

# Exploring Potential Stakeholders in the Organic Business field in Nepal

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Abstract  <p>Organic agriculture and related industries such as sustainable energy, fertilizer production, waste management and ecological tourism are business areas that address global needs of sustainable solutions and also bring additional business opportunities to multiple countries.</p> <p>This research was assigned by the project team FineOFF, which until the day of the submission of the thesis report remains under development. The motivation of the research is based on need to explore potential stakeholders and their response to scope and contents of the project idea of bringing Finnish companies related to organic business to work in and with Nepal.</p> <p>The author conducted a wide literature review in order to construct a solid knowledge base of the research and find and present the linkages of core theories such as Stakeholder Analysis, Social Impact Assessment and Cultural dimension. The study was an exploratory research based on qualitative research. In total ten purposefully sampled professionals were interviewed for the research. The data gathered through exploratory research methods were ultimately analyzed through various stakeholder tools.</p> <p>The research reached its objective in providing the FineOFF project team with information that the project team can use in their process of entering Nepal. Various future research topics were discovered in the process of this research, including a full-scale stakeholder analysis. To briefly summarize the results it can be stated that overall attractiveness of the project was low among Finnish companies, whereas opportunities were seen more positively by other stakeholders. Another finding emphasizes the importance of cultural capabilities in projects such as the one under study in this thesis.</p>		
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<p>Tiivistelmä</p> <p>Luomumaatalous ja siihen liittyvät teollisuudenalat kuten kestävä energiantuotanto, lannoitetuotanto, jätteenkäsittely ja ekoturismi ovat liiketoiminnan aloja, jotka vastaavat maailmanlaajuiseen tarpeisiin kestäville ratkaisuille ja luovat monelle maalle myös uusia liiketoimintamahdollisuuksia.</p> <p>Tämän tutkimuksen toimeksinantajana toimi projektiryhmä FineOFF, joka on tätä tutkimusraporttia plautettaessa edelleen kehittelyvaiheessa. Motivaatio tutkimuksen tekemiseen syntyi tarpeesta kartoittaa projektin potentiaaliset osalliset ja heidän suhtautumisensa projektin sisältöön, joka tässä vaiheessa tähtää suomalaisten luomuliiketoimintaan kytkeytyvien yritysten saattamisesta toimimaan Nepalissa.</p> <p>Tietämyspohja tutkimukselle luotiin laajassa teoriakatsauksessa, jossa esiteltiin ja yhdistettiin keskeiset viitekehykset Stakeholder-analyysi, sosiaalisten vaikutusten arviointi ja kulttuuriset ulottuvuudet. Tutkimus oli luonteeltaan kartoittava tutkimus, joka perustui laadulliseen tutkimusotteeseen. Tutkimuksessa haastateltiin kymmentä tarkoituksenmukaisella otannalla valittua ammattilaista. Kerätty data analysoitiin käyttäen useampia stakeholder-tutkimuksen työkaluja.</p> <p>Tutkimus saavutti tavoitteensa tuottaa FineOFF -projektiryhmälle tietoa, joka auttaa projektin jalkaustamisessa Nepaliin. Tutkimus myös nosti esiin uusia tutkimusaiheita, kuten tarpeen täysmittaisesta stakeholder-analyysistä. Tiivistäen tuloksista voidaan todeta suomalaisten yritysten kiinnostuksen Nepalin markkinaa olevan vähäistä, kun taas muut osalliset osoittivat näkivät mahdollisuudet positiivisemmin. Toinen oleellinen löydös korostaa kulttuurisen osaamisen roolia tämänkaltaisten projektien toteuttamisessa.</p>		
<p>Avainsanat (<a href="#">asiasanat</a>) Osakas, Kartoittava Tutkimus, Kvalitatiivinen, Sosiaalinen Vastuu, Kulttuurilliset Ulottuvuudet</p>		
<p>Muut tiedot (<a href="#">salassa pidettävät liitteet</a>)</p>		

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# 1 Introduction

During April 2017, faculty members of Finnish UAS'S (University of Applied Sciences) met in Katmandu with Nepalese entrepreneurs working on organic fertilizers and expressing needs for finding solutions to develop the production chain of organic fertilizers. The discussions continued in Finland e.g. in the Frugal Innovation –seminar (VTT, Aalto). Mails and skype-meetings between Nepal and VTT/JAMK as well as skype-meetings in Finland started taking place.

Throughout the timespan of these meetings, it became evident that there was a need to be met inside the agricultural climate of Nepal. Organic farming solutions were seen as a long-term solution that would benefit the people in Nepal greatly. Additionally, providing said solutions would potentially be a viable business option to pursue. However, the project team had no clear direction of which stakeholders to contact and pursue, and more importantly if there was any interest outside the group of Nepalese entrepreneurs working on organic fertilizers. As such, the need for research became more clear. Additional information about potential stakeholders and their interests was needed.

## 1.1 Research Motivation

Consequently, the inception of this research occurred. Opportunities in modernizing the agricultural practices as well as opportunities of potential ecotourism, and the respective potential stakeholders of both industries needed to be researched and studied to determine which paths the FineOFF project team ought to pursue, if any.

While the need to introduce modern and organic methods within the agricultural field was identified, the idea of conducting business outside the climate of agriculture was also explored. Thus the idea of pursuing ecotourism as an opportunity was included in the research plan. The idea of including ecotourism in the catalogue of services that FineOFF aims to provide, existed in a very abstract manner. In other words, the idea of Ecotourism was liked among the project team, but methods to include it were completely unknown, and no realistic plan was in place yet.

The researcher's personal motivations lie within the idea of constructing an objective research that attempts to understand stakeholder theory on a deeper level and provide conclusions that can be deemed as relevant and ultimately useful. Prior experience in working in different cross-cultural business atmospheres will be put to use both in terms of theory and overall approach.

### **Identifying and defining the Research Problem**

The procedure of identifying a research problem involves specifying a direct and focused issue to study (Creswell 2005, 8). In order for the research results to be relevant and usable, the research problem had to be very specific. Ergo, the research would have to obtain a focused approach on finding relevant stakeholders for specifically exporting and using organic fertilizers. As the FineOFF project team already had means to access organic fertilizers, it would end up being in their best interest to know who would buy it, who would use it and who would help them bring the product to Nepal. This research was born as a result of a question that a project team had not found answers to. In other words, the FineOFF project team had a need that required to be fulfilled, in order for them to properly define their opportunities. It is also worth mentioning that the researcher does not have affiliations to FineOFF.

### **Research Questions**

After consulting with the FineOFF project team members and identifying the situation that the project team is in, and most importantly identifying what the project team requires to know. Subsequent research questions were created to establish a path of information seeking that would eventually yield answers that help FineOFF identify stakeholder views / positions and ultimately start conducting business that reaches said stakeholders.

The following research questions were created to support the research agenda:

1. Who are project team FineOFF's stakeholders?
2. What level of interest and power do the aforementioned stakeholders possess?

3. As form of businesses, are ecotourism and organic farming mutually exclusive practices, or could they be introduced together?

In the context of this research, the term “relevant” can be defined as entities who have knowledge, power, motivations or plain interest in entering the market of organic farming practices and Ecotourism in Nepal. More in-depth explanations regarding sampling methods can be found in section 3.1.

## 1.2 Nepal

Nepal is a developing, landlocked, country with a population of 29 million people (July 2016, est.), located between India and China. Remarkably, the Nepalese Civil War was a turning point in the country’s history, as the country transformed into a democratic nation in 2008. Nepal’s largest challenges to date are widespread malnutrition and poverty.

Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is the monetary value of all finished goods inside a country, typically measured on a yearly basis. Nepal’s GDP as of 2016 was 21.144 Billion U.S. dollars, according to The World Bank. To understand who can be potential stakeholders, it is important to look at a variety of statistics regarding GDP to gain an overall understanding of how the economy of Nepal operates. By outlining a set of statistics that showcase the trends in production and consumption, the project team of FINEOFF and this research can make conclusions as to where the need in Nepal truly is, which overall helps the project team to identify their possible supply.

In the case of this research, looking at the end use in GDP, observations regarding differences in consumption, inside Nepal’s economy, can be made. End use consumption is divided into household consumption, government consumption, investment in fixed capital, investment in inventories, exports of goods and services as well as imports of goods and services. Relevant to this research, according to the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) Factbook of 2016, 82% of GDP end use is comprised through household consumption in Nepal. The significantly high percentage of household consumption can be explained by the country’s high reliance of remittances. Remittances are funds that are transferred by Nepalese people, who

work outside their home country to people in their home country. Consequently, when taking into account the overall poverty rate, which as of 2016 according to the Asian Development Bank was 25.2%, these funds are most likely often used for basic trade goods, such as clothing and food. In other words, a typical trend inside Nepal with young people is to travel to neighboring countries to earn comparatively more, which in turn helps them support their own family. Notably, household consumption goes directly towards the service sector in the overall GDP composition.

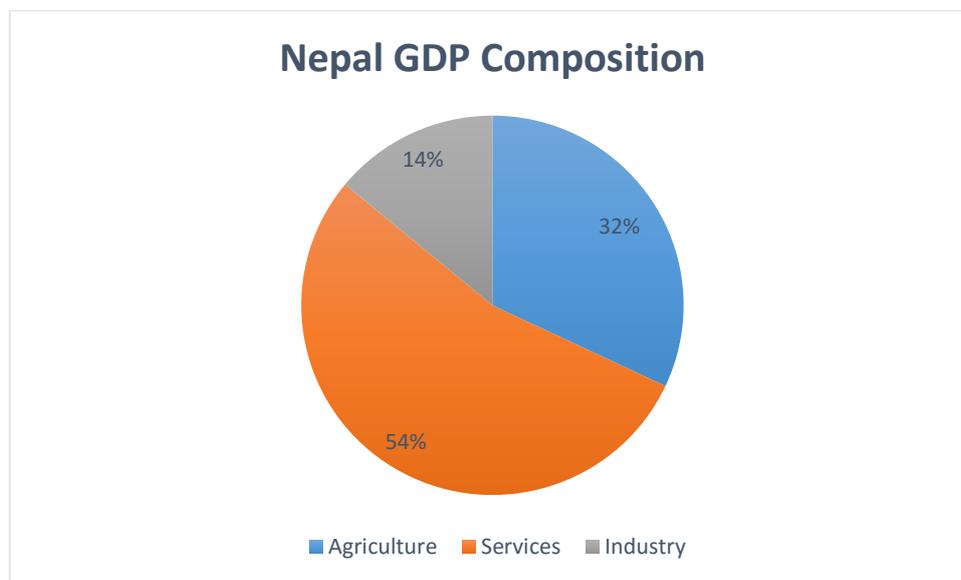


Figure 1. Nepal GDP Composition (based on data from CIA Factbook 2016)

Nepal's GDP composition is divided into three main categories that all have respective sub-sectors. The services sector and the agriculture sector make up for 86% of the total GDP of Nepal. This indicates clearly that Nepal is highly reliant on these two sectors. The industry sector only makes for a total of 14% of the total GDP in Nepal.

Remittances play a very important role in Nepal's GDP. The World Bank estimates that 29.682% of the total GDP of Nepal consists of remittances. As such, remittances play a significant role in the service sector, increasing its overall size up to 54%. A large upswing in FDIs (Foreign Direct Investments) and remittances occurred after the Nepalese Civil War ended, and the country transformed from a monarchy to a

democracy. According to Business Insider magazine, Nepal is ranked as the 28<sup>th</sup> poorest country in the world in 2017, with a GDP per capita of \$2480.

Latest statistics of Nepal's trade balance show that Nepal imported 6.6 billion USD in 2015, and exported 660 million USD in the respective year. As a developing country, Nepal's top export products are textiles and food products. Nepal's biggest trade partner in both exports and imports is its neighboring country, India.

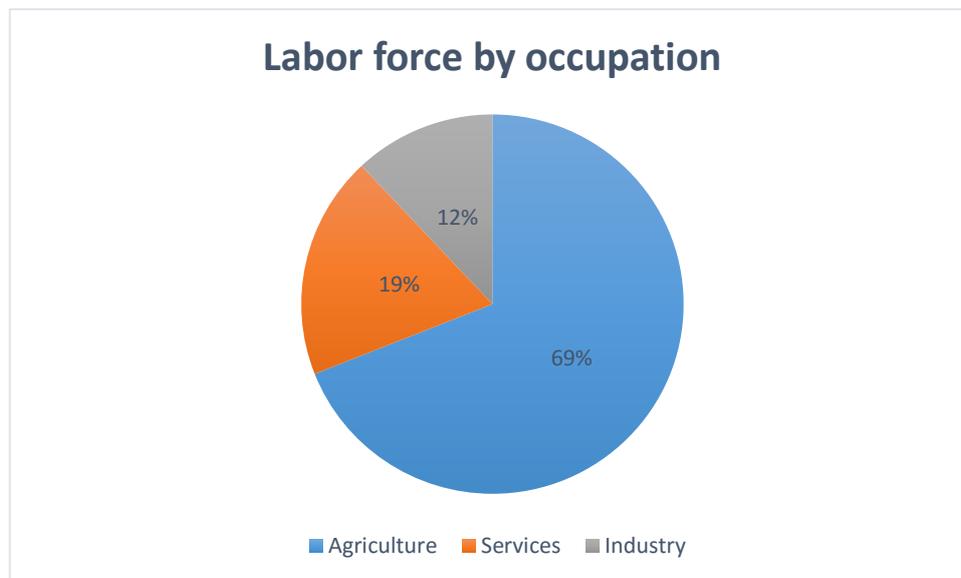


Figure 2. Labor Force by Occupation in Nepal

By studying the overall distribution of the labor force in Nepal, drawing the conclusion that Agriculture plays an incredibly important role in the country's overall economics becomes more distinct. Agriculture brings occupation, food and money to the people in Nepal, all of which are needed dearly on a national level. As such, endeavors inside the agricultural climate can both do good to the people in Nepal, and make for a profitable business.

### 1.3 Green Revolution & Industrial Agriculture

Since the 1960s, the overall human population has doubled up to approximately 6 billion people. During said time period, researchers and scholars alike predicted that food production would not be able to keep up with the constant high speed

population growth. (Vance, 2001.) However, largely thanks to technological advancements and high amount of investments in crop research, food production would end up being tripled come the new millennium. This time period would later be known as The Green Revolution.

The Green Revolution would introduce new methods of farming to combat the ever increasing danger of global malnutrition. New methods of water aggregation, the invention and usage of bioengineered seeds and finally the innovation of chemical fertilizers were at the forefront of the green revolution. The revolution occurred in several locations around the globe. Significant advances occurred in Mexico, with the help of the rockefeller foundation and in India and the Philippines in regards to rice farming. (Pingali, 2012, 4)

Figures of malnutrition and food production ended up conclusive as global malnutrition had lowered from 25% in the 1960s to 17% in early 2000's, when the global population had doubled (Vance, 2001, 3). The new agricultural methods introduced in the Green Revolution played a significant role in the reduction of global malnutrition levels.

Rapidly advancing food production that unprecedented all estimates did not come without a cost however. The combination of heavy usage of chemical fertilizers and water aggregation would cause environmental damage that would not be immediately identifiable. Environmental damage such as, soil degradation, chemical runoff and water usage. (Pingali, 2012, 4) These causes, while unintended, would damage land and soil not simply for the farming land, but beyond as well.

### **Industrial Agriculture and Chemical Fertilizers**

Largely thanks to the Green Revolution, a new field in agriculture would be introduced to the world, Industrial Agriculture. Hailed for its cost-effective practices, industrial agriculture was globally viewed as the new norm inside the agricultural climate. According to the Global Sustainable Development (GSDR) Project Brief (2015, 2) Chemical fertilizers were a crucial part of industrial agriculture. However, in good time it was discovered that organic fertilizers, while providing new crop yields, would also inherently cause damage to surrounding soil.

Under industrial agriculture, mineral nitrogen experiences a rise as the disintegration of SOM (Soil Organic Matter) accelerates synchronically. This sequence of events is bolstered by heavy usage of N-fertilizer seeking higher yields. This trend is reversed once the loss of the less stable SOM reduces mineralization, and ability of the soil to retain N-fertilizer decreases. To resist this decrease, farmers apply increasingly larger amounts of fertilizer, all the way until the point where it no longer makes economic sense to increase fertilizer usage. (GSDR Project Brief 2015, 3.) The economic term “Diminishing returns” promptly describes the situation with the usage of chemical fertilizers. As the farmers input of chemical fertilizers increases, the effect of the fertilizers stays the same and eventually decreases, resulting in overall inefficiency in both economic and environmental terms.

#### 1.4 Ecotourism

Ecotourism is a form of tourism that aims to preserve the environment, advance the overall well-being of local people and create financial gain for the private companies in the target area (The International Ecotourism Society, 2017). Ecotourism can be confused with sustainable tourism, where both sub-sectors of tourism have similar motivations – the preservation of nature in the area where tourism is occurring. While sustainable tourism primarily focuses on minimizing the effect of tourism in an area, ecotourism actively focuses on increasing the positive effects in the area it operates in.

The idea of ecotourism was born in 1983 by the Mexican environmentalist Hector Ceballos Lascurain, primarily focusing on creating awareness about nature-based traveling in under developed areas through education (Kiper, 774). Throughout its existence, ecotourism has been defined in ways differentiating from Lascurain’s definition, but the definition can be used as a cornerstone, as today’s forms of ecotourism still build upon Lascurain’s definition of the term.

Inherently, in the process of ecotourism, the term Stakeholder, plays a significant role. The inclusion of stakeholders is viewed as an integral part in conducting successful and professional ecotourism. Furthermore, involving stakeholders from the very starting point of the ecotourism process, ergo the planning phase, is

paramount. The primary reason to include stakeholders at a very early stage in ecotourism practices, is due to one of the main principles behind ecotourism, which is to create financial gain opportunities for local private entities. Furthermore, actively engaging with local residents helps the efforts of building a functional relationship that can create profits beyond monetary benefits for both parties.

Nepal offers unmatched landscapes compared to the rest of the world. Out of ten of the highest peaks in the world, eight are located in Nepal, including the highest peak in Mt. Everest. While beautiful, the high mountain ranges are dangerous as well. The main ecotourism attractions in Nepal are the highest mountain ranges alongside several cultural and natural attractions, consequently the Nepalese government has put emphasis into the protection of many areas by turning them into National parks (Anup K.C, 2016, 35).

## **2 Theoretical Background**

The theoretical background and base of knowledge of this research is divided into three separate themes: Stakeholder theory & thinking, Social Impact Assessment and Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions.

As the main scope of the research is to explore stakeholders, a comprehensive research in stakeholder literature and its origins, is paramount. Likewise, understanding that there are potential differences between the cultures of Finland and Nepal, seeking to find reason for the potential differences is relevant. Furthermore, acknowledging said differences and implementing them into one's own thought process can improve the probabilities of successful communication between the project team of FineOFF and potential Nepalese partners. Social Impact Assessment grants information that can be used to determine sustainable future decisions for the project team, and ultimately be used as a tool when conducting business in Nepal.

### **2.1 Social Responsibility, Stakeholder Theory & Thinking**

Social responsibility can be defined as a corporation's right to conduct their business in a way which increases the welfare of a society (Garriga, Melé 2004, 1). The term

itself has been brought up and debated about since the early 1950s. At the time, on a general level, businesses did not pursue a concentrated effort on understanding who are effected by their actions and how. Throughout the history in defining social responsibility through discussion, some consider law as the defining and ruling principle, while others define their social responsibility through their own sense of ethics and morality. The subjectivity of the matter is clear and leads one to the resolution that there are large gray areas to be considered when discussing both social responsibility and consequently, stakeholder theory.

Through the discussion of corporate social responsibility, a multitude of theories spawned and gained different levels of attraction. Academics and managers alike wanted to have the ability to categorize customers and investors through various different metrics. The idea of Stakeholder management was academically created at the end of 1970's. (Garriga, Melé, 2004, 59) The core idea of stakeholder management would be defined as aligning a company's core objectives with the needs of stakeholder groups. Having stakeholders as a part of the managerial decision-making process is what stakeholder management strives to accomplish.

Stakeholders are defined as individuals or groups who are effected by an organizations actions. (Freeman 1984). In the rawest sense of business, decisions are oriented towards the aim of achieving financial gain. As the supply of businesses have become larger throughout the evolution of time, the demand for quality has risen as well.

Similarly, as time has progressed, people have become more aware of the environment around them. To a large extent, the advancement of technology and easy access to information can be mentioned as the main cause for this. On the same note, people have become aware of the effects that businesses can have. With the rise in the amount of service provided and the widespread constructs of market economies, customers are given the opportunity and choice to buy their products from service providers that suit their specified needs. Likewise, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), political parties, governments and different groups of people have come to demand responsible corporate practices specifically from larger corporations that possess a wider effect on the environment around them (Garriga, Melé 2004, 59).

Gradually the ethics of business operations have become more relevant. Businesses are held to a higher standard, as both the values of civilizations have progressed and the large-scale supply of businesses has expanded further. While customers are most interested in receiving a product / service that responds to their immediate needs, knowing said products / services are conducted in an ethical manner gives companies a competitive leverage.

Historically, business and ethics have been separated as two sovereign entities that do not naturally connect (Freeman 1995, 35). Ethics would not be associated as part of traditional set of views regarding market economy. Business was seen as an emotionless profit searching process. As such, ethics were viewed as obstacles towards the functionality of this process.

Freeman (1995, 37) proposes the composition of the Separation Thesis (ST). Meaning the black-and-white mindset, where ethics and business exist at the opposite ends of the spectrum, and cannot coexist in the same atmosphere. More specifically, inside a company's operations. The purpose of understanding the composition of ST is revealed through the action of letting go off the concept of ST, which allows the exploration of conceptual mechanisms which do not separate ethics from business (Freeman 1995, 39).

The term "Normative Core" is regarded as a key structure for stakeholder thinking. The normative core of a theory is an array of ethical presumptions and hypotheses of which the theory is driven and motivated by (Freeman 1995, 39). Quintessentially, too high reliance on the normative core is against the core idea of stakeholder thinking. Human nature can be unpredictable and difficult to measure. While the normative core has to possess a framework of theoretical disciplines as background knowledge, presumptions and hypotheses are never complete truths, and have an ingrained potential to be incorrect and misleading.

The black and white nature of ST has historically clouded business managers and academics. The key action in defining any stakeholder theory, is to place the theory in a scenario of where people create and exchange value (Freeman 1995, 45).

Understanding that every single stakeholder theory is based around human behavior is paramount. Stakeholders are complex, behave through their own ideologies and

have their own senses of moral and ethics. Stakeholders are different and produce unique responses to actions conducted by a corporation.

It is argued that stakeholder theory has evolved through development and usage throughout its existence. Reinhard Steurer (2006, 55-59), argues that Stakeholder theory has historically revolved around a corporate perspective, where the relationship between business and society has been rather exclusively analyzed through corporate eyes. Recent academic research on stakeholder theory has focused on the complexity and diversity of stakeholders. In the process of understanding the needs of stakeholders, theorists and academics have started to look at stakeholder theory from three perspectives; corporate, stakeholder and conceptual (Steurer 2006, 59).

It needs to be noted that there is a heavy discrepancy in the representation between the perspectives of stakeholders and corporations inside the history of stakeholder theory and thinking. The corporative perspective heavily outnumbers that of the stakeholder. This, and the usage of the word management, suggests that stakeholders are a resource that can be managed like any other resource that a company requires to operate. However, the important distinction is that stakeholders are people. Academics define this as management “*of*” stakeholders. Resource dependence theory was a theory driven by Pfeffer and Salancik in 1978, in which the idea of management of stakeholders was recognized. The theory of management of stakeholders revolves around the concept that corporations identify the concept of a stakeholder, but treat them in a way they would treat any other resource. One of the biggest criticisms that this theory has received, is its cold nature. Stakeholders will be recognized, but not taken into account in a corporate decision-making process if they don’t have enough influence, for instance through money.

A theory that can be considered as a counter-idea for the management of stakeholders was established in 2007, by the original stakeholder theorist, George Freeman. A way of stakeholder management that focuses on managing “*for*” stakeholders emerged. The core concept in management for stakeholders, is that every stakeholder has a right to be noticed. Importantly not only noticed, but treated as well. In this theory, anyone who has any interest in a corporation, whether or not

said corporation has any interest in them, are considered stakeholders (Eskerod, Huemann, Ringhofer 2015, 42-53).

A potential hazard of the approach in stakeholder management for stakeholders, is the lack of ambition (Hahn 2010, 217-229). The idealistic mindset of creating win-win situations is a pitfall of management for stakeholders. Practicing a management “for” stakeholders approach comes with trade-offs. Realistically these trade-offs are too much, specifically when discussing project management.

### **Stakeholders in Project Management**

Based on academic findings, concepts of contemporary stakeholder theory are not present in the majority of project management cases (Huemann, Eskerod 2013, 43-45). Contemporary stakeholder thinking revolves around the concepts of sustainability and sustainable development. As explored earlier in the previous segment, the historical development of stakeholder theory has shown the two common viewpoints of said theory. Stakeholder theory that manages people as form of resource, and stakeholder theory that manages for the people. Huemann & Eskerod argue that, for project management to successfully implement the idea of stakeholder theory, recognizing the divide and using both sides of the theory is important.

According to Eskerod, Huemann & Ringhofer (2015, 43-45), a large-scale inclusion of stakeholders increases the number of buy-ins towards new activities, but at the same time increases the gap between the project team and key stakeholders. Key stakeholders meaning stakeholders who have the most amount of impact and potential in the project team. In essence, management for stakeholders increases the amount of people towards new activities, but disconnects key stakeholders from the project.

The majority of projects utilize the theory of management “of” stakeholders (Huemann, Eskerod 2013, 43-45). As shown earlier in the research conducted by Eskerod, Huemann & Ringhofer, by utilizing the concept of stakeholder management “for” stakeholders as opposed to “of” stakeholders, the disconnect between key stakeholders became more serious. A plausible explanation for the usage of the management “of” stakeholders, is the fact that projects rely heavily on their key

stakeholders. The Stakeholders that provide the biggest amount of help. Listening to every stakeholder and taking their viewpoints into consideration may be a luxury that many projects cannot afford. The trade-offs for putting a high amount of resources into satisfying every stakeholder is not realistic for projects.

### **Sustainable Development**

Sustainable development can be argued to be connected to social responsibility. As mentioned earlier in the text, social responsibility is a term that defines the right that a company has to improve the society it operates in. The concept of sustainable development operates under the same principle of improving one's surroundings. The most well-known definition of sustainable development is development that meets the needs of today's challenges, while giving the opportunity for such development to occur in the future as well (Brundtland Report 1987, 3-7). Sustainable development can operate under ecological, economical and societal principles.

Konrad (2005, 91) describes sustainable development and stakeholder relationship management as mutually beneficial and importantly, reinforcing concepts. The important correlation between sustainable development and stakeholder theory is the driving attempt to connect social and economic issues into business management. Thus, one can make the argument that sustainable development and stakeholder theory are mutually beneficial to one another.

As the topic of this research concentrates on an issue that can be defined as both environmental and economic, implementing a theoretical background of sustainable development, and more importantly, recognizing the connection between stakeholder theory and sustainable development is an important step towards a comprehensive totality.

## **2.2 Stakeholder Tools**

Prior to mapping stakeholders, it is important to identify who are the potential stakeholders involved in the project. Figure 3 demonstrates a possible solution for

identifying potential stakeholders involved in project work. Walker (2003, 258-295).

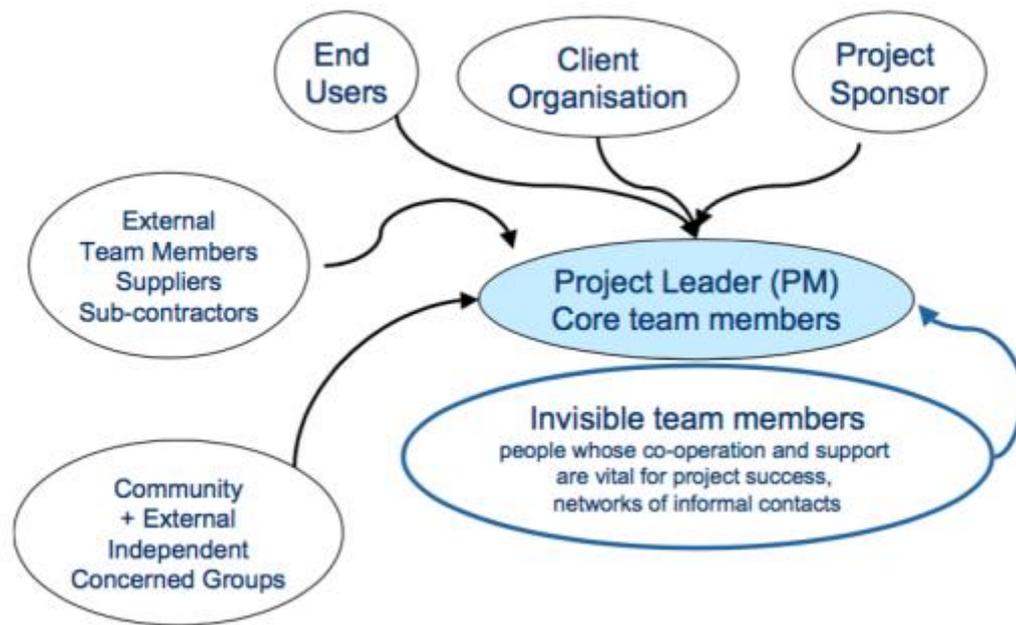


Figure 3. Identifying Project Stakeholders (Walker 2003, 258-295).

When discussing the process of identifying potential stakeholders, one must take into consideration the two types of stakeholder management approaches. As discovered in the theoretical section (2.1), the two types of stakeholder management focus on either managing stakeholders as a form of resource (management OF stakeholders) or taking into consideration every conceivable stakeholder (management FOR stakeholders). It is important to make a clear distinction, which style of stakeholder management ought to be used when attempting to identify stakeholders. In the case of FineOFF, an argument could be made for both approaches. If considering the approach of management for stakeholders, one could make the argument that it is the most suitable approach, since the FineOFF project teams goal is to be socially responsible and ethical, and do good. And through taking into consideration all potential stakeholders, the outcome will inevitably be fundamentally good. However, an opposing argument can be made for the case of management of stakeholders. FineOFF, while possessing ethical viewpoints and attempting to good by the Nepalese people, is a project team ran by business oriented individuals who are not only looking to conduct charity. By managing stakeholders according to their power / interest, FineOFF can not only acknowledge potential Stakeholders, but can do so in a manner that will yield profit.

As such, the methodological approach of Stakeholder mapping was chosen. Stakeholder mapping aims to categorize stakeholders based on different relevant factors. Typical factors that projects & companies attempt to map out are levels of power and interest.

		LEVEL OF INTEREST	
		Low	High
POWER	Low	<b>A</b> Minimal effort	<b>B</b> Keep informed
	High	<b>C</b> Keep satisfied	<b>D</b> Key players

Figure 4. Stakeholder Matrix Based on power & interest (Newcombe 1999)

As demonstrated in Figure 4, one proven way to map stakeholders is via the power / influence matrix. This matrix is aligned with the management of stakeholders' principle, where stakeholders are treated according to their influence over the project. The interviewee participants of this research were placed inside the stakeholder matrix based on power & interest, and results are found in the results section.

### Stakeholder Vested Interest Intensity Index Value Tool

This tool's main priority is to present the intensity of interest that potential stakeholders present towards certain ideas. Importantly, the results gained from this tool are based on the perceptions of the researcher. As such, measures to ensure objectivity were put in place prior to using the tool. For the case of this study, the interviewees themselves are considered stakeholders, and the ideas presented to the interviewees are similar to the commitments of FineOFF. The main goal of this tool is to demonstrate levels of interest and desire to be involved with the project. The four topics of interest presented in the tool are:

1. Working in Nepal
2. FineOFF project
3. Collaboration with FineOFF
4. Connecting ecotourism and Organic Farming

These 4 topics showcase the will to work in Nepal, how the ideas of stakeholders and the FineOFF project team align, interest in collaboration between stakeholders and FineOFF and interest in conducting two forms of businesses. The tool operates on the idea that there are five different levels of vested interest in stakeholders. Very High, High, Neutral, Low, Very Low. These levels of interest are presented in the tool as VH, H, N, L, VL.

### 2.3 Social Impact Assessment (SIA)

According to the Comprehensive Guide of Social Impact Assessment by the Centre of Good Governance (2006), Social Impact Assessment is described as the process of analysis, monitoring and management of intended and unintended social consequences that occur with planned intervention, such as project work for instance. The primary intention of SIA is to ensure that development projects truly achieve their goals. Meaning that planned intervention, such as project work in Nepal, achieves its primary goals while recognizing social consequences. Social impacts / consequences are not only taken into consideration, but monitored and ultimately managed to ensure that the goal of said developing project is achieved.

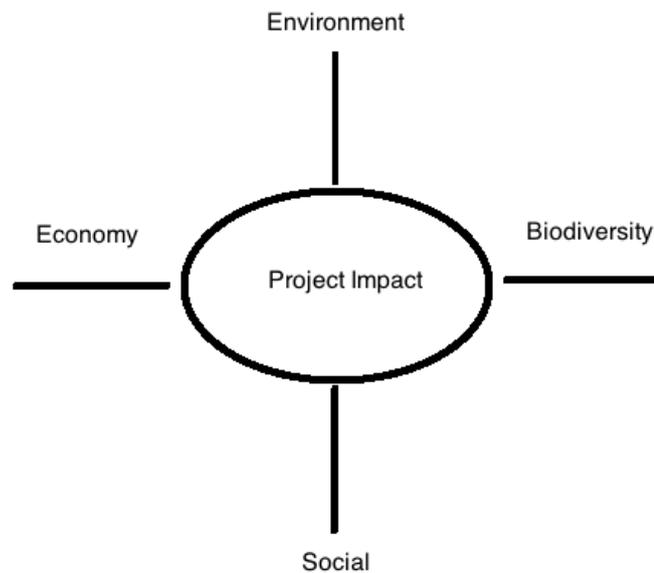


Figure 5. Development Project Impacts

The International Association for Impact Assessment (IAIA) describes SIA as a non-definitive process that, when used particularly in developing countries, specifically finds development potential that is accessible by all effected community members. While not granting definitive information, SIA is a process that can be implemented to last throughout a projects lifespan. The specific benefit is that SIA grants information that is relevant in all phases of a project. Figure 5. Demonstrates the multiple layers of a development project's potential impacts.

In terms of a theoretical totality, SIA connects naturally with stakeholder thinking and stakeholder analysis. Primarily for the reason that SIA aims to achieve similar goals that stakeholder theories do. That is, to hear the voices of people who are affected by the operations of a business, project or corporation. The distinction, and fundamental reason for the inclusion of SIA to the theoretical framework of this research, is quintessentially that SIA is tailored to analyze, monitor and manage social impacts specifically in developing countries. SIA, however, explicitly recognizes the term stakeholder and actively aims to reach stakeholders in the analysis process. Consequently, implementation of SIA assists in recognizing potential stakeholders.

If the project work of FineOFF is to occur in Nepal, social consequences occurring through the project work are inevitable. SIA will assist in providing a platform of

information that can be used in advance, when conducting planned intervention to Nepal. This will furthermore assist the project team to be truly sustainable in their actions, and overall increase the probability of conducting successful business. For the FineOFF project team, SIA can operate as a complete process overview, where this research and Stakeholder Analysis will operate as the beginning point, ultimately gravitating towards stakeholder engagement, implementation of business practices and active usage of SIA.

### **Social Impact Assessment Process**

Conducting a public participation plan is regarded as the initial first step in the SIA process. The participation plan involves recognizing the client population that will be directly or indirectly affected by the project (Comprehensive Guide to Social Impact Assessment, Centre of Good Governance, 2006, 12). The client population consists of group of people affected by the project. Naturally the size of said group will vary depending on the project. Groups typically associated in the client population are people who live where the practice takes place, people who are affected by the business (employment, pollution) and people who are forced to move due to the project, as well as entities who have interest in the project.

Traditionally, the following steps will be to outline a specific plan of action, as well as a detailed documentation of the human environment and existing social conditions. (Comprehensive Guide to Social Impact Assessment, Centre of Good Governance, 2006, 13). In the context of organic farming practices, the human environment will play a driving role, due to how important agriculture is to Nepalese people, as discovered in section 1.3.

A fundamental part of the SIA process is to explore the public, and find who are potentially affected by the project. This process includes in terms of methodology a variety of interviews and discussions with local people potentially affected by the project. There are primarily two methods to scope the potential impacts of the project: Workshop based and Participatory Assessment methods based (Comprehensive Guide to Social Impact Assessment, Centre of Good Governance, 2006, 14). Workshop based methods aim to bring relevant stakeholders together to open discussion about the project and develop ideas in the process. Participatory

Assessment methods include dialogue with stakeholders and hearing them on the issues at hand.

After engaging stakeholders with the methods relevant to the project, analysis of the information at hand takes place. Several sources of information can be used, ranging from the engagement with stakeholders, to previous literature or even previously conducted SIA's. For the context of Nepal, the FineOFF project team can choose their preferred way of analyzing information. Viable options may include consultation of experts or creating probably forecast scenarios for the project practice.

What most typically finalizes the process of social impact assessment, is the setup of monitoring practices. The primary function of monitoring is to observe and understand deviations from the suggested outcomes that are established through stakeholder engagement, as well as other channels of information.

## 2.4 Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions

Throughout the 1970s and into 1984 to the release of the book, "Culture's Consequences", Geert Hofstede created the theory of cultural dimensions. The theory of cultural dimensions analyzes the differences of cultures through six different categories. The theory of cultural dimensions seeks to understand deep values and guiding morality, rather than verbal and non-verbal communication. (Nguyen Phuong 2015, 2).

While the main theoretical scope for the research is to understand potential stakeholders, and give means to reach them, a base theory of cultural dimensions supports the main theory. As the project team's long-term goal is to establish a working relationship between Finland and Nepal, the inclusion of a theoretical background focusing on cultural dimensions is important. The theory of cultural dimensions gives both the researcher, and the project team a perspective that specifically can help with cross-cultural communication. In terms of establishing working relations between the two countries, having means to proper communication is fundamentally important.

Importantly, the theory of cultural dimensions deals with cultural tendencies on a large scale. Specifically, on a country level. Knowing this, one must understand that

the theory of cultural dimensions does not seek to understand individuals as much as it seeks to understand overall populations of a country. Ergo, understanding that individuals may differ in opinion and ideology from the overall population's direction is important. The theory of cultural dimensions deals with a nation's dominant culture, instead of co-cultures (Nguyen Phuong 2015, 2).

### **The Six Dimensions**

Power Distance is the first dimension of the theory of cultural dimensions. Power distance is defined as a dimension of how an organization's member with lesser power deals with, and accept that power is dealt unequally (Hofstede 2011, 9). People with low levels of power distance find equality to be comforting, and believe that treatment should aim to be equal towards everyone. People with high levels of power distance believe that power exists for a reason. Hierarchies are formed and power is distributed to the people in the hierarchies accordingly.

Uncertainty avoidance is the second dimension of the theory of cultural dimensions. Uncertainty avoidance studies how a society deals with the uncertain, whether or not it tends to avoid uncertainty or embrace it (Hofstede 2011, 10). Societies with low levels of uncertainty avoidance see the uncertainty of situations as curious and something to be studied more. Societies with higher levels of uncertainty avoidance find uncertainty as an uncomfortable and unnecessary feeling, structure is highly appreciated.

The third dimension, studies individualism versus collectivism. In individualistic societies, people are expected to take care of themselves, as opposed to collectivistic societies, where people are incorporated into larger groups where everyone looks after one another (Hofstede, 2011, 11). In individualistic societies, people tend to appreciate privacy more than in collectivistic societies. In collectivistic societies loyalty of the one's family and/or extended family is a highly valued aspect.

Masculinity versus Femininity is the fourth dimension in the cultural dimensions theory. In the theory of cultural dimensions, the aspects of masculinity and femininity are viewed through a societal scope instead of an individual perspective. Masculine societies are societies where often both men and women are assertive in their behavior, whereas in a feminine society aspects of caring are more visible

(Hofstede 2011, 12). Showcasing emotion through crying is deemed normal from both genders in feminine societies, whereas in masculine societies men are expected to fight instead of crying.

Long-Term versus Short-Term Orientation is the fifth dimension of the theory. Societies operating through the dimension of long-term orientation, generally look forward and see their most important events in the future, whereas societies with short-term orientation deem traditions sacred and feel that most important events either occurred in the past or are occurring as of this moment (Hofstede 2011, 15). Societies with long-term orientation are seen as open-minded and adaptive, whereas societies that operate in the dimension of short-term orientation are viewed as traditional societies who have a general level of societal coding that emphasizes the need to love one's own country. On the contrary, societies that operate within the dimension of short-term orientation see it as an important action to try to learn from other countries, and accept the fact that their own nation can be improved.

The last dimension, which was added in 2010, is Indulgence versus Restraint. This dimension is seen as complementary to Long-Term versus Short-Term orientation. The dimension of indulgence versus restraint attempts to measure the societal effort of a nation either allowing or disallowing its citizens towards gratification (Hofstede, 2011, 15). A nation that falls into the category of restraint, tends to try control the gratification its citizens are allowed to, whereas nations that can be linked into the dimension of indulgence see no interest in controlling such sources.

To understand the validity of the theory of cultural dimension, one must understand that the theory deals with large sums of people. Additionally, taking the information at face value leads easily towards generalizations, which in turn can be harmful, especially if dealing with a person who does not subscribe to the dominating culture of a nation. Therefore, the cultural dimension theory operates best in giving guidelines towards understanding a complex totality of a nation. The theory of cultural dimensions deals with different nation's cultural dimensions rather than individuals aspects of one's personality. Many of the dimensions deal with extremes that can be argued to present rather black and white natures of a nation. Quite often individuals can see themselves fall between the two extremes, and not fully represent one or another. As such, it is highly important to understand the large gray

areas at play, and never fully assume that a person will fall into a dimension completely and without no exceptions. But rather view the conclusions of the theory in a societal level.

### **Finland compared to Nepal**

The two countries relevant to this research are Finland and Nepal. In the context of this research, Finnish people are trying to find opportunities with Nepalese people. Both Finland and Nepal are presented in the database of Geert Hofstede, and as such both countries have been rated in the previously-mentioned dimensions.

According to the 6 dimensions models of both countries, the relevant outliers are Power Distance and Individualism vs Collectivism. The dimensions of Long-Term orientation versus Short-Term orientation as well as Indulgence versus Restraint are not calculated for Nepal. A comparison between the dimensions of Power Distance and Individualism versus Collectivism is drawn based on the results from the database of the official Geert Hofstede website.

Finland scores low on power distance, indicating that in Finland, equality and coaching style leadership are common as opposed to large discrepancies in power and strong leadership. Additionally, hierarchies exist for the sake of convenience rather than complete truth. According to the results of this dimension, power in Finland is attempted to be distributed as equally as possible.

Nepal scores highly in power distance, indicating the strong existence of hierarchies in Nepal. It is expected that obedience is taught from an early age, and the elderly are deemed as powerful / impactful. Inequality is a result from the strong belief in the hierarchical system, and overall is accepted as a concept. Corruption can occur more often than in a society with low levels of power distance.

In terms of individualism vs collectivism, Finland scores high in individualism. Privacy could be defined as a respected quality of life in Finland. Likewise, people in Finland deem to be individualistic, meaning that people learn to take care of themselves at a rather young age, and the entire aspect of individualism is largely accepted on a societal level. Personal opinions belong to individuals as their own, and people have the right to express their own opinions. Workplace relationships in Finland are

generally aimed to be mutually beneficial, and based upon merit over anything else. (Hofstede, 2017).

A low score in this dimension indicates that Nepal is primarily a collectivistic society. Loyalty is a very highly appreciated value in collectivistic societies. Loyalty is often earned inside the group that individuals are part of. Commonly this group can be an extension of the immediate family. Loyalty can in fact overrule societal law in certain cases. Workplace relationship between employees and employers can be based on a sense of morality rather than be purely transactional, meaning that an employee will “lose face” if they conduct themselves in an improper way or if they fail to achieve their task at work. (Hofstede, 2017)

### **3 Methodology**

Methodology is the systematic attempt to solve a research problem. (Kothari, 2004, 8) The totality that is described as methodology consists of research methods that follow a path of logic that connects every single method logically to the attempt of solving the research questions. This chapter aims to describe not only the research methods that were used, but also the underlying logic that connects all of the used research methods into the bigger picture, which is to explore stakeholders for the project team of FineOFF.

#### **3.1 Exploratory Research**

Exploratory research can best be described as the methodological backbone of this study. Both the project team and the researcher had either little, or next to no information about potential stakeholders, organic fertilizers, ecotourism in Nepal or the agricultural situation in Nepal prior to the inception of this research. In order for the research to fulfil it's biggest purpose; to answer the needs of project team while being comprehensively relevant and of high quality.

Exploratory research is most often conducted, when the research matter is either unknown, or very little of it is known (Zikmund 1991, 75). Exploratory research aims to narrow the scope of the research topic and build an awareness of relevant supporting topics of the research. Exploratory research aims to provoke for

additional research via granting both new knowledge and a focused view on the research topic.

There are primarily two main reasons why research that aims to be exploratory is most beneficial within the context of FineOFF. Firstly, FineOFF is planning to seek business opportunities in Nepal, a country that the project team does not have extensive experience with. Some contacts exist within the country, but actual efforts and experience through efforts are non-existent. The second driving reason for exploratory research, is the fact that FineOFF does not have a product / service that they are pursuing with full intent. In other words, the business itself does not yet exist. The situation that FineOFF finds themselves in, is one where direction is needed, and the exploratory nature of this research aims to provide direction.

Additionally, due to budget constraints, exploratory research was ultimately the most realistic and intellectually the most honest research approach. In the case when multiple, potentially fruitful, opportunities are presented, but the lack of budgeting interferes with the opportunity to fully examine a research topic, exploratory research is a valuable option in finding information about a topic that little is known of (Manerikar, 2014). The initial plan for the research was to pursue a stakeholder mapping process. Stakeholder mapping is fundamentally part of Stakeholder analysis, and the core idea of stakeholder analysis is to know one's own business. If a full-scale stakeholder analysis was to be conducted, not only would the project team of FineOFF have to own a clear idea of what their business is, but contact with Nepalese stakeholders would have to be made inside the country through various interviews. Furthermore, inspecting local businesses and investigating the potential need for planned intervention could be done successfully. With the situation that FineOFF finds themselves in, it is comprehensively arguable that exploratory research is the most functional form of academic research to be conducted in this context. Furthermore, this exploratory research assists in the pursuit of conducting a comprehensive stakeholder analysis for FineOFF.

An important part of exploratory research is the realization of its own limitations. Exploratory research does not claim to find ultimate, tangible results that can be proven and made full conclusions out of. The value of exploratory research emerges from its ability to grant understanding of the core business problem that said

business is trying to provide a solution for. As is the case with FineOFF, the primary need that the project team has, is to conceptualize their business problem, and ultimately seek to conduct business based on a set of ideas that aim to solve said problem. Exploratory research should be treated as the initial step in understanding how a business works. Exploratory research can be very useful for any company / project, but ought to always be used with care (Zikmund 1991, 95).

### **Exploratory Research Methods**

To seek information, and ultimately create valuable discussions, experience surveys were conducted with seasoned professionals relevant to the research topic. Experience surveys do not aim to reveal conclusive data for the research, but rather expose and build a layer of knowledge that helps define the research problem (Zikmund 1991, 41).

Exploratory research, and the usage of experience surveys tends to be informal by nature (Zikmund 1991, 79-80). The experience surveys conducted for the research were semi-structured discussions with seasoned professionals in the relevant fields for the study. Structure would emerge from the above mentioned four primary enquiries. These discussions would not only yield information and additional sources for information, but also provide more contacts for possible interviews for the study.

In addition to Experience Surveys, a process of literature review was conducted with an effort to gather secondary data that would further advance the theoretical background of the study. Literature was gathered from both library and online sources, with information ranging from stakeholder theory, to the history of agricultural development as well as business research theory. All literature used for this research can be found in the reference list.

### **Purposive Sampling**

Within the concept of purposive sampling, sample choosing is based on the idea that choice itself ensures relevant data to be collected, and eventually enabling the research to meet its goals (Symon, Cassell 2012, 38). In accordance to the ideology of exploratory research, choice would inevitably be in the hands of the researcher. As this would be the case, it was paramount to ensure that choices in sampling would

be made based on sound rationale, rather than impulsive decision-making based on the level of difficulty of reaching a potential interviewee. An argument can be made for the case that within exploratory research, the chosen sampling method will fundamentally be critical to the success of the research, as the pool of potential is immensely large.

While purposive in its nature, the sampling method of this research is based on a non-probability technique. A non-probability sampling technique concentrates on allowing the researcher to choose interview participants based on their qualifications and characteristics that can be defined as relevant to the study (Symon, Cassell 2012, 39). To understand who can be considered to be stakeholders for the project, and furthermore, who are relevant due to their characteristics and qualifications, an initial brainstorming process was conducted. The primary underlying indicator whether someone would qualify as a stakeholder was deemed in the values and interests that said individual had presented or communicated through their professional outlets. Whether that was through a company website or non-profit organization that they worked for, the primary indicator searched for would always be interest in the same ideas and practices that the FineOFF project team wanted to pursue. After determining whether or not there was interest, qualifications of potential interviewees were studied. Qualifications would be determined through the potential interviewee's position at their workplace, or prior work they had conducted. Furthermore, it was important for the research to reach qualified professionals in more than one field. As such, the interviewees that were reached out to, formed a diverse totality of different expertise and experience, ranging from organic farming expertise to political power.

The initial step in the process of purposive sampling in the context of this research, was the development of a list of potential stakeholder. This process could best be described as a brainstorming session, where different entities are explored based on their interests and their primary functions. The brainstorming sessions included development of mind maps of potential entities in different countries. Likewise, companies that have expertise in relevant fields were considered and subsequently connected.

The professional background of interviewees ranged from fertilizer entrepreneurs to the chairman of Non-resident Nepali Association (NRNA). Additionally, ecotourism entrepreneurs as well as the founder & president of greenloons were interviewed. As outlined above, the primary emphasis when selecting interviewees was their interests that would correlate with FineOFF's interests. On top of this, the question asked before choosing interviewee participants was "How can they help the research understand the climate in Nepal, ecotourism and organic farming better?".

Purposive sampling techniques require human judgment in the process of choosing cases that will most aptly aim to answer the research questions at hand (Symon, Cassell 41, 2005). Said judgement cannot be codified and measured in an honest way, however, certain principles will help the research in staying true and on track. The research ought to pursue a path of objective information seeking that aims to find objective and truthful answers to the research questions, instead of pandering to certain political ideologies or pre-decided narratives. Disassociating the researcher from said pre-existing narratives and political ideologies allows for the usage of objective purposive sampling techniques.

### 3.2 Interviews as the Primary Data Gathering Method

In accordance to the qualitative methods of research, one-on-one interviews were held with people chosen through purposive sampling methods. Aforementioned exploratory research procedures operated as a platform of knowledge for the main interviews. One-on-one interviews can be truly rewarding, when interviewing people who are comfortable talking, articulate and well versed in their field (Creswell 2005, 216). This methodical procedure is further supported by the aforementioned purposive sampling technique, allowing to find interview participants who are both professionals and articulate in their approach. The overall number of interviews conducted for this research was 10.

The four primary enquiries that were presented to the interviewees in accordance to exploratory research methods were:

**1. The current situation and possible need in Nepal.**

**2. The current situation and possible supply in Finland.**

### **3. Potential business opportunities with ecotourism and organic agriculture.**

### **4. Opportunity to connect ecotourism and organic agriculture into a combined service that could be introduced to the markets in Nepal.**

These enquiries were tailored to suit each interviewee based on their professional background. The objective of these questions was to gather information about the interviewees views on the topics, and ultimately attempt to find out the interest the interviewees had in potential involvement.

The primary reason for using interviews as the main data gathering method for the research, was to ensure the quality of the outcome. Scientifically conducted interviews are expected to create knowledge that exceeds that of journalistic interviews. Said information gained from scientific interviews aims to be systematic, objective, comprehensive, standardized and methodical (Symon Cassell 2012, 239).

Interviews of the study were conducted in a semi-structured approach. A lower degree of structured allowed for a more open environment in the interviews, which in turn allowed interviewees to describe their positions more profoundly and personally. Furthermore, provoking elements of openness in interviewees is relatable to the overall exploratory nature of this research. Elements of surprise and openness are often provoked when conducting semi-structured interviews (Symon, Cassell 2012, 242). A baseline of questions included inquiries about the professional background of the interviewees. Depending on the field of expertise of the interviewee, the follow-up questions would attempt to create discussion around said expertise and further attempt to create a connection of their expertise to the research. Per purposive sampling methods, the relevancy of interviewees was investigated beforehand.

The primary reason of selecting a semi-structured approach is to explicitly provoke elements of openness and honesty in the interview participants. By showing a degree of structure, interviews follow academic guidelines and provide results that can be codified. However, by allowing elements of looseness to the interviews, the overall atmosphere not only allowed to have insightful discussions, but also created a sense of involvement for the interview participants. What can be defined as a direct result of

this, is the fact that interview participants would often end up recommending other professionals to interview for the research.

To ensure this particular environment of openness, the interviews of this study would rely heavily on open ended questions. Open ended questions allow interviewees to respond in an open manner, free of inhibitions, and provide profound answers to the questions. While open ended, a certain amount of structure was required, to ensure that the resulting primary data could be correctly analyzed. As a result, a semi-structured approach was selected to the interviews. Structure ensures the quality of the discussion, but freeing the interviews of complete structure would further enable an open atmosphere for interview participants (Symon, Cassell 2012, 240).

Questions would vary depending on the expertise of the interviewees. For instance, entrepreneurs in ecotourism were asked questions about ecotourism, while hinting towards organic farming practices. Whereas fertilizer entrepreneurs were asked questions about fertilizers and hinting towards themes of ecotourism. Crucially, focusing on the direct expertise that interviewees held, ensured that the results from the interviews would be relevant. As the research aims to explore stakeholders, diversity among interview participants would be both inevitable and highly welcome.

Meticulous and careful following of all data received from the interviews can be impossible in all of its random variation that occur through human communication. (Alvesson and Sköldbberg, 2009). As the nature of the study is exploratory, reducing creativity and critical thinking would work against the main purpose of the study. As such, it was deemed important to not fixate on methods, but to leave space for creativity. However, a certain amount of structure would be present in the analysis of interview results, as the research aims to be both reflexive and academic.

### 3.3 Implementations

The primary goal in successful implementation is to adequately take purposeful steps that ensure validity over anything else. This was achieved through reoccurring visits to the notes taken in the primary meeting with the FineOFF project leader in June of 2017. During said time period a crucial milestone was the creation of the

aforementioned research questions. Not only answering the research questions but sticking to a plan that was put together with careful thinking was deemed as an important methodological decision for the research.

The process of implementing appropriate steps to ensure the outcome of the research started in early June 2017. Prior to the aforementioned meeting, an overall small scale and first out of the two total literature reviews was performed. As the meeting took place, the leader of the FineOFF project team expressed the need for research. Several topics were discovered during this meeting, including the state of the project team. On this note, it was mentioned that the project team was in very early stages and the research would best assist the project team by exploring a wide scope of opportunities. This, in combination with the lack of resources that the research had, led to the ultimate conclusion and choice of exploratory research methodology as the primary methodological scope for the research. A handful of follow-up meetings occurred with the team leader and a key team member. These meetings added knowledge that could be used in the experience surveys that were the main form of information gathering for the research.

In accordance to the flexibility that exploratory research methods grant a researcher, it was decided that an agile approach in creating a theoretical background for the research was appropriate. The follow-up of the meetings was the wide-ranging literature review. This process was ongoing for several months and continued to evolve even during the interview process of the research. As interviewees granted more information about concurrent topics in their respective fields, having an agile approach would allow to further build the theoretical background of the research to a level that would best ensure the validity of the overall results. The literature review process ranged in terms of topic widely. This was largely due to the exploratory nature of the research.

As the literature review process had yielded appropriate results, the interviews started taking place. Interview candidates were reached out to in large numbers. Interviews were conducted either via phone or Skype interviews. Notes of the interviews are available through request from the author. The interview process was in total length over 2 months. After said time period, analysis of the results occurred. The primary focus during the analysis period was objectivity and using the

aforementioned (section 2.2) stakeholder tools. Specifically, while using the perceived interest tools, where results are based on the perceptions of the researcher, it was deemed important for the validity of the research to take careful steps to be objective.

## **4 Results**

The results of the research are visualized through identifying stakeholders, mapping stakeholders by power and interest, as well as evaluating stakeholder interests through the Stakeholder Vested Interest Intensity Index tool. Finally, the interviews / experience surveys results are valued with a specific emphasis on reoccurring themes found in the answers.

### **4.1 Identifying Stakeholders**

As explained in section 3.3, the identifying tool developed by Walker was used as an initial tool in identifying stakeholders. Potential stakeholders were placed in this tool based on the literature review process and research into the professional fields of organic farming and ecotourism. In addition to this, prior knowledge gained from the FineOFF project team allowed to include such factors as Jyväskylä University of Applied Sciences, which operates as a sponsor to the project, and effectively being a stakeholder.

The interviews of the research often times tended to create new connections upon completion. As the research was explained to the interviewees, and due to the open atmosphere created in the interview scenario (as explored in sections 3.1 & 3.2), interviewees tended to give access to their existing network of professionals. What this would mean for the research process, was that new stakeholders would be identified through the interview process.

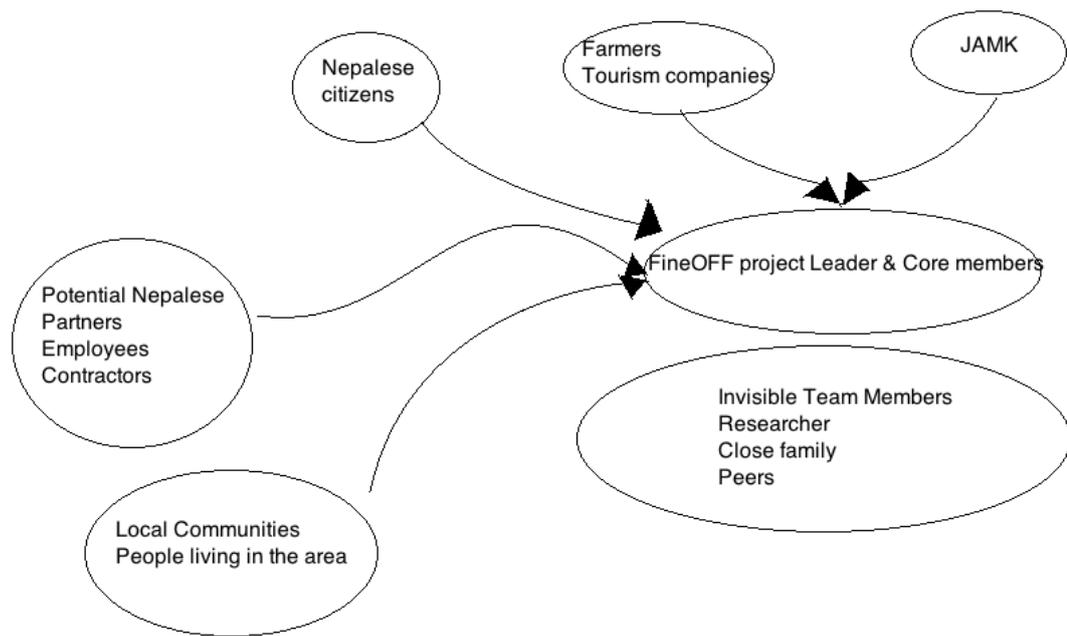


Figure 5. FineOFF in the context of Walker's model

As this research was in its early stages, the amount of information regarding potential stakeholders was limited. As discovered earlier in this research, prior knowledge of the subject matter was limited for the researcher and indeed the FineOFF project team. Through literature review and preliminary discussions, a picture of potential stakeholders was formed. This picture included the quite obvious, which were farmers, ecotourism practitioners and business partners (including investors).

FineOFF was placed onto the Walker's model (Figure 6.) based on the results gained from the interviews. In the process of identifying potential stakeholders, a singular question that would produce a valid answer, is not a realistic presumption. Whether an interviewee could be considered as a stakeholder or not, was concluded through various questions and research into the background of the interviewee in addition to the interview results.

As time progressed with the research process, it became apparent that the network of stakeholders would be larger and more profound than this. Additions included such as the researcher of this research, family members of the project team, Nepalese citizens, with special emphasis on local people living in the area.

Furthermore, the importance of pre-existing professionals in Nepal specifically inside the farming field was deemed as highly important.

As the FineOFF project received funding from JAMK, it had to be noted that JAMK would now essentially be considered a vital stakeholder in the project. More precise identification can be conducted with traveling to Nepal, and indeed researching stakeholder trends there with an emphasis on establishing dialogue with local professionals.

## 4.2 Vested Interest Intensity Index

Interview participants are marked as numbers for the Stakeholder Vested Interest Intensity Index tool and the stakeholder mapping tool. The number that they appear in the intensity tool and the matrix and their professional background is demonstrated in Figure 7.

Number in the Matrix	Professional background
1.	Stakeholder expert / Senior Scientist
2.	Organic & Chemical Fertilizer Entrepreneur
3.	Finnish well established Farmer
4.	Ecotourism entrepreneur (FIN)
5.	Ecotourism / <u>agritourism</u> entrepreneur (US)
6.	Nepalese mountain tourism entrepreneur
7.	NRNA Chairman
8.	Finnish teacher working in Nepal
9.	Ministry of agriculture
10.	Researcher on Nepalese agricultural practices

Figure 6. Number System used in the Stakeholder Tools

The above-mentioned figure operates as a supporting tool to read both the interest intensity index and stakeholder mapping tool. The vested interest intensity index tool results are placed into figure 8.

<b>Stakeholder Interest</b>	<b>Stakeholder Vested Interest Intensity Index Value</b>									
Interviewee Participants ->	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
<b>Working in Nepal</b>	H	L	L	L	N	VH	VH	VH	N	VH
<b><u>FineOFF</u> project</b>	VH	N	N	N	H	N	H	H	N	VL
<b>Collaboration with <u>FineOFF</u></b>	VH	L	L	L	L	N	H	N	L	VL
<b>Connecting ecotourism and organic farming</b>	H	N	L	N	VH	H	VH	L	L	VH

Figure 7. Stakeholder Vested Interest Intensity Index Value

The interest tool's main purpose is to interpret the interest of potential stakeholders, but also in the context of this research, it creates a refined totality together with the Stakeholder Mapping tool. This totality measures both the interest of stakeholders to not only the FineOFF project, but surrounding ideas as well and it measures the power and interest of stakeholders, as demonstrated by the stakeholder mapping tool. Figure 7. provides with assisting information, allowing the reader of the research results to understand the professional background behind the interest levels.

### 4.3 Stakeholder Mapping

As explored in section 3.3, stakeholder mapping was used as a tool to map the influence of potential stakeholders. As the interviewees of the research were professionals in the same field that FineOFF aims to pursue business in, it is fair to assume that these professionals could be considered as potential stakeholders as well. While the interviews focused on gathering information about the viewpoints of these professionals, levels of interest and power could be deciphered with relative ease. Interviewees were indeed asked questions about their will to conduct business in Nepal, and the power of interviewees was examined in the purposive sampling method section, where the professional background of interviewees and their prior work was examined to refined extent.

		LEVEL OF INTEREST	
		Low	High
POWER	Low	<b>A</b> 3. Minimal effort 10.	<b>B</b> 8. Keep informed
	High	4. <b>C</b> 2. 6. Keep satisfied 9.	<b>D</b> Key players 7. 1. 11. 5.

Figure 8. Mapping interviewees in the Power/Interest Matrix

As demonstrated in Figure 9, with the information gained from the interviews, respective interview participants were placed into the stakeholder mapping tool. The stakeholder mapping tool provides with the information that which the project team of FineOFF can continue pursuing business with. The addition of number 11 is JAMK, as it came out during the latter part of the research that JAMK would be a part of stakeholder map. Further analysis of the research results can be found in the analysis section.

## 5 Conclusions

The conclusions section provides analysis based on the aforementioned tools, as well as analysis focusing on repeating views occurring in the interviews of the study. Additionally, the results are viewed in the context of the research questions.

### 5.1 Conclusions Based on Stakeholder Tools

When viewing the results from the stakeholder tools, it becomes evident that there is interest towards the same ideas that FineOFF portray. Interest was found even in potential collaboration, purely based on the ideas portrayed by FineOFF. It is crucial to take into account that FineOFF does not indeed have a clear business model that

they can share with people as of yet. This inevitably effects the interest levels of potential stakeholders. How it effects can be interpreted in two ways. An argument can be made that pure ideas, specifically when as ethically grounded as FineOFF's are, should be rather easy to sell. A counter-argument for this is the clear position that if one does not have a business model, one cannot sell said business to anyone. Based on the knowledge gained from the interviews it is not intellectually honest to make analysis of either of these two. Individual differences between interviewees are bound to create different response to the notion of Ideas vs. clear business model.

When specifically looking at the interest tool and the stakeholder mapping tool, a conclusion can be made to support the argument that there is definite interest. 40% percent of answers regarding interest were Very High or High. Likewise, 30% of the interested are placed in the Key Players section inside the stakeholder mapping tool. This can, and should be taken as good news for FineOFF, the interested stakeholders mostly happen to be ones that can be considered as key players. A key player being someone with power that can affect the project team greatly.

In terms of interest portrayed by the interviewees, interviewees number 1, 6 and 7 are respectively the highest interested individuals. Furthermore, said individuals rank highly in the influence meter set by the stakeholder mapping tool. Number 11 (JAMK) can be added as the fourth stakeholder that can be put into segment D (Key players). Connecting with said individuals might prove to be something that FineOFF can benefit from, when considering about setting up business and defining their business idea.

A reoccurring theme in the results is the interest levels of Finnish based entrepreneurs and experts. None of the interview participants from Finland had much interest in conducting any business in Nepal. The main reasoning was often the riskiness of approaching a market such as Nepal in the field of organic businesses. Out of the five entities that operate in Finland, three respondents were perceived to have a low level of interest in entering Nepal, one neutral and one very high. In other words, only one out of five from the interviews expressed actively an interest in doing business in Nepal, and their professional background was in helping Nepalese people. The three entrepreneurs, all of whom had low levels of interest in working in Nepal, additionally had low levels of perceived interest in working with FineOFF. As

mentioned earlier, when viewing the results gained with the interest intensity tool, the results are based on the perceived levels of interest by the researcher. In accordance to this, all interview materials of this research are available upon request.

The Nepalese stakeholders that were interviewed for this research did express signs of interest that can be used to the benefit of the FineOFF project team. Establishing ties with the NRNA is an opportunity that FineOFF wants to explore. The perceived interest levels of said organization were very high. While their influence levels, as demonstrated in the mapping tool, are not visibly high, they are a connection that have a good chance of providing with a network of Nepal-based people who in turn can potentially have higher levels of power. One can argue that there is hidden potential in the NRNA.

During the final interviews of the research future opportunities presented themselves that are not visible in the results of this research. The Finnish ministry of Agriculture contacted the researcher on the final days of the research with a contact from the Finnish ministry of foreign affairs who specializes in analyzing the effectiveness of Finnish ministry's efforts in assisting other countries, and are currently located in Nepal.

## 5.2 Excerpts from the Interviews

As mentioned in section 3.1, the four enquiries set out for the interviewees were similar to all interviewees, however some contained modifications to suit the interviewees expertise in the most apt way. During the experience survey process, certain questions were met with similar answers several times. Notably, views regarding planned intervention had similarities, although the interview participants came from two different professional fields (ecotourism & fertilizers).

As FineOFF does not currently possess a clear business model, the following segment aims to present excerpts from the interviews that contained themes and ideas that were repeated by more than one interviewee without any existing provocation. These views can be used as useful bits of information that FineOFF can aim to use in their path of recognizing and creating their business model.

To the enquiries regarding the need inside Nepal and the potential supply that Finnish companies could bring, subsequent answers were received:

*“When establishing ecotourism in a new area, it’s important first to listen before teaching anything as there are intelligent people who know the land, the people and the government’s adaptability for tourism.” - Ecotourism Entrepreneur*

*“If a western country aims to go and do good inside a developing country like Nepal, you cannot simply just go there and tell people how to do their job. They have lived there probably for their whole life, and they understand the environment better than someone coming from Finland. To do it correctly, you must go there and learn how the soil works, during different seasons. And you must stay there for a long time- -” - Fertilizer entrepreneur*

When enquiring about the potential of ecotourism and agriculture, following answers occurred:

*“My experience with agritourism, which combines organic farming with ecotourism, are notably on fulfilling the tourism side of the equation and specifically in Hawaii, Italy, Greece, Brazil, and Spain. There are other destinations such as Taiwan and the Philippines that have apparently started offering agritourism, but I do not have personal experience with those destinations.” - Ecotourism Entrepreneur*

*“Mountain trekking is developed in Nepal, but tourists also like farms here they wanna do something with the farms, but they have short time, and need to see more places and just get information. - - there are no specific companies doing agritourism yet in Nepal”- Nepalese mountain trekking ecotourism entrepreneur*

These answers suggest the idea of agritourism as a potential solution in Nepal, when considering the potential of ecotourism and agriculture. Agrotourism came up as a new idea for the researcher at this point.

When enquiring about the need inside Nepal, reoccurring themes of cultural differences were brought up:

*“Taking into consideration the differences in culture is crucial. This is something I have learned through working with different developing countries during my career.*

*There have been moments, when culture has entered the discussion, and effected the outcome.” - Stakeholder expert / Senior Scientist*

*“I have noticed that when I have had meetings in Nepal, people really do respect the higher authorities in companies. What the boss says, is usually what goes. But then again, I have noticed that when it comes down to working, people on all levels do listen and focus on improving when we do work there.”* Finnish teacher involved in a teaching project in Nepal.

Acknowledging that certain cultural differences have the potential to come into effect, when conducting business, is a clear advantage that any business can possess. Such is the case with Nepal and FineOFF. These excerpts from the interviews supports already existing data of differences in value systems. As the research aimed to be exploratory and the main emphasis heavily focused on searching potential stakeholders, the amount of data regarding cultural differences is low. While however low, the topic of culture was brought up by several interviewees without any provocation. What can primarily be derived from the data, is the fact that cultures, with a high probability will play an effect if entering and doing business in Nepal. Furthermore, acknowledging the differences in respect towards hierarchy in particular, is information that holds value. A process of introspection with team members of FineOFF can be of assistance, as a valuable goal to have is preventing conflict from happening at all.

### **Revisiting the Research Questions**

The context in which the analysis matters, is undoubtedly within the context of the research questions. The research questions were:

1. Who are project team FineOFF’s potential stakeholders?
2. What level of interest and power do the aforementioned stakeholders possess?
3. As form of businesses, are ecotourism and organic farming mutually exclusive practices, or could they be introduced together?

While being the simplest and shortest research question, the first question is a research question that has not been answered completely. To understand who are

FineOFF's stakeholders, one must accept that it is an ongoing process, where potentially every day a new stakeholder can emerge for the project team. When trying to explore the current stakeholders for FineOFF, this research had potential to do better. This research has revealed a fragment of potential stakeholders for the project team. A fragment that could be larger, even with the budget limitations that this research faced. An argument can be made that while simple and short, the first research question is broad and challenging as well.

While that remains the case, the interest and power levels of potential stakeholders have been discovered, in what can be described as a profound manner. This was largely done successfully due to the mapping tools, as mentioned earlier in the research. Information regarding ecotourism and organic farming was largely derived from one interview with an agritourism entrepreneur. As stated prior in the research, the literature review process for the research can best be described as agile. Such was the case with agritourism being introduced as a completely new form of business for the researcher. FineOFF has the potential to pursue agritourism as a viable path of business inside Nepal. As it is with exploring stakeholders for the project team, the same can be said for agritourism. More research ought to be done in both fields. As the nature of this research remains exploratory, and one of the primary ideas behind exploratory research is to find more topic of research, it can be noted with good confidence that the research succeeded in its mission to provoke future research.

## **6 Discussion**

These above-mentioned reoccurring views helps the FineOFF project team in identifying what exactly it is that they should know when choosing a business model. The reoccurring theme that local people know best the local environment was one that came up not only in these two interviews, but was mentioned in two more interviews. This is an important lesson for the FineOFF team. Once a business model is set, and intentions are to do business in, for instance the organic farming field, getting to know the environment is crucial. What specifically makes this statement strong, is the already mentioned fact that the experts claiming this are from different fields of professions. Furthermore, time ought to be spent in Nepal for at least a

year, according to the organic fertilizer entrepreneur. This time allows to examine the soil during different seasons, which in turn is important when assessing how the fertilizers will work. The preconceived idea that the researcher had, where fertilizers could simply be shipped from Finland to Nepal, were quickly debunked by the farmer and the organic fertilizer entrepreneur. According to both, a system ought to be created locally.

The respect towards local people, and inclusion of local people in decision-making connects with the theoretical background of Social Impact Assessment and Stakeholder theory. Including elements of SIA, based on the repeating views coming from the interviews is something that the project team of FineOFF should consider. SIA will fundamentally be a supporting tool that the project team can use at all times from the beginning of conducting business to the potential scaling up phases.

Likewise, cultural differences are to be taken into consideration when eventually conducting business. As it occurred with the “reaching out” -time of this research, some individuals that were from Nepal deemed the researcher’s questions as disrespectful, and as a move to gain information for free. Confusion may occur during email exchanges, but as discovered in the theoretical section of this research, Finland and Nepal are differentiating cultures that have different value systems in place. As such, caution is advised and consideration that hierarchy is respected more strongly in Nepal can be of great value when conducting business with Nepalese people.

Finally, agrotourism is a direction that FineOFF has the potential in pursuing. It is considered to be the combination of ecotourism and organic farming. If the interest in pursuing ecotourism is strong, and potential connections exist for the project team, the idea of pursuing agrotourism is a valid option in terms of a business model.

### **Reflection on the Process**

This research marks as a milestone for the author, as this is their first full-scale research that has gone through the milestones that any credited and valid research goes through. Processes such as literature reviews, interviews and analysis, as well as academic writing were all familiar processes to the author. It was, however, the combination of all the above that formed a totality that can best be described as new

and challenging. A new element of responsibility was accepted, as one choice was clear from the starting point: there would only be one author for this thesis. As such, many lessons have been learned in the process, and more importantly motivation for future writing has sparked from the challenges and emotions that this research has brought up in the author.

As expected, there were many challenges along the way, and an underlying element of uncertainty that constantly effected the process. It is, however, through these hurdles of uncertainty where growth happens. Alongside natural challenges that any researcher will come across, there were also limitations. The key distinction between limitations and challenges being that limitations have an overall negative effect, whereas challenges, if faced with integrity, will net result with positive outcomes. The primary limitation of the research was the limited amount of budget that would primarily and only go into traveling to Nepal and conducting face-to-face interviews with locals. Everything, when it came to Nepal and even the professionals from Nepal, were experienced through skype interviews, emails and already documented data primarily from the internet. As such, a full-scale stakeholder analysis could not be conducted, and perhaps the data for the research is not as profound as it has potential to be. Of course, with FineOFF still being in a phase of development itself, conducting a valid stakeholder analysis would perhaps be either futile or near impossible, and in many ways the final product which, an exploratory research, seems more than fitting.

### **Future Research**

Per exploratory research motivations, provoking future research is one of the primary goals. This has been one of the key motivating factors for this research, to induce future research that will go further beneath the surface that was scratched by this research.

There are several areas that could be researched still when it comes to the context of FineOFF and Nepal. An in-depth stakeholder analysis ought to be the top priority, and specifically mobilizing the researcher to Nepal and having them interview local stakeholders would be crucial. Likewise, attempting to understand agrotourism more fundamentally as a business opportunity for FineOFF is as well a valid path to

research. Cultural differences specifically between Finnish people and Nepalese people is research that would provide completely new information that could be used to tremendous benefit when it comes to Finnish businesses planning on entering Nepal.

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