Navigating the delivery of a service

- A practice perspective on environmental consultants

Joel Wickström

Navigating the delivery of a service – A practice perspective on environmental consultants

Joel Wickström

Publishing and archiving

Approved students' theses at SLU are published electronically. As a student, you have the copyright to your own work and need to approve the electronic publishing. If you check the box for **YES**, the full text (pdf file) and metadata will be visible and searchable online. If you check the box for **NO**, only the metadata and the abstract will be visible and searchable online. Nevertheless, when the document is uploaded it will still be archived as a digital file.

If you are more than one author you all need to agree on a decision. Read about SLU's publishing agreement here: https://www.slu.se/en/subweb/library/publish-and-analyse/register-and-publish/agreement-for-publishing/.

☒ YES, I/we hereby give permission to publish the present thesis in accordance with the SLU agreement regarding the transfer of the right to publish a work.

☐ NO, I/we do not give permission to publish the present work. The work will still be archived and its metadata and abstract will be visible and searchable.

Abstract

In a world where environmental pressure on companies is increasing, environmental consultancy services are a valued commodity. This study set out to investigate environmental consultants' practice of delivering an environmental service and what obstacles that practice encounters. This was achieved through a qualitative interview study with environmental consultants. The practice perspective was provided by Cook & Wagenaar's (2012) Epistemology of Practice, comprised of Actionable understanding, Ongoing business and the Eternally unfolding present. Two inductive concepts were also introduced, used here as a tool to reposition the original practice perspectives lens to better illustrate the researched phenomenon.

The result of the study showed how environmental consultants' (EC) actions are constituted by the practice of delivering a service. These actions were shown to first generate a practice rather than applying knowledge to the situation. The practice perspective also revealed the taken-for-granted stuff of everyday life of environmental consultants' and how the practice is generated and sustained through them. The study also detailed how the ECs handle challenges and sustain their practice by living in the present, where past and current practices inform the ECs about their situation and partially informs them about future practices. Showing how well utilized experiences was created and used through the present and applied in future practices. The inductive concepts highlighted the unpredictable nature of delivering ECs services. Environmental consultants' roles were difficult to predict before a practice was finished, forcing environmental consultants to handle the unpredictability of role assignment in the present. Cooperation was shown to be an important coping mechanism for the unpredictable nature of delivering environmental services. The intrinsic unpredictability of environmental consultancy services was met with practices of sharing knowledge and experience between environmental consultants to increase understandings, improve services and to better handle disruptions in practices.

The practice perspective provides an account for what is there and how what is there creates reality through engagement with it. How the practice is not only a result of agency or structures but generated through social relationships and the material context when engaged with. Providing an account for the reality environmental consultants are situated in when performing their practice. Also, how the practice makes sense and are acted upon by the environmental consultants involved and how the challenges that arise are coped with. Providing practitioners and academics with an insight into a previously unexplored field of study.

Keywords: Consultant, Environment, Practice Theory, Services, Social Theory, Qualitative

Table of contents

Introduction

Companies have an impact on the environment through their practices (Johannsdottir, 2015). The condition of the environment, with its degradation, depletion of resources, pollution and climate change influences the company's operations (ibid.). This pressures companies to take actions that are seen as environmentally beneficial or otherwise they risk being forced to act (ibid.). That is why in modern economies environmental consulting firms are providing an increasingly more valued service (Sayed & Lento, 2018). Environmentally, socially and economically sustainable services offered by environmental consultants (ECs) are therefore providing a valuable aid to companies (ibid.). The services are sometimes intangible in nature and knowledge-based (ibid.) i.e. implementations of environmental management systems or environmental policies. Some are more technical (ibid.) i.e. assessments of tainted soil or energy conservation in industries. What they have in common is that ECs deliver an environmentally beneficial service to help companies become more environmentally friendly.

Ben-Gal & Tzafrir (2011) argues that partnering with external consultants is not always a simple endeavour for organisations. This is due to organizational, political, and interpersonal factors that could interfere in the process of partnering and create tension in the relationship between client and service provider (ibid.). Many of the services provided by the ECs in my study are often adapted and personalized for the clients and require expert knowledge to be implemented successfully, Sayed & Lento (2018) seems to have a similar experience in their study. In my study's context, the high level of expertise and knowledge that are required for a delivery of an environmental service leads to the services becoming difficult to understand and to implement for the companies acquiring them. Also, the nature of the process of delivering an environmental service is unpredictable, with many structures and agents coming together that might have never interacted before. Obstacles during the process of delivering/acquiring environmental services emerge as a result. How these obstacles manifest themselves, why and how they are handled in this context will be investigated in my study.

A practice perspective will be applied in my study to detail the actions that constitute the practice of delivering EC services and the problems that might occur when doing so. The practice perspective provides an insight into how the phenomenon of delivering environmental services is created by the ECs actions and how these actions in their turn is shaped by the phenomenon of delivering environmental services. A transactional notion of experience is therefore applied to the situation. A transactional experience is an extension of the aspect of experience by incorporating situations that includes individual and social aspects as well as interactions with the physical world, not limiting experience to only the subjective mind of a practitioner (Cook & Wagenaar, 2012). The transactional definition of experience then focuses on how the relationship between individual, social and physical aspects are established through a practical action (ibid.) The transactional notion of experience, provided by Cook & Wagenaar, 2012 is used in my study as a theoretical tool and allows for the possibility to analyse the active and unpredictable nature of providing environmental consulting services, including the communication and adaptation of the services that could lead to learning and the revision of actions.

Both Srinivasan (2014) and Sayed & Lento (2018) argues that though consultants and consulting firms has been around for a long time, there is not much research done on the area. The lack of research regarding specifically environmental consulting firms provide motivation for this study. Very little to no research has been done specifically of the practice perspective on an ECs provided services. This study will then provide new insights by analysing the "doing of the practice" associated with services provided by ECs as described by the ECs. This will have implications for both practitioners and academics. For a practitioner this provides a better understanding of what is said to constitute the practice of ECs, what problems occur in the process and how they are handled. Through this gained insight, new thoughts and ideas regarding ECs perceived service delivery will be provided so that ECs could learn from and help them in the delivery of future services. From an academic point, this is a new context researched to create new knowledge regarding the delivery of an EC service, a previously ambiguous phenomenon.

In this research I will operationalize my practice perspective through a qualitative interview study with the aim to (1) gain an insight into ECs described practical actions that constitute their practice, (2) how the spoken experiences, understandings and choices in those actions shape the production of the practice itself and (3) challenge an operationalized epistemology of practice Cook & Wagenaar's (2012). This will be achieved through using the three concepts that make up Cook & Wagenaar's (2012) epistemology of practice: "actionable understanding", "ongoing business", and "the eternally unfolding present" and the two inductively produced concepts Role Flexibility and Cooperation.

Research questions

1. What are the ECs spoken perspectives on delivering EC services?

2. How is the practice of delivering an EC service generated, sustained and lived as described by ECs and seen through Cook & Wagenaar's (2012) practice perspective?

3. What obstacles to delivering an environmental service are identified in the ECs practice based on the interviews?

Background

External consultants have been illustrated by the literature Simon & Welsh (2010) Lapiedra et.al (2011) Ben-Gal & Tzafrir (2011), Srinivasan (2014). Organisations have been employing external advice and support for a variety of matters, ranging from critical to seemingly procedural (Srinivasan, 2014). Not uncommonly is that the relationship between the service provider and the client stretch over a longer period, is considered mutually beneficial, and has a high level of interaction (Simon & Welsh, 2010). In this study's context, most of the ECs provided services range between critical to procedural. ECs regularly engages in long term relationships and usually provides solutions with clear start and end (Sayed & Lento, 2018). Many of the ECs in this study also have longer relationships with their customers, some services require years to accomplish while other days and many of them are delivered by the same EC. Because of this built relationship, ECs are sometimes provided with different projects from the same customers if the service and relationship was deemed beneficial by the client. This I will explore more in the result section.

Simon & Welsh (2010) tells us that a professional service provider (or a consultant) "is trusted by the client to provide expert advice in a discipline of study", meaning that the consultant should provide knowledge in an area where the client lack it. These services are often highly specialised and tailored to a specific problem within an organisation (ibid.). In this context, the environment is often the "problem". Clients want to become more environmentally friendly but lack the expertise and/or the money to do it themselves. ECs then provides specialised and tailored solutions to the client's environmental problems and delivers it as a consultancy service. This means that ECs operate with a unique set of skills (Sayed & Lento, 2018). These skills are part of the expertise that ECs need to have for a successful service delivery. The skills are not always linked to expertise regarding the environment but could be related to project management or facilitation of actors involved. Therefore, ECs often use their own specialized equipment and methods to satisfy their market niche (ibid.). It also means that environmental consulting firms are required to acquire and update technical expertise, keeping themselves informed of technological changes and maintain modern methodologies (ibid.). If not, they risk delivering services that are outdated and unsatisfactory for the client.

Consulting firms poses a challenge to anyone with an aim to accomplish any form of extensive study of the area (Srinivasan, 2014). This due to factors such as the variety of consulting firms, encompassing massive global corporations to individual/independent consultants (ibid.). Much of the regulations other service providing firms operate in, such as law, is absent in the consulting industry and entities such as professional consultants' associations are scarce if existing at all (ibid.) Also, the wide spectrum in which these companies reside and operate, not in regards to size and scale, but in the differentiation of services provided and positioning in regards to values presents a challenge for research (ibid.). Arguably the most significant obstacle for extensive studies are the services provided by the firms "the lack of extensive studies on the consulting industry can be attributed to the nature of services they offer—services that are hard to study, measure, and quantify." (Srinivasan, 2014). The success of a delivered service is difficult to measure and hence study. Therefore, the lack of empirical evidence regarding the phenomenon of delivering environmental services could be attributed to these obstacles.

However, in this study a practice theory perspective will be applied to the ECs context. This means that practices rather than individuals or structures are the focus of the enquiry (Twine, 2015). Through the practice lens some of the innate obstacles for research of ECs described by Srinivasan (2014) can be circumvented. People are reframed as carriers of practices and elements of the practice are not linked to the individual but to the practice itself in which individuals participate (Twine, 2015). This means that the individual perspective is removed and replaced by a practice perspective, granting a tool for conceptualisation of the social aspects of delivering a service rather than the measurable and quantifiable (ibid.). This study then position itself opposite to the understanding that individuals constitute the practice of delivering services. The position rather becomes that the practice informs the individuals about actions in the practice.

Since this study focuses on practices rather than individuals, conflicting individual statements or contradictions are not explored in depth. This is because the chosen positioning of the practice perspective, that the practice informs the individuals about actions in the practice, is what is analysed. Not the individuals own creation of the practice. However, the group of ECs interviewed had a quite homogenous understanding of their practices with few contradictions. Why this was the case, one might only speculate, though the fact they all where ECs, in Stockholm, in a similar industry might give hints to an educated guess that they operate in a similar context, regardless of their individuality as people. Therefore, when drawing upon the data of the interviews, the focus is to explore how the perceived practice informs the ECs in their delivery of a service.

Theory

The practice of ECs will be researched through practice theory stated by Reckwitz (2002) as "a conceptual alternative to other forms of social and cultural theory". Practice theory originated from the field of sociology (Perera et.al, 2018). The concept of practice has historically been used as a tool to handle the dilemma of dualism such as "object and subject, agency and structure, power and knowledge, mind and body and nature and society" (Behagel et.al, 2017). Meaning that the previous focus was on either the individuals mind and actions or social structures, systems and discourses (ibid.). Many social theorists have used parts of a social theory of practice in their works i.e. Pierre Bourdieu in Outline of a Theory of Practice, Anthony Giddens in the framework of a Theory of Structuration and Michel Foucault in his late works on ancient ethics (Reckwitz, 2002). These sociologists have utilized the practice concept in similar ways. Giddens and Bourdieu argue that "social structures do not simply exist or influence actors from the outside but are produced and reproduced in interaction with them." (Behagel et.al, 2017). Meaning that through engagement in a practice, social structures emerge and are re-emerging when engaged again. Foucault uses the concept of practice as "a contingent way of imposing order on the world supported by non-discursive practices" (Behagel et.al, 2017). He argues here for how discourse cannot be resolved through a "system of significations" (ibid) but needs practices to be ordered. In short, "practice theories go beyond individuals but emphasise the fact that human subjectivity is at the heart of processes of structuration, reproduction, and (also environmental) change" (Spaargaren, 2011).

These contributions to the concept of practice leads up to Theodore Schatzkis Social Practices that was the first social philosophy explicitly focused on the practice concept (Reckwitz, 2002). What all these authors have in common is their interest in the everyday and life-world of people (ibid.). Reckwitz (2002) argues that all these authors are influenced by the interpretative or cultural turn in social theory. However, Reckwitz (2002) also argues that practice theory lacks one fundamental aspect to other social-theoretical alternatives, the lack of a theoretical system. This is where Cook & Wagenaar's (2012) Navigating the Eternally Unfolding Present: Toward an Epistemology of Practice attempts to create a theoretical account of how knowledge and context can be explained in terms of, and evoked within, practice. This is an attempt to construct a theoretical system of practice theory and is what Reckwitz (2002) sought after. Therefore, Cook & Wagenaar's (2012) perspective on practice theory will be used in this study.

Cook & Wagenaar's (2012) practice theory allows for the possibility to analyse ECs perspective on their actions while delivering a service through a practice theory perspective. Introducing this new position of perspective then becomes an attempt to explain the specific patterns of learning, doing and living that arise in the ECs context. Preferably creating an epistemological framing of ECs practices that could offer an understanding to the situation ECs resides in. This reframing of practice epistemology seeks an understanding of the relationship between knowledge and practice through a transactional understanding of experience (ibid.). A transactional approach on experience extends the aspect of experience to incorporate situations that includes individual and social aspects as well as interactions with the physical world, not limiting experience to only the subjective mind of a practitioner (ibid.). This then means that an epistemology of practice incorporates how the relationship between individual, social and physical aspects are established through a practical action (ibid.). Then the relationship in a practical action constructs an understanding of context and knowledge that is relevant to perform the practice (ibid.). This model then treats context and knowledge as aspects of practice rather than practice being seen as fully explicable in terms of knowledge or knowledge constrained by context (ibid.).

Since this study's empirical data consists of interviews only, all the claims of how the practice of delivering ECs services will therefore come from indirect data. This means that throughout the study, when the practice of ECs is referenced, it will be based on what the ECs have said to have learned, done and lived. It is the ECs own account of their practice that will be primarily analysed through the practice lens that Cook & Wagenaar (2012) provide.

Method

I have used a qualitative research approach in this study. Creswell (2014) argues that qualitative research "is an approach for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem". Meaning that a qualitative study will focus on the experiences, meanings and understandings from the view of the study's subjects regarding a phenomenon Creswell (2014). Bryman (2008 p. 413) concur when saying that the focus of qualitative interviews is on the respondent's own perceptions and views of the phenomena

researched. Since this study is based on interviews, its important to emphasise that it's the ECs own experiences, meanings and understandings regarding their practice that is analysed.

A strategic sampling of respondents was done to create equivalence between research aim and sampling (Bryman, 2008 p. 434). This is done so that relevant people are asked relevant questions connected to my research topic (Bryman, 2008 p. 434). Meaning that the respondents had to fulfil the criteria for participation in the study, otherwise a risk of interviewing a person that could not contribute to the study's aim was present. The criteria for the respondents where that they should provide any form of environmentally beneficial service to clients in a consultant format. No exclusion regarding what kind of environmental services was provided by the ECs or the size of their firms was implemented. The respondents were located through their firms' websites using the criteria above.

To get access to respondents I called all my participants in the study on the phone and booked meetings with them. 7 of the interviews were conducted at the office space of the respondent, 3 where done over the phone. The interviews differentiated in time, some was over an hour other around 30 minutes. All the interviews audio was recorded and later transcribed completely. 5 of the ECs provided more nature-science-based services while the other 5 where more knowledge-based. Many of the ECs in the study deliver many different services and operate within both fields and are therefore difficult to categorize precisely.

Semi-structured interviews were chosen to gain access to the data needed for the study. 7 interviews where done individually with ECs and one group interview was done with 3 ECs. The group interview was done with the aim to let the interviewees help each other, drawing from opinions and ideas that further developed their own thought and understanding during the interview (Bryman, 2008 p.447). The data from the different interview formats have not been separately analysed and has been coded together with the other data. The choice of semi-structured interviews was motivated by the relative flexibility given by the format during the interviews while keeping the overall theme of the study present through the interviews (Bryman, 2008 p. 415). Since I knew my specific topic of the study, flexibility gave me an opportunity to pursue specific themes of interest that might present themselves in the interviews that would otherwise be overlooked with a more structured format (Bryman, 2008 p. 416).

A critical perspective of the respondents is worth having in mind when doing qualitative research based on interviews. Not because respondents in general are dishonest but because a certain amount critical reflection might be important regarding biases in respondents (Creswell, 2014 p.239). All the respondents in this study provide indirect information regarding the phenomenon researched (Creswell, 2014 p.240). Meaning that the answers given to the questions are filtered through the respondent's views and therefore influenced by their biases (ibid.). Also, the presence of a researcher might influence the answers of the respondents (ibid.) The ECs in the study are representing their firms and this might create biases that influences their answers when given to a researcher. How much these biases are influencing the answers is very difficult to say or predict but both these limitations have been considered in this study.

An application of the theoretical constructs of the epistemology of practice: actionable understanding, ongoing business and the eternally unfolding present (Cook & Wagenaar 2012) was done on my data corpus collected through interviews. This means that the study became deductively-oriented (Bryman, 2008 p.26). With deduction the researcher draws upon theory and previous knowledge on the specific research area to pose one or more hypotheses that can later be empirically tested (Bryman, 2008 p.26). However, an inductive approach to the data will also take place since this enables me to test, develop and challenge aspects of Cook & Wagenaar's (2012) operationalized epistemology of practice. An inductive analysis tries to build theories from what the collected data tells the researcher (Bryman, 2008 p.28). This method is sometimes called grounded theory (Bryman, 2008 p.28). Grounded theory is simply explained as an approach where the researcher moves between inductive and deductive methods to create a theory based on an empirical foundation (Bryman, 2008 p.28). The choice of using a mix of inductive and deductive methods is motivated by two things, first Cook & Wagenaar's (2012) epistemology of practice is a relatively new theory that needs to be thoroughly tested, developed and challenged. Second, the approach presents an opportunity for flexibility in the later analysis by opening for complementary interpretations to be applied or created if deemed necessary. This in the pursuit of a higher validity throughout the study and a deeper understanding of this study's specific context.

One of the approaches that was applied on the data collected was a thematic coding based on the pre-existing theoretical constructs: actionable understanding, ongoing business and the eternally unfolding present by Cook & Wagenaar (2012). Thematic coding of data means that the author creates an index over central themes presented in the data (Bryman, 2008 p. 528). This will categorize the data into encompassing themes that later will be broken down into smaller sub-categories based on the Cook & Wagenaar (2012) literature. This is the deductive part of the coding.

However, since this study will attempt a grounded theory perspective on its data, a complementary form of coding will also be applied. Kvale (1997) describes an approach to coding where the meaning making process is ad hoc. This means that there is no specific technique or approach to the coding process, but a mix of several. The researcher combines several different forms of coding i.e. pattern recognition, reasonability, themes and metaphors etc. to the data. This ad hoc approach is used to gain an inductive perspective to the coding process and utilize parts of grounded theory. This approach is of inductive nature, since its intention is to increase the researcher's possibility for interpretations in the application of codes. This leads to an increase of possible interpretations of concepts and themes present in the data that only an application of a deductive coding approach would not. The concepts and themes I use in the inductive coding are highly interpretive, their effective application as codes relies upon the interpretive responsibility of the researcher and will hopefully contribute to some interesting thoughts and ideas.

The two sets of coding, one deductively and one inductively created, was compared and contrasted. This to strengthen and/or challenge Cook & Wagenaar's (2012) theoretical perspective of the epistemology of practice and further increase the overall validity of the study. The two concepts produced through the inductive coding method was Role flexibility and

Cooperation. Since all the interviews mentioned these categories a pattern surfaced and was turned into theoretical concepts. The two categories could be argued to fit into the more deductively produced coding scheme from Cook & Wagenaar's (2012) actionable understanding and ongoing business. However, I believe that in this specific context using only Cook & Wagenaar's (2012) interpretation of these concepts risked losing knowledge regarding the context if not illustrated as done in the study. Both inductive concepts are analysed through a modified lens of Cook & Wagenaar's (2012) practice perspective. This means that a repositioning of the epistemology of practice (Cook & Wagenaar, 2012) is done in the study to better suit the researched context.

Result

In this section of the study a presentation of the data collected through the interviews with ECs are put in a practice perspective. The chapter starts the deductively produced theoretical concepts actionable understanding, ongoing business and the eternally unfolding present. The two inductively produced concepts role flexibility and cooperation ends the result chapter. The data collected from the interviews has been coded and categorized into one of these five concepts. However, since the two inductive concepts data could be argued to fit into the three deductive concepts, see below, they are presented at the end. The inductive concepts are still presented through a practice perspective but a repositioned one from the deductive concepts. This is done so that the reader has a better understanding of the original practice perspective presented first and why a repositioning of the theory was utilized at the end.

In this section I will use the concepts one, few, some, many and all when describing how many ECs said different statements. One means 1, few means 2-4, some means 5-7, many 7-9 and all 10.

Actionable understanding

The task facing the EC is to deliver a service requested by the customer. This requires them to first create an understanding of what the service requested is and what that means for themselves. A conceptualisation of the service needs to be produced by the EC, to shape it in a way so that it later can be "done" or delivered. This includes the ECs understanding of what is desirable, effective and responsible in the project. This enabling stage of the "doing" of the service means developing a "mutually held understanding of the case that enables them to take mutually acceptable action on it" (Cook & Wagenaar, 2012). This is called an actionable understanding and it is formed to make the service requested manageable.

Many ECs highlight two things that influence this conceptualisation stage more than other things, the knowledge of the costumer and how explicit the description of the service is. Knowledge about what this service will mean for the customer when hiring the consultant to

"do" it. An explicit description from the customer of the ECs role in the service requested, but also how an explicit description from the ECs what the service will entail for the customer.

Many ECs describe that more time is usually necessary when working with customers not used to working with consultants. Extra time might be spent on the starting phase of the project with the goal to increase the knowledge of the customer regarding the service offered. This to guide the customers through the conceptualisation stage of the service and to increase their knowledge regarding the service. The intention of this is to increase customers knowledge and to achieve a precising of their description of the service which in turn then makes it easier for the EC to conceptualise the service for themselves and increase precision in their own description of the service. This could lead to extra services being added through the conceptualisation stage, since an increase of the mutually held understanding of the service is happening.

However, this is described as a difficult stage by some ECs and do not always succeed fully, even though many define it as essential for a successful delivery of the service. As one EC said, "the customer sometimes doesn't even know what we are delivering, and it can take a while before they understand what we are delivering". The level of knowledge and therefore explicit descriptions differs between customers, but one thing is agreed upon by all ECs, customers that have more knowledge and explicit description entering the project is easier to work with since the ECs own understanding of the service requested is influenced by it.

The aim of the services provided is linked to the conceptualisation part of the projects. The aim is often some form of environmental benefit and includes a wide range of goals. Many of the ECs include an advisory role into the services. The advisory role usually involves teaching, providing information and support to the customer by drawing upon their own expertise in the area. This with the goal to provide knowledge as a base for decisions regarding the aim or the doing of the service.

After the conceptualisation of the service is created and different possible aims produced, there needs to be a decision about how to proceed. All the ECs sends an offer of how the service is conceptualized by the ECs, how it will be provided and what it will mean for the client. If the offer is accepted by the client, the project can commence.

After the decision is made, generation of the practice of delivering the service starts. This phase is made possible through shared understandings and decisions that enables a range of different actions to take place or activities to engage in (Cook & Wagenaar, 2012). It is when a "mutually held understanding" is reached and enables participants to "take mutually acceptable action" on it (Cook & Wagenaar, 2012). This mutually held understanding of the service starts the generation of the service through action. Many ECs actions usually start with gathering their project groups with the people that will be involved in the project. This to go over what the service entails, what has been decided that the ECs should do, what the customers should do, what the budget is, time plans, aim and purpose with the service, dividing the different tasks connected to the service and how resources within the ECs own firm needs to be delegated. Large projects might require continuous reconceptualization of the service together with the

costumer, with aims updated and a constant flow of new decisions to be made. Small projects might require none of these and the EC delivers its service and nothing else.

Until now, I have illustrated the diversity of factors that goes into the production of an actionable understanding in providing EC services. A relatively small part of these factors could be known before starting the "doing" of the practice of providing the service. My conclusion from the ECs told perspectives is that the ECs do not apply their pre-existing knowledge to solve many of these stages to reach an actionable understanding (Cook & Wagenaar, 2012). I argue that the experience, through being in the situation and engaging with the problems present, drives the creation of practice, based on the ECs own account (Cook & Wagenaar, 2012). This means that "doing" the practice informs many the ECs what to do next through their embodied and practical engagement in the service provided. The knowledge is not brought to the context to create and drive the practice. The "doing" of practice in the context creates knowledge that drives the practice of delivering the service.

Ongoing Business

The arrival at an actionable understanding regarding the services provided takes place in a wider kind of practice. Cook & Wagenaar (2012) argues that actionable understandings emerge out of "ongoing business". Ongoing business consist of a "flow of routine actions and understandings, a certain physical environment, a set of tools, the presence of colleagues who behave in predictable ways, and shared memories, meanings, and expectations, that, taken together, form the experiential environment" of the ECs (Cook & Wagenaar, 2012). Also defined as taken-for-granted stuff that is expected to be there in everyday work. This means that the shared experience lived by the ECs makes up the ongoing business (Cook & Wagenaar, 2012).

In the ongoing business, physical environment is one aspect. Outside the need for computers, phones and internet, one physical aspect mentioned by many ECs was the office space and what that entailed for them. Many of the ECs highlighted the importance of good office space as a contributor to good service delivery. The office space was important for both wellbeing for the ECs but also counted as a factor then inviting potential customers for meetings. However, the nature of the services that ECs provides, many times forces them to work at the costumer's offices or in the field. This with the effect that many of the ECs spent few days at their own offices. A few ECs thought this led to challenges in some of the tasks regarding corporation and a loss of overall affinity at their own office. Also, the offices at the costumer was highlighted, as one EC put it, "it is good to have a place to sit when you are working, it is nicer". Affinity is again here shown to be important by an ECs.

Routine actions are also part of the ongoing business. Many of the ECs argue the importance of how you start a project, knowledge about if something similar has been done before, how you do a risk assessment and a budget in all the services provided. Some EC firms have formal routines for this, while others have fewer formal steps to follow while providing the service. The perceived challenge facing many ECs is that the services provided usually becomes highly tailored for the costumer. Some of the ECs say they almost never sell the same thing twice.

Thus, leading to problems when creating routines that are to specific. There needs to be an adaptation of the routines for every customer, since the nature of the services provided are heavily context dependent. This shows how the "doing" of practice creates knowledge that drives the practice of delivering the service forward. Knowledge is generated by doing the practice and the knowledges utility lies within the practice (Cook & Wagenaar, 2012). This means that during the delivery of the service the routines are adapted since new knowledge is generated through the doing of the practice.

All the ECs talk about having fixed tasks not directly connected to the services provided. These might include, meetings, forums, task groups and support. All these have different purpose and importance, but all contribute to the shared lived experience of the ECs. These different routine tasks inform the ECs about the sometimes taken-for-granted stuff that might have not been noticed otherwise. An example of this is one ECs firm who has assigned different groups to different parts of their office space as their responsibility. This with the benefit of understanding how a dirty conference room might affect their colleagues. This knowledge might not be directly influencing how services are provided but might increase understanding regarding your colleagues and an overall wellbeing. Another example mentioned is developing an understanding for what the customers might need and through that develop new services. This directly connects to the services provided but is still not connected to any specific service provided.

Rules and requirements are also part of the ongoing business. The most obvious rule and requirement for all the ECs is the agreement made with the customer to deliver a service. To sustain themselves as ECs and as environmental consultancy firms, delivering services successfully is crucial. However, there are many other rules and requirements that shape the practice then just the agreement with a customer. These differentiate a lot between the fields of service and expertise. The consultants working with technical nature-based services for industries or real estate have a very different set of regulations to follow versus the more knowledge-based services. What they have in common is that they all need to follow the rules and requirements for both their customers and their own firms. This duality requires the ECs to be knowledgeable in its own firms rules and requirements imposed on them and at the same time their customers rules and requirements and how this affects the practice. All the ECs know this, it is taken-for-granted stuff. However, knowing the exact shape of these rules and requirements from both perspectives becomes apparent first when the practice starts.

There are certain traits that ECs needs to know or learn if one is to be a successful EC. A higher education of some form is usually needed. All ECs in the study argue that university or equal education is necessary for the required tasks. Project management and some form of environmental knowledge is also argued to important by many ECs. Other traits included by some ECs is an interest in people, perceptive, clear and structured, communicative, flexible, problem solver, dare to ask, stand up for yourself and social competence. All these traits, except maybe education, are highly subjective. This is then a part of the shared subjective context that Cook & Wagenaar (2012) talks about, in which the ECs perform their practice in. All the ECs highlight these specific skills as important, since their experience performing practices before in this context informs them that this is what is needed to provide a service.

ECs are constantly influenced by the ongoing business of the practices around them. This influence shapes the interpretations, understandings and meanings attributed to being an EC performing a practice. One could describe this as a general "standard" of performance. This influence is often beneficial but could also become a threat to the projects. "most events simply assert the ongoing business, thereby contributing to its stability, but some events may be perceived as a threat." (Cook & Wagenaar, 2012)

As stated above, often the ongoing business helps the ECs deliver a service successfully by shaping the practice through a delivery "standard", but there are instances where this could be a liability. There is a chance that the ECs becomes complacent in the routines of the ongoing business and miss detecting things that could have a negative effect on the projects. One EC said that to avoid this, one should have no preconceptions before entering a project. What many other EC firms have done, is to resort to core values in their service providing. These core values function as routines for how to approach and handle projects and the context presented in them. Examples of values are customer satisfaction, ethical values like not working with pornography etc. Forming values instead of specific routines allows for flexibility over different services, while still maintaining frames to guide the EC in their work. This to ensure that the customers experience working with the EC is as beneficial as possible and vice versa.

Many of the ECs talk about a need to meet the customer at their level and adapting the services accordingly. This is also why many ECs have an advisory service connected to the main service they provide. To help themselves by helping the customers making the most beneficial decision for the context. However, for this to work, the customer needs to trust that the EC has the customers best interest in mind and not their own. This trust can sometimes be difficult to earn from customers but is very important, this is especially emphasised by the smaller ECs firms. An example mentioned by one EC of this is courage to address inconveniences that appear in the projects and how this could be one way to increase the trust between an EC and customer. The customer is often more understanding if an explanation is given to why a change has happened in a project. Frankness is talked about by many ECs to be a winning concept through a project, since it allows the EC to speak up if something needs to be addressed in the project. However, to be frank about an issue with a customer is easier said than done many ECs state. The ECs firms handle this with different strategies. What all the firm's strategies have in common is that the particular EC connected to the project is supported by the firm they work at. The issue is brought up in the team/firm and handled as a company decision. This to protect the individual EC but also to increase the credibility in the action towards whatever the issue that has risen entails.

Knowing the limits of your own knowledge and where the customer knows better than you are another issue brought up by many ECs. This could present a threat to the project if the customers don't provide enough resources, support and information to the EC to perform the service. This is an example of how the ongoing business and hence the actionable understanding of the costumer influences the ECs practice. Clashing expectations regarding the project could happen for several reasons, but the effect of withholding resources, support and information from the EC, intentional or not, is that the project might be slowed down or become impossible to do. Some ECs talk about frankness again as a good strategy for coping with the situation of

clashing expectations. Customers might not be aware of the implications their actions have on the ECs practice, hence the importance of this frankness from the EC.

This is what constitutes the ongoing business of the ECs I have interviewed. What I have hopefully shown here is how navigating the ongoing business is done through "doing" the practice and how this creates knowledge. This shows that simply applying knowledge to a context it not enough to keep driving the practice forward. Rather the ongoing business between ECs and customers determines what knowledge is extracted from the practice and why it is to be considered knowledge in the first place.

Eternally Unfolding Present

In this part, I will try to show how Cook & Wagenaars (2012) concept Eternally Unfolding Present connects actionable understandings and ongoing business in the present. Cook & Wagenaar (2012) argues that the Eternally Unfolding Present is "the immediate present of practice (in which) actionable understandings are formed and ongoing business is sustained". Since practice takes place in the present, then the understanding of knowledge and context also do (Cook & Wagenaar, 2012). Context is argued to acquire its ongoing existence, form, and meaning from the practice it sustains (Cook & Wagenaar, 2012). Knowledge is evoked through the ongoing practice and shaped by the practice it aids (Cook & Wagenaar, 2012). This means that, since we are constantly in the present, our consciousness engagement with the world creates a collection of experiences of that world. We then assemble those collections of experiences to form experiences with meaning. It is through these "systematic singularities" (Cook & Wagenaar, 2012), or collected experiences with attached meaning, that our understanding of the world emerges. A practice perspective then tries to explain how engagements in the world through practices evokes context and knowledge. This understanding of the present will be used as a perspective on how learning by doing as an EC is created and later described by ECs in the interviews. This means that learning in the present by doing, is analysed here through indirect data from the interviewee's own descriptions of past experiences of the phenomenon learning by doing.

I have already above somewhat illustrated how knowledge comes into being through active engagement in the present but will dive deeper into the meaning of it here. How is then practice invoking knowledge in this context? So, when the EC start a project, it also starts a practice to deliver a service to a customer. As seen above, the EC might know about the request, has engaged the costumer and started "doing" the practice. However, how the request is conceptualized together with the costumer, what is needed to deliver the service and how this will be practically "done" is knowledge that cannot fully be obtained without moving the practice forward through engagement in the present. As one EC states "in our business, one gets knowledge through delivering services". The EC never know all the knowledge that is needed to deliver the service before the practice starts, since knowledge is evoked through the present. An illustrative example given is how the ECs sometimes don't have the competence needed to deliver the service requested. They first must learn it themselves and then teach the costumer about it. This is also true for the customers. When ECs talk about customers not knowing what they are buying and finds out along the way, through the practice, what the service means to

them. The knowledge in these two examples is not applied but is categorized and understood to be knowledge only through the practice. Systematic singularities need to be formed, through engagement in the present, for knowledge to have utility in the practice.

Some ECs also talk about developing a "sense" for what to do in the situation they are in. This sense is a systematic singularity and is used to understand the situation the EC are in. This sense is said by one EC to only be possible to develop through experiencing the practice in the present and cannot be read or studied to. The meaning of the sense will differ between customers, but the concept stays the same. This sense is used in the present to collect and order experience in an understandable way for the EC, creating knowledge.

Another example of how knowledge comes into being through active engagement in the present, is how the ECs start their employments. Some of ECs in the study talk about how their firms have some form of trainee program for newly employed ECs. This trainee program usually means that the new EC does everything together with a senior EC until deemed fit to do it themselves. One of the reasons for this is that the knowledge gained through experiencing the practice of delivering a service is impossible to gain from anything other than "doing" it. Delivering or providing an EC service can mean many different things, it is only when the practice is put into a specific context that knowledge can be accessed through the present. The new EC is then able, through the trainee program, to produce systematic singularities that will later be used as a method to collect more and new systematic singularities that creates more knowledge. Systematic singularities then work as frames or categories that could be used to understand other collected experiences and create new systematic singularities.

Practice is also shaped by context that in turn shapes context. Context is argued to acquire its ongoing existence, form, and meaning from the practice it sustains (Cook & Wagenaar, 2012). This means that place influence the practice and vice versa. The social and physical history of a place enables activities that happens in that place. The ECs work in many different places and in many of them at the same time. The environmental sector is one, Stockholm is one, their own firms one, the costumer's different places is some and the list goes on depending on what level of analysis one finds interesting. All of these are connected by the practice that are performed within them. All these places shape the ECs practice in different ways. The practice of providing a service will be different due to a place shaping it and how other practices have shaped that place to afford the practice (Cook & Wagenaar, 2012).

Some EC talk about how some customers wants to have a more environmentally friendly image for their companies as a reason for acquiring the ECs services. This is an example of how the customers place have been influenced by the practice of what ECs do in their common place, i.e Sweden or the customers industry. A few ECs talk about companies reaching out to them and wants to acquire their services because their competitor on the market have acquired similar services.

The opposite is also true, if the ECs resides in a place where the customers perform practice, they will be influenced. One ECs mentions that one of her main tasks is to survey what the different markets need for environmental services look like. This might lead to, as was briefly

mentioned above, generation of new services to provide to customers. By understanding what the customers might need, by residing in the same places as them, the ECs can tailor services for them. Different places have different influence of course. A company in the same country where the ECs performs a practice as opposed to a company on the same market with similar customers will be influenced differently. The places shape the practices and in turn the practices shape the places differently depending on the level of perceived influence by the actors within them. This is how ECs practices evoke their own specific contexts while also shaped by them in the present.

I have now established how knowledge and context is invoked by the practice of ECs based on their own account. These concepts, knowledge and context, illustrate how engagement in the present through practice informs the understanding for ECs about the situation they reside in. The ECs starts "doing" the practice of delivering a service with creating an actionable understanding through the ongoing business of their own firm. It is only possible to "do" this practice in the present. We now also know that the phenomenon, actionable understanding and ongoing business, could contain and produce challenges to the practice of delivering a service. These challenges and their solutions are sometimes impossible to foresee and therefore impossible to plan for since some arise in the present. All the ECs have stated that unforeseen challenges arise constantly in their practices and that these challenges might shape the practice unpredictably. The ECs needs to overcome these challenges in the present when they arise. They do this is by driving the practice forward in the present, creating new knowledge in the dual nature of the context they reside in. They also use past experiences of delivered services to handle the challenges that arise. This means that a service delivered, past and present, becomes in itself a systematic singularity, a collection of experiences with attached meanings. Learning happens when the experience is interpreted through the practice's specific framework. The framework of the practice works as a coding scheme that informs the ECs of what knowledge is, regarding the service delivered. A learning process is then started based on the knowledge invoked by the practice and learning-by-doing then becomes an effectively utilized systematic singularity.

An effectively utilized systematic singularity creates a more responsive and flexible practice, more adapt to handle unforeseen challenges and how they might shape the practice. By utilizing the knowledge invoked through systematic singularities within a project or a past project, the ECs can use that lived situation in the present or future projects to avoid or handle challenges. As almost all ECs answered when asked about how they know what to do when handling unforeseen challenges, "experience". One EC explained "everyone builds up authority through experience, when you have seen it with your own eyes, lived through it and seen the result of different approaches. That is valuable".

Role flexibility

The different roles ECs must embody through their practices are many and might shift through the projects. Cook & Wagenaar (2012) talks about rolls as being part of the ongoing business and hence part of the forming of an actionable understanding. Many of the ECs in this study say that

different roles are needed to be performed simultaneously in the projects. In the ECs practice some of the roles are predetermined in a project, but in some cases, they are added, changed or removed during the projects. This means that the practice informs the ECs about which role is needed in the present sometimes. An understanding about these continually changing roles might be overlooked using only Cook & Wagenaar (2012) epistemology of practice. Cook & Wagenaar (2012) interpret roles as part of the ongoing business that forms the actionable understanding of a given practice. This is to some extent also true for this context as seen above. However, in this context specifically, the practice of delivering a service, some roles do not originate in a way as interpreted by Cook & Wagenaar (2012), one could argue. Some roles are more connected to the eternally unfolding present and the ongoing business of the costumer. Therefore, a further exploration into the origin of these roles and how that affects the ECs is provided here to highlight their importance in this specific context.

The ECs all have different roles, both in their own firms but also in the projects connected to their customers. The roles appointed in their own firms are connected to the ongoing business of that firm. This means that the taken-for-granted stuff that is expected to be there helps create and shape the ECs role at that firm. All the ECs in the study work at other firms and will therefore be assigned different roles at that organisation. However, the roles in a specific service or project is assigned to the ECs as they perform their practice of delivering the service. These three origins of roles, two created through the two firms ongoing business and one created through the doing of the practice, position the EC within the practice and informs them regarding the consequent tasks connected to each role. However, both firms' ongoing business role creation of the ECs originates from their ongoing business and actionable understanding, but the roles created and assigned during the "doing" of the practice originates more from the eternally unfolding present. An example of this, as mentioned above, is when new knowledge is evoked by the practice and leads to new tasks for the EC and a new role.

The two roles produced in the firm's ongoing business, that later is used to create an actionable understanding, have more of a "fixed" nature, I would argue. By this I mean that they are more easily predicted and static since their origin is based on the collectively generated taken-for-granted stuff that exist in both firms, the ongoing business. These roles could take the form in this context as mentioned above, internal roles such as office space responsibilities and development groups that the ECs are assigned to by their own firms. Also, the roles created at the start of every project, through the actionable understanding with the customers in the generation phase of the practice are linked to the ongoing business of both firms. Roles are assigned to the EC by creating a common understanding between the actors involved that leads to common actions taken in the specific project.

However, roles assigned during the "doing" of the practice are more connected to the eternally unfolding present. This has the implication that ECs don't know all their possible roles in a project before it has started. Only analysing roles as part of the ongoing business and actionable understanding fails to illustrate how roles are added, changed or removed during the projects in this context. This with the effect that an understanding of the flexibility of roles required by ECs doing their practice might be inadequate strictly following Cook & Wagenaars (2012) epistemology of practice. An example of this role flexibility, one EC says that customers have

sometimes thought of him as part of their own organisation. With the effect that services are requested from the EC that is not part of original deal between the firms. This example shows how a role was assigned to an EC through the present, that could not have been foreseen before starting "doing" practice. Another example is how new knowledge evoked through the "doing" of the practice that requires added services for the project to succeed. This might add roles to the ECs practice, some ECs talk about having to delegate some of these added services to others in their own firm or even other firms if they themselves are incapable of delivering them. This once again shows how the nature of the ECs practice is highly unpredictable, since many aspects of the practice can only be known through "doing" it. It is also another example of how important experience is when delivering services and why so many ECs talk about the importance of this experience to navigate in the practice.

Cooperation

Cook & Wagenaar (2012) sees cooperation as part of the ongoing business of a practice and this is to some degree also true for this context. "Ongoing business is made up of experience, shared by the members of the unit." (Cook & Wagenaar, 2012). Here Cook & Wagenaar (2012) talks about experience shared by the participants of the ongoing business. However, experience is defined here as all thing experienced by the ECs connected to their work, a transactional notion of experience. This widens the definition of experience into a more encompassing concept that involves almost any experience the ECs have in their job. This has its benefits of course, one is creating a tool for a broader understanding of the situation ECs reside in everyday and how that could influence them. However, this less precise definition of experience could lead to a lack of understanding regarding the importance of shared experiences in this specific context regarding services provided. In this case, when the sharing of knowledge and experience between ECs is made into its own practice within and/or beside the practice of delivering a service and utilized as it is. Using Cook & Wagenaars (2012) epistemology of practice, with a transactional view of experience, could lose precision in explaining the implications of this specific phenomenon for the ECs. If all experience is only looked at as always shared and how it constitutes the ongoing business of the ECs, the specific instances where shared knowledge is used to benefit a particular service or project might be overlooked together with its specific importance. Hence, an alternative definition of shared experience and the meaning of it seems to be required in this study to better understand ECs practice in this context.

Almost all the environmental consultancy firms represented in this study have some form of internal practice regarding sharing knowledge and experience. One example is, as mentioned above, how the trainee programs are done. One EC mentors another EC in a delivery of a specific service, turning it into a practice of cooperation to share experience and knowledge in the present. Another example is how the teams connected to a certain practice share experiences with each other from previous or present services to increase the group's overall understanding of the situation they are in. A third example is how firms have developed specific practices to share knowledge and experience with each other on a regular basis on a firm level to utilize as much knowledge as possible from the practices they have previously done and are doing. These examples are all practices of cooperation that are directly or indirectly connected to the services

delivered. They show how important the ECs in this study think the sharing of knowledge and experience is for the practice of delivering a service.

Discussion

Cook & Wagenaars (2012) practice perspective have in this study been slightly repositioned to better fit the researched context. As a result, the two inductively produced concepts, Role flexibility and Cooperation, were introduced to better understand the context ECs resides in when performing their practice. Both concepts could be argued to fit within the original practice perspective. However, the ECs own emphasis of the concepts together with how they were positioned in the original practice perspective presented an opportunity for a deeper analysis.

In the first concept, role flexibility, the variety of origins generated roles within the practice made this context difficult to interpret strictly following Cook & Wagenaars (2012) practice perspective. Cook & Wagenaar (2012) argues that roles are produced through the ongoing business in an actionable understanding made in the present. However, this argument is only providing an understanding of a part of the reality facing ECs. How ECs roles are created and sustained is also connected to the ongoing business of the customers firms. This means that there are two parallel sets of ongoing business that influence the roles the ECs are assigned and creates an uncertainty to the meaning of the roles for the ECs. Using only the lens of Cook & Wagenaars (2012) practice theory, one might not understand that the customers ongoing business have great implications for the ECs as well. The two clashing sets of understandings regarding what a role entails creates dilemmas and how these might only be discovered when "doing" the practice. This situation is quite specific for consultancy firms. Not many practices have so much of the time spent "doing" it in a different ongoing business setting. Therefore, a repositioning of Cook & Wagenaars (2012) practice theory was conducted that incorporated the customers ongoing business through the ECs account.

The practice perspective was also made more encompassing to illustrate the more general connection to the eternally unfolding present of the origin of roles. These roles origin was created from doing the practice rather than the ongoing business of the separate firms. The ECs talks about adding, changing or removing roles in projects due to a better understanding of what the service provided should entail after engaging in the present. The understanding of this phenomenon might have been limited strictly following the notion of roles created through the ongoing business as presented in Cook & Wagenaars (2012) theory.

The second concept, cooperation, also adjusts the practice perspective lens to some extent. The definition of experience used in the practice perspective was of a transactional nature. What was done in this study was to reposition experience into an alternative, more precise definition. This new analysis tool had the effect that the importance of shared experiences between ECs was analysed separately from the ongoing business. The reason for this was as stated above, if all experience is only looked at as always shared and how it constitutes the ongoing business of the

ECs, the specific instances where shared knowledge is used to benefit a particular service might be overlooked together with its specific importance.

The ECs in the study stated that the cooperation between ECs regarding delivering services was important. Almost all the firms in the study had created practices for sharing of knowledge and experience. The examples shown above are connected to the ongoing business of the ECs, but I argue that their meaning to the ECs is better understood with an alternative perspective on experience than Cook & Wagenaar (2012) perspective. If understood as experience shared through the past and/or present services into the present or future services, one might better understand the meaning and hence why it is important for the ECs to share experiences and knowledge. The natural unpredictability of the practice of delivering environmental services has influenced the ECs firms to find a solution that overcomes this challenge. Sharing experiences and knowledge has become a tool to be used in the unpredictable present the ECs reside in. Learning-by-doing is one part, doing-to-teach is the other that completes the meaning of sharing experiences and knowledge in this context. Using only Cook & Wagenaar (2012) interpretation of an encompassing definition of experience as taken-for-granted stuff categorized as ongoing business, one might have overlooked the position of shared knowledge and experience practices in this context.

Actionable understanding

As stated above, the actionable understanding is created through engagement in the present. The ECs do not apply their pre-existing knowledge to reach an actionable understanding regarding the specific delivery of a service. Experience, through being in the situation and engaging with the problems present, drives the creation of practice. This tells us that reaching an actionable understanding and hence a creation of practice is difficult if not proper engagement in the present is achieved. If the engagement in the present from the actors involved in the practice is limited, the generation of a manageable practice becomes challenging. This because experiencing the practice in the present generates the understanding needed to drive the creation of practice forward.

In the ECs context, where services delivered needs to be planned, budget and executed over time, the intrinsic lack of understanding of how the service will be delivered can have implications for the actors involved. As seen above, more time might be needed in the conceptualization phase then first planned, added services that cost more than originally budgeted for might appear or an approach to execution of delivery might not be as effective as intended. All these examples have one thing in common, that they are difficult to predict before starting the "doing" of the practice that evokes the knowledge regarding them.

The ECs talk about an incorporation of an advisory role in many of their service delivered. One of the reasons for this is to help facilitate the actionable understanding. This is done by the ECs by drawing upon their own expertise in the area to increase the knowledge of the actors involved. The advisory roles goal is to reach a mutual understanding that can later be used to take mutual action regarding the practice. The ECs have recognized that if they don't invest in the actionable understanding, it might present challenges later. The ECs know, through

experience, that the services many of them provide are difficult to understand for a customer. A lack of understanding might limit the possible engagement in the practice by the customers, leading to the creation and sustainability of the practice experiencing challenges. So, by helping their customers understand the practice, the ECs help themselves understanding it. A perfect actionable understanding might not be possible, but the advisory role limits the possibility of practice disrupting phenomenon's appearing in the generation phase of the practice.

Ongoing business

As stated above, ECs are constantly influenced by the ongoing business of the practices around them. This influence shapes their interpretations, understandings and meanings attributed to being an EC performing a practice. As stated above by the ECs, the ongoing business is often beneficial, but could also become a threat to the projects. There are constant challenges to the ongoing business that could if not handled sufficiently become a threat to the practice. To sustain the practice, the ongoing business needs to be experienced through the present. Navigating the ongoing business is done through experiencing practices that creates knowledge through the present to sustain the created individual practice. The ongoing business between ECs and customers determines what knowledge is extracted from the practice and why it is to be considered knowledge in the first place.

The experiential nature of the ongoing business could be seen as a filter. The produced systematic singularities are generated through the ongoing business before they become frames used to understand other collected experiences with meaning. The ongoing business then becomes a frame, within in which the systematic singularities are categorized and from which an actionable understanding can be created. One could see that these frames could have affect the ECs in several ways. One is that the ongoing business creates a reference frame for what is deemed a good or bad practice for the ECs. Their own firms collectively create their ongoing business and might produce any shape of it they decide. This illustrates how the ongoing business is influencing the perception of a "good" service on a firm level and how this could lead to a threat for the firm if not payed attention to. Getting complacent and arrogant ECs is a risk in the ongoing business, If it has no clear values, routines and collectively agreed upon frames connected to the delivery of a service. Another potential effect of an unhealthy ongoing business is that ECs can't utilize systematic singularities created in the practice. Since a lack of framework might exist in the ongoing business that in itself works as a frame for the practice, incorrect coding of the systematic singularities might lead to that the knowledge evoked through the practice is lost or not utilized fully. Standards are set through lived experience in the firms, troublesome if faulty and leading to a delay or stop of the practice, an unsatisfied customer and therefore becomes a threat to the ongoing business. All the aspects of ongoing business should inform the ECs of what is required of them but also what they should require from their surroundings. The ongoing business then creates the expectations for the service provided by the ECs and at the same time help them reach it through the present.

Role flexibility

Three origins of roles where presented through the inductively produced perspective. This to illustrate the unpredictable nature of the assignment of roles in the practices of ECs. The implication of this unpredictability was that ECs don't know all their possible roles in a project before they started doing it. The challenge this presents for the actors involved is that their roles in a project become difficult to fully understand and predict. This leading to different challenges that are illustrated above by the ECs.

The two origins of roles that are more connected to the ongoing business of the firms involved are more easily analysed since they have a more predictable generation. These roles are produced through the ongoing business and are made from the collectively agreed upon understandings connected to the specific role. This can create tensions, since there are two firms ongoing business that are applying their understandings upon the ECs different roles. Many of the firms hiring ECs have a different understanding of environmental services and are positioned differently in their values towards the environment one ECs explains. This means that their understanding of a role assigned to an ECs will be influenced by their owns firms ongoing business. The notion of what an EC is and what tasks that incorporate could differentiate significantly between the firms because of this preconceived notion.

The third origin of roles, the one connected to the eternally unfolding present, provides a more difficult challenge to analyse through interviews. Some ECs talk about how roles are added, changed or removed during the projects since new knowledge is evoked through the practice that informs the EC and client about the situation they are in and what is needed to complete the goal of the service.

Many of the ECs explained that they coped with this change through previously collected systematic singularities or experience. Informed by the practice, ECs created from previous experience a new understanding of the situation and applied it to the context. This sometimes leading to a change of the ECs role in the during the delivery of a service to the client. These roles created in the present, might limit the influence of the ongoing business from both firms, since more of the knowledge was evoked in the "doing" of the practice that lead to the change in roles. They might then become the "best" understood roles by all the actors involved in the practice, since they have been generated through collective engagement in the present. This means that both actors saw a demand for a slightly different role for the EC would be better for the goal of the service.

Cooperation

The practices of sharing knowledge and experience or systematic singularities between ECs was an important aspect to ECs in their work. Based on what has been shown above, the unpredictability of the practice of delivering environmental services has led to many of the firms having emphasized cooperation between its ECs. The ECs therefore experience delivering services as a learning-by-doing or a doing-to-teach practice within the practice. This means that a

well utilized method for sharing systematic singularities is of great benefit for the ECs, hence the emphasis of it by the ECs.

The challenge then becomes how to create a method that utilizes the sharing of systematic singularities well. The ECs have already given examples of how their firms do this. What they all have in common is that their ongoing businesses becomes frames within which the systematic singularities are categorized. This means that the value assigned to a specific systematic singularity is decided by its utility for the ongoing business and through that the practice. It is with this understanding the ECs firms have I.e. created routines for new ECs to follow such as trainee programs or facilitate discussion regarding how to handle a certain project in the project group or on a firm level.

Through cooperation, environmental consultancy firms become more aware of the connection between their ongoing business and the knowledge sharing between ECs. This with the benefit of understanding what specific experiences and knowledge is valued at the firm and its benefit for the practice. This is used to create better teaching and learning tools for their firms in the form of the examples illustrated above. What also is gained from this understanding is a tool for analysing what is creating the notion of "good" practice for the firm by connecting it to the ongoing business. Providing an answer to why certain systematic singularities are framed and utilized as they are, creating insight into how knowledge and experience is collectively produced through cooperation.

Conclusion

I set out to answer:

1. What are the ECs spoken perspectives on delivering EC services?

2. How is the practice of delivering an EC service generated, sustained and lived as described by the ECs and seen through Cook & Wagenaar's (2012) practice perspective?

3. What obstacles to delivering an environmental service are identified in the ECs practice based on the interviews?

In this study I have applied a practice perspective on the context I have researched through a deductive and inductive analysis. (1) This to understand what constitutes the practice of ECs as they deliver services to customers as described by ECs themself. (2) I started with illustrating the said actions the ECs told was needed when generating a practice through an actionable

understanding of the service requested. This with the goal to generate a practice rather than applying knowledge to the situation. I then showed what constitute the taken-for-granted stuff of everyday life as told by the ECs, their descriptions of the physical environment, rules and requirements, routines, skills and tools that forms the ongoing business within which actionable understandings are made and through which the practice is sustained. I also detailed how the ECs say they handle challenges and sustain their practice by living in the present, where past and current practices inform the ECs about their situation and partially informs them about the unknown future.

(3) Drawing upon what was said in the interviews, obstacles were identified to the ECs delivery of services. In the generation phase of the practice, an intrinsic lack of understanding by the clients regarding the services acquired was identified. This led to challenges to accomplish an actionable understanding. The lack of mutual understanding produced obstacles for both ECs and clients to engage in the practice and therefore could slow the progress of it. Obstacles to sustain the practice was also presented in this study. The ECs firms ongoing business was shown to produce what was required of their ECs but also what ECs should require from their surroundings. If the firms had no clear values, routines and collectively agreed upon frames connected to the delivery of a service, the ECs experienced difficulties knowing what a "good" delivery of service was. This leading to a delay or stops in the practice and an unsatisfied customer.

(3) An alternative perspective from the interviews was also added through an inductive process that highlighted the unpredictable nature of delivering ECs services. This perspective showed three origins of the roles ECs are assigned in the delivering of a service. The consequence being that roles in the practices where difficult to predict and that challenges to the practice, such as role confusion, could arise as a result. The inductive perspective also illustrated cooperation as an important coping mechanism for the unpredictable nature of delivering environmental services. This situation many ECs described was facilitated through practices of sharing knowledge and experience between ECs. This taking the form as learning-by-doing or doing-to-teach cooperative practices with the aim of increasing understanding, improve services and to better handle disruptions.

Here are two suggestions for the practitioners drawn from this study. One might be that the awareness of potential unplannable challenges could strengthen the resilience of ECs practices. Communicating the phenomenon of potential unplannable challenges to all actors involved in the practice and thereby increasing understanding of the challenges that arise could be resilience increasing. Another suggestion could be building models for how systematic singularities are framed and utilized, since experience is valued in the ECs context. This might provide a tool for insight into how and why certain experience is valued or not in the firms. The models can then later be used to assess learning-by-doing and doing-to-teach practices in the firms and hopefully improve them.

The practice perspective has provided a key to unlocking the taken-for-granted stuff that is otherwise overlooked when performing an action. To produce a practice and sustain it, as described in the interviews, requires more indirect work and lived experience than might have

first been understood. It also describes through descriptions from the ECs, how unforeseen challenges that constantly arise in the present are dealt with and that no practice can be completely predicted before doing it. This is where the practice perspective, with its encompassing theoretical lens, provides a value. The lens provides an account for what actually is there and how what is there creates reality through engagement with it. Meaning that an act can be seen as not only a result of agency or structures but generated through social relationships and the material context when engaged. The result being that the seemingly disordered practice can be analysed and with it the challenges it faces. Informing the researcher how this disordered practice makes sense and are acted upon by the ECs involved and how the challenges that arise are coped with. This is done by analysing the acts described in the interviews, that are generated through the practice. This was particularly valuable in this study's context since its unpredictable nature could seem difficult to analyse with other theories. The actions, described in the interviews, generated through the practice are all accounted for, regardless of origin. Providing a tool to get a more complete understanding of the perceived reality ECs are situated in when performing their practice.

The practice perspective could be combined with other theories to further deepen the understanding of the context. A suggestion would be some form of communication theory that could illustrate how the meaning of the actions in the practice are sent and received between the actors involved. Another suggestion could be to expand the epistemology of practice (Cook and Wagenaar, 2012) to incorporate different categories of actions or "doing". The "doing" could mean different things and have different implications, usually at the same time. A diversification of the model what "doing" is might precis the analysis of a specific practice. Overall, more research ought to be conducted in this context. The demand for environmentally sustainable practices is only increasing and should be assisted with more research to better meet the global challenges and opportunities we face as a species.

References:

Behagel, J.H, Arts, B & Turnhout, E (2017) *Beyond argumentation: a practice-based approach to environmental policy.*
https://doi.org/10.1080/1523908X.2017.1295841

Ben-Gal H. C, Shay S. Tzafrir, (2011) *Consultant-client relationship: one of the secrets of effective organizational change?* Journal of Organizational Change Management, Vol. 24 Issue: 5, pp.662-679, https://doi.org/10.1108/09534811111158912

Bryman, Alan (2008). *Social Research Methods.* [rev.] uppl. Malmö: Liber pp. 28-29, 413-528

Cook, S.D.N. & Wagenaar, H., (2012). *Navigating the Eternally Unfolding Present: Toward an Epistemology of Practice.* The American Review of Public Administration, 42(1), pp.3–38.

Creswell, John W. (2014) *Research design: qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches.* SAGE Publications Ltd. 4th ed. pp. 105-139

Johannsdottir, L. (2015) *Drives of proactive environmental actions of small, medium and large Nordic non-life insurance companies – and insurers as a driving force of actions.*
https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jclepro.2015.06.055

Lapiedra, R. Alegre, J. & Chiva, R. (2011) *The importance of management innovation and consultant services on ERP implementation success.* The Service Industries Journal Volume 31, 2011 - Issue 12 pp. 1907-1919
https://doi.org/10.1080/02642069.2011.556189

Simon, G. L. & Welsh, D. H.B. (2010). *International professional service firms: How do they affect government policy?* The Service Industries Journal, 30(1): pp. 11–23.

Spaargaren, G. (2011). *Theories of practices: Agency, technology, and culture: Exploring the relevance of practice theories for the governance of sustainable consumption practices in the new world-order.*
Global Environmental Change, 21(3), pp. 813–822.
https://doi: 10.1016/j.gloenvcha.2011.03.010

Twine, R (2015) *Understanding snacking through a practice theory lens.*
Sociology of Health & Illness Volume 37, Issue 8 pp. 1270-1284
https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9566.12310

Reckwitz, A. (2002) *Toward a Theory of Social Practices A Development in Culturalist Theorizing* European Journal of Social Theory 5(2): pp. 243–263 Copyright © 2002 Sage Publications: London, Thousand Oaks, CA and New Delhi.

Sayed, N. & Lento, C. (2018) *Developing a strategy map for environmental consulting firms.* International Journal of Productivity and Performance Management, Vol. 67 Issue: 5, pp.916-934, https://doi.org/10.1108/IJPPM-06-2017-0139

Perera, C. Auger, P. & Klein, J. J. (2018) *Green Consumption Practices Among Young Environmentalists: A Practice Theory Perspective.* Bus Ethics 152: 843. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-016-3376-3

Srinivasan, R. (2014) *The management consulting industry: Growth of consulting services in India: Panel discussion.* Volume 26, Issue 4, December 2014, pp. 257-270 https://doi.org/10.1016/j.iimb.2014.09.001

Appendix:

Interview guide

1. **Decision-making in practical consultations**
Conceptualisation of the situation, Decision-making, Generation of the service

What is your role at work?

Why is your role needed?

How is your role created?

Who creates that role? Internally, externally, society

How is a common understanding created of the ECs service/mission? Internally, externally

Are any tools/methods used to create this understanding?

Why is a common understand needed of the service/mission?

How does one know that all involved have the same undertraining of the service/mission?

How is this achieved?

2. **Competence, tools, knowledge, skills, rules and requirements, routines, disruptions, physical aspects.**

What routines are needed for the ECs to do their job?

What knowledge are needed for the ECs to do their job?

What skills are needed for the ECs to do their job?

What physical aspects are needed for the ECs to do their job?

What tools/methods are needed for the ECs to do their job?

What behaviour is expedited by colleagues and clients for the ECs to do their job?

What rules and requirements are needed for the ECs to do their job?

3. **Unforeseen events and fast decisions**

How is an unforeseen event handled?

What is needed to handle an unforeseen event?

How do you understand what to do in an unforeseen event?

Why do you need to understand what to do in an unforeseen event?