

Non-Governmental Organizations and Corporations
Conflict & Collaboration

Student Name: Jasmin Memaran Dadgar

Student Number: 436642

Supervisor: Dr. Vidhi Chaudhri

M.A. Media Studies: Media & Business
Erasmus School of History, Culture and Communication
Erasmus University Rotterdam

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ABSTRACT

This research project analyses the transforming relationship between businesses and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) from pure antagonists to equal collaborators in the past two decades. This shift resulted as the effects of globalization have altered the global balance of power, decreasing the influence of national governments and the public sector in general. As a consequence, NGOs gained influence worldwide and the non-profit sector transformed into the voice of civil society, taking its place as an institutional actor next to its equally strengthened for-profit counterpart. Given this rise in global influence, and their collective influence and power, NGOs and businesses are believed to pose the sustainable solution to the global environment and societal problems we face today. Further, both actors have taken upon characteristics once thought constituent of the other, as the borders between the for- and non-profit sector have gradually become indistinct. Realizing the potential benefits and resources that each side may hold for the other, NGOs and business have thus begun to engage in dialogue and eventually form partnerships with one another.

Departing from previous scholarship that examines the historically tense relations between the two actors, this research employs a qualitative approach, through conducting eleven expert interviews with professionals from NGOs that engage in collaborative partnerships with businesses to shed light on how the two sides forms collaborations with on another. The thesis therefore analyzes three different research questions in this regard, firstly determining the motivations in fostering NGO-businesses collaboration and secondly the challenges the two actors encounter in this process in addition to facilitators. Furthermore, there is evidence to suggest that organizations are shifting from pure financial arrangements towards sustainable solutions for global environmental as well as social issues, characterized as the creation of shared value in its most advanced form. However, existing scholarship also highlights the gap between theory and practical implementation as well as the missing insides on how to establish such deep forms of partnership. The research project therefore also draws a picture of the current state of NGO-business partnerships and offers insights for future collaborations.

The research contributes to a growing body of scholarship that addresses the importance of NGOs as vital social actors and influencers in business-society relations. By focusing on the conditions under which business and civil society actors may collaborate, and the varied forms such collaborations may take, this research advances both conceptual and pragmatic implications. The thesis shows that organizations forge collaborations with one another based on the overarching motivation to achieve mutual value for both sides in regard to their organizational mission through the use of complementing intangible and tangible resources. Furthermore, three distinct levels (ideological, organizational, structural) in encountering challenges and how to overcome as well as facilitators are determined. Finally, the research challenges the applicability of existing theoretical frameworks based on hierarchical understandings of collaboration and offers insights for practical implications for successful partnerships based on a long-term perspective and strong organizational relationships.

KEYWORDS: *business, collaboration, collaboration continuum, NGOs, partnerships, shared value*

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1. Introduction & Research Question

Nearly two decades ago, former United Nations secretary general Kofi Annan gave a speech at the *World Economic Forum* underlining the need for the for- and non-profit sectors to work together and collaborate:

Creating wealth, which is business's expertise, and promoting human security in the broadest sense, the UN's main concern, are mutually reinforcing goals. Thriving markets and human security go hand in hand. A world of hunger, poverty and injustices is one in which markets, peace and freedom will never take root. (as cited in Dossal, 2004, para. 3)

The pressing global social and environmental issues of our time are far from being resolved, but rather become increasingly complicated and multifaceted. The extent of these worldwide challenges, such as poverty or access to education, have consequently reached the point where the public or non-profit sector can solve them singlehandedly. Confirming Annan's statement, businesses must be included intensively in this process and especially partnerships and collaborations between non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and companies are believed to pose a sustainable solution to the global problems we face today (Austin & Seitanidi 2012a; Pedersen & Pedersen, 2013).

But why do these two particular actors constitute the answer? Today, the effects of globalization have transformed the global balance of power. The public sector and political actors such as the United Nations, but particularly nation states and their governments have experienced a threatening decrease in their influence. Simultaneously, NGOs have strongly gained power as well as influence and have formed the third sector and are now situated firmly between the for-profit and now diminishing public sector. Therefore NGOs have taken over the representative voice of civil society (Yaziji & Doh, 2009). It is estimated that there are currently ten million NGOs operating around the world, (OnGood, n.d.), in comparison to only 50,000 in 1993 (Doh, 2003). By establishing themselves as powerful institutional actors, NGOs have become relevant players that businesses need to take into account in their daily operations (Pedersen & Pedersen, 2013).

Yet, political actors and NGOs do not remain the only players experiencing a shift in their global role as institutional actors. The impact of globalization is further linked to an extensive increase of the worldwide influence of the for-profit sector in general and large international corporations in particular (Parker, 2003). Corporations have gained the ability to easily bypass national governments, in addition to environmental as well as social legislature interfering with their business practices by simply relocating without high costs (Dempsey, 2011). This increased influence has resulted in the fact that the general public and particularly stakeholders instead of governments are holding corporations responsible for their actions and the environmental and social impact they cause. At the same time, NGOs

have taken on the task to hold businesses officially accountable for this responsibility on the public's behalf (Heap, 2000), targeting them directly and circumventing governments in doing so (Argenti, 2004). Although both sides recognize the influence and power of their vis-à-vis, this has resulted in an era of constant confrontation and antagonism between businesses and NGOs (Pedersen & Pedersen, 2013).

However, the nature of relationship between these two actors has begun to change in the past years - businesses have realized the need to measure their performance by more than just mere financial profit and have started creating and implementing Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programs to account for the environment in which they are active. NGOs on the other hand have come to understand that the complexity of global challenges cannot be approached working against the for-profit sector, but rather in dialogue and partnership (Argenti, 2004; Austin & Seitanidi, 2012a). The former enemies have thus gradually begun to engage in partnerships, to cooperate and collaborate with one another to different extents, based on this newfound common ground (Pedersen & Pedersen, 2013).

With few exceptions there is yet limited theorizing on the different forms of collaboration between NGOs and companies. For instance, Austin and Seitanidi (2012a; 2012b; Austin 2000) conceptualize the Collaboration Continuum (CC) as part of the Collaborative Value Creation framework (CVC) to emphasize the higher value of advanced forms of collaboration that go beyond mere corporate donations or sponsorships. Also, the concept of Creating Shared Value (CSV) by Porter and Kramer (2011), underlines the need for businesses to incorporate social and environmental development as main performance indicators in the center of operations. The authors argue that sustainable financial profit cannot be realized otherwise and therefore urging managers to engage in advanced forms of collaboration to sustain their organizational future by addressing pressing global issues (Porter & Kramer, 2011).

Guided by the interest in and necessity of corporate-NGO collaborations, this master thesis therefore examines the following research questions:

RQ 1: What are the motivations in fostering collaborations between businesses and NGOs?

RQ 2: What are the perceived challenges and facilitators in fostering collaborations between businesses and NGOs?

RQ 3: What is the current state of collaborations between businesses and NGOs and what are the considerations for future partnerships?

Therefore, the thesis firstly sheds light on how NGOs as well as businesses identify potential partners for collaborations and ultimately decide which organization to collaborate with. Secondly, the determinants and impediments in the collaboration formation as well as

execution will be illustrated, accompanied by insights on how to approach partnerships successfully and ultimately overcome them. Thirdly, actual outcomes of cross-sector collaborations between NGOs and companies are portrayed as well as how to establish in-depth forms of partnerships and implement successful collaborations. This is grounded in the fact that practitioners continue to report on disparities between theoretical or contractual conceptions of collaborations and actual experienced outcomes (Pedersen & Pedersen, 2013). While Porter and Kramer (2011) focus on the implementation and possible effects of CSV for the business side, they miss to portray in which ways these deep forms of partnerships come into being and how the role of NGOs within CSV is actually constituted (Shared Value Initiative, n.d.-b). Austin and Seitanidi (2012a; 2012b) offer broad arguments on how to determine if an organization is compatible, but fail to outline distinct factors to consider or a framework for implementation. Further, the authors acknowledge the existing gap on how to move collaborations to more advanced stages. These models will therefore serve as a guiding framework to assess the actual nature of collaborations, as the reported outcomes tend to highly differ from existing frameworks and formulated goals of both actors.

Finally, most business-NGO collaborations are currently located within more basic forms of engagement with no insights on how to advance these partnerships (Pedersen & Pedersen, 2013). However, scholars argue that both the non-profit as well as for-profit sector create and gain greater value through collaborations, the deeper and more advanced the respective partnership becomes (Austin, 2000; Austin & Seitanidi, 2012a). Therefore, the thesis will also provide insights on how to enter these in-depth stages of collaboration from existing partnerships as a starting point. The current existing academic research and literature on NGO-business partnerships is thus far from exhaustive and the field is ever growing as well as ever changing. At the same time, practical frameworks for implementation, including possible challenges and determinants are more than rare (Yaziji & Doh, 2009).

1.1. Societal and Academic Relevance

As underlined by former United Nations secretary general Kofi Annan, collaborations between businesses and NGOs hold the key to solving the challenges humanity faces today. Not only because previous tactics have not been successful, but also as advanced forms of NGO-business collaborations are said to contribute to this goal in the most effective way possible, in contrast to pure monetary donations by companies. Therefore the academic research in this field must be advanced. The necessity to gain deeper insights on advanced forms of cross-sector collaboration is thus underlined by the pressing global societal and environmental problems that can only be solved by a united approach of businesses and NGOs moving from basic forms of partnerships to deeper collaborations (Austin & Seitanidi, 2012a; Austin & Seitanidi, 2012b; Pedersen & Pedersen, 2013). For the non-profit sector this

clearly constitutes the possibility to achieve their organizational goals in an efficient manner. Furthermore, for the for-profit side, this knowledge can further contribute to sustainable business performance and give competitive advantages, in addition to improving relations with stakeholders and the general public (Porter & Kramer 2011). By the means of eleven semi-structured interviews with experts from various NGOs, this thesis sheds light on the presented research questions and offers a structured approach to the raised issues for scholars and practitioners alike.

In order to discuss the research interest thoroughly, the term of NGOs as the focus of the following thesis need to be defined. Generally speaking, the term non-governmental organization or short NGO, refers to an organization that is “committed to the promotion of a particular (set of) issue(s) through advocacy work and/or through operational activities” (Teegen & Doh, 2003, p. 206f). Nevertheless these types of organizations are not one homogenous entity. The range of NGOs is almost indefinite, but can be categorized into organizations, which primarily focus on benefiting their own members, such as support groups and secondly NGOs that aim at profiting individuals or groups outside their own organizational borders, such as environmental groups (Yaziji & Doh, 2009). This thesis will focus on the second category.

Secondly, the term collaboration or partnership as applied in the scope of this thesis ought to be clarified, as it constitutes the heart of the research interest. Therefore collaboration in this context firstly consistently refers to partnerships that are conducted across sectorial borders, hence so-called cross-sectorial partnerships, e.g. excluding collaborations within businesses or NGOs. Furthermore the term will only be applied to partnerships between the for-profit and non-profit sector, omitting partnerships with public actors (Sanzo, Álvarez, Rey & García, 2015). The analyzed collaborations always refer to what academia defines as cross-sector social-oriented partnership: “(P)rojects formed explicitly to address social issues and causes that actively engage the partners on an ongoing basis” (Selsky & Parker, 2005, p. 850). Although broad, this definition permits to consider all varieties of partnerships and collaborations, regardless of timespan, outcome or level of engagement (Selsky & Parker, 2005).

The remainder of this thesis is separated into four chapters in order to illicit the motivations as well as the perceived challenges and facilitators in NGO-business collaborations, in addition to offering insights on the outcomes of collaborations and finally how to build successful partnerships in the future. Firstly, a literature review will outline the existing, yet limited work on NGO-business collaborations (Yaziji & Doh, 2009). This chapter is divided into three sections, rendered integral for the research interest at hand. Therefore, illustrating the rise of the non-profit sector as the third legitimate institutional actor will firstly portray the current global playing field for business-NGO collaborations. Subsequently, the

relationship between the two analyzed actors and its evolvement in the recent decades will be discussed, taking positive and negative implications of a possible convergence into account. The third and final section illustrates theoretical classifications of partnerships as well as existing understandings on conditions of partnerships and introduces the framework of Creating Shared Value (CSV) as defined by Porter and Kramer (2011).

With this firm conceptual base, the applied methodological approach of semi-structured expert interviews will be portrayed, offering details on the analyzed sample, the data collection processed and portray the systematic use of inductive theme analysis to answer the presented research questions within the scope of this thesis. Subsequently, the results of the conducted empirical research will be presented and discussed in relation to the research purpose. Conclusively, I will present the final result of the thesis project in connection to insights from existing scholarship. Additionally, the research questions will be discussed with regard to societal and practical implications as well as limitations of the conducted research and future possibilities.

2. Literature Review & Theoretical Concepts

To fully understand the context in which NGO-business collaborations take place, an analysis of existing academic work, including relevant theoretical concepts is undertaken. This review is divided into three main constituents relevant for the research interest of this thesis: Firstly, the positioning of NGOs as legitimate institutional actors among other relevant actors is discussed, followed by an analysis of how relationships between the for- and non-profit sector have evolved in the past two decades, as well as the accompanying possible benefits, negative implications in addition to an overview of possible determinants and challenges of collaboration in partnerships. Finally, frameworks and concepts classifying different forms of collaboration are introduced and the existing gaps in research, which will be addressed in this thesis are underlined. Although the conducted empirical research puts its focus on members of the non-profit sector, the following literature review will give insights in relation to both the for- as well as the non-profit sector, not only due to the occurrence of sectorial blurring between these two sides (Pedersen & Pedersen, 2013), which shall be elaborated below, but also as the insights gained on the relationships and collaborations between NGOs and companies always include perceptions concerning of all involved actors.

2.1. NGOs as Institutional Actors

“(W)e found NGOs to be present in some form or shape in nearly every corporate decision, public policy initiative, and business-government bargaining (...) globally, regionally, and locally” (Doh & Teegen, 2003, p. xvii).

This quote hints at the extensive influence NGOs have in our day and age. The number of NGOs as well as their geographical reach worldwide has increased immensely in the past two decades. Nevertheless, determining the exact number of NGOs globally is a difficult task. It can be stated that while in 1993 around 50,000 respective organizations were estimated around the world (Doh, 2003), over 1,5 million NGOs were counted by 2012 in the United States alone. But this number also includes religious organizations or volunteering groups of any size (U.S. Department of State, 2012). Their economic role further illustrates the rise of NGOs, as over 11.4 million people were employed in the non-profit sector in the United States in 2012 alone, accounting for 5.4% of the nation’s GDP (Doh, 2003; Independent Sector, n.d.; McKeever & Pettijohn, 2014). Unfortunately, no comparable numbers are available in the European context.

The increasing importance of NGOs is not merely a result of their quantitative rise, but rather an expression of this changed role. As a result of globalization (Parker, 2003), the so-called third sector, with NGOs as their organizational entities, has manifested its global role and influence, taking its place between the diminishing public and the ever-growing private sector (Yaziji & Doh, 2009) and is therefore said to pose a form of “social safety net”

to the general public (Andreasen, 1996, p.48). As international corporations in particular and businesses in general experienced a widespread growth in influence around the world (Parker, 2003), national governments have lost power over corporate actions through globalization. The for-profit sector has gained significantly in influence as markets and financial assets have reached a high degree of mobility and as a result businesses can easily move to nation states with lower levels of operational restrictions, if necessary (Dempsey, 2011). Thus, corporations are said to now pose “the dominant social institution” (Shumate & O’ Connor, 2010, p. 577).

Yaziji and Doh (2009) draw up a conceptual model to explain how the increased role and impact of NGOs has come into being in this context. The authors argue that social movements and ultimately NGOs gain influence, as the population perceives that political actors of all levels (local, national and global) have failed to address market failures which were initially created by the private sector, in other words businesses, in an effective way. These market failures are classified into (1) social desirability, referring to instances where the population is not provided with the products or services it actually needs, due to missing profitability, e.g. vaccination coverage in the Global South. Further, (2) externalization, mostly targeting ecological shortcomings, argues that goods are produced and sold at a price that do not take its full environmental, but also societal impact into account. Finally, (3) imperfect competition refers to inequalities between providers and consumers of goods and services, including inappropriate pricing and compensation, as well as an unbalance of held information between both sides (Yaziji & Doh, 2009).

Political actors can address these market failures e.g. through adjustments in the welfare system or implementation of environmental regulations. Yet, the authors argue that this process is conducted inefficiently in the eyes of the public, if the political actors in question disagree about the need and depth of the required response, the political actors themselves are part of an unbalanced system or the businesses in question are too powerful as stakeholders to the government. The authors support these assumptions by referring to examples connected to global climate change. Once market failures are ineffectively addressed, the playing field is structured most favorable to the rise of NGOs not only to tackle the market failures created by businesses, but also their reinforcing responses by the public sector (Yaziji & Doh, 2009). As institutional actors, NGOs have thus restructured the bilateral government-business relationship into a three-sided connection (Doh & Teegen, 2002). Austin, Stevenson and Wei-Skillern (2006) even argue in this sense that market failure constitutes the very reason why organizations with a social or environmental mission exist. Further elaborating in line with Yaziji & Doh (2009) that instances where for-profits fail from a business or market perspective, non-profits actually receive the opportunity to pursue their mission.

It needs to be pointed out that in doing so, NGOs take on the role of representing civil society as well as the public good, although lacking legitimacy and accountability on several levels. NGOs, unlike political representatives (of democratic systems), are not elected and not accountable to any shareholders like corporations. NGOs are most often the self-appointed agents for a voiceless or underrepresented topic or group and may therefore choose a course of action, which again dissatisfies or misrepresents the population. Also, NGOs' assertions might prove factually incorrect (Baur, 2011; Dempsey, 2011). Yaziji and Doh (2009) also underline that particularly in light of the rising impact of NGOs worldwide, the issue of accountability needs to be regarded through a critical perspective. These considerations concerning the general legitimacy of NGOs and particularly its assessment are also of high importance when forming and executing collaborations, as shall be further illustrated in the following section (Baur, 2011).

Yaziji and Doh (2009) argue furthermore that in order for NGOs to gain this power over businesses and political actors, the right circumstances must prevail (Yaziji & Doh, 2009), referring to the persisting imbalance between the number and influence of NGOs in the Global North and South (Parker, 2003). Therefore, NGO influence is obstructed in coercive political systems as well as weak economies, as financial stability is needed to 'allow' civic engagement. Also, an established social environment in terms of education further favors NGO formation and impact. Finally, technology holds many possibilities to increase NGOs' audience, information dissemination and facilitate organizing in general. The dissimilar development of these determining circumstances constitutes the reason NGOs hold greater influence in some parts of the world than others and ultimately why different forms and stages of collaboration prevail globally (Yaziji & Doh, 2009).

Thus, the authors' argumentation goes in line with Parker's (2003) assertion that globalization has not only reinforced social stratification worldwide, but also resulted in the decrease of the impact of nation states, while increasing the influence of multinational enterprises (MNEs) and most importantly: NGOs', which are fully taking over certain governmental fields of activity (Yaziji & Doh, 2009). This influential role has not only shown its effects on governments, but especially on the for-profit sector worldwide, affecting businesses in their daily operations and changing the way they interact with NGOs (Doh & Teegen, 2002).

2.2. Businesses & NGOs: From Adversaries to Collaborators?

2.2.1. Historical Development

With the rise as institutional actors, NGOs have started to serve as counterweights to the primarily economically motivated and influential corporate sector, taking over responsibilities once assigned to nation states and representing the public's social and environmental

interests. As a result, the for- and non-profit sector have intensified their interactions with one another (Dempsey, 2011). NGOs are said to have grasped the increased power the for-profit sector now holds and have therefore begun to target businesses directly to advance their causes, instead of putting pressure on national governments or even consumers themselves, posing a severe danger to a company's reputation and consequently financial performance in the long run (Argenti, 2004). Until recently, NGOs were mainly known for their confrontational tactics, utilizing their strong role in global society to initiate far-reaching boycotts against companies e.g. in the food and clothing industry, ultimately aiming at publicly forcing businesses to alter their operational practices and consequently discouraging for-profit actors from further engaging with their non-profit counterparts (Dempsey, 2011; Doh, 2003). This antagonistic element in NGO-business relationships has begun to transform towards dialogue and cooperation in the past two decades, as both actors acknowledge the potential the other side holds in achieving their respective organizational goals (Heap, 2000; Pedersen & Pedersen, 2013).

The example of the long-drawn-out case of Nestlé illustrates this general shift. Starting in the late-1970s, the corporation was put in the global public spotlight for the extensive tragic implications of the company's infant formula in countries of the Global South. Nestlé, among other businesses, was accused of using misleading marketing as well as distribution methods (e.g. paying nurses and midwives commissions for recommending their products) discouraging mothers from breastfeeding their newborns and praising their formula in promise of a healthy childhood instead. Due to reasons such as contaminated water, misinformation on necessary hygiene procedures as well as the missing resources to purchase the needed amount of formula, Nestlé was held responsible for the deaths and underdevelopments of an endless number of children by NGOs, who effectively initiated a global boycott of their products. Only in the following decade, after years of public confrontation and criticism, Nestlé decided to engage in dialogue with the NGOs and agreed to take corrective action (Dempsey, 2011; Newton, 1999; Solomon, 1981).

Argenti (2004) uses the term 'category killer' to describe the distinct power NGOs hold over corporations in such direct confrontations. Category killer refers to the fact that non-profit actors, unlike businesses have the opportunity to merely focus their attention and efforts on one particular topic at a certain point in time, allowing them to answer to new developments and sudden changes rapidly. This was also the case during the Nestlé boycott, which was lead by the Infant Formula Action Coalition (Dempsey, 2011).

The shift in interaction and ultimately nature of relationship as seen in the case of Nestlé and other instances such as Shell and Greenpeace or Starbucks and Global Exchange (Argenti, 2004; Dempsey, 2011), is the result of developments both within the for- as well as the non-profit sector in the past two decades. In this sense NGOs as well as

businesses have taken upon characteristics once thought constituent of the other, as the borders between the profit and third sector have become indistinct (Pedersen & Pedersen, 2013). The non-profit sector has been subject to a marketization process as a further implication of the ever-growing number of NGOs worldwide, who stand in strong competition to one another in terms of determining financial resources (Dempsey, 2011). Also, this development was further amplified by a general decrease in individual donations in the 1990s and the resulting need to find new streams of revenue (Andreasen, 1996). Therefore, as recognized global institutional players, non-profit actors have begun to engage in establishing well-known brands and concern themselves with meeting their 'customers' high expectations – delivering tangible environmental and social change (Pedersen & Pedersen, 2013). In the course of finding the right paths and means necessary for social and environmental transformations on a global scale, NGOs have thus come to understand that the non-profit sector cannot provide sustainable outcomes solely by itself (Austin & Seitanidi, 2012a).

At the beginning of the 1990s, businesses moved away from denouncing public and NGO critiques through debating that corporate responsibility only applies to shareholders, onto a new perception about to whom and what they are accountable for (Dempsey, 2011). Consequently, as the influence of nations has decreased, large corporations

not only find themselves in a position of great power, but are also held more accountable for their actions with regard to global ecological and societal implications, which stake- and shareholders increasingly expect businesses to act upon. Corporations have thus begun to take upon their global responsibilities by shifting away from a pure focus on financial profit and taking their corporate ecological and social impact into account (Heap, 2000). By recognizing the possible reputational and ultimately financial gains, the aim to meet these demands has manifested in the creation and implementation of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) measures (Dempsey, 2011; Pedersen & Pedersen, 2013).

2.2.2. Implications of NGO-Business Collaborations

The changes in the for- as well as non-profit sector have consequently established a common ground and overlapping interests between these two actors and given way for the emergence of dialogue, cooperation as well as collaboration (Austin & Seitanidi, 2012a), whose different forms and stages will be discussed in the subsequent section.

By cooperating, NGOs as well as businesses can offer one another unique sets of resources and capabilities, resulting in mutual benefits and driving each other's success (Dahan, Doh, Oetzel & Yaziji, 2010). Yet simultaneously, these particular cross-sector partnerships can pose very severe threats to both sides (Heap, 2000).

Firstly, stakeholders are more likely to trust NGOs than businesses, who are finding themselves confronted with an unprecedented mistrust by the public, while NGOs are thought to always put the public's interest first (Argenti, 2004). The *Edelman Trust Barometer* further illustrates this, as NGOs once again rank as the most trusted institution globally in 2015, leaving businesses, governments and the media behind them (Edelman, 2015). This means that companies can gain increased credibility through partnerships. Also, businesses can benefit from NGOs' understanding for social concerns, meaning that through partnerships, problems can be addressed directly once the first sign of dissatisfaction occurs, instead of risking public reputation threatening campaigns. This advanced social understanding further enables NGOs to assess changes in consumer priorities. They also possess strong networks e.g. with political actors or other NGOs and can further offer companies human expertise and skills in the fields of natural sciences or law that are unavailable within the company itself or through partnerships with other businesses (Yaziji & Doh, 2009). This can be of particular importance when companies want to enter new markets, where NGOs have already been present for years (Parker, 2003). Further, when companies work with NGOs and broaden their focus beyond financial profit, product innovation will be enhanced (Yaziji & Doh, 2009).

As an illustrative case, Dahan et al. (2010) exemplify these aspects very well with the example of Ashoka's work in Latin America. The organization (Ashoka) generally focuses on fostering social entrepreneurship in the Global South. Through its Full Economic Citizenship Initiative (FEC) the organization acted as a facilitator between local non-profits in rural Latin America and large MNEs in the water distribution industry. Together, these actors took upon the task of offering the 88% of farmers in rural areas without access to irrigation innovative watering solutions for their land that they could afford, in order to sustainably improve their livelihoods. For the for-profit actors, this clearly constituted the unique opportunity of a entering a new market seamlessly through the NGOs' insights in the operating countries as well as their social and therefore customer expertise. Further, the organizations also ensured that more and more farmers were educated on the topic of irrigation and determined fitting financing schemes for them to acquire these developed systems and also promoted them. The collaboration with the MNEs therefore allowed the local NGOs to firstly achieve their organizational missions as well as ensure their operational sustainability through receiving commissions.

On the non-profit side it is argued that sustainable environmental and social change can only come from within the for-profit sector, considering its increased global impact. In this sense it is noted that as NGOs have become representatives for the civil society, they are expected to present effective outcomes to their stakeholders (Argenti, 2004). To achieve sustainable progress, companies further bring financial resources to the partnership table

(Parker, 2003). This is of particular importance, considering the global economy as well as competition between NGOs themselves (Sanzo et al., 2015). This was also evident in the outlined case of Ashoka in Latin America (Dahan et al., 2010).

NGOs also gain from increased access to human resources and may even improve their own reputation (Yaziji & Doh, 2009). Yet at the same time, it is argued that once NGOs start partnering with businesses, the threat of losing their well-established reputation, trust and legitimacy is the highest, as the public conceives them as selling their values to the highest bidder. Simultaneously, businesses risk being accused of partnering with NGOs for image building, without taking any real action (Argenti, 2004; Heap 2000), commonly referred to as 'greenwashing' (Shumate & O'Connor, 2010, p. 599). This notion may particularly arise in cases where both actors fail to communicate the "value, benefits, and legitimacy" (Shumate & O'Connor, 2010, p.590) of the collaboration in question to its stakeholders. Baur (2011) calls for caution in this context, arguing that once companies start 'hiding' behind collaborations with NGOs with established legitimacy as representatives of civil society, and this practice is unveiled, the business in question will further lose its credibility and attractiveness as a collaboration potential partner in the future.

Further, the issue of NGO legitimacy also comes into play here in a reversed way: Baur (2011) argues that businesses jeopardize their reputation if they collaborate with non-profit actors who fail in their role as legitimate representatives of the public. To illustrate this argument, she draws upon the conflict of Adidas and the Thai Labour Campaign in the context of the soccer World Cup in 2006. The Thai Labour Campaign, an organization the corporate had collaborated with in the past, had issued a report on the working conditions in the factory in Thailand, where the official '+Teamgeist' ball for the championship was being produced. This report argued that the found conditions were unacceptable, thus initiating an image crisis for the company (Adidas Groups, 2006). Baur (2011) concludes that this incident occurred as Adidas failed to assess its partner's legitimacy. The Thai Labour Campaign had supposedly released the report without any contact or communication with the corporation and former partner through conducting interviews with workers off-site (Adidas Groups, 2006) and was therefore deemed inaccurate (Baur, 2011). The author consequently argues that the organization's legitimacy as a representative of civil society was not given as its behavior indicated that it was not aiming to achieve its organizational mission transparently and sustainably together with its partner, but rather following a "hidden agenda" (Baur, 2011, p. xii).

Especially in-depth collaborations for businesses entail that delicate corporate information will inevitably be shared with NGOs, as well as the fact that once companies have engaged in conducting business in a socially and environmentally sustainable manner, they will be held to higher standards by the public as well as other non-profit actors (Yaziji &

Doh, 2009). Shumate and O'Connor (2010) also support this notion, arguing that both sides are faced with increased scrutiny from stakeholders once they engage in a new collaboration. However, the authors argue that this effect does not only reduce with longer endurance of partnerships, but eventually results in sustainability and acceptance through the actors' environment once the partnership is deemed legitimate. This development can manifest in many ways such as decreased governmental as well as social opposition on the for-profit side or strengthened public sentiment and attention by the general media for the non-profit actors. The authors draw upon their case study of the long-year partnership between the Rainforest Alliance and Chiquita, which commenced in 1994 and centered around the certification of the banana corporations' farms by the NGO's environmental standards. In the starting phase, both partners faced public scrutiny by the media as well as several environmental and human rights organizations on different levels: Chiquita was accused of using the non-profit for greenwashing purposes and thus improving its image to the general public, as portrayed above. The Rainforest Alliance on the other hand was put in the spotlight for selling themselves out and thus applying low standards to Chiquita farms during the certification process as well as ignoring the labor conditions of the corporation's employees in their work. It becomes evident here, how the different risks and benefits associated with business-NGO collaborations are interconnected. However, Shumate and O'Connor (2010) portray that the initial critical atmosphere relinquished as the collaboration between the two partners endured and was communicated effectively to both sides' stakeholders. Especially the Rainforest Alliance is said to have gained recognition by its environment through this particular partnership, while simultaneously Chiquita was acknowledged as a sustainable corporation especially in contrast to its immediate competitors such as Dole or Del Monte and was therefore able to significantly increase its sales.

Parker (2003) argues that a major problem NGOs face when entering partnerships with for-profit actors is failing to recognize them as eye level partners due to two reasons. Firstly, because NGOs still see corporations' main interest in financial profit, consequently not equally motivated to achieve social and environmental change. This positions the for-profit sector mainly as potential financial contributors once more, leading to the second challenging factor, as donor-recipient relationships may construct a hierarchy between the two sides. Therefore NGOs may continuously perceive themselves as the weaker actor, fearing their principles may be compromised by deeper engagement with businesses. In this sense, it is even more crucial to assess how to develop advanced and sustainable collaborations.

Argenti (2004) offers seven recommendations to practitioners in the for-profit sector looking to collaborate with NGOs, of which five refer to possible success factors and

challenges when forming, implementing or possibly advancing partnerships. He urges businesses not to collaborate only to dissolve an existing crisis, but rather assess compatible NGOs by analyzing their organizational mission and if these respond to the company's social or environmental area of concern. Further, he suggests being open to operational changes resulting from partnerships and argues that a certain distance should be kept between both actors to avoid accusations of greenwashing. Finally, he stresses the importance of a large time frame for the formation and development period.

Pedersen and Pedersen (2013) draw upon results from a small-scale survey on this matter, underlining that while the potential of collaborations has been mutually recognized, both NGOs and businesses face substantial difficulties in determining the right partnering organization. Also, the actual collaboration results tend to differ from what theoretical elaborations suggest, due to the missing organizational fit between the actors. The authors further emphasize the importance of the establishment of mutual trust and respect between businesses and NGOs in question, which is also underlined by other researchers (e.g. Argenti, 2004; Dahan et al. 2010). Other broad determinants include a clear vision and strategy for a potential partnership, as well as continuous communicational efforts, available time and human resources in addition to understanding for the opposing organizational culture (Pedersen & Pedersen, 2013).

Although not very recent, the work of Andreasen (1996) gives a differentiated outline concerning the possible risks for non-profits in the context of partnerships with businesses centered around cause-related marketing campaigns. In addition to reputation implications, he cautions that NGO relationships with businesses, although successful in financial terms, may result in the neglect of other important operational areas, such as general fundraising or educating the public on its mission. Also, he argues that such activities may alienate private stakeholders and further restrict NGOs in their search for other corporate partners, who maybe active in a similar field. Nevertheless it needs to be stressed that Andreasen's (1996) findings merely apply to what shall be defined as the transactional stage of business-NGO partnerships in the subsequent section (Austin, 2000).

In conclusion it has to be noted that the above arguments cannot account for all NGOs or businesses, but rather reflect the dominating trends in the sphere of non- and for-profit interactions (Austin & Seitanidi, 2012a), as many NGOs are reported to still prefer to choose the confrontational path to advance their causes and refrain from any form of partnership or even dialogue (Dempsey, 2011). This can be due to the organization's particular history and may further be embedded deeply in their respective operational philosophy (Argenti, 2004).

2.3. Towards Collaboration & Creating Shared Value

Having identified the historical background of relationships between NGOs and businesses, and portrayed the imperative for respective collaboration, as well as the arising opportunities and challenges for both actors, this final section outlines specific forms partnerships may take, by firstly introducing the Collaboration Continuum (CC) (Austin, 2000; Austin & Seitanidi, 2012a) as well as the concept of Creating Shared Value (CSV) (Porter & Kramer, 2011). Table 2.1. gives an overview of the two approaches. Conclusively the evident research gap will be highlighted.

To this point, the possible outcomes of partnerships between NGOs and businesses have only been described limitedly in academia. Several frameworks and terminologies exist to refer to and classify the different collaboration outcomes by the degree of engagement between the two actors (Pedersen & Pedersen, 2013; Yaziji & Doh, 2009). The two following approaches are particularly highlighted in existing scholarship. Although these serve as a useful starting point to examine collaborations, I argue that more research is necessary to better comprehend the respective partnerships.

The collaboration continuum, a constituent of the Collaborative Value Creation framework, developed by Austin (2000) and extended by Austin and Seitanidi (2012a) has found strong resonance in academia since its first publication. It distinguishes between four general stages of collaboration: The (1) philanthropic stage, referring to instances where companies make pure charitable financial or material donations to an NGO, followed by the (2) transactional stage, where particular events or actions e.g. sponsoring, endorsements or cause-related marketing campaigns are conducted in favor of one another. The (3) integrative stage, the most developed form of collaboration in the initial framework, is found when reciprocal relationships between NGOs and companies are founded, including uniting their ethics, goals and strategic approaches. The final (4) transformational stage is established, once NGOs and businesses try to produce societal transformations through their collaboration. This stage is characterized through strong operational interdependency between the collaborating partners. Yet the authors note that this last collaborative stage only exists in theory at this point. Moreover, partnerships are clearly not bound to a certain phase but can evolve throughout the different stages of the CC (Austin, 2000).

A main argument of the CC is that the outcome of a partnership is always some form of value. Value in this context is understood “as economic, social and environmental, but their aggregative nature cloaks the multifaceted nature of value” (Austin & Seitanidi, 2012a, p.729). The further advanced a collaboration is, the more value is created not only by one sole actor, but in unison. This further implies that the amount of dedicated financial resources as well as intangible assets increases considerably on both sides (Austin, 2000).

Consequently, it can be stated that as a collaboration advances, the benefits of collaboration manifest themselves more strongly.

Table 2.1 Forms and Stages of Partnership and Collaboration

Stage	Description	Example
Philanthropic	Businesses support NGOs purely financially or through provision of goods	Charitable donations
Transactional	Events or actions are conducted in favor of one another (resource exchange)	Sponsoring events
Integrative	reciprocal relationships between NGOs & business: including uniting ethics, goals and strategic approaches, (HR)	Collective projects & alliances, e.g. entering new markets
Transformational	Societal transformations through collaboration	Only theoretical at this point
Creating Shared Value	Social & environmental sustainability and economic growth are interconnected & accomplished subsequently and at the heart of operations	Eroding societal problems that are directly connected with business practice

Note. Based on Austin 2000; extended by Austin & Seitanidi 2012a; Porter & Kramer 2011

The perspective of Creating Shared Value (CSV) by Porter and Kramer (2011) relates to this argument of increased value through in-depth collaboration, by asserting that social as well as environmental sustainability and economic growth are in fact interconnected. Although the concept of Shared Value places business and particularly management at its center (Shared Value Initiative, n.d.-a), it is argued that CSV can be achieved as the outcome of advanced forms of collaboration between the for- and non-profit sector (Porter & Kramer, 2011), therefore overlapping and connecting with the transformational stage in the Collaboration Continuum (Austin & Seitanidi, 2012a). In the CSV framework, addressing environmental and social issues within operational practices presents opportunities for businesses and sources of innovation, in addition to a market strategy to distinguish oneself from competitors and not just a mere tool to reduce costs. Simultaneously, the ignorance of these societal problems is said to ultimately jeopardize the organization’s future existence (FSGImpact, 2012; Shared Value Initiative, n.d.-a). Porter and Kramer (2011) further argue that too many companies still operate primarily focusing on short-range financial determinants of profit, while ignoring their consumers’ and suppliers’ needs, in addition to the environmental and social impacts of their operations. The authors assert that Creating Shared Value constitutes the only sustainable way for the for-profit sector to conduct business. In line with the idea that long-lasting change can only be accomplished in unison with the for-profit sector and the gradual disappearance of sectorial boundaries (Argenti, 2004), collaboration with the non-profit sector is therefore an imperative.

Porter and Kramer (2011) argue that businesses must lead beyond the dominance of philanthropic corporate programs or CSR measures as we know them and bring these pressing issues to the center of the debate and business operations. This means that the for-profit sector must widen its focus on more than decreasing the immediate effects their operations have on their respective environment, but rather approach societal issues interconnected to their business at their roots.

CSV can be accomplished on three different levels: Firstly,(1) goods as well as markets need to be conceptualized in with the real needs of the society. This means that for profit actors must refocus on offering products and services that address today's most pressing global topics, which simultaneously constitute the most neglected ones. These entail issues such as global health or the general ageing of the world's population. Secondly, companies should (2) optimize their supply chains with environmental as well as social issues in mind, as these ultimately affect productivity positively. This can for example entail the innovation and reduction of the material used to package goods. Finally, the authors urge companies to (3) foster innovation as well as competitiveness through the support of industries that are connected to their own and therefore encourage the advancement of clusters in operating locations, by strengthening the local infrastructure as well as communities. It is therefore argued that CSV does not only evolve capitalism, but also delivers sustainable long-term profits for companies as well as society as a whole. Underlining the fact that CSV in this sense has already begun to be implemented through collaboration with non-profit actors, examples of larger corporations such as IBM or Unilever on one side and the Bill and Melinda Gates foundation on the other, in addition to social entrepreneurship are brought forward. A prominent example that illustrates the Creation of Shared Value is the case of Nestlé and its coffee brand Nespresso. The corporation set out to establish local clusters in areas where it produces coffee beans and was consequently able to improve the efficiency of its general procurement. This cluster included access to knowledge and expertise for its farmers in knowledge areas such as agriculture, logistics as well as financing, e.g. determining joint funding possibilities for effective irrigation systems. This example of CSV is further notable in the context of this thesis, as it encompasses a business-NGO collaboration, namely the Rainforest Alliance. The non-profit supported Nestlé in its endeavor through offering agricultural expertise and thus educating coffee farmers on how to estimate and ensure their volumes of production reliably. Consequently, both the corporation as well as the local communities were able to increase their efficiency and thus economic growth, while simultaneously approaching a pressing societal issue (Porter & Kramer, 2011; Shared Value Initiative, n.d.-a).

The authors also emphasize the vital role NGOs play in the Creation of Shared Value through their specific expertise and insights. Shared Value is therefore measured by

“benefits relative to costs, not just benefits alone” (Porter & Kramer, 2011, p.63), connecting the framework back to the market failure of externalization and how to erode it through joint efforts of both sectors (Yaziji & Doh, 2009). It is argued that the CSV framework also affects NGOs’ practices and role within collaborations (Shared Value Initiative, n.d.-a). Yet the exact implications and meaning of the implementation of CSV partnerships for the non-profit sector remain to be discovered. This entails insights on how these CSV partnerships with businesses can come into being, also due to the rather recent nature of the framework. Nevertheless it is argued that Shared Value collaborations offer the non-profit sector the possibility to strategically increase their impact in an unprecedented way. Therefore gaining insights in this field constitutes an imperative for NGOs as well as corporations not only to pursue their own organizational goals, but implement sustainable societal change (Shared Value Initiative, n.d.-b).

Nevertheless, the concept of CSV does not stand uncontested. While acknowledging the impact and strong resonance the model has had not only in the academic context but also with practitioners, managers as well as political actors, Crane et al. (2014) state that CSV does not go beyond CSR, as their main arguments align or overlap with existing academic models on CSR, disregarding that the latter indeed connects societal with financial profit. Further, the authors point out that although desirable, financial and social profit are not always compatible or achievable in the same extent. Porter and Kramer respond to these criticisms by underlining the fact that CSV takes the standpoint that solutions to social and environmental problems ultimately lead to the creation of sustainable economic profit and unlike previous research, CSV does not suggest that both can be achieved simultaneously, but rather subsequently.

The two approaches have been chosen as they do not merely focus on value creation and benefits for each individual actor, but emphasize the interconnectedness between the respective organizational goals and the ability to achieve them more efficiently and effectively through advanced forms of collaboration (Austin & Seitanidi, 2012a; Austin & Seitanidi 2012b; Porter & Kramer, 2011). With the exception of the presented frameworks, the existing literature on NGO-business collaborations is as mentioned limited (Yaziji & Doh, 2009), particularly in regard to CSV collaborations (Shared Value Initiative, n.d.-a; n.d.-b). While it is possible to reconstruct both NGOs as well as businesses as important global players or to determine the benefits and threats collaboration poses for both sides as well as classify the impact and outcomes of different forms of collaboration, there is an important element in the collaboration process that remains almost untouched in literature. Little is known about the determinants and challenges in the formation process of a partnership as portrayed above or how to advance them, once implemented. This is especially critical when recalling that most partnerships are currently placed within the first two collaboration stages of the Collaboration

Continuum (Pedersen & Pedersen, 2013), yet maximum value can be created through advanced collaboration (Austin & Seitanidi, 2012a; Austin & Seitanidi 2012b; Porter & Kramer, 2011).

The presented frameworks also merely offer limited insights to these missing aspects. Austin and Seitanidi (2012b) underline the importance of defining the right partner for a sustainable collaboration as part of the Collaborative Value Creation framework. In this sense, they broadly state that the organizations in question need to be compatible with one another, which can be determined by assessing whether their social or environmental interests and motivations are in any way connected. Further, the actors should aim at determining if and how their particular resources are valuable to the other side as well as assess their possible resources. These include tangible such as financial or human resources as well as intangible ones, such as reputation. Nevertheless the authors underline the need to explore under which circumstances collaboration can move on to more advanced stages (Austin & Seitanidi, 2012a). Furthermore it remains unknown, if and to what extent these arguments apply for the context of CSV.

Looking back at the presented literature review, the influential global role of the non- and for-profit sectors are undeniable and connected to extensive responsibilities for both sides (Parker, 2003; Yaziji & Doh, 2009). In conclusion, it can thus be attested that the transformations and changes NGOs and businesses have been subject to have created a common ground and paved the way for dialogue and collaboration between one another (Pedersen & Pedersen, 2013) and are even regarded as determinants for sustainable organizational success (Austin & Seitanidi, 2012a; Porter & Kramer 2011). Nevertheless, both sides face strong threats next to possible benefits, when engaging with the other and have to overcome challenges in the formation and implementation process of collaborations (Dahan et al., 2010; Heap 2000; Pedersen & Pedersen, 2013). Although insights exist on how to classify different outcomes of collaboration as well as societal and economical relevance, the road to especially integrative and transformational collaborations or the Creation of Shared Value through partnership remain unclear. This also accounts for structured insight on obstacles and facilitators within the collaboration process and how to overcome them. The presented arguments may offer limited information on the collaboration formation process, yet merely represent loose fragments and lack insight for practical implication. Further, it needs to be noted that most existing literature is slowly becoming untimely and thus may not account for the current context, also due to the fact that the scholarship mainly focused on the first stages of collaboration. The arguments also refer to business-NGO partnerships in a very broad sense, not taking sectorial particularities, both within the for- as well as non-profit sector, into account.

Given the portrayed global importance of particularly advanced forms collaboration (Austin & Seitanidi, 2012a; Austin & Seitanidi 2012b; Porter & Kramer, 2011) and the reported gap between theoretical models and actual reported outcomes (Pedersen & Pedersen, 2013), it is therefore vital to gain structured insights on this topic. Therefore this thesis will firstly shed light on the motivations of NGOs as well as businesses in assessing potential partners for partnerships. Secondly, the challenges and facilitators in fostering NGO-business collaborations are determined. Finally, the actual outcomes of current collaborations are assessed in addition to insights on how to successfully build strong partnerships in the future and eventually advance to deeper forms of partnerships in the future, ultimately resulting in higher value for both actors and society as a whole.

3. Method

3.1. Methodology

This research uses a qualitative research design, specifically, in-depth expert interviews, for a variety of reasons: Firstly, existing academic research on NGO-business collaborations in general and advanced forms of partnerships and their outcomes, in particular, remains rather limited (Porter & Kramer, 201; Yaziji & Doh, 2009). This is also applicable for scholarship examining the outcomes of in-depth partnerships (Pedersen & Pedersen, 2013) in addition to research on how to deepen and progress partnerships to more advanced forms of collaboration (Austin & Seitanidi, 2012a). Therefore, the topic was addressed through a method that allowed room for flexibility and adjustments during data retrieval and analysis, as is the case for qualitative methods. Via semi-structured interviews, the researcher was able to get insights of interviewees' specific experiences, standpoints, and perspectives relating to the research questions at hand. This could not have been achieved e.g. through participant observation (Behnke, Baur & Behnke, 2006; Boeije, 2014).

Secondly, the amount of primary sources that can be consulted on this matter is similarly limited. CSR reports may constitute an example, yet these are not published on a regular basis and only contain superficial, if any, information concerning NGO-business partnerships (Sutantoputra, 2009). Members of NGOs, that either had collaborations in the past or currently engage in partnerships with the for-profit sector hence constituted the defined population of interest. Possible interview partners were further involved in the collaboration processes themselves or preferably, even played a constructing role within a specific partnership. Beyond their current occupation, potential interviewees were also deemed as experts due to preceding professional experience in the field of NGO-business partnerships (Boeije, 2013; Richards, 1996; Ritchie, Lewis & Elam, 2003).

Applying a qualitative approach was consequently necessary to collect significant data, as individuals who are or were actively involved in the respective collaboration process were able to share their knowledge and understanding of the issue thoroughly and directly (Boeije, 2014). Literature suggests that specifically experts or elites in a certain subject are inclined to offer their differentiated view on a matter during interviews, in contrast to merely answering to a set of closed question. However, in order to gain these deep insights, the researcher has to be able to establish trust and rapport before and during the interview (Harvey, 2011). This was achieved through giving the participants room to fully illustrate their examples and experiences in detail, probing as well as keeping interruptions and complete change of subject or issue at a minimum level, as well leaving the choice of time and venue fully to the participants (Boeije, 2014).

It was further noted that collaborations are connected with substantial threats to NGOs as well as businesses, (e.g. Yaziji & Doh, 2009), rendering it a sensitive research

interest. Boeije (2014) argues in this sense, that delicate topics are better approached by the use of methods where partakers have a higher, yet structured control over discussed issues. Therefore, semi-structured expert interviews were chosen to give the best insights on this particular instance of cross-sectorial collaborations. Experts or elites in this context were defined as individuals who have a strategic position within their organization (Harvey, 2011) and therefore hold knowledge and expertise in relation to the research interest at hand (Boeije, 2014). It needs to be further noted that some scholars recommend a higher degree of structure for interview guides in the context of expert interviews. This was adhered to in designing the instrument of analysis as shall be elaborated below. With participant consent, conducted interviews were recorded digitally and transcribed verbatim. Identifying information was removed if wished so by the respondents (Harvey, 2011).

3.2. Sample & Sampling procedure

A purposive sampling logic was employed, based on the determined characteristics for experts in the non-profit sector in the area of business-NGO collaborations as the criterion for selection (Ritchie et al., 2003). Purposive sampling allowed gaining in-depth insights as well as a wider range of standpoints to the research interest at hand (Boeije, 2014). In order to recruit and gain access to individuals deemed fitting as potential interviewees, two approaches were applied: Firstly, organizations with relevant collaborations were identified through an online search on NGOs. Then, individuals indicated as responsible for corporate partnerships and collaborations were approached with a request-for-participation e-mail, explaining the research focus of this study to indicate openness as well as trustworthiness (Harvey, 2011) and inviting them to participate in an in-depth interview at a date and place of their convenience. Also, the possible value deriving from the research project for the organization and the whole non-profit sector itself was stressed, as recommended in literature (Boeije, 2014). This recruitment approach included a total of 31 requests. A follow-up e-mail restating the same information in condensed form was sent out after one week if no response had followed. Secondly, the networking or snowballing method was applied in a broader sense, as members of the researcher's extended social network within as well as outside of respective NGOs referred her to suitable interview partners. As gaining access to suitable interview partners is considered one of the main obstacles in expert interviewing (Richards, 1996), especially when seeking access into organizations, this approach is seen as appropriate, as the possibility of an interview does not need to be renegotiated multiple times. Further, this approach is deemed fitting to lower access barriers in general as well as in contexts where the general time frame for data collection is limited (Boeije, 2014). However, it needs to be underlined that the sampling logic cannot be regarded as convenient or opportunistic sampling (Ritchie et al., 2003), as all referred parties were weighed against the selection criterion discussed above, before concrete appointments for interviews were

scheduled. Furthermore, establishing trust between researcher and interviewees generally plays a determining role in the context of expert interviews. A referral to a possible interview partner from a credible source therefore also signaled that the researcher was deemed trustworthy by the referring party (Harvey, 2011). Also in the case of this research project, recruitment proved to be difficult and relied heavily upon referral and continuous follow-up. The sampling process aimed to be conducted until saturation was reached with regard to the three research questions at hand. However, the limited time frame to conduct the empirical research had to be taken into account simultaneously (Ritchie et al., 2003). Thus the recommendations of our faculty as presented in the ESHCC (2015) methodological guidelines were further applied as a point of reference. The expert interviews were conducted with members from different NGOs with a social focus as well as experts with professional experience in this field. Eventually, eleven participants agreed to participate in this research.

Also in line with the methodological guidelines and research ethics of our faculty (ESHCC, 2015), an informed consent form was issued to the interviewees before hand, once again notifying them on the nature of the study, the possibilities of withdrawing from the study at any point during the interview or one week afterwards. Further, interviewees gave consent to being audiotaped as well as if their name or their organization's name may be used or if they preferred to remain anonymous (three participants elected to do so). Audio recording did not commence until oral consent was given as well. Interviewees received a copy of the signed consent form.

The sample consists of eleven individuals from ten different non-profit organizations (two interviewees were from the same organization) in the Netherlands (N=6), Austria (N=4) as well as Switzerland (N=1). The interviewees were all members of what can be characterized as NGOs with a social mission. This refers to organizations committed to issues related to the broad field of international development as well as humanitarian relief at the heart of their organizational mission in contrast to environmental concerns. These organizations are also characterized by strongly focusing on one very specific target group or topic, such as populations of countries of the global south, children, education or the eradication of poverty (Parker, 2003).

In sum, the eleven interviews lasted between 35 and 70 minutes and accounted for 150 double-spaced pages of verbatim transcriptions. The interviews were conducted face-to-face (N=8) as well as via Skype (N=3), in English (N=7) as well as German (N=4). Interviews were held in the time period between April 13th and May 4th, 2016. Table 3.1 presents an overview of the interviewees and their respective organizations.

Table 3.1 Participant profile

	Name (a)¹	Current Role	Organization	Organizational Mission
1	Nisha Bakker (15)	Senior Account manager Partnerships	UNICEF NL	Humanitarian relief, children's rights, empowerment, education & advocacy, health
2	Anonymous (8)	Partnerships Manager	anonymous	Humanitarian relief, children's rights, empowerment, education & advocacy, health
3	Silke Sohler (3)	Project Manager Fundraising - Implementation	Educational NGO	Empowerment of socially disadvantaged school children through education
4	Anonymous (16)	Sr. Program Manager Public-Private Partnerships	anonymous	Empowerment of base of the pyramid through WASH initiatives
5	Ruben Korevaar (7)	Business Development Manager	Simavi	Empowerment through WASH and SRHR initiatives
6	Robbert Bodegraven (13)	Director of Advocacy, Campaigning & Communication	War Child Holland	Offering children who experienced war, educational & psychosocial support, protection
7	Anonymous (15)	Senior Relationship Manager	anonymous	Humanitarian relief, children's rights, empowerment, education & advocacy, health
8	Michaela Rimser (unkn.)	Private Funding & Partners	SOS Kinderdorf	Offering Children without family a save living environment
9	Stefanie Ruck (2)	Corporate Partnerships	Red Cross	Aiding individuals in adversity, ranging from humanitarian relief, care to health education
10	Stefan Gormász (1)	Corporate Partnerships & CSR	Caritas	Supporting individuals in adversity, e.g. care, disability, hospices
11	Claire van Bekkum (8)	Manager Corporate Partnerships	Right to Play	Empowering children through education through a playful approach

¹ Note. (a) indicates years of experience in non-profit sector, (unkn.) = unknown

3.4. Operationalization & Research Instrument

As indicated above, data were collected through semi-structured interviews with experts from respective NGOs. Therefore an interview guide was prepared utilizing the three research questions as a guideline (see Appendix A). Each research questions was thus broken down into several categories and main questions based on the insights gained from the conducted literature review, including sub-questions. Due to the chosen qualitative approach of the thesis, data collection and analysis were not separate, but rather constituted an iterative process. Therefore, the topic guide was adapted according to direct insights gained during the interviews as well as based on the continuous data analysis. Hence, questions were rearranged in order, added, adapted or omitted from the interview guide during the data collection process (Boeije, 2014). The questions were kept as open as possible in order to allow room for as much in-depth information as possible (Harvey, 2011) and not to guide the answer into any specific direction. Also, the order of the questions was not set in stone, but was adapted to each case and depending on the course of the interview, allowing room for flexibility, when necessary (Legard et al., 2003). Interviewees were once again reminded that the interview would broadly focus on collaborations between NGOs and business through an introduction.

Based on the conducted literature review and insights on collaborations with less engaged forms of engagement *RQ1* and *RQ2*, concerning the motivations, challenges and facilitators of the collaboration building process, were broken down into the topics of defining possible collaboration partners, possible determinants and impediments of success within this formation process. This also included questions about failed partnerships as well as possible benefits and negative implications to understand what shape these may take and how they can be overcome (Austin & Seitanidi 2012b; Pedersen & Pedersen, 2013). In the course of the data collection process the general topics of the role of the external context as well as maintaining relationships with partners emerged and were further integrated.

Secondly, *RQ3* was addressed after the icebreaker, as interviewees were asked to give a general overview of the types of partnerships their organization maintains to gain an overview and assess the discussed gaps between literature and practice (Pedersen & Pedersen, 2013). This question was moved to the beginning, as it proved strong in establishing rapport, as well as points of reference for the following topics. Secondly, participants were asked about their knowledge on theoretical frameworks of collaboration, if they had not been introduced by themselves earlier. Table 2.1 was used to give an overview as well as explain the concept of Shared Value if necessary (Austin, 2000; Austin & Seitanidi, 2012a; Porter & Kramer, 2011). Furthermore, interviewees were always asked to provide examples to all topics, therefore further shedding light on *RQ3*. The establishment of strong collaborations and advancement of partnerships was addressed by asking the participants

on their experiences, yet not necessarily taking the provided table as a point of reference (Austin & Seitanidi, 2012a). This topic was situated at the very end of the interview. Finally, interviewees were asked for any final remarks and additional materials.

3.5. Data Analysis

The data, consisting of the verbatim transcriptions of the conducted interviews, were analyzed by the means of an inductive theme analysis due to several reasons. Thematic analysis allows the researcher to determine themes, experiences and recurring meanings within an entire data set, yet at the same time it does not strive to establish a completely formulated theoretical concept, as would be the case for grounded theory. Also, this data-driven method of analysis permits the necessary degree of flexibility as elaborated earlier, yet at the same time offers in-depth insight to the data at hand (Braun & Clark, 2006). The inductive approach to analysis was further chosen as the existing scholarship on the research topic remains limited (Yaziji & Doh, 2009). The analysis process was guided by the recommended phases as elaborated by Braun and Clark (2006) and consisted of a close familiarization with the data, the continuous and repeated determination and review of initial codes and themes and the composition and reporting of the found themes. Due to the chosen qualitative approach of the thesis, data collection, and analysis and composition of the reported findings were not separate, but rather constituted an iterative process (Boeije, 2014).

Themes relating to four research questions within the data set were identified based on the three criteria as defined by Owen (1984): (1) recurrence, (2) repetition as well as (3) forcefulness. The first criterion of (1) recurrence is present if the same meaning reappears within the data set, yet is expressed through the use of different words or forms of language. Secondly, (2) repetition is identified if the same words or, fragments or even full sentences are repeatedly determined. In this sense Owen (1984) argues that it can be regarded as an expansion of criteria one. Finally, the criterion of (3) forcefulness is found when interviewees make use of rhetorical techniques such as interjections, change in volume or take meaningful pauses in their speech to underline certain statements. The final identified themes were then arranged to the four posed research questions and will be discussed in detail in the subsequent section.

4. Results

4.1. Motivations in fostering collaborations

Motivational factors in NGO-business collaborations can be separated into two different levels, which build upon each other. Firstly, the driving motivational factor of advancing the organizational mission and establishing mutual value through collaboration. Secondly the manifestation of this mutual value through the exchange of tangible and intangible resources.

4.1.1. Partnering for Mutual Value

Participating NGOs frame the motivations for the for- as well as the non-profit side around the aim to advance their organizational goals through collaboration. Therefore, the overarching motivation for NGOs manifests in seeking partnership within the for-profit sector is to reach their target group and therefore organizational mission more efficiently and with higher impact. Several interviewees state in this sense that they are aware of the fact that this cannot be done solely through one organization alone or even their entire sector. Business impact is perceived to be particularly relevant in issues of children rights or water and sanitation, the focal areas of participating organizations, as companies are believed to play a vital role through their global relevance. Lasting change can therefore be achieved only together with the for-profit sector. Corporate partners are hence regarded as indispensable in this context. “(W)e can do a lot of change, but we can’t do it alone. So we need others to help us and businesses actually take a big role in making the world better place for children” (P1).

Simultaneously, the interviewees note that they perceive that companies seeking collaborations see the need to give back to the environments they are active in, regardless of form or depth of the partnership in question. Therefore, partnerships, even if ‘just’ centered around financial contributions, will ultimately focus on issues that are connected to operational aspects of the business in question or can at least be thematically or geographically linked and therefore affect communities they are active in. Furthermore, the orientation of social engagement and therefore possible collaboration is based on fulfilling and aligning with strategic goals or pillars within the company’s CSR strategy. Evidently, companies are interested in knowing and seeing the direct effects of their contributions, as well as their sustainability: “And we definitely do see a shift that companies (...) want to know much more. What is the impact of the money, what is it really going to do. Not just something good, but what are you really going to do with the funding. What is the impact on the long-term” (P2).

While interviewees note that the general motivations behind collaboration with the non-profit sector have reported to have changed or at least shifted in relevance, the

economic bottom line remains guiding for businesses. Some interviewees therefore also underline the highly diverging goals between the two actors, where collaborations remain a mere side interest as well as the fact that companies want to ultimately improve their economic profit on the long run, as mentioned above. “I think you need to be very clear about that (...) the corporations will have other objectives than yours. Their objectives are in order to improve their bottom line and earn money” (P7). One interviewee even regards collaborations as a fully business-driven decision, which cannot be influenced.

However, a contrasting statement concerning the leading motivation in supporting non-profits can be seen in the following statement relating to funds received in connection to the recent refugee crisis, where businesses were reported to help organizations, knowing it contradicts with stakeholders’ opinion and without speaking about their actions publicly:

(E)specially then in late autumn, early winter companies also said, ‘We want to do something, but we also do not like to talk about it’, simply because the mood had changed. (...) The great thing is that there will still be companies out there that say that to them doesn’t matter (..) who said from the beginning, ‘We do not care, we know that’s right, we want to do that and we will do that. (P10)

These fragments illustrate that interviewees perceive businesses’ guiding motivation as a balance between awareness of their environment as well as a means to advance their own organizational mission. This overarching motivation to advance the organizational mission on both sides establishes the basis for the tangible as well as intangible resources both sides seek to gain through the collaboration.

4.1.2. Tangible & Intangible Resources

The different sides offer one another concrete resources to create mutual value in collaborations and this theme therefore constitutes an extension of the first theme. These are centered around reputational benefits, monetary contributions on one side and knowledge expertise and time as well as networks on the other. NGOs report on benefits that are indeed fully connected to the economic success of the company. Throughout the sample it was frequently noted that **reputational motivational factors** play a crucial role in fostering NGO-business collaborations. Many NGOs have well-known and highly liked as well as trusted brands that are attractive for companies in several ways: “We are in the luxurious position that our brand is very well known throughout the world. (...) So the luxurious position is that companies come to us” (P1). Businesses aim at using collaborations as forms of communication and branding to the public to improve their general image to external stakeholders and distinguish themselves from competitors. The connection to a NGO’s brand is said to create an image transfer with a certain subgroup in the population, thus making the company more likeable and reaching higher **brand-awareness** and ultimately enhancing their reputation: “A large part of what [the company] wants from the partnership, is of course

they want their name known (...) Of course for [the luxury goods company] it's a PR-stunt as well as doing something good for [the NGO]" (P2).

The interviewees note that this reputational consideration also affects businesses internally. By collaborating with a trusted brand, businesses utilize partnerships not only to present themselves as conscious global actors to their external stakeholders, but also to their own employees:

The reason why they got engaged in the first place, was to position themselves as a better employer. Because we could work at any bank, but this is a bank that is actually doing more for the environment and doing more for its people and looking beyond its traditional scope. So that was how they were positioning themselves. (P1)

In this regard, collaborations are used as forms of employee engagement through internal branding and building pride within the company. Companies want to signal to their employees that the organization is taking their social and ecological environment into account and want to involve them in this process, aiming at increasing employee's identification with and motivation to work for the company: "In turn, it is also about that the employees feel and see that their company is committed to a great thing. This is also a form of branding from companies towards its own employees" (P3). Collaborations as a tool for employee engagement can take many forms, such as corporate volunteering or field visits and are thus incorporated in personal development trajectories. Several interviewees also expressed that the prospect of employee engagement constitutes the main motivational factor for businesses to engage in collaborations with NGOs. However, as will be elaborated in the following section, it also poses high potential for conflict within partnerships.

Likewise, the non-profit side also seeks to advance its mission through increased brand awareness and reputational reach. Firstly, NGOs are reported to look for well-reputable brands and thus target audiences that match or can be somehow linked to the NGOs' as a tool of positioning themselves to outside stakeholders and raising brand awareness. In this sense 'target audience' also refers the beneficiaries of the NGOs, as the following quote from a participant, referring to a collaboration with a well-known football club illustrates: "For us it was all about that [our] brand was strong among kids in the field. Because wherever you are in the world, in the poorest and most remote areas (...) you will be looking at football matches" (P7). Therefore NGOs strategically aim at increasing their communicational channels by tapping into their collaborator's target audience or customer segment and thus reach more people as their organizational message gets amplified if communicated through another channel. This extends the general visibility for the NGO's work:

In these collaborations we have the opportunity to use the different means of the business. On one side, the company as multipliers that take our message to their

customers. It's a classic principle: Every company has a certain customer base, this becomes a possible customer base for Caritas. (...) That is (...) an extension of the communication channel" (P10).

However, one NGO that is focused solely on fundraising aspects in its corporate relations sees their own reputation as sufficient and is not interested in respective reputational benefits: "It's not that the effects that are related to public relation aspect guide us [in corporate partnerships], because we are very well situated in this respect" (P8).

The possibility of gaining **additional financial resources** or funding for specific projects remains a clear driving factor for non-profits to engage in collaborations with the for-profit sector, as well as a straightforward one. However, interviewees argue that in financial terms, it only constitutes a small part of their total organizational fundraising, even if the majority of corporate partnerships are reported to lie within this area. These financial resources are generally employed to execute on-going programs by the NGOs themselves. It is also reported that NGOs may choose to refrain from accepting money in some forms of collaborations, due to reputational reason, as outlined in the subsequent section. However, this development does clearly not apply for organizations that are focusing on financial contributions as the main collaborative outcome: "Admittedly, for us it is the financial contribution, that we receive from companies [constitutes the main reason for collaborations]" (P8). Nevertheless, although of high relevance, money is not the most leading or attractive factor anymore throughout this sample and is often regarded as more of a starting point or means to an end, or even an investment:

That is the kind of thing you are look for, really. Where you complement each other, where you create something that you would have never been able to create alone. Often of course, ultimately you need to get some money to get going (P4).

Therefore, in contrast to pure financial contributions, organizations further aim at improving their operational programs from a content or implementation perspective. This aspect to partnerships is seen as the most important one, even if not dominant quantitatively within their collaboration portfolio. This main motivational factor of gaining the company's **knowledge, expertise and time** in areas NGOs lack through collaboration in order to advance their mission, is present through almost the entire sample: "They know how to build products (...) and that's wonderful. We don't have the knowledge to build it (...) so the expertise is invaluable in that respect" (P1). This is an area some interviewees report to be most keen to develop on in the future. It is also a further expression of an evolved understanding of companies as mere financial donors.

This motivational factor can be broken down into gaining knowledge and expertise on an operational level on one side: "(B)ecause we have quite the rural aspect, a lot of businesses also have a good understanding about the logistics, about the supply chain" (P5).

Furthermore and this is more applicable for organizations with less engaged partnerships, knowledge, expertise and time can also be gained on the organizational level, such as legal services or technological investments. NGOs are also eager to tap into human resources such as in areas where they are understaffed themselves. This is often a more practical aspect to partnerships and is connected to the aim of reducing organizational costs.

Through collaborations, NGOs aim to tap into the company's professional network, such as contacts in the media. Interviewees also state to use this form of networking to find further potential partnership candidates, as the existing partners become ambassadors for their organization, ideally setting off a form of chain reaction. When identifying potential partners, several interviewees state that the most efficient way is through word of mouth and an established network. "When we have a good relationship with our partners, we aim that they also recommend us. That they truly become our ambassadors (...) and open up doors to other companies who could support us" (P3). In this sense 'network' also refers to a company's infrastructure in general, that aids target populations in areas where corporates are producing with regard to the NGO's mission, where governmental restrictions prevent non-profits to take action, or very rural areas without any other safe access:

We are talking about 300,000 women in Cambodia that were actually reached through that project (...) So this whole program was based on the partnership with [an international textile company]. If we would not have had this partnership, we would not have been able to [reach these women]. (P7)

On a more general level, several interviewees report that the for-profit sector offers them expertise through an alternative perspective to fulfilling their mission through a business oriented approach that is regarded as a clear asset, as companies have to constantly prevail against their competitors to remain successful. This implicates denouncing established models of philanthropy-based collaborations as unsustainable and ineffective. An expression of this mentality is the ability to operate economically in terms of finances. Business are regarded to operate more sustainably and efficiently in this sense as they are offering knowledge in a particular a field and have experience in overcoming respective competitive factors in their operational field. Non-profits can therefore learn from businesses how to create a demand for the programs and services they are implementing, make them economically sustainable and ultimately empower the target population on the long run.

So reaching more people (...) in a more sustainable way. Because what we have seen a lot (...) projects come and go again. Leave the infrastructure behind, it fails and there is no mechanism to get it fixed. There are no systems set up to running them financially or ecologically sustainable. (P4)

However, interviewees report that NGOs also offer companies comparable resources in the form of market insights, posing a strong motivational factor to collaborate with them.

NGOs have been operational for long periods of time, often in areas of the world, where no businesses has been active before. They therefore hold invaluable market insights and can even be the key to a company to gain market access in general, as the following quote relating to the case of a collaboration in South Sudan illustrates: “And there was a lot of enthusiasm, because for [the company] there was interest, because it could open new markets for them” (P6). Businesses are reported to want to apply their specific expertise in areas countries with respective shortcomings but lack knowledge on the respective local context. In this way companies can gain a competitive advantage through collaboration as these include areas as well as customer segments where no other business actor is present at this point in time. Businesses that seek collaborations are therefore aware of the importance of NGOs’ mission not only on a general global scale, but for their own organizational success and the fact that NGOs hold expertise in this area they do not. Well-established NGOs can thus also be consulted as advisors in specific issues they are engaged with. Clear-cut and prominent examples are issues regarding child labor, but also organizational impact of sport activities, as shall be elaborated below.

Conclusively, NGOs ultimately look for partners that are aware of the role of the for-profit sector in global society and support their mission as a common goal and thus look beyond the notion of companies as a mere source of financial support. Collaborations are rather about achieving an impact and outcome in unison that would not be able by one actor alone. The findings therefore confirm Dahan et al. (2010) argument that both sides possess highly relevant resources for the other, yet also specify them more concretely. The outlined resources can be regarded as different forms of value that can be offered to one another when fostering collaborations on both sides. NGOs are therefore pragmatically motivated in finding areas where businesses can complement them in advancing their organizational goals. However, while on the non-profit side the benefit or win for their organizational goal is clearly defined, NGOs perceive companies to balance their consciousness of their social and environmental role in society with their economic bottom line, as the following quote captures: “(T)heir starting point was actually to strengthen their brand, so it was from a CSR-point of view, but strengthening their brand was their main objective” (P6). This links back to Baur’s (2011) discussion of NGOs as legitimate institutional actors. However the findings show that actually both actors need to assess the legitimacy of their collaboration partner towards achieving a common goal. While Baur (2011) speaks about the danger of NGOs following a ‘hidden agenda’, for businesses this danger is given through an uneven balance between economic and societal motivations.

Furthermore the findings show that not only businesses gain reputational advantages through collaborations, but that NGOs seek to gain in reputational terms alike. Additionally, existing literature merely discusses the reputational benefits for businesses towards external

stakeholders, such as the media or the general public (Argenti, 2004; Shumate & O'Connor, 2010) and not in relation to their own employees, which was determined as a highly relevant resource business seek to gain through collaboration with NGOs. Also, current literature suggests that NGOs possess strong networks business aim to tap into (Yaziji & Doh, 2009). However, the results suggest a reversed tendency, where NGOs report to be keen on using their partners' network to amplify their message and gain higher communicational reach, once again underlining the importance of reputational implications of collaborations for the non-profit sector. The high importance of this dynamic will be further underlined below. The motivational factors of achieving mutual value in advancing their organizational mission through the exchange of tangible and intangible resources is highly constituent to the specifications of the challenges, facilitators and finally outcomes of collaborations, as shall be illustrated in the subsequent sections.

4.2. Challenges & facilitators in fostering collaborations

Although businesses and NGOs gain mutual benefits through fostering collaborations with one another, this specific type of cross-sectorial partnership is accompanied by several areas of challenges as well as facilitators. These determinants can be distinguished into three different levels, which build upon each other: The ideological, the organizational and finally the structural level.

4.2.1. Ideological level

The ideological fit in values and organizational mission is the most crucial point in determining the general possibility partnership, as a successful collaboration cannot be achieved with just any organization. Determining the right collaboration partner is therefore a difficult task and the first challenge to overcome. Interviewees report on a pre-process that determines this general prospect. One interviewee notes in this sense that there are different categories of possible partners as well as disqualifying factors. Clear no-go's such as the tobacco and arms industry are echoed by numerous interviewees. However, this is based on the general notion that businesses whose bottom-line clearly contradicts with the NGO's mission goals, code of conduct or self image are not suitable as collaboration partners. A clear example NGOs state, is the case of child labor within a company's supply chain misclassifying a company as a possible partner. This was confirmed regardless of the depth of collaborations the different organizations were engaged in:

We do indeed check very rigorously if the company fits well with us (...) Therefore it would be bad for us, if we enter into a partnership with a company that does not fit with children (...) we always look a bit at what the company is doing, how it is

working, where it is producing, is there hopefully no child labor involved. So one checks very closely at the beginning before we engage into a partnership. (P8)

However, it is stressed that there is no black and white in choosing a possible collaborator and that there will never be a perfect fit. This relates to the fact that NGOs respond to the specific context and history of each case, meaning that even though a potential partner may have proven to have had respective critical issues in its past, a non-profit organization may consider to collaborate if recognizable and known efforts in the area in question have been made and clear potential to act can be identified by the NGO. Also the respective partnership will then continue towards eliminating these 'critical areas' and having a joined impact in that field: "But it is not only about giving them the checklist and then saying, 'Hey, you are doing great, you are not doing great', but how do we work then with a company to try to eradicate child labor" (P2). In such critical cases NGOs report to consciously not accept any financial contributions from the business in question until respective aspects have been taken care of. Building on this argumentation, other interviewees state that when dealing with corporate actors, NGOs always face issues they may not agree with or could criticize. One interviewee proposes a hierarchy of values when choosing collaboration partners in order to achieve impact:

(W)e would probably prefer for [the international textile company] to raise the wage of the employees in Cambodia from 40 dollars to 80 dollars a month. (...) Even though there is not a shared value there, that is not as important as the shared value when it comes to how can we improve the situation for women with HIV/AIDS. There are some levels of values. What can we accept and what can we not accept. With companies you will never have a perfect fit. You will always have values that you share and others, where you would have different perspectives. (P7)

Possible collaborators must therefore hold real potential to act on the organizational goals of the NGO. Therefore, a preference for large corporations as collaboration partners is reported, as their possible global impact is seen as higher. Organizations with a national focus however, report on a preference on local businesses as they understand their context better and relate to their mission as well as the relevance to solve the problem at hand also for the for-profit side, while others interviewees focus on businesses that can be linked to their field of operation in order to have the possibility to conduct joint programs. The choice for a collaboration partner is therefore not a straightforward one that is always determined by the same principle, but is based on the specific NGO's mission.

As the perfect fit for partnerships does not exist, interviewees report that NGOs face general scrutiny from stakeholders when entering partnerships with corporates. This is especially the case for receiving financial contributions, or working with certain industries or companies that are in the public spotlight, but may be considered as partners due to the

reasons explained above. In this sense, interviewees report on the necessity of active **risk assessment** as well as **mitigation** to overcome this challenge. It is also argued that taking time for this initial assessment phase and pre-process can eliminate the risk of collaborations backfiring at NGOs, e.g. in reputational terms. While generally, possible negative effects of the association with a company need to be determined, interviewees stress the importance of particularly communicating about details of partnership to the general public and stakeholders, such as showing the reasons, impact and value of the specific case to avoid unintended negative effects. Others also underline this necessity as a joint effort between the two partners and the need of story telling, sharing successes and therefore being proactive in this process. The case of a large humanitarian organization concerning a collaboration with a well-known football club illustrates this argumentation:

(I)f [the organization] pays a football club (...) large amounts to get our names on their shirts they [the stakeholders] would not support us anymore. There was a whole communication area, on how we had to tell them, that we did not actually pay for this logo (...) (Y)ou always need to be very proactive in looking at what are the possible problems that you will face when engaging with a corporate partner. (P7)

In sum it becomes even more evident that while the perfect corporate partner is an unreachable goal, a general alignment with the organizational mission and values between the two actors should be determinable in order to foster a sustainable collaboration. The potential to sustainably advance one's mission may therefore entail collaborating with businesses that may have disqualified as partners in the past, but have evolved due to a changed context as well as motivations. Assessing this potential by weighing it against possible risks is therefore a vital process.

4.2.2. Organizational level

The second level concerns challenges and facilitators in collaborations that NGOs and businesses encounter between one another in an organizational context. These challenges are based around the different conceptual working cultures and how to best anchor collaborations within organizations. The challenge of the diverging **organizational cultures** of the two actors needs to be addressed first, as it lays the basis for the subsequent challenges. The following fragment illustrates this argument: "I guess the main obstacles is understanding each other. Because there are two different cultures gathering together. It's a company culture and the UNICEF culture" (P1). Other interviewees further elaborate that although the two sides have moved towards each other, the different historical backgrounds and priorities remain. No matter how advanced a partnership may be, this gap poses a conceptual barrier when working with each other. Other interviews specify in this context that the challenge relates to the fact that although NGOs work in a professional manner, their central approach to conduct business differs highly from the for-profit sector. Thus,

understanding the business perspective within collaborations can be a source of complications. Although this understanding may be present within the organization, it can be missing within the operational arm of the NGO: “There was this feeling within the company that our teachers are not cooperating (...) But maybe sometimes the teachers really aren’t cooperating, because they see their main responsibility in the classroom and not within the fundraising” (P3). An integral part to overcoming this challenge and therefore a facilitator, is argued to lie with the self-conception of NGOs, who have to present themselves as eye-level actors and learn to communicate with their business counterparts as such. One interviewee states that communicating on an eye-level is especially a key element to establish deeper forms of partnerships. This notion is supported by a contesting fragment from an organization that solely engages in philanthropic and transactional partnerships: “A CEO or board member has such a tight schedule that he is just not interested into talking with a representative from an NGO” (P8).

In this context interviewees further specify that throughout their collaboration history they have understood the need to take a firm stand throughout negotiations, even if it means losing the prospect of a collaboration. This need differs between collaboration partners, but it is confirmed by several interviewees, that companies will put their focus on their economic bottom line, as portrayed above. Therefore taking a firm stand also means catering to their role as representatives of civil society:

I like about businesses that they are very much focused, but often they are also blind for social aspects. If we are talking about inclusion, for instance to include in India or Nepal the people who are in the cast systems for instance. Or really taking into consideration the bottom of the pyramid, rather than the middle class. (P5)

Therefore, a clear challenge can be found, when the for-profit partner aims at fully determining outcomes at an operational level, and thus crosses over the organizational borders. This can mean trying to steer the NGO in a specific direction, content-wise as well as geographically, that best fits their needs and therefore undermines the NGO’s integrity as an organization: “It depends on the local context. But we won’t just go to a new region because the company has money and wants us to go there. We do follow our multiyear annual plan, we follow the themes” (P2). This can be due to wrong perceptions of the NGO and its operational structure. Other interviewees also report on the risks of NGOs being incorporated too much into the collaborating company, meaning that the NGO’s mission becomes neglected and the economic motivations prevail: “So maybe there is a risk that if NGOs and business start working together and it is going fine, that they forget that they have this watchdog function and representing the voice of the poor or society” (P4). This need is also present when trying to accommodate the wishes of businesses to a full extent and is reported to pose a challenge in collaboration formulation as well as implementation, possibly

resulting in the fact that financial contributions will not go towards the area, where they are most needed at that time. In this sense non-profits with a broader array of operational areas may be in a stronger negotiating position: “(I)t is just too time consuming, it is too much work. We basically say for [our organization] if you are coming with a really a significant amount of money, then we can talk about details. Otherwise it’s really more on ongoing programing” (P2).

A recurring instance throughout the sample concerns challenges with different forms of **employee engagements** such as field visits or corporate volunteering as popular constituents of partnerships. This challenge can be seen as a clear manifestation of the differences of organizational cultures: Interviewees report that NGOs cannot accommodate all requests in this area, as it poses a burden to the operational arms of their organization or it may not be possible due to danger in the field and the fact that the NGO’s beneficiaries need to remain protected. Interviewees state that they have to cater to their own organizational mission first and thus are forced to constrain respective possibilities: “We are not a travel agency, (...) it is about the work we are doing and not about hosting everyone who wants to come and visit” (P11). While business are expected to understand the priorities in this context, NGOs are aware of the need find other ways to accommodate employee engagement for business partners as it poses a high motivation in fostering partnerships. Several interviewees confirm their efforts to improve the situation: “We are continuously trying as the demand is present. Therefore we have begun to create a concept for volunteering with a responsible spokesperson, however this is still in the beginning” (P8). However another organization for which business partnerships pose the main source of revenue, also confirm the high demand in employee engagement within partnerships and have thus made them an integral part of their operations in the form of corporate volunteering, although actually small in organizational size. In contrast, this organization (P3) reports that their capacity for this form of engagement remains higher than companies actually make use of at this point and at the same time is easy to offer. Yet, the interviewee stresses that companies must be aware of the fact that the presented opportunity of employee engagement remains a away to support the NGO in question and should not only be viewed as a way to benefit the business. Others state that employee engagement can never happen as form of exchange or relief for the NGO as it always connected to additional effort. One interviewee confirms the need as well as their own organizational constraints and that it does indeed pose a burden on the NGO. However, the organization was able to identify cases of collaborations, where corporate volunteers actually constitute an additional workforce for the projects in question.

The imperative in overcoming differences in organizational culture boils down to how organizational priorities are communicated with one another. In order to overcome this

challenge, NGOs must not only learn to speak their counterpart's language, but also present themselves as equal partners. The case of employee engagement illustrates this, as NGOs who have understood the corporate demand in collaborations, were able to overcome this challenge while still catering to their organizational mission and thus ensuring a win-win for both sides.

A further challenge within the organizational level is the issue on how to best **incorporate collaborations in a sustainable manner** within the participating organizations. Interviewees noted in this context that companies are firstly best approached through the management or board level in order to initiate and thus to formulate a possible partnership fast and efficiently as they hold the decisive power in their organization. If the collaboration is initiated through another channel, it is ultimately necessary to get the management level on board, for both sides to sustain the partnership as means of linking it to the company's strategy. In this sense, interviewees reported about the importance that partnerships should not only be tailored to the specific company, but also to the interest of the individual that is in charge of bringing the demand forward within the company, thus ideally a manager or board member. It is therefore necessary to find the right tools the responsible person needs in order to convince the organization's remaining stakeholders: "[The collaboration] starts with one person or rather a personality, who is often placed at the executive level and who is of course a driving force (...) in placing it deeply into the company" (P10). This commitment on the managerial level is applicable for both actors: "Both parties need to have the buy-in of management in their possession. That doesn't always happen. And that can be a large problem during the partnership" (P6).

However, once collaborations are definite, it is argued that partnerships ought to be anchored and rooted throughout the entire organization, which is a gradual and time-consuming process. Generally it also encompasses the commitment to and role of collaborations within the organization: "There has to be this overlap with the core business and interests of both partners. It must be anchored on a strategic level" (P9). This is also vital as interviewees report on several occasions where changes in human resources or financial challenges within a company resulted in the fact that a partnership was discontinued, as this process has not taken place. Failing to establish this commitment is considered a factor that will ultimately result in the failure of the collaboration and therefore poses a clear challenge: "That is a crucial point (...) that really everyone in the company is standing behind [the partnership] and that it is not just the nice project of the CEO and nobody else is behind it" (P3). On interviewee refers to this process as 'stakeholder management' meaning that the partnership needs to be executed on all levels and not just by the individuals trusted with the cross-sector collaborations, but "there needs to be commitment from the boardroom to the reception" (P1).

Truly anchoring the collaboration within organizations is also challenging due to the difficulty to **communicate the value and impact of collaborations** to businesses, as they remain rather intangible. Other organizations specify this challenge more clearly. Even if the collaboration is characterized through financial contributions, it remains challenging to convey what NGOs are offering to the for-profit sector on the long-term as well on the short-term:

It is of course difficult in comparison, because we are not selling a product that you can touch, where the company can somehow see a direct benefit in terms of numbers in their accounting. This is a difficulty, which the NGOs have of course. (...) But then you just have to argue differently. We have such different KPIs, such different things that we can offer, that another company cannot offer. (P3)

One interviewee confirms this aspect also within NGOs in regard to deeper forms of collaborations: “Even within UNICEF, and it is true it is very time consuming to work on expertise and share knowledge. What’s the outcome: it’s not measureable, it’s difficult to put a value on it” (P1).

To summarize the true task remains to convince the business of the value of the NGO’s mission and that the offered resources are lying outside the company’s core competencies. In other words, establishing the indispensability of NGOs in terms of resources and strengths, which can be established through storytelling from the operational field as well as the use of facts and figures. Others see corporate volunteering as a facilitator to build commitment for the collaboration within the company. One organization actually reports to handle the rush on employee engagement through motivational assessments of employees and therefore utilizes it as a tool to anchor the partnership and finding ambassadors. One interviewee describes this effect: “(C)ompanies give their employees the opportunity in the form of corporate volunteering to simply get to know the work of NGOs (...) and of course as soon as you have touch points and know, why we do our work, everything changes” (P10). The intangible value of collaboration can often be conveyed throughout an organization by making it tangible through different means that are also catered to the respective company and responsible individuals.

4.2.3. Structural level

A third and final level concerns challenges and facilitators collaborations can further face in a structural context, relating to the specific environment the organizations are embedded in. Partnerships are situated within specific context, which one interviewee refers to as the “**business ecosystem**” (P4). These contextual factors (e.g. competitors, regulations, effects of climate) can constrain as well as facilitate partnerships. Depending on the specific actors within the collaboration, these can only be influenced to a certain extent.

One interviewee reports that particularly the possibility of external funding can pose a structural constraint on partnerships, as the outcome is then dictated by the need to fulfill bureaucratic requirements instead of the collaboration goal. This mainly applies to partnerships where joined implementation of programs is present:

That is always an important role, sometimes too big of a role that people are working on basis of the subsidy instruments that are there. So there are framing and phrasing everything to meet the criteria of the specific instrument. This becomes sort of a guiding thing. (...) But that is of course not for the right reasons. (P4)

Another interviewee further notes that projects are more likely to receive external funding, when approached in a partnership. However, these external funding opportunities are also reported to be a facilitator when negotiating a partnership, as they often give the possible collaborations a pre-formulated goal or direction the partnership then builds around.

These factors can also include strongly discussed issues in the media, occurring crises or emergencies, as well as the policy environment:

Of course we also use external factors. Like the refugee aid at the moment, which was massive throughout the last year. Where also a lot of new potential cooperation partners approached us, where we try to determine, if it is something we can truly develop into a long-term cooperation. (P9)

These instances illustrate that although external factors may prevent collaborations, they may also give rise to possible partnerships. However these may not be formed on the grounds of ideological alignment of organizational mission and values as portrayed above. As the quoted fragment illustrates, this conformity needs to be evaluated on the long run, to ensure sustainable partnerships.

Additionally, **sectorial structural constraints** are present within the collaborating organizations. NGOs may be based in a larger network or federal system with several umbrella organizations and federal entities connected to them. This may limit their leeway in negotiations e.g. in terms of geographical reach or resources which can be offered to possible partners as well as in the implementation process: “We as Caritas Austria are not active in operative terms. (...) That means that we are dependent on our federal organizations in terms of implementation (...) That means we need the go from all our nine organizations” (P10). Interviewees also report that particularly structural constraints within companies pose an obstacle in implementing collaborations as it entails the involvement of numerous stakeholders. This may also pose a challenge, when collaborations are implemented on a regional level, even if general commitment is present within the core organization. This argument is similarly applicable within NGOs themselves, yet it is not a issue of commitment, but more of available resources or even further structural factors such

as the respective policy setting, whether a collaboration can be implemented in the intended way or not.

A very important aspect to the structural level in NGO-business collaborations is the **importance of the networks** of organizations as the following quote illustrates: “You can be very strategic, but in the end it is mostly related to personal initiatives and networking” (P7). Interviewees report that the absence of a social network can not only result in the fact NGOs do not partner with the profit sector at all, but also operational shortcomings: projects do not come into being through missing funding as well as expertise. One interviewee stresses that this can be particularly the case for organizations that are operational in different areas of the world. Others confirmed this effect of networks in this process, once again underlining the motivation of building and connecting networks through collaboration:

In reality, many of the times, the partnerships just formed because we meet people in network occasions. Or we know some people. And talking about things, what you do. Issues occur and you start thinking about ‘Can we work together?’ or ‘Can we do something?’, which is okay. I mean it’s perfectly okay to start a partnership like that. (P6)

To be honest (...) I knew the managing director of [an international textile company]. (...) It could have been ZARA, it could have been the GAP, we just needed someone in the textile industry to engage with. (P7)

This argument is underlined by the other interviewees stressing the complicated nature of cold acquisitions in NGO-business collaborations and the resulting advantage of well-known NGOs: “The cold acquisitions are awfully difficult. It is easier, if you were able to spark a tiny bit of interest through networks” (P8). Several interviewees therefore report to refrain from cold acquisitions at all: “So there is no cold acquisitions in this sense, but companies approach us, which is of course the luxury of a large organization like Caritas” (P10). NGOs are therefore in need of a strong network to engage in collaborations. Additionally this underlines the motivational factor of tapping into businesses’ network through collaboration to circumvent this challenge. Furthermore, NGOs can continuously assess ideological alignment of members in their immediate network and therefore determine possible collaboration partners more easily. Although the structural level of challenges and facilitators can only be influenced to certain extent, organizations need to be aware of them and the impact they have on possible and existing collaborations.

The findings contribute to and simultaneously challenge existing literature in several ways. As Pedersen and Pedersen (2013) mention the complications in determining the right collaboration partner for business and NGOs alike, the ideological level gives concrete answers to this issue, however underlining that an impeccable fit in NGO-business collaboration does not exist in practice. As the absence of the perfect business partner

results in the continuous need of risk mitigation and assessment, Shumate and O'Connor's (2010) argument that "value, benefits and legitimacy" (p. 590) of a collaboration must be conveyed to stakeholders once implemented to preserve organizational reputation and trust by the public (Argenti, 2004, Edelman, 2015), is therefore extended to the pre-collaboration and negotiation stage.

Parker (2003) discusses how NGOs struggle to accept corporate partners as eye-level actors in collaborations due to different organizational goals. Additionally, the approach to businesses merely as a source of revenue, puts NGOs in a donor-recipient relationship resulting in the perception to be the 'weaker' actor within a partnership. The study confirms the problematic of a perceived hierarchy between NGOs and businesses and determines it as the source of challenges within the organizational level. Parker's (2003) argument is further underlined as the analysis determines the self-conception of NGOs as equal partners as a key to sustainable as well as deeper forms of engagement with businesses. Although awareness for this issue exists throughout the participants, all but one organization show to have overcome this challenge. The findings therefore show that the development in the non-profit sector as described in literature (e.g. Argenti, 2004; Dempsey, 2011; Pedersen & Pedersen, 2013) is a continuous process that further strengthens its role as an institutional actor.

Finally, while the relevance of structural factors remains hardly discussed in previous academic work, Yaziji and Doh's (2009) notion concerning the relevance of NGO-networks for businesses is further put into perspective as mentioned above, as especially NGOs prove to be highly dependent on the networks of their collaborators. To a large extent these professional networks further establish the general pool of possible partners as well as issues collaborations ultimately form around.

4.3. Current state of collaborations & considerations for future partnerships

The practical implementation of collaborations illustrate that collaborations are formed based on organizational goals and therefore highly diverge from existing theoretical work. Furthermore, successful partnerships are characterized by a long-term approach, which allows the necessary time span to develop strong relationship with the collaboration partner.

4.3.1. Outcome-driven partnership

Interviewees reported on numerous examples of their past and ongoing partnerships with businesses. Nine interviewees reported that they have collaborations placed throughout the CC as well Shared Value Collaborations. Out of the two remaining, both can be placed within the philanthropic as well as transactional stages, however this classifications apply to a limited extent. Furthermore, one of the of the two participants stated that ultimately, their goal

is to achieve deeper forms of collaborations and also hinting at the inapplicability of existing classifications:

I think it works the same for us, but that you have more steps (...) I really do think that and we are actually working with an engagement strategy to actually move some partners more towards more involvement and getting them to get active and their own, that they are proactive instead of reactive. I think that is also what this [CSV] is actually. (P11)

Nevertheless, organizations with all forms of collaborations state that the large majority of their collaborations remain in the so-called philanthropic or transactional stage in contrast to partnerships that aim at joined implementation. Although awareness for the concept of Creating Shared Value is present, it is not the dominant approach to partnerships. In sum, NGOs structure collaborations around their organizational goals, and not based on a specific stage of collaboration they aim to engage in.

In this context only two NGOs report working with broader predetermined groups of collaboration based on the amount financial contribution received. The details are then specified and tailored according to the wishes and need of the corporate partner through dialogue. These can include corporate involvement in their operational field of education, e.g. by employees teaching a school lesson that gives students new perspectives about their future, field trips or the connection with other corporate collaborators in the field of cultural sponsoring. In contrast one NGO prefers to work in completely enclosed forms, where businesses can choose from different thematic areas, as well as countries, however they can only contribute financially to on-going projects and needs, such as operational funding in return for the use of logos or press releases. This approach is not present within the rest of the sample as one interviewee stresses: "When I first started here, we had those packages. (...) Very straightforward and everything formulated. I don't think it is the way it works anymore" (P11). The argument further underlines the dominance of the collaboration goal determining the outcome within the participating organizations.

However, the difficulty to differentiate between different stages of collaborations is further noted in addition to the fact that also less engaged stages are regarded as Creating Shared Value. The following fragment illustrates this argument:

It is just that this [CSV] would generally apply to any cooperation for me. Because you are always working with people and there are always people involved, who are affected by it. You can most probably see that in the form of corporate volunteering or so where you very actively contribute to the transformation of society, which is also the mission of Caritas. (P10)

This inapplicability of classifying frameworks is further illustrated through the wide spread existence of **multilayered partnerships** within the sample. Therefore, several

interviewees report to be engaged in different depths of partnerships with one and the same corporate partner and that each level is deemed as fundamental for the respective collaboration. For instance, two examples were brought forward for the case of an international humanitarian organization in the cotton and textile industry: In Cambodia, the organization was able to tackle HIV/AIDS within young women through facilities of their corporate partner, an international textile manufacturer: “What we tried to do, is enter the textile industry through the normal patterns, through the national textile associations and connect with the factories there. That was basically totally impossible for us, they basically did not want [our organization] to come in there” (P7). Jointly, the partners set up several services, including health centers as well as counseling hours with and sustainable impact. After this program succeeded, transactional and philanthropic levels were added to the partnership in form of financial donations as well as consumer campaigns, which stated to be of high value in the area of disaster relief.

Similarly, the organization served as an advisor for an international furnishing retailer to free its supply chain of child labor through a context driven approach and the implementation educational programs for affected beneficiaries. The approach was replicated from a company level by the government first at a local level, than at a federal level for the entire industry. Like in the preceding instance, financial contributions were only added as a complementary step afterwards, further putting the hierarchy of existing frameworks into perspective: “(F)or me at least it is the perfect case of a partnership that started with a clear CSR perspective (...) and then ended up in a total large-scale partnership that also included obviously [the company] funding programs of [our organization] worldwide” (P7). The same company has a very similar collaboration with another large NGO in the field of children rights.

[The company] works on various levels with [us]: “They have programing which is specifically humanitarian aid. (...) And another part is that they have programing that [the company] funds specifically in Bangladesh and India, looking at the cotton fields, because a lot of their cotton comes from those areas. So they really want to do something back to the communities there (...) Another part (...) is that [the NGO] was one of the key members looking at [their] code of conduct (...) so ensuring that there is no child labor within the supply chain and we continue talking with them on that subject. And then the fourth one, the way we work with [the company] is the soft toy campaign. (P2)

The Red Cross also reports on several multilayered partnerships. One with a large consulting firm offers learning facilities to disadvantaged school children through a dedicated physical space as well as tutoring. Firstly the company offers funding for this facility, secondly they their operational expertise through consulting services on the project, such as

how to further develop the project in the future as well as measure success. The third level is constituted through corporate volunteering within this project, such as employees working as study companions or conveying job skills and therefore posing an additional working force to the organization. Two comparable cases including employee engagement were further mentioned in the sample.

However, instances entailing aspects of the concept of **Creating Shared Value** as defined by Porter and Kramer (2011; reconceptualization of goods and markets, optimization of supply chains and fostering innovation, competitiveness and advancement of clusters) are also present within the sample, in addition to mentioned examples of multilayered partnerships that entail levels, which can be regarded as CSV partnerships. Several instances as well as one case that further puts this framework into perspective were identified, encompassing the joined **development of products** as well as **services and infrastructure**. Together with its partner, UNICEF is designing and producing medical equipment tailored to their operational countries' needs through a joined context assessment that sustainably improve local health facilities. Furthermore, resident entrepreneurs are educated to develop these products further and thus empower local communities sustainably, by bringing knowledge into the operational country and therefore starting a chain reaction. Another children rights organization is working together with one partner to develop a multipurpose soap to be marketed in their operational countries that is simultaneously safe to use for personal hygiene, baby care, cleaning as well as washing fabrics, yet is competitive in the specific context and therefore improves the quality of life of these target groups on the long run.

In the field of menstrual hygiene, Simavi developed biodegradable sanitary pads together with their corporate partners that are discrete and inexpensive. These are primarily aimed at increasing school attendance with young women in Bangladesh. However, there is a clear market for the product. By taking its value chain, as well as external actors such as integration in the educational system and governmental actors into account, the product is rendered a sustainable and competitive solution to a societal problem. These examples are all founded on the respective NGO's market insights: "(I)t is also of course eventually very good for their name, but also to get access to markets, which they possibly would not have had access to otherwise" (P2).

Secondly, examples where the for- and non-profit sector jointly set up infrastructure to achieve an impact were determined. UNICEF as well as Caritas show instances where collaborators use their financial and operational infrastructure as a low-barrier approach to generate a continuous revenue stream of individual donations more easily, by providing the NGOs with new fundraising channels. While two involved interviewees clearly see their respective and very similar collaborations within the area of Creating Shared Value beside

their pure financial nature, another contests this view: “For [the organization] it is a way to fund programs for financial literacy around the world. So it is a pure fundraising approach” (P7). One interview reports on a multilateral water sanitation project in India that simultaneously tackles financial literacy as well health insurance. Households are offered micro loans in order to install sanitation facilities. In a second step these households are then granted reduced insurance tariffs: “If poor households become financially literate or they have access to credit, etc. and they try to deal with this kind of financing institutions, that is something that helps them much further in their life than just having a toilet” (P4). Another organization reports on a trilateral CSV partnership including a major network company. Together with a research institute they conceptualized and implemented an e-learning platform for displaced children in very rural areas in South Sudan with no schools or teaching force available. While the organization played the implementing actor, the remaining collaborators took over other constituents of the partnership: “So, we needed technical support. We needed innovative support from other parts. And we needed [a network provider] because we needed connectivity“ (P6).

In explaining the nature of their collaborations through the instances above, interviewees portrayed their **diverging understanding of advancement** to different collaboration stages as well as the nature of in-depth collaborations, further underlining the inapplicability of respective frameworks. Several interviewees stated that the hierarchy as proposed by the framework is not necessarily valid in respect to gained value. While it is argued that the stages can blend together, several cases as elaborated above illustrate how partnerships may even begin in the Creation of Shared Value and add a philanthropic aspect at a later point. However, concurring standpoints can be found concerning the potential of evolving to deeper forms of partnerships from a philanthropic stage:

It's perfectly okay to start with philanthropy. But it's...I would always, if you start a relationship in a philanthropic phase, then I would always challenge partners to start thinking if you can go through those phases and come to this (CSV) phase. Because this is much more rewarding. (P6)

“Very seldom actually. When it is a pure fundraising perspective, it comes very seldom that it becomes a CSR aspect” (P7).

While also acknowledging that the outcome of CSV or in-depth partnerships depends on capabilities and core business of the company, as shown in in the case of financial infrastructure above, others note that advancing a partnership does not necessarily entail achieving more depth: “It is more the general case that it extends in width. But that it goes into depth in that sense, that is not really the case” (P10). This connects back to the

formation of multilayered partnerships as seen in the examples mentioned above. This notion is therefore also connected to the nature of work of the participating NGOs: Emergency relief and humanitarian aid will always require financial as well as short-term contributions and partnerships and will therefore remain to exist in this case of cross-sector collaborations, as they are needed to reach their organizational goals. Conclusively it is clear that NGO-partnerships are indispensable for success, they are however not aimed to be exclusively placed on what is considered more engaged forms of partnerships in literature, such as the the collaboration continuum (Austin & Seitanidi, 2012a). In-depth or CSV partnerships pose one vital mean to fulfill the NGOs' mission, while other forms of collaborations are still widespread and also important constituents in multilayered partnerships or pose as starting points for deeper instance of collaborations, ultimately putting the proposed hierarchy into perspective. Although Austin (2000) recognizes that collaborations can evolve from less engaged stages in the CC to deeper ones, the framework fails to discuss the possibility of different forms or stages of collaborations with the same partner. Therefore, the findings clearly challenge the collaboration continuum's argument that the more advanced a partnership is in regard to the individual stages, the more value the collaborators gain (Austin & Seitanidi, 2012a) as well as Porter and Kramer's (2011) notion that collaborations should merely be implemented based on the concept of Creating Shared Value to ensure societal and environmental progress as well as economic sustainability.

4.3.2. Implementation of successful long-term partnerships

In order to establish in-depth collaborations with businesses that produce high impact, the interviewees state several contingent factors for success. These are based upon procedural aspects, relationship and expectation management and the need to build on past successes.

Phase One: Establishing a foundation

It could take like months to understand each other and to really get the details from where the other party is coming from. An understanding of what the objectives, what the goals are from the parties. Be completely transparent about it and be completely honest about it. So there's a lot of pitfalls there and you see them all happening in these first phases. (P6)

Before collaborations actually come into being, both parties need to take the time to familiarize themselves with one another in dialogue to establish the foundation for the future partnership. This process aids at determining where both organizations have synergies they can use as a starting point for a collaboration. These are founded in the organizational motivations and can be based on overlaps in the operational field as well as the company's CSR areas. Dedicating time to this phase is an imperative as it allows to build a partnership based on trust and understanding the full motivations of each actor to engage in a specific

collaboration and thus also start determining the specific issue and joined goal that can be approached through the respective collaboration. One interview argues that a common element in this process is showing a critical attitude towards on another and therefore the need for transparency. How well this phase is managed is said to decide the outcome and therefore success of the entire collaboration. Others relate to this as determining which resources each specific actor can bring to the table to achieve this goal, as also outlined in section 4.1.2: “(B)asically from our knowledge and experience, we mainly think about ‘What are you looking for what do you need’ There has to be complimentary in what you have to offer” (P4). Additionally, NGOs report that organizations that engage in deeper forms of collaborations essentially show a shifted attitude and readiness towards deeper form of partnerships as well as the readiness to dedicate to one another on the long term from the beginning. “I can say that from a UNICEF perspective, we have become much more open and aware of the possibilities that partnership with business can bring. Whereas in the beginning we were very money oriented” (P1).

Phase two - Building the partnership & determining the outcome

“To agree on all the specific details, you can have nice ideas, as long as they remain a little bit broad. But ultimately you have to be on the same page on everything” (P4). As the fragment illustrates, interviewees consider it vital to move fast from the pre-collaboration phase to the implementation process. Even if it may prove difficult to fully distinguish from the first phase, this entails defining responsibilities, processes, formulating the outcome and results. Therefore the general issue that will be addressed in unison should be clear at this point and will be further specified and developed in this process. Some interviewees report in this sense that is comparably easy to find the synergies and define broad ideas for possible partnerships. However, much conflict potential can be found when determining details in terms of responsibilities, risks and formulating official agreements. Participant state that the conflict potential in this phase can be reduced when the necessary time is taken in the first phase.

Ultimately this process or phase should entail formulating what form the collaboration will actually take and what needs to be conducted to achieve it. In deeper forms of collaboration this can be the joined product or service, but also how to offer value to both sides through the collaboration and therefore establish a mutual benefit. In this stage it is particularly relevant to determine in detail, where the required resources to execute the partnership will come from as well as the need to integrate different implementation steps between the organizations:

(T)rying to integrate processes from those two organizations which is probably in the second phase the top thing to do. To integrate those processes. You can try to build a

partnership and separate the different tasks completely, but in many of the times there is... integration is needed. (P6)

Furthermore, one interviewee stresses that it may occur that partnerships may be ultimately formulated on a less engaged level during this phase, if companies realize that they cannot offer what is required for an in-depth partnership: "It does not mean that you do not continue in another way or that you maybe speak again the following year (...) And it's okay if it is not a strategic cooperation at that point with a huge impact" (P10).

Official and contractual agreements in paper pose a tool to set an official basis for the collaboration and formalize this second phase. Interviewees underline again that it should entail all determined aspects, including strict formal processes, joined objectives, how they will be reached, quarterly results as well as the necessary time span. However, room for changes and unexpected developments should be left. One participant summarized this need for detail quite vividly: "I do believe that it is very important to have a very good solid agreement with each other. I mean they are horrible processes to go through, nobody likes it, (...) but (...) you really need them" (P11). Therefore, failing to deliver on a contract is reported to damage the collaboration on the long run. This is highly relevant for the specific case of financial contributions, as NGOs then fail to implement their on-going programs and fulfill their organizational mission. Distinct areas of complications in the formal process can be legal issues such as intellectual property rights, issues of confidentiality, or if to maintain an exclusive basis of relationship e.g. in reference to competitors. Time needs to be dedicated to detecting and communicating these issues and how they will be approached.

Phase Three: Relationship management

Throughout and also beyond a collaboration, the relationship with partners needs to be maintained through constant reporting, exchange and evaluation. The extent and balance differs from partnership to partnership and is particular, yet an defining factor of a collaborations' success. Establishing this forms of exchange is a vital part in building trust on the long-term, while neglecting this process can result in the failure of a collaboration. Throughout the sample relationships with collaborators have to be maintained on two separate levels: formally and informally, while both levels are regarded as indispensable for successful partnerships:

Evaluating. It is a continuous process as well. (...) But very irregularly, also informally, we are just having a beer together and be honest. (...) And it is really helping to be critical towards each another and move forward and become better. I think that is quite key. It is also about a personal relationship. (P5)

The formal aspect refers to reviewing the collaboration at certain points in terms of value and benefits gained on both sides as well as putting the focus on the execution of the

collaboration in a joined process. One interviewee sees this evaluation process also as part of the NGO's responsibility as the voice of civil society: "That means we also have to evaluate. (...) Because we are not doing it for our sake, but the donation is supposed to arrive somewhere" (P10). An integral part of a successful partnership is continuing to cater to the relationship once the collaboration is formulated. It is reported that often the focus is put solely on the execution in terms of actual results and the relationship becomes neglected. Therefore, the informal level refers to a very personal approach to collaborations and is handled differently throughout the sample. Some interviewees determine strategic moments for informal relationship maintaining, such as company anniversaries, while the majority takes an even more personal approach to this aspect: "Over the past few years we also simply built friendship-like relationships with our partners, where the chemistry is just right and where you can gain a lot through this loose, open communication culture" (P9). The awareness of the role of the relationship with the collaboration partner is generally present throughout the entire sample. However, interviewees report that available time and thus human resources constraint the extent of possible exchange, arguing that this takes away time dedicated to the actual implementation of the partnership in the field. In contrast, other NGOs report that they plan the entire communication upfront with around five points of contact, however these are less engaged collaborations and not related to the size of the organization.

Interviewees stress the general need to clearly and transparently communicate what can be expected throughout partnership. In this context the term **management of expectations**, meaning being open about progress, capabilities as well as possible failures is used. Others underline the need for transparency especially in the first phase of the determining the potential for a collaboration. Especially in deep forms of partnerships this is deemed as necessary by one interviewee:

But if you are working towards a transformative relationship and you really want to create Shared Value and you see that your own organization, for example UNICEF is not ready for some stages or for some things to work out, then you better say, I am not sure whether we are able to do this. Or we would be able to do it but it is going to take a lot of time. (P1)

In sum, expectations in what a partnership can achieve must be kept realistic in terms of what can be offered to the business as well as concerning motivations and goals.

Phase Four: Building on previous successes & relationships

You just build a trust relationship and that you communicate on an eye-level and through a good level of trust, that always stands above anything to build something

together. Then, a lot of times we start with a certain project and then we do a review of the partnership (...) in which direction we could proceed. (P9)

It is largely reported on instances, where organizations were able to deepen their partnerships based on experiences and successes they had accomplished together in the past. This is mainly founded on their strong relationship based on transparency and trust with the collaborator and is reported as a particular success factor to deepen partnerships in the future. Evaluation of concluded as well as on-going partnership is therefore an imperative to determining existing successes as well as to identifying new directions and future possibilities for collaboration. This evaluation process is based on firstly identifying how efficient the joined goal or issue is being reached or solved, but most importantly, how both sides are gaining value through the partnership. One interviewee states that the mutual value can be illustrated through conveying the impact of the respective collaboration. Ideally, this value is also demonstrated to external actors. The case of an international humanitarian NGO and a furnishing retailer illustrates this notion:

You started with a problem, for a company actually. We helped them solve a problem. Doing that we saw a possibility and that is maybe more our benefit to actually promote this approach and actually replicate it in other areas of the country. By doing that you actually strengthen the partnership also, because when the partner sees that you can actually promote this partnership across borders, across areas of work, then this also has a strong value for the company. (P7)

In this sense both actors must be aware that the road to deeper forms of engagement is a gradual process and essentially less straightforward, entailing even more obstacles, which need to be overcome in unison. One interviewee stresses that the necessary attitude ultimately comes from the individuals within the organization: "We are also realistic that this [Creating Shared Value] is something we have wanted to do in the past. Then we didn't have the right people on the right positions to really pick that up and go for it. We have that now" (P2). Furthermore, even as achieving deeper forms of partnerships is recognized as a goal even within more fundraising oriented organizations, it is reported that the required time and human resources to constantly evaluate pose a constraint for smaller NGOs, who are more dependent on finding corporate partners in general.

To summarize, the findings show that the establishment of and advancement to deeper forms of partnerships requires a long-term perspective as well as awareness of the high relevance of building a relationship with the collaborator based on trust, respect and transparency. Therefore the different phases further develop the arguments established by Argenti (2004) and Pedersen and Pedersen (2013) on the importance of these factors by concretizing their effect and how to implement them effectively within collaborations. However the findings must be viewed in light of the diverging understandings of

advancement of partnerships as well as the limited applicability of existing theoretical concepts and frameworks as portrayed above.

5. Conclusion

This thesis embarked from the assertion that today's global issues are too complex and extensive to be efficiently tackled by only one sector or institution (Austin & Seitandi, 2012a). Due to their transformed global role, the for profit and the non-profit sector as the new voice of civil society now pose the answer to eradicating the global issues such as poverty or pandemics, however only in unison (Dossal, 2004; Yaziji & Doh, 2009). Beside the pressing societal need for the two actors to collaborate, the history of their engagement with one another has been characterized by confrontation and only gradually turned towards dialogue within past two decades (Dempsey, 2011; Doh, 2003; Heap, 2000; Pedersen & Pedersen 2013). Therefore this project aimed to determine the motivations, challenges and facilitators in fostering this globally indispensable need for partnership and to outline the current outcomes and therefore impact these cross-sector collaborations actually take, in addition to offer insights on how to successfully cultivate partnerships in the future. In doing so, several theoretical implications arise.

The findings firstly show that the existing notion of antagonism or increasing dialogue is highly outdated. Collaborations and strong relationships between the two dominant global institutional players (Yaziji & Doh, 2009) have clearly become the norm, instead of the odd exception and therefore highly alter the point of origin in analyzing NGO-business collaborations. The results show that NGOs do not merely regard businesses as a means to an end but that both sides form collaborations consciously with the aim to create a mutual benefit for one another. In this sense, collaborations pose a way to advance the respective organizational goals in unison. Underlining the fact that businesses have gained consciousness of their role in their social and ecological environment (Argenti, 2004), which they are perceived to balance with their economic bottom line, thus main organizational goal, as their driving motivational factor in collaborations. This stands in contrast to Porter and Kramer's foundational argument of the CSV approach that businesses should firstly focus on creating societal impact as a guarantee for sustainable financial profit (Crane et al., 2014). Therefore, this thesis suggests that both sides show a pragmatic approach to collaborations, as each actor brings specific resources to the table as outline above.

Accusations of greenwashing or using NGO partnerships for reputational advantages (Shumate & O'Connor, 2010) therefore need to be put in a new perspective that takes mutual benefit as the main driver for partnership into account. The thesis highlights the fact that NGOs and business alike seek reputational benefits towards external as well as internal stakeholders (e.g. employees) from their collaboration partners, contesting existing academic work that places this motivational factor mainly on the for profit side. Furthermore, the findings illustrate that the reputational risks as well as their mitigation, which are portrayed as the most threatening challenge for NGOs (Argenti, 2004), rather pose a fundamental element

in business-NGO collaboration that is connected with achieving higher organizational impact in unison with the for-profit sector.

The literature review offers an overview of several obstacles that both sides may face and how to overcome them, as well broad facilitators, however these merely pose loose fragments to the issue at hand (e.g. Dahan et al., 2010; Heap 2000; Pedersen & Pedersen, 2013). The findings show however, that the motivations in engaging in a specific partnership also set the ground for the potential challenges the partners may encounter during their collaboration. By building on the theoretical framework, these determinants are specified and three distinct levels of challenges and facilitators in NGO-business partnerships are identified: the ideological, organizational and finally structural level, offering a systematic analysis to the research interest at hand and therefore an approach on how to anticipate and circumvent respective obstacles in collaboration.

Furthermore, the findings put theoretical frameworks such as the Collaboration Continuum (Austin & Seitanidi, 2012a; 2012b) and Porter and Kramer's (2011) concept of Creating Shared Value into question. The reported nature of current NGO-business partnerships, e.g. multilayered collaborations shows not only that often collaborations cannot be placed within these frameworks, but also that the hierarchy of the proposed stages in terms of generated value remains inapplicable, as reaching organizational goals poses the main driver regardless of collaboration stage, although deeper forms of partnership or CSV are acknowledged. Therefore the reported issue concerning gaps between theoretical considerations and practical implementation and the fact that the majority of partnerships remain in what are defined as less engaged forms of collaboration (Pedersen & Pedersen, 2013) can be attested to the fact that the existing frameworks fail to capture them adequately. This also raises the question of what the advancement of collaboration to deeper forms actually entails.

5.1. Recommendations for practitioners

Due to the pressing societal relevance as well as impact on organizational success (Austin & Seitanidi, 2012a), this research also aimed to offer insights for practical implementation of successful NGO-business collaborations by investigating the considerations for future partnerships. The identified four phases therefore offer hands-on advice on how to best commence, implement and maintain relationships sustainably. Table 5.1 offers an overview of these phases. These focus on interactions with the collaboration partner, however the findings also underline the need for risk mitigation with external stakeholders such as the public and media by transparently communicating about the nature and impact of the relationship (Shumate & O'Connor, 2010), as well as internal stakeholders such as employees by anchoring the collaboration within the entire organization and not just management level.

Table 5.1 Phases of successful partnerships

Phase	Processes	Gain
Establishing a foundation	Constant dialogue	Determining organizational fit
	Finding synergies	Building a relationship, establishing trust
	Determining motivations, resources and joined goal	Partnership's general direction
Determining outcomes	Identifying how joined goal will be reached (implementation steps)	Concretization of collaboration
	Possible offered value to one another	Determining mutual benefit
	Responsibilities, financial resources	Risk mitigation
	Composing official agreements	
Relationship management	Throughout collaboration: constant exchange & evaluation	Maintaining trust
	Formal & informal level	Ensuring mutual benefit
	Management of expectations through transparency	Possible operational improvements
Building on previous successes	Review of partnership	Finding possibilities for new partnerships
	Underlining gained value to partner	Deepen / advance collaboration

5.2. Limitations

Although conducted with high rigor, several limitations of the research need to be noted. Firstly, the sample consisted of eleven interviewees. Ideally data collection should have been continued until saturation was reached and may therefore have included a few more respondents. Furthermore, the sample was unequally distributed in terms of nationality and ultimately only included interviewees from Central Europe. Both of these shortcomings resulted from difficulties in the recruitment process, which ultimately led to time constraints during data collection. However the interviews were conducted with highly experienced professionals in the field of NGO-business collaborations, which further counterweighs the limited number of participants.

Secondly this study only included data gathered from interviews from professionals in the non-profit sector and no respondents involved in cross-sectorial collaborations from the for-profit side. Insights referring to business' motivations and behavior are therefore based on NGO perception. Additionally, interviewees were all active at NGOs operating in the social field, such as humanitarian relief or children's rights and did for example not include members from environmental NGOs, that may have different perspectives on partnering with businesses.

5.3. Directions for Future Research

As scholarship on NGO-business collaborations remains limited (Yaziji & Doh, 2009), several directions for future research can be identified:

Firstly, as the findings focus on insights from in-depth interviews conducted in the field NGOs with a social mission, future research may focus on including a broader range of NGOs such as environmentally oriented organizations or advocacy groups to investigate if and how respective findings diverge from this thesis. This approach not only implicates a larger sample, but also a more diverse one in terms of origin, such as NGOs located in Asia or North American countries, as only NGOs from three European countries were included at this point. Such a study would therefore give new nuances to the findings at hand and offer insights on possible differences based on culture.

Additionally future research may focus on incorporating the business perspective on the determinants of NGO-business collaborations to gain complementary insights. In this case it can be of particular interest to include members from organizations that collaborate with each other to underline the differences in how the both sides perceive collaborations reflecting on particular instances of partnership.

Furthermore, as the findings underline that common frameworks and concepts towards partnership prove to inapplicable, further research can set upon reevaluating respective theoretical models based on the findings of this research project. This can include large-scale studies which aim at establishing new frameworks that can be further applied by practitioners.

Finally, another direction may focus on stakeholder's perspective on NGO-businesses collaborations, as the findings underlined the need to communicate and incorporate them in the decision-making process to ensure continuous support as well as to maintain the role of voices of civil society.

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Appendix A – Interview Guide

Introductory text

My name is Jasmin Memaran and I am a graduate student at Erasmus University Rotterdam, studying Media & Business at the Erasmus School for History, Culture and Communication.

I am currently writing my thesis on the relationships between non-governmental organizations and businesses and how they form in-depth collaborations, which is why I would like to find out more about the partnerships and collaborations *[NGO's name]* is engaged with.

As I mentioned in the consent form I provided you with, I would like to audio record and transcribe this interview for the following analysis, if you do not mind. [Start recording if consent is given]

I would like to stress again the following points that you can find in your copy of the consent form I gave to you earlier:

Please note that the interview will be anonymized (unless wanted differently) and the interview and its results will only be used for the purpose of this thesis.

I am going to ask you open questions on the relationships and collaborations *[NGO's name]* maintains with businesses.

If you feel uncomfortable about answering a certain question, please feel free to deny the answer at any time during the interview.

If you do not have any questions, I would like to begin.

Icebreaker & Introduction

1. Please tell me about yourself and your role in *[NGO's name]*.

- How long have you been working here?
- What are your responsibilities at *[NGO's name]*?
- How long have you been working this field?

- **Conditions & Motivations for partnership**

(Your organization collaborates with companies.)

2. Why is *[NGO's name]* partnering with businesses?

- Which other partners do you seek for collaborations? E.g. public, NGOs

3. What does *[NGO's name]* hope to gain from collaborations?

4. In general, how do you determine if a business is suitable for a possible collaboration?

- How would you describe this process?
- What is the most important element?
- What should a business bring to the table?
- How do you determine if a business supports your mission?

5. How have you chosen collaboration partners in the past?

- **Challenges**

6. From your experience, what are the main obstacles during the collaboration forming process?

- Can you recall any particular stumbling blocks while negotiating a past collaboration?

7. How did you *[NGO's name]* overcome these challenges?

8. Do you recall partnerships with companies, which eventually failed?

- When did they fail? (During the formation or execution?)
- Why would you say that they failed?
- How did this failure affect the relationship with *[company name]*

9. In your opinion, why does this general notion exist that NGOs and businesses are unlikely to collaborate or partner with one another?

- **Benefits & Threats**

10. How would you describe the possible benefits that arise from collaborations for your organization / NGOs?

- In your opinion, what was the greatest benefit you experienced through a partnership?

11. Can you describe negative implications of collaborations?
- Can you recall a situation where collaboration posed a threat to your organization?

- **Towards Shared Value**

12. How would you describe your relationship with your collaboration partners?
- use table: Where would you see yourself here?
13. In your own words, what does a Shared Value / in-depth collaboration entail?
- Can you name an example?
14. Would you describe your partnerships as Shared Value collaborations?
-If so, which & why?
15. How do you deepen/strengthen/advance your relationship with collaboration partners?
16. Did you have any previous collaborations with *[company name]*?
- How did you decide to continue working with *[company name]*?
- How does your current partnership differ from the previous ones?

- **Wrap-Up**

17. Do have any printed material on specific partnerships or cases you would be able to share?
18. Could you think of another person / NGO / business who could give me more insights on this topic?
19. Is there anything else you would like to add?

- **Optional**

xx. Does *[NGO's name]* currently have partnerships with other companies?

- How would you describe this partnership?
- How does it differ from your partnership with *[company name]*?
 - Why?
- What does this partnership entail?
- When was this partnership formed?

xx. Which businesses did *[NGO's name]* have partnerships/collaborations with in the past?

- When did the partnerships take place?
- How would you describe the partnership?
- When did the partnership end?

xx. Concerning your current partnership with *[company name]*, could you describe *how* this partnership came into being?

- Why is *[company name]* the right partner for you?
- Can you recall any stumbling blocks while negotiating this collaboration?