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Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences

**Faculty of Natural Resources and  
Agricultural Sciences**

# **The Experiences of Environmental Inspectors and Company Representatives during Environmental Inspection Meetings**

– Case Study in some Municipalities of Skaraborg County  
Sweden

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## Abstract

During environmental inspection meetings the conversations between environmental inspectors and company representatives are an important part of the society's legislation on environmental management, since the degree of understanding between these parties is important for how excellent environmental standard would be attained in the society since. Therefore, if these conversations do not work effectively, it may result to less efficient implementation of environmental solutions, which may result to health or environmental risk. The aim of the study is to describe and discuss the communication experiences between the environmental inspectors and the company representatives during these meetings, and to identify the dilemmas they encounter and how they try to improve upon such conversational problems.

In order to get an in-depth understanding of their experiences semi-structured interviews and observations were carried out with the participants involved, in five different municipalities in Skaraborg County. The investigation revealed that although the company representatives have the rights to deny the inspectors decision during and after meetings, they however see the inspectors as having power over them because they are endowed with the authority to enforce environmental legislations in the society. However some company representatives did also subtly exercised power during some of the occasion. Attitude and anxiety also emerged as important factors that could positively and negatively influence the outcome their meetings. Finally the more the involved actors understand each other the better the environment is properly taken care of.

*Keywords:* Environmental management, inspection meeting, power, communication, attitude, anxiety



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# 1 Introduction

The exploration and production of goods and services, the increase in population growth couple with global warming have not only caused unprecedented degradation of the natural environment but have affected human health. According to predictions if adequate measures are not taken to control our interference with the natural world, present and subsequent generations risk destroying life on earth (Wilkinson et., al, 2007).

In Sweden, the Environmental Protection Agency represents nature protection and amongst other things, it encourages sustainable economic development practices in the society. The sustainability principle uphold that, economic and social development must go hand in hand with environmental development, societal development of any kind must not affect nature wellbeing, because the lives of current and subsequent generations is dependent upon the services it provides. The “polluter pay” principles states that individual, agencies or companies that cause harm or alter the natural environment must pay for the damage. This may not only strengthen environmental justice but also society’s ethical responsibility in taking care of the environment (Naturvårdsverket 2014).

Therefore communication is important in the management of the environmental. Our efforts to improve nature’s health are thanks to the different means of communication. Cox (2008) argues that “the way we communicate with each other about the environment powerfully affects how we perceive both it and ourselves and, therefore, how we define our relationship with the natural world”. Implicitly, it is by communication means, that the environmental inspectors and company representatives could better understand the effects of a company’s activities to the environment and how they can try to improve upon the problems. It is by this medium that we can express our feelings and thoughts about the present deplorable state of the environment. It is by it that we can make and enforce regulations to safeguard its wellbeing. Senecah (2004) support that, effective communication interaction led to better environmental decisions which contribute in building a sustainable society.

In Sweden, it is the obligation of every municipality to safeguard the environment and the environmental inspectors are charged with the responsibility to perform the function, which the municipalities in Skaraborg County are not an exception. The county is located in the Western part of Sweden and amongst the municipalities that constitute it; five of them have decided to cooperate on environmental management issues in the area. These involves Skövde, Karlsborg, Falköping, Hjo and Tibro municipalities, who argues that working together is less expensive as well as more effective relative by working independently (Miljösamverkan 2016).

The cooperation hosts the different environmental inspectors, who occasionally go out to inspect and control the operations of companies which may affect the environment in the form of a face-to-face meeting. The more the companies understand how their operations impact nature the better they can improve upon their ways of production in order not to affect it. Therefore, the problems which may influence operators to be partial or less committed for their environmental impacts is worthy to know and this can only be captured



by exploring their conversation with the inspectors during meeting, to identify those problems that may affect their conversation.

## 1.1 The Problem Statement

In Sweden, one way to regulate public environmental effects is the environmental legislation that controls individuals, public agencies as well as companies' activities. Connected to the legislation are the environmental inspectors that are given the responsibility to supervise and to sanction companies that do not comply with the legislations. They also examine the environmental profile reports of business organisations as well as they visit them and interview the responsible person for the environmental at the site. However if the standard does not conform with that of the legislation the inspector compels the company representative to make changes which may be expensive to some companies (Naturvårdsverket 2014).

The conversation between these persons is an important factor of society's law on environmental management. Since the degree of understanding between the inspector and the company representative is vital for how excellent environmental standard would be attained in the society. If the conversation does not work out effectively it may result in poor implementation of environmental safety solutions which may put nature and public health at risk, as well as it may also disrupt the production processes in companies since it is obligatory for them to adhere to environmental standards.

Nevertheless, it is assume that there are some dilemmas related to inspection conversations. In some occasions the inspector may recommend certain actions that are considered challenging and such decision may deeply affect the company. Situations as such require the inspector to exercise power because they are constrained to put the legislation into practice. The company representative may refute or fails to comprehend the judgement or think the inspector could consider other alternative. The company representative may also regard the inspection as interference in the private activities of the company, thus withstanding both the inspection and its result.

The above is an example of inspection conversation encounter which makes it different from the ordinary conversation of mere exchange of information between interlocutors with symmetric power relation. In this investigation I am interested in how environmental inspector and company representatives describe inspection occasions and conversations and what the narratives reveal about their attitudes and inspection experiences. To generate the narratives is needed interview in which there is open sphere for the inspectors and company representatives to express their experiences.

## 1.2 Aim of study

The aim of the study is to describe and discuss the communication experiences of environmental inspectors and company representatives during environmental inspection meetings:

- What are the conversational dilemmas they faced during meeting occasions?
- What are their views about the environment?

## 1.3 Structure of the thesis

The thesis is divided into four sections. The first part involves the introduction, the problem, and the aim of the study. The second part describes the theory of power in relation to interpersonal verbal face-to-face communication - how the use of these theories may

influence the outcome of inspections conversation. The third part present the methods use in generating the data followed by the results and discussion and finally wrapped off by the conclusion.

## 2 Theory

In the studies the theories of communication and power were used to analyse the interpersonal verbal conversation between the environmental inspectors and companies representatives during inspection meetings. The role of these theories is that they help to illuminate some of the problems which affect conversational practices and how these problems could be improved in order for interlocutors to better understand each other.

### 2.1 Communication

Communication is the spoken interaction we practice during our daily activities which may be either one-on-one or through other means. Interpersonally, it is described as a co-constructive activity between two or more people in order for them to mutually understand each other (Markova et., al 1995). During the process each party make use of his utterances in trying to influence the cognitive, emotion and behaviour of the other in relation to the subject. In other words each party tries to guide the other to be aware, feel or react on what is being discussed (Markova et., al 1995). For example in a meeting, the inspector may suggest that it is vital for a company to have waste receptacles because it helps in preventing wastes from littering on to the environment. In this sense he is trying to call the attention of the representative towards wastes, by guiding him to understand that it is detrimental for the environment and it would be plausible for him to engage in actions that could prevent littering.

The overarching goal during conversational interaction is for the interlocutor to understand each other; therefore during the process of a conversation, it is necessary to pay attention to each other's utterances as well as making sure that the context of the discussed subject is jointly understood. In some occasions those involved may understand utterances or the context of a subject differently, thus it is important for the interlocutor to confirm that what is discussed is jointly understood. Context comprehension does not only concern what is being understood in the present but also the antecedent events that are connected to the present conversation. The absence of a mutual understanding may result to what is termed a "problematic talk" – a conversation that leaves discrepancies between parties in the interpretation and understanding of what is said and done (Linell, 1995).

How accurate each party presents his views point is also important during conversation interaction, a clear, concise and straight forward expression would enable recipients to understand the subject more better, relative to the construction of ambiguous sentences which may cause others to partially understand what is being said, simple words or phrases may be use in other to facilitate comprehension (Markova et., al 1995).

Connected to the preceding is power during conversation which is the exercise of social power over other parties, whereby one person dominates during a conversation, purposefully to control the behaviours of those involved. In such an occasion the conversational contribution of the subordinated individuals is treated as less valuable and not allowed to contribute in the discussion. Power during a conversation may negatively

affect the interaction because the subordinated individual may feel unhappy and perhaps be afraid to chip in ideas or suggestions that may be important in a conversation. An ideal conversational interaction presupposes “turn-taking” which gives the opportunity for everyone to equally contribute during the process (Markova et., al 1995).

Linked to the above is also reciprocity which presupposes that the interlocutors keep to accepted conduct during the process. Each party is expected to give room for the others to express their thoughts and feelings as well as listening to and from each other. Indeed it is an occasion which requires each part to treat the other in the same way he would be liked to be treated, for reciprocity may influence trust and cooperation which may enhance understanding of the subject (Markova et., al 1995).

## 2.2 Power

Power is “everywhere” and comes from “everywhere”. We exercised it in our daily interaction perhaps consciously or unconsciously with the aim to influence the behaviour of others; therefore it is a relationship which exists between two individuals or people. Knowledge is connected to power as well as power is related to knowledge and each them influences the other. If a person has the knowledge or skill to perform a particular function better than those with whom he interact the individual is said to have power over them with regard to that particular situation. On the other hand power is also considered as a form of knowledge, in the sense that, it is easy for the one who possess it to observe the behaviours of those that he controls, thereby understanding how they think and interact which enable the dominant person to develop alternative strategies to constantly control the people (Barker, 1998).

With regards to the fact that the inspectors are more conversant with environmental problems as well as they have the legitimate power to make decisions against operators who do not abide to the legislation, these gives them power over the company representatives. Nevertheless these do not influence them to make unjustifiable decisions which may negatively affect economic operators. On the other hand the company representatives also have the powers to reject decisions taken against them. Therefore, in the investigation attention would be paid in occasions that the exercise of power was attempt by either the inspectors or company representative, how it negatively influenced the outcome of their conversational interaction and plausible ways to improve on such problems.

In a given relationship, if one of the parties is capable of controlling the behaviour of the other in some respect or entirely having control over his whole life and the subjugated person is incapable to act in the same way for the other party the relationship is termed to be asymmetrical. And if both of them have equal control over one another the relationship is viewed as symmetrical. Power relationship between two parties may be asymmetrical in one aspect and may not be asymmetrical in other aspect, depending on different roles and situations of the interactant (Allwood, 1980). For example in a class room lecture the lecturer is regarded as having power over his student because he has the knowledge plus the skills to facilitate learning which the student craves for but out of this scenario the student may be the manager of a soccer team which the lecturer belongs to, the student has power over the lecturer in this case because players have to take to the managers instructions.

The party that exercises power over the other could do this directly or indirectly. The former involves it wield to the desired target of the wilder – positive direction and the latter involves partial control of certain aspects of the person life. The subordinated person may sometime restrict his own degree of freedom and allowed to be controlled, therefore the exercise of power and the yield to it is interdependent, it can never be exercise unless there is a wield and yield to it. In other words no control is possible if the wilder in any manner does not employ the degree of freedom which is given to him by the subordinator and also

if the latter refuses to succumb the control. However, power may be resisted by those who think that they do not desire to be controlled by another individual (Allwood, 1980).

Power in interpersonal relationship may happen due to the fact that the influential person has access to certain resources, for example legitimacy, which gives him the advantage to control his counterpart. In addition, legitimate power can also be conferred to someone such as an authority to help perform certain function that is required by the state or an organisation. Power should not only be conceptualised as evil because it constrains people to act against their wish but it can also be employed as a tool to cement certain standards in the society (Allwood, 1980).

Power is inherently present in communication and could be used to influence people in many ways. Linguistic expressions such as “the declaration” and “the interrogation” implicitly represent some orders that need to be obeyed to (Allwood, 1980), for example if the inspector declares that companies should have waste receptacles in order to contain their trash. Indirectly it means that companies are constrained to act in accordance to the declaration. If the instruction is followed it shows that they believe decomposed wastes are harmful to nature and this would subsequently influence how they treat their trash.

In the same sense during an interview exercise the interviewee is required to provide answers to the questions posted by the interviewer, therefore the interviewer has some degree of influence over the interviewee because he is constrain to respond to the questions regardless whether the answer are right or wrong (Allwood, 1980). Seemingly the speech act is also inherently compelling because it is a request that is made by a speaker for the receiver of the message to act in accordance to his desire (Dietz, 1991).

Power could also be manifest in interpersonal verbal and non- verbal communication and could only be notice in the behaviour of those involved. Verbally it manifestations include constant interruption of the other while speaking, the dominant party uses much time to speak relative to the other party, the use of harsh words and high sounding voice etc. And with non- verbal conversation it manifestations involves - body language expressions – wide eye gazing and uncontrolled blinking, facial expression (frown) which signifies discomfort, carefree mood and actions – posture, gesture, elevation etc. Indeed an informal and impolite atmosphere (Dunbar & Burgoon, 2005).

## 3 Methods

Skaraborg County has a population of about 66.000 inhabitants as well as many business enterprises of different sizes, the operations of these economic holdings apparently contributes to environmental effects, therefore it is important to regulate their activities in order to avoid nature degradation. Prior to the interview the responsible person that oversees the activities of the environmental inspectors was contacted. She organised the meeting between the interviewer and the inspectors and the inspectors connected the interviewer with the company representatives, similar to the “snowball” technique where the first informant connect the investigator to the next informant and next and next (Lindlof, 1995).

The interview duration for each person lasted between thirty minutes to one hour. A tape recorder was use to record the respective narratives of the interviewees that were later transcribed and analysed. In order to deeply understand the subject some review of achieves were also carried out. Those who participated in the study include the environmental inspectors and some selected companies environmental representatives. In sum eight persons were involved in the investigation - three inspectors and five company representatives and the latter represented the following companies:-

- The wastes water treatment plant located in Skövde municipality,
- The pharmaceutical company that produces different health supplements located in Falköping municipality,
- The trucks and cars painting company located in Falköping municipality,
- Trucks and cars repairs plus washing company found in Tibro municipality,
- The carpentry training workshop that trains professional carpenters in different fields located in Tibro municipality.

These companies were chosen for the study because their course of production and services rendered to the public contributes to nature degradation.

### 3.1 Interviews

To investigate the communication experiences of the environmental inspectors and company representatives during inspection meetings conducted interviews were organised in order to generate the data required for the study. A semi structured interview approach was employed in the data generating process. It attributes constitute prepared questionnaires with open ended questions, face to face interviews and focus group observations. The interview approach is not only vital in that it renders the conversation accessible for the interviewer to chip in follow up questions which may help in guiding the interviewee to deeply narrate about the subject but it also makes the conversation flexible,

such that the interviewer may have the opportunity to ask some of the questions that may have been forgotten or not included in the questionnaire (Beverley, 2002).

Before the interview two separate interview guides were prepared, one for the inspectors and the other for the economic operators and although the questions in the both questionnaires made the same sense the formulation were slightly different. The purpose of this was to make it easy for the interviewees to better comprehend the questions, since it was assume that the economic operators may not be too familiar about how the investigations in relation to environmental safety management are carried out. Question formulation is important in interview exercise because it influences the extent of question comprehension and the better the interviewees understands the questions the more detail their explanations which also render the interviewer to understand the situation better.

In the study face-to-face interviews were used to find out how the conversation between environmental inspectors and company representatives are performed. Open ended questions, supported by follow up once were asked to all the interviewees and the method enables them to tell their detail individual experiences. The questions that were asked to the inspectors involve:-

- What are the municipality environmental objectives?
- What inspired you to work as an environmental officer, are your desires achieved?
- Describe a typical inspection meeting process?
- How do you perceive conversation interaction during inspection?
- Do you consider the interaction to be democratic? Why and why not?
- Describe the attitude of company representatives during inspection meeting.
- What are the communication problems that are encountered during the meeting and how do you try to improve upon such problems?

Those that were asked to the company representatives involve:-

- Describe what the company does?
- What are its environmental objectives?
- Describe a typical inspection meeting process?
- How do you perceive conversation interaction during and after inspection, do you see it as free and fair opportunity to express your desire?
- Describe the attitude of the inspector during the meeting, do you think he or she understands the difficulties in fulfilling the regulations
- What are the communication problems that are encountered during the meeting and how do you try to improve upon such problems?

## 3.2 Observations

During the investigation observations were also carried out. The document which depicts the environmental standard according to the legislation was presented by one of the inspectors as well as some company representatives presented their environmental objectives and the recent inspection results report. A brief walk was also carried out within and outside the surrounding of some the companies and the aim was to show the interviewer some of the environmental management facilities such as – were harmful chemicals are stored, wastes receptacles, drainage and ventilation outlets etc. The ineffective handling of such kinds of facilities may contribute in affecting the environment.

### 3.3 Analysis

Qualitative method was employed in the data analysis process. According to this method, the analysis and interpretation of the empirical data is based upon the experiences of the participants as well as the observations carried out by the researcher and is called “inductive judgement”. Therefore the obtained data was categorised according to the method of open coding. Whereby the interview statements were categorised according to content in relation to the kind of social phenomena represented (Beverley, 2002). For example, statements like “the inspectors described the meeting with a company owner as a “power display” in relation to the seating arrangement in his office and his behavioural expressions”, and “In the course of their conversation he responded to and makes telephone calls with other people, without begging the concern of the inspector”, was categorised as “power argument”. The statement that “smaller companies do not seem to understand the consequences of their operations to the environment.....”, was categorised as “communication argument”. In addition, themes such “attitude” and “anxiety” emerged as concepts that could contribute in the improvement of conversations, based upon the participant’s definition of the concepts in connection to conversational interactions. And the theories of communication and power were used in explaining these categories alongside the emerging themes in relation to the conversations during inspection meetings occasions



## 4 Results and discussion

### 4.1 Power

The study revealed that both the inspectors and company representatives perceive the power relationship between them as asymmetrical. The inspectors acknowledged that prior and during meetings they have more power relative to their counterparts, because they are municipal authorities that are endowed with the authority to enforce the legislation and to control economic operations that may negatively affect the environment.

Quotes that support the claim involved: “I don’t think we have equal power, I am in a power position over them because I am an authority”, “We are authority we can use different measures to make them comply for example, the issue of fines to defaulters”, “They see us as government authority and they know that it is possible for us to make things difficult for them, they know is not an equal relationship”. Although they are the authorities with the legitimate power to enforce the legislation they are however very cautious in making decisions, in order that it does not affect the business aim of economic operators. “We want to cooperate with the companies to see that we find solutions or improve their environmental problems and at the same time helping them to grow” quoted by one of the inspectors.

The company representatives acknowledged that during their meetings they do not have the powers relative to that of the inspectors and even though they have the rights to deny the inspector’s suggestion or decision nothing can be changed once a decision is reached, for they see them as government authorities who are trying to enforce the government regulations. Some of them quoted as follows: “we do not have any power and the only power we have is to follow the rules, he is an authority we have to listen to what he says, he is just doing his work”, “I perceive her as an authority that is doing her job and she points out what we can do and what we cannot do” etc. From the quotations it is apparently clear that both the inspectors and economic operators are conversant with the extent of their powers. The company owners do not see the inspectors as imposing but they perceived them as municipal authorities that want to make sure the environment is protected.

In connection to the theory of power in interpersonal conversation, the “speech act” (Dietz, 1991) and linguistic expressions - “the declaration” and “the interrogation” (Allwood, 1980) implicitly represent some orders that need to be succumb to. With regard to the fact that the inspectors are government authorities who make sure that the company representatives comply to their environment responsibility implicitly mean that company representatives are obliged to act in accordance to what they say. Dietz (1991) argue for the “Ideal dialogue” whereby communication is a cooperative action undertaken by parties based upon mutual deliberation and argument. An ideal conversation interaction is based on rational justification of thoughts rather than constrains, with the overarching aim to understand each other. Power should not only be conceptualised as coercive in the sense that it compels people to act against their desires but it can also be used in compelling the society to conform to certain standards which are necessary for that society (Coleman,

2000), for example economic operators that do not want to take responsibility for their environmental effects should be forced to conform because environmental safety is important for everyone.

Nevertheless, the inspector's perceived that resistance to compliance are sometimes made by company owners who think that the inspector's decision may negatively affect their business operations. One of the inspectors described the meeting with a company owner as a "power display" in relation to the seating arrangement in his office and his behavioural expressions. It all started when the inspector called him by the telephone to inform him about the verdict of a complain that someone laid against him and despite that it was even in his favour, in the course of her explanation he hung up the telephone. The inspector thought that may be the conversation seized due to net work problem, so she called again and he responded yes, I got the message and hung up again, and the conversation stopped without any further contributions.

The same inspector described a situation in which she perceived the same company owner indirectly express how powerful he is through the seating arrangements in his office. She described that, his table is elevated from the ground and behind it, stands a big chair which he seats on. And on the opposite side stands another chair, but a small one reserved for his visitors. On top of the table, lies a cigarette ash tray, packed full of remains. She continued that; before their conversation began, the first thing he did was that he adjusted the ash tray in front of where she sat and he smokes in his office which is forbidden by law in Sweden. She says that, she thinks he was really upset of her presence because he does not see any reason why he is a priority for inspection. In the course of their conversation he responded to and makes telephone calls with other people, without begging her concern. Nevertheless, she revealed that, it is alleged that, this is how the said economic operator behave to all those that comes to his office.

The inspector interpreted the encounter as a subtle way of power expression and that the owner wants to let her know he is the boss. She also concluded that for the fact that he ended their telephone conversation unofficially as well as talking on the telephone with other people without begging her permission is a sign of disrespect, therefore her presence and the conversation were valueless for him. The message from the narratives is obviously clear the company owner is attempting to exercise power, for if he feels that he is not a priority for inspection and he can behave in any way that suits him is a form of power expression because both of them are aware of the fact that inspection is a routinized exercise.

The inspector also said that she had encountered other occasions that some company owners expressed power but in a subtle manner. They say things and act in the form of a joke but indirectly are insult to the inspector, for example, during a follow up meeting someone would go as far by presenting a consultant on site, in order for him to justify the company's actions, "It is really a challenge" quoted the respective inspector. According to the environmental legislation, if a company owner is not satisfy with the inspectors decision he or she has the right to deny the decision as well as the individual also have right to take the matter to court (Naturvårdsverket 2014). Therefore the presence of a consultant on site is an attempt of power expression because it is the inspectors and the court that handle environmental issues and not private a consultant. She has also encountered another occasion that a representative was really aggressive but during a follow up meeting she was surprised that all what she recommended has been perfectly done and the person did not do those things out of his wish but just because he is constrain to follow her instructions.

Another inspector also explained his own encounter which is similar to the above. He said that in one of his meeting occasions a company owner brought out all the documents of environmental management that he have ever had and scattered them all over the table and he said "look at how much I have been doing to save the environment, I paid all the money that is required yet you are not satisfied, and you have come here again to complain over nothing". The inspector's interpretation of the situation was that the company representative want to show proves of how his company is committed in solving its

environmental impacts relative to other companies that may not have as much documents as he. Therefore the inspector should stop coming to his company and he should be exempted for subsequent inspections because he has already contributed too much in protecting the environment.

According to the inspector it is a cunning way of expressing power because inspection meetings are legal and regular exercise which both of them is aware of, so he does not see any reason why the representative should complain or be exempted from it. Although it is the legitimate right for the economic operators to reject the decisions of the inspectors, it is still very important that prior and during meetings the parties respects the opinions of each other, for it is unfair to undermine someone's view points because in some occasion it may result to resistance.

As described above by the different inspectors about their meeting encounter with the different company representatives Dunbar & Burgoon (2005) argue that power during interpersonal conversation can be manifested verbally and none verbally. Verbally it manifestations include – the constant interruption of a discussion by the dominant party, the use of harsh words and high sounding voice by the superior individual. And none verbally it manifestations involves - informal way of behaving such as wide eye gazing and uncontrolled blinking, carefree mood and actions – posture and elevation such as what the inspectors have described above. Markova et., al (1995) argue for a free and fair conversational interaction that may influence the participants to make meaningful contributions that may improve a discussed subject.

## 4.2 A Good Attitude

In the investigation “attitude” also emerged as an important concept in the inspectors’ and company representatives’ narratives, used to explain their ideas about improvements of conversation during meetings. Some of the company representatives expressed that they wish to work with an inspector who has a good attitude and feels for them. They desire to have a meeting with an inspector that has a good behaviour and shows concern for their dilemmas. Some of them quoted as follows: “She had a good and polite attitude, during our conversation, I asked her thing that were unclear and she explained them to me, indeed she taught me so many things that I did not know”, “Attitude is very important because if they tell me when they are coming we have to be more prepared and when he came he presented his agenda and emphasized on what he is going to do which is good because it makes me to stay focus”, “Is good for us when they are specific because we can take a little time to reflect a little extra on how do we do this or that.

Prior to any meeting the inspector informs the company representative well ahead of time, firstly by a telephone call and later by an e-mail in which he precisely explains what would be discussed and as well as stating the date for the meeting. “Before the meeting I first call and inform them and if they need some kind of material or information I send it to them and also if I need something from them I asked them to send it to me”. This approach renders both parties to be well prepared in advance before the meeting and the more they are prepared the better their conversation.

It also indirectly renders them to constantly make sure that their environmental performances are executed accordingly. In addition, the expression of good behaviours during the occasion would also influence the parties to listen to each other which will contribute to better conversation. Some of the representatives also acknowledge that the inspector's feels for their plights as business persons that want to make profit but at the same time they are still compel to be responsible for their environment effects. “They feel for us, if we have a problem that we cannot solve we usually call them and we try to look for a solution together and they always call again to get the feedback and to give more advice”.

However one of the company owners had a contrary view about the feelings of the inspector with regard to his business and he feels that, the inspector does not value his complain. He runs a truck painting company and during the painting process contaminated water runs out to the environment, so he has been compelled by the inspector to build a washing plant that would contained the contaminant. According to him it is a good idea to protect the environment but he does not have the money for such a project and he has complained over and over but the decision remains the same.

### 4.3 Anxiety

In the inspectors' and company representatives' narratives "anxiety" also emerged as an important factor used to explain their ideas about improvements of conversation during meetings. It was revealed that those company representatives that have never experienced an inspection exercise turn to be fearful during the meeting process, perhaps because of their limited knowledge about what is an inspection or they may not be familiar with a particular inspector, especially if he is newly appointed. One of the inspectors told her experienced about a company owner who has never previously been involved in an inspection meeting occasion. She said that, during her meeting with the company owner, she noticed that the person was too nervous and she perceived, all what she explained during the occasion was never understood by the company owner. However, thanks to subsequent follow up meetings that the owner gradually came to understand what is the meaning of environment inspection meeting as explained by the inspector.

If a company representative does not know the purpose of an inspection meeting or not being familiar with an inspector these may temporally influenced some of them to be nervous during meeting occasion because they are uncertain of the behaviour of the inspector since they have never met before. The inspector who has experienced such an occasion quoted that "One huge hindrance to communication is a person who is afraid, a person who is afraid does not listen to what is been said because he is overshadowed by fear, you can explain methodologically and feels that this is the best you have offered and it just not sink".

The antecedent quotation implies that if a person is fearful during inspection, he can neither listen nor assimilate what is discussed which indirectly would negatively affect the outcome of the conversation. The important thing in a conversational interaction is for the parties to understand what is been discussed and the more we understand how we affect our environment the better we can protect it. However the inspector explained that if she noticed that a business owner is fearful she would instead spend much time to carefully explain to the person what is the meaning of an inspection as well as checking that the person has understood. For her it is good to properly establish the relationship because she sees it as a long term relationship, since they would be meeting occasionally. Craig & Muller (2007) argue that uncertainty is a common phenomenon in the initial interaction of two strangers. However as the parties starts to converse perhaps about different things the uncertainty level gradually reduce because the brief interaction moment gives each of them the opportunity to roughly guest who is the other person.

### 4.4 Their view about nature

With regards to the environment all the interviewees acknowledged that nature is something that is important for them. They believe that nature is something that needs to be taken care of because we are all dependent upon it. One of the company representative stated that "The environment is important for the future of our children, it is only when you start getting old then you realised how important is it". However, they all acknowledged that, sometimes it's difficult to keep to the management standards because of the financial

constrain that is entailed in the process. Their primordial aim as business people is to maximise profit and in situations that the profit is less, there is a high probability that some economic operators may turn to neglect some aspects of their environmental responsibility especially when it demands spending extra money.

#### 4.5 Inspection meeting, before and today

It was also revealed that there has been a gradual evolution in the manner in which inspection meetings are being carried out over the years and all the participants in the study acknowledged the claim. In the past meetings were more of information dissemination forums and the exercise of how powerful an inspector is which most company representatives hated and the aftermath was that there was constant disagreement between them. One of the company representative quoted as follows “The conversation interaction in those days were not constructive at all, it was more of finding faults and blaming people and no explanation is given on how to improve on the problem and if you ask how to do this or that the answer is I don’t know find out yourself, they only complain and don’t say how to do it”.

Nevertheless, the interviewees acknowledged that “today” is quite different relative to the past – they said that meetings these days are more in the form of “democratic deliberations” with a focus for the parties to collectively identify and to solve environmental problems. “We are free to express what we are capable to do and what we have not been able and then we can jointly work on how to improve it”. No company owner would want to work with an inspector that is unreasonably compelling and less helpful, they would prefer someone who listens and feels for their plights. An inspector should be an optimistic person that should cooperate with his counterparts in looking ways to improve or solve problems. And since they both have different skills and experiences the best suggestion is to combine both synergies which would make it less difficult for them to achieve their gold's – “together we succeed divided we fail”.

#### 4.6 Communication during inspection

The study also revealed that it exists a good conversational relationship between the interviewees. The inspectors tries to guide the company representatives to understand their environmental responsibilities as well as the company representatives who tries to let the inspectors to know the difficulties involved in the management process. One of the inspectors quoted that, “It is always good to listen carefully to the other party and try to put yourself in the situation that a company is in that moment because they too are considering other things that are important for them before making decisions”.

All of the interviewees say that, they have the opportunity to air out their opinions, by pointing out what they desire or dislikes as well as they also acknowledge that they understood each other during the occasion. Some of the representatives quoted as follows “During the meeting we had a polite discussion and it was really good, it wouldn’t have been easy if she was angry with me and I find it easy to have such a type of conversation because she does not point fingers that you are doing wrong but telling us this is a problem you can fix it in this way. In fact we had more of a cooperative talk and I see this very helpful to make us better”. Continued another that “We had a good speak and she did not raise her voice, I think the conversation was equal and I do not think the conversation can be done better than what we had. She was really good, polite and knowledgeable of her profession, I trust her”.

According to the inspectors, face-to-face conversation is not only important in that they can talk and feel each other but it also gives them the opportunity for them to look through some of the management documents at the spot. And as well as walking around the

building to check whether the management facilities are in order and it has happen in some occasions that something is detected that needs to be improved. A glaring example was in one of the companies that the environmental permit had expired a day before the inspection and the representative was not even aware of it and it was the inspector who notified him and requested he should apply for a new one. Other situation may be oil or water leakage or the malfunctioning of a smoke chimney which need to be repaired.

#### 4.7 Communication in big and small Companies

It was also revealed that the meeting interactions with both the big and small companies are not the same. According to one of the inspector bigger companies turn to fully understand their environmental impacts and what they have to do in order to keep the environment safe. Most of them have an established environmental department that look after their environmental problems with a well trained officer who is knowledgeable about the importance of having a sustainable environment. Some of these companies even use their effective environmental performance as a market strategy to attract customers that are environmental sympathizers to their businesses, because such people turn to buy commodities that are produced in connection with nature safety consideration. Though such companies are pro-environmentally oriented they are however not exempted from the legislation and should they failed to comply with the inspectors decisions they are given the same sanctions like any other environmental defaulter, however it seldom happens because they usually adheres to the laws.

According to the inspector, smaller companies do not seem to understand the consequences of their operations to the environment and most of them think that since they are small in size their impact are less significant to affect nature. They also argue that since they do not generate much profit and the environmental requirements demands spending extra money which most of them do not have. A glaring example was a case that the owner of truck and car painting company is compelled to build a small waste water catchment plant that would collect contaminated water during the course of cleaning. However this person complains that he does not have the money to established the facility and as a business person he too need to make profit and he does not think that the wastes water which spills out to the environment has any impact. Indeed most of the smaller companies have the will to act against their environmental effects but the problem is that they do not have enough money to invest on thinks that are not directly connected to their business.

## 5 Conclusion

Communication is a vital aspect in the management of the environment, for it is by talking with each other that we can understand how our daily activities affect it as well as its vitality for the society. The more the environmental inspectors and company representatives understand each other the better they can work together in order to keep the environment safe. Although the inspectors have power relative to the company representatives, during their interactions they turn to be very cautious in making environmental decisions, for the use of power in an abusive way may negatively affect their relationship which implies that the environment remain affected.

On the other hand, though the company representatives too have the powers to deny the inspectors decision, prior doing so, they should carefully reflect upon what they regard as an unfair, for a senseless denial of the latter's judgement or recommendation may as well negatively affect their relationship, cognisance to the fact that they have to be meeting each other occasionally. Conversely an equal power relationship may influence a positive conversation between them, since there would be no domineering party which may contribute in improving the management standards. In addition, how polite they behave towards each other would apparently influence better interaction and understanding also and on the other hand poor behaviours would consequently lead to suspicion which may result to poor understanding of each other thus putting nature at jeopardy.

Similarly the presence of anxiety may result to poor conversation, for fear can influence someone not to thoroughly express his viewpoints as well as not paying enough attention during conversation which may negatively affect the meeting objectives. On the whole since it is the degree of understanding between them which determines how excellent environmental standard would be attained in the society the more they understand each other the better the environment is protected.

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