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Master in Tourism Destination Development
The Vasaloppet as transformative nature sport event

Does the experience of participating in nature sport events influence sustainable practices?

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Abstract

The research for the master thesis was about the influence the participation in sport events taking place in nature has on sustainable behaviour of the individual. Although there is an understanding of what sustainability means in literature, each person defines its means for her- or himself and acts differently. As there is not much research that looks at sustainability as something that can be experienced, this paper is an attempt to find out. Therefore, the aim of this thesis is to identify how a participant of sport events, taking place in nature, is influenced by the experiences during the different stages of the event, including preparation, racing, and the time afterwards. As a theoretical concept for a change through experience transformation was chosen. As case for such an event the Vasaloppet 2018 was chosen. As there is a large variety of races during the events, the participation in the context of research includes individuals that join the full 90-kilometres distances during daytime. As a result, the sample is derived from the Vasaloppet (main run), and open spår (open trail).

The concepts derived from literature encompass sustainability in relation with organisations, using the triple bottom line. In this context, the sustainability of events is conceptualized in conjunction with the ideas of people, planet and profit. After exploring concepts that are important on an organisational level, the three levels of sustainability by Cavagnaro and Curiel (2012) was used to get a better understanding of the role of the individual. Further concepts are serious leisure and consumption, as the participant of an event, for this research, is also someone who consumes products and services in relation to performing serious leisure. Also, the motivations to participate are examined. Additional, the meaning of experiences and possible experiences of events were elaborated. Finally, the concept of transformation for this paper were discovered.

To reach the aim of the research a qualitative research approach, based on social constructivism was taken. The research was conducted by having interviews with six participants of the 2018 Vasaloppet. The obtained data was analysed by means of an inductive thematic analysis, creating themes from what was said by the interviewees.

The key findings discussed are their understanding of individual and organisational sustainability, as well as transport, in the context of the Vasaloppet experience. Further a chapter about experiences that made the interviewees thinking about issues that might cause transformation is added. A chapter about actual found transformational experiences is added in closing. Eventually a reflection on the research process is given, before concluding the thesis.

Keywords: transformation, sustainability, sport events, experiences, Vasaloppet.
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1. Introduction

At the present stage, when this thesis was written, it represented the final step a journey of gaining knowledge in the field of tourism. Coming from a technical background, focussed on numbers and figures, logical thinking and clearly defined causality, it was supposed to broaden my mind and change my perspective on knowledge. Pursuing an academic career in tourism studies, and working in the industry, broad me repeatedly to Sweden. During my studies and work, I got in contact with not only theories about culture, but I was able to live in what is considered the heart of Sweden, interact with its people and ultimately participate in a Swedish hallmark event, the Vasaloppet. Further, I had many points of contact with the issues of sustainability, within the field of leisure and tourism. Based on this, my scope was to get a deeper understanding of the phenomenon, rather than measuring the world in numbers and figures, or to generalize. Eventually this thesis became an attempt to conduct qualitative research in the field of leisure and tourism, with a focus on the transformation participants had while going through the beforementioned experience of participating in the Vasaloppet.

The Vasaloppet in Dalarna, Sweden, is supposedly Sweden’s oldest and longest, but for sure biggest cross-country ski race. It is organised by Vasaloppsföreningen Sälen-Mora. The Vasaloppsföreningen Sälen-Mora is a non-profit organisation owned by the sport clubs at the start and finish of the Vasaloppet, IFK Mora Idrottsallians and Sälen IF (Vasaloppet, n.d.-a). Today’s Vasaloppet comprises of a winter and two summer events, including a diverse selection of cross-country ski races, mountain biking, and running. The Vasaloppet’s Winter Week alone attracts several thousands of participants, and in connection with it many spectators (Vasaloppet, n.d.-a). Among Swedes the Vasaloppet is almost as known as the Swedish King (Hagström, personal communication, January 11, 2018) and as one of the participants stated, according to a folk saying a Swedish man only becomes a true man, if finishing the Vasaloppet (Interviewee 6, 2018). The reason to choose the Vasaloppet as a field to study was the 2018 event took place recently before this research was conducted and that I participated myself in it.

Another distinct feature of Swedish culture, which by now has a large share of my life, became an additional driver for this thesis. The Swedes, as do I, have a strong relation to their natural environment, generally referred to as Friluftsliv [lit. open-air life], which is part of their lifestyle. This lifestyle drives many nature-based activities all year around, often for health
benefits, including cross-country skiing. One foundation of Friluftsliv is the Allemansrätten [right to roam] giving everyone the right to use the resources the land offers, for personal use. Research in relation to this revealed that because of this background Swedes have a high degree of awareness when it comes to safeguarding these natural resources. In addition, this awareness is highly related to what is talked of nowadays, sustainability (Beery, 2013). Sustainability is a main discussion topic in tourism too. Despite being a hot topic across-the-board in tourism, the issue seemed underrepresented in relation to events that take place in natural environments. While exploring secondary data, it became noticeable that there was research conducted on the sustainability of events in general, but often from an event organisers perspective. When looking at the participants perspective, there is a wide array of research about their experiences in nature sport events. These studies are referring to serious-leisure and are part of the literature review. The Participants perspectives and experiences in regard to sustainability are widely neglected. A participant is defined as someone who takes part in something. In the context of events, (Getz, 2008) described that ‘someone’ as the visitor and the participant. He further wrote that the participant is, in sport events, the one who actively does the sport related to the event, during the event. By this definition, a participant in the Vasaloppet is an athlete that actively skis, runs or cycles in any of the races.

The underlying idea of this research, is that events are related to sustainability (Dickson & Arcodia, 2010; Getz, 2008). As mentioned, the reasons to participate in sport events taking place in nature are known. However, Getz (2008) specifically mentioned that the field of events experiences are underrepresented in research. This thesis is meant to partly fill this knowledge gap. Additional concepts are the following. Theory revealed that challenging oneself in a natural environment depicts a driver to participate in such events, classifying the surrounding as key ingredient to the experience (Cosma, Bota, Fleșeriu, & Gică, 2018; Gallegos, 2005). Despite the lack of research about the relation between sustainability and participants in general, researches showed that sustainability is a concern many people have (Budeanu, 2007; Hall & Richards, 2002) and it was explained earlier that Swedes have a pronounced sense of environmental awareness. Additionally, there is evidence that people who personally experience issues are more likely to take action (Spence, Poortinga, Butler, & Pidgeon, 2011), and others indicated that personal involvement motivates engagement due to psychological and emotional reasons, which can lead a modification of habits and behaviour (T. Crompton, Kasser, & World Wildlife Fund UK, 2009; Office for National Statistics, 2011). However, according to Thogersen (2000) the pro-environmental attitude, which also influence decision-
making, varies from one person to another. Penz, Hofmann and Hartl (2017) found that research is still deficient “whether individuals have associations to the environment or concerns for environmental and social problems” (p.2), while being tourists.

Thereupon the Swedish hallmark event and experiences of participants will be of focus. The basic assumption, which was found in literature, is that through personal experience and involvement in the Vasaloppet a modification in habits and behaviour is triggered, which leads to acting and influences decision-making about sustainability. As there were no attempts found to focus on experiences in the context of sustainability, this thesis was designed to start filling the gap of knowledge. It attempts to understand the link between experiences during the participation in the event, which are influential on sustainability practices, and their role in the transformation process of the individual.
1.1. Aim and structure of the research

As it was explained, this research focuses on the transformation of the participant in the Vasaloppet. Whereas it is understood that experiences of performing activities can lead to transformation, a link between sustainability, events, and transformation was not found. To contribute to reduce knowledge gap on how these issues qualitative methods were used. These methods are based on the formulation of this aim, in relation to objectives. To meet the objectives, research questions were formulated.

As a result of this, the aim of this research is

to identify how experiences during the participation in the Vasaloppet are influential in a transformation in relation to sustainability

To reach the aim the following objectives are formulated

to understand which experiences in the Vasaloppet are a matter of sustainability for the participant

to identify which of these experiences led to what transformation(s)

To reach the objectives, the following three research questions are designed

Q1: How is sustainability understood by the participant?

Q2: What did the participant experienced related to sustainability during the event?

Q3: What transformation(s) did the participant undergo in relation to sustainability?

The structure of this thesis, following this introduction is a thorough description of the event and its background, followed by the literature review, framing the important concepts for this research, followed by a methodology part containing the methods used to obtain and analyse primary data. Following this is the discussion of the data. The research is rounded off with a conclusion and a reflection section. Additionally, the references can be found before the appendix.
2. The Vasaloppet

To understand why the Vasaloppet is of such interest, this chapter gives a background of the event itself, its location, and what lays the foundation of it. More precisely, the Vasaloppet winter event was chosen, because the Vasaloppet Winter Week is the hallmark event that made the Vasaloppet as popular as it is nowadays. As it became recognisable through images presented by Visit Dalarna and the Vasaloppsföreningen through their webpages and social media channels, as well through speaking with people involved, the Vasaloppet is not just any event, but one that has the capability of representing Sweden and Swedish culture as such. It further reflects elementary parts of Sweden’s history and it takes place in a part that is considered representative for Sweden itself. Figure 1 shows the finishing line in Mora. The theme says ‘In our fathers’ tracks for future victories’, indicating the importance of traditions, but maybe also a subtle clue of why it is important for many Swedes to finish the race and achieve what their ancestors did. Further almost every Swede knows about the event (Hagström, personal communication, January 11, 2018). Many know the story about the Swedish king Gustav Vasa, who is depicted in Figure 2, by the famous Swedish painter Anders Zorn. According to the legend the Vasaloppet follows the trail King Gustav Vasa took in 1521 to lead the Swedes against Danish occupation (Vasaloppet, n.d.-b).

Within the winter event, the focus lies on the ‘Vasaloppet’ [Vasa main run] and ‘open spår’ [open track] races, which are the ones that go over the full 90-kilometre distance of all the offered races. There is also a ‘Nattvasan’ [Night Vasa], which goes the whole way, but it is taking place during the night, and a ‘Staffetvasan’ [Relay-Vasa]. These races are the ones where an individual participant can grasp the whole spectacle, together with as many factors involved as possible. However, the single-runner day-time races were chosen, as the researcher assumes that during daylight and by running the full 90 km on his or her own, the highest degree of influential experience is possible. The location of the event plays a key role for this
research. It takes place in the so-called ‘Vasaloppsarenan’, meaning Vasaloppet’s Arena. A track stretching over 90 kilometres, from Sälen to Mora (Figure 3; enlarged in Appendix 1).

Both cities are in Dalarna, which is marketed as being “Sweden in miniature” (Visit Dalarna, n.d.) or as being “more Swedish than ABBA and IKEA combined” (Visit Sweden, n.d.). The Vasaloppet’s Arena is located along the Vasaloppet’s trail, which is protected under the Swedish conservation act. Besides being anchored in Swedish history the Vasaloppet’s Arena is not solely used for the ski, bike, and running races. As being a nature reserve, it serves the public as a place to experience the unique pristine environment and historical sites likewise.

The right to utilize the land resources like that is rooted in the Allemansrätt, the Right of Public Access, in Sweden. According to Sandell and Fredman (2010) this access is fundamental for the Swede’s, when following outdoor recreation and leisure activities likewise. Although (Sandell, 2006) “the ‘Swedishness’ of this form of interpretation of nature must not be over-emphasized” (p.279), outdoor recreation and leisure activities in nature are very important aspects of Friluftsliv (open-air life) the traditional outdoor life in the European Nordics (Sandell, 2006). However, Sandell and Fredman (2010) further found that there is an increase in tension between the Swedish public and organisations using the Right to Public Access to offer touristic products, as which an event like the Vasaloppet can be considered. For that reason, the preservation of the environment should be considered by the event organiser and also by everyone using the trails along the Vasaloppet’s Arena. This counts especially for participants in the races, utilising it for leisure (training) or the event.

This is only one example of issue the event organiser faces. This is partly operational, but also something that is related to sustainability.
An important aspect within this research is sustainability. Depending on the context, or framing, it is used in, it differs. Per dictionary (Oxford Dictionaries, 2018) it basically means maintaining something (e.g. operations, processes, or development), while not depleting the resources. However, to achieve a perfect state each entity on different levels striving for sustainability needs act accordingly. There are two entities of interest for this research, one is the participant being subject of primary research, and the Vasaloppsföreningen. The Vasaloppsföreningen formulated a medium-turn sustainability strategy for the organisation, identifying issues and finding solutions to reduce unsustainability. This strategy was given to me by the organisation exclusively, and is not meant to be published or printed in this work. It comprises 5 years from 2017 until 2022, which is the 100-year anniversary of the Vasaloppet. Further, they implemented a measuring tool to collect data in every field of the strategy. The strategy includes three aspects, social, economic and ecological sustainability. By that it coincides with general theory on the subject organisational sustainability (theory chapter 6.1; results chapter 8.1.2). The following graph (Figure 3) shows the areas of concern.

![Vasaloppet CO2 emission (total = 7492 tons)](image)

*Figure 4 Vasaloppet total CO2 emissions (Vasaloppsföreningen, 2018)*

Figure 4 shows the contribution to CO2 emissions in tons per causal agent. The production of emissions is mostly linked to environmental sustainability and represents the greatest concern of the event organiser. The largest contributor is the transport of the participants. From the reports provided it must be assumed that participants include participants and visitors, whereas in this research they are split. Therefore, it cannot be stated how large the
contribution of the ones racing and the ones observing is. All of the shown aspects were noticeable during the event, if sensitised for them. Other matters of sustainability, addressed by the organisation are among others, driving public health and working ethically correct (social sustainability), as well as maintaining the operation and long-term attractivity of the event and brand, and investing in more sustainable operations within the Vasaloppsarenan (economic sustainability). Here it is arguable if maintaining the brand and operation of the event can be considered a sustainable goal, considering the impact of the event. All of the beforementioned aspects concerned are not easily comprehended, if one is not aware of the broader impacts of events as such.

As a hallmark event the Vasaloppet is one of a kind, inseparable to its location in central Sweden. Due to its location and the long distance of the race it provides circumstances that are extreme and certainly challenging. In a region like that weather extremes like heavy or no snowfall and extreme cold or warm weather can appear (Dar, Rashid, Romshoo, & Marazi, 2014). How weather extremes can be experienced during the Vasaloppet becomes comprehensible when looking at two extremes. In 2015, the Vasaloppsarenan faced +12 centigrade (Sveriges Television AB, 2015). The Blogger (Enqvist, 2015) described the issues of standing in water, instead of snow and having no tracks to ski in, in her blog entry ‘kallas det här skidåkning?’ (meaning this is what you call skiing?). Contrary, the Aftonbladet reported expected -28 centigrade and a lot of snow during the 2018 Nattvasan (Night Vasa), which almost forced the event organiser to cancel the race (Aftonbladet, 2018). During the 2018 Vasaloppet the weather even differed between the start in Sälen and the finish in Mora, by 5 centigrade, with snowfalls in Sälen and partly clouded weather in Mora (Hultgren, 2018).

Cavagnaro and Curiel (2012) stressed the individual as important agent of change, towards sustainability. As it is important for this research to identify experiences of the individual that led to a transformation of sustainable practices, it is essential to know about possible triggers, represented by experiences. These are framed into matters concerning the sustainability of winter sport events.
The first matter is pollution, which represents the main concern of the event organiser in recent years. Carbon dioxide (CO²) emissions and littering have a key role within their planning. Whereas CO² is related to the cause of climate change (Dar et al., 2014), and caused mainly through transportation and energy consumption (Hibbert, Dickinson, Gössling, & Curtin, 2013; Triantafyllidis, Ries, & Kaplanidou, 2018). Littering is caused by participants and visitors (Gursoy, Kim, & Uysal, 2004). Interestingly littering affects all three corners of the triple bottom line, as littering is unappealing to visitors and participants likewise, it pollutes the environment at large and it costs money and/or workforce to be removed. Vasaloppsföreningen (Figure 5) set up trash-zones noticeably to participants, as well as a leaflet handed out to every participant about penalties due to littering.

The second environmental matter identified consumption. Psychologically, goods are consumed conscious or unconscious for different reasons. This process underlies decision-making based on motives (Nixon & Gabriel, 2016). They further described that this decision-making can be influenced. Goods can be affiliated with meanings and values, which than influence the motives to consume, or to avoid them. The range of goods linked with the Vasaloppet reach from the event itself, nature, equipment, nutrition supplements, and merchandising. As Nixon and Gabriel, (2016) further argued, consumers can be aware of positive and negative aspects of what they consume. Especially the awareness of such aspects, concerning the environment, are of interest for this study.
3. Literature review

In this part the concepts used to conduct the research and reach the objectives are explained by identifying them in literature. For that mainly articles, but also books, were used to frame the context in a way that they can be used to understand and explain phenomena found in the data retrieved. The literature review is loosely structured by the concepts identified.

3.1. Sustainability as organisational responsibility

A commonly used concept of sustainability on an organisational level are the principles of the triple bottom line (TBL) formulated for the definition of sustainable development by the Brundtland Commission, put in place by the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED, 1987). The three fields of the TBL (Figure 6) are people, planet and profit, representing the resources, as well as areas for development. Only where all three are balanced (centre overlap) true sustainability is achieved. Nevertheless, the TBL depicts a state of utopia, where all three aspects are equally valuable for everyone and the area of sustainability is indeed considerably small.

3.2. Sustainability of events

Tomuș (2012) highlighted that events are an essential part of the culture of a society. In correlation with sustainability, the nature of events is understood as a possibility to promote and drive sustainable destination development on different levels (Buhalis, 2000; Getz, 2008). Buhalis and Gets further stated that with this importance comes a special responsibility for the event organiser. This section is to clarify concepts concerned with the sustainability of events.

The necessity of sustainability of events, especially for the ones taking place in natural, sometimes rural, environment, are widely known. Mair and Whitford (2013) reviewed research on that matter and found that for the event organisers environmental practices, waste reduction and generally sustainability play a crucial role. Further, the management of an event should face the trend of an increase in corporate social responsibility. All these topics account for the Vasaloppet in a remarkable manner.
Besides the attraction of visitors, a main aspect is the social side of events (Gursoy et al., 2004). According to (Yolal, Woo, Cetinel, & Uysal, 2012) it is understood that increasing the attractivity of a place and foster liveability and cohesion in a community is a sustainable way to also develop a destinations attractiveness to tourists. Such social values are named in the events section, including attractivity, liveability, and cohesion. They are related to individual considerations, but might be described by the interviewees in terms of atmosphere adding to emotional experiences (Yolal et al., 2012). As a results for this research, it can be expected that interviewees describe certain concepts differently to how they are understood and explained in the described concept about social values. J. L. Crompton and McKay (1997) pointed out that events also honour the cultural traditions. On the negative side of such events the exploitation of nature and culture for events, and its negative environmental footprint are listed (Mair & Whitford, 2013; Valle, Baena-Extremera, & Granero-Gallegos, 2011). This means that events are generally so much more than just the event. The Vasaloppet represents a remarkable case of an event, being more, as it covers all the above-mentioned aspects.

It is up to the event organiser to balance the social (people), the monetary (profit), and the environmental (planet) areas. Which becomes even more visible in the next chapter about the three levels of sustainability concept, linking different responsibility levels together.
3.3. Sustainability as individual responsibility

Cavagnaro and Curiel (2012) described that the principles of the TBL, designed on a supranational level, are implemented by national governments within their constitutions and many aspects, like social well-being, became legislation. Further they stated that private businesses and non-governmental organisations establish principles of sustainability in their missions and visions and thereby making them part of their development strategies. However, the authors argued that this higher goal of balance between the three areas cannot be reached, without the individual acting on it.

As they wrote in their book (Cavagnaro & Curiel, 2012) “This process of change toward sustainability depends on the choices made by people. It is therefore essential that not only societies and organizations choose sustainability, but also individuals.” (Introduction, para 1). Consequently, Cavagnaro and Curiel linked the principles of sustainability down to the individual, their decision-making and eventually to their actions driving sustainable development. To illustrate their ideas, they developed the Three Levels of Sustainability (TLS) framework, shown in Figure 7 above.

The TLS has three different levels. The macro level is the sustainable society. The meso level the sustainable organisation, which incorporates the TBL. The micro level is leadership
for sustainability. For this research interesting are aspects of the meso level, as the Vasaloppsföreningen is part of it. However, the micro level is the most interesting one, as according to Cavagnaro and Curiel (2012) sustainability develops from there.

3.4. Sustainability as participant of the Vasaloppet

As it was mentioned the micro level of the TLS is the most interesting one for this research. For this it needs to be examined what the individual can do about sustainability in the relation to this research.

As it became clear sustainability is about balancing the use of resources to maintain development. Therefore, it is important to look how the individual consumes sustainably. It is necessary, for this research, to not understand consumerism as an activity, but as something that is performed in practice by the individual in relation to her/his social surrounding (Gram-Hanssen, 2010; Wahlen, 2011). Shove, Pantzar, and Watson (2012) described three components of this performance, which are competence, meaning and material. Competences include knowledge and understanding, leading to awareness of consumption. Meaning is linked to motivation to act according a socio-cultural background. Materials is related to the use of objects, things and even infrastructure. In the context of what Shove et al. (2012) described, Shadymanova, Wahlen, and van der Horst (2014) specified that things include everyday practices and that the degree of sustainability is dependent on the possibilities of the individual, its social relationships, but also on the availability of more sustainable options.

Consequently, the participant of the Vasaloppet as a consumer can only act as sustainable as her or his possibilities allow. This includes personal background, like awareness or care, social background and pressure, but also the materials available. Hence, the individual’s sustainability can hardly ever be generalized.

3.5. Serious leisure and consumption

This section considers why people participate in sport events, with a focus being consumers of and for sport events like the Vasaloppet 90-kilometres races.

It was found that people that participate in sport events do it for excitement, memories, challenge and the feeling of satisfaction of achievement. Especially in the context of serious leisure and the long-term commitment with the sport (Stebbins, 2001). To reach excitement,
the uncertainty of outcomes plays a crucial part, as does danger and risk. Where uncertainty may cause a sense of risk by itself, it is understood that to be at risk one needs to be exposed to danger. Depending on preparation and experience risk is tolerated differently, changing the experience of uncertainty. The challenge is then to overcome the uncertainty, which is than rewarded with satisfaction. Under extreme exposure to the environment, as it can be the case during the Vasaloppet, participants are challenged mentally and physically, which can lead to strong emotions and intense experiences (Swarbrooke, 2003).

Another aspect which is often overlooked are life-style, in relation with identification with the sport, and social ties, between family and friends, but also among like-minded people (J. Mykletun & Rumba, 2014). Although it might not be obvious, this also links back to the social environment of consumerism, discussed earlier. Stebbins (2001) described that performing serious leisure involves the development of knowledge, understanding and skills, which relates with competences of consumerism. Further, Davidson and Stebbins (2011) wrote the requirement of special equipment to perform activities as serious leisure, which eminently counts for long distance competitions in nature under winter conditions.

3.6. Motivation to participate in nature sport events

To understand why people become participants in an event one has to look at their motives. (Wilkie, 1994) “Basically (..) motivation refers to the processes that move a person to behave in certain ways. Motivation deals with how behaviour gets started, is energized, is sustained, is directed, and is stopped” (p.123). As the word ‘how’ indicates in Wilkie’s statement, the main question behind motivation is ‘why’ is someone doing what s/he is doing. Hanna and Wozniak (2001) explained that motivation is the sum of all motives leading to certain behaviour. Trommsdorff, Köhler, and Diller (2008) described that motives have a strong relation to emotions. Zehrer and Siller (2007) summarized the relation Trommsdorff et al. (2008) described as

“(1) For that motives may exert influence, they must be activated like emotions and cognitions. (2) Motives have emotional and cognitive components. While emotions are triggering acting processes, knowledge is the basis for goal-oriented action. (3) Motives are not consciously perceived, but can be realized through thinking or questioning.”

Zehrer and Siller (2007) used these thoughts to link motives with behaviour, through
experiences. To create a time concept of before, during, and after they added attitude and expectations. Interestingly, but not coincidently, similar intellectual approaches are found in the theory about experiences, following this section, showing that all these aspects are profoundly intertwined.

### 3.7. Meaning of experiences

Getz (2008) stated that meanings that are attached to events are an essential component of the experience. He further elaborates that meaning is of such high importance that a meaningful experience has the capabilities to trigger transformation, “change beliefs, values or attitudes” (p.414), and that the individual “will likely adopt new behaviors” (p.414). Crompton et al. (2009) confirmed the phenomenon in their research about experience education, stating that a personal lived experience has an extraordinary ability to consolidate understanding of a matter in a small time-frame depending on how extreme the experience is. Generally spoken, people learn and change faster through personal experiences. Nonetheless, Getz (2008) stressed that it might need a number of events experiences for a transformation.

Events get their meaning externally, through for example communities or on a greater scale, society. These meanings attached have an influence on the individual. Still the individual attaches her or his own meaning to the event too. Especially large events with their own history, like the Vasaloppet, often have socially-constructed meanings, which are generally recognized (Getz, 2008). As Roche (2000) wrote, events can be an important subject for the identity of a society, which makes them more than a sole marketing tool for tourism. Remarkably this is also the case for the Vasaloppet. According to him, an event also comprises of the accomplishments of a society presented through the event, and last but not least prestige. This becomes even clearer when witnessing the final sprint on the finishing line in Mora, when it is once again about who wins, a Norwegian or a Swede.

As it was shown meaning is important, when researching experiences and will therefore play an important part in the design of the data collection method.
3.8. Experiences of events

In this section of this study the concept of experiences of events is examined. In this context, the Vasaloppet as the event case can be understood as a touristic one. The reason for this is that most of the participants are not from the area, where the Vasaloppet takes place. This is partly because of its remoteness, but also due to its popularity among all Swede’s and internationals. Consequently, the participants need to travel to the event and use a variety of resources provided that qualify being touristic. These resources include among others transport, which is part of access, accommodation and different amenities. Additionally, it does not matter if the participant is a day-tripper, meaning s/he arrives on the day of the event and returns home the same day or a tourist, in the sense of staying at least one night for the event (Page & Connell, 2014). Due to this it is possible to explain the experiences of the event with research of experiences in a touristic context, additionally to the one about experiences of events. It is debatable if there is a difference between them, but for the framing for this research these areas seem most suitable for above explained reasons.

To be able to understand experiences in this work it is necessary to constitute what it is for the participant who is researched. Undoubtedly this includes the integration of psychology research. When looking for a definition of experience in the tourism context it becomes clear that there is no consensus in academic literature. Pine & Gilmore (1998) focused on impressions that are felt during an event, by the ones that participate or visit it. These impressions can be intellectual, physical, emotional or spiritual. Getz (2008) wrote that experiences can be conceptualized as behaviour, emotions and perceptions. They further involve attitude and moods, as well as awareness.

By this he is clearer to what Pine and Gilmore (1998) found earlier and adds a couple of concepts related to experiences. It should be clear by now that this research does not aim at holistically understand an event experience, but rather consider certain aspects of the experience, namely sustainability and transformation. It is barely possible to exclude any of the above-mentioned dimensions named by Getz (2008), when researching event experiences. However, to understand the process of transformation in relation to sustainability through the experience the focus of any of the dimensions should be towards the subject of sustainability, and how transformation in that field can be explained. Getz (2008) highlights that to all this, meanings should be attached. The different stages of before, during, and after are important for experiences This was also described by Clawson & Knetsch (1971), who highlighted to
incorporate the pre- and post-stages of an experience to identify influences and outcomes of such in more detail.

3.9. Transformation

It is substantial for this research to explore what transformation in the context of leisure and events is. Albeit the participation in an event like the Vasaloppet includes travelling the focus lies on the event itself, representing an extreme sport event. By knowing what the process of transformation is in this circumstances and what triggers it, it becomes possible to identify transformation among the interviewees.

In the context of physical travelling, transformation can be understood in two ways. The first one is the effects the traveller has on her/his surrounding, meaning the people s/he interacts with, cultural exchange, representation, physical deterioration of resources, or the destinations economy, to name a few. The second one is how these effect influence the traveller (Lean, 2012). The latter one is related to the scope of this research.

As Lean (2016) described, physical travelling can be divided into three temporal stages “before”, “during”, and “after”. Although the use of these distinction is common (cf Abbott, 2008), Lean (2016) argued that this framing is problematic in the context of transformational travel, as it is only possible to relate the physical location of the body, rather than the transformational experience. He further explained that the influence of a transformational experience of a journey might start before the person is physically at the place, and likewise continues after returning. In the context of serious leisure and the Vasaloppet, the experience might start with the preparation for the race, gaining of knowledge about equipment, track and climate. As Lean (2016) noticed the different periods of time flow into each other, but for the ease of narrative are split by physical location of the participant. The same principle is used in this thesis.

It is understood that many different forms of tourism have potential to trigger transformation. Among the most common ones are forms like eco-tourism, voluntourism, pilgrimage, community-based tourism, and backpacking (Reisinger, 2015). They are often referred to, as they kind of obviously enable the traveller to gain knowledge about other cultures and languages (Roberson, 2003). They might provide meaningful experiences about social (Butcher & Smith, 2010) and environmental (Beaumont, 2001) issues. Often they are linked to
discover or explore the *inner self* (Reisinger, 2015).

Willig (2008) concluded that the participation in extreme sports can enrich one’s life in ways that cannot be achieved elsewhere and stated thereby have high potential for transformation. This is due to the fact, that experiences in such situations cannot be experienced elsewhere. In research it was found that experiences in extreme sports trigger personal change (Brymer, 2013; Willig, 2008). This kind of transformation is linked to risk-taking, overcoming fears and the reappraisal of feelings, emotions and own capabilities, but also the development of identity (Allman, Mittelstaedt, Martin, & Goldenberg, 2009). Brymer (2013) also described the link between extreme sports, transformation and nature, which is of interest for this research. He described the feeling of participants in extreme sports to have a sense of battling the nature and might have a feeling of insignificance or powerlessness, which they overcome to prove to themselves and others. Experiencing these feeling and overcoming the challenges eventually lead to transformation.

Although events are not in the top list of transformational experiences and it might be arguable that the Vasaloppet is an extreme sport event, the earlier chapters, in relation to this one, show that there is potential for transformation in the event of scope.

### 3.10. Summary

In order to make it clearer how these concepts are linked to the research, this summary lists the most important thoughts and concept in relation to it.

As driving theme of this thesis sustainability represents a key concept. However, sustainability as such is too vague and broad to be use as a single concept. Therefore, the focus was on the two expected matters, in the context of the events. One was the sustainability of the event organiser, with concepts concerning the organisational level and where they derive from. In this regard, social, environmental and economic sustainability are widely known and thus something the researcher expected to be related to experiences, or at least something the interviewees might be aware of. Further, concepts regarding individual behaviour, practises and awareness were described. For this purpose, the three levels of sustainability model of Cavagnaro and Curiel (2012) was described and put in the context of events and experiences.

The latter mentioned context of events and experiences, depicts the second most important conceptual field for this research. Here the focus was on the reasoning to participate
in an event like the Vasaloppet, with regards to serious leisure and consumption of events, and why experiences are important in this context. Additionally, the experience of events was further explored and described. Finally, a section about transformation and how it is triggered was presented. Here, the critical aspect was how extraordinary experiences influence transformation. Moreover, it was shown that transformation in extreme sports, or extreme conditions, is likely.
4. Methodology

Coming from a positivist shaped background, this research is personally challenging to the researcher in his attempt to conduct this work. However, a qualitative approach is chosen to help him progressing in his academic career. Furthermore, the researcher himself participated in the 2018 Vasaloppet main race and therefore is able to better relate to what is told or described by the interviewees.

For this thesis, the researcher uses a social constructivism approach, assuming that the nature of reality of the interviewees is subjective and multiple, as is the one of the researcher (Creswell, 2009). Therefore, the knowledge deriving from the data collection is based on quotes and themes using the words of the participants of this research. Within this approach qualitative methods are dominant. As strategy for this research phenomenology is chosen to understand transformation as phenomenon among participants of the Vasaloppet. A suitable method for this strategy is the collection open ended data, collected with the intent to develop themes. A suitable method to collect open ended data is conducting in-depth interviews with the participants (Creswell, 2009).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interpretive paradigm</th>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Outcome</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social constructivism</td>
<td>Phenomenology</td>
<td>In-depth interviews</td>
<td>Knowledge based on themes of participants</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1 Methodology overview

A possible influence on the results is that the researcher has limited interview experience, which is mainly focussed on learning experiences during his undergraduate studies and are often of more theoretical knowledge than of practical experience. This is accounted for by conducting a few interviews first and learn from them for the other interviews during this study. The researcher is aware that this might lead to a change in quality of data from the first to the last interview.

The following paragraphs explain ethical consideration, and the data collection and analysis methods. Known constraints are explained in detail in the limitations section of both the collection and the analysis subchapters individually.
4.1. Ethical considerations

As this research is about details of individuals, their feelings and emotions, and what it did with them personally, including in-depth details, a critical review of ethical considerations is necessary. This counts not only for the thesis itself, which includes among others honesty about results and resources, but also honesty towards the participants in the research and respecting their rights.

According to Veal (2011) there are three main principles in research, which are

a. that no harm should befall the research subjects;
b. that subjects should take part freely; and
c. that subjects should take part on the basis of informed consent.

(p. 71)

Although the principle mostly occurs in studies concerned with medicine and biology, it is understood that in social sciences, as in tourism, privacy and the use of data are of concern (Veal, 2011). The ethical considerations for this research are formulated in a consent form given to the subject, following the principle c. They cover both above mentioned principles. Additionally, the consent form is handed over to the subject, when agreeing to participate in the research. The form is formulated in easy every-day language, include a clause about anonymity and offers that the subject is informed about the results of the study, if interested. The consent form can be found in Appendix 3.

4.2. Data collection method

As the purpose of this work is to find in-depth information about the transformation of the individual, qualitative data collection methods were examined. The one that seems most suitable for the given resources and aim are semi-structured interviews in-depths interviews. These interviews are of informal nature and targeted at gathering as much information of a small sample, which is contrasting to methods that want to gather focussed information of a large sample (cf Veal, 2011). The situation of this research seems highly suitable, as the information about the transformation are likely to be different with each interviewee and transformation in itself is a rather meaningful subject that can hardly be generalized (Getz, 2008; Veal, 2011).
In order to return exploitable results in the data obtained, the interviews have to be at least 30 minutes long. In general, the researcher aims at about 45–60 minutes. The time-frame of course depends on the individual, who is interviewed. The aimed duration of the interviews should however allow to make the interviewee talk and allow for probing and explanation of what is said.

The interview is, as said, an informal in-depth semi-structured interview (Veal, 2011). This means that there is no specific structure, or a list of questions to be asked. However, an interview overview was designed to have an overview of topics to cover (Table 2, p. 23). Additionally, possible subjects for questions are shown. This is mainly to ensure that the information that is needed to answer the research questions is obtained, which relates to the validity of this research. Further it helps the unexperienced researcher (interviewer) to direct or change topics if the interview gets stuck.

The researcher planned to conduct the interviews face-to-face, wherever possible (see limitations of the data collection method). If needed the interviews were held via video calls over the internet. However, if the situation demands interviews via phone were a possibility. In any case the audio of the interview was recorded and transcribed for analysis. Additionally, notes were taken. The reasons to prefer face-to-face interviews were the relation between interviewer and interviewee, rather than analysing body language. Still, emotions can be recognised better in in-person situations (Veal, 2011).

The pool of interviewees is described as population and the selection of the interviewee is done by sampling. The subject of research are participants in the Vasaloppet 2018, which represented the population. As it was described in the introduction, the most interesting participants to deliver results for this research are the participants of the 90-kilometres daytime races, who eventually delivered the sample for this research. This method of sampling is purposive and was used as the researcher focusses on the transformation through the largest amount of possible experiences in the event.

The contact with the sample was planned with help of the Vasaloppet organisation to get several people that are willing to participate in the research. Further contact options were via online forums and direct contact. Also snowballing from one participant to another was considered.
4.2.1. Interview overview

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topics</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Possible subjects</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Understanding of sustainability</td>
<td>Framing the understanding of sustainability from the interviewee perspective</td>
<td>Importance of S., place of S. in everyday life, S. practices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experiences during the event</td>
<td>Find out experiences in general</td>
<td>What happened, why, where, when, what did that make with the participant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matters of sustainability during the event</td>
<td>Find out which matters of S. the participant was aware of</td>
<td>What was sustainable, unsustainable, why is that, how did that make you feel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change of practises</td>
<td>To identify what changed through the event</td>
<td>What is different after participation, why so?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Different view on the event/sport?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 Interview overview

Sample: 6 – 8 participants of the 2018 90-kilometres races
Interview type: Semi-structured interview
Time: 30-60 minutes per interview
Aim: What is sustainability for the participant?
What did the participant experienced in relation to sustainability during the event?
How did that change the participant?
Record type: voice record, notes

4.2.2. Limitations of the data collection method

Despite a thorough explanations of the methods used to collect the data for this research, no method is without limitations. As this research was qualitative and aims at exploring a field that is not widely known it was difficult to find applicable models or frameworks for it.

The used interview method is prone to the experience and expertise of the researcher. Usually the aim of this research would allow for an unstructured interview approach, but the boundaries between semi and unstructured are blurred and it can be argued that there is a
continuum, where one ends and one starts (Veal, 2011). However, the resources of this research do not allow for a completely unstructured attempt mainly to time, but also due to the experience of the researcher.

The sampling size and method were limited to mainly two things. The first one was the sample size. Where quantitative research aims for generalization, qualitative does not. There is a theoretical saturation, which means that there are as many interviews as there is new information obtained. However, this cannot be achieved in a research of this scale in the time available. According to Willig & Rogers (2017), in a thesis like this one, with the time-frame (approximately 10 weeks) and scope (approximately 15,000 words), 6–10 interviews can be sufficient. For the sampling method the main concern was the researcher bias, which was represented by the subjectivity on selecting the sample.

4.3. Data analysis method

After the data was collected by the previously described method it needed to be analysed to find answers to the research questions. In this paper a thematic analysis (TA) was used. By this it was possible to identify the issues from the participants view, rather from what is already known (Willig & Rogers, 2017). Firstly, this was the main matter of interest to the researcher and secondly, there was not much found on the matter anyway. Therefore, this approach was suitable.

For the TA the research familiarize himself with the data first. This was done during several stages, starting with the interviews and notes. It continued with the transcription of the interviews. Through coding the researcher identified themes, which were, together with the codes, reviewed several times. In a TA like this co-occurrences and relationships, as well as meaning, can be captured. Furthermore it strongly focuses on experiences, feeling and perceptions of the subjects (Willig & Rogers, 2017). Within the TA a latent approach was taken. Rather than identifying the words used by the subjects to describe their experiences, the aim was to give meaning to the experience. This also aided to answer the research questions and to reach the objectives in an inductive way.

The stages described above are adapted from Braun and Clarke (2006). In total there are 6 steps, which can be seen in Figure 8.
4.3.1. Limitations of the data analysis method

As in the data collection, each method has its flaws, the same goes for data analysis. Using TA has its disadvantages. According to Willig and Rogers (2017) the most substantial one is reliability, as TA is prone to a range of subjective interpretation of the data, changing with each researcher. In the opinion of the researcher this subjectivism is unavoidable. The statements and words used by the interviewees are highly subjective, as is the interpretation of what was said by the researcher. The way one thinks and interprets is bound to the personality, created by experiences, culture, and social background (Willig & Rogers, 2017). As it was initially explained the researcher has a background coming from similar cultures and he has been through the experience of the event himself. The analysis does not try to be objective, but reflects the interpretation of the data by the researcher, including his personality.

When it comes to the choice of using inductive or deductive approaches for the TA, an inductive approach seems most suitable for this work. However, both approaches are not black and white and not as rigid as some might see them. Here, the researcher struggled with having previous knowledge about the topic in comparison to the interviewees and falling into a habit of looking for themes that relate to the literature. This was related to having a positivist mindset.

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**Figure 8 Steps of thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006)**

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1) Familiarisation with the data: reading and re-reading the data.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) Coding: generating succinct labels that identify important features of the data relevant to answering the research question; after coding the entire dataset, collating codes and relevant data extracts.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3) Searching for themes: examining the codes and collated data to identify significant broader patterns of meaning; collating data relevant to each candidate theme.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4) Reviewing themes: checking the candidate themes against the dataset, to determine that they tell a convincing story that answers the research question. Themes may be refined, split, combined, or discarded.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5) Defining and naming themes: developing a detailed analysis of each theme; choosing an informative name for each theme.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6) Writing up: weaving together the analytic narrative and data extracts; contextualising the analysis in relation to existing literature.</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
and the need to stick to known patterns, instead of going an unknown path. Especially the use of additional literature in the result part of a thesis challenged his thinking. However, the researcher was aware of this and tried to open his mind for different approaches into the unknown.
5. Findings and discussion

In this chapter the different themes depicting the major results are represented and discussed. Although only six from previously planned eight interviews took place, an ample amount of information returned from them. Considering the depth of information to be analysed and the amount of results, a selection of representation needed to take place. After coding and theming (Appendix 4) the interviews it became visible that there are many different aspects regarding experiences that influence the participant, when speaking about the event and sustainability in one context. The following sections represent the themes, including a thorough discussion with help of previously found secondary data. Additionally, new concepts were added to explain what was found.

5.1. Sustainability

The key theme of this thesis is sustainability. Following broader explanations and what sustainability means in the context of events, especially the ones in, what can be considered as, natural environment, it became a key note of the interviews. Eventually this was considered determinative for experiences that initiated a transformation. Still, this theme was too broad to be used to categorise what was said by the interviewees. Therefore, sustainability is divided into subthemes. These subthemes are individual sustainability, organisational sustainability and transportation.

5.1.1. Individual sustainability

During the interviews the participants were asked to describe what sustainability means for and to them in their everyday life and speak about every day practises. Issues from this were revisited during the ongoing talk to either relate, clarify or understand them further.

Remarkably here was the fact that some participants primarily started with how they practise garbage separation based on legislation and stated that this became ingrained in their behaviour. Interviewee 1 stated that this made her/him sensitised to an extent where s/he start to nudge others if they do not follow the rules. Others focussed on consuming behaviour. Interviewee 3 described that sustainability is the conservation of resources for future generations. Interviewee 4 explained that s/he does not consume beef, but any other meat, personally considering beef to have the largest negative environmental impact and linking it to individual sustainable practises, as it was described in section 3.3. In this context Interviewee
argued that there is no true sustainability, but we [the society] can try to come close to perfect. Although each participant considered her/himself as sustainable, almost every argument was based on the context the individual is in. Its social community. Only Interviewee 6 additionally spoke about how s/he sustain her/himself, by exercising and having a balanced diet.

When being asked during the interview, how these views on sustainability fit within their practice of sports, and cross-country skiing in particular, the results seem to correlate with the degree of seriousness of the activity. Three of the interviewees could borrow their skiing equipment for the race, stating they did not want to buy new gear just for single-use. Interviewee 1 said in this context “I was able to borrow everything from my brother, but shoes, as he has way bigger feet”. Two interviewees stated they use the same gear as in their training for many years, as leisure skiing is their focus. This includes interviewee 6, who’s focus is on self-sustaining by exercising, who rhetorically asked “why should I have gear for every sport I do, if I can use the same for everything”. Noteworthy is that interviewee 5 used the same arguments for her/his training, but did not describe any connection to her/his understanding of sustainability. Only one interviewee stated, with perceptible discomfort, that his family has a pool of 10 different skis at disposal, for different conditions. However, he justified her/himself by explaining that all family members participate in competitions.

One particular moment during an interview made the researcher listen attentively, as it led to a talk about expectations about sustainability, or rather about expectations about attitude. Whereas Interviewee 4 indicated discomfort while making her/his statements about gear use, while making a statement, Interviewee 6 had difficulties expressing a statement about her/his attitude towards sustainability. After talking about the reasons for that, with which the researcher can relate, the interview spoke more openly about it. In her/his case s/he had troubles with performing sustainable practices, while struggling with the personal capabilities to do so. The interviewee expressed an intrinsic driven motivation to be more sustainable, which is considerably limited by personal capabilities. Especially the latter argument made the researcher question himself, who drives the understanding of sustainability. Most of the expressions and contexts used by the interviewees are linked to what was found in literature before. The focus lies on environmental sustainability. It is about reducing the depletion of resources, reduction or adaptation of the individual consuming behaviour. These findings align with what was explained in the literature review (Chapter 3.4). The aspect of leaving something of what we have today for future generations was found in the literature as a general aspect of
Unfortunately, it is not possible at this stage to ask the interviewee, from where these thoughts derive, but from the context of the research it can be linked to ethical considerations. When making the decision to participate in the event, the participated is confronted with a vast variety of decisions. Questions about the personal goal, equipment needed, travel, nutrition and social status come into play. The participant becomes a consumer of resources, which are considered valuable (nature, water, energy, workforce) and a representative of her/himself and her/his community (sport, social group, nationality). Bray, Johns, and Kilburn (2011) wrote that it is hardly possible to define what ethical consumption behaviour is. The reason for that is the subjective tendency of assessing ethics. Nevertheless, the participants that were interviewed can be considered ethical consumers, as they care about others and their physical environment (Barnett, Cafaro, & Newholm, 2005). Despite being ethical consumers, who care about their actions in their everyday life and (serious-) leisure activities, studies shown that the intention of being sustainable does not always translate into actions (Carrigan & Attalla, 2001; Harrison, Newholm, & Shaw, 2005). Further studies found that a consumer, in this case the participant of the event, is always inhabiting a socially constructed ethical space to cope with in her/his decisions (Shaw & Riach, 2011). Struggling to make clear statements about sustainable behaviour in general and the context of the event indicates that the participants might answered in, what they think, is socially (ethically) acceptable, by the researcher or future readers of this research. Regardless of the researcher clarifying that there is no right or wrong, there is a socially constructed right or wrong in the mind of the interviewee determining her/his world.

Without generalising the points of view of the interviewees, they still seem to be driven by a collective general understanding of sustainability. Additionally, the construct of ‘ethical considerations’, based on cultural and social background of the interviewee influences their thinking, but also what and how they answer the questions in the first place. Hence, it is arguably that there is such thing of individual sustainability. However, the results show that personal motivations and capabilities seem to lead an individual interpretation of the different aspect of sustainability, when taking decisions.
5.1.2. Organisational sustainability

During the interviews the participants were asked to put themselves into the position of the event organiser and think about issues of sustainability, which correlate and go beyond what they initially considered important for their personal sustainability. From that the second subtheme within sustainability derived. For ease of discussion this theme mainly involves responsibilities of the event organiser, described by the interviewees. After analysing the interviews, it became more sensible to link some of what was said, in this context, to other themes, such as transport and thoughtfulness.

When speaking of the event the participants saw waste management of something they would need to take care of. In this context the Vasaloppsföreningen implemented a system to penalise participants who drop waste outside designated garbage zones (Figure 5, Chapter 2) Interviewee 1 highlighted that s/he only knew about that issue from the handout received in the starting package and liked the approach. In this context, Interviewee 3 considered the increasing expenses for the event organiser, if littering increased. S/he stressed the overall amount of wastage produced by participants, but also the event itself; “every participant uses a large amount of paper cups” (Interviewee 3). Interviewee 5 reacted negatively to the overall amount of “awful garbage”, stressing that is partly the responsibility of the event organiser, but it cannot be solely their task. Interviewee 1 took the same line and said: “an event [of that scale] cannot be 100% sustainable”. Nevertheless s/he was concerned about the reduction of emissions due to cleaning in general, but also the final cleaning after the event. Although all interviewees spoke in high terms of what the event organiser is doing about wastage, some said there could be done more. Interestingly Interviewee 6, who visited the Vasaloppsarenan during summer witnessed leftover waste from the winter event, indicated that not everything experienced during the event is as it seems. In conclusion it can be said that this is one of the issues that is easily experienced and considered important. Besides the good impressions the participants have, the ones coming with a pronounced awareness for sustainability, looking for details, would like to see improvements in this matter.

Another aspect of organisational sustainability was the location of the event itself and the design of the Vasaloppsarenan. Here, the thoughts can be divided into the track and the accompanying programme and services. Deliberately excluded are transport services, as the researcher chose to theme them extra. For details read the subchapter 5.1.3 transportation, following this one.
Organisational sustainability concerns regarding the track were the course of the track itself and the snow used. Again, the interviewees were asked to put themselves into the event organisers perspective. Interviewee 2 was concerned about the strain of the event on the track. Interviewee 3 spoke about the lay out and maintenance of the forest aisle representing the track. Both issues cause stress on the nature in a confined space. When talking about the use of snow there was no common thread, on an organisational base. Interviewee 2 stressed that weather becomes extremer and therefore less predictable for event organisers, stating there is enough snow Sweden, to run such an event. Contrary to that Interviewee 5 said that the event organiser for the Vasaloppet cannot rely on natural snow only, but it does not really matter, as the participants will not recognise the difference anyway. Remarkable here is the statement that “weather can be experienced, but climate cannot” (Interviewee 5. When it comes to the race, the important factor is the quality of the track itself (Interviewee 4; Interviewee 6). Interestingly Interviewee 1 stated in this context that the attractiveness of the event lies partly in the image of skiing in pristine nature with natural snow. This issue has potential of conflicts between the image sold about the location and the sustainability of the event.

Organisational sustainability concerns regarding the accompanying programme and services (excluding transport) were interestingly commercially motivated. Issues of concern were the duration of the event (Interviewee 2). Interviewee 3 had the impression of Mora being sedate and that besides the event not much is going on. Interviewee 1 said “there is a lack of accompanying programme”, despite the fact of the city being booked out. In relation to that there is a small fair at the finish in Mora, including exhibitions of sponsors. Interviewee 3 mentioned that there is necessity for sponsoring for such events, although this might not be considered a suitable accompanying programme by some. Interviewee 6 stressed the importance of such occasion for local companies and the region to market themselves on different scales. Irrespective the international scope of the event, secondary research in the beginning of this paper indicated that the Vasaloppet is a Swedish event, which is used to mainly market the region nationwide. Interviewee 6 further spoke about how this marketing can benefit the region and companies detached from the event, describing what is known as the multiplier effect in economics related to leisure and tourism (Page & Connell, 2014).

Although the interviewees did not deliberately used commercialisation in the context of sustainability some brought up issues, without recognising they were speaking about sustainability as used in this research. Additionally, some had a sense of what a hallmark event
can do for the community on a wider scale. This includes the hospitality sector and job and image creation in other businesses related to the destination. Sponsorship was not considered as considered to relate to sustainability, other than helping the event to take place.

5.1.3. Transportation

As introduced, transportation represents an own subtheme within sustainability. This is partly based on the issue that it overlapped with the beforementioned subthemes, but also was more deliberately expressed by the interviewees. Additionally, despite that this analysis has an inductive approach, this issue was also found in the objectives of the event organiser (see chapter 1 & 2). Therefore, it made sense to use it as an individual theme. The findings are of rather descriptive nature. Concerning the event organiser, there are three fields of consideration. The transport to and from the event, the transport during the event, and the traffic caused by visitors and participants in all three stages. Based on that the participants were asked to describe their transports and reflect on them from their own and the event organisers perspective.

The interviewees were partly international and national participants, which gave a glance on different aspects from both sides. The international participants used air transfer to get to Sweden (Arlanda). From there two participants (Swiss) used organised transport of a tour operator they travelled with. One (German) travelled individually by train. From the national participants, two arrived by car and one stayed with friends in Mora, arriving by train beforehand. This is not to generalise by any means, but to give an understanding of the different background of what was said. The two participants travelling with a tour operator (Interviewee 1; Interviewer 3) had all transport (participation and accommodation etc.) arranged, and said it was the most convenient way to get to Mora. Interviewee 3 was asked if s/he considered alternative like train or bus. S/he explained that friends participated in the 2018 Vasaloppet too, and travelled individually by minivan. Though s/he was unsure about the degree of sustainability, compared to air travel and car transfer to the event, s/he would choose this in the future. The reasons for that were the freedom of movement at the destination, as well as the social aspect of the trip itself. For Interviewee 2, travelling by plane and go further by train and using the transport offered by the Vasaloppet represented a reasonable convenient and sustainable option, considering the distances.
For the national participants sustainability of the mean of transport was not much consideration at all. The reasons for that were for one participant (Interviewee 6) the lack of having own individual transport available and friends in Mora to stay with. Thus, taking the train was most convenient. For the other two participants (Interviewee 4, Interviewee 5) the reasons to choose individual transport were explained thoroughly. Interviewee 4 is skiing on a high level, explaining s/he skis in the top 500 of the event, starting just behind the elite group. For that s/he needs support along the track, supplying nutrition at certain moments, to perform at her/his best. Having a family member fulfilling this task was the only possible option the participant saw to have this assured. When asked if the event organiser could ensure the supplementation along the track, the interviewee said it is up to individual and would need too much workforce and organisation to implement that option (Chapter 5.2).

The most interesting explanation for choosing individual transport was given by Interviewee 5. S/he explained several sides of the issue. Firstly, s/he admitted that there are way too many cars used during the event in general. Further that s/he is aware that this has a large impact on the environment, indicating an experience of an issue that is related to sustainability. Yet, this is, according to her/him what the Swedish people, especially on the country side and in the provinces, are used to do (Interviewee 5). In this context, Frändberg and Vilhelmson (2011) researched personal mobility trends in the Swedish population and found that the motorisation of the population led to a shift from living in a local space towards a regional one. This has expanded the activity spaces of the individual. Further, with the upcoming of individual transport, away from shared ones, and increases in speed to travel distances, the car was superior in Sweden’s more remote areas. However, they argued that there is a slower shift back to shared transports, even though the offer increased. They also indicated that younger generation become more aware of the high-costs of individual transport for the environment. Nevertheless, mobility is strongly related to circumstance of the space one lives in, social background and culture, leading to conflict between one’s environmental impacts and their transport habits. Interviewee 5 further described “a weekend during the Vasaloppet, with the family, is considered a Swedish holiday”. Whilst most of the participants might be aware of their doing and impact on nature, they value their mobility and social bounds over the environment. When asked about the people that make use of friends to supplement them during races, s/he responded that this is not the case for her/him. Seeing a familiar face at the track to motivate her/him, helps to sustain her/himself through the race. Further reading about this in the chapter social aspects.
The aspect of free transportation during the event was mentioned by all interviewees, but related to the responsibility of the event organiser. Getting free transport at the finish seems to be taken for granted. Other free transport options were not part of any discussion with the participants. Reasons for that might be the preference or necessity of individual transport, or acceptance that transport comes at expenses and they cannot be covered by the event organiser.

**5.1.4. Conclusion of sustainability findings**

While interviewing the participants it became clear that sustainability in general is no easy topic. In personal sustainability the limitation of sustainability due to personal possibilities became obvious. One can only be as sustainable as the personal circumstance allow. This was reasoned with partly monetary resources, but also ethics. In organisational sustainability the participants recognised sustainable issues, which they denied being problematic on a personal level. However, they were aware of them in general, but also from what they experienced during their participation. In transport several aspects to personal sustainability were added. The participant needs to balance aspect of mobility, social environment and culture with the seriousness of the activities performed. This conflict became even more comprehensible in the next chapter about thoughtfulness, where participants described where they experience these conflicts in relation to the event. Here is also where the participants reflected on their role of being more sustainable for the greater good.

**5.2. Thoughtfulness**

The theme thoughtfulness derived from incidents, where the participants spoke about considerations about others. Whereas the beforementioned chapter focussed on a strong link to sustainability on the macro and meso levels, this chapter focusses on a deeper meaning of sustainability on the micro level. As it was explained from literature sustainability on the micro level is rather individual and much about caring for oneself, for relatives and others. When talking about their personal experiences during the race, the participants partly indicated a relation between the seriousness of the activity and how much they cared about what was going on around them, including other participants, which sometimes where friends or relatives. All interviewees were asked, if they had the time to appreciate the circumstance of the event and the place they were in. From all interviews there were three subjects that caught attention.

Before conducting the interviews, there were questions like, what can the participant
experience at all. Do they have time to actually experience issues, and if so, what would that be? While analysing what they said the questions turned more to, how much is the participation in the Vasaloppet driven by others and is there actually space to take in what is going on? The strongest feelings were found with Interviewee 5 and Interviewee 6. Both were national participants, with a good understanding for the setting of the event, its history and place in Swedish culture. Interviewee 5 brought up the context of Swedish culture and the Vasaloppet being an event for families and people of all ages and skills levels. S/he stated to feel proud to be part of the race, but also to be blessed to ski in the Vasaloppsarenan. Despite the strenuous endeavour to ski the 90 kilometres s/he caused a deep feeling of happiness to be part of something bigger, which needs to be conserved to future generations. Interviewee 6 described the Vasaloppet as being more than just a sport event. It is an important part of Swedish tradition and culture. All these aspects can be found in literature about the responsibility of events, as for example fostering social cohesion. There is also an understanding amongst researchers and organisation that these are issues of sustainability. On the same account the Vasaloppsföreningen Sälen-Mora lists its responsibility for the image and the community in their sustainable strategy (Vasaloppsföreningen Sälen-Mora, 2017). Unfortunately, this relation might not be comprehensible to the participants of such events. Nevertheless, there is an indication that participants unwittingly build that link by themselves.

The second subject that stood out was how Interviewee 4 talked about her/his participation in the race. S/he described a strong focus on the race and the result. When asked how s/he experienced the environment and the auxiliary services, such as supplementation, s/he admitted that this is not of much importance. Admittedly Interviewee 4 was by far the most serious participant interviewed. As a result, much of the theory about serious leisure was identified. In spite that the participant is well aware of sustainability and the social pressure of being sustainable, s/he described that this is not of much interest during the course of the event. As a reminder, this is the same participant, who uses the car and personal support to supplement during the race, at spots where needed, not where provided by the event organiser. The interviewed participant spoke of personal achievement, by skiing the Vasaloppet in top positions. In her/his case being in the top 500 out of more than 16,000 participants. Overcoming the challenge triggers strong emotions of accomplishment and social belonging. This also seems to be a driver for participation, as the race is understood to be very challenging, within the wider cross-county skier community. Further as a hallmark event the finishing of the race counts for something. The social and sporting aspect is in the foreground of thinking and there
is not much space to think about sustainability. Nonetheless, Interviewee 6, who had a detailed understanding of the sport, but also about the subject of cultural importance described a similar thread, speaking about how in Sweden someone becomes someone, when finishing the Vasaloppet. S/he said that you become “a real man” (Interviewee 6), when finishing the 90 kilometres. This correlates with what was said beforehand about conflicts that are socially and ethically constructed, personal capabilities of being sustainable and the boundaries of being sustainable at all (Frändberg & Vilhelmsen, 2011; Shaw & Riach, 2011).

The third subject, where participants experienced the support for others, was the contact with volunteers during the race, spectators to cheer them up and when skiing with others. The latter one was the case for one of the participants, during the Vasaloppet. Interviewee 1 was travelling in a larger group, but had one friend, with the same level of skiing. Reflecting on the race s/he said that finishing the race would have not been possible the way it was with someone with her/him. They supported and cheered up each other to continue (Interviewee 1). Interviewee 6 described a similar situation, but in another race, stressing the emotional importance of support. Interviewee 5 did not have such a partner. As described in the transport chapter s/he valued a familiar face along the track for mental support (Interviewee 5). Every participant interviewed, as well as the researcher himself, had contact with volunteers at the supplementing stations along the track, as well as with spectators. Although it cannot be generalised from this research, all stated that having such support motivates and helps to persevere the individual ambition. Interviewee 2 described that s/he had “Goosebumps”, while passing groups in the middle of nowhere, cheering for her/him. Interviewee 6 valued the work of the volunteers, not only for nutritious and mental support, but also for knowing that someone will clean up, after all the racers. On a relate note, Interviewee 3 experienced that “the participants [the ones who do not know each other] did not speak with each other”. Reflecting on it, it led to wonder and discomfort.

5.2.1. Social aspects discussion

As is became clearer during the analysis, not only the understanding and practicing of sustainability seems driven by a social construct or background. During the interviews the participants often described other social aspects of their participation. Besides the focus of this research on sustainability, this needs further discussion. Some of these aspects were used as arguments before, as some are difficult to dissociate from other themes. Details about this issue are discussed in the conclusion of this paper.
As it was described in other findings, the individual participant does not necessarily join the event for what seems for them a personal reason. From the literature review, we know that in serious leisure personal challenge and achievement play a crucial role (Davidson & Stebbins, 2011; Swarbrooke, 2003). Nevertheless, the same literature found that there are aspects of belonging to groups, as well as the image on has for others, when achieving something. This does not only represent a driver for participating in challenging sport events and attitude towards sustainability, but also what the individuum thinks, how s/he acts and how experiences are expressed. Within the different communities of Vasaloppet participants, finishers, and cross-country skiers, and needs to be questioned how much the belonging of any of these drives the participation in the event. During the interviews it was found that for Interviewee 1 and Interviewee 3 the driver was partly participating with a group of friends and relatives, to have a common experience, which this group will have for their life. Further, they described how this group now plans to have such experiences more often in the future. As mentioned before, Interviewee 5 appreciated the experience to an extend of pride additional to having a driver for fitness, and Interviewee 6 felt belonging to different communities through participation.

All of the above issues can be found in research. The concept found, which addresses many of these, is co-creation of value through experiences. Within this concept it was found that the value of the experience can be solely created by the customers, outside what the service provider intended (Grönroos, 2008). In the context of non-everyday occasions the value often arises from the extraordinary experience (Getz & Page, 2016), resulting into temporary emergence of social coherence (Kim & Jamal, 2007). The intention to repeat this experience in future sport events, by the group Interviewee 1 and Interviewee 3 belonged to, can lead to value creation outside what the service provider creates or intended to create as value proposition (Getz & Page, 2016; Grönroos, 2011; Mackellar, 2009). However, limiting this approach of co-creation of the experience are the circumstance of the event, as it depicts an emotional, or as mentioned extraordinary, instant outside everyday life (Rihova, Buhalis, Moital, & Gouthro, 2015). Löbler (2011) argued that it is hard to make conclusions about what happened related to social context, from subjective sense-making and individual intrinsic thinking processes.
5.2.2. Conclusion thoughtfulness findings

After conducting the interviews and digging into feelings and reasoning for caring about ‘the other’ it became visible that there are no conscious occasions during the race to share thoughts about it. The two remarkable overlaps between the ‘me’ and ‘you’ were, when the participants skied in company or experiencing spectators and volunteers supporting them to continue the ordeal of racing 90 kilometres. Further, it seems that there the individual is able to neglect, or become unaware, for one type of issue, when focussing on another subject. Interestingly, both issues are socially constructed. It is up to the individuum to decide, which to value more. Additionally, the social aspects of the experienced were highlighted. Racing the event together with others seems to be an important part of individual experience, as it is to be recognised as participant. Group coherence was a remarkable aspect in the experiences, regardless if being part of a group in the race, or because of the race. There are indicators that despite what the event organiser intends to propose as values of the event, co-created value amongst the larger community of participants and spectators overrules them.

5.3. Transformational experiences

At the end of every interview, the participants were asked to reflect on their personal attitude towards the practise of sport and their sustainability. Although this question might seem aiming straight forward towards transformation, the interviewees were not aware of the concept. Additionally, they were asked to state if they would participate again in the Vasaloppet. Some participants are repeat participants already. The invitation to reflect on such things of course represents an attempt towards their individual transformation. Regardless the impossibility of generalizing from just six interviews, it seems evident that a strong background of sustainability in the participants social environment leaves less space for transformation in that field. Theory revealed that transformation is an ongoing process, conditional to time and magnitude of trigger. The Vasaloppet has a very short timeframe and the general awareness described by the participants indicates a small magnitude to trigger transformation. However, there were different experiences that triggered transformation.

Interviewee 1 described that s/he intensified her/his training, the moment their group signed up for the Vasaloppet. Despite being sportive, and joining different sport events, the awareness for the need of fitness increased prior to the event. This included participation in local skiing races. S/he reflected that health in general becomes a more important aspect of life,
giving the possibilities to enjoy life more. Therefore, s/he likes to participate in more such/similar events in order to keep the motivation to be more self-sustaining. Similar aspects were described by Interviewee 6, who, since practicing skiing on a serious leisure level, increased general understanding of personal fitness. S/he participated in her/his 8th Vasaloppet in 2018, seeing it as a measure of fitness, without pressuring her/him into top positions. This meets the social sustainability goal of the Vasaloppet to be a driver of public wellbeing and health.

Interviewee 3 valued the location of the event. Although, s/he did not have an eye for the nature all the time, s/he reflected on the time penalty for littering in the event. Retrospectively s/he was concerned about the amount of wastage due to supplements and paper cups s/he witnessed. When asked what this does with her/him, s/he stated that it is “one’s own responsibility to keep the track clean” (Interviewee 3) indicating an increase in awareness for such issues in general. Further, s/he explained that in this context the costs would increase for everyone, if the participant would reject this responsibility towards the event organiser. Similar view points are shared in her/his everyday life, when it comes to practising sustainability. Here the experience was able to consolidate thinking towards responsibilities of sustainable practises. This aligns with what was written in the chapter about individual sustainability in the literature review.

Interviewee 2 said that s/he was happy to experience “wicked shit”, related to the location of the Vasaloppsarenan. Interviewee 5 and Interviewee 6 described happiness in the context of training within nature, partly in the Vasaloppsarenan outside the races. Interviewee 4 described that s/he had not have the mind to experiences the nature, as it was just the location the tracks were in. Interviewee 1 described the area surrounding the tracks as monotone and boring. Here, the interviewees that were aware of their place within the Vasaloppsarenan, and its location described that they became more aware of issues related to climate, or weather, although there is not much they can do about it. However, they were partly aware of the sheer impact an event of such scale must have on the environment (Interviewee 2; Interviewee 5; Interviewee 6). Interviewee 1 indicated that s/he knows about the scale, from marketing, but being mostly unaware of the sustainable practices of the event organiser made her/him reflective.
It was shown that there are potential experiences during the Vasaloppet that lead to transformation by sustainable means. Some of them concern practices, some personal health and wellbeing, and others awareness for issues. There might be others, which are difficult to identify from the data collected. Based on the analysis some might relate to other themes, but still lead to a transformation in some manner. Overall it can be stated that the Vasaloppet has potential to transform participants sustainable practices and awareness, but the event itself has only a short-term influence on the participants. Also, from what the participants described it might be advisable that the event organiser creates more transparency about sustainable issues and measures, to increase awareness.
6. Conclusion

Before concluding the results, a reflection on the research process is presented. In this chapter it is discussed how the plan to produce this paper worked out in relation to what actually happened. Further it represents a kind of lessons-learned during this process and what should be done differently.

The first thing that comes to my mind, when remembering the beginning of this work, was the difficulty to justify the topic itself. As explained in the very beginning it initially was clear to work on something around experiences in the Vasaloppet. During the journey towards my own participation in the event I found that sustainability seems to be a key issue. However, it became apparent that linking these themes is not easy task. I have been told to rethink the topic, and despite others having issues to put together these different abstract concepts, I rather took the challenge.

The most challenging part was getting into a qualitative mind, for this work, which I think I am still not fully capable of. Nevertheless, I could find supporting literature, both before and after conducting the research, explaining most of my findings. However, getting the data was more challenging than expected. Firstly, I did not manage to get the eight interviewees and had to work with six. This is partly because I could not get any interviewees through the event organiser, but also partly to difficulties approaching certain nationalities in a non-preferred language. That is as far as I can speak ethically correct about this. Only after I got advice from our programme supervisor, I managed to get more interviewees, showing me, how important experience is, but also that thinking out of the box and discussing with others help to get back on track. The solution at that point was to write the whole university to find participants in the 2018 Vasaloppet. Another factor in this was that with the number of interviews the quality and depth of information got better, as themes formed more intuitively and leading the interview became more natural. Still, at a certain point the data needed to be analysed to a full extent timewise and discussed, limiting the possibilities of getting even more into the issue. An additional huge obstacle was the perceived sensitivity of the topic sustainability. The term seems to be heavily loaded emotionally and ethically, representing a challenge to probably many, even experienced, researchers. Yet, I have the impression the interviewees spoke freely most of the time. Some obviously had issues saying, what they said. Still, they said it. The main challenge during analysis was the inexperience and lack of practice in that field, especially in
something as intertwined as sustainability. There were many overlaps, which were difficult to justify and the coding and theming slipped partly into something that is rather simple to explain, than what was probably meant exactly by the interviewee. This is to a certain extent accounted for by the lack of depth in the interviews, but also to the matter that many reasons for feelings and emotions are grounded into psychology, which is no professional discipline of mine.

Recapitulating, I still believe I got decent results, which might lack depth, but still represent that there are links between the different concepts. Despite identifying huge transformation, I still managed to find that participants in the Vasaloppet can experience sustainable practices first hand, which differ from their mundane life and make them think about issues and become aware of possible solutions, which eventually will lead to transformation. If I would repeat the study I would reconsider the analysis method and invest more time for the interviews.

After discussing the data collected for this research and reflecting on it, the work is further concluded in this part. As a small summary, the paper included an introduction, giving a context of this research and its importance. Further it included the aim of this research. Within the literature review key concepts were described. Before presenting the results, a methodology chapter explains how the research was conducted and in which context the produced knowledge could be placed.

The aim of this research was to identify how experiences during the participation in the Vasaloppet are influential on a transformation in relation to sustainability. To reach that it was necessary to understand which experiences are a matter of sustainability for the participants interviewed and to identify which of these are linked to transformation. Related to that, there were three issues to examine. One was the understanding of sustainability from the participants view, what did the participant experienced in relation to sustainability and finally what the transformation were the participants underwent.

While interviewing the participants it became obvious that their understanding of sustainability is mainly focussed on what is understood as environmental sustainability. First thoughts are often related to consuming behaviour, especially in relation to food sources. Another aspect is waste management, which the interviewees were able to relate to their own habits, but also as an important consideration for the event organiser. In this context the waste produced by nutrition supplements seemed controversial. An additional issue of sustainability
was related to transportation related to the event. To some small degree aspects of social sustainability were experienced by the participants. These aspects included social cohesion of events, with a strong background of culture. Economic sustainability was barely described. Here, one participant described the multiplier effect, which can benefit the proximity of the event. Transformations in any of these areas were limited to personal wellbeing and health, which was deliberately mentioned only once, but described by others too. This also depicts a key aspect in the sustainable strategy of the Vasaloppsföreningen. Another widely described experience was the production of waste in relation to the event, as well as the CO2 emissions caused by waste and transport, which at least for some of the interviewee led to thoughtfulness about the use of products and the distribution of responsibilities to take care of it. An issue, which is also described in the sustainable strategy of the Vasaloppet is the impact of such emissions on the climate. Especially on the winter event. Three interviewees were aware of this issue and found in the reflection on the participation that the scale of the event and its impacts might be questioned in general.

Overall the transformational experiences and the picture of sustainability described during the interviews revealed different dilemmas, which can partly be found in literature about sustainability in the context of the individual and events. A major conflict, which became noticeable while participating in the Vasaloppet, interviewing other participants and communicating with the event organiser was that it is challenging to balance different needs and wants. Notwithstanding that this research was not about the role of the event organiser, this impression aligns with what was found in theory about events. An event might always have negative impacts on different areas, but it is up to the organiser to balance these with possibly the most beneficial countermeasures. As the personal dilemmas are of higher interest, they are discussed in the next paragraph.

The first personal dilemma identified is the one between the attitude towards a more sustainable lifestyle and the resources available to act upon it. The second personal dilemma is the one between being sustainable over all, while performing serious leisure, which is often related to negative impacts on sustainability. As it became understandable through theory, many different aspects play a role in attitude and image. Noteworthy is the fact that this puts the individual in the same position as the event organiser. However, the individual only needs to balance her/his own deeds against the own consciousness, which is formed by its social environment and mainly the exact same social community the consciousness is formed in.
Dissimilar from that, a hallmark event like the Vasaloppet must balance against a myriad of opinions on sustainability. Sweden considers itself as being a leading country in sustainability, worshipping and protecting its natural resources, while letting a sheer uncountable number of Swedish citizens and foreigners utilising them. The research revealed that there are individual that only care about having the best possible training and racing conditions for the Vasaloppet, neglecting any impact they have for having the best results. Contrary there are participants who join for being in that nature and becoming part of something bigger than themselves, while being consciously aware of neglecting their impact. Still those participants try to reduce their impacts wherever possible, even outside the event, and in a small part realised this by participating in the race. Ultimately it is questionable that an event that is a hallmark example of overcoming an endeavour to be completely sustainable, within the society it depicts so strongly, can become something that its underlying society is not yet willing to be.

I would like to end this work with two citations.

Stazyk, Moldavanova, and Frederickson (2016) stated about sustainability

It is in the attempt to sort out how competing environmental, social, and economic pressures can and should be balanced that the term sustainability comes to mean both so much and so little. To ascertain what it means for something to be sustainable can be elusive, if not unrealistic, when divergent environmental, social, and economic goals and values are weighed against each other. In such cases, sustainability is no longer solely an environmental issue, but rather an issue defined by highly contextualized, competing preferences. (p. 656)

Or, as interviewee 1 said “there is no 100% sustainability”.

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7. References


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Appendices

Appendix 1
Vasaloppet Arena Map
Vasaloppet Trail Profile
# Appendix 2

## Project chart

### Themes

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</table>
Appendix 3
Consent form

Interview Consent Form

Research project title: Master Thesis – The Vasaloppet as transformative nature sport event

Research investigator: Rosenbaum, Michael BBA

Research participants name:

The interview will take approximately 60 minutes. The research does not anticipate that there are any risks associated with your participation, but you have the right to stop the interview or withdraw from the research at any time.

Please read the further conditions carefully. If you have any questions, please ask the research investigator for clarification.

• the interview will be recorded and a transcript will be produced
• the transcript of the interview will be analysed by the beforementioned research investigator
• access to the interview transcript will be limited to the beforementioned research investigator and academic colleagues and researchers with whom he might collaborate as part of the research process
• any summary interview content, or direct quotations from the interview, that are made available through academic publication or other academic outlets can be anonymized so that you cannot be identified, and care will be taken to ensure that other information in the interview that could identify yourself is not revealed

With regards to being quoted, please initial next to any of the statements that you agree with:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I agree to be quoted directly, using my real name.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I agree to be quoted directly if my name is not published and a made-up name (pseudonym) is used.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
• the actual recording will be destroyed after the graduation of the research investigator mentioned above
• any variation of the conditions above will only occur with your further explicit approval
All or part of the content of your interview may be used;

- In academic papers, policy papers or news articles
- On our website and in other media that we may produce such as spoken presentations
- On other feedback events
- In an archive of the project as noted above

By signing this form I agree that;

1. I am voluntarily taking part in this project. I understand that I do not have to take part, and I can stop the interview at any time;

2. The transcribed interview or extracts from it may be used as described above;

3. I have read the Information sheet;

4. I do not expect to receive any benefit or payment for my participation;

6. I have been able to ask any questions I might have, and I understand that I am free to contact the researcher with any questions I may have in the future.

Printed name

Participant signature Date

Researchers signature Date

Contact information
This research has been reviewed and approved by Högskolan Dalarna. If you have any further questions or concerns about this study, please contact:

Name of researcher: Michael Rosenbaum
Tel: +46 72 200 5347
E-mail: h17micro@du.se

What if I have concerns about this research?
If you are worried about this research, or if you are concerned about how it is being conducted, you can also contact (Researchers name) supervisor:

Name of Supervisor: David Scott
Address: Högskolan Dalarna Röda vägen 3, 781 70 Borlänge
Tel: 
E-mail: dsc@du.se
### Appendix 4

**Code book**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word / Expression</th>
<th>Times mentioned</th>
<th>Theme/Subtheme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grown up with skiing</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Ind. sustainability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participating as idea with friends</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Thoughtfulness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Driving every weekend to the mountains to train</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Transportation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sustainable (e-)mobility</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>General sustainability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not living over sustainable</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Ind. sustainability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sustainability important nowadays</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Transformational exp.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recycling</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Sustainability (general)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vasaloppet was an exception to travel, to reach a personal (sportive) goal</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Reasons to x-country ski</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am trying to be as sustainable as possible</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Ind. sustainability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I skied with one friend from km 45. Having friends with you to support each other, makes the race way better</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Thoughtfulness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden is beautiful, but during the race the landscape becomes monotone. Everything looks the same.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>General impressions/emotions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There were not many spectators, compared to a marathon in a city. That is what I expected during the Vasaloppet.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>General impressions/emotions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Vasaloppet is not a highlight in nature and atmosphere. Especially compared to skiing events in the Alps.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>General impressions/emotions</td>
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<tr>
<td>I participate for the sport rather than nature</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Reasons to x-country ski</td>
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<tr>
<td>Trash zones</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Org. sustainability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Energy bars / drinks</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Ind. sustainability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Note in starter package to increase attention</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Org. sustainability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not everybody sticks to the rule to not drop trash anywhere along the track</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Ind. sustainability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not everybody has the head to pay attention to act sustainable during the race</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Thoughtfulness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>With so many people there will always be some that produce trash without thinking about it</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Sustainability (general)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is positive that the event organiser creates attention for the issue</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Org. sustainability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compared to other events the Vasaloppet seemed cleaner</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Thoughtfulness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In city sport events the cleaning is way easier, as after the last runner a cleaning squad comes, which is available anyway, in an urban environment. In Sweden you would need track vehicles that produce way more emission.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Thoughtfulness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is impossible to collect all the garbage in a track like in the Vasaloppet</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Org. sustainability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You have to take supplements. It is not possible without</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Ind. sustainability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An issue is that you might need to give up, if you need supplements at places where there is no post</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Ind. sustainability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The accompanying program is quite boring</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>General impressions/emotions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The offer (for lunch) in Mora is very limited.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>General impressions/emotions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It would not be sustainable to install a large infrastructure for only these few days of events per year.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Org. sustainability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We travelled with a small bus</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Transportation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We travelled with a Swiss tour operator, who organised everything</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Org. sustainability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How you travel is also a matter of money</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Ind. sustainability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using the busses can also add to the stress of the participation itself. So, having own transport was very good for our group</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Transportation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I do a lot of sport in general</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Ind. sustainability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Believe that the event organiser needs to have money and be commercial to some degree to keep the thing going.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Org. sustainability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If your main focus is being sustainable, you cannot create an event of such scale</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Org. sustainability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To run such an event you need sponsors, which want to promote themselves. This might come with extra costs in sustainability. But that is something the hands are tight for the organiser.</td>
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<td>Org. sustainability</td>
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<td>Thoughtfulness</td>
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<td>General impressions/emotions</td>
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<td>Sustainability (general)</td>
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I did not recognise sustainability besides the info note about trash zones.

I did not pay much attention to sustainability during the race.

Sustainability plays an important role, but not during the race, as the focus is different.

If I would know about a huge impact on nature, due to the event. And participating just for a sportive goal on costs of nature is no option for me.

My picture of Sweden is that they live sustainability. I also expect that in a country like that are rules to regulate it.

Sustainability is linked to nature.

It (sustainability) is also to conserve the future and have better a better perspective.

Leave no traces

The event is a huge burden for the environment.

The organisation of the event is very good.

I got Goosebumps from the atmosphere, when people where there to cheer

When you ski into a station and you suddenly have people cheering and music. It flashes one to see people smiling at you and get some food. It boasts motivation.

(General positive emotions regarding atmosphere)

The event only impacts the time, when it takes place. Other than that, it does not much.

The weather is getting more extreme.

Sustainability is about products. Like reducing throw-away products. Reusing resources.

Sustainability is important around the use of energy, like producing power from wind and water.

Understanding the need of sustainability is linked to education about it.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cross-country skiing is an emission free sport</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>Reasons to x-country ski</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In the area where I ski, they produce a lot of artificial snow</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Org. sustainability</td>
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<tr>
<td>I use my gear as long as I can and do not buy new things regularly.</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Ind. sustainability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Vasaloppet was a huge experience</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>General impressions/emotions</td>
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<tr>
<td>The hotel we stayed in was rudimental, but had everything we needed. However, the city seemed sedated.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>General impressions/emotions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I was very nervous before and during the race</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>General impressions/emotions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I remember that I found it awkward that no one talked with each other during the race.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Thoughtfulness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The logistic of the event organiser was very well planned. Especially the DHL container for the luggage stood out.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Org. sustainability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I did not see any wildlife during the race.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>General impressions/emotions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I think wax has a large impact on nature during a race of that scale.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Thoughtfulness</td>
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<tr>
<td>Maintaining forest aisles</td>
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<td>Org. sustainability</td>
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<tr>
<td>It is important that the participants are aware of being self-responsible for littering. If the event organiser would not do anything about it the costs for everyone would increase, due to cleaning up.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Ind. sustainability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I ski since my childhood, as that is what we did in winer.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Reasons to x-country ski</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I ski for fun</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Reasons to x-country ski</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I spare eating beef</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Ind. sustainability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>garbage separation does not have a huge impact of sustainability. It is rather about reducing the overall volume of garbage.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Sustainability (general)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I do ski to be in the forest</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Reasons to x-country ski</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waxing the skis is a problem and flour waxes are not that good for nature. I try to reduce the annual amount of waxing.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Ind. sustainability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statement</td>
<td>Code</td>
<td>Category</td>
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<tr>
<td>If I knew the skis would have the same performance without the wax, I would quit using it.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Thoughtfulness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There was a lot of snow this year</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Thoughtfulness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Since I got more aware of sustainable issues I changed my buying and travel behaviour. I also test my equipment more thoroughly before I buy it.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Ind. sustainability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transportation to the start is crazy. There must be better ways to handle this.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Transportation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I got to the race with my dad, who also served me during the race travelling along with the car.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Transportation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The elite uses people serving them extra during the race, which causes more traffic. Generally, this is negative, but the bigger impact is due to the people that take the car, although they do not need these extra stations for supplement. Because of that they could actually use the bus.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Transportation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is hard to have supplement stations that suit everybody.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Org. sustainability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After a warm-up phase I was in a good mood. Of course, you have your up and downs</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Other emotions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You can experience weather, but not climate. The change is not dramatic enough to notice it. You cannot trust your own memory and would need to check facts about weather changes.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Sustainability (general)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There are too many cars in the event, but the Swedes are used to drive. Especially on the country side. Busses and trains are not useful to us.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Transportation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You do not need all those extra supplements to finish the race. I use what is provided and bring nuts and chocolate. It produces awful amounts of garbage and people mainly use it because of marketing.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Ind. sustainability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I buy most of my things second hand.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Ind. sustainability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am proud to manage to finish the Vasaloppet and it helps me to have a goal to train for. I train to be healthier and have a long life, but having something to train for is of great help.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Ind. sustainability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sustainability is for me being healthy and exercise. I am aware of the consequences of not</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Ind. sustainability</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
practicing. So, I would name it personal sustainability.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Category</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>As a student your resources are limited, and that is the first priority, when it comes to food. But wherever it is possible I try to buy from sustainable resources</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Thoughtfulness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To purchase sustainable, you have to have a good economy.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Ind. sustainability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes it is cheaper to go buy car than taking the train, as the prices are too high.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Transportation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Vasaloppet is an event which is the highlight of the year. And with result you can compare yourself with others. Everybody has a father or family member that participated. So, you want to be prepared and perform at your best.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Thoughtfulness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>While performing the sport you become more aware of nature and I enjoy it more. It opened my eyes for different things.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Thoughtfulness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is a race everyone knows</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Org. sustainability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You must make the race to become a real man</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Thoughtfulness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There is some garbage left in the arena, which can be found in summer.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Org. sustainability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Before the rule to drop things in zones people were littering everywhere</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Org. sustainability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You can finish the race without supplements, but not at your best performance. However, there are quite many feeding stations.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Ind. sustainability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel the Vasaloppet gets cleaner, because they become stricter</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Org. sustainability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The group of people that work (paid) at the Vasaloppet is quite small.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Org. sustainability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For the society in Mora the event is everything, as they earn a lot money in this area, due to the event.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Org. sustainability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Companies settle in the area because of the image.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Org. sustainability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel better if I can help others and when I am not alone.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Thoughtfulness</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>