loyalty and commitment of members. Maintaining this relaxed and comfortable rapport is important to the effectiveness of MSPCs atmosphere, and we believe, can be instrumental in stimulating creativity in a non-critical or judgmental environment of peers in a common sector.

- Keep the forum “marketing” free. Since they are an industry-led initiative, members are connected in various ways. Considering the reach of media networks, contacting experts to participate in the meetings and debates is one of the main strengths of these forums.
Marketing is not needed for a healthy forum, as its purpose as a collaboration tool is intended for sustainable development of the media industry and not for profit. Because of the striking capacity of MSPCs as networking tools, allocating the resources into promotion of the forum is an action that results in the violation of the MSPCs principles.

“It's always useful to know what others are doing. If other companies are doing more, then we want to do more, too.”

*Nick Hart, Head of Corporate Social Responsibility at Time Warner International.*

- Encourage speakers to contribute “Brainprint.” MF coined the term “brainprint” from their collaborator WWF and uses it to define a message that remains ‘imprinted on the brain’ of the audience after the communication channel closes. During the feedback session, MF manager mentioned we should not forget great conversations also happen after the meetings and an opportunity for inspiration and insight is that the most relevant issues prevail as part of the “brainprint” of the different forum members and they tend to prioritize the issues according to what they remember. Speakers provide a certain amount of “brainprint” is an important element of something that forum members can “take away” without generating any potential waste of material since nothing but a message is necessary. Because, presently, without accurate success indicators of the effectiveness of MSPC meetings, there is no way to measure what members take from forum meetings and contribute to their companies.

**Recommendations for the Managerial Structure:**

Intended to maintain the diversity and inclusiveness of MSPC models and structures, our findings on the current practices of our case study provided great insight as how a flexible structure can help to the healthy growth of an MSPC.

- Maintain a Rotating Steering Team. Forum leadership should be all-inclusive and rotating. It helps to keep the agenda updated and relevant for all businesses in the industry. As a self-organized and interdependent scheme, the management and activities of the forum are coordinated by a secretariat (personnel from the hosting, non-media, neutral organization) and 5 representatives from each company. In the MF, this “steering group” changes on a yearly basis and gives opportunity to all members to be pat of it and take a role of higher
responsibility than just being a member. There is also an overlap in membership so they never have a whole new committee coming-in, you would never have "just broadcasters", or "just retailed committee", since they try to represent the variety of businesses within the industry. The steering group meets on a quarterly basis separately from the forum, usually a couple of weeks before the regular meetings, so that they can then move forward to present input, call in speakers, show results from previous discussions and generate engagement.

- Request a Membership Fee. One of the key findings from the case study was the effectiveness of membership recognition. Unlike the settings that are conferences open for speakers to present and host dialogue, MSPCs, as MF manager denoted “offer an incredible good value for money and it is a major success factor, as a group these companies could do so much more than they could do individually, it is a vehicle for staying up to date with the latest thinking, conferences are usually very expensive to attend, and it costs them less to be members of the forum and have access to the same speakers in a closer –less noisy– environment”. Membership happened to be one of the most divergent aspects between the case study and the other forums observed and the results appoint that close membership schemes enables better track of conversations and commitments made. This does not imply that conferences and open setting lack of merit, simply that they have more obstacles to overcome when it comes to issues of follow up and measurement as well as compliance with the MSPCs principles.

- Publish an annual report of the MSPC activities. Our case study, the Media CSR Forum demonstrated that this practice of accountability and transparency is crucial for maintaining the trust among participants as well as being a very useful tool that can be used for networking purposes, information sharing or simply tracking how the membership fees are spent.
4 Discussion

Our results provided us with a myriad of opportunities and challenges that MSPCs overcome, are facing or are very likely to encounter as they develop. In this section we intend to elaborate further on the recommendations suggested, share the reflections we had throughout the process and the results achieved as well as present how our expectations were met (or not).

The research provided us with robust evidence about the current state of MSPCs and has honed our understanding of the opportunities for strategic planning towards sustainability these tools for collaboration represent so we could elaborate a set of comprehensive recommendations for MSPCs within media companies.

4.1 Opportunities for MSPCs in the Media Industry

We see enormous opportunity in media stakeholders collaborating towards sustainability using tools for collaboration such as MSPCs. The interest our research prompted from the MF members is an example of the potential for this tool for collaboration, the observation was made by the MF manager who declared the average response rate for MF surveys was of 20% whereas our research not only had 30% of responses but members expressed their interest on taking active part of the research and being interviewed personally.

Models vary throughout the industry, and most are still in development. Nevertheless, new initiatives setting the stage for the rest of the industry can result in participating companies having a competitive advantage, among other advantages, in eliminating the obsession with ownership and collaborating towards a higher purpose. Based on our recommendations, below we outline some key opportunities for MSPCs in the media sector.
4.1.1 Discussing Elements for Success

Visioning for Backcasting from Elements for Success. Since MSPCs are knowledge-sharing spaces, they can be useful for opening the conversation and sharing of tools and ideas, but it would be beyond a forum’s scope to be used for crafting one single vision for the industry. Also, as demonstrated by our research, MSPCs have the opportunity to develop based on elements of success, and more strategically towards sustainability to maximize their potential as nodes or hubs that connect several companies’ visions. These elements can be used by any organization to backcast from and build a media forum, even if independently from the unique vision of the company. Complying with the Sustainability Principles is the milestone of our suggested elements for success, thus the one element that provides the strongest, scientifically accepted direction towards sustainability.

“Common challenges, common actions” was a notion we were expecting to show true through our research, though, it is everything but simple when it comes to get members of the media industry together. Considering our objective to analyze the ways MSPCs can be instrumental in the efforts of the media industry to achieve compliance with sustainability; our results not only provided us with enough confidence to confirm that MSPCs are a good tool to support the media industry but certainly fall short of being the ‘be all and end all’ of CSR and sustainability tactics for media companies. We do however, find that MSPCs such as the MF in London are useful tools to develop sustainability visions for the individual media companies who attend forum meetings and provide an excellent opportunity for companies to get to know about the possibilities strategic planning towards sustainability can bring to their organizations.

The Glocal Approach – Think Global, Act Local. As mentioned in section 3.3.1, a significant success element of MSPCs is their potential to discuss global challenges from a local perspective. In the case of the Media CSR Forum, the issues that the “Mapping the landscape” survey identified belong to the reality that media industry faces globally; however, the forum discussions around these issues happen on the UK-European level. MSPCs, as interpersonal platforms, must be local and thus generate ideas that will manifest in the local community. To replicate local models in another country could be detrimental to the smooth running of that model - and even forced. Forum model designs develop around local conditions, problems, realities, and according to group dynamics. Each MSPC will
ideally be tightly networked and connected with the realities of the local community, so that information sharing from inside the forum walls, to dissemination into the community, is relevant, reliable and accurate.

Promotion of Sustainability. Consistently demonstrated across all interviews, surveys and literature, and even in the history of CSR and the media, was how social pressure activated the evolution from media corporations as solely profit makers into conscious businesses and responsible corporate citizens. MSPCs promote meaningful collaboration, as they are self-organized, diverse and interdependent.

4.1.2 Guidance for Using MSPCs

Cross-Pollinate Key Ideas from the Forum Discussions As informal discussion forums, MSPCs need not incorporate strict guidelines and strategies to flourish as meaningful helpers with sustainability and CSR practices for media companies. The strategy, as we mentioned, needs to develop within the media company themselves, in the specific ways that are entirely relevant to the individual company. This does not mean, however, that MSPCs cannot serve as energizing spaces to brainstorm and develop ideas for internal business strategies. This is why we believe that generating methods to host a meaningful conversation and cross-pollinate the forum ideas amongst colleagues after the meetings could be a worthwhile recommendation.

What good are meetings if one person shows up and leaves without reporting their experience to his/her company? As we have seen with MF, plenty of interesting topics and stakeholder organizations participate in the company. This could be a key part of ‘strategy’, a good investment, and a key method of growth for the forum. Enabling the cross-pollination of key ideas maximizes the opportunities for applying the FSSD, the introduction of more stakeholders to the debate and creation of brainprints as identified in results.

Reinvigorating Forum Structures. There is opportunity in introducing more stakeholders into forum debates for educational reasons, which will help keep sustainability agendas of media companies edgy and capable of informing the public from a fundamental shared point of view. Implementing more education and learning conversations into MSPCs will be useful in a few ways. It could:
• Help bring new ideas and latest news of sustainability to light
• Promote sustainability reporting
• Align the diverse views about sustainability that MF is currently dealing with amongst diverse members
• Foster interpersonal conversation and brainstorming about new incentives for all media companies
• Help elevate companies who are less active in sustainability efforts to the level of more active companies.

Where MF in London is concerned, Acona proves useful as a local neutral party in providing the resources, support and channel for information flow between media company representatives that would not have been there without this platform. As presented in our results, the local, almost organic nature of MSPCs in the quick-paced media industry requires flexibility, and does not necessarily need a blueprint design. These aspects, crucial for the Principles of Success make possible to keep the MSPCs attuned with the pace of the Media Industry without the need of “catching up” and avoiding the risks of lagging behind the headlines.

The baseline analysis resulting of the analysis of reports showed that society believes most of media stakeholder interaction is about content making and the impact on society relies solely in the quality of the products consumed, this premise made us realize how unusual MSPCs appear to be because to us it seems their implications are not yet appreciated by the consumers and collaborators of the industry, even for the members of the forums, though we believe that in the long run, the outcomes of the MSPCs discussions will reveal themselves in the way content will be made, therefore it is important for existing MSPCs to ensure their dynamics comply with the Principles for Success.

*Continue the Debate on Sustainability Reporting.* Nowadays, the most “developed” approaches to connect the media industry with society beyond a customer-supplier relationship, is represented by the sustainability reports media companies publish on a yearly basis. It is interesting that these reports are an issue of debate for the media stakeholders because companies struggle to effectively communicate their sustainability activities to the readers and, considering that the core of the media business is to communicate, this represents a serious issue that members of MF have been debating about over the last months.
Through our research, we found out that the problem is a disconnect that exists between the readers and the media company's storytelling. The reports are missing a space for readers to continue a relevant conversation with the media company. For today's readers, it would be much more stimulating to have an interactive dialogue with a media company about their CSR efforts than to read through pages of contrived gloating. Some reports merely list-off awards and recognitions and contain no internal company strategies, indicators or even definitions that may help the reader understand how the company's business strategy is related to its CSR strategy. And the design of the CR reports does not intrinsically offer a chance for questioning as they are mostly portable document formatted (pdf) files.

A lot has been said of how important conversations between stakeholders are in order to create a meaning, and how interactivity is contingent on readers finding the right story in the right place. Clearly, society is not demanding PDF formatted CSR reviews. So starting a live dialogue around these issues and involving interested readers in debates may be one possible solution. After all, effective storytelling requires a captive audience

4.2 Obstacles for MSPCs

The barriers we covered in our results require time, experience and nurture to dissolve. The interesting fact is that MSPCs in the media industry are novel and vary in model type. A coherent aim for all MSPCs, however, is to continue to grow and become stronger as platform entities. Most barriers are symptoms of bringing together such a diverse sample of representatives from the media industry (in the case study model, MF) so that experience, and reasons for attending meetings, are often varied and disproportionate. Ergo, we reflect on some noted challenges below.

4.2.1 Too Much Ado about Nothing...?

The barriers MSPCs face to move towards sustainability are interconnected and are mainly related to the lacking of a vision to backcast from. Their approach to addressing issues separately as mapped in the landscape makes their actions be a response to a problem than the steppingstone to success.
The situation of having MSPCs as knowledge-sharing spaces gives the impression that media companies are like a soccer team kicking around the ball without a mission to score, thus the urgency of keeping relevant and as long as lacking of principles of success, the threat of becoming mere headline makers or disappearing, will increase.

We see a problem with the fact that MSPCs are not the priority's for many companies, and they seem to be unclear of the purpose of the participation of their CSR departments, this is due to their seeing their CSR/Sustainability employees attending to discussions but failing to identify concrete, tangible outcomes and as long as the MSPCs lack of a vision of success, they will represent a space for companies to get inspiration for problem-solving rather than for strategic planning.

We must keep in mind that MSPCs such as MFs can be third parties who join stakeholders together. As platforms, they do not inherently seek profit. Yet our results indicate that as they are not as effective without sufficient investment and we recommend that media companies include funding for MSPCs as part of their sustainability strategies. The membership fee proved to be an adequate solution though it is important to allocate part of the budget to forum projects as they gain importance among the priorities in the forum’s agenda but it does not address the issues of lacking a vision of success from which MSPCs participants can backcast.

4.2.2 Irrelevance of Topics and Lack of Indicators of Success

The moment that someone considers the participation in an MSPC is irrelevant for their companies’ strategies, the incentive to talk to each other dies. Motivation plays a key role. Topics also determine the attendance and they have to be relevant for a majority.

Why is lack of indicators a barrier? Because if members invest their money into fees and attend meetings without seeing tangible results, this seems to be lack-luster effort, and will diminish zeal and enthusiasm. We see a danger of this effect being infectious, and so aiming for results and 'low-hanging fruit' (easy things that reps who attend meetings can do in their role/position to make them feel productive/pround/effective) is a more motivating approach. Since it was possible to identify the elements that made possible to elaborate a list of principles for success for MSPCs in the media industry and generate recommendations to make MSPCs
instrumental for strategic sustainable development, our expected outcomes turned into real outcomes.

4.3 Opportunities for MSPCs in Other Industries

We would like to acknowledge that Multi-stakeholder Platforms for Collaboration, in the way we have outlined them in this thesis, are certainly transferable to other industries. In fact, we see massive potential in the flexibility and momentum of the studied model to be applied to other industries. The traditional way of doing business is undergoing a movement towards more transparent and collaborative ideals, and an incremental product to form out of this is open forums where various companies share their ideas and insight on how to do business in a sustainable way. Our view of a ideal future corporate climate entails this sort of collaboration leading to a decentralized field of enterprises who affect nature and communities positively.

4.4 Strengths and Limitations of Research

Exploring a chosen field such as the media sector in a limited time space proved challenging and interesting, especially when considering our diversity of experiences and education as a group. The premise we eventually evolved our research from was that certain aspects of the media industry in Europe contribute to an unsustainable society, and in order to shift this direction towards sustainability, there needs to be a strategic approach taken.

The way in which media companies work together and discuss their further steps towards a more responsible sector as a whole, from all angles and with all forms of media in consideration, can be approached in a more strategic manner as outlined in our results. We believe this to be a useful and significant strength of our research. The 10 Elements of Success for MSPCs involve taking a more strategic approach to forums, and have the ability to cascade through the industry and ideally aid with planning and strengthen action plans. Communications and media are needless to say imperative in public and societal behaviors, and we believe there is improvement to be made in the way that the communicators and the people
in charge of various media sections contribute to society when it comes to sustainability. A more collaborative and strategic approach behind the scenes, amongst the key players of the media industry, is incremental to a more sustainable output of media content and production.

Our research method called for exploring options for MSPCs based on literature review and surveying the media sectors' current reality, and out of this exploration we discovered areas of risk and opportunity for existing and future MSPC models. Areas of restriction from research methods include a limited amount of literature for review, as our topic is still a developing field. Also, the amount of activity that is happening 'on the ground' in the industry is not abundant as of yet, but we hope to see it grow as more media companies collaborate towards sustainability. For this reason we had only a few collaborators to connect with and receive feedback from. Importantly, our collaborators were mostly from the United Kingdom and Europe. We did not approach media companies or media forums based in North America, due to time constraints and less activity in this field of research.

Most of the contributors from our surveys were involved in the print and public media industries and in media CSR development. If it were not for time constraints, we would have ideally interviewed a larger sample from these sectors as well as a wider variety of media persons from different fields such as music, film, and publishing. Our focus area took place as such due to proximity and availability of our collaborators, and the current development of our case study, the Media CSR Forum in London.

Our results are based on the studied activities of existing forums and the chosen area of literature review, and are thus narrowed towards a more sustainable approach to collaboration of media companies according to the expertise and experience of these two areas.

These strengths and limitations highlighted various areas of opportunity that may help media companies to enhance the potential of MSPCs and address the sustainability challenge for the media industry on a more strategic, grassroots level.
4.5 Suggestions for Further Research

Since we are not analyzing the conditions of the media industry (such as government ownership of media channels, or corporate monopolies or any other variable that requires a deeper analysis of socio-political aspects) but the way that media companies, either private or public, can use MSPCs as a strategic tool for collaboration to talk and cooperate in shaping the industry to be more compliant with the sustainability principles, there are various other interactions happening “behind the scenes” that are worthy of exploring. The topics suggested are derived from our assumptions and results and each of them present opportunities for media companies to become more strategic when planning towards sustainability.

How can the strategic recommendations outlined in this thesis be implemented successfully into MSPC activities? It would be compelling to research and develop specific ways that the FSSD could be integrated into the planning processes of media forums. We suggest the development of specific guidelines to facilitate with this endeavour. These guidelines have the potential to become applicable tools in various levels of the planning processes of media companies towards sustainability. Communicating the company’s sustainability strategy to the employees is another opportunity for a strategic, sustainable planning of worthwhile exploration. It is important to have the entire company engaged in the planning and implementing processes for it creates not only ownership but understanding of the strategy and provides a varied, multidisciplinary and detailed perspective of what and how each area of the organization can contribute to the compliance with the sustainability principles – starting with individual action.

How can media forums intended for sustainable development communicate openly with the broader audience? We suggest developing social media (virtual tools) as means to follow-up on collaboration of forum members. It is essential to include all stakeholders in the debate with the same speed that media transforms itself. Considering that our results depict elements that support MSPC members’ visions of success for their forum that they can backcast from, the actions for communication and inclusion of the audience in the stakeholders’ dialogue will be more strategic.

In what ways does media literacy influence society to move towards sustainability? Exploring the sustainability implications of media ownership and media literacy internationally is a complex area, nonetheless
very appealing to study for the keen researcher and a media producer. Thanks to the input from media stakeholders in Asia and conversations amongst us, we realized that the issues of media transparency, ownership and accessibility are far from being a determinant factor of the industry’s social responsibility on an international level, China being perhaps one of the most notorious cases. From the media business perspective, a multi-stakeholder platform where different members of the industry can talk about citizens’ demands by including citizens represented by organizations and governments is one of the main ways to remain competitive: “Citizens are always free to establish new media outlets, and investors are free to fund them […] Citizens need not fear media monopoly, rather, in our modern marketplace, it is the media itself that must live in fear of the power of consumer choice and the tyranny of the remote control” (Thierer and Crews 2005, 86). However, this condition of market saturation and need of regulation is not as global as many authors may promote.

*How can MSPC endorse the implementation of GRI guidelines for the Media Industry to better support strategic planning towards sustainability?* Considering the importance of having a clear goal to backcast from, having common guidelines upon which companies can track their actions will facilitate the process for taking strategic steps. Using GRI for the Media Industry as a reference it is possible to develop guidelines that assist media companies to comply with the sustainability principles. The application of a tool like GRI will also offer more room for tracking opportunities and improvements of the integration of virtual resources into the follow up of the MSPCs meetings, task that social media specialists may find fascinating.

*How can similar MSPC models be useful for other industries to move towards sustainability?* As suggested in section 4.3, MSPCs can be developed within other industries. They have the opportunity to embed the planning process for SSD in their unique area of expertise. The outcomes of this research can help as a reference for industries that are interested in creating an MSPC and also, this research could give support to existing MSPCs to analyze their current reality and create a strategic plan to move towards their vision as sustainable industry.

Currently, the REAL Change program does not have any research specifically related to the Media Industry as such, and this research offers a kick start by providing terminology, activities and collaborators interested in supporting the media sector to move towards sustainability.
5 Conclusion

In 2009, “Climate Change” was one of the leading headlines in the media domain (Christian Toennesen, MF manager, March 2010). The multifaceted debate that swirled around the issue, to us, never seemed to genuinely meet the standards of relevance and veracity that citizens seek for in media content. On other words, from the perspective of media literacy, the accuracy and neutrality of climate change reporting was low. Most articles about climate change brought the critically aware individual to ponder about the source: Where are these people coming from? The mysterious realm of sustainable development for the media industry is starting to take shape out of demand for a coherent approach and delivery of information about how society can plan for a better world.

We have found that Multi-Stakeholder Platforms for Collaboration in the Media Industry can be very instrumental for the shift towards sustainability within media companies. Spaces for dialogue carry a strategic function aligned with relevant CSR issues and can bring about a holistic, synergistic perspective to reality. Because of the intrinsic nature of media channels, a shared perspective of reality coming from the industry has the capacity to transfer, and create a vast and potent ripple effect on society’s intellectual terrain and, ultimately, be manifested through the actions of individuals. Thus results have indicated that MSPCs towards sustainability in the media industry are a tremendous opportunity for eliminating the gap of connectivity and trust between the public and the media industry.

For incorporating a planning process into MSPCs under a more relevant and generic setting, such as the Framework for Strategic Sustainable Development, we look to future possibilities of the current sustainability endeavours happening in the media industry from where they are now, behind the scenes, to a more meaningful and impactful place, whereby the content that citizens consume; primetime television, radio shows, film, newspapers, magazines and so on, have an implicit unified understanding of the role of responsibility media has for the world.

Our findings suggest that for this to happen, outstanding obstacles and concerns mentioned earlier such as lack of funding, clear purpose of forums, and irrelevance of topics for certain stakeholders involved need to be met by further research, cross-pollination of ideas throughout the industry, meaningful internalization of issues and strategic guidelines for
planning that could beneficial for platform hosts and media corporate executives. Once there is a level playing field of relevance, context, and vision for all entities, including common understanding of the elements for success the progress of action plans and collaborative projects for CSR will quicken. Currently we find that one effective way of evening the discrepancies and gaps of understanding that exist due to complexities of the issues is to incorporate more education into MSPC models, and employ use of the Framework for Strategic Sustainable Development for planning. MSPC models such as the Media CSR Forum already promote sustainable development intrinsically, and with a more strategic planning approach to meetings, also have the potential to greatly influence decision-making of media company executives in their sustainability measures.

Taking a look now at the uniqueness of the developments within the media industry that we have uncovered and explored in-depth, we are pleased to report that MSPCs contribute to the media industry’s businesses sustainably in many ways. According to virtually everyone we spoke with, MSPCs help to identify issues common to the industry, discuss these issues and their implications for business operations, share best practices, initiate ideas for further actions within media companies, engage in useful dialogue and learning with a network of relevant organizations, audit and check the impact of current CSR work, and be on top of relevant issues and sustainability headlines for the public.
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66


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Appendices

Appendix A – Interviews and Surveys. General Information

A.1 Overview

In order to match the population represented by MF members, we created a list of 21 well-known people related to the media industry (academics, journalists, publishers, script writers, freelance journalists, independent producers and filmmakers) to whom a second questionnaire was developed with the objectives of:

a) Identify if the respondent was aware of the existence of not online, multi-stakeholder platforms for the media industry and how they value their importance for the corporate responsibility of the industry.

b) Corroborate if the sustainability challenge for the media industry as identified by the “Mapping the landscape” survey – the guiding document for the MF strategy- was aligned to what other stakeholders identify as the sustainability challenge for the industry.

c) Detect potential opportunities for improving MFs activities as well as existing barriers that hinder the creation of forums alike for media companies elsewhere.

d) Create awareness of the existence of MF.

These 21 people are not based in the UK and their activities are part of traditional, new media, or both. This sample also includes the manager of the Deutsche Welle Global Media Forum and 10 of its collaborators.
A.2 Interviews to the Media CSR Forum Members

Interviews

Interview with the Manager of the Media CSR Forum

Questionnaire 1. The interview was carried out via conference call.

Objectives:

- Get to know the functioning and complexities of the forum in order to create the case study (Yin, 1994)
- Understand the operational aspects of the forum, challenges met during its development and how they were overcome.
- Get to know what is the vision of the forum and what are the compelling measures the members decided to undertake to make it happen.

Interviews with the members of the Media CSR Forum

Questionnaire 2. All interviews were carried out via conference call.

Note: Although at the beginning of the study we were warned about the privacy policies of MF, which implied we would not have any contact with the members if not though the manager, the study generated enough interest for the members to request being interviewed personally rather than just answering the online survey.

In average, every interview lasted 40 minutes

Objectives:

- Gain understanding of the value MF provides to its members through “action inquiry” perspective. (Denzin & Lincoln 1998, 274)
- Validate the assumption that participating in MF helped the companies to have an ongoing research and debate for improving their sustainability practices.
- Identify how the every day practices of the media business can be integrated to the context of the SSD.
**Surveys**

Both respondents to the online survey decided to remain anonymous. The positions reported were “Head of CSR” and “Responsibility Manager”. As a very simple version of the questionnaires applied for the interviews, the surveys helped to strengthen the results drafted after the reports’ review and supported the findings of the interviews.

Methodological note: None of the other questionnaire formats was used by the members of the Media CSR Forum.

**A.3 Interviews to other media stakeholders.**

**Interviews**

Interview with the Manager of the Deutsche Welle Global Media Forum

Questionnaire 3. The interview was carried out via phone call.

Objectives:

- Understand the rationale behind the creation of the forum and the value it provides to the company maintaining it.
- Identify similarities and disparities this forum has with the forum we are studying as case for multi stakeholder collaboration.
- Find the advantages and disadvantages of a company-driven initiative vs. an industry created one.

Interview with Bob Willard for framing the business case

Questionnaire 4. The interview was carried out via internet conference.

Objectives:

- Validate our assumptions for the business case that placing MSPC in the SSD context convey for the media industry.
- Identify key language issues that helped us to overcome potential misunderstanding with other collaborators.
- Get a different perspective of MSPC’s usability for the media industry.
Interviews with other media stakeholders

Questionnaire 5. All interviews were carried out via conference call.

Objectives:

- Identify if media industry stakeholders are aware of the existence of platforms as MF and what they think are they useful for.
- Create awareness of MF and its activities.
- Analyze and compare the existing understanding of the CSR issues the media industry non related to MF have.

Surveys

It is important to mention that the sample of the survey is the same population targeted for interviews since survey was the option offered for those with time limitation and availability, this, by no means, hindered the frame of the sample since it was comprehensive, with high probability of selection and it was efficient for the collection of data as a proper sampling scheme should be. (Fowler 2002, 13)

2 people from this group replied to the survey via e-mail, both opted to remain anonymous

The content and objectives of the surveys was the same as in the interviews.
Appendix B - Interviews: Questions and Respondents

Respondent
Dr. Christian Toennesen.
Media CSR Forum Manager
Date: March 12th, 2010

Questionnaire 1

Part 1. About him and his vision of the forum
1. How did you become the manager of the CSR Media Forum?
2. We noticed some changes in the forum's agenda between the 06 and 08 reports, what was the vision of the forum then, What would be your vision for 2010, 2020 and beyond?
3. What do you think are the success factors of the forum?
4. What are the main obstacles/challenges?
5. Recommendations for a start-up forum?

Part 2. About the forum's structure

Internal
1. Had there been any significant changes on the structure of the MF? why?
2. What are the dynamics within the structure? (secretariat, steering group... how often they change? what are the conditions to be part of the steering group?)

Meetings
1. How do you overhaul the meetings format?
2. How's the agenda drafted?
3. What's the structure of the meetings?
4. How do you choose the themes?
5. How they choose speakers for the conferences and meetings?

Members
1. Do you have feedback sessions?
2. What do you do to recruit new members?
3. Are members requested to give a reason for resigning?
4. How do you keep members motivated?
5. Which internal communication channels do you use? a distribution list, personal mails...?
6. Do you send a regular update, like a newsletter or you have a report of activities during the meetings?

Tools and developments
1. Do you think the CSR Media Forum website fulfills its objectives as an outlet for the members?
2. What's the most used resource of the visitors to the website? Why do you think this happens?
3. How often people call the secretariat to inquire about membership?
4. How is the "how media is made" website meeting its objectives?
5. What do you think are the next steps for the forum?
| Questionnaire 2 | Respondents - Members of the Media CSR Forum  
(Alphabetical order) |
|----------------|---------------------------------------------------------------|
| Yogesh Chauhan  
Chief Adviser Corporate Responsibility at the BBC  
Date: March 31<sup>st</sup>, 2010. |  |
| Jo Confino  
Executive Editor and Head of Sustainable Development for Guardian News and Media  
Date: March 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2010 |  |
| Nick Hart  
Head of Corporate Social Responsibility at Time Warner Intl.  
Date: March 18<sup>th</sup>, 2010 |  |
| Catherine Puiseux  
CSR Coordinator at TF1, France.  
Date: March 16<sup>th</sup>, 2010 |  |

1. Why do you think collaborating with multi-stakeholders in the media industry is an effective CSR approach?
2. How does the media forum contribute to your company's CSR progress?
3. Please suggest a way that the CSR MF contributes to a more responsible media industry.
4. What do you consider are the main obstacles multi stakeholder platforms such as CSR MF face?
5. As a member of the steering committee for the Media CSR Forum, what is your primary responsibility? What are the implications/advantages of being a member of the steering committee?
6. How long have you been a member of the Media CSR Forum?
7. According to the trends of the Media CSR Forum reports, we noticed a lot of changes in the format, and at the same time the objectives of the forum, and the way the meetings are structured, what do you think are the most impactful changes made?
8. How many people work with you in your department? Does (the company) have a large CSR sector?
9. How involved is the rest of the staff in your company with CSR issues?
10. Are the CSR Forum meetings discussed in the company (not just the CSR section/experts), and are the outcomes shared with everyone?
11. Is there a company that has impressed you when it comes to CSR issues?
12. What would you recommend to a start-up forum?
13. What would you like to get from our report, is there anything else we can do to help?
**Questionnaire**

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<tr>
<td><strong>Part 1. About him and his vision of the forum</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>1. How did you become the manager of the Global Media Forum?</td>
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<td>2. How do you choose the topic for the forum?</td>
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<td>3. Why the name, Global Media Forum?</td>
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<td>4. What was the vision of the forum when created, what would be your vision for 2010, 2020 and beyond?</td>
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<td>5. What do you think are the success factors of the forum?</td>
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<td>6. What are the main obstacles/challenges?</td>
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<td>7. What would you like to learn from other forums? (initiatives that have been around for longer)</td>
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<td>8. Do you have a specific report of activities as a forum?</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Part 2. About the forum’s structure</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Internal</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>1. As a company solely focused on organization of multi-stakeholder meetings, what’s the structure that prevails?</td>
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<td>2. What are the dynamics within the structure?</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Meetings</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>1. How is the interaction with other media companies and stakeholders</td>
<td></td>
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<td>2. Is there a strategy of networking with other media companies?</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. How's the agenda drafted?</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. What's the structure of the meetings?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>5. How do you choose the themes?</td>
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<td>6. How do they choose speakers for the conferences and meetings?</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Members</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>1. Are there any requirements to become a member or it's just participant’s registered to the conferences?</td>
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<td>2. How do you keep members motivated?</td>
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<td>3. Which internal communication channels do you use? a distribution list, personal mails...?</td>
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<td>4. Do you send a regular update, like a newsletter or you have a report of activities during the meetings?</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Tools and developments</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>1. Do you think the Global Media Forum website fulfills its objectives as an outlet for the members?</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. What's the most used resource of the visitors to the website? why do you think this happens?</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. What do you think are the next steps for the forum?</td>
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<td>4. How do you manage the information from conversations?</td>
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**Questionnaire 4**

Respondents - Media industry stakeholders  
Jonathan Marks. Critical Media Lab.  
Date: March 15th, 2010

1. How does your role contribute to a responsible media industry?  
2. What are the key elements of success for collaborative platforms in media industry towards sustainable development? What have you encountered that works best?  
3. How and Why collaboration platforms can be considered useful for the media industry stakeholders?  
4. What potential do you see for the future of this method? What is your vision of a sustainable media industry?  
5. What are the barriers that multi stakeholder platforms encounter in the media industry?  
6. Why do you think that many companies and groups in the industry are still taking the 'old' and less effective approach to CSR issues?

**Questionnaire 5**

Respondents – CSR / Sustainability business experts.  
Date: March 18th, 2010

**Part 1. About the case**

1. How should explain the function of these platforms/forums strategically?  
2. What are the benefits of this working? How to make it a friendly space?  
3. How can we use the FSSD and communicate these things effectively?  
4. What does "reframing the thinking" look like for media industry?  
5. Low hanging fruits have been picked - how to do it for the media industry?

**Part 2. About our research**

1. step back into the results of the interview of MF members, Why do you think these are important?  
2. What are the issues that this raises in your mind and within your role, within society?  
3. How can this be a powerful force for the kinds of things you care about? Discussion of Aha! moments during the research
## Appendix C – Survey Questions and Respondents

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Survey 1</th>
<th>Respondents</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Members of the Media CSR Forum</td>
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<td></td>
<td>All anonymous</td>
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1. Why do you think collaborating with multi-stakeholders in the media industry is an effective CSR approach?
2. How does the media forum contribute to your company's CSR progress?
3. Please suggest a way that the CSR MF contributes to a more responsible media industry.
4. What do you consider are the main obstacles multi stakeholder platforms such as CSR MF face?

<table>
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<th>Survey 2</th>
<th>Respondents</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Media stakeholders</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cristiana Falcone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>World Economic Forum Senior Partner</td>
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<td></td>
<td>And anonymous contributions</td>
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</table>

1. When it comes to addressing CSR issues within media industry, what have you encountered that works best?
2. What is your understanding of 'multi-stakeholder gatherings for collaboration towards CSR issues', and why do you think this is a promising initiative for the media industry?
3. Who do you think should participate the gatherings above mentioned? Are you aware of any existing initiative you can tell us about (even if it's just the name)?
4. What do you think are the current challenges for initiating productive conversations about CSR issues among media companies?
5. What potential do you see for the future of multi-stakeholder collaborations? What is your vision of a sustainable media industry?
6. If you want us to mention your contribution in our thesis, please write down your name, company/organization, position and contact information.
Appendix D - Surveys Summary of Responses

Survey 1 – Media CSR Forum Members.  
Responses 2. Anonymous. Roles: Responsibility Manager and Head of CSR.

1. Why do you think collaborating with multi-stakeholders in the media industry is an effective CSR approach?

It is important in any sector, however, for the media industry it has to be something that simply must happen because the whole aim of the business is communication. Having a common denominator (CSR) helps to share ideas, build connections and collaborate as one front rather than scattered initiatives that may not be strong enough to survive and have a real impact.

2. How does the media forum contribute to your company's CSR progress?

To have the opportunity to discuss with competitors about how to address particular shared challenges and be able to provide advice and support beyond just receiving information from externals is a unique experience that not all companies can enjoy. It provides tremendous benefits when it comes to understand the direction we are taking as industry and talk with colleagues from other parts of the business.

3. Please suggest a way that the CSR MF contributes to a more responsible media industry.

It is a vehicle that helps the media companies to move forward collectively. The forum’s work, such as the media literacy efforts, present how the media companies can strengthen society by helping with its education and supporting their participation with the industry not only as consumers but as stakeholders.

4. What do you consider are the main obstacles multi stakeholder platforms such as CSR MF face?

Resources and time were the two issues that resonated as the real barriers the participants must take into consideration for supporting the forum. They have to help each other to make the forum the space they use to connect without seeing this as an obligation but as an activity they are glad to take part of.
Survey 2 – Media stakeholders

Responses 4.

Cristiana Falcone, Senior Advisor, World Economic Forum.

Anonymous contributions

1. When it comes to addressing CSR issues within media industry, what have you encountered that works best?

The general response was human development initiatives based on social demands. The media businesses can choose either connecting with other organizations or start an initiative of their own but it is an external pressure what makes the management boards to think on how to respond to these challenges.

2. What is your understanding of 'multi-stakeholder gatherings for collaboration towards CSR issues', and why do you think this is a promising initiative for the media industry?

Seen as initiatives of having an united industry acting as a responsible citizen interacting with other organizations, the phrase denotes an approach of “community-focused” cooperation rather than a “money-driven”, segmented intend to hush the diversity of voices demanding responsibility. Having a neutral platform for collaboration diminishes the risks of “social washing” and allows the promotion of best practices.

3. Who do you think should participate the gatherings above mentioned? Are you aware of any existing initiative you can tell us about (even if it is just the name)?

What the respondents had as common denominator of these gatherings was the participation of a myriad of organizations and actors representing interests other than those of the media business. Management board members and executives of all levels of the media companies are the ones to be taking the initiative to interact with these organizations and individuals and listen to what they have to say. A strong warning to keep these meetings apolitical and open to all the voices was also what most stakeholders pointed out as crucial as well. The gatherings mentioned were:

The World Economic Forum Media (2009 and 2010 meetings) as well as the ongoing councils: Global Agenda on the future of media, on the Future of Entertainment, and on marketing and branding.
4. What do you think are the current challenges for initiating productive conversations about CSR issues among media companies?

Consistent with the responses given during the interviews, the participants of the survey also identified funding as one of the main challenges, however it was more on the tenure of having commercial initiatives as priority, leaving social responsibility aside for lacking of a common understanding of what are the really pressing issues they have to take action on. Another important factor is the lack of willingness to collaborate with competitors since there is no clear connection with the bottom line and an invitation to talk about social initiatives can be taken as a strategy for increasing (commercial) audience.

5. What potential do you see for the future of multi-stakeholder collaborations? What is your vision of a sustainable media industry?

There were three strong descriptions of a sustainable media industry characterized by: cooperation between competitors and with other organizations, accountability in terms of promotion of literacy and information and adequate use of information technology and opportunities globalization provides.

The potential of multi-stakeholder collaborations is to make all these possible. It is interesting that despite the huge coverage and paramount involvement of the media on the climate change discussion, only one respondent answered that the media had also to find a way to be friendly with the environment and not contribute to its deterioration.
Appendix E – Report of Results Outline and Overall Feedback From Collaborators.

Abstract
 Foreword – Introduction of the paper’s structure.

1. Key definitions
1.1 Framework for Strategic Sustainable Development (FSSD)
1.2 Sustainability issues for the media industry in Europe
1.3 Multi-Stakeholder Platforms for Collaboration (MSPC)

2. Behind the scenes
2.1 Why the media industry? Objectives of the research
2.2 Methods
  2.2.1 Research Questions
  2.2.2 Case Study – Media CSR Forum: London

3. Results and discussion points.
 Table with the 10 key results with description and points for discussion.

Feedback from collaborators.
 Sent to the 5 collaborators that indicated disposition for reviewing the results and providing feedback. All of them provided very specific observations and valuable information to validate our results and consolidate the discussion points.

1. The objectives of the research are clear and properly presented
   Agree completely – 80%
   Agree with suggestions -20%

2. The key definitions are unambiguous and allow a good understanding of the premises and results of the research.

   Agree completely – 40%
   Agree with suggestions – 60%

Comments: Explore more the implications of economical CSR. All collaborators manifested having a different understanding of CSR and SD, thus they all commented it was interesting we found the media industry uses them interchangeably.
Feedback continuation

3. The methodology used was adequate to meet the objectives of the research and validate the results.

Agree completely – 100%

It is recommended to present in a forum or to more media stakeholders through a blog.

4. The results presented reflect a good overview of the case studied and offer a new piece of knowledge about the applications of the framework for strategic sustainable development.

Agree completely – 60%

Agree with suggestions – 30%

Comments: Media CSR Forum is not an MSPC as such and in general the planning should happen within the member companies and not in the forum.

5. The discussion points show clear opportunities for further research and applications for the media industry.

Agree completely – 100%

6. General observations

Congratulations to all the team for this great and bold first step.

Kind regards,
Cristiana Falcone
Director Strategic Outreach
World Economic Forum
Footnotes

i As defined by Hegelian philosophy it describes the cultural, spiritual, intellectual, ethical and political trends within different social groups. (Heidegger 1988)

ii From the entry to “The Guardian’s” blog written by Guillen, Katan, Xu on March 23, 2010

iii Term coined from existing media literature where “new” media is identified as the channels of communication generated via internet, mainly blogs and platforms of “citizen journalism.”