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Networking for a Sustainable Future?

*A qualitative study about the couplings between member organisations and
CSR-networks*

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Master Degree Project in Management
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A qualitative study about the couplings between member organisations and CSR-networks

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Abstract

The increasing focus on social and environmental issues has led to a rise of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) networks. Studies on CSR-networks have different explanations for the effects of participation in such networks, but has largely ignored to explore how the strength of couplings between the participating organisations and the network shape these effects. This study aims to address this gap based on a qualitative case study of a Swedish CSR-network and loose coupling literature. Drawing on empirically identified multitudes of couplings, we suggest that there are four ‘ideal types’ of members in CSR-networks: the Disconnected, the Social, the Selling, and the Knowledge Seeker. We then show that these ideal types experience different effects of participation in CSR-networks with the Knowledge Seeker experiencing the most immediate practical effects, the Social mostly gaining immediate emotional effects, the Selling mostly experiencing practical effects and the Disconnected getting no effects. We conclude the thesis by discussing the implications of these findings for what participation in CSR-networks means for the four ideal types of members.

Keywords

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), CSR-Networks, Networks, Loose Coupling, Effects.

Introduction

Networks organising around Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) have become increasingly common due to a rise in focus on social and environmental issues (Albareda, 2008). This CSR-focus is connected to globalisation (Waddock, 2008; Albareda, 2008), new sustainability regulations and a growing public social and environmental consciousness, which together has changed the frame in which economic actors operate (Vitolla, Rubino, & Garzoni, 2017). In effect, there is an increasing belief that organisations can and should

voluntarily chase sustainable solutions to social and environmental problems (Waddock, 2008; Haugh & Talwar, 2010). One way to create spaces for CSR-debates, where implementation for the members is still voluntary, is to organise in networks (Albareda, 2008). These networks have taken on different forms. The most unstructured networks are informal gatherings of people from a professional group where social ties provide a possibility for information sharing (Westphal & Zajac, 2001; Barnes, Lynham, Kalberg, & Leung, 2016). Furthermore, some organisations have created business networks where they adhere to outside pressures to work more with CSR (Waddock, 2008). These groups are often formed by the organisations in a supply chain to secure ecology (Andersson & Sweet, 2002), Triple Bottom Line reporting, or other standards (Waddock, 2008). These collaborations often target one issue and has thus been criticised to miss the whole picture (Jamali, Lund-Thomsen, & Khara, 2017). A third category of CSR-networks - and the empirical focus of this paper - is the collaborations between organisations from different sectors, such as private, public, and non-profit organisations, forming a local or global network (Rasche, 2012). These initiatives can take on different purposes including increased engagement and learning (Clarke et al., 1999), information sharing (Etzion & Ferraro, 2010), or standardisation such as the ISO-standards or the Green Reporting Initiative (Gilbert, Rasche, & Waddock, 2011). However, there is still comparatively little research on these cross-sectoral networks. In particular, there is limited research on why certain effects arise from such constellations (Provan & Kenis, 2008).

The sparse existing research on the effects of cross-sectoral networks nevertheless provides some important findings. For example, these types of networks have been argued to serve the purpose of knowledge gaining and forming new activities in the member organisations (Clarke et al., 1999; Albareda, 2008). CSR-networks have also been found to contribute to more efficient resource use (Provan & Kenis, 2008) and to increased capacity to plan for and address complex issues (Brass, Galaskiewicz, Greve, & Tsai, 2004). However, some scholars have found that these initiatives do not always display the desired effects of improving organisations' social responsibility (Behnam & MacLean, 2011; Moog, Spicer, & Böhm, 2015). Thus, it is important to examine why companies experience certain effects or non-effects from network participation (Provan & Kenis, 2008). This is especially important for organisations chasing sustainability solutions to decide if engaging in CSR-networks is beneficial.

Scholars have explained the effects, or non-effects, of CSR-network participation in several ways. One stem of literature has examined the leadership of the network as a possible explanation. For example, Provan and Kenis (2008) have studied network governance and argued that there is one decentralised and one centralised form. In the former, all organisations constituting the network interact with each other to govern the network, whereas in the latter one organisation act as lead governor for the network. They have argued that different amounts of trust and competences are needed in the different network structures in order to reach the desired effects. Another stem of research has used aspects of political

dynamics within CSR-networks to explain how participation shape effects. One such study is provided by Moog, Spicer, and Böhm (2015), who have discussed tensions between members in a cross-sectoral network aiming to decrease deforestation. They have argued that CSR-networks often become spaces dominated by technical debates and commercial concerns, thereby marginalising many of the non-profit civil society representatives which could contribute with knowledge to the network. Consequently, the authors concluded that the balance of power shape the effects of the CSR-network.

Other scholars have explained the effects of cross-sectoral network participation by external forces and different forms of institutional theory. Delmas and Montes-Sancho (2011) have examined how national institutional factors affected the adoption of sustainability standards in cross-sectoral network. They have claimed that regulative forces, as well as normative forces such as the diffusion of initiatives, play important roles for what effects participation in these networks could have. Other researchers have suggested that the effects and non-effects of CSR-networks are a result of decoupling between the member organisations and the network. Behnam and MacLean (2011) have argued that decoupling in networks occur when organisations express commitment to the constellation, but do not operationally enact that commitment. In a study of cross-sectoral networks they examined why certain types of such initiatives are more prone to be decoupled from the member organisations than others. They found that the structure of these networks could explain why participation did not always have the desired effect. In contrast, Christensen, Morsing, and Thyssen (2013) have argued that it is not possible to make a clear distinction between a network's or an organisation's CSR talk and CSR action since both are probably legitimate claims about how they work with CSR. In addition, these approaches disregard the relational aspects between CSR-networks and their members (Beekun & Glick, 2001).

One approach which addresses this relational aspect, but has largely been ignored in CSR-network research is loose coupling. As opposed to decoupling, loose coupling focuses on the relations between elements (Beekun & Glick, 2001), recognising that they can be at the same time responsive and show evidence of separation from the network (Weick, 1976). It also takes into closer consideration the different processes leading to a potential effect (Orton & Weick, 1990). In contrast to theories on power, loose coupling accounts for the possibility that processes are not static, and that responsiveness and separation often co-occur without actors necessarily being aware of it (Misangyi, 2016). There is a limited amount of previous studies examining loose coupling in CSR-networks. One important exception is Rasche (2012). By using four categories for loose coupling, he found that there were differences in strengths of couplings between local and global cross-sectoral networks, which in turn had implications for how these CSR-networks organised themselves. However, Rasche (2012) has neglected to take into consideration that several coupling variables influence the effects. This paper aims to address this gap by treating the effects separately from other coupling variables. Hence, the purpose of this study is to examine if the strengths

of couplings between member organisations and CSR-networks shape the effects of network participation, by answering the research question:

- *How are member organisations coupled to CSR-networks and how do types of coupling shape effects of participation?*

To answer the research question, this thesis conveys a qualitative case study on a CSR-network in Western Sweden. It makes no claim to value the efficiency of the network, but rather to view the strength of couplings between the members and the network and present what effects this has for the members by using loose coupling literature (Weick, 1976; Orton & Weick, 1990; Weick, 2001; Rasche, 2012). We claim that by using Rasche's (2012) categories for the strengths of couplings and by widening the focus to include several aspects of effects, we can contribute with a framework which explains why certain effects arise from network participation. In doing so, we also contribute to fill the research gap of how the strength of couplings between members and CSR-networks shape effects, as well as providing a basis for decisions of whether or not it is beneficial for organisations chasing sustainability solutions to engage in CSR-networks.

The rest of the paper is structured as follows. First, the theoretical perspective of loose coupling is discussed, followed by a presentation of the methodological approach. It continues by presenting the empirical findings, each followed by a shorter analysis in close relation to the theoretical framework. The ideal types of members are then presented. Further, the occurrence of Immediate effects is presented, and these findings are then further elaborated upon in relation to theory where both aspects are discussed together with implications for theory and practice. Last, conclusions and contributions are presented together with suggestions for further research.

Theoretical Framework

Introducing Loose Coupling

Loose coupling occurs when elements within an organisation are responsive but still show some evidence of separation (Weick, 1976). The concept first appeared as a way to explain how organisations respond to institutional pressures, which means that organisations are subject to institutional rules that push them to behave in a certain way (Weick, 1976; Meyer & Rowan, 1977). Institutions are patterns of collective actions, which have been described as organised, established procedures, often presented as 'the rules of the game' (Jepperson, 1991). In any location in organisations, institutional pressures create loose couplings that vary in strength. The loosely coupled system is linked, i.e. coupled, but at the same time also contain continual small changes which affect all involved, i.e. loose (Orton & Weick, 1990). Other scholars have framed loose coupling as a strategic device which organisations can employ (e.g. Oliver, 1991; Westphal & Zajac, 2001). In contrast, it has been argued that it is

a way to assume that everyone is acting in good faith, thereby absorbing uncertainty and maintaining confidence, leading to a decreased need for inspections (Meyer & Rowan, 1977). However, Orton and Weick (1990) have argued that loosely coupled systems are both spontaneous and deliberate, indeterminate and rational. Especially regarding complex subjects such as sustainability, loose coupling might be a result of uncertainties and ambiguities about how to fulfil different demands and organise around the question. With this perspective on loose coupling, it is not a manipulative or strategic device, or a way to assume that everyone is acting in good faith, but rather a process that actors are often unaware of and which can take on many different forms (Misangyi, 2016).

The concept of loose coupling appeared around the same time as decoupling. Decoupling is a process where organisations symbolically adopt formal practices to gain legitimacy towards stakeholders, but without necessarily implementing these practices substantially (Meyer & Rowan, 1977). When first introduced, the concepts were framed as two separate notions. Decoupling implied that there was no connection between decoupled activities and the core business (Meyer & Rowan, 1977), whereas loose coupling suggested that there was some connection (Weick, 1976). Nevertheless, more recent literature has pointed out that coupling and decoupling processes often co-occur (Orton & Weick, 1990). This is because in settings where organisations are subject to several institutional pressures, it is especially likely the two occur simultaneously (Misangyi, 2016). Orton and Weick (1990) have referred to this as the dialectical interpretation of loose coupling, as opposed to the unidimensional view which focuses on either decoupling or coupling. In addition, they have claimed that using the dialectical view on loose coupling better accounts for the unconscious ways in which organisations act (Orton & Weick, 1990). In line with these arguments, Rasche (2012) has stated that loose coupling occurs when coupling mechanisms still exist, yet are weak. Loose coupling and decoupling have also been used interchangeably (Misangyi, 2016), but to avoid confusion we agree with Rasche's (2012) claim that loose coupling is separate from decoupling and occurs when coupling mechanisms are still in place but are weak.

Loose Coupling as Relations Between Elements

Weick (2001: 383) states that the strength of relationships between any element "A" and any "B" could vary in a continuum from tight to loose over time. These elements form a loosely coupled system where the interacting units have relationships among them. Beekun and Glick (2001) argue that this relational focus is one of the strengths of loose coupling and that focus should be on the various relations between elements. In addition, they claim that many dimensions of couplings are expected to be related to each other and that these relations need to be examined empirically. With the support of Weick (2001: 383) and Beekun and Glick (2001), we refer to the CSR-network and its member organisations as a system. This is made up of different units, or elements, which we understand as the different organisations constituting the network.

In examining the relationships between the elements in a loosely coupled system, Weick (2001: 383) claims that the strength of the couplings between the elements is visible when they affect each other suddenly (as opposed to continuously), occasionally, negligibly, indirectly, and eventually (rather than immediately). Building on this line of reasoning, Rasche (2012) argues that the strength of coupling between elements can be viewed in the light of four characteristics of relationships between elements of a system: Frequency of interaction, Indirect relationships, Causal indeterminacy, and Non-Immediate effects. The last category is different from the first three by examining an outcome and we therefore treat it differently. Non-immediate effects occur at another point in time compared to the first three categories and it is not always possible to determine the cause-effect relationship (Weick, 2001: 383). Based on Rasche (2012), the first three categories outline as follows.

(1) *Frequency of interaction.* Rasche (2012) argues that if the elements interact more seldom they are more loosely coupled. This indicates that various degrees of coupling can occur depending on the frequency of interaction. This ties into Weick's (2001: 383) ideas that if elements affect each other suddenly and/or occasionally (rather than continuously and/or constantly), they are more loosely coupled.

(2) *Direct or indirect interaction.* Rasche (2012) states that if interaction occurs through some kind of mediator instead of directly between the elements that need to interact, the elements are more loosely coupled. He exemplifies by arguing that if two organisations communicate through a third party, the system is loosely coupled. This corresponds to Weick's (2001: 383) idea that elements that affect each other indirectly are more loosely coupled.

(3) If the people interacting *share a common view/use* of their environment. Rasche (2012) refers to this as causal indeterminacy, stating that when people disagree about how their environment functions, this results in less coordination in actions which in turn leads to more loose coupling between the elements. This could be due to both different focus but also different interpretations. His idea is that when people share a common view about how their environment functions or should function in a setting, the elements are more tightly coupled. This does not correspond directly to any of Weick's (2001) conditions for loose coupling, but is an additional aspect which, we agree, should be taken into consideration when viewing the relationships between elements.

Rasche (2012) also claims that when elements display non-immediate effects, the couplings between them are more loose. This corresponds to Weick's (2001: 384) idea that loosely coupled elements affect each other eventually rather than immediately, indicating that there is often a lag between events and effects. However, since this paper aims at examining how couplings between the network and the member organisations shape effects, it becomes impractical to treat effects as a coupling variable in itself. Since Orton and Weick (1990) argue that coupling and decoupling practices often co-occur, we instead examine the occurrence of *different types of immediate effects*. This is to investigate whether there is a

connection between the first three categories and the Immediate effects-category. In doing so, we recognise Beekun and Glick's (2001) argument that many dimensions of couplings are expected to be related to each other and that these relations need to be assessed empirically. In Rasche (2012) the effects are discussed as practical (e.g. when feedback is given on time). However, Weick (2001: 162-165) also discusses emotional effects, building the argumentation on behavioural theory. He explains that when people are interrupted in their ordinary work sequences, this could trigger arousal, which in turn has people searching for new answers. He states that an emotion is in essence a non-response activity that occurs when arousal is triggered, and that emotional experience is often accompanied by redoubled effort to complete the work sequence that was interrupted. In effect, positive emotions could lead to increased work effort, which in turn could have practical effects. Hence, a positive emotion triggered by arousal by an interrupted work sequence could be an additional interpretation of what is considered to be an effect, apart from concrete practical effects, as this is something that influences the relationship between elements.

In relation to this last category, Weick (2001: 383) reasons that cause-effect relations are difficult to find in loosely coupled systems where relations are slow, mediated, lagged, or intermittent. This makes it difficult to predict what will happen in organisations, since the understanding of a loosely coupled system does not imply knowledge about how an organisation works, but rather an understanding of when predictions do not work. The focus of this study is therefore not to provide a full explanation for what effects that could be predicted, but to examine the relationship between the couplings indicated by the first three categories and the Immediate effects, to explain why certain effects arise. Thus, in line with Rasche (2012), we treat each of the first three categories as relationships between elements and ways to view strengths of couplings in themselves. We view Immediate effects in the broader understanding outlined above to examine whether there is a relation between the first three categories and the fourth. In addition, we recognise that there are no guarantees that the predicted effects will occur, but that there can nevertheless be a relationship between the categories that could suggest how effects are shaped.

Methodology

Research Design

To investigate the couplings between member organisations and CSR-networks and how types of couplings shape effects of participation, a case study of a CSR-network operating in Western Sweden was conducted. The reason for choosing this type of method was that case studies are detailed examinations of single examples that can provide practical, in depth information about a certain phenomenon (Flyvberg, 2006). The CSR-network in this study is a cross-sectoral network called the Public & Private Social Responsibility Initiative (the PPSRI). There is a limitation in using a case study as research method associated with the generalisation of data from only a limited number of cases. However, case studies can point out aspects that innovate the current knowledge about CSR-networks and challenge existing

views of how they function (Flyvberg, 2006). In addition, when studying loose coupling there is a need to closely consider the processes within systems and case studies can strengthen this careful analysis (Orton & Weick, 1990).

Data Collection

Both primary and secondary data was collected in order to gain a deeper insight and provide a richer analysis about the studied phenomenon (Silverman, 2013). Secondary data was collected in the form of information on the CSR-network's web-page and a member survey which an external part carried out in 2015. The data collected via the internet was mainly used as background to deepen our understanding of how the network functions, whereas the document was used as a benchmark for the additional data and complemented the picture provided in the primary data (Eisenhardt, 1989). The primary data was collected mainly through interviews with member organisations and the employees at the PPSRI, but also through observations during network events. Using different types of empirical sources helped collecting a more reliable set of data, as it reduced subjectivity issues that could arise in qualitative research (Charmaz, 2014). It also provided an opportunity to see where the different data intersected (Silverman, 2013). Initially, we attended an information meeting with the PPSRI to learn more about the network and how it functions, also serving as an initial observation. Afterwards, we met with one of the network's project managers, which gave us the opportunity to ask additional questions about their work and develop our understanding of how to design the study.

Interviews

The main source of data, qualitative interviews, was chosen as it enabled the acquirement of peoples' reflections on their experience, which was helpful in providing an understanding of the CSR-network from the interviewees' points of view (Silverman, 2013). For the purpose of this study, nine member organisations were selected for interviews. These members were not chosen by their extremity but because of their variation, displaying information about different circumstances which together painted a picture relevant for the research question (Flyvberg, 2006). Since the network is cross-sectoral, members representing all sectors (private, public, non-profit, and academia) were interviewed to ensure a diverse representation. The variation in number of employees and type of business was also taken into consideration when selecting interviewees. In addition, interviews were held with all the employees at the PPSRI to obtain their views on how the network functions and how members use it. Keeping the set of organisations as diverse as possible also helped build a model which could potentially be applicable to other members in the network (Eisenhardt, 1989).

As a starting point, contact persons for the member organisations towards the PPSRI were contacted and interviewed, as they were believed to have the most extensive knowledge about the CSR-network. These people also served as initial informants for what colleagues in their organisation that had attended the PPSRI's events. This captured additional views within the

same organisation, thereby increasing our understanding for how the member organisations are coupled to the network, and reducing subjectivity issues (Charmaz, 2014). This kind of ‘snowballing sample’ was helpful in ensuring a relevant selection of interviewees (Silverman, 2013). In some cases, the initial informant could not refer to any colleague who had been active in the network or who had time to participate in an interview. When so, only one interview at that member organisation was held. In total, 20 interviews were conducted, resulting in a total interview time of approximately 14 hours (see Table 1 for summary of the interviews). Within the private sector four organisations were interviewed, whereas employees from one organisation were interviewed in the public sector. The reason for this is that the public organisation had a relatively large number of employees who had attended any of the PPSRI’s events. In the non-profit sector, interviews at three organisations were conducted, whereas one organisation was investigated within academia. All interviewees were informed about the subject and how the material would be used prior to each interview (Kvale, 2007). After given consent, all interviews were recorded and transcribed to ensure an accurate account of their answers and reflections. All interviewees are anonymous in this paper to ensure that they would feel secure in sharing information without being exposed personally (Silverman, 2013).

Table 1. Summary of Interviews.

Organisation	No. of organisations	No. of interviews	Total interview time
PPSRI	1	3	2:05:45
Private	4	7	4:42:38
Public	1	6	4:43:55
Non-profit	3	3	1:51:44
Academia	1	1	39:41
<i>Total</i>	<i>10</i>	<i>20</i>	<i>14:03:43</i>

The interviews were conducted in a semi-structured way, meaning some main topics were covered but without any requirements to stick completely to certain predefined questions. Semi-structured interviews enabled a larger degree of flexibility, including the possibility to ask follow-up questions relevant for the topic (Kvale, 2007). The method also suited a grounded theory approach since it allowed us to pursue new leads and revisit and reframe the conceptual categories (Charmaz, 2014). When conducting the interviews, special attention was paid to having the interviewees contextualise their answers by giving examples, thereby facilitating the understanding of how the member organisations are coupled to the network and how this shapes effects of participation (Watson, 2011). Occasionally, enough information was not obtained during the interviews. The interviewees were then contacted again (mainly through e-mail) to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the subject. In one of the cases, the same person was interviewed twice as several new questions arose. There are limitations associated with selecting interviews as a research method, particularly in the fact that people do not attach one single meaning to their activities. Hence, there is a risk that the

interviewees could not convey the full picture of their perception of the CSR-network, which in turn could influence the interpretation and analysis of data (Silverman, 2013). To reduce this bias different types of data were collected (Charmaz, 2014).

Observations

To gain a more extensive understanding of the couplings between the member organisations and the PPSRI and how this shapes effects, two observations were conducted. They were a valuable complement to the interviews, since they enabled the discovery of new aspects, which were elaborated upon in the following interviews. These discoveries included accounts of how members acted at network meetings and with whom they interacted (Watson, 2011). The first observation occurred at an information meeting and the second during a combined seminar and workshop. During the breaks of these events several informal conversations were held with participants to further increase our understanding of the subject. Extensive notes were taken directly in relation to specific events to ensure details were captured. This material was then compiled and structured to facilitate the remaining analysis.

Data Analysis

The data was analysed in several steps inspired by grounded theory. This analysis method was useful since there was little prior research on loose coupling in combination with CSR-networks and we wished to develop the theoretical approach (Martin & Turner, 1986). As Beekun and Glick (2001) have argued, many dimensions of couplings are expected to be related to each other and these relations need to be assessed empirically. In using a grounded theory method, we could approach the study with a relatively open mind and avoid making false assumptions from the beginning (Martin & Turner, 1986). One important issue to consider is the subjectivity aspect in the understanding and interpretation of data. However, using a grounded theory approach this was not necessarily a limitation, since the method suggests that the researchers' subjectivity should provide lenses for viewing and interpreting the data (Charmaz, 2014).

All interviews, observations and the member survey were coded according to the same principles. First, the material was reflected upon in the light of the research question and short memos were written containing initial and spontaneous thoughts about the matter (Silverman, 2013). Second, the parts that were deemed as relevant were coded close to the text, i.e. several narrow codes that explained the text, and compared. This enabled learning about what the research participants considered to be important and problematic, which laid ground for an analytical treatment with the help of existing theories (Charmaz, 2014). Third, we searched for interplay between the theory and the data with a cross-case pattern search, looking at the similarities and differences from the different data and categories (Eisenhardt, 1989). Reaching the fundamentals in the abstractions generated from the data enabled the development of a theory to understand how the members are coupled the network and how types of coupling shape effects of participation (Charmaz, 2014). Consequently, we used Rasche's (2012) four categories combined with Weick's (2001) five premises for loose

coupling to abstract from the codes developed in the second step. Four broader codes were developed from this, 'Frequency of interaction between elements', 'Direct or indirect interaction between elements', 'Shared or different use of the system', and 'Immediate effects', including both practical and emotional effects. In these categories, we found four 'ideal types' of members which did not represent certain member organisations but were a generalisation of four main ways the members were found to be coupled to the CSR-network. During the discussion on the relation between categories and ideal types, the effects emerged as separate compared to the other categories. It was evident that there was a relationship between the first three categories and the fourth, which was elaborated upon to fulfill the purpose of this study.

There are issues associated with discussing ideal types of member organisations. An ideal type implies certain shared characteristics that cluster member organisations who are coupled to the network in a similar way. However, actual member organisations often cohere to several types and could shift between them depending on occasion. It is also the case that within member organisations, different people could portray different types. Nevertheless, discussing in terms of ideal types helps facilitating the understanding of how member organisations are coupled to CSR-networks and how this shapes effects.

Results and Analysis

This section first outlines the setting where the CSR-network is presented. Further, it presents the empirical findings in relation to Rasche's (2012) three categories to view the strength of coupling between the member organisations and the network, the Frequency of interaction, Direct or indirect interaction, and the Shared or different use. These are used in the subsequent section to empirically derive four ideal types of member organisations. In the following section the immediate effects are outlined in respect to each ideal type. The final section summarises the key findings.

Setting

The PPSRI is a cross-sector and non-profit network founded in 2008, which operates in Western Sweden. It is financed by the county in Western Sweden and by annual member fees, which vary between 3000 to 20 000 SEK depending on the number of employees. The idea behind the network is to provide a platform where organisations can develop their knowledge, exchange experience, and gain contacts. The PPSRI has three employees who arrange events including educations in CSR related topics, breakfast/lunch seminars and workshops, cooperation groups, and a yearly CSR Forum. The members also get access to online services aimed at increasing the understanding for CSR in the organisation, exchange experience and finding potential partnerships. The network currently has 289 members from academia, the private, public, and non-profit sector. There are no preconditions for becoming a member in the network, although members are required to understand their environmental impact. They are also required to integrate CSR in their core activities as far as possible and make continuous progress in their CSR-work. Each organisation appoints one or two contact

person(s), responsible for the main contact with the PPSRI, but anyone in the member organisation can attend events. Similarly, anyone can sign up for receiving their digital newsletter.

Frequency of Interaction between Elements

This category concerns how often members interact with the network and what limits their interaction.

A majority of the interviewees responded that they only attended a few of the network's events every year. The member survey revealed that the most popular activity was the annual CSR Forum, which around 80 percent of the member organisations had attended. One person representing the academia explained that the only interaction he had with the network, besides receiving their newsletters, was at the annual CSR Forum. This shows that some members attend events with particularly low frequency. For other members with a low frequency, the interaction could be related to if their interests matched the topic of the activity. One person from the non-profit sector expressed that he had not attended that many events the last year but had reached out to the PPSRI about presenting at a certain occasion. When declined to present he was not interested in going. Another person from this sector explained that it is important for them to attend the events with topics that match their business. This shows that some members do not attend that many activities and that attendance is often dependent on the event.

However, some members had a slightly higher frequency of interaction with the network. Two project managers from the public sector expressed that they had engaged more frequently in different network activities, since their role in their organisation includes building external relationships. This corresponds to the numbers in the member survey, where about 70 percent had gone to the breakfast/lunch meetings and seminars. In addition, one CSR-manager expressed that she had attended the network events more frequently to increase her knowledge and gain contacts. The higher interest of educational events was confirmed by the member survey where the different educations arranged by the network had been attended by approximately 50 percent of the member organisations. In addition, some network activities are designed in a way that they automatically raise the number of times members attend events. One such activity is the specific cooperation groups where it is often the same people from membership organisations who meet four times during one year to increase their knowledge. Nevertheless, the member survey conveyed that about 20 percent of the members had engaged in those groups. Regarding online services, the member survey showed that members are often aware of what services the network has to offer, but have not used them. For instance, around 70 percent of the respondents claimed that they knew about the platform for experience exchange, yet had never used it. Only one interviewee expressed that she had used these services with the purpose of gaining more knowledge about CSR.

Regardless of the purpose for and how often members interacted with the network, respondents from all the sectors expressed that time was a constraining factor for how much they could engage in network activities. This explains why no members had a high frequency of interaction with the network. One person described that she had been to an education activity, a membership meeting, and a network lunch, but that those were all the events that she had the time to attend. The interviewee from academia viewed the membership as important, stating that supporting the network through membership is for a good cause, but that going to events gets crowded out by other work tasks. Several interviewees explained that they have not been able to attend all the events they wish to, due to lack of time. For example, one interviewee expressed some frustration in the wish to be an active part of the network activities but not finding the time to do so.

“We know now that we have to skip work tasks that aren’t necessary and this was one of the things that had to go. So that’s one thing that can happen. Then you get involved temporarily because you think, this is so fun and exciting, and I became the contact person, but then we had to skip it.”
(Communicator, Public)

The same interviewee explained that she usually skims through what is going on in the network when she receives the digital newsletter, because she does not have the time to attend. Another person working at the same member organisation explained that there are several other activities available for her, so she does not always have time to prioritise the PPSRI’s activities. Regarding the online services, one person expressed that she did not use the online services because the internet is not the first place she would start searching for help, but that she would rather turn to colleagues.

In sum, there are several ways to interact with the network, although most members have limited their attendance to include a small number of events each year. Some members only attend events when their interests match the topic of the activity, making their frequency of interaction dependent on the event subject. A few member organisations interact more frequently with the network to gain knowledge or network. Time deficiency and the fact that members need to prioritise their everyday work tasks is the primary reason why no organisations have a high frequency of interaction with the CSR-network.

Analysis: Frequency of Interaction

One can argue that the network is coupled with various strength in terms of the member organisations’ interactions with it. A majority of respondents had only attended a few events, which according to Rasche (2012) would mean that they display weak couplings in this category. In addition, one could reason that the interactions between the network and its member organisations occurs occasionally rather than constantly, which in Weick’s (2001) terminology indicates that the elements are loosely coupled. Some interact with the network when the topic matches their interests. This means that their frequency of interaction with the

network can vary from low to slightly higher depending on the event. Relating to Rasche (2012) this means that in terms of interaction frequency, these members display weaker couplings when the events do not match their interests, and stronger when they do. In accordance with Orton and Weick (1990) this shows that coupling and decoupling practices can co-occur. However, some members showed a higher frequency in attending events, particularly those who wish to gain more knowledge about CSR and to gain contacts. In Rasche's (2012) framework, the higher interaction frequency between these members and the CSR-network indicates stronger coupling. In Weick's (2001) line of reasoning, the higher frequency would also indicate that these members have more or less continuous interaction with the network, displaying stronger couplings. Nevertheless, there is little evidence of any constant interaction (Weick, 2001) and time is a constraining factor for this. This means that the couplings in this category can be somewhat stronger among the members who wish to gain contacts or develop their knowledge, but due to time constraints they are still relatively weak since no member display high frequency of interaction (Rasche, 2012).

Direct or Indirect Interaction between Elements

This category presents how many people from each member organisation that attend events. It also sheds light on that the match between the topic of the event and the work tasks of the person who attends is important.

During the interviews, all the employees at the PPSRI discussed how it is common that only a few people from the same member organisations attend events, making the interactions between the network and the member organisation indirect. One network employee expressed that there is a problem when the attendants do not have work tasks that are directly related to the topic of the activity. She explained that they plan events with various sustainability focus for different groups, e.g. Human Relations (HR) or Finance, but that the presence at these events become mismatched if it is always the contact persons who appears. Another employee at the network explained that they encourage their members to send a colleague when it seems relevant. She continued by saying that it is often the case that the membership becomes bound to one person, usually the contact person. This was exemplified with that they have seen some organisations terminating their membership when the contact person resigned from the company.

“We’re sitting on the contact person’s lap [...] Some don’t prioritise to inform us about changes in their membership so it becomes vulnerable. [...] We try to have more than one contact person, preferably two. We try to be clear about that the membership is not bound to these individuals, but that it concerns their entire organisation. We try to encourage them to inform about the membership and send several colleagues, different colleagues, and that they forward the invitations and get more people to sign up for newsletters. But we can absolutely work more with that.” (Project Manager, PPSRI)

Despite the encouragement from the PPSRI to send more than one colleague, several interviewees stated that they did not always forward emails or asked a co-worker to go. A majority of the interviewees expressed that it was mostly the contact person or a few other persons from the organisation that had attended events and that it was common that the same people went. The digital newsletter with invitations is available for anyone to sign up for, but the interviews revealed only a few examples where more people of the same organisation got the email. In several organisations, the ones receiving the newsletter acted as intermediaries between the network and the member organisations. For example, one contact person explained that she was the one who received the information from the network and who decided if she should attend or pass the invitation on. She reflected that most of the time she had attended herself, and when others in the organisation had been invited they have not had the possibility to attend. In an email conversation, another member explained that she was the only one from their organisation who had been involved with the network, clarifying that her superior also knew about the membership but had not engaged any further. This shows that most members only send a few people to the PPSRI's events and that it is often the contact person who attends regardless of theme.

The member survey showed that for educational events such as the foundations in CSR course about half of the member organisations had attended. The interviews showed that these events also had more variation in who the organisation sent. Some interviewees mentioned that they had asked a colleague to go that had work tasks more closely related to the theme. For example, one contact person explained that she sometimes forwards the invitation but only if she thinks the event could increase her colleague's knowledge. She also pointed out that she sees an advantage in not sending too many different people to these events since it could change the group dynamics, making them feel less secure to exchange knowledge.

“There is probably an advantage that not too many of us go to these events, because you may want to tie it together, and that the ones in the group, that you get to know them a little, and that's difficult if there are new people every time.” (CSR-Manager, Private)

A person working with HR explained that she has chosen not to get the digital newsletter because she views herself more like an “understudy based on personal interests” and do not have time to attend events that are not directly linked to her work role. However, she had been invited to a PPSRI event on employer branding by the contact person in her organisation. She explained that she was initially sceptical about going, since she did not directly consider herself to work with CSR. Despite this, she expressed that she was positively surprised when she found other people from HR at the event and that the subject touched upon both HR and CSR, making it educational for her. Another interviewee also

mentioned the importance of relevance for the person attending, stating that the topic needs to be closely related to the work tasks if he should consider to go.

“So if it's something that I think is really worthwhile and available then yes, but if not then I suggest someone else that maybe have a closer connection with the topic to go.” (Founder and Project Manager, Non-Profit)

Another theme of events, where the member survey also showed that more member organisations had participated, was the CSR Forum and the network lunches. The interviews revealed that for these events, it was more common that several people from the same organisation went, although most members still sent one person. In an organisation where more people had gone, one project manager explained that the theme of the event was not the factor that made her attend, but that she went to the network lunch to socialise and gain contacts. Similarly, another person from the same organisation explained that she went to events to expand her network. The social factors were also touched upon by members from another organisation where several people had attended events. The contact person in this organisation explained that she mainly had attended the network lunches. She explained that she found the short presentations at these events as optimal, because if they were not interesting it did not matter because the presentations are short. This made the network lunches perfect for her purposes because she could use the time to gain new contacts and maintain her network. An HR-business partner from the same organisation explained that it was advantageous that many people from their organisation had attended events since it created stronger bonds between them as a group and also between them and some of their clients who had attended the same events.

In sum, it is most common that the contact persons attend events regardless of the theme, indicating that the membership is to a larger degree person bound than organisation bound. The PPSRI expressed that this is a problem since the information does not reach the right audience and they also recognised that they are dependent on the contact person for making the right person coming to the event. In addition, the newsletter seldom reaches more than a few from each member organisation and the PPSRI is therefore dependent on the contact person forwarding it, which they do not always do. Relating to some events, particularly educational events, the CSR Forum, and the network lunches, more people from the same organisation had attended. Regarding the educational events several interviewees explained that they ask a colleague to go if they believe the event can increase their knowledge. Some expressed that there could be an advantage in not having too many people attending events, implying that they are more prone to exchange knowledge when they know who is listening. Sometimes those who receive the invitation also get confused why they were asked, since they do not think they work with CSR. On the network lunches and the CSR Forum it was more common that several people from the same organisation had attended and this was mainly because they saw it as ideal opportunity to socialise and expand their network.

Analysis: Direct or Indirect Interaction

The fact that the membership becomes person bound rather than organisation bound indicates looser couplings between the elements as the interaction between them becomes indirect (Weick, 2001). A majority of the interviewed organisations only had a few, or only the contact person active in the network. This means that these people become mediators between the network and the member organisation, as they must forward the information to the colleague it is most relevant for. This makes the interaction between the network and the member organisations indirect, which indicates weaker couplings (Rasche, 2012).

Regarding events that aim to increase knowledge or contacts, more people from the same organisations have attended, indicating slightly tighter couplings as it is more probable that the persons will have work tasks relevant for the theme of the event (Rasche, 2012). In the educational events, some contact persons believe that it is beneficial to not send to many different people. This could reduce the possibility to learn at these events, since they do not feel as open with sharing information when they do not know each other. However, since the PPSRI plan events with different themes each time there is a possibility that those attending these activities do not have work tasks that match the topic. In these cases, the elements become loosely coupled (Rasche, 2012), since the person who attends the events needs to forward the information to the right person, which is not always done. Conversely, when the topic has matched the person who attended, that person is directly connected, as in the case with the HR-administrator. Since the work tasks are relevant for the topic of the event, the interaction with the network is more direct and the elements are more tightly coupled (Weick, 2001). For the CSR Forum and the lunch meetings, more people from the same organisation had attended as they wished to develop their network at these events. The larger number of attendants in these events makes it more probable that at least one person will have work tasks that match the theme of the event, making the interaction more direct and the couplings stronger (Weick, 2001). However, there was also evidence that the networking part was more important to these members than the theme of the events, meaning they might go regardless of topic. Consequently, they might not have work tasks related to the subject of the activity making the interactions with the network indirect (Rasche, 2012). This shows that the Direct or indirect interaction is also a variable where coupling and decoupling practices co-occur (Orton & Weick, 2001).

Shared or Different Use of the System

This category examines how different member organisations use the network, where three main purposes are found. The first two, selling and socialising, are connected to networking, whereas the third purpose is related to knowledge development.

The member survey conveyed that what people mainly expect from the network do not differ so much over the sectors. According to the survey, the main expectations were the networking opportunities and knowledge development. Networking was observed as a main

goal for members during the observations. In both observations, people introduced themselves and afterwards some took each other's contact information. What was not evident in the member survey, but became visible during the second observation and expressed during the interviews was that people networked for different reasons. The data showed two main reasons for networking, to "sell" a concept or to socialise to get inspiration. Regarding the first group, one employee at PPSRI confirmed that some organisations, such as consulting firms and non-profit organisations, want to sell their concept to others. This was also visible during the second observation, where several representatives from the non-profit sector were explicit in their wish to get to know new enterprises and gain more resources, not only monetary, but also projects for people they work with who are far from the labour market. The interviewees from the non-profit sector all expressed that they wish to display their work and offering to other members in the network, resembling a marketing division at a company. One representative explained that their organisation had a twofold purpose with their membership, both to affect the understanding of CSR to include more of the social issues, and to present their offering to companies. She clarified that this is what they mainly do in the network.

“[What we do in the network] is primarily to meet with organisations. I mean meeting organisations who'd might be interested in us and might want to invest money in our business.” (Fundraising Manager, Non-Profit)

She also explained that she had tried to use the network webpage to find which companies that are members in the network to investigate if any of them could be interested in investing in their work. In addition, she explained that she usually tries to make contact at events if she recognises that one of their sponsors is present, as a way to show what work the other person's organisation is contributing to. Another non-profit organisation explained that they have reached out to the network employees about presenting their work at the yearly CSR-Forum, but it has not happened since there has yet not been a clear fit between their activities and the theme of the event. These examples show that some of the members view the network as an opportunity to sell their offerings and display their work. Several interviewees expressed that the presence of selling organisations is advantageous, since they often have considerable knowledge in certain questions. However, in some cases the selling aspect is not perceived in a positive way by other members. During the second observation where several non-profit actors attempted to make their offerings visible, some discomfort was visible among some of the representatives from other sectors. In a follow up interview with a CSR-manager, she expressed that it was unfortunate that those displaying offerings were a majority at this particular event and that it became a selling arena rather than a forum for discussing how effective partnerships could be formed. She gave an example of a situation from the event where she had expressed interest in a new collaboration, leading to several non-profit representatives trying to sell their concept to her.

Another reason for networking is to gain social acquaintances with people that also have interest in CSR. This was most evident in those organisations that only had one person working with CSR. One employee at the PPSRI described that they often get contacted by members who express that they feel alone in the CSR questions in their organisation. This picture was confirmed by several interviewees, some of which explained that they have few colleagues to discuss sustainability issues with. One CSR-manager described that the loneliness at the home organisation creates a need for confirmations that they are “on the right track” or that someone else shares the same kind of problem as their organisation faces. The network events could therefore become like a gathering of colleagues, since they have similar work tasks and challenges and could share insights in a specific role at a membership organisation. One interviewee explained that that she finds the networks important to be able to benchmark with others how they approach certain questions. She continued by describing that it is sometimes difficult to be “a prophet in your own organisation” and that it is beneficial to gain contacts that could be referred to, or even brought in for a guest lecture. These examples display that there is a social dimension of networking which is mainly used by those in need of colleagues working with CSR since they do not have any in their home organisation.

The member survey also displayed that experience exchange or knowledge increase was an important expectation from the network. This was expressed during the interviews, where for example one CSR-manager described attending events as similar to a purchaser who goes on a trending tour, searching for current trends and what is happening in the world. Some interviewees claimed that they share the expectation of learning in the more niched cooperation groups. One CSR-manager described that the group she was part of meet and exchange experiences and that it gives her insight in other organisation’s problems that are similar to hers.

“There are different companies from Gothenburg in this group. It gives you a completely different insight in how you can work with CSR questions in other organisations. How you handle problems is very similar, you know not only supply chain related questions which we also face, but also internal CSR questions.” (CSR-Manager, Private)

Another CSR-manager explained that she did not attend any general events on sustainability, since she did not feel that they had the time to discuss the questions more deeply. This shows that a smaller group is more beneficial for knowledge sharing, which was also portrayed when some members expressed that they had formed subnetworks from the PPSRI. During an informal conversation, one person explained that some of the members had formed their own informal network to discuss challenges that they all faced. This was confirmed by one of the interviewees, who explained that meeting on other occasions help them discuss issues that are more directly applicable to their business.

In sum, this category has shown three main purposes for network participation, selling, socialising, and gaining knowledge. Regarding selling, some organisations use the network for visibility and an arena to create business opportunities. Another aspect of this is that these organisations want to display their work for the other members. Sometimes this is appreciated, but at other times it could lead to disappointment from other members. Others use the network to socialise, where several people explained that the social possibilities of the network confirmed that they were not alone in their work with CSR. The third use, to gain knowledge, was described as a way to keep eyes on current trends. Some expressed that they gain most insights from smaller groups where they can discuss more niched questions that they consider to be more relevant for their business.

Analysis: Shared or Different Use

It is evident from the data that different members have different focus when attending events, as well as different expectations and interpretations of the network. This could lead to disappointment from some actors when these different views become very apparent. In such cases, the different uses of the network indicate that the elements are more loosely coupled, since they do not share a common view about how the network should function (Rasche, 2012). On the other hand, some members have engaged in smaller collaboration groups or created their own subnetworks where they are able to discuss issues they face. In these groups, there is a stronger focus on knowledge development from all parts, meaning that they to a larger degree share a common view of how the network should function in these groups. Consequently, the elements should, in Rasche's (2012) framework be more tightly coupled when attending these particular events, since they have a shared perception about how their environment functions.

Four Ideal Types

The three categories for relationship between elements, Frequency of interaction, Direct or indirect interaction, and Shared or different view, have shown that members are coupled to the network with various strengths in the different variables (Rasche, 2012; Weick, 2001). From these categories, four 'ideal types' of member organisations in CSR-networks can be derived: *The Selling*, *the Social*, *the Knowledge Seeker*, and *the Disconnected*, which present four main ways the members are coupled to the CSR-network. In the third category, Shared or different view, we discussed that there are three main ways to use the network, selling, socialising, and knowledge development. The Frequency of interaction category showed that members who have a social dimension to their work tasks, or who need to know more about CSR, interact with the network more frequently. This category also reveal a fourth ideal type of member, the Disconnected, which does not attend that many events. The ideal types also have support in the second category, Direct or indirect interaction, where we pointed out that members often send the same person regardless of theme. However, the members who wanted to gain knowledge from the network or use it to develop their contacts, were more prone to send different people from the same organisation.

Consequently, *The Selling* organisations have a relatively low frequency in attending events, because they attend to display their work or sell their offering to other members. Thus, the topic of the event must match these interests, which is not always the case. These organisations have a small number of people attending events with this specific purpose, making their membership less connected to their organisation. *The Social* ideal type has a higher frequency in attending events since they want to build relationships to other people working with CSR. When socialising, some member organisations have more people attending events whereas other social types only have one person. In neither case are these persons always the most relevant representative from the member organisation to attend since they might not have work tasks that match the event. The third ideal type is *the Knowledge Seeker*. Within this group frequency of interaction with the network is also somewhat higher. It is often the contact persons that attend events from these organisations, making some knowledge gaining opportunities non-relevant for the person attending. However, when they see a possibility that a colleague could learn something from the event, they often ask them. Finally, there is one group of organisations that are less active in the network. This ideal type, *the Disconnected*, does not attend that many events and does not always perceive the network offerings as relevant. Still, they remain members, some because they used to be active but become inactive after a personnel exchange, others are dormant members waiting for the right theme or lecturer at an event. Thus, the Disconnected are the most loosely coupled members in the network.

Immediate Effects

The immediate effects of participation in the network are presented in this category. Depending on ideal type of member, different emotional and practical effects are seen as a result.

The survey showed that the membership had mainly helped the members in two ways, to concretise their own work in CSR and by inspiring them. This could be understood as practical and positive emotional effects, where most examples from the interviews were related to the latter. Some members could not point at any immediate effects from their membership, which is the case with the disconnected ideal type.

Emotional effects were especially common for the Social ideal type, where several members expressed that the positive feelings they gained at networking events could make them more engaged in their work. For instance, one interviewee explained that some events could increase her will to try something new in her organisation. She expressed that it “lit her spark to do something different”, although she could not point at an immediate example of what those new things might be. Some members claimed that the network activities had given them a feeling of confirmation that they should continue to work the way they do. For example, a CSR-manager expressed a positive feeling of confirmation that she was not alone in working with CSR.

“I know many of us [working with CSR] are alone in this task at our companies. So sometimes it feels good to get a confirmation that you are on the right track, or that you hear someone else in another organisation talking about the exact same problem as you have. It feels good, because then I know I’m not alone in this.” (CSR-Manager, Private)

Another interviewee described a positive feeling of belonging from a meeting with another person during a break at an event, when they compared their organisations. Nevertheless, she explained that they did not take each other’s contact information, and therefore the meeting had not led to anything further. These examples highlight that for the Social ideal type, emotional effects from personal meetings are valuable, yet few could give an example of any practical effects arising from this. This was also expressed by an interviewee who felt that the events had created better cohesiveness in the work group at her company, since several of their employees had attend the same events. However, she could not point at a direct practical effect arising from this.

“I absolutely think that we talk more about what has happened since we engaged in something together and talked it through afterwards. [...] It has created stronger bonds within the group, among [us working with sustainability] to attend these things together and become inspired, or not become inspired depending on how you perceive it. Sharing this means a lot to the group. But I can’t tell you that we really brought something with us or did something from that particular lunch event or so.” (HR-Business Partner, Private)

As in the other examples, this quotation highlights that members acquire a positive feeling of inspiration, confirmation, belonging, and cohesiveness. Despite the fact that the largest part of respondents could not point at an immediate practical effect, the data indicated some evidence that there could be a practical effect arising later in time for the Social ideal type. For example, one CSR-manager described a practical effect that came after several years. She had contacted another member for advice in a CSR-related question, which she knew the other member had three years ago and got their help.

For the Selling, immediate practical effects were apparent, although there were few examples. Some expressed that they expand their network at the events, but few could concretise when the contacts had been used to gain a new business relationship. These people also highlighted that developing their network is important because they never know what will appear or if the contacts or ideas might be useful in the future. One effect from the second observation was that a member who was especially active during the workshop contacted another member after the event to discuss a potential partnership. This enquiry had the effect that the contacted member discussed this with the HR-department at her organisation, displaying a practical effect.

Regarding the Knowledge Seeker, there were most examples of immediate practical effects, i.e. when members have gained concrete ideas for actions from the network activities and carried those out in their home organisations. One such example was provided by an interviewee at an HR-department. She described that at an event, a recruiter had presented how they hand out catalogues with their values and approach to sustainability issues to new colleagues. She explained that she brought up this idea with her boss the following day.

“Maybe we could do one of those small catalogues, because we have material for that and [our organisation] stands for a lot of good things too, especially from an environmental and consciousness point of view. [...] I actually spoke to by boss the following day and brought, I got their little introduction catalogue so I brought that. And then my boss has actually borrowed it at some meetings.” (HR-Administrator, Private)

A similar example was provided by a CSR-manager, who explained that she got the idea at one of the PPSRI's events to ask the employees how they contribute to the sustainability at the company. She explained that the idea behind asking is that people should reflect more on how they contribute and act more consciously. Closely after the event, she described that she had contacted the HR-department at her organisation regarding adding such a question to the annual staff appraisals. Some answers from the interviews also showed that the immediate practical effect could be interrupted by time constraints and other priorities. For instance, one interviewee explained that she had downloaded a book by those who had presented at an event, but that she had not had time to read it.

Analysis: Immediate Effects

This category has shown that there are different types of effects for the ideal types. The Disconnected did not get any immediate effects since they do not participate in the network regularly. An explanation for this might be that the network has no specific requirements on their members, but rather general requirements that they should understand their environmental impact and make continuous progress in their CSR work. Thus, carrying out specific activities in the members' home organisations is voluntary, enabling this type of dormant membership. Drawing on Weick (2001), these organisations, like all organisations, could still experience some lagged effects from previous more active periods. The Social ideal type mainly perceived positive emotional effects, such as feelings of inspiration, confirmation, belonging, and cohesiveness. Most could not point at a practical effect arising from this, but there were examples of when practical effects had occurred later in time. In line with Weick (2001), the emotional effects for the Social could be seen as positive interruptions that trigger arousal, since there is a possibility (but not a guarantee) that they could contribute to increased work effort. In contrast, the Selling ideal types had few examples of immediate effects. The effects they could exemplify with were practical. Last, the Knowledge Seeker mainly experienced practical effects (Rasche, 2012).

Key Results

Within the first category, the Frequency of interaction, time deficiency affected all members. Some member organisations had particularly low frequency, making them Disconnected members with loose couplings to the network. The Social organisations and the Knowledge Seekers had a higher regularity in their interactions with the network, indicating stronger couplings. The Selling organisations had higher frequency when their interests matched the topic of the activity, making their couplings with the network rather loose in this category. The second category displayed that in most organisations it is the contact person that attends events, making them an intermediary between the network and the member organisation. The exceptions were knowledge or network related events, where the Knowledge Seekers and the Social organisations were sometimes represented by more people. Nevertheless, even for these ideal types it was common that the contact person attended regardless of theme, either because they believed it was beneficial not sending too many different people to the events or because they did not forward the invitation to a colleague. This means that they, as the other ideal types, often display an indirect relationship. In contrast, these ideal types display more tight coupling when the theme of the event is connected to the person who attends making the relation direct.

Regarding the third category, the Shared or different use, the Selling ideal type use the network to display and sell their offering. The Social ideal type use the network to socialise and network, whereas the Knowledge Seekers used the network to increase their knowledge where smaller groups were highlighted as positive for relevant learning. The Disconnected displayed no particular use of the network, indicating a dormant membership. The fourth category showed that emotional effects were most common among the Social ideal type. The Selling ideal type experienced practical effects, although there were few examples. Among the Knowledge Seekers, practical effects were the most common. The Disconnected members had difficulties giving examples of effects. Table 2 summarises how the different ideal types are displayed in the four different categories. Frequency of interaction vary from low to high, where low indicates loose couplings. In Direct or indirect interaction, indirect indicates loose coupling. The Use of the network display the how the ideal types use the network in different ways. The strength of coupling in this category does not become apparent until the members attend events. If they meet other members with a different use, they are more loosely coupled. Last, the Immediate effects, is either practical, emotional, or none for the ideal types.

Table 2. Summary of Ideal Types from all Categories.

<i>Ideal Type</i>	Frequency of Interaction	Direct or Indirect Relationship	Use of the Network	Immediate Effects
<i>The Selling</i>	Low/Medium	Indirect	Display work and sell offering	Some practical
<i>The Social</i>	Medium	Indirect/Direct	Network and gain contacts	Emotional
<i>The Knowledge Seeker</i>	Medium	Indirect/Direct	Knowledge gain	Practical
<i>The Disconnected</i>	Low	Indirect	Dormant	None

Discussion

The purpose of this study is to examine if the strengths of couplings between member organisations and CSR-networks shape the effects of network participation. Drawing on Rasche (2012) and Weick (2001), the key findings and Table 2 displayed that members can be coupled to the network in four different ways. It also shows that members can be tightly coupled in one category but not in others, meaning that the elements are responsive and separated at the same time, which is characteristic for loosely coupled systems (Weick, 1976). These different couplings correspond to four ideal types, which experience different Immediate effects. The Disconnected displayed the weakest couplings among the ideal types in all three categories and these members did not experience any immediate effects from network participation. In contrast, the Knowledge Seeker showed the strongest couplings in all the categories and were the ones who also experienced the most concrete practical effects. Considering the other two ideal types, the Social displayed strong couplings and experienced emotional effects, whereas the Selling showed weaker couplings and also less immediate effects. This provides empirical evidence that there is a relationship between the strength of couplings in the first three categories and what Immediate effects the different ideal types experience, answering to Beekun and Glick's (2001) argument that many dimensions of couplings are expected to be related to each other and that these relations need to be examined empirically. Viewing the categories in this way, the first three variables influence the amount and type of immediate effects the member organisation could expect.

Previous research on CSR-networks has indicated that the desired effect of improving the member organisations' social responsibility is not always reached in these types of initiatives (Behnam & MacLean, 2011; Moog, Spicer, & Böhm, 2015). Others have found that this type of networks contributes to knowledge gaining and forming new activities (Clarke et al., 1999; Albareda 2008). When viewing cross-sectoral CSR-networks using loose coupling, it is however evident that these types of effects do arise, although only for certain members, i.e. the Knowledge Seekers. This means that loose coupling provides an explanation for why and

when members can experience immediate practical effects (Rasche, 2012), emotional effects (Weick, 2001), or no effects. The sparse existing of immediate effects could be explained by Albareda's (2008) argument that the voluntary nature of CSR-networks influences the effect the network has on its members. The PPSRI has no preconditions for becoming a member and members are only required to attempt to make continuous voluntary progress regarding sustainability. This affects several of the variables mentioned above. The Frequency of interaction is not high for any ideal type since members from all categories claimed that time constraints limited their possibilities to take part of the network's offerings. In addition, regarding Direct or indirect interaction, all ideal types had a membership that sometimes became too bound to the contact person and thereby not included as a vital part of the member organisation. Thus, there is a possibility that more specific requirements on the members would increase the occurrence of immediate effects and tighten the couplings between the member organisations and the CSR-network.

Existing studies on loose coupling has treated effects as a coupling variable among others (Weick, 2001; Rasche, 2012). This study builds on this research, although has treated effects as separate from other categories of coupling. Non-immediate effects as Rasche (2012) study occur at another point in time compared to the other variables. Consequently, the Immediate effects that are studied in this paper do not have this issue regarding timing. In addition, solely examining the effects to view the couplings between the elements would, as Orton and Weick (1990) explained, make the understandings of the couplings unidimensional as either coupled or decoupled. As shown in Table 2, this would have been false to assume since the couplings could vary between variables explaining why some effects do not occur, making them dialectal (Weick, 2001). This study shows that there is a link between the input (i.e. the coupling variables like frequency, relationship, and, view/use) and the effects. This also makes treating the effects like one of the coupling variables (Rasche, 2012) problematic since the outcome becomes endogenous, i.e. the other variables affect the variable (immediate or non-immediate) effects. The responsiveness of the first three categories indicating strengths of couplings (Weick, 1976) affect the responsiveness in the Immediate effect variable. We therefore recognise that in Rasche's (2012) framework for the relations between elements, the category of immediate effects is different from the other three in showing an outcome. There is also a reason to expand the Immediate effects category to involve both practical and emotional effects (Weick, 2001), to further increase the understanding of what effects different couplings lead to and when. Consequently, this paper contributes to the research area of loose coupling. By modifying the framework in this way to increase the understanding of cross-sectoral CSR-networks (Brass et al., 2004), we have been able to display why certain effects arise (Provan & Kenis, 2008) taking into consideration the relationships between elements as well as their dynamic nature. We have also considered Beekun and Glick's (2001) argument that many dimensions of couplings are expected to be related to each other and that these relations need to be examined empirically.

Although loose coupling provides an explanation for why certain immediate effects arise, it cannot with absolute certainty predict what these effects will be. This is because in loosely coupled systems effects could be slow, mediated, lagged, or intermittent (Weick, 2001) making it difficult to predict when they will occur. Of certain significance is that the couplings in the categories Frequency of interaction, Direct or indirect relationship, and Shared or different view do not guarantee an immediate effect. Nevertheless, the results show that if there is an immediate effect it can be explained by the strength of couplings in these three categories (Weick, 2001). This study thus answers the call of increased understanding for why certain effects arise from network participation (Provan & Kenis, 2008). In light of this, the immediate effects presented here are an indication of what different ideal types of members could expect as effects, but not a precise prediction of what a member in a CSR-network should necessarily get out of their membership, especially when including long-term effects (Weick, 2001).

Implications for Participation in CSR-Networks

Despite the sparse member requirements and the generally few practical immediate effects, there are still beneficial aspects of participating in CSR-networks for all types of members. This account of implications could be used as a basis for decisions on whether or not to engage in CSR-networks and are particularly valuable for organisations chasing sustainability solutions. Considering the Selling, there were some examples of where the membership had practical effects, although they were limited in number. This means that the network could function as an arena for displaying their offering, meet potential collaboration partners and maintain contacts, but there are few effects. However, the events are attended by members from several different organisations and there is an idea in taking the opportunity to display an offering at such events, since it might match those present. Given the low member fee, it might be beneficial for the Selling to engage in network activities. For the Social, there was a strong presence of emotional effects. This means that participation in CSR-networks for this ideal type could function as emotional support, which could be of special importance when the person attending network events feel alone in their role at their organisation. In these cases, the network functions as an arena to gain feelings of inspiration, confirmation, belonging, and cohesiveness. This could increase their will to test new ideas in their organisations and contribute with increased energy in their ordinary work tasks (Weick, 2001). Considering the Knowledge Seeker, this ideal type displayed the largest number of practical effects. This indicates that their participation in CSR-networks has the most concrete implications for how they work with CSR-related questions in their home organisations. Participating in events increases their knowledge about sustainability and affect how they work with CSR in their home organisation. For the ideal type that displayed the weakest couplings, the Disconnected member, there are no examples of immediate effects and their membership is dormant. Therefore, the membership might not have implications for how these members work with CSR-related questions. However, there might still be an idea for this ideal type to be a member of the network, since it might match their desire to be perceived as sustainable, giving them potential goodwill. This means that there is still a point

in becoming a member although it is not related to activities. There is also a possibility that they can use their dormant membership when it is relevant for them, thereby becoming another type of member. Again, given the low cost of membership, the potential benefits of being a member might outweigh the costs for the Disconnected.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study has been to answer the research question how member organisations are coupled to CSR-networks and how these types of coupling shape effects of participation. Using loose coupling literature and particularly Rasche's (2012) framework in a modified version, we have been able to demonstrate that there are four ideal types of members, the Selling, the Social, the Knowledge Seeker, and the Disconnected, which display different strength of couplings to the CSR-network. This, in line with Weick (1976) and Orton & Weick (1990), shows that the elements can be both responsive and show evidence of separation in these types of settings, since members show tendencies of couplings in one category but not in others. We have also been able to display that due to the variation in strengths of couplings, the ideal types experience different direct effects of network participation. Members with weak couplings display no effects and members with the strongest couplings experience practical effects. We have also discussed the implications of these findings by elaborating upon what participation in CSR-networks means for the four ideal types of members.

This study contributes to existing research on CSR-networks in two main ways. First, we have demonstrated how Rasche's (2012) model of the strength of coupling between elements could be modified to use the first three categories to identify ideal types of couplings and subsequently how such categorisation shape the fourth effect category. Our empirically derived four ideal types could be a useful starting point for future studies into what types of couplings there are. Second, we show how couplings in the four ideal types shape the effects of CSR-network participation. Combined, these two contributions furthers our understanding of couplings between members and CSR-networks. Further research should continue to explore the strengths of couplings between elements and their relationships with effects. In particular, it would be valuable to examine what these mean for the long-term effects of network participation.

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