NGO influence on women's rights in CSR

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Abstract

Research of the 'Hogeschool van Amsterdam' (2019) shows that in 2018 the average Dutch consumer had 173 clothing items in his wardrobe, of which 50 items had not been worn in the past year. Annually the Dutch consumer buys 46 items, and disposes 40 items. What about the effect of these growing 'clothing mountains' on employees who produce 'fast fashion' clothing? The past decade, the Dutch garment and textile industry has paid increasing attention to the effects of the industry on the environment, labour conditions and human rights.

This thesis researches the question *'to what extent and how do Dutch NGOs influence the advancement of women's rights in CSR processes.* This question has been researched via a case study, focusing on NGO influence in advancing women's rights in the Sustainable Garment and Textile Agreement. This research primarily serves as an investigation of NGO influence and their role as emerging CSR actor in light of the evolving *political CSR* discourse: a multi-stakeholder process of CSR. Second, it explores how numerous NGOs approach the advancement of women's rights. To do so, a conceptual model was created based on conditioning factors, NGO strategies and influence factors, deriving from prior research. The overall findings confirm that NGOs are of high influence in the advancement of women's rights in CSR and assert influence by performing predominantly symbolic strategies. Although several structural power resources constrain NGOs in their efforts, their knowledge of specific issues and access to local networks empowers them to assert influence. This research can add several findings to the existing literature. First, NGOs are effectively adapting to their role as an actor in CSR issues, and have maximum leverage when they make use of strategic collaboration with other NGOs. Secondly, the collaboration between NGOs and private firms to combat CSR issues is intensifying increasingly. Firms and NGOs have become more prone to work close together and assertively contest issues in production- and supply chains. However, this finding should be put in perspective as signatory companies are often small and medium enterprises, and not large multinationals. A last significant finding is that NGOs oftentimes integrate the advancement of women's rights with other CSR priorities like earning a living wage, creating freedom of association and actions against child labour. These are more inclusive priorities and improvement on these issues also leads to better women's rights. These findings can be used to further explore political CSR and the importance of NGOs as CSR actors. The findings on the added value of NGO involvement and how they frame women's rights can also be taken into account while developing future IRBC Agreements.

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List of abbreviations

(I)CSR	(International) Corporate Social Responsibility
(I)RBC	(International) Responsible Business Conduct
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
SEZ	Special Economic Zone
The Agreement	The Sustainable Garment and Textile Agreement

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Chapter 1: NGO influence in advancing women's rights in CSR

This research focuses on the involvement of *non-governmental organisations* (NGOs) in *corporate social responsibility* (CSR) and attempts to contribute to the debate on NGO influence. For this purpose, the focus is placed on the influence of Dutch NGOs in advancing women's rights in the Sustainable Garment and Textile Agreement. This Dutch domestic CSR agreement for the garment and textile industry was established in the aftermath of several accidents occurring in 2012 and 2013.

The years 2012 and 2013 saw some tragic events for the garment and textile industry. On the 24th of November 2012, the Dhaka garment factory in India caught fire, which cost the lives of at least 112 people. Only several months later, the well-known Rana Plaza collapse occurred in Bangladesh. During this disastrous accident, no less than 1.132 people lost their lives, and more than 2.500 got injured. Amongst them, mainly women (Burke & Hammadi, 2012; ILO, 2018). These accidents have awoken the world to the hazardous working conditions that many workers face in their daily jobs in the garment and textile factories (ILO, 2018). Not only in Dhaka, but in garment and textile factories all over the world, many employees suffer from unsafe and exploitative working conditions. Especially girls and women are confronted with unsafe working environments, the lack of earning a living wage, discrimination and violence (Oonk, Overeem, Peepercamp, & Theuws, 2012; Ooijens, 2017). The urgency these events created, have set wheels in motion. In the aftermath of these disasters, the Bangladesh Accord was established. This Accord is a legally binding agreement on *International Responsible Business Conduct* (IRBC) between brands and trade unions operating in Bangladesh. Companies that signed this accord, committed to work towards a safer and healthier garment industry in Bangladesh (Bangladesh Accord, 2019).

Concern in the Netherlands | Around the same time, the urgency to improve Responsible Business Conduct practices (RBC) of Dutch companies operating in the garment and textile industry increased as well. Although Dutch companies only cover 1% of the global market, they felt a responsibility to improve the working conditions of the employees in their production and supply chains (SER, 2016). Not long after the incidents, the Dutch minister of Foreign Trade and Development initiated the start of a multi-stakeholder process to establish IRBC Agreements for Dutch companies operating in sectors that pose risks on the environment, labour conditions and human rights. The Sustainable Garment and Textile Agreement (hereinafter referred

April – May 2013
Rana Plaza incident, Bangladesh Accord

June 2013
Plan of Action – Dutch branch organisations

April 2014
SER advice on IRBC Agreements

March 2016
Establishment Sustainable Garment and Textile Agreement

Current status
92 signatory companies, representing 48% of the Dutch garment and textile sector

to as 'the Agreement') was the first agreement that got established. It was officially signed in 2016 by the Dutch government, three branch organisations, 55 firms, two labour unions and five NGOs. Signatory companies committed to implement IRBC practices and to improve, amongst others, women's rights. 'Discrimination and gender' are addressed in the Agreement as one of the nine specific themes that companies should take into account when analysing the most urgent issues in their supply and production chain. These issues ought to be confronted by demonstrating *Due Diligence*, as the key principle in a continuous process in which companies are bound to indicate, prevent and reduce actual as well as potential adverse impacts of their own operations or business relationships in the production or supply chain (OECD, 2018; United Nations, 2011). It was stipulated that companies have to perform a risk analysis, compose three priority issues and construct a Plan of Action to combat these issues (SER, 2016). Hitherto the amount of signatories has expanded and equals 92 companies that make up for 48% of the Dutch market (SER, 2019a).

A new strategy | In the Agreement, NGOs have the same formal decision-making power as do government, firms, branch organisations and labour unions. Noteworthy is that NGOs have only recently obtained their roles as formal CSR actors. Along with increasing NGO involvement, is a change in CSR discourse. CSR was traditionally considered a corporate strategy and defined as a business strategy; companies engage in self-regulatory activities and take social responsibility only when it enhances their profit maximisation (Baur & Schmitz, 2012). Accordingly, the traditional CSR paradigm has an economic or instrumentalist perspective. However, the declining role of national governments and their lack of ability to govern the global economy, have led to blurring boundaries between private and public spheres. Nation-states became to rely more on the private sector to stimulate economic development (Ogle, 2004). Shared responsibilities have resulted into a variety of new governance systems, such as international norms, codes of conduct and standards (Levy & Kaplan, 2007). International CSR is currently regulated by the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, OECD-guidelines and the International Labour Standards (SER, 2016). The new context of CSR, spelled the onset for other actors such as NGOs and

Nine priority issues
1. Discrimination and gender
2. Child labour
3. Forced labour
4. Freedom of association
5. Living wage
6. Safety and health in the workplace
7. Raw materials
8. Water pollution and use of chemicals, water and energy
9. Animal welfare

governments to assume greater visibility (Jamali & Keshishian, 2009). Consequently, contemporary scholars emphasise the emerging *political* approach of CSR (Baur & Palazzo, 2011). Political CSR can be defined as '*a multi-actor and multi-level system of rules, standards, norms and expectations, involving a highly political deliberation process that aims at setting and resetting the standards of global business behaviour'* (Grosser, 2016, p. 66). Rather than a single focus on self-regulation, it

covers societal, governmental and multi-stakeholder regulations (Grosser, 2016). Although the alleged effect is that shared responsibilities lead to sustainable economic development, some scholars remain sceptical and emphasise the hazardous working conditions emerging from the increasing authority of multinationals (Braun & Gearhart, 2004; Ogle, 2004; Parwez, 2017). Numerous garment and textile factories are stationed in *Special Economic Zones (SEZs)* which maintain special regulations to attract foreign investment. Working condition measures are often insufficient in SEZs in order to keep production costs low (Parwez, 2017). Nevertheless, international and national initiatives – such as the Agreement – demonstrate that a growing awareness of the need to improve CSR standards is present and can results in new Agreements developed by a multi-stakeholder process.

Is the strategy effective? | Notwithstanding the institutionalisation of NGO involvement, opinions on the influence of NGOs on CSR seem to differ (Arenas, Lozano, & Albareda, 2009). On the one hand, NGOs are considered important drivers of CSR. Their involvement brings a plurality of perspectives to business regulations and new governance systems, as NGOs represent marginalised groups and embody the voice of the less powerful (Grosser, 2016). In addition, NGOs can encourage and monitor regulatory compliance of the private sector (Grosser, 2016). On the other hand, academics question the actual influence of NGOs. NGO influence can be shaped by multiple conditioning factors that can enable or hinder NGOs in shaping CSR practices (Boström & Hallström, 2010). For instance, a lack of resources, informal power or trust between firms and NGOs, can constrain NGOs in their ability to assert influence. The literature demonstrates disparity in NGO influence, but nevertheless shows a common denominator of NGOs as emerging CSR actors, searching for ways to become effective. This gap leaves space for research and will be explored in this research.

Research objective and research question

As stated above, this research looks into NGO influence in advancing women's rights in the Sustainable Garment and Textile Agreement. By focussing on the specific context of the innovative Dutch IRBC agreements, this research attempts to contribute to the literature on NGO influence in political CSR. The following question is leading in this research:

'To what extent and how do Dutch NGOs influence the advancement of women's rights in CSR processes?'

In order to research the main question, this question is split up in several sub-questions that serve as building blocks for the research. The first sub-question sets the over-all scene by exploring the current development of CSR and the relation with NGOs as CSR actors.

What are the possibilities and limitations of NGOs to assert influence in the changing CSR field?

The second and third sub-questions cover the theoretical framework and investigate NGO strategies, if other external factors are of influence and how NGO influence can be measured. This leads to a theoretical framework that is used as the basis of this research.

What influence strategies do NGOs use in their role as CSR actor?
What other external factors influence CSR processes?

The last two sub-questions are empirical and serve the analysis, conclusion and recommendations. Jointly these questions answer 'how' and 'to what extent' Dutch NGOs can influence the advancement of women's rights.

In what ways do Dutch NGOs influence the advancement of women's rights in the Agreement?
Do Dutch NGOs influence the advancement of women's rights in the Agreement?

Research approach

To answer the central research question, this research starts with a literature review. First, the concepts CSR, NGOs and NGO influence are discussed and defined. Subsequently, the contemporary debate on the limitations and possibilities of NGO influences is outlined. The literature review answers the first sub-question.

The theoretical framework examines theories on NGO strategies and influence in CSR, and investigates alternative external factors that are of influence. These theories are merged into a conceptual model which forms the basis of this research. This overview and model provide the answer to the second and third sub-question of the research.

The next chapter fashions the methodology of the research. The most important concepts are operationalised and the choice for a qualitative single case study is outlined. In short, a qualitative design fits best with the research question, because NGO influence cannot easily be turned into a quantitative indicator. Rather, it is defined by the perceptions of stakeholders on what strategies NGOs perform and how effective NGO influence is. Given that the development of IRBC Agreements is a relatively new process, it is of greater value to create a detailed image of this case, instead of searching for generalisable results. The choice to focus on this particular agreement was made because of the current state of the Agreement. This agreement was the first out of eleven to get established, and therefore most information can be found on the development and progress. In addition, as the majority of workers in this industry consists of female employees, the advancement of women's rights is salient and makes a relevant case. These rights are often violated, and participating NGOs have the

advancement of women's rights as one of their priorities. 'Gender equality' is stated in the Agreement as one of the nine priorities that needs to be addressed in order to create a sustainable garment and textile sector (SER, 2016). Important to mention is that the Agreement discusses *'gender equality'* rather than *'women's rights'*. Although the term is different, in this context, there are no real differences between these terms. Both refer to better working conditions for female employees, therefore women's rights and gender equality are used interchangeably within this research.

Also discussed in the methodology, is the method of data gathering. Gathering of information takes place via two channels: first, information is gathered by document analyses of the Garment and Textile Agreement, yearly evaluations of the Agreement and NGO reports. Additionally, secondary documents such as opinion pieces and news articles are analysed. Second, the document analysis is complemented by interviews with representatives of the most important stakeholders. These stakeholders are NGOs, firms, branch organisations, labour unions and the Dutch government. NGOs are asked about their strategies and their perspective on their influence, other respondents receive questions concerning their perspectives on the contribution of NGOs to the Agreement. As follows, NGO influence is not only analysed from a NGO perspective, but from the point of view of the other stakeholders as well.

Lastly, to construct the data analysis, the operationalised conceptual model is put into practice. The findings serve as the answer of the last two sub-questions. Based on the results, the conclusion, discussion and policy recommendations are drawn.

Academic relevance

This research contributes to the academic debate on NGO influence in CSR processes in three ways. First, it gives an insight into the innovative CSR process of the Dutch IRBC Agreements. Although this emerging form of CSR is rising in importance and is frequently part of political debates, it has not yet been researched extensively. Second, it enhances our understanding of the general contribution of NGOs to CSR processes. As NGOs are becoming more skilled in embodying their roles as NGO actors in the changing CSR discourse, this can add new information to the literature. In addition, whereas much of the research merely focuses on NGO strategies, this research attempts to move beyond strategies and tests several conceptual models that can measure NGO influence. In the analytical framework, attention is paid to the underlying conditioning factors that limit or empower NGO influence. Lastly, much of the contemporary research is focused on the involvement of NGOs in CSR processes related to environmental issues. This research puts the spotlight on human rights issues, particularly women's rights. Besides the urgency to improve women's rights, this topic is of interest as NGOs approach women's rights in different ways. On the one hand, NGOs address women's right as a separate issue and address the specific salience of the lack of women's rights. On the other hand, women's rights can be supplementary to larger and more inclusive issues. such as a living wage or freedom of association. Given this complexity, it is important to understand how NGOs advance

women's rights in different ways. The results give a distinct insight in the different approaches, which can be of value for contemporary literature.

Societal relevance

The societal relevance of this research is defined by the possible contribution of this research to the future development of the Agreement and to those still being developed. Currently, eleven out of thirteen sectors that impose risks, have established an IRBC Agreement (SER, 2019a). The other agreements are still in development. This research can offer insights in NGO influence and on how women's rights can be addressed in the development of future IRBC agreements. In particular, NGOs can use this information as a preliminary evaluation of their strategies and to assert how influential their strategies are. Furthermore, it sheds light on the different ways women's rights can be addressed; as a self-standing issue or as a part of a larger integrated structure.

Thesis outline

The following chapters expand on this research. First of all, chapter 2 provides a literature review about contemporary literature on NGO influence in CSR. Subsequently, chapter 3 constructs a theoretical framework based on theories of NGO influence. This leads to the development of a new conceptual model that serves as the basis of this research. The methodology chapter outlines how this research is performed via a qualitative single case study. Chapter 5 discusses the results deriving from document analyses and interviews with stakeholders. Thereafter, a conclusion is drawn and the main research question is answered in chapter 6. Chapter 6 provides a discussion of the results and a discussion of the limitations of this research. Finally, the research terminates by providing several policy recommendations for the development of the Agreement and for possible other IRBC Agreements

Chapter 2: Literature review

The literature review elaborates on the most important concepts of this study. First of all, this chapter outlines contemporary research on the changing CSR field and the development of NGO involvement as CSR actors. After defining NGOs and NGO influence, the academic debate on limitations and possibilities for NGOs as CSR actors is outlined.

From instrumental to political CSR

There is a growing body of literature that recognises a shift has taken place in the CSR debate (Baur & Schmitz, 2012; Levy & Kaplan, 2007; Scherer & Palazzo, 2011). Although there is no consensus on the precise definition of CSR, scholars generally distinguish between two approaches. The traditional approach of CSR, which is categorised as *economic* or *instrumental* CSR, and the emerging approach of *political* CSR. Before diving into the definition of political CSR, it is important to understand what characterises traditional CSR.

Traditional CSR can be seen as a 'business case'; firms perform societal responsibilities if it benefits the future of the firm (Scherer & Palazzo, 2011). Corporations are assumed to establish social responsibility only when it serves their profit maximisation (Baur & Schmitz, 2012). Hence, firms' contributions to social development goals only become real when key components can become commercialised. Such approaches, however, fail to address the blurring boundaries between the state, the private sector and the civil society (Baur & Schmitz, 2012; Scherer & Palazzo, 2011). Globalisation processes have changed the division of labour and responsibilities of businesses, government and civil society. Nation states are facing declining abilities to regulate international business activities, to provide public goods and to compensate externalities (Scherer & Palazzo, 2011). In order to address these challenges adequately, the need for multi-stakeholder cooperation with non-state actors has increased. Consequently, during the past decades the private sector has become actively involved in matters that traditionally were regarded as government activities (Scherer & Palazzo, 2011). Corporations have expanded their power and started to shape political realities. The private sector moved into the political sphere and is expected to move beyond mere compliance with legal standards and to address social issues, such as human rights, environmental issues and labour standards (Den Hond & De Bakker, 2007; Jenkins, 2005; Scherer & Palazzo, 2011). Demands for greater accountability from the private sector set the pace for academics to embrace the notion of *political CSR*. This alternative strand views the private sector not only as an economic actor, but as a political actor in the globalised world as well (Baur & Schmitz, 2012). Resulting from the increasing pressure on firms to address the negative social and ecological external effects of their operations, their responsibilities related to the promotion of labour, environmental and human rights standards are placed on top of the CSR agenda (Baur & Schmitz, 2012; Jenkins, 2005). In this new approach, CSR governance processes are not regulated by the state, but administered by a collaboration of the state, corporations and civil

society. This model is characterised by self-regulation and voluntary rules (Scherer & Palazzo, 2011). Above all, not only the private sector has become more invested, but the current multi-stakeholder approach of CSR has opened up opportunities for NGOs to become more involved (Huijstee & Glasbergen, 2010). However, scholars disagree on sustainability of the political CSR approach and the power NGOs have in nudging the private sector into CSR policies. Some argue that emerging CSR regulations created scope for NGOs to assert considerable influence in CSR, whereas others are sceptical and claim that firms have occupied the space of the declining government and primarily create beneficial self-regulations (Doh & Guay, 2014; Ogles, 2017; Scherer & Palazzo, 2011;).

Political CSR; a tenable approach?

The formal decentralisation of authoritative power to non-state actors and the concomitant processes of blurring lines between the political and economic sphere, has had mixed consequences. From 1970-1980 onwards, governments became to rely more on the private sector for development policies. The declining role of governments and their reliance on the private sector made way for multinational organisations to take upon a development role and to link their interests with governmental interest in economic development (Ogle, 2004 p. 1444). One of the clearest examples of private sector involvement is the proliferation of so-called Special Economic Zones (SEZs). SEZs seek to promote economic development by providing incentives such as low tax regimes and light government oversight to attract foreign investment (Ogle, 2004; World Bank, 2017). The proliferation of SEZs in India, China, Vietnam and other textile manufacturing countries, aimed to create jobs and to stimulate economic development (Braun & Gearhart, 2004; Ngai, 2004; Parwez, 2016). However, the special regulations in SEZs especially attracts investors interested in cheap labour and a controlled working environment (Parwez, 2016). Given the focus on minimising production costs and cheap labour, it is labour that suffers from non-implementation of welfare measures. As of yet, in a number of low-skill manufacturing countries and in countries with SEZs, the organisation of labour unions remains prohibited (Braun & Gearhart, 2004, p. 191). As national laws are adapted for SEZ, these zones can become instruments of labour exploitation considering working conditions. Employees often earn less than the minimum wage and have longer working hours (Parwez, 2016, p. 138-142).

Contrarily, other scholars refute this sceptical image of multinational organisations by emphasising that companies engage in self-regulation to close global gaps in legal regulations. Due to state failures or absence of the implementation of basic human citizenships rights, companies frequently occupy the function of protecting citizens (Scherer & Palazzo, 2011). However, as neither companies or nation-states are able to regulate the global economy, other non-state actors have to be involved as well. The need for multilateral governance structures empowered NGOs to pressure multinational corporations to become more responsible. In these processes, NGO are valued for their contribution of knowledge and resources. Consequently, they acquired an important role in influencing the interaction between the

private sector and governments, while establishing terms of international business rules, norms and practices (Scherer & Palazzo, 2011). Seen in this way, NGOs became important actors in the attempted pressuring of and collaboration with corporations to govern their market behaviour and strategies (Doh & Guay, 2004). NGOs are still developing their roles as NGO actors in order to become more influential, but the last decades have provided prove for the increasing institutionalisation of NGOs within CSR (Arena et al., 2009; Huijstee & Glasbergen, 2010; Jonker & Nijhof, 2006). SEZs and malpractices in the textile industry are still very much present today, but the last decades have given rise to initiatives on both an international level (UNGPs on Business and Human Rights, the OECD-guidelines, the International Labour Standards) and a national level (the Sustainable Garment and Textile Industry Agreement) that attempt to create better self-regulatory mechanisms which enhance, amongst others, working conditions. These CSR initiatives include governments, companies, labour unions and NGOs.

Defining NGOs: social purpose and club NGOS

Before turning to NGO influence in CSR, it is necessary to clarify what defines a NGO. According to Den Hond (2010), NGOs are '*organisations independent from the state and formally organised on a non-profit basis*' (Den Hond, 2010, p. 173). Winston (2002) points out that NGOs are highly diverse and have different missions, strategies and organisational forms. The most extensive description of NGOs, however, is given by Teegen, Doh and Vachani (2004). They distinguish between two sorts of NGOs: *social purpose NGOs* and *club NGOs*.

If a NGO arises from a *social movement*, it is called a social purpose NGO. A social movement is formed by sustained collective action of a group of individuals who aim for an emerging social change (Teegen et al., 2004). Social purpose NGOs represent the objects or people of the social movement that give rise to the NGO's formation. Consequently, their success is defined by the impact they have on these clients and their communities (Teegen et al., 2004). Social purpose NGOs include for example human rights organisations and environmental groups. Club NGOs, on the other hand, are characterised as 'solidaristic individualists' (Teegen et al., 2004). Their purpose is to promote the interests of their own members, rather than to serve a public-regarding purpose. In other words, their scope is narrower and more inward-looking. Examples of club NGOs are church groups, unions and business associations (Teegen et al., 2004, p. 466). In this research, exclusively social purpose NGOs are analysed. Therefore, Teegen's et al. (2004) definition of social purpose NGOs is used in the remainder of the research: '*NGOs are private, not-for-profit organisations that aim to serve particular societal interests by focusing advocacy and/or operational efforts on social, political and economic goals, including [...] human rights*' (p. 466). Touched upon in this definition, is the nature of *advocacy* and *operational* efforts of NGOs. These characteristics are widely acknowledged by scholars researching NGO roles and strategies (Doh & Guay, 2004; Teegen et al., 2004). NGOs that focus on advocacy aim to influence decision-makers and to represent individuals or groups who lack resources or are excluded from decision-making processes. Advocacy work consists of conducting research, giving advice and setting

agendas. Accordingly, NGOs promote social gain by giving voice to the less powerful and by providing access to institutions (Teegen et al, 2004). NGOs with an operational focus serve as critical 'safety nets,' aiming to interfere in market failures. NGOs take up this responsibility because they hold technical expertise by working in difficult settings. Notwithstanding this division, NGOs oftentimes combine advocacy and operational activities.

NGO influence

Additionally, it is necessary to define what NGO influence entails. The concept of NGO influence remains a difficult topic. Rather than defining NGO influence, many scholars discuss indirect measures of influence. Evidence whether NGO participation truly influences CSR negotiations and outcomes, is limited (Betsill & Corell, 2008). In this regard, Betsill and Corell (2008) have attempted to assess the influence of NGOs in a context of international environmental and labour negotiations. Influence, in this research, *'occurs when one actor intentionally communicates to another so as to alter the latter's behaviour from what would have occurred otherwise'* (Betsill & Corell, 2008, p. 24). This definition signifies two dimensions of influence: intentional NGO communication with other actors during a negotiation process, and the alteration of behaviour of other actors, caused by that communication. As such, to define influence it is necessary to analyse both intentional NGO communication and the behaviour of other actors in the negotiation, resulting from communication with NGOs (Betsill & Corell, 2008). This definition of influence is maintained throughout the research as it provides a clear scope by pointing out that research should look both at intentional NGO communication and at the alterations of behaviour of other stakeholders, in this case represented by the firms.

NGOs as CSR actors; limitations and possibilities

Limitations of NGO involvement

Foregoing definition defines influence as a result of intentional NGO communication. Yet, some scholars suggest that the effect of NGO communication to alter stakeholders' behaviour is rather limited. NGO involvement in CSR is frequently associated with three main risks threatening the credibility and functioning of NGOs.

Co-optation | A common denominator in the literature, is the potential risk of *co-optation* of NGOs (Baur & Schmitz, 2012; Boström & Hallström, 2010; Den Hond & De Bakker, 2007; Grosser, 2016). Baur and Schmitz (2012) define co-optation as '*the process of aligning NGO interests with business interests'* (p. 10). Co-optation is induced when corporations are capable to align the interests of a challenging group with their own goals (Baur & Schmitz, 2012). Scholars are concerned that NGOs alter their strategies and move from critical opposition towards institutional strategies to gain access to

corporate targets. Firm-NGO relationships can distract NGOs from pursuing their mission and limit their willingness to use disruptive strategies (Baur & Schmitz, 2012). According to Baur and Schmitz (2012), NGOs should maintain their independence as a core credential and as a sign of legitimacy if they want to endure their influence.

Accountability | Along with the risk of co-optation, scholars accentuate concerns of NGO *accountability* (Arenas et al., 2004; Noh, 2017). Accountability describes the relationships between an organisation and a set of stakeholders. Being responsive to those stakeholders is expected to enhance the NGO's mandate. It can be seen as the '*the means through which individuals and organisations are held externally to account for their actions and (...) the means by which they take internal responsibility for continuously shaping and scrutinizing organizational missions, goals, and performance*' (Ebrahim, 2003, p. 194). On that account, NGOs are expected to establish '*downward accountability*' measures, because they claim to represent poor and marginalised groups. These measures ensure effective input into decision-making from the people they represent. Drawing upon several case studies, Noh (2017) stresses this argument and demonstrates that NGOs do not sufficiently represent people in developing countries. As a result, NGOs may perform 'elite activism' and promote the interests of groups in developed countries, rather than developing countries (Noh, 2017). Along these lines, increased competition for funding and the need for organisational survival within the field of NGOs has endorsed the dominance of '*upward accountability*' (Baur & Schmitz, 2012). Rather than being accountable to their constituencies, NGOs have to accomplish results in favour of their donors. As such, NGOs are being scrutinised for devoting most of their attention to donors and to reduce accountability to mere financial accounting. The focus on upward accountability threatens the unique position of NGOs and their ability to offer an alternative to state and market dominance (Baur & Schmitz, 2012).

Legitimacy | The last point of critique, is the rising concern on NGO legitimacy (Arenas et al., 2004; Grosser & Moon, 2005; Noh, 2017) In relation to the role of NGOs as CSR actors, most scholars describe NGOs as legitimate partners because of the corporate and social benefits they derive in adjusting social and environmental problems, or avoiding them (Arenas et al, 2004). However, Arenas et al. (2004) stipulate a normative approach in which they view legitimacy as a matter of 'perception, approval and consent', it can be gained or lost in varying ways (Arenas et al, 2004, p. 179)'. In their research about the role of NGOs in CSR, they perform a qualitative analysis of stakeholders' (governments, firms and unions) perceptions on NGOs and of NGOs' self-perceptions. In essence, this research illustrates that these perceptions indicate discrepancies and that stakeholders are concerned with NGO legitimacy. These concerns coalesce around three issues: NGO identities, NGOs' right to intervene in CSR, and the way NGOs intervene (Arenas et al., 2004). Explanations for these concerns derive from multiple perceptions. For instance, NGOs obtain their legitimacy from their mission rather than from their members. Thus, their legitimacy does not depend on downwards accountability. In

addition, NGOs criticise companies while using their resources as funding. This makes their role ambivalent. Finally, stakeholders argue that NGO goals are oftentimes far too ambitious and that NGOs lack knowledge of the business world (Arenas et al., 2004; Grosser & Moon, 2005).

Possibilities for NGO involvement

Opposed to these concerns, numerous scholars emphasise the ample possibilities and benefits of NGO engagement. As stated above, Arena et al. (2004) found evidence that some stakeholders question NGO legitimacy, but this image appears to be rigid.

CSR drivers | Further evidence states that governments and firms perceive NGOs as important drivers of CSR and as generators of visions and values around human rights. Their effort can provoke deeper economic and social changes and can open up new perspectives for business activity. Even more so, NGOs themselves feel confident about their role to play as CSR actor (Arena et al., 2004).

Agenda setters | Furthermore, Doh and Guay (2004) demonstrate that NGOs can influence the political agenda within which corporations must work. NGOs pressure firms to comply both with governmental regulations and with norms and standards advocated by civil society actors. They argue that companies eventually adjust to those standards. Not out of corporate altruism, but as a response to social pressure. Although this perspective points out that traditional CSR, the business case, is still persistent. Doh and Guay (2004) are still optimistic about the possibilities for NGOs to claim authority and agency. This will stimulate NGOs in demanding better monitoring and enforcement mechanisms.

Gender mainstreaming | Grosser and Moon (2005) researched the possibilities for NGOs to influence the issue of gender equality. They demonstrate that NGOs can use CSR as a suitable vehicle for *gender mainstreaming*. Gender mainstreaming aims to promote gender equity via a mainstreaming process that is both technical and political (Grosser & Moon, 2005). The inclusion of gender within the business sector resonates with the change in CSR discourse. Using CSR for gender issues has become possible because the scope of CSR has expanded and has now moved beyond the 'business case' (Grosser & Moon, 2005). As corporations have assumed greater authority on employee rights, they can be held accountable on a number of gender workplace issues. Nonetheless, Grosser and Moon (2005) recognise that corporate reporting on gender equality has been limited so far; information on policies and systems to address equal opportunities has mostly been absent. This raises the question if gender issues are included in national and international voluntary CSR guidelines. Therefore, they argue, it is necessary to involve women's organisations - organisation with a high percentage of participating women - as participants in CSR multi-stakeholder initiatives. Evidence shows that women's organisations have contributed to the development and monitoring of codes of conduct in supply chain, which takes gender issues into account. Grosser and Moon (2005) demonstrate that NGOs can have leverage over firms,

can pressure them to meet certain standards and monitor these standards. Grosser published another article on the involvement of women's NGOs in promoting gender equality (2016). She stresses the rising importance of including gender equality issues as it has become a key issue of international CSR. For instance, gender equality measures are included in the UN Global Compact and the Sustainable Development Goals. Including women's NGOs within multi-stakeholder CSR promotes the plurality of perspectives and enhances the legitimacy of the regulations (Grosser, 2016). Although NGOs are criticised about their legitimacy, they are still valued as the most credible organisations in society. Hence, their involvement as representatives of marginalised groups is of utmost importance (Grosser, 2016).

Answering sub-question 1

Based on the literature review, it is possible to answer the first sub-question of this research: '*What are the possibilities and limitations of NGOs to assert influence in the changing CSR field?*
Surmising the literature, it is possible to make several claims about CSR and NGO influence. The literature outlines that the discourse of CSR is changing. The traditional CSR perspective is making way for a more ample definition of political CSR. Political CSR permits NGOs to become part of CSR processes. Although hitherto multinationals still hold power in setting CSR standards and benefit from special regulations in SEZs, there is a growing demand for a multi-stakeholder approach of political CSR. Although processes of globalisation and the declining role of national governments have mainly benefited multinationals, it simultaneously spelled the onset of NGOs to become more active CSR actors.
The academic debate is divided between academics who stress the potential of NGO influence, and those who dispute NGO influence. Some reason that NGOs drive CSR processes, represent marginalised groups, monitor compliance and put issues on the political agenda. However, NGOs are criticised because firm-NGO partnerships can result in co-optation, NGOs sometimes lack legitimacy and do not always adhere to downwards accountability.

Chapter 3: Theoretical framework

Chapter 3 reviews relevant theories of NGO influence in CSR. These theories accentuate different parts of NGO influence. Jointly they provide a comprehensive conceptualisation of NGO influence. After discussing the differences, the theories are combined within a conceptual model serving as the basis of this research.

NGO influence in CSR

As stated in the literature review, this research applies the definition of influence used by Betsill and Corell (2008). As this definition is rather broad, Betsill and Correll (2008) elaborate on five indicators to assess how NGOs influence CSR processes (Figure 1). These indicators are used to construct the basis for the conceptual model of this research. The first three indicators relate to NGO influence on the negotiation process. The first indicator, *issue framing*, portrays how the issue at stake is conceptualised prior to and during the negotiations, and how NGOs contributed to the understanding of the issue. Second, the issue of *agenda setting* concerns both a specific phase of the policy process and an ongoing process during negotiations. NGOs can influence negotiations by prioritising certain issues and by aiming to put those issues on the agenda.

Indicators of NGO influence (cells contain examples of the types of evidence analysts should include in the table and/or accompanying narrative)

		Evidence		NGO influence? (yes/no)
	Influence indicator	Behavior of other actors …	…as caused by NGO communication	
Influence on negotiating process	Issue framing	• How was the issue understood prior to the start of the negotiations? • Was there a shift in how the issue was understood once the negotiations were underway?	• What did NGOs do to bring about this understanding?	
	Agenda setting	• How did the issue first come to the attention of the international community? • What specific items were placed on or taken off the negotiating agenda? • What were the terms of debate for specific agenda items?	• What did NGOs do to shape the agenda?	
	Positions of key actors	• What was the initial position of key actors? • Did key actors change their position during the negotiations?	• What did NGOs do to shape the position of key actors?	
Influence on negotiating outcome	Final agreement/ procedural issues	• Does the agreement create new institutions to facilitate NGO participation in future decision making processes? • Does the agreement acknowledge the role of NGOs in implementation?	• What did NGOs do to promote these procedural changes?	
	Final agreement/ substantive issues	• Does the agreement reflect the NGO position about what should be done on the issue?	• What did NGOs do to promote these substantive issues?	

Table 1: Indicators of NGO influence. Source: Betsill and Corell (2008)

The last indicator is the *position of key actors,* and if stakeholders changed their position during the negotiations. In this model, key actors consist of firms and states. The two remaining indicators relate to the effect of NGOs on the final agreement, being the outcomes of *procedural* and *substantive issues*. The first addresses how decisions are made in the future and if NGOs participate in decision-making. The latter refers to specific demands on member states; if NGO positions have led to certain demands imposed on states (Betsill & Corell, 2008, p. 33-36). Betsill and Correll (2008) believe that individually neither of the indicators can point to a specific level of NGO influence. Only if these indicators are aggregated, it becomes possible to measure NGO influence.

Notwithstanding the value of this model, several aspects of NGO influence remain unaddressed. Betsill and Corell (2008) do not pay attention to the different strategies NGOs use to influence the negotiation process and outcome, and to external influential factors. Accordingly, the next section of this chapter provides additional theories on NGO strategies and on conditioning factors.

NGO strategies

To indicate NGO strategies, research of Den Hond and De Bakker (2007) on ideologically motivated activism, was compared with research of Frooman (1999) on NGO strategies as stakeholder strategies. Frooman emphasises the relationship and dependency between actors involved in a negotiation. However, this theory provides additional information, but appeared less relevant for the researched multi-stakeholder approach of this case study. Therefore, the discussion of his research has been placed in Appendix 1.

Den Hond and De Bakker (2007) reason that tactics and strategies to influence social corporate change depend on the ideological position of a stakeholder, in this case 'activist groups'. In their research, social movement- and institutional change theories are used to explore how activist groups influence corporate social change activities (2007). Activist groups are viewed as stakeholder groups that represent a social movement, or that claim to do so (Den Hond & De Bakker, 2007, p. 903). As Teegen et al. (2004) argue, social purpose NGOs are formed by a group of individuals who represent a social movement. Thus, social purpose NGOs can be placed within the definition of activist groups used in the article of Den Hond and De Bakker. The authors distinguish between '*reformative*' and '*radical*' activist groups. Reformative groups believe that companies cause problems because their lack of attention for societal welfare, but that they can be part of a solution to improve societal welfare. Radical groups on the other hand, reject the notion that companies can be part of a solution (Den Hond & De Bakker, 2007). Nevertheless, both radical and reformative groups aim to alter or replace standards that do not address corporate societal change. These standards are formed by informal and formal institutions, such as CSR procedures (Den Hond & De Bakker, 2007). Although activist groups with

intermediate ideological positions exist, the authors focus on ideology as a significant dimension in their choice for protest tactics (Den Hond & De Bakker, 2007).

In order to highlight how activist groups attempt to alter institutions, Den Hond and De Bakker (2007) distinguish between *damage* and *gain* strategies, which can be *material* or *symbolic*. Material damage strategies, on the one hand, imply the increase of costs of the decision makers to continue with contested decisions or policies. For example, enduring pressure of NGOs by pursuing boycotts and spreading bad publicity can increase costs of companies to do damage control. Symbolic damage strategies on the

Symbolic gain	Symbolic damage
Material gain	Material damage

Table 2: NGO strategies. Source: Den Hond and de Bakker (2007)

other hand contain a threat of conflicting material damage, as activist groups try to influence the mental association that consumers have of a firm (Den Hond & De Bakker, 2007). Conflicting symbolic damage has become a feasible strategy due to the rise of mass media. Reputational damage of a company can for example be realised by spreading bad publicity of a firm on social media. Conversely, symbolic gain can lead to material gain. For instance, good publicity can lead to the reinforcement of a firm's reputation, which can increase the turnover (Den Hond & De Bakker, 2007). In general, reformative activist groups make more use of symbolic strategies. Inflicting material damage might cause alienation of a significant part of their constituency. This can lead to a decline of the resources which provide them with leverage in their engagement with firms. Thus, in order to remain collaboration, reformative groups are more drawn towards symbolic damage- and gain strategies (Den Hond & De Bakker, 2007). Radical groups dispute the structural position and trustworthiness of a firm in general. Therefore, they are more inclined to apply non-conventional protest tactics, such as inflicting material damage (Den Hond & De Bakker, 2007).

Conditioning factors

NGO influence remains an ambiguous concept and a difficult concept to get a grip on. Some scholars argue that rather than a fixed number of variables defining NGO influence, it strongly depends on conditioning factors which enable or restrict NGOs in influencing CSR (Boström & Hallström, 2010; Doh & Guay, 2004). Boström and Hallström (2010) claim that the *institutional-*, *structural-*, and

discursive contexts shape NGO influence in international negotiations. Although these conditioning factors relate to the international arena, similar conditioning factors take place on a national level.

The formal and informal institutional context consists of rules and procedures. These rules and procedures favour certain actions and categories of actors, while they can constrain others (Boström & Hallström, 2010). Although NGOs are given access to a multi-stakeholder process, aligned formal and informal arrangements might create asymmetries in power between the participants. An example is the classification of participants of a multi-stakeholder process. Participating NGOs can be key participants of a negotiation, or they can be merely involved as consultants to provide advice. For the reasons addressed above, NGOs depend on formal and informal institutions of a multi-stakeholder which shape their influence (Boström & Hallström, 2010).

Besides rules and procedures, also underlying (asymmetrical) structures can influence NGO efforts. For example, the dominant structure of global capitalism provides multinational organisations with a privileged position in global governance. Global capitalism privileges multinationals because these firms are indispensable and rich in resources (Boström & Hallström, 2010). Especially in market regulated regulations firms obtain a privileged position. Power asymmetries can also depend on the amount of resources one stakeholder has, compared to another. Structural power asymmetries between firms and NGOs are often caused by a lack of material resources for NGOs. On the one hand, the asymmetry in resources often constrains NGOs to participate effectively in long-term multi-stakeholder processes (Boström & Hallström, 2010). On the other hand, NGOs might have access to other sorts of resources that firms lack. Jonker and Nijhof (2006) indicate that NGOs generally have access to four resources that firms lack: inspirational and volunteer assets, community networks, issue knowledge and a community reputation (Jonker & Nijhof, 2006, p. 458). These resources can provide NGOs with leverage to influence negotiation processes.

Finally, discourses empower or constrain NGOs through the spread of systems of knowledge and meaning (Boström & Hallström, 2010, p. 54). Currently, the growing discourse of political CSR enables NGOs to participate in multi-stakeholder approaches of CSR. In the last few years not only the attention for IRBC practices increased, but the attention for gender equality grew as well.

Conceptual model

In order to answer the research question, I make use of the analytical frameworks and theories mentioned above. Due to the complexity of NGO influence and the many factors that relate to it, it is only possible to answer the research question by integrating these frameworks. Therefore, this research uses the framework constructed by Betsill and Corell (2008) as the basis for a new conceptual model, and enlarges this model with NGO strategies and conditioning factors (Figure 3).

What changes in the new conceptual model, is the concept of 'intended communication'. Betsill and Corell (2008) do not elaborate on the definition of intended NGO communication and what factors can

be categorised as communication. When identifying intended NGO communication, this research looks at the strategies outlined by Den Hond and De Bakker (2007): symbolic damage, symbolic gain, material damage and material gain strategies. This component facilitates the identification of different types of NGO strategies. A second alteration of the model was made by adding a component of conditioning factors. The theoretical framework discusses the institutional-, structural-, and discursive contextual factors of Boström and Hallström (2010). These factors capture a wide image of varying contextual factors that influence the negotiations and outcome. Furthermore, a small alteration is made in Betsill and Corell's (2008) definition of stakeholders and if their position has altered. Opposed to the international context of the original framework, IRBC Agreements are made on a national level (although it covers an international sector). Therefore, the most important stakeholders of this research are national stakeholders, rather than states and international firms.

A combination of these three models serves as the conceptual model of this research. The conditioning factors form the first part of the model to indicate the context in which this case takes place. The second part of the model is formed by NGO strategies. The overview of NGO strategies identifies NGO strategies of the respondents. The influencing factors form the last part of the model. The influencing factors facilitate the analysis of the success of NGO influence. After analysing all indicators, the results provide the answer to the central research question and indicate how much influence NGOs have in advancing women's rights in CSR processes.

Conditioning factors

Institutional context	Formal and informal institutions that favour or hinder NGO participation
Structural context	Structural asymmetries of power resources that shape NGO participation
Discursive context	Systems of knowledge and meaning that enable or constrain NGO participation

NGO strategies

Symbolic gain	Strategies attempting to positively subvert dominant meanings, ideologies, and discourses. Aim to reinforce the firm's reputation in order to increase the turn over.
Symbolic damage	Strategies attempting to negatively subvert dominant meanings, ideologies, and discourses. Protest results in symbolic damage if it is made clear that the decision maker is publicly typified as non-complying with institutionalized rules, values, or categories.
Material gain	Strategies based on economic calculation. Aim to reward firms for particular policies or practices.
Material damage	Strategies based on economic calculation. Aim to disturb or slow down the normal operational rhythm or to damage the property of a decision maker. Protesters increase the cost the decision maker must bear to continue the contested decisions or policies.

Influence factors

	Influence factor	Behaviour of other actors….	…. as caused by NGO communication
Influence on negotiation process	**Issue framing**	How was the issue understood prior to the start of the negotiations? Was there a shift in how the issue was understood once the negotiations were underway?	What did NGOs do to bring about this understanding?
	Agenda setting	How did the issue first come to the attention of the stakeholders? What specific items were placed on or taken off the negotiation agenda? What were the terms of debate for specific agenda items?	What did NGOs do to shape the agenda?
	Position of key actors	What was the initial position of key actors? Did key actors change their position during the negotiations?	What did NGOs do to shape the position of the key actors?
Influence on negotiation outcome	**Final agreement/ procedural issues**	Does the agreement create new institutions to facilitate NGO participation in future decision-making? Does the agreement acknowledges the role of implementation of NGOs?	What did NGOs do to promote these procedural changes?
	Final agreement/ substantive issues	Does the agreement reflect the NGO position about what should be done on the issue?	What did NGOs do to promote these substantive issues?

Figure 1: Integrated conceptual model, adapted from Boström and Hallström (2010), Den Hond & De Bakker (2007), Betsill & Corell (2008),

Answering sub-question 2 & 3

Stemming from the theoretical framework, the next two sub-questions can be answered. To begin with; '*What influence strategies do NGOs use in their role as CSR actor?'* NGOs can assert influence in CSR during a negotiation process by focussing on issue framing, agenda setting and the position of key actors. If this is successful, NGOs can influence the outcome of the Agreement. This becomes visible in procedural and substantive issues. In order to influence the negotiation process and the negotiation

outcome, NGOs make use of several strategies. As stated by Den Hond and de Bakker (2007), reformative activist groups have a strong focus on symbolic damage and symbolic gain strategies, whereas radical NGOs are mostly motivated to inflect material damage strategies.

Subsequently, the question; '*What other external factors influence CSR processes?'*, can be answered. Deriving from the literature, several conditioning factors should be taken into account. Institutional, structural and discursive contextual factors appear to interfere in the development of an agreement. Given the increase of NGOs that are formally involved as equal partners in CSR negotiations and because the momentum for political CSR is growing, it is assumed that the institutional and discursive contextual factors favour NGO influence. The structural context is double-sided; NGO's access to networks and a trustworthy reputation might enable NGO influence, but their lack of financial resources might hinder NGO influence. As of yet, it is not possible to conclude if the conditioning factors mainly enable or constrain NGOs in their influence on advancing women's rights in the Agreement.

Chapter 4: Methodology

This chapter elaborates on the methodology that is used to perform this research. To start with, the research design and the case selection are outlined. Thereafter, this chapter discusses how the main concepts are operationalised and how data was gathered and analysed. Lastly, the reliability and validity of the methodology are examined.

Research design

This research is performed by using a single case study design. Case studies form unique contexts for analysing a specific theme, while taking into account a broad and diverse set of explanatory factors. The value of such research relates to the growing theoretical trend of taking factors such as ideas, norms and discourses as cornerstones of analytical frameworks (Blatter & Haverland, 2014, p. 6). Case studies are small-N studies; therefore they provide a researcher with the opportunity to explore perceptions and motivations of important actors (Blatter & Haverland, 2014). In addition, case studies can take multiple and diverse theoretical frameworks into account. By acknowledging different theoretical camps within social sciences, case studies can build bridges to close academic gaps (Blatter & Haverland, 2014). Building bridges between theories is attempted by researching a diverse set of explanatory factors of NGO influence, deriving from different fields of research. Accordingly, a qualitative case study design is very much suitable. Quantitative research would not have created profitable results in this research. As Betsill and Corell explain, 'quantification of research on NGO influence is trivial as it would create a false impression of measurability of a phenomenon that is highly intangible and complex' (2008, p. 32). Furthermore, this design enables a researcher to test if an independent variable is a factor that has an autonomous influence on a dependent variable (Blatter & Haverland, 2014). This is relevant when a new policy or organisational innovation is introduced, which is the case of this research.

Case selection

This research focuses on a single case study. Single case studies emphasise the intensive examination of the setting. Due to the importance of conditioning factors in this research, this design is deemed suitable (Bryman, 2012). Above all, it is important to choose a case in which the researcher has access to a rich amount of empirical evidence. As the Agreement has been established more than three years ago, multiple evaluations have been executed and many NGOs have written reports about it. Hence, a substantial amount of evidence is available. Furthermore, Bryman (2012) outlines that single case studies can take different forms; they can be critical-, typical-, revelatory-, unique- or longitudinal cases. Single case studies are relevant research designs when a certain case forms a unique or extreme example (Yin, 2003). The Agreement is chosen because it is a *unique case* as women's rights are perceived to be at stake in the garment and textile sector. Most of the employees working in the garment and textile

industry, are women. For this reason, the promotion of women's rights is salient. The other eleven established agreements do not have a clear focus on the advancement of women's rights. Consequently, these cases are less relevant to research the advancement of women's rights. In addition, this case study can also be characterised as a *typical* case study. Although the development of national IRBC Agreements is quite a new phenomenon and the urgency of women's rights is exceptional, the rules and procedures of this agreement are similar to those of the development of other sectoral agreements. Thus, the structure of this case is *typical* for the development of IRBC Agreements, but the emphasis on women's rights in this case is *unique.*

Respondent selection

The respondents are chosen based on their involvement and position within the Agreement. In order to obtain a comprehensive image of NGO influence, it was necessary to interview representatives of the five formal parties of the Agreement: NGOs, firms, branch organisations, labour unions and the Dutch government. Together, these stakeholders form the total population of this research. All these stakeholders are involved with the Agreement but take upon different roles. Within the Agreement it is possible to distinguish between three different groups of participants (SER, 2016):

- *Signatories*: the group of signatories exists of companies that have signed the Agreement and committed to achieve the established goals.
- *Participating parties*: the participating parties are organisations that help to reach the goals of the Agreement. These organisations represent all five groups of stakeholders.
- *Supporters:* supporters are not directly involved but support the Agreement. These organisations can be companies which are not directly related to the garment and textile industry, such as NGOs, banks or international organisations.

The five stakeholders' groups are represented in the *Steering Group* and in the *Secretariat* of the Agreement. The Steering Group monitors the compliance with the Agreement and the implementation of the Agreement. Every stakeholder group can select two representatives who take place in the Steering Group (SER, 2016). The Secretariat supports the Steering Group in the implementation of the Agreement. The Secretariat receives the yearly Action Plans of the signatories and addresses possible improvements. This information is treated with confidentiality. The Secretariat is accountable to the Steering Group and reports yearly to the Steering Group (SER, 2016).

Group	Population		Relevant respondents		Respondents (interviewees)	
Signatories	Firms	92	Firms	68	Firms	2

Participants	NGOs	5	NGOs	1	NGOs	1 (2R)
	NGOs that withdrew	*2*	*NGOs that withdrew*	*2*	*NGOs that withdrew*	*1*
	Branch organisations	3	Branch organisations	3	Branch organisations	2
	Labour unions	2	Labour unions	2	Labour unions	1
	Dutch government	1	Dutch government	1	Dutch government	1
Supporters	Organisations (NGOs, banks, government)	17	NGOs	2	NGOs	1
	Total population:	***124***	***Relevant respondents:***	***77***	***Total respondents:***	***10***

Table 3: Total research population, relevant respondents and final respondents, based on data from IRBC Agreement evaluation 2018

The total case population and the amount of respondents per group has been outlined in the table above. The table demonstrates that a selected part of the total population of respondents has participated in this research as an interviewee. The aim was to interview relevant representatives of all stakeholders, represented in the three groups. The criteria for a party to be of interest, was their involvement with the negotiation process, their interest for the advancement of women's rights and to have understanding of NGO influence. Based on these criteria, many organisations could not be classified as relevant respondents. Per group, I will elaborate on the selection of respondents. The final selection of individual respondents is outlined in Table 4.

Signatories

In total, 92 firms participate as *signatories* (SER, 2016). Based on prior set criteria, several firms of this list were chosen as respondents. I reached out to eleven firms that differed in size, that were part of the Agreement from the start in 2016 and that published their IRBC practices online. Due to their long term and active involvement, these firms can provide more information on NGO influence than companies that became involved only recently. Two companies agreed to schedule an interview. Both companies were relatively small (R8, R9). After conducting two interviews, firms appeared to be less relevant stakeholders for this research. Most individual firms do not participate in the negotiations and firms are not often in direct contact with NGOs. Instead, firms collaborate with branch organisation or labour unions. Resulting from this, their information on NGO influence is limited. Branch organisations that represent firms appeared to be of higher relevance. After conducting the two interviews, I decided to focus on the branch organisations rather than firms.

Participants

The group of *participants* exists of several parties. The first party is formed by NGOs. From the participating NGOs, only one NGO has women's rights as their priority. The other NGOs focus on other topics, such as child labour, the environment or animal wellbeing. Therefore, I have only spoken with the NGO that focuses, amongst others, on women's rights. This NGO is represented by respondent 1 and respondent 2. Respondent 1 is currently involved in the development of the Agreement. Respondent 2 was the former director of this organisation and participated in the Steering Group, representing the other NGOs. Currently this NGO is renouncing its role as representative of NGOs, for reasons to be explained below.

Although the NGOs that withdrew from the negotiations are not formally part of the participant group, I did allocate them in this category because they were previously involved in the negotiations and were in the running of becoming a participant. Both NGOs that withdrew work on women's rights and are valuable participants. I managed to interview one of the two NGOs.

The next party exists of branch organisations (R6, R7). Branch organisations represent their member firms in the Steering Group. These organisations have been actively involved with the development of the Agreement from the start. All three participating branch organisations were contacted, and two organisations had time to give an interview. Both respondents were involved with the Agreement from 2016 onwards, therefore they were able to provide information on both the negotiation process and the implementation of the Agreement.

The labour unions represent the rights of employees, both in the Netherlands and in countries in which garments and textile companies operate. Two labour unions participate in the Agreement. Both labour unions collaborate with NGOs and would have been valuable to interview. Due to limited availability of respondents, I have spoken to one.

The last party is formed by the government, represented by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The government initiated the development of the Agreement and participated as an equal partner in the negotiations. One representative of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs who is involved in the development of IRBC Agreements, was interviewed (R10).

Supporters

From the *supporter* group, only the NGOs are relevant respondents. The involvement of other parties with the development of the Agreement, such as banks, is limited. These organisations did not engage in the negotiation process and not all of them collaborate with NGOs. In order to secure the boundaries of this research, I have not reached out to these supporters. The two NGOs who reside in the supporter group, were both relevant for this research because they have considerable experience in the advancement of women's rights in this sector. One of the two NGOs had time to provide an interview (R4). This NGO is specialised in the promotion of girls' rights. As a supporting NGO they are active in

the implementation of the Agreement. The NGO I did not speak to, has a well-established reputation in the garment and textile field and has extensive knowledge on women's rights. Consequently, it is a limitation for this research that I have not managed to speak with this organisation.

	Stakeholder	Category	Job title
Respondent 1	NGO	Participant	Programme officer Human rights & Business
Respondent 2	NGO	Participant	Former Director (participated in the Steering Group)
Respondent 3	NGO	In line of becoming a participant, but withdrew from negotiations	Senior Researcher, specialised in Garment and Textile sector
Respondent 4	NGO	Supporter	Senior advisor Policy and Partnership
Respondent 5	Branch organisation	Participant	CSR manager
Respondent 6	Branch organisation	Participant	Policy advisor Europe, CSR
Respondent 7	Labour Union	Participant	Policy employee Bangladesh, Myanmar and Strategic Partnership for Transforming the Garment chain
Respondent 8	Firm	Signatory	Director
Respondent 9	Firm	Signatory	Director
Respondent 10	Government	Participant	Policy officer International Responsible Business Conduct Unit

Table 4: Final selection respondents

Operationalisation of indicators

In order to measure if an independent variable (X) has an effect on a dependent variable (Y), it is necessary to operationalise the concepts of interest. Abstract concepts have to be turned into measurable concepts (Bryman, 2012). This research sets several indicators deriving from the literature to operationalise and analyse NGO influence. To do so, the conceptual model constructed in the theoretical framework, is operationalised. The operationalised conceptual model facilitates measuring whether NGOs can influence the advancement of women's rights in the Agreement.

Conditioning factors

First of all, the conditioning factors that shape NGO influence need to be operationalised. This facilitates the indication of the context in which the Agreement is developed and implemented. In order to

determine the context, I make use of Boström and Hallström's (2010) definitions of institutional-, structural- and discursive context.

Institutional | The institutional context is defined as the formal and informal rules and procedures of the context (Boström & Hallström, 2010). These rules and procedures enable or hinder NGOs to participate effectively. For operationalisation purposes, this definition is divided in two issues. First, I analyse the rules and procedures for NGOs to participate. These can be formal rules, but also informal standards that prioritise the participation of more reformative than radical NGOs. Thereafter, I look at the rules and procedures that shape the negotiation process. This includes the rules and procedures concerning the power to make decisions. To obtain this information I ask respondents about their experiences and I analyse the organisational chart of the Agreement. The organisational chart demonstrates the structure of the Agreement and how power is formally divided between the stakeholders. This sheds a light on the current procedures to make decisions about the implementation and future of the Agreement.

Structural | Second, the structural context entails the underlying (asymmetric) power structure, oftentimes expressed as asymmetries in power resources. A typical power asymmetry related to NGOs, is their lack of financial resources compared to international firms (Boström and Hallström, 2010). This can have a negative effect on their capacity to participate in long-term multi stakeholder processes and can lead to a stakeholder imbalance (Boström & Hallström, 2010). However, NGOs often have access to other resources that provide them with leverage. NGOs obtain issue knowledge, community networks, community reputation and inspirational and volunteer assets (Jonker & Nijhof, 2006). Following these examples, I look at the asymmetries in power resources that enable NGOs to maintain effective participation and to further the advancement of women's rights in the Agreement. NGOs participate effectively if they have leverage to influence the advancement of women's rights. This is operationalised in the following way: I analyse if their financial resources, issue knowledge, community networks, and reputation suffice for effective participation. Reputation in this research does not refer to their reputation amongst women working in the garment industry, but to their reputation amongst the participants of the Agreement and if NGOs are viewed as more radical or reformative NGOs. NGOs' inspirational and volunteer assets are not taken into account as volunteers do not engage with the Agreement. Evidence to support these indicators mainly derives from NGO reports and interviews. Furthermore, news articles outline the development of the negotiations and give information on the participation of NGOs.

Discursive | Third, the discursive context is operationalised. To research the discursive context I look at systems of knowledge and meaning. The most important indicator of the dominant system of knowledge and meaning, is the definition of CSR and women's rights. How NGOs and stakeholders define CSR and women's rights, is discussed in the analysis of 'issue framing' as part of Betsill and Corell's (2008) model. Therefore, the discursive context is operationalised as the definition of CSR and women's rights by the Dutch government and by the media. Questions posed on the Agreement, and

especially on women's rights, by the House of Representatives, can lead the negotiations in a certain direction. Moreover, media coverage can shape the public opinion on the development of the Agreement. Together these two factors create systems of knowledge and meaning and provide for a conditioning factor. In order to research this, I look at motions seconded by the Dutch House of Representatives and by analysing media coverage on the Agreement.

Conditioning factor	Definition	Operationalisation	Evidence
Institutional context	Formal and informal institutions that favour or hinder NGO participation	(In)formal rules and procedures regarding NGOs and women's rights: - Which NGOs can participate - Decision-making power of NGOs	Organisational chart of the Agreement News and media Interviews
Structural context	Structural asymmetries of power resources that shape NGO participation	NGO resources to maintain effective participation and to further the advancement of women's rights in the Agreement: - Financial resources - Issue knowledge - Network access - Community reputation	NGO reports News and media Interviews
Discursive context	Systems of knowledge and meaning that enable or constrain NGO participation	The dominant perspective of ICSR and women's rights in relation to the Agreement: - The Dutch governments definition of ICSR and women's rights, related to the Agreement - The media's definition of ICSR and women's rights, related to the Agreement	Motions seconded by the House of Representatives News and media Interviews

Table 5: Operationalised conditioning factors, adapted from Boström and Hallström (2010)

NGO strategies

Second to operationalise, are Den Hond and De Bakker's (2007) four different types of NGO strategies. Den Hond and De Bakker's definitions of these strategies are outlined and operationalised in figure 8 (2007, pp. 909-910). In the operationalisation, the concepts are turned into measurable indicators and linked to women's rights.

Material gain and damage strategies are based on economic calculation, whereas symbolic gain and damage strategies intend to alter the dominant image of a company. Symbolic gain and damage strategies can be identified when NGO strategies intend to benefit or damage the reputation, the mental image, of a company. These strategies have an indirect negative effect on the costs of the continuation of a policy, or an indirect beneficial effect on the turnover of a company. In line with this, these strategies are operationalised as 'strategic measures that positively or negatively discuss firms in relation to their ICSR practices regarding women's rights'. 'Strategic measures' is purposely left a broad

concept as these measures can take many forms (reports, social media, opinion pieces). A broad definition provides the possibility for respondents to explain how they shape their strategic measures. Material gain and damage strategies occur when strategies of NGOs have a direct effect on the increase or decrease of the cost of the decision maker to continue with a certain policy. These strategies are based on economic calculation and influence the firms' economic position. Hence, material strategies are operationalised as 'strategic measures that positively or negatively influence the firms' economic position'. Strategic measures are taken in relation to a firms' ICSR practices regarding women's rights. Evidence to support the indication of these strategies is gathered via NGO reports, social media, news articles and by conducting interviews with NGOs. These data sources provide insights in the different sorts of strategies NGOs apply.

NGO strategies	Definition	Operationalisation	Evidence
Symbolic gain	Strategies attempting to positively subvert dominant meanings, ideologies, and discourses. Aim to reinforce the firm's reputation in order to increase the turn over.	Strategic measures that positively discuss firms in relation to their ICSR practices regarding women's rights.	NGO reports Interviews NGOs Social media News articles
Symbolic damage	Strategies attempting to negatively subvert dominant meanings, ideologies, and discourses. Protest results in symbolic damage if it is made clear that the decision maker is publicly typified as non-complying with institutionalized rules, values, or categories.	Strategic measures that negatively discuss firms in relation to their ICSR practices regarding women's rights.	NGO reports Interviews NGOs Social media News articles
Material gain	Strategies based on economic calculation. Aim to reward firms for particular policies or practices.	Strategic measures that positively influence the firms' economic position. Strategic measures taken in relation to firms ICSR practices regarding women's rights.	NGO reports Interviews NGOs Social media News articles
Material damage	Strategies based on economic calculation. Aim to disturb or slow down the normal operational rhythm or to damage the property of a decision maker. Protesters increase the cost the decision maker must bear to continue the contested decisions or policies.	Strategic measures that negatively influence firms' economic positions. Strategic measures taken in relation to firms ICSR practices regarding women's rights.	NGO reports Interviews NGOs Social media News articles

Table 6: Operationalised NGO strategies, adapted from Den Hond and De Bakker (2007)

Influence indicators

Lastly, the influence indicators of Betsill and Corell (2008) are operationalised. In their framework, Betsill and Corell (2008) pose questions in order to identify the influence factors. To operationalise the influence indicators, these questions are turned into concrete indicators linked to women's rights (Figure

9). The data derives primarily from NGO reports and statements in which NGOS outline what actions they have taken in order to influence the negotiations. In addition, interviews serve as supplementary data on NGO strategies to influence issue framing, agenda setting and the position of key actors. Furthermore, interviews with firms and branch organisations are used to analyse the firm perspective on NGO influence. Finally, the Agreement itself is used to extract information on the final outcome.

		Operationalisation		
	Influence factor	**Behaviour of other actors….**	**…. as caused by NGO communication**	**Evidence**
Influence on negotiation process	**Issue framing**	Problem definition of women's rights of the stakeholders during the negotiations	NGO strategies to frame how women's rights is understood during the negotiations and if this succeeded	NGO statements The Agreement Interviews
	Agenda setting	Issues related to women's rights that were put on or off the agenda during the negotiations	NGO strategies to put issues related to women's rights on the agenda and if this succeeded	NGO statements The Agreement Interviews
	Position of key actors	Initial position of stakeholders on women's rights and final position of stakeholders at the end of the negotiations	NGO strategies to alter position of stakeholders on women's rights and if this succeeded	NGO statements The Agreement Interviews
Influence on negotiation outcome	**Final agreement/ procedural issues**	Institutions that facilitate NGO participation concerning women's rights in future decision making	NGO strategies aimed at formalising their participations concerning women's rights and if this succeeded	NGO statements The Agreement Interviews
		Formal role of NGO in implementation of the Agreement concerning women's rights		
	Final agreement/ substantive issues	Reflection of NGO position on what should be done to advance women's rights within the Agreement	NGO strategies aimed at formalising their vision on what should be done to advance women's rights and if this succeeded	NGO statements The Agreement Interviews

Table 7: Operationalised influence factors, adapted from Betsil and Corell (2008)

In conclusion, by analysing data and researching these indicators, it is possible to distinguish the presence of conditioning factors, NGO strategies and influence factors.

Data gathering

In order to analyse these indicators, it is necessary to gather relevant and sufficient data. Gathering high quality and trustworthy data is of utmost importance for the cogency of a single case study (Blatter & Haverland, 2014; Bryman, 2012). In this line of thought, it is deemed relevant to make use of data

triangulation. Data triangulation refers to the use of multiple sources or data types to measure the same concept. Drawing on several sources of information can eliminate measurement errors and enhance internal validity (Betsill and Corell, 2008; Blatter & Haverland, 2014). The small-N of this research, allows for data *triangulation.* Therefore, the empirical data of this research is gathered by analysing different types of documents and by conducting interviews.

Documents

The empirical data consists of documents and interviews. First of all, I gathered several sources of primary documentation and secondary documentation. Primary sources consist of the Sustainable Garment and Textile Agreement, NGO reports, yearly evaluations of the Agreement and motions issued by representatives of the House of Representatives. Additional secondary sources are news articles and opinion pieces.

Primary sources	- The Sustainable Garment and Textile Agreement - Yearly evaluations of the Agreement - NGO research reports - Firm reports on CSR practices - Motions House of Representatives
Secondary sources	- News articles - Opinion pieces

Table 8: Document sources

Semi-structured interviews

A second channel of empirical data derives from semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured interviews follow a list of questions on specific topics but leave leeway for questions that come up during the interview (Bryman, 2012, p. 471). This leeway gives respondents the possibility to express their own perspective and to address issues that might be of topic, but which can give insights into their perspective on relevant issues. In order not to deviate too much from the main topic and to create structure, I made use of an *interview guide*. Interview guides cover the most relevant topics of the research and are constructed based on the literature but leave flexibility in the conduct of interviews (Bryman, 2012). During the interviews with the NGOs, the respondents were asked about their involvement with the Agreement, their perception on conditioning factors, their strategies to advance women's rights and their perception on their influence. During the interviews with the other respondents, the focus was placed on their perception of NGO strategies and influence, and on the conditioning factors shaping the negotiations and outcomes. Besides the questions related to the literature, the interviews started with several introducing questions and left room for follow up

questions. Finally, with the aim of formulating several policy recommendations, all respondents were asked about possible points of improvement for the Agreement. The interview guide for the NGOs and the firms can be found in Appendix 2 and 3. The interview guide for the branch organisations, the labour union and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is similar to the firms' interview guide, therefore they are not attached separately.

Face-to-face and telephone interviews

Some of the interviews were held face-to-face, whereas other interviews were conducted by phone (Table 12). At the start of this research, I attempted to schedule face-to-face interviews. During these interviews it was my goal to gather as much information as possible concerning the work of the respondent and to gather general information on the research field. These face-to-face interviews provided the opportunity to go in depth about certain topics. Later on in the research, I conducted telephone interviews. Telephone interviews have several benefits and disadvantages. The downside of telephone interviews is that the length is often shorter than face-to-face interviews (Bryan, 2012). On average, the phone interviews lasted around 40 minutes whereas the face-to-face interviews lasted around 50 minutes. Telephone interviews have benefits as well. First of all, at that stage of the research I had a clear image of which specific questions I wanted to ask the respondent. Thus, I could ask demarcated questions which demanded less explanation. Second, telephone interviews can take away barriers between the interviewer and the interviewee as respondents sometimes adapt their story to the character, attitude or appearance of the interviewer. Respondents can respond more freely to sensitive questions if the interviewer is not physically present (Bryman, 2012). Lastly, due to busy schedules of the respondents, it was sometimes more convenient to schedule a telephone interview.

Audio-recordings & transcripts

If the interviewees gave permission, the interview was audio-recorded. Based on the recording, a transcript was written. Before starting the interview, I explained the interviewee that all transcripts would be anonymised. This enabled the respondents to speak more freely. In addition, if I used direct quotes from the transcripts, I sent the quotes to the respondents for approval.

By recording interviews, I could focus on the interview and ask follow-up question. Moreover, it was beneficial for the data analysis as I had to rely less on my memory and because transcripts enabled me to perform a secondary data revision. These measures declined possibilities of interpretation errors and enhanced the internal validity of data. (Bryman, 2012, p. 482). If the interviewee did not give permission, I took extensive notes during the interview and wrote a detailed report directly after conducting the interview. At the end, seven interviews were recorded and transcribed, and three interviews were not recorded but summarised right after the interview. An overview can be found in Appendix 4.

Data analysis

The next step of this research is the data analysis. Before the data could be analysed, it had to be prepared into structured results. This was done in two phases; first, I transcribed or summarised the interviews. Second, I coded the data.

Coding

Before it is possible to analyse the indicators of the conceptual model, data has to be structured in such a way that it can be interpreted. Therefore, I coded the data by using the programme NVivo. NVivo is a data analysis software programme for qualitative research, which facilitates the organisations of rich amounts of document-based information (NVivo, 2019).

By coding the data, I turned data into fragments which served as evidence of the indicators. During the process of coding, different themes and categories were assigned to the collected data. This provided an organised overview of the data. Creating these codes occurred in two phases: *initial* coding and *focused* coding (Bryman, 2012). Initial coding is the first step towards organising data and generating first ideas about the results. In this phase it is important to remain open-minded and to generate new ideas. This process creates many unrelated codes. The second step is focused coding. Focused coding involves selecting the codes that make the most analytic sense and which are most relevant for the research. The data becomes more categorised, new codes can be generated by combining initial ones and some codes might be dropped (Bryman, 2012). These two phases reflect how I coded the data. However, while performing the first step, I already constructed the conceptual model. In this regard, the initial coding phase was relatively more structured than outlined by Bryman (2012). Nevertheless, the initial coding process brought up new topics which were not yet addressed in the conceptual model, but appeared to be important to add. Creating, reviewing and restructuring the codes led to a more comprehensive data analysis. The result of this coding process can be found in Appendix 5.

Reliability and validity

The last part of the methodology chapter is devoted to discussing *reliability* and *validity*. These concepts serve as important criteria to establish and assess the quality of research (Bryman, 2012).

Internal and external validity

Validity is one of the most important criteria of a research. It is concerned with the integrity of conclusions that are generated from a research (Bryman, 2012, p. 47). Internal validity concerns the question whether a conclusion that incorporates a causal relationship between two or more variables, holds truth. In other words, if the suggestion that X influences Y is not produced by something different than a causal relationship (Bryman, 2012). As this research is a single case study, much attention was paid to conditioning factors and to defining how concepts should be measured. This has increased the

likelihood of accurate indicators. At the end, I did not solely focus on one indicator to measure NGO influence, but made use of several complementary factors that take strategies, conditioning factors and actual influence into account. Resulting from these steps, the internal validity of this research can be considered high. In short, due to the small-N characteristic, it was possible to devote much time on the indicators and to ensure internal validity.

The external validity of this research, viewed from the dominant perspective of case study design, is less high. External validity concerns the question 'whether the results of a study can be generalised beyond the specific research context' (Bryman, 2012, p. 47). The results of this research are not highly generalisable because they relate to specific conditioning factors, and because a comparison with other cases has not taken place. Nevertheless, these outcomes can serve as predictions for a sequential small- or medium-N study, and it can facilitate the construction of new multilevel explanatory models of NGO influence in CSR. Taking into account that the field of IRBC Agreements is relatively new and still in development in the Netherlands, this initial and explorative research can form grounds for further research. However, since the context under research is relatively new, further research should remain critical of the conditioning factors and reflect on those factors present in other contexts.

Internal and external reliability

External reliability refers to 'the degree to which a study can be replicated' (Bryman, 2012. p. 390). Upholding this criteria is a difficult task within qualitative research because it is impossible to 'freeze' a social setting (Bryman, 2012, p. 389). Nonetheless, I constructed several documents which enable researchers to follow the steps I took throughout this research. First, I constructed a conceptual model. The operationalisation of the model indicates what I researched while analysing the data. In addition, I set up an interview guide to structure the interviews. These guides give insights in the structure of the interviews. Finally, I used a coding programme which resulted in a list of codes. This list can be reviewed and reused for future research and enables researchers to get insights in the steps I took that led to the results. However, it should be noted that the conditioning factors are dynamic and will never be precisely the same in a sequential research. This limits the possibility to reconstruct this research. Internal reliability occurs when all researchers involved in a research agree about what they hear and see (Bryman, 2012). Since this research is performed by only one researcher, this criterion is not relevant for this research.

Chapter 5: results and analysis

This chapter presents the results deriving from the data. The results are substantiated with quotes from the interviews. Data deriving from the interviews is indicated with an R (respondent), followed by the number of the respondent. After analysing the three components of the conceptual model, the fourth and fifth sub-question are answered.

Results and analysis of the conditioning factors

The next part discusses the results on the three conditioning factors: the institutional-, structural- and discursive context.

Institutional context

As stated in the methodological chapter, the institutional context is operationalised as the formal and informal procedures that influence the participation of NGOs in the Agreement, and how much decision-making power NGOs have concerning the advancement of women's rights.

NGO participation

The respondents (R2, R3, R5, R6) explain that the involvement of four participating NGOs relates to their engagement with the establishment of the prior Action Plan. These NGOs were previously involved in the establishment of the '*Action Plan – to make the garment and textile sector more sustainable*'. This Action Plan is a precursor of the current Agreement (Modint; INretail; VGT, 2013). The Action Plan was developed by three branch organisations as a response to the growing demand of the civil society to improve working conditions for employees of the garment and textile industry (Modint et al., 2013). To construct the Action Plan, branch organisations collaborated with NGOs and labour unions. The respondents from the branch organisations explain that NGOs were invited based on their experience with the garments and textile industry. After the start of developing IRBC Agreements, the Action Plan had to make way for the development of the new multi-stakeholder IRBC Agreement. In the Agreement all stakeholders participated as equal partners. Rather than a formal procedure that established which NGOs could participate, the prior NGOs were invited to join the negotiations (R1, R2, R3). This procedure was a logical proceeding of the previous collaboration between NGOs and branch organisations. The other three NGOs that joined the negotiations were not previously involved, but also had considerable expertise in this field and therefore decided to participate (R2, R3). Respondents explain that there were no formal procedures excluding NGOs, but that field knowledge was required (R1, R2, R3).

In addition, the NGOs had to adhere to a formal procedure as well, explains respondent 3. If NGOs decided to participate in the negotiations, they were required to sign a 'Statement of Intent'. This Statement indicated that a NGO would participate with the intention of signing the Agreement.

Respondent 3 argues that the need to sign this statement caused doubts whether to participate or not. The NGO of respondent 3 focuses on performing research and is not specialised in practicalities of implementing Due Diligence. Considering their possibilities, this NGO decided to sign the Statement, but they attached a letter explaining not to see a role for itself in the implementation phase of the Agreement. Although there was no formal procedure that excluded certain NGOs, the dominant tendency encouraged more reformative and census-oriented NGOs to join the negotiation. The NGO of respondent 3 joined the negotiations but withdrew before signing the Agreement. The NGO was not satisfied with the result of the negotiations because certain important issued remained unaddressed. In several opinion pieces the NGO explains that the Agreement lacks the involvement of local NGOs and labour unions (Theuws, 2016).

In short, all NGOs with expertise of the field could join the negotiations if they signed the Statement of Intent. Two out of seven NGOs withdrew from the negotiations because their expertise did not resonate with the characteristics of a more reformative NGO and because they endeavoured to achieve more ambitious goals.

Decision-making power

The second characteristic of the institutional context is the formal and informal decision-making power of NGOs. Respondents explain that during the negotiations, all stakeholders participated as equal partners and decisions were made based on consensus (R1, R3). Guidelines to make decisions were set by the Social and Economic Council of the Netherlands (SER). On request of Minister Ploumen, the SER issued a rapport on the development of IRBC Agreements (SER, 2014). According to the SER, IRBC agreements should be established by firms, labour unions, branch organisations and NGOs together. This approach diverged from the previous Action Plan in which NGOs were consulted, but not considered equal partners. In the development of the new Agreement, a multi-stakeholder approach was applied, and the non-binding advice of the SER led to the formal decision-making procedure which included NGOs. Although the SER advice was non-binding, it had much leverage because the SER consulted all important stakeholders in order to formulate a high-quality advice (R2, R10). The final decision-making procedure deriving from the negotiations can be found in the organisational chart of the Agreement (SER, 2016). As this structure has been taken from the SER's advice, the decision-making power of NGOs cannot be attributed to NGO influence.

Depending on the way NGOs are involved in the Agreement, their decision-making power differs. As described in the methodology, there are three different groups of participants present in the Agreement: signatories, participating parties and supporters. The five NGOs that function as participating parties are represented by two members in the Steering Group. The Steering Group monitors the compliance with the Agreement and the implementation of the Agreement. In the Steering Group decisions are made based on consensus. If this is not possible, they decide based on a majority vote (SER, 2016). The core credential is that stakeholders have equal decision-making power within the Steering Group. The

supporting NGOs, however, are not directly involved with the development of the Agreement and are not directly represented in the Steering Group. Their responsibility lays with the implementation of the Agreement. Several supporting NGOs operate in NGO-Firm projects and provide workshops for the improvement of firms' Due Diligence practices.

In short, the formal decision-making power depends on the formal involvement of a stakeholders. Nonetheless, it can be concluded that the new structure enables NGOs more to assert influence than the prior Action Plain.

Structural context

The conditioning factor 'structural context' is operationalised as NGO resources to maintain effective participation and to further the implementation of the Agreement. Resources consist of financial resources, issue knowledge, access to networks and NGO reputation.

Financial resources

Interviews with NGOs revealed that NGOs often depend on subsidies provided by the government to participate (R1, R4). In the first years of the Agreement, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs provided a subsidy for NGOs that were part of the Steering Group (R1). According to respondent 1, this changed at the start of 2019. These subsidies declined and were relocated under the responsibility of the Netherlands Enterprise Agency. The decrease in subsidy made the NGO of respondent 1 rethink its role as NGO representative in the Steering Group, and they decided to handover their role as NGO representative to another NGO. The respondent states: '*Based on the limited amount of resources, we decided that we can accomplish more by engaging with firms and by performing practical on the groundwork. Now another NGO signatory will represent the NGOs in the steering group*'. Financial resources also influence the amount of manpower the NGO is capable to allocate to the development of the Agreement. As respondent 3 explains, over time the work of the negotiations increased significantly, and NGOs were required to read and respond to large number of documents in a limited amount of time. Not every NGO had the financial resources and manpower to engage in the negotiations. Thus, financial resources did not constrain NGOs in their decision to participate, but a lack of resources did hinder several NGOs to retain effective participation in the long run.

Issue knowledge

The findings support the statement that access to relevant issue knowledge is an important power resource for NGOs. Respondents explain that NGOs possess region specific knowledge and knowledge on human rights breaches within the industry (R1, R2, R3, R5, R6, R7). Respondent 5 and 6 from the branch organisations declare that NGOs add value to the negotiations because they have extensive issue specific knowledge. This knowledge was put to use while drafting the nine specific issues (R2, R3).

Contrarily, NGOs sometimes lack knowledge on the 'business case of CSR'. This can hinder NGO influence in the implementation phase. NGOs do not always have an accurate image of the complexity of, for example, trade negotiations. In addition, NGOs sometimes overestimate the power of companies (R5, R6). The majority of Agreement signatories are small or medium enterprises. Hence, their reach within the production and supply chain is often limited, argues respondent 5. Respondent 4 is aware of the deficit of NGO knowledge on the business case and pursues to respond to this deficit. The respondent explains that this NGO focuses on gaining insight in the firms' perspective of CSR. This NGO uses this knowledge to persuade companies and to make investing in women's economic empowerment more appealing. The NGO of respondent 4 distributes information by scheduling meetings, but also via internet. For instance, the NGO created a video which explains the business case of women's economic empowerment. Although the respondent believed this strategy to be influential, in practice this tactic appeared less effective than expected. Respondent 4 reasons that their business case might not be strong enough to convince companies, or that companies are more responsive to risks of reputational damage than encouraging measures.

In short, NGOs hold an important power resource by having issue specific knowledge on problems that companies encounter in their supply or production chain. As such, this is valuable information during the negotiation phase. The power of knowledge on the business case is more questionable. This knowledge can be used to convince firms to invest in women's economic empowerment during the implementation, but there is no clear evidence that this strategy is effective.

Local networks and information

A third resource that is supposed to enhance effective NGO participation, is their access to local networks and local information. The results confirm this statement. Respondent 5, representing a branch organisation, argues that companies often lack local information. Access to local information and networks makes NGO participation important. The NGOs involved in the Agreement either collaborate with local partners or have their own national offices in other countries (R1, R3, R4). Access to local information gives NGOs leverage in agenda setting, because they know which issues are most pressing. Respondent 2 explains that when defining the nine specific issues, NGOs delivered information on what should be prioritised. The Secretariat was open for receiving NGO information and this information was reviewed and integrated into the Agreement when possible. In the implementation of the Agreement, NGOs make use of this resource as well. Women's rights issues are addressed in NGO reports and workshops on Due Diligence given by NGOs. Thus, access to local networks and local information proves to be a characteristic and valuable resource for NGOs and gives them leverage in both the negotiation and the implementation phase.

NGO reputation

A last structural resource is NGOs' reputation. Results demonstrate that NGOs' reputation can influence collaboration between NGOs and respondents in the implementation phase, but did not prove to have an effect in the negotiation phase. According to the respondents, NGOs and other stakeholders negotiated about themes and procedures, but in general the participants listened to NGO input and did not distinguish between information deriving from more radical or reformative NGOs (R1, R5, R6). During the implementation phase, NGO reputation can affect the trust within firm-NGO relations, but this effect is rather limited. Respondent 1 explains that at the start of the implementation, firms were hesitant to collaborate with this NGO. Nowadays the relationship between firms and this NGO have become better. '*Although it took a while to establish trust, companies now have less 'fear' to collaborate with a NGO that has a reputation as being critical as well'*, respondent 1 explains. The interviews with the firms confirm this as well. Firms do not fear critical NGOs, but emphasise their added value (R8, R9). Respondent 9, a firms' director, argues that critical NGOs can enhance the awareness of the public to the hazardous working conditions in the garment sector. This can pressure companies to adhere to the current standards. Respondent 8 explains that it is valuable that NGOs keep the pressure on the advancement of Due Diligence and remind companies of breaches of human rights. Before, NGOs were mainly critical, but nowadays they also mention companies that are doing a good job. This is motivating, argues respondent 8. Forging ties between NGOs and firms appears to occur more frequently.

To conclude, as of yet there appears to be no effect of NGO reputation during the negotiation phase, and limited effect during the implementation of the Agreement. Companies can be hesitant to collaborate with a critical NGO, but firms increasingly acknowledge the added value of critical NGOs to advance ICSR practices. Consequently, this lack of effect can point towards a possible change in firm attitude and an increased focus on political CSR.

Discursive context

The discursive context is operationalised as the definitions of ICSR and women's rights given by the Dutch government and by the media. As stated by several respondents (R1, R2, R3, R8, R10), policy priorities and media coverage can boost the development of an agreement.

Policy priorities

Just after Minister Ploumen took office as the Minister of Foreign Trade and Development, the Rana Plaza disaster occurred. The disaster was as one of the reasons she requested the SER to advise the government on effective establishment of IRBC Agreement (SER, 2014). This advice set wheels in motion and initiated the start of the Agreements. The respondents (R2, R3, R4, R7, R8) indicate that the personal commitment of Minister Ploumen to the textile industry accelerated the development of the Agreement. In addition, Minister Ploumen addressed in a letter to the House of Representatives that

women's rights must be part of every IRBC negotiation process and that gender analyses must be part of the Agreements (Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, 2017). Similarly, the current Foreign Trade and Development policy of Minister Kaag influenced the inclusion of gender equality and women's rights as well, as 'gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls' are a cross cutting theme in her policy (Minstry of Foreign Affairs, 2018).

The House of Representatives also had the development of the Agreement on their agenda. In 2012, several members of the Dutch House of Representatives issued a motion on the exploitation of young girls working in the garment and textile industry. The motion of the House of Representatives indicated the exploitation of young girls and the need to abolish child labour. This motion was based on a NGO written report, published April 2012 (Oonk et al., 2012). The members of parliament requested the government to collaborate with the garment and textile industry to come to an agreement on full transparency within the production and supply chain, and to agree on procedures to ban child labour (Braakhuis, Gesthuizen, & Voordewind, 2012). Another motion was issued in 2014, addressing the moderate progress of improvements in the garment and textile sector and the need for an extra impulse (Voordewind; Van Ooijnk; Van Laar 2014). The attention given to the establishment of the Agreement and the urgency to address women's rights, enhanced NGO influence. As the NGOs and the branch organisations explain, there was a shared acknowledgement that 'gender equality and discrimination' had to be addressed in the Agreement. NGOs were an important player in providing information on how this issues could be addressed (R2, R5, R6, R10). Although gender has become a more important topic in politics and in the media, child labour remains the dominant issue. A clear example is the Child Labour Due Diligence Law that was adopted in May 2019 (Eerste Kamer der Staten-Generaal, 2019).

In short, the Dutch government prioritised the establishment of the Agreement and payed attention to gender as one of the several priorities. Hence, the discourse created by the government enabled NGOs to provide information on this topic and to assert influence and is similar to the political CSR discourse. The political CSR is increasingly becoming more institutionalised.

The media

Another system of knowledge and meaning is created by the media. An important moment in which the media was influential, was the Dhaka Garment Factory Fire of 2012, and the Rana Plaza incident of 2013. Much has been written by the media about these disasters. Most of these articles emphasise that the majority of victims were women, even young girls (Ali Manink & Yardley, 2012; Burke & Hammadi, 2012; De Zwaan, 2013; ILO, 2018). The attention for young female employees, who form the majority of garment and textile workers, put the spotlight on women's rights and renewed the urgency to address child labour (CCC, 2012; ILO, 2018). The day after the Dhaka Garment Factory Fire, several NGOs, trade unions and labour rights organisations called for immediate action (CCC, 2012). The Rana Plana Disaster led to a global movement and created the establishment of the Accord on Fire and Building Safety (Bangladesh Accord, 2019). By May 2013, more than 150 companies

signed this accord (CCC, 2019; ILO, 2018). The global urgency to address the hazardous working conditions of this sector, accelerated the development of the Agreement in the Netherlands as well, and demonstrated that firms alone do not manage to create safe working environments. Hence, the image created by the media emphasised the need to involve other stakeholders and enhanced NGO influence. NGOs became more important because NGOs provide on the ground information which is necessary to create improved working conditions.

Summary

The results demonstrate that many factors influenced the development of the Agreement and the possibilities for NGOs to assert influence. The institutional context is defined by the informal procedure to select NGOs that were previously involved in the Action Plan. Once invited to join, there was a formal procedure in which they had to state their intent to sign the Agreement. The final decision-making power of NGOs was defined by the SER and is formally written down in the Agreement. The four different NGO resources defining the structural context appear not to be of equal importance. First of all, financial resources constrain several NGOs to maintain their participation in the implementation phase due to declining subsidies. Second, issue specific knowledge on regions and problems is valuable in both the negotiation and the implementation phase. Third, access to local networks and local information proves to put NGOs in an advantaged position during the negotiation and implementation phase. Fourth, the reputation of NGOs is a limited conditioning factor. In the implementation phase, some companies are hesitant to collaborate with critical NGOs, but relations of trust were nevertheless established. The reduced aversiveness of firms to collaborate with NGOs can indicate a change in firm behaviour and resonates with firms' acknowledgement of the political CSR discourse

The policy priority for IRBC Agreements, Minister Kaag's priority for gender equality, and the large media coverage of the disasters in Bangladesh have spurred the development of the Agreement and shaped the focus on child labour and women's rights. Worthy of note is the increasing devotion for a multi-stakeholder approach – from the media, the government and firms as well - which bears a strong resemblance with the political CSR discourse.

NGO strategies

The next step is to analyse NGO strategies. Based on document analyses and interviews, it became possible to identify several NGO strategies. These strategies are outlined and thereafter linked to the theory. An overview of strategies per NGO can be found in Appendix 4.

Reports and articles

Above all, the findings demonstrate that the publication of research reports is a key tool of all the NGOs of this research. Respondent 1, 2, 3 and 4 confirm they write reports to address breaches of working

conditions within production and supply chains. These reports critically discuss shortcomings in CSR practices. The NGO of respondent 1 published a report on female migrants working in garment factories in India. These women are victims of modern forms of slavery (Pramita & Peepercamp, 2018). The factories under research deliver clothing to major international brands that also operate in the Netherlands. All these reports focus on addressing pressing issues occurring in production and supply chains. The names of the companies which are part of the research, or in any way involved as they are supplied by factories that do not perform well, are publicly stated. Every research includes a review period in which the companies have the opportunity to review the report, to respond and to explain how the firm currently addresses these issues (R1, R3). Thereafter, the results are published in reports and mentioned in news articles and opinion pieces on websites of NGOs. Experts write short articles about their findings and give their opinion on these findings. In addition, the NGO represented by respondent 3, writes critical reports on firms as well. Together with the other NGO that withdrew, this NGO recently published an opinion piece in which they argue that the Agreement currently remains '*a paper exercise*' (Overeem, 2019).

NGO reports do not always apply a merely critical approach towards companies. Reports can be practical and encouraging as well. An example is the practical guidance report written by respondent 4 and associates (Girls Advocacy Alliance, 2017). This report points out that the working and living conditions for women in the textile and garment industry are inadequately addressed by companies. However, the approach of this report is to emphasise the benefits of enhancing these conditions and of adopting a 'gender lens' in supply chain management and compliance (Girls Advocacy Alliance, 2017). Besides critically addressing the shortcomings of supply chain management, this NGO focuses on measures that can be taken to improve women's economic empowerment. Furthermore, the practical report gives examples of case studies in which measures have been taken and have led to improved women's economic empowerment. Women's economic empowerment is framed by respondent 4 as 'a good business case'. Respondent 4 explains: '*Based on data and numbers we try to convince companies to invest in more work, better work and better working- and living conditions for young female employees*'. Accordingly, this NGO attempts to give a positive impulse to companies to invest in women's rights.

Due Diligence Tool

Another strategy that was observed is the transfer of practical knowledge to companies to improve their CSR policies. One specific tool that was created, is the Due Diligence Database (Modint, 2018). The development of this database was initiated by one of the participating branch organisations and got established in close collaboration with NGOs (R1, R3, R4, R5). The aim of the tool is to provide companies with information that supports companies in developing and implementing Due Diligence (Modint, 2018). Respondent 5, representing the branch organisation, explains that together with NGOs, the branch organisation searched for the optimal way to structure the tool and how it could empower

companies best. NGOs provided information on potential risks in production and supply chains within certain countries and outlined what the fields of expertise are of the participating NGOs. Furthermore, NGOs developed practical and specific questions and answers to enable companies to improve their ICSR practices. Respondent 1 explains this NGO helped creating guidelines for companies to demonstrate how firms can initiate a dialogue with their suppliers about pressing issues, such as child labour. Respondent 4 was involved in the development as well and addressed issues related to young female employees.

Gender Workshop

Another strategy to provide practical information, is by organising workshops related to Due Diligence. A specific example is the workshop on gender within supply chains. In March 2018, two NGOs and a branch organisation organised a workshop on gender within the garment and textile industry for participating companies (SER, 2019b). The NGO respondent 4 works for, was involved in organising this training. The respondent explains that the aim of the workshop was to move beyond discussing the importance of gender equality, and to address specific measures to combat gender-based issues, such as combatting gender based violence and the improvement of women's opportunities within the sector. To evoke better gender standards, the organisations organised two sessions: one basis training and one pragmatic training (R4, R5). At the end, 15 signatory companies participated in this workshop. Besides companies, other NGOs could join the training as well. Respondent 1 participated in the training and refers to this event as a workshop that offered companies concrete tools to further the development and implementation of their Due Diligence practices. Specific case studies were discussed, examples of how to adopt a gender lens were given and blind spots related to gender issues were addressed (R1). The interviewed firms did not participate in this workshop, but the branch organisations declared that this workshop offered concrete tools for the participating firms (R5).

Network activities

Another strategy to get companies working on their CSR practices, is the organisation of network activities, such as meetings with local partners. Meetings with local partners enable companies to establish on the ground networks. Relations with local parties can enhance firms' opportunities to gain insights in their production and supply chain. Respondent 3, whose NGO withdrew from the negotiations, organised several network meetings. The respondent explains that these meetings provide companies with the opportunity to engage with local partners. Although companies are sometimes hesitant to establish these partnerships, both NGOs and firms emphasise that in the long run these connections enhance firms' capability to spot issues in the production and supply chain. Respondent 3 explains that NGOs directly involved in the Agreement organise these events as well. Sometimes in collaborations with labour unions.

Lobby

The last strategy is the performance of lobby. NGOs talk to politicians in order to address certain issues and to put these issues on the agenda. As the Dutch government is one of the stakeholders in the development of the Agreement, the government has influence on the agenda. In addition, politicians of the House of Representatives can ask questions about the development of the Agreement. This can stimulate or hinder the advancement of the Agreement. NGOs lobby for legislation concerning ICSR practices (R1, R2, R3, R4). Legislation in relation to women's rights and ICSR practices has not been issued yet. However, in May 2019 the Child Labour Due Diligence Law got adopted (Eerste Kamer der Staten-Generaal, 2019). This law indirectly advances women's rights as most of the children working in the garment and textile industry are young women. Another example is the motion issued by Van den Hul in 2018, asking for strict, quantifiable targets and specified deadlines (Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, 2018). The NGOs are in favour of this step, and lobby in order to create legislation (R1, R3, R4).

Strategies and theory

After outlining the results, the findings can be related to the theory. The findings demonstrate that NGOs make use of both gain and damage strategies. On the one hand, NGOs attempt to restrict companies in engaging in practices which are not in line with CSR, by lobbying for legislation and by publicly criticising companies via reports. On the other hand, NGOs attempt to stimulate companies to work on CSR by providing them with the Due Diligence database, gender workshops, practical reports and network activities. The theoretical distinction between symbolic and material strategies is less visible in the results. Most strategies are symbolic strategies – research reports and opinion pieces – but several strategies resemble material strategies as they can influence the economic position of a company in the long run. For example, a bad reputation can influence the economic position of a company and can result in material damage. As these strategies do not have a *direct* effect on the economic position of a firm, the strategies align more with symbolic strategies. Solely lobby can be classified as a material damage strategy, as legislation has a direct effect on companies' economic positions. This leads to the conclusion that the NGOs of this research do not make much use of material strategies, and mainly assert symbolic strategies.

Chapter 3 outlined that reformative NGOs are more drawn to performing symbolic strategies, as their aim is to collaborate with NGOs to establish a solution. Material strategies might hinder collaboration. The results confirm this assumption. Respondent 1 and 2 mainly focus on symbolic gain strategies, whereas respondent 3, whose NGO withdrew from the negotiation, has a more critical approach in writing reports. As a non-participating party this NGOs have more liberty to remain critical and are more radical. In short, the findings are generally in line with the expectations, although the difference

between symbolic and material strategies is less visible than the difference between gain and damage strategies.

Symbolic gain	Symbolic damage
 ● Opinion pieces ● Local networks ● Due Diligence Database ● Practical guidance reports ● Workshops 	 ● Opinion pieces ● NGO research reports
Material gain -	**Material damage** ● Lobby

Table 9: Overview identified NGO strategies, categorised according to Den Hond and De Bakker's framework (2007)

Influence factors

The last part of this analysis exists of researching the influence factors of the conceptual model. To do so, the analysis of the different factors related to the negotiation process and the negotiation outcome is outlined. As stated in the operationalisation of this model, it is necessary to look both at NGO strategies and at firm behaviour caused by the NGOs strategies. For every influence, to used strategies and if this has influenced firm behaviour, is discussed. The majority of data derives from the conducted interviews with the NGO, the firms and the branch organisations.

Influence on negotiation process

NGOs can assert influence on the negotiation process by making use of issue framing, agenda setting and by altering the position of key actors.

Issue framing

The first influence factor is *issue framing*. This relates to NGO strategies to frame women's rights during the negotiations and if this succeeded. The results demonstrate that NGOs had an influence on the inclusion of 'discrimination and gender' within the Agreement, but that the inclusion was supported by a general tendency prioritising gender. 'Discrimination and gender' are one of the nine priority issues in the Agreement. These priorities got established during the negotiations. Respondent 2 explains that the choice for the nine priority issues derived from international agreements, such as the UNGPs on Business and Human Rights, the OECD-guidelines and the International Labour Standards (SER, 2016). These guidelines constructed the framework of the priorities, amongst which women's rights. The UNGPs on Business and Human Rights indicate that states have to provide guidance to enterprises

on 'how to consider effectively issues of gender, vulnerability and/or marginalization' (United Nations, 2011, p. 5). The OECD guidelines state that enterprises have a responsibility in addressing gender issues as well. Due Diligence should involve 'tailored approaches for specific risks and taking into account how these risks affect different groups, such as applying a gender perspective to due diligence' (OECD, 2018, p. 17). Additionally, the OECD provides several guidelines on how to apply a gender perspective in Due Diligence. The guidelines and priorities in the international agreements are rather general, but the 'discrimination and gender' clause in the Agreement is more specific. The final Agreement includes measures on the eradication of discrimination and to develop equal rights (equal work, payment, and equal chances for a senior position). Other concrete measures are the protection of pregnant female employees, to promote parental leave and childcare, to offer paid maternity leave, to provide sufficient time and space for health care tasks (for example breastfeeding or expressing milk), and to guarantee the return to their job (SER, 2016, pp. 49-50).

Although not all respondents recall how the priority 'discrimination and gender' was completed, they reckon that the framework was taken from international standards and that NGOs must have had an important say in how the nine specific themes were formulated in the Agreement (R1, R3, R4, R5, R6). Respondent 2 and 3 explain that NGOs influenced the further definition of this priority by handing in reports, by reviewing conceptual texts of the Agreement and by providing feedback. Respondent 2, who was part of the negotiations, explains that the Secretariat of the Agreement welcomed feedback and input. Both NGOs and branch organisations indicate that there was not much disagreement on 'discrimination and gender' during the negotiations, and that NGOs had the ability to influence how international standards on gender would be translated in concrete points (R1, R3, R5, R6). Moreover, during the time of the development of the Agreement, gender became an important topic within the Dutch Foreign Trade and Development policy. Therefore, all participants realised this issue should be included. Respondent 6, from a branch organisation, agrees with this statement. The respondent was involved in the prior Action Plan and explains that soon after the Action Plan got established, the branch organisations realised that gender should have been included. This time, branch organisations considered gender an important issue and were prone to include gender in the Agreement.

In short, the NGOs did have an influence on framing women's rights by providing information that supported the urgency and practical implications. NGOs amplified the international standards and helped establishing the details. However, the branch organisations addressed this issue as well and were in favour of integrating this issue in the Agreement. Thus, several contextual factors created a shared understanding amongst the participants about the importance of women's rights. Therefore, NGOs cannot receive all credits for framing women's rights.

Agenda setting

The second influence factor is *agenda setting*. Agenda setting is operationalised as strategies NGOs use to put issues related two women's rights on the agenda and if this succeeded. During the negotiations

NGOs focused on putting certain thematic issues on the agenda – such as women's rights, a living wage and freedom of labour union. As stated above, the inclusion of most priority issues was priory set by international guidelines. Resulting from this, there was more disagreement on establishing procedural issues than thematic issues. During the negotiations NGOs lobbied for firms to sign the Agreement instead of the branch organisations, NGOs aimed for an independent complainant's mechanism and individual reporting standards (R2, R3).

To put these issues on the agenda, NGOs published research reports and lobbied the Dutch government. An example is the lobby effort of respondent 2 which resulted in a motion of the House of Representatives (Braakhuis et al., 2012). NGO reports and the motion put pressure on all participants to accelerate the development of the Agreement and to incorporate child labour and women's rights. Thus, lobbying appeared to be a successful tactic to address the issues of women's rights. The NGOs argue that one of the reasons they managed to accomplish this, is by working together amongst NGOs and sometimes together with labour unions (R2, R3, R7). NGOs collaborated to form 'one block' in expressing their opinion on shared concerns. Respondent 2 explains that the NGOs created more leverage when the NGOs constructed common issues to address. These shared efforts have resulted in the establishment of an independent complainant's mechanism, individual reporting standards and the requirement for companies to sign individually. These three aims got accomplished, but the NGOs had to give in on the reporting procedure on firms' production and supply chain, which would be put in place after three years. In addition, some measures were not turned into quantifiable targets. Respond 3 explains *targets in the Agreement are formulated as "we are striving for" instead of, for instance "In 2020, 50 percent of all factories pay their employees a living ways", this is a fight that we as NGOs lost.'* Although these procedural issues do not directly relate to women's rights, it does affect the advancement of women's rights as these procedures give further insights and access to situations on the ground.

In conclusion, NGOs put issues related to women's rights on the agenda by providing information that created urgency. Participating companies acknowledge NGO influence in addressing women's rights but emphasise that the realisation of gender and women's rights as a point on the agenda derived from a shared sense of urgency. NGOs also address procedural issues. In order to put issues on the agenda NGOs often collaborate with other NGOs and labour unions. Although not all targets were as strict as NGOs wished for, the negotiations resulted in the establishment of several procedural standards.

Position of key actors

The third influence indicator is the *position of key actors*; what strategies NGOs used to alter the position of key actors on women's rights, and if this succeeded. The results for this indicator closely align with the results on agenda setting. Similarly, NGOs made use of their expertise to convince companies to address women's rights. Because companies found, and still find, it difficult to develop Due Diligence practices and to indicate the most pressing issues within their production and supply chain, they

welcome this information (R6, R7, R8). Correspondingly, the branch organisations explain that NGOs make less use of 'naming and shaming' strategies, which makes collaboration easier. This encourages companies to become more transparent.

During the negotiations there were no major obstacles in convincing companies that women's rights are important. As stated before, the branch organisations, the labour unions and the government all agreed to include women's rights (R5, R6, R7, R10). An important finding is that instead of arguing over the exact description of 'discrimination and gender', the participants had more discussions on procedural issues such as reporting obligations and if information on the production chain should be made public (R1, R2, R4). Respondent 1 explains that there was not much friction concerning gender, but that it was a challenge to convince companies to collaborate with NGOs to improve their Due Diligence. The collaboration between firms and NGOs concerns the implementation of the Agreement, therefore it is discussed in the results of the procedural issues. Overall, it is difficult to assess NGO influence on the position of key actors as there was a shared understanding of the need to include gender, amongst all stakeholders. Therefore, this finding is limited and can solely confirm that NGOs have had an influence in convincing other stakeholders on how discrimination and gender should be further defined in the Agreement.

Influence on negotiation outcome

After discussing NGO influence during the negotiation process, the next thing to do is to analyse their influence on the negotiation outcome. This includes their influence on procedural and substantive issues.

Procedural issues

Procedural issues cover the strategies performed by NGOs to formalise their participation concerning women's rights, and if institutions have been established that facilitate their participation in future decisions. Looking at the results, several NGOs have obtained a formal role, whereas others obtained an informal role in the implementation of the Agreement. The NGOs that were involved from the start are part of the Steering Group and have a continuous formal say in the implementation of the Agreement. Their participation in future decision-making is formally written down in the organisational chart (SER, 2016). Equal representation of all parties was a set condition at the start of the Agreement. Therefore, this accomplishment cannot be attributed to NGO efforts. What can be attributed to NGO efforts, is their involvement in thematic projects. The Agreement includes a separate clause for every specific theme. Within these clauses, companies commit to attain certain objectives and agree to participate in thematic projects. Thus, the Agreement initiated several projects in which NGOs and firms collaborate. Both respondents from NGOs and branch organisations explain that the choice for these projects was primarily based upon the expertise of NGOs. The 'discrimination and gender' clause states that companies are advised to join the NGO led programme that aims to halt violence against

women, managed by a supporting NGO of the Agreement. Although this project is run by a NGO that is not a participant, the NGO's experience and expertise in this field made it logical to include this programme.

Respondent 1 declares that NGOs have formal roles in the Agreement, but in practice it can be difficult to execute this formal role and responsibility. Respondent 1 explains that it is a challenging task to convince companies to forge ties with NGOs to improve their Due Diligence practices. Companies can be hesitant to collaborate and share information with critical NGOs. Respondent 1 collaborates with companies within the Agreement, but also performs research and writes critical reports. The information gathered in function of the Agreement is not used to write public reports, the respondent explains. For instance, this NGO performed a research on the working conditions amongst suppliers of the signatories. The NGO interviewed employees from 150 different factories. This data was processed and written down in a report for internal use. The report was not made public as it contains names of companies and the associated production locations (SER, 2019a). According to respondent 1, companies are willing to improve their Due Diligence practices, but to do so in collaboration with NGOs, it is important to build trust and to create long term relations. Respondent 8, from a company, explains that companies want to make use of the expertise of NGOs, but that it is still difficult to find the right party within the Agreement to go to with questions. For example, if a company indicates certain issues in their supply chain, does the company reaches out to the Secretariat, branch organisations, labour unions or NGOs? Furthermore, respondent 8 explains that this company has mainly been in contact with a branch organisation and a labour union, but there is not much direct contact with the NGOs.

Supporting NGOs participate in the implementation as well but have more of an informal role than participating NGOs. Respondent 4 is a supporter of the Agreement. The respondent explains that their expertise lays with the practical implementation of the Agreement. Therefore, this NGO focussed on becoming involved with the implementation and with assisting companies to move from commitment to action. An example of their work is the Due Diligence Gender Workshop. Furthermore, they were involved with the development of the Due Diligence database for companies. This tool offers guidance to companies to implement Due Diligence. Information on specific regions, issues and which organisations can be contacted for help, can be found in this tool. Although this role is not formalised, this NGO still has an important role to play in the implementation of the Agreement.

In conclusion, NGOs have been able to formalise their participation in the advancement of women's rights because of the set conditions that favoured their involvement, and by offering their expertise to companies. Notwithstanding the differences in direct and indirect participation, all NGOs have a role to play in making companies aware of women's rights and supporting them to transform commitments into practical measures. However, participation remains difficult as it acquires a strong and trustworthy relationship between NGOs and firms.

Substantive issues

The last influence indicator relates to *substantive issues*. This indicator refers to NGO strategies to promote their vision on what should be done to advance women's rights, and if this succeeded. While analysing this factor, several important findings came up. First of all, NGOs were part of a working group which discusses gender. After the Agreement was established, the participants created a working group for each of the nine priorities, amongst which was the working group on gender (Zijlstra, 2017). In this working group the participants shared knowledge and information, discussed what gender is and how a gender perspective can be applied in Due Diligence (R6). Several respondents explain that discussing gender issues was helpful to create awareness (R5, R6). However, after a while the working groups were reordered to make them more efficient. Gender became part of the working group on social issues. This group discusses other issues, such as child labour, as well. Respondents (R1, R2, R3) explain that the issue of gender on itself is currently not one of the most salient issues. As such, this issue is not a priority within the working group on social issues. More pressing issues are a living wage, freedom of association and child labour (R1, R2, R3). Respondent 1, 2 and 3 explain that NGOs make sure that gender remains addressed, but that other issues are more important at the moment. Hence, their efforts to specifically address gender are limited.

This indication leads to a subsequent and significant finding. What catches the eye, is that NGOs do not often address women's rights as a separate issue but accommodate women's rights with broader issues. In the implementation of the Agreement, NGOs often use a broader approach to address multiple issues at the same time. According to respondent 1, gender should be included in all topics, but it can be addressed separately because it does not receive sufficient attention yet. Respondent 1 focuses especially on child labour but takes women's rights into account. The respondent explains that the fight against child labour is as much a fight for better women's rights, as it is to abolish child labour. As stated before, most children working in the garment and textile factories are young girls. Thus, these issues relate to each other. Respondent 3, who withdrew from the Agreement, is in favour of accommodating women's right with other broader issues. An example is to focus on the establishment of a living wage throughout the whole production and supply chain. A living wage is the minimum income necessary for a worker to meet their basic needs (SER, 2016). Respondent 3 explains that a living wage is an objective that can be turned into a quantifiable objective, and therefore might be easier to target. Although this objective does not specifically point to women's rights, it nevertheless is an important measure that needs to be taken in order to advance women's rights. Respondent 3 explains: '*if women make a living wage, the need to work overtime decreases and the possibility to buy decent nutrition will increase. Furthermore, the necessity for children to start working will decline and their opportunities to go to school rises.*' Another example of an overarching measure given by respondent 3 and respondent 7 from a labour union, is the need to ensure freedom of association. If labour unions have the possibility to associate and to function effectively, then progress can be made on many different

topics. According to respondent 3 and 7 it can be effective to focus on overarching issues, rather than focussing on women's rights itself. Respondent 2 agrees with this approach and emphasises that gender issues are entangled with other problems. Respondent 2 explains that it can be effective to '*apply an inclusive approach and focus on issues such as a living wage and freedom of association. Within this approach specific gender measures can be taken*'. Thus, although NGOs currently do not have a strong focus on the promotion of women's rights, they do include this topic in their work on other issues.

Finally, NGOs often collaborate in order to pressure the advancement of CSR and to make the NGO perspective valid. In order to have an effect with these approaches, NGOs sometimes join forces with NGOs that operate on a distance. Participating NGOs collaborate with supporting NGOs, NGOs that withdrew from the negotiations, or with NGOs that are not part of the Agreement. Noteworthy is the collaboration between respondent 1 and respondent 3. Over time these respondents developed a close collaboration in which they make use of their different roles. Respondent 1 has been part of the Steering Group whereas respondent 3 withdrew from the negotiation. These NGOs combine their forces and make use of an 'insider-outsider' strategy. Respondent 1 attempts to influence the participants from the inside by collaborating with companies and supporting them to further their ICSR practices. Respondent 3 focuses on addressing deficits in the sector and takes a more critical stance towards companies. Both respondents emphasise that this collaboration has certain limitations. As respondent 1 is part of the Steering Group, this NGO has to adhere to confidentiality procedures; they cannot share all the inside information. Another example is the shared effort to improve transparency. In 2019 a mid-term evaluation takes place to evaluate the Agreement. In order to create leverage NGOs have discussed their points of improvement and searched for shared issues (R1, R3, R4). All NGOs would like to see an improvement in the transparency of the companies' Action Plans. The labour union respondent 7 works for shares this opinion and explains that '*we regularly have bilateral meetings with NGOs to discuss our shared points (e.g. transparency, malfunctioning of factories) in order to create more leverage*'. Although this issue does not directly relate to women's rights, it does affect the advancement of women's rights as it will give further insights in situations on the ground. This topic became an important issue on the agenda and is currently discussed amongst all participants. This demonstrates that NGOs have most leverage to pose their vision on what should be done on thematic and procedural issues when they collaborate.

In short, NGOs managed to incorporate their vision on the advancement of women's rights in two ways. First, NGOs share their knowledge during working group sessions. However, as gender is not a high priority at the moment, this does not have a large impact. NGOs nowadays integrate gender as a part of a larger strategy, which appears to be effective. Living wage, child labour and freedom of association are high on the agenda, and oftentimes this includes a gender lens as well. Second, by collaboration NGOs can pressure firms from the inside and outside, which proves to be effective and keeps priority issues on the agenda.

Answering sub-question 4 & 5

The fourth and fifth sub-question can now be answered.

The fourth question stated: '*In what ways do Dutch NGOs influence the advancement of women's rights in the Agreement?*' The discussion of the conditioning factors and the main strategies gives a clear outline of the way NGOs promote women's rights in the Agreement. First of all, NGOs are subject to several conditioning factors in their efforts to assert influence. The institutional context defines if NGOs join the Agreement as a participant or as a supporter. Based on this, NGOs have different levels of access to the negotiation process and varying influence on the decision-making procedure. Second, all NGOs are affected in their structural power by resources. In general, NGOs were not hindered by financial resources when joining, but were constrained in their long-term participation by a lack of financial resources due to withdrawal of national subsidies. However, NGOs have extensive expertise, access to local networks and their reputation as a credible partner is increasing. This provides them with leverage. Third, an essential result is that the current ruling discourse created by Dutch politics and media favours NGO participation in CSR practices and enables NGOs to gain attention for women's rights. Correspondingly, have become more prone to collaborate with NGOs. The ruling discourse significantly embodies the emerging political CSR discourse.

Furthermore, NGOs mainly make use of symbolic strategies to promote women's rights. On the one hand, NGOs address the need for improvement by issuing research reports and opinion pieces that address breaches of women's rights in production and supply chains. Moreover, NGOs lobby politicians in order to establish CSR legislation. On the other hand, NGOs encourage and enable companies to improve women's rights by providing them with practical guidance reports, Due Diligence tools, gender specific workshops and access to local networks. Instead of a strict separation between the four strategies of Den Hond and De Bakker (2007), the results demonstrate that the NGOs make most use of symbolic gain and symbolic damage strategies and that material strategies are not oftentimes used by these NGOs.

The final sub-question states: '*Do Dutch NGOs influence the advancement of women's rights in the Agreement*?' Results demonstrate that NGOs are adapting competently to their role as CSR actor and are of influence because of their extensive issue specific knowledge, access to local networks and their practical guidance in formulating Due Diligence. In order to amplify their influence, NGOs are exploring different forms of collaboration. Jointly they have more leverage to impose their demands on the Agreement. Using these strategies, NGOs influenced how the discrimination and gender clause was formulated in the Agreement. It should be noted that firms and branch organisations acknowledged the urge to advance women's rights, and therefore were willing to collaborate on this topic. Besides the thematic issue of women's rights, NGOs did not accomplish all their demands considering procedural

issues. Targets are less strict as NGOs proposed. Nevertheless, firms are more prone to collaborate with NGOs and aim to set ambitious targets, ahead of global standards. Noteworthy is that most NGOs do not prioritise women's rights. Instead, NGOs mainly address the issues of a living wage, child labour and freedom of association. A broad focus on inclusive issues will benefit the advancement of women's rights. Furthermore, NGOs influenced procedural issues by formalising their participation on the advancement of women' rights in the Agreement. Participating NGOs have a formal say in the decision-making procedures of the Agreement, whereas supporting NGOs are involved with the implementation of the Agreement and keep pressure on firms by addressing violations in the sector.

Taken all together, NGOs influence both the negotiation process and negotiation outcome and are of influence on the advancement of women's rights in the Agreement. The current institutional and discursive context enable NGOs to become more involved in CSR, and NGOs skilfully adapt to their role as CSR actors.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

In the conclusion of this research I address the answers to the five sub-questions and formulate the answer to the main research question. After answering the research question, I discuss the relevance of the research and compare this to the literature. Thereafter, the methodological limitations are discussed. Lastly, several policy recommendations serving the progress of the Agreement, are provided.

What are the possibilities and limitations of NGOs to assert influence in the changing CSR field?

The shift from the instrumental to the political discourse of CSR provides opportunities for NGOs to become involved in CSR policies. However, mainly to the benefit of multinationals, processes of globalisation have led to governmental reliance on firms for economic development and created special firm regulations. Simultaneously, increasing firm involvement in the public spheres resulted in a growing demand for multi-stakeholder CSR processes. This spelled the onset of NGOs to become more involved in CSR and to influence negotiation and outcome processes.

NGO involvement in CSR embodies both possibilities and limitations. NGO involvement does not come without risks. Processes of co-optation can result from firm-NGO partnerships, NGOs can lack legitimacy and do not always adhere to downwards accountability. Despite this, NGOs play an important role in shaping CSR processes. They drive CSR processes, represent marginalised groups, monitor compliance and put issues on the political agenda.

What influence strategies do NGOs use in their role as CSR actor?

The literature indicated four different types of NGO strategies in CSR: symbolic gain, symbolic damage, material gain and material damage strategies. Reformative NGOs are typically more drawn to perform symbolic strategies, whereas radical NGOs make more use of material strategies. These strategies are used to influence the negotiation process and negotiation outcome of CSR.

What other external factors influence CSR processes?

NGOs are subject to three conditioning factors: the institutional-, structural-, and discursive context. These conditioning factors are dynamic and create different contexts which shape NGO influence. The emerging institutional and discursive contextual factors of political CSR positively support NGO influence, whereas the structural context is two-sided. A lack of financial resources can hinder NGOs, but their entry to local networks and their honourable reputation can facilitate NGO influence.

In what ways do Dutch NGOs influence the advancement of women's rights in the Agreement?

The analysis demonstrated that NGOs influence the advancement of women's rights in different ways, but that their influence relates to several conditioning factors. Essential for this conclusion, is that the construction of the Agreement parallels with the political CSR discourse. The members of the

Agreement agreed that the government, labour unions and NGOs should be part of establishing CSR norms. The political CSR discourse is also embodied by the media and by the CSR approach of the national government. Although not all garment and textile enterprises are part of the Agreement, the growing demand for a multi-stakeholder approach is omnipresent. Thus, the institutional and discursive context enable NGOs to assert influence. The structural context both enables and constrains NGOs. Several NGOs are hindered by a shortage of subsidies, which constrains them in their influence. However, NGOs have much issue knowledge, access to local networks and a good reputation which provides them with leverage. Strategies NGOs use to assert influence, are predominantly equivalents of symbolic strategies. The main strategies are publishing reports, lobbying and providing information via workshops, network activities and tools. In addition, NGOs collaborate with each other to expand their leverage. They are agile in combining their 'insider' and 'outsider' roles to become more effective in their roles as CSR actors. These strategies are used to influence the negotiation process and the negotiation outcome of the Agreement.

Do Dutch NGOs influence the advancement of women's rights in the Agreement?
NGOs have become skilled in embodying their newly obtained roles as CSR actors. Given their entry to local networks and their extensive issue specific knowledge, they have the possibility to set certain topics on the agenda and to frame these issues. This has contributed to the standards of discrimination and gender included in the Agreement. Standards in the Agreement are based on international standards, but amplified by NGO efforts. However, the research demonstrated that other stakeholders were also in favour of including women' rights into the Agreement. Therefore it is difficult to establish to what extent this can be attributed to NGO influence, or to the influence of other conditioning factors. Furthermore, NGOs managed to formalise their participation in the advancement of women's rights in the Agreement. Participating NGOs have a formal role in future decision-making procedures and in the implementation of the Agreement, whereas supporting NGOs have informal roles in the implementation of the Agreement. NGOs that are not directly involved in the Agreement, have an important role in addressing violations in the production and supply chain. As most stakeholders agreed on the importance of women's rights, NGOs did manage to pose their perspective on the advancement of women's rights in the Agreement. The bigger challenge appeared to be to convince companies to collaborate with NGOs to improve their Due Diligence measures. The results demonstrate nevertheless that firms are changing in behaviour, that they are less aversive of NGO's reputations and more willing to collaborate with NGOs. This stems from the limited importance of NGO's reputation as radical or reformative, for firms to engage with NGOs. Similarly, participating NGOs make less use of 'naming and shaming' strategies. Instead, they tend to offer assistance to put firm's CSR targets into practice. A last significant finding is that NGOs often address the advancement of women's rights in combination with other issues rather than a separate issue. Other issues, such as a living wage and the freedom of

association are often more urgent, and the improvement of these issues will eventually also benefit the advancement of women's rights.

After answering both sub questions, it is possible to answer the main research question: *To what extent and how do Dutch NGOs influence the advancement of women's rights in CSR processes?'*
This research has demonstrated that Dutch NGOs influence the advancement of women's rights in CSR processes. The results illustrate that NGOs influence both the negotiation process and the outcome of the Agreement. NGOs have influence on issue framing, agenda setting and the position of the key actors, and influence both procedural and substantive issues. Notwithstanding the value of this indication, it is necessary to keep the conditioning factors in mind. Results of the institutional, structural and discursive context demonstrate that the conditioning factors were mostly in favour of the NGO perspective on the advancement of women's rights in the Agreement. The rules and procedures provided NGO participation and the political CSR discourse promoted a multi-stakeholder approach and put a focus on women's rights. Nevertheless, the structural context demonstrated that NGOs were disadvantaged by financial resources, but still had influence due to their knowledge, network and to a certain level due to their reputation.

These results add on existing literature. It can be stated that NGOs are skilful in fulfilling their newly obtained role as CSR actor in the multi-stakeholder Agreement, resembling political CSR. NGOs influence the advancement of women's rights by performing symbolic strategies. Moreover, NGOs collaborate with other NGOs to create more leverage. The results demonstrate that collaboration makes their strategies as CSR actors more effective. Similarly, companies are less aversive in creating long-term relationships with NGOs. As a concomitant effect, firms are adapting their behaviour to the emerging political CSR discourse. Firms are becoming more inclined to engage with NGOs and to make use of their assistance and issue specific knowledge. However, the NGOs that withdrew from the Agreement are more critical of firms. Given these results, it can be concluded that NGOs and firms are creating more symbiotic and long-term relationships. These new relationships empower NGOs to work together with companies and with other NGOs on the most salient topics. Instead of responding to global standards, they can contest the current major problems and progress to set advanced targets to improve CSR processes.

Yet, this claim should be put in perspective. Participants of the Agreement are mainly small and medium enterprises. Numerous large multinationals are not part of the Agreement and still hold power in the garment and textile industry and are still favoured by special regulations which condone the lack of sufficient working conditions. Given that NGOs did not manage to incorporate all procedural issues they had put on the agenda, also reveals the remaining dominance of firm' power. Concrete targets and the obligation to publish on Due Diligence results remained a sensitive topic and firms were favoured in their demands, as this information can influence their competitive position. A last point to make, is that the research ensues that the priority of women's rights is limited. Other

issues such as a living wage and freedom of association are of greater urgency. Most NGOs reckon that solving these problems will eventually influence the advancement of women's rights. Hence, NGOs direct their efforts to more inclusive issues, and appear to be effective in this approach within the Agreement.

Discussion

In the discussion of this research I elaborate on the academic and societal relevance of this research, and compare the results to the literature.

The aim of this research was to add to the existing literature on NGO influence in CSR processes. To do so, I tested conditioning factors, NGO strategies and influence factors by researching a single case study. The results confirm the growing importance of a political approach of CSR, as this multi-stakeholder approach includes NGO participation. The literature review outlined the growing importance of NGOs in CSR but demonstrated that most authors are still sceptical about NGO influence. NGOs and firms are still positioned as opposing actors that do not often collaborate on an equal level. As this case study demonstrates, this image is tilting. Although multinationals still hold extensive power on an international level, on national levels collaborations of governments, firms, labour unions and NGOs are setting an example of how a multi-stakeholder approach can take form. Not only NGOs confirm the need to advance their role as CSR actors, also firms incrementally recognise the importance of NGO involvement. Moreover, the research proved that firms and NGOs are more inclined to cooperate and are less opposing actors. This reaffirms the importance and the need to further research the influence of NGOs as emerging CSR actors in a field of political CSR.

Nevertheless, NGOs are still subject to traditional power asymmetries. First of all, they often lack financial resources because of subsidy shortages, but they can assert influence because of their rich amount of issue knowledge, network access and their trustworthy reputation. The importance of dynamic conditioning factors that can differ per case, confirms the relevance of Boström and Hallström's (2010) theory on conditioning factors.

The strategies resulting from this research, however, do not fully align with Den Hond and De Bakker's (2007) four categories of strategies. The strategies of the NGOs in this research mainly resemble symbolic strategies. This implies that NGOs have less direct access or are less drawn to influence the economic position. In an environment of political CSR, NGOs are more inclined to perform supportive strategies. Additionally, NGOs appear to collaborate amongst each other in order to improve their leverage. Consequently, it would be of great value to investigate additional strategies.

Finally, this research tested Betsill and Corell's model of influence factors (2008). The model of influence factors appeared to be of relevance as it closely aligns with the case study. However, by using this model it remains difficult to distinguish between results on the advancement of women's rights caused by NGO communication, and results that would have occurred without the presence of NGOs.

Without combining this model with conditioning factors, the model might indicate false causation and overestimate NGO influence. Results can be influenced by other factors and actors than NGOs. Thus, the lack of counterfactual measures and evidence makes it difficult to indicate actual NGO influence.

A second objective of this research was to add societal relevance. This research attempts to add societal relevance by researching a relatively new form of CSR: IRBC Agreements. As this IRBC Agreement got established in 2016, the stakeholders are still optimising the Agreement. This research gives an insight in the NGO perspective on IRBC practices. Hopefully this enables all stakeholders to expand their vision and gain more information on the added value of NGOs in this process. It clearly displays the shift from instrumental to political CSR and exposes opportunities for NGOs to collaborate with firms or other NGOs to increase the effectiveness of their role as CSR actors. Furthermore, it can enable NGOs to review their strategies and the effectiveness of their current strategies. Lastly, this research aims to create urgency to keep addressing human rights violations in the garment and textile sector.

Limitations

This research has been subject to several limitations. The first limitation relates to the research design of a single case study. In a single case study it is not possible to compare NGO influences between cases. However, this could have enhanced the validity of the research as another case might include other conditioning factors and other strategies. In this context, however, this was not possible as there was no other case in which women's right were of similar importance. Even so, due to a limited amount of time available for this research, it was more feasible to concentrate on one in-depth case instead of researching two cases less thoroughly.

A second limitation relates to the used theories of NGO strategies. The four strategies outlined in the literature appeared to be of less relevance amongst the respondents of this research. This can be caused by the limited number of respondents, or because the theoretical categorisation did not form a proper match with the used strategies.

Finally, performing a qualitative research with interviews creates several risks. In order to conduct research, the respondents need to be open for interviews and have time available. In this research I managed to speak with most of the important stakeholders, however, several possible respondents did not have time to schedule an interview.

Based on the limitations, I advise further research to analyse multiple cases to compare NGO influence. Second, I advise to expand on NGO strategies and search for a different framework. In order to create further insights in NGOs' choices for strategies, it is necessary to interview more NGOs within this case or to search for alternative academic frameworks on NGO strategies. Lastly, I advise to reach out to additional stakeholders. For instance, the Secretariat of the Agreement and the other NGO that withdrew from the negotiations.

Policy recommendations

The final part of this research outlines several policy recommendations.

- The first recommendation relates to the advancement of women's rights. As appeared from the results, women's rights can be treated as a specific issue, or as an integrated condition within other prioritised issues. I advise stakeholders to make use of the second approach. Women's rights are salient as most employees in the garment and sector industry are women, but it is best to aim for an inclusive approach, which includes specific measures. For instance, to focus on a living wage and freedom of association. Within these issues, special attention should be paid to women's rights and a 'gender lens' should be developed by constructing concrete measures.

- A second recommendation is to intensify the collaboration between companies and local NGOs. Firms and branch organisation argue that companies have general knowledge of the main issues in the sector, but firms lack detailed information of the urgency of issues and on the ground situations. For instance, companies are aware of discrimination issues, but do not always know which groups of employees are victim of discrimination. Companies acknowledge that NGOs play an important role in the supply of this information. Participating NGOs already have local contacts and local offices but should make companies more aware of these connections. Labour unions can play a role in this as well.

- Firms and NGOs explain that they are willing to intensify local connections, but that it is not always possible to establish these connections due to political difficulties in certain countries. As the Dutch government has the responsibility to improve human rights, the governments should support NGOs and labour unions in establishing these connections. This might include the use of diplomatic strategies.

- A fourth recommendation concerns collaboration between NGOs, and between NGOs and labour unions. Firms explained not to be aware of what NGOs have to offer, what their expertise is and when firms can approach NGOs. The branch organisations argued that it would be good if NGOs and labour unions could come to an agreement on the most relevant issues in certain regions. This provides more clarity and concrete targets for firms. Thus, the effectiveness of NGO influence might increase if NGOs and labour unions collaborate (even) more and coordinate their priorities.

- The last recommendation does not directly relate to the research but was oftentimes addressed by the respondents. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs is advised to set stricter targets that have

to be obtained within the Agreement. Most respondent explained that participants from the Ministry were present during the negotiation, but that they did not actively promote certain standards and targets. However, as they have a responsibility to protect and promote human rights, amongst which women's rights, they can be more vigorous.

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Appendix

Appendix 1 - Stakeholder theories

A second theory about NGO influence is discussed by Frooman (1999). Frooman developed a model that facilitates the identification of NGO strategies based on *stakeholder theory* and *resource dependence theory*. This model identifies how resource relationships between a firm and a stakeholder define strategies used by a stakeholder to influence firm decision-making. Similar to Den Hond and De Bakker (2007), his framework results in the identification of NGO strategies. However, he argues that these strategies are chosen based on the relationship with the private sector, rather than the ideology of the NGO. Stakeholders in this context, are individuals or groups who can affect a firm, such as NGOs. Frooman (1999) argues that the dependency of a firm on resources from external actors, gives those actors leverage over the firm. It provides stakeholders with opportunities to gain control. Resources consist of financial, physical, and informational resources (Frooman & Murrell, 2005). The first part of Frooman's model outlines the dependence between the firm and the stakeholder (Table 10) (Frooman, 1999; Frooman & Murrell; 2005). This figure takes dependency as a dichotomous variable and demonstrates differences in relationships and the resulting *influence pathways* chosen by stakeholders.

Typology of Relationships and Strategies

		Is the Stakeholder Dependent on the Firm?	
		Yes	No
Is the firm dependent on the stakeholder?	Yes	Direct compromise (high interdependence)	Direct coercion (stakeholder power)
	No	Indirect compromise (firm power)	Indirect coercion (low interdependence)

Table 10: Typology of relationships and strategies. Source: Frooman (1999)

Table 10 demonstrated that when there is asymmetry in the resource relationship, the firm or the stakeholder is dominating, which is called *firm power* and *stakeholder power*. Opposing to this, there is symmetry between firm and stakeholder power when their welfare is interlinked (*high interdependence*) or not related (*low interdependence*). When stakeholders hold power, they perform *direct coercion* strategies on firms. This involves threats to increase costs or to reduce benefits for a firm. Contrarily, when the firm holds power, stakeholders are left with *indirect compromise* strategies. Compromise strategies entail the increase of a benefit for a firm, or to reduce a cost (Frooman & Murrell, 2005). In addition, these strategies are indirect of nature, which means they are executed through allies who can manipulate the flow of resources of a firm (Frooman, 1999). When the relationship is defined

by high interdependence, the welfare of both the firm and the stakeholder are related. Therefore, stakeholders will pursue an influence pathway of *direct compromise*. Stakeholders themselves influence the flow of resources to the firm, hence, these strategies are characterised as direct strategies. Lastly, low interdependence relationships are defined by *indirect coercion* strategies. Allies who have a greater impact on the firm are used to pressure the firm (Frooman, 1999, p. 198). In a subsequent research, Frooman and Murrell (2005) categories the types of strategies discussed above and order them (Table 11). Table 11 gives an overview of how and by whom these strategies can be performed.

Influence Strategies

Types of Strategies	Definition
Manipulation	How the influencing occurs
Coercion	Decrease benefit or increase cost
Compromise	Increase benefit or decrease cost
Pathway	Who does the influencing
Direct	Stakeholder
Indirect	Ally of stakeholder

Table 11: Influence strategies. Source: Frooman and Murrell (2005)

Appendix 2 - Interview guide NGOs

1. **General information**
   a. Mission and vision of the NGO
   b. NGO ideology
      i. Reformative or radical
   c. How is the NGO involved with the Agreement?
      i. What is their responsibility?
      ii. Since when are they involved?

2. **NGO strategies: does the NGO makes use of….**
   Symbolic damage strategies
   a. Does the NGO assert strategic measures that positively discuss firms, in relation to their ICSR practices regarding women's rights?
   Symbolic gain strategies
   b. Does the NGO assert strategic measures that negatively discuss firms, in relation to their ICSR practices regarding women's rights?
   Material damage strategies
   c. Does the NGO assert strategic measures that positively influence firms' economic position? These measures are taken in relation to firms ICSR practices regarding women's rights.
   Material gain strategies
   d. Does the NGO assert strategic measures that negatively influence firms' economic position? These measures are taken in relation to firms ICSR practices regarding women's rights.

3. **Influence NGOs**
   Influence on the negotiation process:
   Issue framing:
   a. How was the issue of women's rights framed at the start of the negotiations and did this change over time?
   b. Did the NGO have a different definition of women's right compared to the other stakeholders?
   c. Did the NGO attempt to influence how women's rights were framed?
   d. How did the NGO attempt to influence how the issue of women's rights was framed?
   e. Did the NGO succeed in framing the issue of women's rights?
   Agenda setting:

f. Did the NGO attempt to add certain issues about women's rights on the agenda?

g. What were the issues related to women's rights the NGO attempted to add to the agenda?

h. How did the NGO do this?

i. Did the NGO succeed in adding issues related to women's rights to the agenda?

To alter the position of the key stakeholders:

j. Did the position of key stakeholders differ from the position of NGOs related to the issue of women's rights?

k. Did the NGO attempt to influence the position of key stakeholders related to the issue of women's rights?

l. How did the NGO attempt to influence the position of key stakeholders related to the issue of women's rights?

m. Did the NGO succeed in influencing the position of key stakeholders related to the issue of women's rights?

Influence on the outcome of the negotiations:

Procedural issues:

n. Did the NGOs attempt to formalise their position in the implementation and the enforcement of the Agreement, related to the issue of women's rights?

o. How did the NGO attempt to formalise their position in the implementation and the enforcement of the Agreement, related to the issue of women's rights?

p. Did the NGO succeed in formalising their position in the implementation and enforcement of the Agreement, related to the issue of women's rights?

Substantive issues:

q. Did the NGO attempt to integrate their vision on what should be done to advance the position of women's right in the Agreement?

r. How did the NGO attempt to integrate their vision on what should be done to advance the position of women's right in the Agreement?

s. Did the NGO succeed to integrate their vision on what should be done to advance the position of women's right in the Agreement?

4. **Conditioning factors**

Institutional factors

a. Were there formal rules and procedures that defined whether the NGOs could participate?

    i. Did this enable or constrain their work on women's rights?

b. Were there formal rules and procedures that defined the decision-making procedure?

        i.   Did this enable or constrain their work on women's rights?

Structural factors

    c.   Did the NGO have sufficient resources to maintain effective participation and to further the advancement of women's rights in the Agreement? There resources can be:

        i.   Financial Resources

       ii.   Issue Knowledge

     iii.   Networks

     iv.   Community reputation

Extra:

- Points of improvement of the Agreement

Appendix 3 – Interview guide firms (branch organisations, labour unions and Ministry of Foreign Affairs)

1. **General information**
    a. Mission and vision of the firm

2. **Involvement firm with the IRBC Agreement**
    a. Since when is the firm involved in the Agreement?
    b. What is the (formal/informal) role of the firm?
    c. What was the goal of the firm during the negotiations?

3. <u>**Firm perception**</u> **on NGO strategies: do NGO makes use of….**
    a. Symbolic damage strategies
       Strategic measures that positively discuss the efforts of firms ICSR related to women's rights?
    b. Symbolic gain strategies
       Strategic measures that negatively discuss the efforts of firms ICSR related to women's rights.
    c. Material damage strategies
       Strategic measures that positively influence a firms' economic position, based on their ICSR related to women's rights
    d. Material gain strategies
       Strategic measures that negatively influence a firms' economic position, based on their ICSR related to women's rights
    → In which strategy are NGOs most successful?

4. <u>**Firm perception**</u> **on NGO influence**
    a. Influence on the negotiation process:
       i. Issue framing:
          Did the NGOs influence how women's rights were framed? If so, how does the firm think they established this?
       ii. Agenda setting:
          Did the NGOs add certain issues on to the agenda related to women's rights? If so, how does the firm think they established this?

iii. To alter the position of the key stakeholders:

Did the position of the firm concerning issues of women's rights change throughout the negotiations? If so, was this influenced by NGO efforts?

b. Influence on the outcome of the negotiations:

i. Procedural issues:

Did NGOs manage to formalise their position in the implementation of the Agreement, relating to women's rights? If so, how does the firm think they established this?

ii. Substantive issues:

Is the position of NGOs on what should be done to advance women's rights reflected in the Agreement? If so, how does the firm think they established this?

Overall question on firm perception:

What is the added value of NGOs joining the negotiations?

Extra:

- Points of improvement for the Agreement

Appendix 4 – Tables and Figures

Respondent	Method	Duration	Data processing
R1	Face-to-face	1:02:24 min	Transcribed
R2	Telephone	53:58 min	Transcribed
R3	Face-to-face	55:30 min	Transcribed
R4	Face-to-face	50:16 min	Transcribed
R5	Telephone	31:00 min	Summarised
R6	Telephone	39:00 min	Summarised
R7	Telephone	46:00 min	Transcribed
R8	Telephone	49:00 min	Summarised
R9	Telephone	18:41 min	Transcribed
R10	Face-to-face	26:04 min	Transcribed

Table 12: Method, duration and data processing of interviews

	Reports	Tools	Gender workshop	Network activities	Local networks	Opinion pieces
R1/R2	X	X			X	
R3	X	X	X		X	X
R4	X			X		X

Table 13: Overview strategies of NGOs under research

Appendix 5 - List of nodes

List of nodes

- NGO general information
  - Year of participation
  - Participating category within agreement (participating party, supporter)
  - Responsibility within the Agreement
  - Ideology
    - Reformative
    - Radical
- Firm (f) general information
  - Year of participation (f)
- Conditioning factors
  - Institutional context
    - Participation NGOs
    - Decision-making power NGOs
  - Structural context
    - Financial resources
    - Issue knowledge
    - Network access
    - NGO reputation
  - Discursive context
    - Definition ICSR politics
    - Definition WR politcs
    - Definition ICSR media
    - Definition WR media
- NGO strategies
  - Symbolic gain
    - Constructive reports
  - Symbolic damage
    - Critical reports
  - Material gain
    - Gender Workshop
    - Due Diligence Database
  - Material damage
    - Lobby
- NGO perspective: Influence indicators

- o Negotiation process – NGOs
  - ▪ Issue framing
  - ▪ Agenda setting
  - ▪ Position key actors
- o Negotiation outcome - NGOs
  - ▪ Procedural issues
  - ▪ Substantive issues
- Firm perspective: influence indicators
  - o Negotiation process – firms (f)
    - ▪ Issue framing (f)
    - ▪ Agenda setting (f)
    - ▪ Position key actors (f)
  - o Negotiation outcome – firms (f)
    - ▪ Procedural issues (f)
    - ▪ Substantive issues (f)

Extra nodes for policy recommendations:
- Points of improvement Agreement – NGOs
- Points of improvement Agreement – firms
- Critique firms on role NGOs