



Linnæus University

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Bachelor Thesis

Better Together – NGO and Business Solve Environmental Issues

Investigating the partner search of local, regional, and international NGOs



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Abstract

Addressing environmental issues is becoming increasingly important for businesses and NGOs. In addition, through the internationalisation of these organisations, the problem is becoming global. To address environmental issues in an effective way, there is a need to form a cross-sector collaboration between NGOs and businesses. Thus, to have a successful collaboration, it is important to search for suitable partners. This thesis investigates the partner search process of NGOs for cross-sector collaboration. It investigates how the process of partner search with regard to drivers for collaboration, formation typology, success factors compatibility, resources, and capability, as well as trust affect the partner search of three NGOs with different internationalisation degrees.

A literature review has been conducted to investigate what has been discussed regarding the key concepts: environment, internationalisation degree, partner search, formation, drivers, and success factors. The resulted conceptual framework is used to analyse the empirical data. The study was conducted following an abductive approach since existing literature is only existent on firm-perspective so far. To investigate the NGO's partner search for potential business partners, the thesis follows qualitative research where semi-structured interviews were conducted to create three single cases. The cases represent three internationalisation degrees, namely local NGO, regional NGO, and international NGO.

The analysis discusses the differences and similarities between the empirical findings and the theoretical findings. The conclusion suggests that the internationalisation degree influences the partner search process slightly in every key concept. This is mainly due to the interdependence between each concept, which challenges a clear distinction. Nevertheless, the main implication for theory is the contribution to the so-far missing NGO perspective on the partner search in cross-sector collaboration. This thesis also provides practical implications where it appeals for NGOs to clearly understand the intention of the business partner for the collaboration and build trust. The study concludes with limitations and future research implications.

Key words

NGO-business, cross-sector collaboration, environment, internationalisation degree, partner search, case study, local, regional, international



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Kalmar, 26. May 2021

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'C. Alves Nunes Köppel'.

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List of Abbreviation

B2B	Business-to-Business
CSC	Cross-Sector Collaboration
EDF	Environmental Defence Fund
ibid	ibīdem, in the same place
N2N	NGO-to-NGO
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisations, non-profit organisation and non-profit sector
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
UN	United Nations
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
WWF	World Wildlife Fund



1 Introduction

The focus of this bachelor thesis is on the partner search process of environmental NGOs (hereafter only as NGOs) for cross-sector collaboration. Through the creation of environmental issues and the increasing internationalisation of businesses, the need to address environmental problems is asking for collaboration between the for-profit and the non-profit sector. In the context of our research, the for-profit sector refers to businesses and non-profit to NGOs. In this introductory chapter, we provide a short background of the NGO-business collaboration topic. Thereafter we discuss the relevance of the problem and present the derived research questions. This chapter concludes with the delimitations and outline of the study.

1.1 Background

The awareness of environmental issues is steadily increasing. In February 2000, leading representatives of the society stated that climate change is the most important issue of humankind (Sundin & Ranganathan, 2002). 20 years later, environmental issues are for the first time dominating the top long-term risks in the Global Risk Perception Report 2020. These environmental issues are in nature very complex and have a high impact on life on earth (World Economic Forum, 2020; 2021).

In Europe, many national measures are already created to counteract these issues and thus, protect the environment (Dauwe, et al., 2019). However, according to Huwart and Verdier (2013), national measures are not sufficient for addressing environmental issues as pollution and the caused environmental damage ignore borders. This means when a company produces environmentally harmful by-products close to borders that these will most likely affect the neighbouring countries as well (ibid.). In this respect, bilateral or regional agreements have been created to address this kind of problem (ibid.). However, for more complex environmental issues like climate change, they argued that not even bilateral or regional approaches are sufficient. Climate change affects the whole globe in many ways and therefore they claimed that it requires global action to address this problem. In fact, the scale of a lot of environmental problems is too large to be solved within a single sector or action (Yang & Liu, 2018). In order to solve these complex issues, high investments are required which exceed the capacity of the public sector or non-profit sector (UN Environmental Programme, 2021). As these sectors, which are normally responsible for societal well-being, fail to provide solutions, the responsibilities for these problems become more and more distorted (Maier, et al., 2016). One possible solution which recently received a lot of attention is that NGOs were expected to act more business-oriented in order to increase their impact for the public good (ibid.). However, this shift of orientation might lead to some divergences, e.g., the point of intersection between for-profit and idealistic behaviour (ibid.). Therefore, collaboration across sectors is seen as an effective and efficient approach to provide solutions in this regard, without



endangering or distorting NGOs' values and credibility (Austin, 2000a). In other words, the active participation of several sectors and organisation is required to solve these complex environmental issues. Collaboration between different sectors is called cross-sector collaboration and has many different forms that arise between NGO, government, and business (Seitanidi, et al., 2010). Taking into consideration that according to the World Economic Forum (2016), 69 out of 100 largest economies are businesses, it seems to be very obvious that help from the private sector is needed in this respect (Myers, 2016). Cross-sector collaboration (hereafter referred to as CSC) can have different forms and motives. However, the scope of this study only includes CSC between NGOs and companies that have arisen due to environmental motives. This form of CSC was chosen because NGOs are highly engaged in societal problems and businesses have the relevant resources and capabilities needed to provide environmental solutions. As a matter of fact, NGO-business collaborations are considered to be significant in terms of reaching the environmental goals in the Sustainable Development Agenda defined by the United Nations (UN) (UN, 2015a) and Paris Agreement (UN, 2015b) (Menden et al., 2019). *Figure 1* represents the scope of research of this thesis and illustrates all key contextual parameters that form NGO-business CSC. This figure illustrates the creation of environmentally motivated NGO-business CSC. Environmental issues have an impact on the whole globe and therefore, demand collaboration beyond borders to solve them. The different internationalisation degrees, in turn, determines the scale of possibilities for NGO-business collaboration.

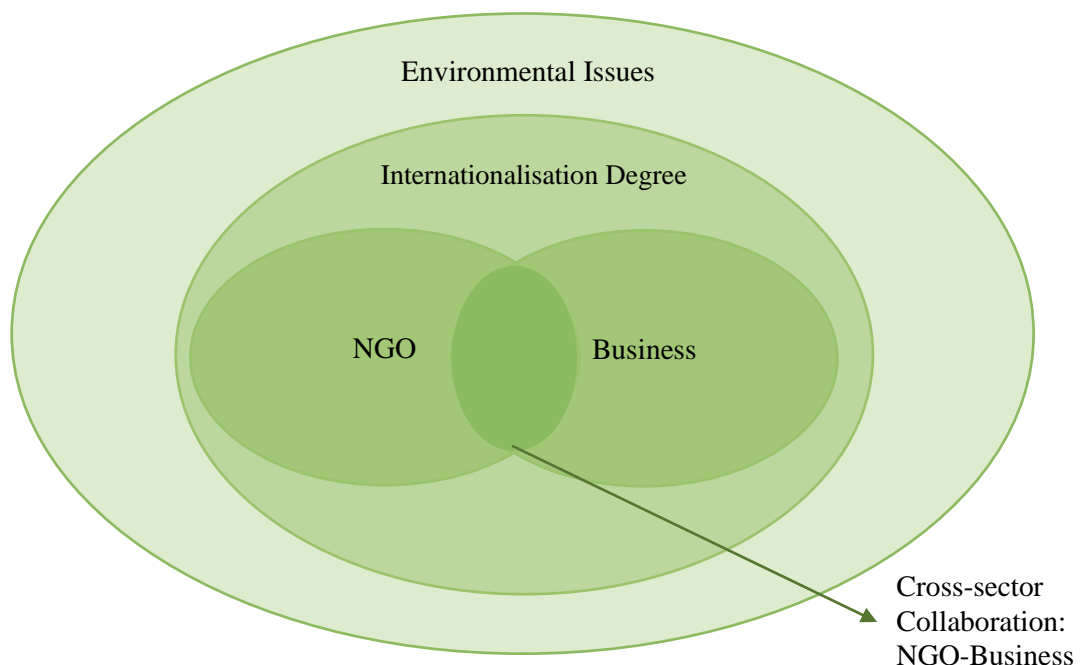


Figure 1: Different Contextual Influences of NGO-Business CSC *Own Source*



In practice already several successful NGO-business CSC examples exist, e.g., the collaboration between WWF and IKEA launched in November 2020 with the joint goal to achieve net-zero emission production by 2050 (WWF, 2020). This form of CSC is becoming increasingly popular, especially when it comes to solving complex social problems (Rondinelli and London, 2003 cited Armin and Hesselbein 2000). Despite rising interest in such kind of collaboration, the nature of their relationship is often described as adversarial due to their contradictory visions, mission, and objectives (Rondinelli and London 2003; de Lange et al., 2016). This has historically led to many conflicts, so these two sectors have been seen as enemies rather than partners (de Lange, et al., 2016). However, NGOs changed their approach from confronting businesses to collaborating with businesses to create environmentally friendly practices (Seitanidi & Austin, 2012).

There are various reasons why NGOs and business seek such collaborations. The NGO-business collaborations have the potential to conduct systemic change, foster innovation, and improve the environmental and social conditions (Seitanidi & Austin, 2012). Moreover, through collaboration, solutions can be created which are mutually beneficial for both by increasing profitability as well as providing stronger environmental protection (Rondinelli and London, 2003; Pedersen & Pedersen, 2013; Menden et al., 2019; Dahan et al., 2020). To realise this potential, both parties must effectively leverage each other's strengths, complementary resources, and capabilities, thereby creating new opportunities and effectively managing risks (Menden, et al., 2019).

However, not all collaborations are beneficial and ignite the previously described potential. Many CSCs lead to failure due to a lack of compatibility between the parties (Ashraf, et al., 2017). Most of the reasons why CSCs are unsuccessful could be avoided in the formation phase, precisely through a well-implemented partner selection (Holmberg & Cummings, 2009). Most of the potential problems of collaborating partners can be predicted and therefore avoided (Berger, et al., 2004). A well-executed partner selection process reduces the risks of collaborating with incompatible businesses and increases the probability of reaching the defined goals and providing solutions for environmental issues (Seitanidi, et al., 2010). Consequently, the partner selection process has a direct influence on the success of the CSC ratio and, therefore, also on the solution of environmental issues.

In this respect, this thesis investigates the partner selection process of NGOs for CSC. As the partner selection process is an extensive process per se, the thesis focuses on the NGO partner search for businesses, when intending to collaborate in such CSC. Whereby the key elements of the partner selection in CSC in the perspective of NGOs are researched and presented.



1.2 Problem Discussion

Given the importance of CSC to address environmentally complex problems, the partner search is also important before entering into the collaboration. The literature mostly investigates the innovation or the environmental responsibility aspect in this cross-sector context (Mousavi & Bossink, 2020; Yang & Liu, 2018; Rondinelli & London, 2003). Nevertheless, the importance of finding the right partner has been highlighted in their studies. For example, Mousavi and Bossink (2020) found that the need to find compatibility of a strategic match between corporations and NGOs is essential during the formation phase in order to successfully achieve environmentally sustainable innovation. In terms of environmental responsibility, Rondinelli and London (2003) argue that it is important to first understand the need for resources before establishing the collaboration.

In the international business context, the literature mostly covers the partner selection of B2B alliances. Dacin et al. (1997) emphasise the importance of partner selection in international alliances and highlight that not only the understanding of the partners is important, but the search for suitable partners cannot be underestimated. Ramanathan et al. (2020) investigate the impact of the selection of collaborating partners for green performance. They conclude that finding the right partner which has similar motivation increases the strength of collaboration which enhances the environmental and economic performances. In terms of NGOs, Hailey (1999) discusses the shift from local activities to the increasing contribution of NGOs into the international environment. In this context, Avellaneda et al. (2017) investigate why international NGOs from Japan expand their activities to Latin American countries. In their study, they found that the presence of Japanese companies in Latin America encourages the presence of Japanese international NGOs. This emphasises the need for CSC for NGOs to access foreign markets and the need to find suitable partners for collaboration. Organisations internationalise in different degrees (Verbeke & Asmussen, 2016). This thesis takes into consideration the three internationalisation degrees local, regional, and international which are derived from Verbeke and Asmussen (2016).

Forming CSC can start by providing initial conditions such as the emergence of a complex problem (Bryson, et al., 2006). Rondinelli and London (2003) argue that as part of the formation phase, the type of collaboration has to be determined. Furthermore, Austin and Seitanidi (2012) argue that the formation phase includes the assessment of the partner's compatibility for CSC as part of the initial condition of the partner selection process, which the latter is said to be between the formation and the implementation phase. Nevertheless, for CSC to be successful, it is important to select the right partner, as underestimating this process can lead to collaboration failure (Holmberg & Cummings, 2009). A good partner match is defined by the level of how well-collaborating partners can achieve the targeted outcome, how harmonic



the drivers for collaboration are, compatibility level between partners, and potential success factors (Seitanidi & Austin, 2012).

The partner selection process has been extensively researched from the firm's perspective for strategic collaborations, which are collaborations between businesses (B2B). Bierly and Gallabher (2007) for example, examined the importance of trust and strategic match. Holmberg and Cummings (2009), in turn, elaborated four key steps of firm's partner selection namely (1) the alignment of business partner objectives, (2) the elaboration of critical success factors for the evaluation of potential activities from such collaborations, (3) the identification of potential partners, and lastly (4) the elaboration of partner selection analysis tools. In contrast, the research on partner selection of NGO collaborations (N2N) has been rather scarce. Atouba (2019) investigated the impact of trust and communication of the partner selection process for NGO collaborations and found a positive correlation of reputation to the trust factor, which in turn also influences communication effectiveness. In terms of partner search, O'Brien et al. (2019) identified a preference for collaborating with existing partners between NGOs and argued that this is due to a greater level of trust between parties from existing relationships. In the cross-sector context, Austin and Seitanidi (2012) investigated the partner selection process which is based on first defining the potential fit and further investigating criteria for selection. Seitanidi (2010) further argued that information about resources is important for partner selection. Nevertheless, the partner selection process of the NGO perspective remains scarce. Before being able to select the right partner, it is important to know where to find the right partner and in regard to the partner search, the literature shows little results, especially for CSC. Feilhauer and Hahn (2021) examined the drivers for businesses' partner choice in NGO-business CSC. They identified the firm's motivation to search for partners through existing ties for collaboration and to search for new partners for the formation. They concluded that there is a preference for businesses to start CSC with existing NGOs rather than looking for new partners. In this context, Feilhauer and Hahn (2021) clearly appealed for the need to understand the NGO perspective of partner search for CSC.

There is a research gap in the understanding of partner search of organisations, more specifically of partner search of the NGO's perspective for CSC (Feilhauer & Hahn, 2021; Ashraf, et al., 2017). As previously mentioned, this need was stated by Feilhauer and Hahn (2021), who appealed for the implications for NGOs. Furthermore, the literature so far does not address the influence of different internationalisation degrees on the partner search process.

1.3 Research Question

How do environmental NGOs, with different internationalisation degrees, search business partners for cross-sector collaborations?



1.4 Research Purpose

The investigation of NGOs partner selection, more specifically the partner search is rather scarce in literature and will therefore be examined in this thesis. The purpose of this thesis is to understand the partner search process of NGOs. The expected outcome of this thesis is to contribute to the existing literature on CSC, particularly environmentally motivated CSC between NGOs and businesses, by identifying the process of NGOs' partner search in different internationalisation degrees. The thesis further attempts to investigate how the internationalisation degrees influence the partner search of NGOs.

For managerial implications, it would be interesting to understand the partner search for NGOs, the evaluation of compatibility to business and why NGOs initiate CSC. For theoretical implications, the research can help to expand the existing research basis on cross-sectoral collaboration in regard to the partner search of those collaborations.

1.5 Delimitations

This thesis investigates the partner search process of NGOs with different internationalisation degrees, for CSC. This is done with three single case studies of big environmental NGOs each operating in a different international context. These cases can be classified into three internationalisation degrees derived by Verbeke and Asmussen (2016): (1) collaborating mainly domestically, therefore local NGOs, (2) collaborating regionally, therefore regional NGOs, and (3) collaborating globally as international NGOs. The insights are given only from the NGO perspective. All of the three analysed NGOs are located in Europe which determines the local or regional scope of the NGOs. Moreover, this thesis focuses on NGO-business CSC and therefore deliberately limits the scope of research by both focusing solely on the NGO perspective and disregarding other forms of environmental CSC. Moreover, the thesis is also narrowed down to environmentally motivated CSC which ignores CSC with other social motives and other forms of environmental engagement.



1.6 Outline

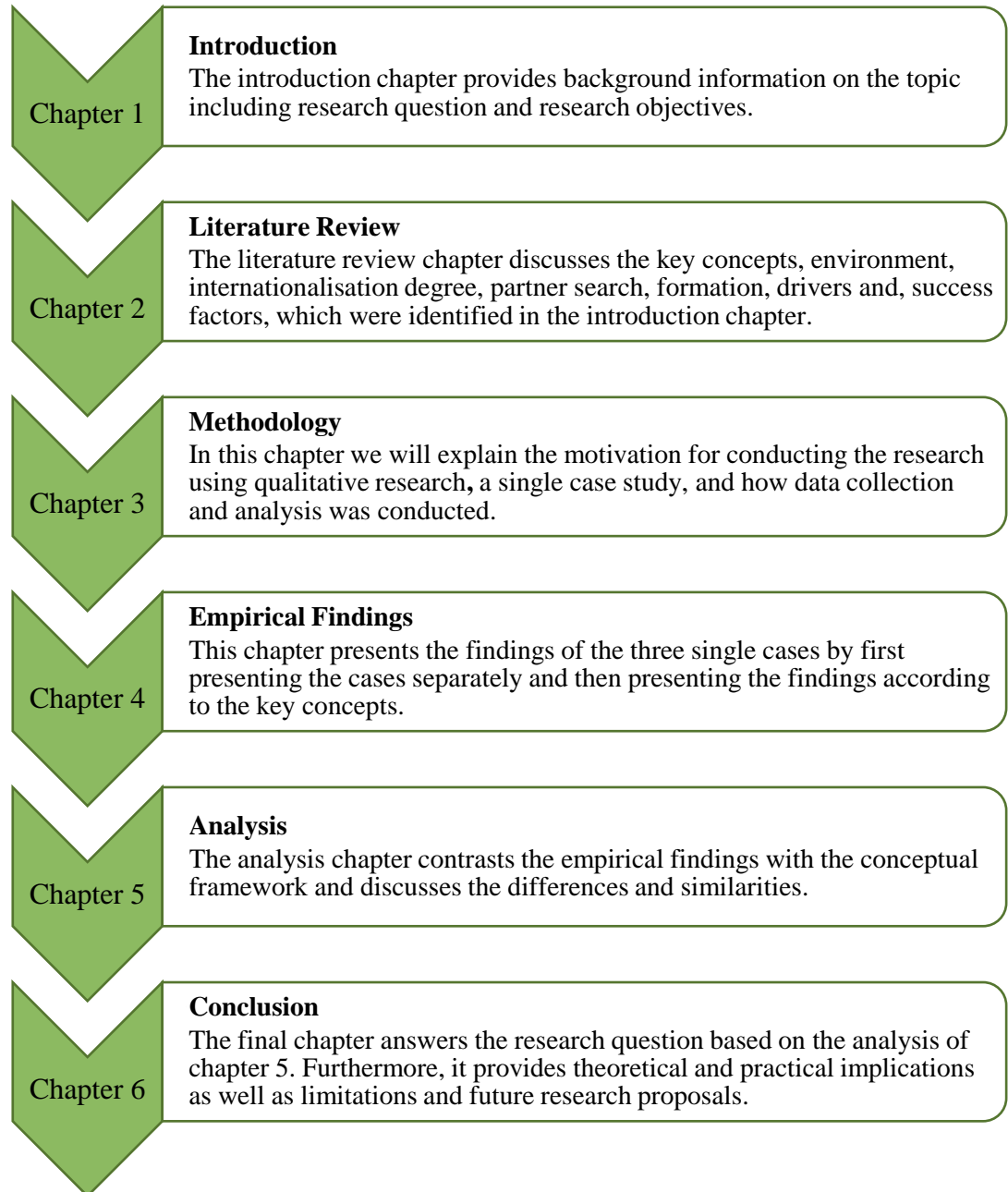


Figure 2: Chronological Structure of the Thesis *Own Source*



2 Literature Review

In the literature review chapter, the identified key concepts of the background subchapter are discussed, compared, and presented. The key concepts of partner search for CSC are environment, internationalisation degree, partner search, formation, drivers, and success factors. The synthesis of these concepts is presented through the conceptual framework which builds the basis of the comparison with the empirical findings. In general, the literature review serves to expand the reader's knowledge of the subject.

2.1 Environment

NGOs and businesses have different logics for their actions among different layers. NGOs are mainly focused on creating value for society, whereas businesses focus on profit by following the market structures (Ashraf, et al., 2017; Heap 2000). The collaboration among them can be driven in order to create value in different spheres like healthcare, education, and the environment (Selsky & Parker, 2005). Therefore, in order to form a CSC, the organisations should search for an organisation that is willing to work on the same issue (ibid.). In terms of this bachelor thesis, the environmental-oriented CSC is examined.

Human well-being highly depends on the intactness of the ecosystems. However, the economic growth of the last decades has been created through the extraction of natural resources which exceeded their capacities multiple times and thus is endangering the stability of the ecosystem (UN Environmental Programme, 2021). In this respect, the UN (2015a) claims for the need of becoming more sustainable in a global context and calls for transformation in all sustainability domains (social, economic, and environmental). In this matter, the UN created the sustainable development agenda, consisting of 17 sustainable development goals (SDG). The environmental aspect seems to be particularly important and present, taking into account that, since the settlement of the Paris Agreement in 2015, 196 countries ratified the agreement and obligated themselves to actively fight global warming by reducing greenhouse gas emissions and foster climate neutrality (UNFCCC, 2021). Whereby the pace and scale of the implementation of these environmental agendas are left to the countries (UN, 2015b). This approach of international cooperation through both, national measures and the development of universal environmental agendas, are insufficient to address complex environmental issues (Huwart & Verdier, 2013). The complexity of the problem demands a global approach to find solutions (ibid.). That relates to the scale of environmental issues which is too large and complex to be solved by single actors (Yang & Liu, 2018; Selsky & Parker, 2005). Active actions and high investments exceeding the capacity of the public sector are required to find solutions in this regard (UN Environmental Programme, 2021). Therefore, in order to perform an environmentally friendly transformation, all sectors and persons are required to



address these problems through innovation, collaboration, multilateralism, and new business models (ibid.).

According to UN Environmental Programme (2021), the main reason for environmental issues are activities from humankind. They further state that these activities are mostly coordinated through economic structures. The human pursuit of growth and development leads to inequality and overuse of resources, which in turn are responsible for climate change and biodiversity loss (ibid.). Therefore, businesses have a central role in the environmental policies because of two reasons, firstly to decrease the greenhouse gas emissions and secondly, to use its resources to find solutions (Sundin & Ranganathan, 2002). In other words, the main goal is to foster economic growth while protecting the environment, or in short, to grow sustainably. To achieve this kind of goal, businesses are required to cooperate with NGOs (Schmidheiny & Business Council For Sustainable Development, 2000). Collaboration between businesses and NGOs is in fact, becoming increasingly popular, especially when it comes to solving complex societal problems (Rondinelli & London, 2003; Austin & Seitanidi, 2012, Seitanidi, et al., 2010). Mousavi and Bossink (2020) explained this trend by the combination and integration of the diverse resources of NGOs and businesses which enables innovation.

2.2 Internationalisation Degree

The formation of environmental CSC becomes more popular because of both, internationalisation process and increasing global awareness of environmental issues. Through internationalisation, businesses might benefit from greater access to different international markets which in turn increase their opportunities for CSC formation (Hajidimitriou & Georgiou, 2002). Therefore, as businesses are collaborating internationally, they enlarge their extent of accessible resources and capabilities as well as share costs with the collaboration partner (ibid.). However, not only businesses are internationalising, but NGOs are following this path as well. Hailey (1999) highlighted the shift of NGOs activities from local levels to a more international level. In the 50s, NGOs were active on a more local level to promote local development, whereas, throughout the years, NGOs were engaging in different projects in different countries to promote their development, and therefore geographically spread their activities (ibid.). In this context, Avellaneda et al. (2017) investigated the reasoning for the expansion of Japanese international NGOs to Latin America by quantitatively researching variables on 41 Japanese international NGOs for the expansion. They concluded that Japanese international NGOs tended to operate in those locations where there was a need for help. Furthermore, they found the tendency that Japanese international NGOs engaged more in those countries when there were Japanese businesses present, which therefore led the international NGOs to collaborate with them as it provided familiarity.



Huwart and Verdier (2013) stated that although globalisation is leading to increased economic output and wealth, it is also responsible for increasing greenhouse gas emissions. They argued that this was due to the rising activities in international trade which fuels production, transport, and mass consumption and thus foster greenhouse emission. However, they also stated that globalisation has great potential to align economic growth with sustainability since global trade and research lead to greater opportunities for sustainable growth. Therefore, if considering that environmental issues are too complex and large to be solved by a single actor or sector, the research on CSC on different internationalisation degrees becomes relevant (UN Environmental Programme, 2021).

Verbeke and Asmussen (2016) argued that the well-known internationalisation degrees are stated to be domestic and global integration. It was rather recently where the regional dimension as part of the international strategic management studies has been considered (Verbeke & Asmussen, 2016). In the study of Verbeke and Asmussen (2016) they defined regional integration as an intermediate stage between domestic integration and global integration and highlighted that internationalising into the regional sphere is more applicable over the global integration. This was explained by the geographical and cultural closeness given within the region as well as the implementation of different trade agreements such as the EU (Verbeke & Asmussen, 2016). The terminology of internationalisation degrees in this thesis is derived from Verbeke and Asmussen (2016) and adapted to local (*domestic integration*), regional (*regional integration*), and international (*global integration*).

In the context of partner search, most literature analysed the partner choice in terms of strategic alliances in different internationalisation degrees and highlighted the importance of the selection process. Hajidimitriou and Georgiou (2002) investigated the partner selection decisions based on a quantitative approach in the context of international joint ventures. Their conceptual model presented a quantitative method of how companies choose their partners based on strengths and weaknesses and tested their model on a case study of a Greek firm that was expanding to Hungary. Furthermore, their conceptual model could be used to facilitate the partner search in other international markets by using criteria that reflect the organisations' objectives. They concluded that the choice of partner played an important role in the success of collaboration and emphasised that the common reasons for failure in collaboration in the international context are due to poor partner selection. Ramanathan et al. (2020) investigated how the selection of collaborating business partners impacts global business performance by interviewing managers of three global companies about their partner selection process. They concluded that a good partner selection is the key to success and parties need to understand each other's commitment and goals more seriously, especially with regard to different internationalisation degrees. Dacin et al. (1997) investigated international alliances through a case study of a U.S. company and Korean firms. They highlighted that doing collaboration in the cross-border



context requires a critical partner selection process, where partners are searched and selected based on their compatible goals, motivation, and important resources for the collaboration. Their study showed that companies approached each other differently depending on the market they attempt to internationalise. In addition, they found that Korean firms placed importance on how attractive the partner's industry and the partner are before entering into the collaboration. They stated that a lot of companies that are collaborating in different internationalisation degrees are neglecting the partner selection process due to increased competition in the international context, which in turn, often leads to failure of the collaboration.

Searching for partners in the international context can be harder than in the local context. Meulman et al. (2018) developed a tool that helps to identify partners in both local and distant proximity to increase innovation in the business practice. They concluded that the tendency of searching for local partners is related to the familiarity and proximity of their business practices, which tends to be related to a reinforcing strategy. In terms of searching for distant partners, Meulman et al. (2018) suggested first looking into the existing network. They claimed that this helps to identify links and clusters which can help to search for potential partners in the international scope.

In the regional context, Yang and Liu (2018) stressed that regional divergences of businesses' interest in corporate social responsibility exist which were created through the different institutional contexts of countries. These differences can be associated with attempts to provide institutional solutions on a national or regional level for environmental problems (Huwart & Verdier, 2013). Therefore, depending on the nation's characteristics lower CSC formation can be expected (Yang & Liu, 2018).

2.3 Partner Search

Whereas most literature defines partner search as part of partner selection, divergences in the definition and categorisation of partner selection exist. Previous studies defined the formation phase as the partner selection process (Seitanidi & Crane, 2009). While others challenged this definition by defining the partner selection process as a grey area that cannot be clearly defined as either formation or implementation phase (Seitanidi & Austin, 2012). Other scholars provided different definitions for the formation phase, e.g., that the formation of CSC is linked to the initial compatibility between the organisations (Bryson, et al. 2006; Waddell & Brown, 1997) or that drivers for CSC are correlated to the individual intention for the collaboration and therefore define the formation phase (Selsky & Parker, 2005). This study focuses solely on partner search whereas it follows the definition that partner search is a part of partner selection. Further, in this study, the partner formation is distinguished from the partner search by defining the formation phase as a part of the partner search. In general, this study defines CSC formation, drivers, and success factors as the key determinant of partner search in CSC. However, it is worth noting



that these aspects are highly correlated which makes it difficult to clearly delineate them.

In CSC, the partner selection aspect is rather scarcely explored (Seitanidi, et al., 2010). Attempts have been made to study the selection of cross-sector partners, however, the partner search was mainly evaluated from the business perspective (Feilhauer & Hahn, 2021). Partner selection has been recognised as an essential challenge for CSC because of the negative effects of poor pairing (Seitanidi, et al., 2010, Austin & Seitanidi 2012). In fact, the process of how organisations search and choose partners is one of the key determinants of the success or failure of CSC (Farzad, et al., 2021). Rondinelli and London (2003) underlined the importance of the search for the most appropriate partner by defining partner selection criteria as a necessary pre-condition for the success of interactive CSC. Moreover, they argued that depending on the purpose of the CSC and the required investment to achieve this kind of goal, different forms of relationships might become relevant for CSC. Farzad et al. (2021) further stated that the definition of partner selection criteria is complex because it is highly dependable on two components. The first component is that the organisation has to find and select a counterpart that is able to cover their needs. The second component is that the selected partner should be to some extent dependent on the resources and capabilities of the organisation. In this respect, collecting information is a key element in the partner selection process (ibid.). Austin and Seitanidi (2012) emphasised that information from the formation phase can be used as an early assessment tool to determine the compatibility of the organisation for CSC.

A typical question one might ask about this subject is if NGOs are approaching a business for CSC or is it the other way around? Rondinelli and London (2003) stressed that companies approach NGOs to reduce waste or to improve their environmental quality in general. Prescott and Stibbe (2017) in return, created a guidebook based on previous CSC which aims to promote NGOs to engage with businesses and supports them by providing tools that facilitate the collaboration process. However, the drivers which motivate them to conduct CSC differ.

According to Menden et al. (2019, p. 13), “*the perfect partner*” for collaboration does not exist. This is particularly true for environment-motivated NGO-business collaborations since their relationship is historically described as adversarial (de Lange, et al., 2016). This contrast is created because of their almost contradictory logic (Ashraf, et al., 2017). NGOs are engaged in creating value for the public good whereas businesses follow the logic of the market and are rather profit-oriented (Ashraf, et al., 2017; Heap, 2000). Therefore, to prevent a conflict of interest, a balance between profitability and environmental protection has to be found (Selsky & Parker, 2005). This can be achieved through joint goals that are agreed upon in the formation phase and in which the strategic compatibility of the organisations for CSC can be determined (Mousavi & Bossink, 2020). Furthermore, the context of the collaborating organisation must be considered as well, as the national environmental



policies differ among countries and affect business' interest in environmental protection (Yang & Liu, 2017; Huwart & Verdier, 2013). Therefore, finding organisations that are considered a good match for pursuing a common goal is fairly difficult, particularly for CSC (Menden et al., 2019). However, it is not impossible, successful CSC which are mutually beneficial for both organisations exists (Goggins & Rochlin 2000; Pedersen & Pedersen, 2013, Dahan, et al., 2010). Menden et al. (2019) further claimed that all potential CSC partners must be considered in the partner search in order to find a good match. Therefore, a thoughtful partner search and selection is important for successful collaboration in the future (Holmberg & Cummings, 2009; Farzad, et al., 2021).

According to Menden et al. (2019), organisations must first evaluate the value of their own resources and capabilities and create a clear vision of the desired goal before starting the partner search. They stated that this helps to find the most compatible organisation based on the conditions of the searching organisation. Then as a second step, they claimed that the searching organisation must evaluate which market position and network are desired from the collaborating partner in order to reach their goals. Prescott and Stibbe (2017) argued that preferences of organisations exist and found that NGOs prefer to collaborate with larger businesses as they have the required resources and structures.

When searching for a collaborating partner, organisations can opt to search within their existing ties or search for new partners outside their network (Beckman, et al., 2004). In this context, the strategy of network-reinforcing and network-broadening can be considered as part of the social network theory (ibid.). When looking for partners within the existing network, Gulati (1995) studied the connection of prior ties in regard to the formation of collaboration between firms. He statistically tested the hypothesis of a sample of 166 firms and concluded that social context influences the formation of collaborations between firms. In other words, firms tend to collaborate with partners, with which they already had collaborated in the past (Gulati, 1995). He confirmed that known partners, meaning partners that already had past collaborations, tend to trust each other more and engage in repeated collaborations. Bryson et al. (2006) and Seitanidi et al. (2010) argued that the presence of existing networks facilitates the assessment of the trustworthiness of the CSC partner. This strategy was named as reinforcing by Beckmann et al. (2004) in their study of the partner selection process in regard to uncertainty. They concluded that larger firms tend to apply network reinforcing strategy when facing market uncertainty. In regard to searching for partners outside the existing network, Beckmann et al. (2004) attempted to explain why firms opt to broaden their network. Their research showed that larger firms tend to apply a broadening strategy when facing extreme firm-specific uncertainty. In this context, firm-specific uncertainty is related to internal issues of the firm (ibid.).



Feilhauer and Hahn (2021) found drivers for firms' partner choice, which is related to partner search by using the network-broadening and network-reinforcing strategy of B2B literature to the cross-sector context. They concluded that businesses prefer to collaborate with NGOs from their existing network rather than looking for new partners. They explained this preference through motivators like cost reduction in the formation phase (no cost to look for new partners), increased trust, and protect reputation. Moreover, they followed the definition of Austin (2000a) which described the CSC as a continuum process that develops over time. Due to this definition, Feilhauer and Hahn (2021) assumed that collaboration among these organisations will develop and address various topics. In this context, they found that the network-reinforcing strategy is more effective for CSC which was contradictory to the findings of the alliance literature. They further implied that the less important the collaboration to the firm, the more likely they are to form the collaboration reactively (as an opportunity) rather than actively (they search for it). In this context, they clearly appealed for the need to understand the NGO perspective of partner search for CSC.

2.3.1 Formation

The findings of the majority of authors indicate that the formation phase is essential for success in CSC. They emphasised that the formation phase is important to discover and understand early indicators of the organisation's compatibility with CSC. Thereby the authors focused on different factors like identification of strengths and weaknesses of both organisations (Menden, et al., 2019), drivers for collaboration (Selsky & Parker, 2005) transformation potential (Seitanidi, et al., 2010), previous history and experience (Seitanidi, et al., 2010; Bryson, et al., 2006), initial resources (Rondinelli & London, 2003) and network reinforcing or broadening (Feilhauer & Hahn, 2021). These factors are divided into formation, drivers, and success factors in this thesis. Further, researchers claimed that the absence of the partner formation phase could lead to poor pairing and critical negative effects for the collaboration (Seitanidi, et al., 2010; Austin & Seitanidi, 2012; Menden, et al., 2019).

Rondinelli and London (2003) stated that before starting to search for a partner, organisations must evaluate what kind of interactions are needed for reaching their goals. Depending on the goal, other interactions in CSC become relevant (ibid.). Menden et al. (2019) defined in this respect, four CSC formation forms, namely philanthropic, opportunistic, strategic, systemic, and partnerships. They categorised these formation forms in this order from small to large based on their degree of involvement in the respective operational activities and thus their level of impact and complexity. They compared the lowest CSC formation form, namely philanthropic partnership, with a charity model in which businesses provide financial resources and NGOs use this funding to reach their goals. At the other extreme, systemic partnerships, they summarised as a form of CSC in which the core activity of the organisations is the collaboration itself. Thereby, organisations share key resources and capabilities to address complex challenges and promote systematic



transformation (ibid.). Austin and Seitanidi (2012) followed the same logic, however, defined these different forms as different stages, namely philanthropic, transactional, integrative, and transformational. Rondinelli and London (2003) created a decision tool that facilitates the formation of environmentally motivated CSC. They defined three different forms, which are arms-length relationship, interactive relationship and intensive environmental management alliance. Whereby, they defined different conditions which must prevail in order to create the different levels of collaboration, or no collaboration should be conducted at all. Their defined conditions include for example joint goals and interests, greater benefits than costs of CSC, availability of the required resources, integration of mutually accepted procedures, feasibility, and managerial capabilities. Moreover, it is important to note, that they focused on the business perspective since businesses were their base of examination. Depending on the prevailing conditions in combination with the organisation's situation and joint goal, they suggested that different forms of CSC formation must be applied.

According to Seitanidi and Crane (2008), a collaboration has reached an advanced level when their structures, processes, and programs are accepted by each other and integrated into the existing strategy, values, structures, and administrative systems. Several researchers indicate that the formation of more advanced collaboration forms is a continuous process that develops over time (Heap, 1998; Dahan, et al., 2010; Austin, 2000a; Rondinelli & London, 2003; Seitanidi, et al., 2012). While other studies claimed that these forms can be chosen instinctively in order to reach a certain transformation goal (Goggins & Rochlin, 2000; Prescott & Stibbe, 2017; Menden et al., 2019).

2.3.2 Drivers

Although two organisations from different sectors are addressing the same issue, they most probably have different perspectives towards the problem (Selsky & Parker, 2005; Bryson, et al., 2006). However, the fact that there are problems that affect both organisations and that they cannot be solved by themselves drives them to carry out CSC (Selsky & Parker, 2005, Menden, et al., 2019, Prescott & Stibbe, 2017).

Various studies underline the importance of understanding the drivers of the collaborating organisation in order to create a successful CSC (Prescott & Stibbe, 2017; Selsky & Parker, 2005; Farzad, et al., 2020). The drivers and benefits of CSC are well researched (Seitanidi, et al., 2010) whereas the drivers differ among the organisations in the context of CSC. These differences in drivers are related to the characteristics of the parties, where businesses are striving for profit and NGOs want to create value for the society (Heap, 2000; Ashraf, et al., 2017). In this respect, Menden et al. (2019) argued that in order to find a good matching partner an organisation has to do both, evaluate what drives the other organisation to conduct CSC, and based on their own assets make themselves attractive.



NGOs transformed from organisations that confront business, in order to act more environmentally friendly to a potential partner and supporter (Bendell & Murphy, 1997; Heap, 2000). The research focused on various aspects which drive NGOs to conduct CSC. The increase of societal problems and the motivation to find solutions in this regard, drive NGOs to enter such collaborations (Austin, 2000a). Generally, NGOs might be driven to collaborate with business through their organisational-, financial-, and technical assets (Farzad, et al., 2021) which might support them in reaching their goals. In fact, NGOs are dependent on financial payments from businesses in order to address environmental problems effectively (Menden, et al., 2019; UN Environment Programme, 2021). Therefore, NGOs are searching for businesses in order to increase their impact on environmental protection (Menden, et al., 2019). Rondinelli and London (2003) stressed that through CSC, NGOs are able to define best practices for environmental matters, create circular supply chains, foster environmental awareness, implement stricter environmental controls, and demonstrate that a green business model can be beneficial for business. Menden et al. (2019) underlined that aspect partly by stating that NGOs are able to communicate and disseminate their value proposition in the business world through CSC. Austin and Seitanidi (2012) mentioned some benefits of CSC that might drive NGOs to collaborate with business, namely greater visibility, notoriety, and impact, which in turn, if the collaboration is successful, increase NGOs' reputation and political influence. Moreover, Heap (1998) stressed that NGOs might benefit from CSC through greater access to networks and obtain market-oriented knowledge and capabilities from the business.

The drivers for businesses to engage in CSC are also well studied (Seitanidi et al., 2010). According to Austin and Seitanidi (2012), higher commitment to environmental issues can change businesses' value structure to a more environmentally friendly orientation. As a result, employees can identify themselves with these values and feel more fulfilled in their work, which in turn increases their commitment and the overall success of the company (ibid.). Moreover, customers prefer to consume goods from a corporation which have a good reputation due to high social and environmental responsibility (Poret, 2019). This can lead to increased sales (Heap, 1998).

According to Hartman and Stafford (1997), the main drivers for businesses to search for NGOs for collaboration are to improve their reputation or to gain a competitive edge. They argued that this is achieved through both, differentiation and reducing costs by process and product optimisation. Indeed, these drivers were mentioned by several studies across various layers. Business drivers which can be associated with reputation are, their willingness to increase corporate social responsibility (Selsky & Parker, 2005), greater access to the institutional network (Hunt, et al., 2002), and enhancement of their image (Poret, 2019), credibility (Heap, 1998), and legitimacy (Farzad, et al., 2021). Furthermore, the competitive edge can be reached through



access to scientific and technical information which allows businesses to address complex problems (Rondinelli & Berry, 2000). Moreover, through enriched access to resources, information, and capabilities, businesses have greater business opportunities (Farzad, et al., 2021; Selsky & Parker 2005; Heap, 1998).

Many authors emphasised that through the increasing awareness of environmental problems, businesses experience higher social, legal, and global market pressures which drive them to engage in CSC (Bryson, et al., 2006; Rondinelli & London, 2003). Research indicates that society progressively supports environmental policies and increasingly tries to identify themselves with their purchase behaviour (Stafford & Hartman, 1996; Poret, 2019; Rondinelli & Berry, 2000). Therefore, customers increasingly observe the social responsibility of businesses (Rondinelli & Berry, 2000). In this respect, joint initiatives were created which helped businesses to engage more in environmentally friendly operations (Stafford & Hartman, 1996). Poret (2019) examined the social pressure more in detail by focusing on joint branding strategies. She stated that businesses' operational activities are usually complex and vary between goods, which makes it difficult for customers to obtain all relevant information. She found that joint labelling schemes with well-known NGOs can eliminate this kind of information asymmetry (ibid.).

2.3.3 Success Factors

Many articles investigated which conditions make NGO-business collaboration successful. Most of these success factors can be assigned to the implementation phase of CSC since it is usually associated with value creation (Austin & Seitanidi, 2012). Therefore, some success factors cannot be easily detected from an external point of view. Nevertheless, since these factors determine the success or failure of the whole collaboration, NGOs should be aware of them in order to spot early indications (Seitanidi, et al., 2010; Austin & Seitanidi, 2012; Bryson, et al., 2006). NGOs and businesses have different cultures, motivations, objectives, scope, roles, legal forms, and governance structure (Menden, et al., 2019; Prescott & Stibbe, 2017) which can complicate the collaboration between them (Ashraf, et al., 2017).

As a matter of fact, every collaboration has to be mutually beneficial to be recognised as successful (Goggins & Rochlin, 2000; Pedersen & Pedersen, 2013, Dahan, et al., 2010). Furthermore, the created value of the collaboration should be greater per input than if the parties had acted alone (Goggins & Rochlin, 2000; Menden, et al., 2019; Prescott & Stibbe, 2017; Austin & Seitanidi, 2012). Their willingness to share information, activities, resources, and capabilities in combination with well-defined procedures like an assessment of the progress or report system are fundamental for successful collaboration (Rondinelli & London, 2003; Bryson, et al., 2006). Seitanidi et al. (2010) claimed that the formation of collaboration is critical for CSC success. Through the gathered information of the formation phase, an organisation can assess the probability of success and the inherent risk of collaborating with a certain



organisation (ibid.). Many studies indicated in that regard, the previous actions and interactions of organisations give a good indication of the behaviour and values of the organisation (Seitanidi, et al., 2010; Austin & Seitanidi, 2012, Bryson, et al., 2006; Selsky & Parker, 2005).

Ashraf et al. (2017) emphasised in their study that the failure of collaborations in the cross-sector aspect can be partly explained by the incompatibility of the partners, and therefore, they appealed to managers to look for partners with compatible values and drivers. However, according to Austin (2000b) managers rarely invest a lot of time in searching for compatible partners. A lot of research defined the compatibility of the partner in form of the alignment of values, objectives, mission, vision, level of commitment as one of the most important factors for CSC (Mironska & Zaborek, 2019; Austin, 2000a; Austin & Seitanidi, 2012, Seitanidi, et al., 2010). However, not only the similarities should be acknowledged, but also the differences (Austin, 2000a). The collaborating organisations need to know each other's needs and objectives (Menden, et al., 2019). Moreover, to form a successful collaboration, the organisations must understand each other's strengths and weaknesses, operational activities, and organisational structure (Heap, 1998; Menden, et al., 2019; Goggins & Rochlin, 2000; Bryson, et al., 2006). In this respect, a lot of studies indicated that the resources and the capabilities of the collaborating organisations should be complementary in order to compensate for each other's shortcomings (Austin, 2000a; Menden, et al., 2019). Through the combination of these complementary resources, strategies can be executed more effectively (Goggins & Rochlin, 2000; Austin & Seitanidi, 2012). However, the dependency between the collaborating partners must be in balance (Ashraf, et al, 2017). If one party is more dependent on the resources than the other one, power imbalances emerge which can lead to the failure of the collaboration (ibid.).

Hunt et al. (2002) summarised findings from some studies in terms of CSC success factors in four different perspectives, namely resources, competencies, relational factors, and competitive advantage. The resources, competencies, and competitive advantage perspectives are already well covered through the previously mentioned success factors. Hunt et al. (2002) relational factors consist of cooperation, trust, commitment, and communication. Research emphasises that these homogenous relational factors are the main determinants of the value creation process and therefore of the success of the collaboration (Barroso-Mendez, et al., 2020; Barroso-Mendez, et al., 2016). Mironska and Zaborek (2019) investigated in this regard the correlation of alignment, trust, and commitment (*their definition of relational factors*) to the benefits of CSC. They found that the alignment process and trust are essential in CSC since they are positively related to all kinds of collaboration values. Barroso-Mendez et al. (2016) found that these relational factors are also correlated among them. If the collaborating organisations align their objectives, mission, vision, and values they enhance communication, perceive each other's actions more positively, increase



commitment, cooperation, and trust (Mironska & Zaborke, 2019). In general, these positive effects of relational factors increase the success of the collaboration (Barroso-Mendez, et al., 2020, Barroso-Mendez, et al., 2016, Mironska & Zaborek, 2019).

Through their fundamentally different structures and values, NGOs and business usually distrust each other, fear of loss of control, and misunderstanding each other's intention which in turn, lead to conflicts and failure (Dahan, et al., 2010; Rondinelli & London, 2003 cited in Long and Arnold, 1995; Austin & Seitanidi, 2012). Menden et al. (2019) recommended settling some kind of agreement that defines the purpose, commitment, roles, and other important factors for CSC in order to prevent misunderstanding and minimise the risk in general. Hereby they recommended creating a Memorandum of Understanding (ibid.).

Complementarity of the organisations (Menden, et al., 2019; Austin, 2000a), as well as trust among them (Getha-Taylor, 2012), are fundamental for success in CSC. Therefore, the alignment of the collaborating organisations is important since it leads to increased trust and computability (Barroso-Mendez, et al., 2020; Barroso-Mendez, et al., 2016; Mironska & Zaborek, 2019). However, the alignment of these factors is challenging, especially when there are a lot of conflicting areas (Holmberg & Cummings, 2009). Therefore, a well-structured partner selection is needed to exploit the full potential of CSC by finding the best suitable partner who shares common goals (Austin & Seitanidi, 2012; Menden, et al., 2019). Moreover, the partner selection helps the parties to understand the counterpart's strengths, weaknesses, mission, and potential objectives which filters the unsuitable partners as well as increases the success of the collaboration (Menden, et al., 2019; Goggins & Rochlin, 2000).

2.4 Conceptual Framework

The conditions of the environment and internationalisation degree shape CSC. These two factors build the context of CSC. NGOs and businesses collaborate to create a value which they would not be able to create by themselves. This collaboration can be motivated to provide a solution for different kinds of issues, however, for this research, the focus is on environmental issues. Therefore, CSC should have a joint objective to provide some kind of environmental protection or to limit environmental damage. In this regard, international agendas were elaborated in order to promote sustainable transformation and development. However, the pace of the implementation of appropriate measures to reach these goals is left to the nations. Since there are national differences in environmental measures, there are also different regional levels of commitment to environmental issues. On the other hand, by enhancing their internationalisation degree, both businesses and NGOs have greater possibilities to enlarge their impact by finding the most compatible partner for collaboration.



From the broad topic CSC, we are focusing on partner search, precisely how NGOs are searching for business partners. The conceptual framework depicted in *Figure 3*, shows how partner search is defined and what factors influence it. Partner search is defined in this research as consisting of CSC formation, drivers, and success factors. The environment and internationalisation degree provide the context of the search. As part of the partner search, it is further examined if NGOs prefer to collaborate with businesses from their existing network or from outside their network. Depending on the joint goal, different types of collaboration become important. Therefore, organisations need to evaluate the needed intensity of CSC to reach their objectives and adapt their partner search towards such conditions. Furthermore, organisations' drivers for CSC should be considered in the partner search as they show the intention for CSC. The drivers also show what kind of values an organisation is seeking and based on that they can make themselves attractive by emphasising these values. The success factors determine the overall success or failure of the collaboration. Therefore, they are important to consider when searching for a compatible partner. In this regard, three key success factors have been detected which should be considered in the partner search, namely compatibility, complementarity, and mutual trust.



Figure 3: Theoretical Synthesis of NGO's Partner Search Within CSC *Own Source*



3 Methodology

In the methodology chapter, we will discuss the chosen research approach, method, and research design. This is followed by describing the data collection and analysis and concludes with a discussion of quality and the authors' contributions.

3.1 Abductive Approach

The theory derived from the literature review in chapter 2 will be the basis of this research. It is therefore important to identify whether we follow an inductive, deductive, or abductive research approach because it influences the research design (Saunders, et al., 2016). Saunders et al. (2016) explain that the inductive approach creates a theory from gathered empirical data. This approach takes the context into consideration and, in contrast to the deductive approach, it allows for alternative explanations (ibid.). This approach was not considered suitable for this research, since the authors consider theory as necessary to conduct the study. Saunders et al. (2016) explain that the deductive approach tests hypothesis formulated from the theory implying that if the hypothesis is true the theory is also true. This suggests that the deductive approach is less suitable for this research. As mentioned before, the deductive approach relies on theory. The literature review showed that the partner selection process, more specifically the partner search has been extensively studied on the firm perspective for CSC. With the lack of literature on the partner search process of the NGO perspective, it is difficult to test a set of hypotheses to further develop the existing theory.

The last approach combines the two previously mentioned approaches and is identified as the abductive approach (Saunders, et al., 2016). In the abductive approach, the research begins with an observation of a phenomenon that is interesting to explore (ibid.). Through the observation, there is an attempt to create or modify a framework that can be tested as well (Saunders, et al., 2016). For this research, the NGO perspective of the partner search process of CSC has not yet been studied (interesting observation) (Feilhauer & Hahn, 2021). The existing literature is mainly on the business perspective with a different set of theories (ibid.). This thesis attempts to investigate if the pre-defined theory can be applied for the NGO perspective (need for creating or modify theory).

3.2 Qualitative Research

According to Saunders et al. (2009), there are two ways of analysing and collecting data for research, namely quantitative and qualitative. The quantitative method is used to gather numerical data which can be interpreted in terms of statistics and graphs and is used as a form of validity (ibid.). This method is associated with testing the theory, which we previously identified as the deductive approach (Saunders, et al., 2016).



Since the research does not aim to test hypotheses, the quantitative method is less suitable for this research.

On the contrary, qualitative methods gather non-numerical data and are used “(...) *to develop a conceptual framework and theoretical contribution*” (Saunders et al, 2016, p. 168). With qualitative research, it is possible to investigate the meaning behind the result by providing more detail and going in-depth (Patton, 2015). Furthermore, Patton (2015) stated that qualitative research can be used with an inductive approach or abductive approach, while the latter is the approach chosen for this thesis. This thesis aims to understand the partner search process of NGOs for CSC given different degrees of internationalisation. The qualitative methods can help to gather detailed information of the process and not only identify what the data is but to analyse why it is that way.

3.3 Research Design

The research design can be seen as the guideline of how to answer our research question (Saunders, et al., 2016). Saunders et al. (2016) argue that the first step of defining the research design is by determining the choice of methodology, which was previously identified as qualitative research. They further implied that it is necessary to define the nature of research, which for this thesis is explanatory. According to them, these studies serve to get a deeper understanding of a problem which are normally formulated into “how” and “what” questions. Explanatory studies can be conducted through literature reviews and interviews, which applies to this thesis.

What further needs to be identified is the strategy of the research, which in the case of qualitative research, can be identified as archival research, case study, ethnography, action research, grounded theory, and narrative inquiry (Saunders, et al., 2016). The case study strategy is used to gain in-depth knowledge about real-life situations which provides an understanding of dynamics and context (Saunders et al., 2016; Yin, 2003; Yin 2018). Case studies have been used to investigate explanatory and exploratory studies and are used to answer “how” questions (Saunders et al., 2016; Yin, 2003). The case study strategy encompasses different kinds of evidence such as documents, interviews and observations (Yin, 2003). Yin (2003) further distinguished between a single case and multiple cases. In this thesis, the research question can be answered by investigating different single cases each with different degrees of internationalisation. It is worth mentioning that this thesis will be investigating three single case studies to explain the partner selection process of NGOs with different internationalisation degrees and is not to be mistaken by the multiple case study. According to Stake (1995), the multiple case study is justified as pursuing more generalisation and therefore relies on several cases. For the scope of this thesis, investigating multiple similar NGOs could not be considered, as the response rate was very low (see sub-chapter 3.4.2). This implies that the study will follow the single case study approach, more specifically intrinsic case study, which is defined to



investigate a particular case with its uniqueness (Stake, 1995). Therefore, the case study approach is suitable because of three reasons. First, our research question is formulated as a “how” question, which can be answered using the case study approach (Yin, 2003). Second, we attempt to gain in-depth knowledge of the partner search process to understand how the real-life process works for NGOs in different internationalisation degrees. Finally, the research is conducted by using different evidence such as literature review, interviews and reports, which will further be discussed in the next sub-chapter.

3.4 Data Collection

To answer the research question, it is important to investigate how information, or data, can be gathered (Saunders, et al., 2016). The process of “(...) *data collection is about asking, watching, and reviewing*” (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 105). Since in qualitative studies data is identified as non-numerical, common ways to collect the data is, for example, through interviews (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Collecting data through interviews can be classified as primary data, which is used to gather new information for a specific purpose (ibid.). They explain that already existing data available for research which is as helpful to answer the research question is called secondary data. In this thesis, both types of data will be used. Before defining the secondary and primary data for our research, it is important to identify the research sample, which will be presented in the next sub-chapter (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

3.4.1 Purposive Sample

According to Merriam and Tisdell, (2016) to investigate the proposed research question, the sample for analysis must be identified. The sample can be differentiated between probability samples and non-probability samples, whereas probability sampling helps to generalise results and is applicable for quantitative research (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). On the contrary, for qualitative studies, the purposive sample (non-probability sampling) is used to learn from the sample and is selected based on pre-defined criteria (ibid.). Considering that this thesis follows qualitative research based on single case studies and with regard to the research question, we limited the sampling to environmental NGOs which fulfil the set criteria.

The NGO must be active in at least one of the following:

1. Environmental keywords
 - Climate change
 - Environmental protection
 - Food
 - Water
 - Energy
 - Greenhouse emission
 - Biodiversity



- SDG
- Agriculture
- 2. The NGO must further show indication of:
 - Collaboration with businesses
 - o Ongoing collaborations
 - o Finalised collaborations
- 3. Internationalisation degree (one of them)
 - Local
 - Regional
 - International

The searching process for suitable NGOs was conducted through different stages. At first, different NGO prospects were screened based on the defined criteria. This resulted in a list of approximately 28 potential NGOs that are active in environmental issues and actively collaborate or have recently actively collaborated with businesses. Those prospects were located mainly in Europe and in the USA. The potential NGOs were then contacted via email, phone call, or contact form to participate in the study (*Appendix 1*).

3.4.2 Cases

As in the beginning, the response rate was very low, the NGOs had to be reminded via email and phone. Even though the potential partners were reminded, the response rate did not increase. Nevertheless, it was possible to conduct the interview with three big environmental NGOs with different internationalisation degrees. These three environmental NGOs represent the single cases for this research. *Table 1* summarises the cases for this thesis in more detail by identifying the NGO, the interview partners, the NGO's internationalisation degree, and the key activities of the NGO.

NGO	Interviewee	Internationali sation degree	Active Areas	Interview details
Naturskyddsforeningen	Andreas Drufva <i>Head of Marketing and fundraising</i>	Local	Climate, oceans, forests, agriculture and environmental toxins	Zoom on the 05.05.21 For 25 mins
Environmental Defense Fund Europe	Pedro Martins-Barata <i>Senior Climate Policy Director</i>	Regional	Climate, energy, ecosystem, oceans, and health	Zoom on the 05.05.21 For 30 mins
World Wildlife Fund	Katrina Johansson <i>Key account manager WWF-H&M</i>	International	Climate, food, forest, freshwater, oceans, and wildlife	Zoom on the 07.05.21 For 35 mins

Table 1: Duration and Diversity of Single Case Interviews



3.4.3 Secondary Data

Secondary data is information that has already been researched, and thus can be used to investigate the proposed research question (Saunders, et al., 2009). There are different ways to collect secondary data such as through documents, existing surveys, and publications like books or journals (ibid.). According to Saunders, et al. (2016) using secondary data is less time-consuming, cheaper, and provides easier access for public examination. They further imply that secondary data is opposed to the issue that the collected data might not be as suitable for the study as primary data would be. In addition to this problem, Saunders et al. (2016) further identified issues such as constraint in access, lack of control over the quality of the information, and the distortion of the data due to different purposes of previous research.

In this thesis, secondary data, such as the NGO's website, is used to support the empirical findings by providing information about the NGOs, the organisational activities, and, if available, their partner search process. The information about the partner search and selection process is not as evident in the secondary data as it is in the primary data. Nevertheless, the secondary data can be used as a support for the examples given during the interviews.

3.4.4 Primary Data

In contrast to secondary data, primary data collects information that has not existed before (Saunders, et al., 2016). In qualitative research, this is done by conducting interviews and using questionnaires (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). On one hand, questionnaires are used when the study has a descriptive nature (Saunders, et al., 2016). The method helps to either identify irregularity in different phenomena or observe relationships between variables (ibid.). As this thesis follows an explanatory purpose and in-depth knowledge is of importance, the use of questionnaires would not result in a desirable outcome and is therefore seen as not suitable.

On the other hand, Saunders et al. (2016) explained that qualitative data can be gathered through interviews. They differentiate between structured, semi-structured, and unstructured interviews. Whereas structured interviews use questionnaires and are used for quantitative research, semi-structured and unstructured interviews are suitable for qualitative research (Saunders, et al., 2016). They further emphasised that the latter two are suitable for exploratory and explanatory studies. The decision of the interview type will be further discussed in the following sub-chapter (3.4.5). For this thesis, the primary data collected through one-to-one interviews will provide in-depth insights into the three single cases which will help to answer the research question by gathering information from specialists in the area (Saunders, et al., 2016).



3.4.5 Structure of Interview

As previously mentioned, Saunders et al. (2016) identified three types of interviews. On one side of the spectrum, they identified the unstructured interview which uses a questionnaire to gather standardised information. They emphasised that this method is usually used for quantitative research and descriptive purpose, which for this thesis is not applicable. On the other side of the spectrum, they presented the unstructured interviews which hand over the stage to the interviewee. Unstructured interviews are used for exploratory purposes and use open-ended questions (Saunders, et al., 2016). According to Merriam and Tisdell (2016), unstructured interviews are used when the knowledge about the phenomenon is not sufficient which means that the interview is used to formulate the research question at a later stage. As this thesis already has existing literature and the research question is formulated, the use of unstructured interviews is not suitable. Furthermore, conducting unstructured interviews requires experience since great flexibility is required (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

The semi-structured interview represents the balance of the two previously mentioned interview types (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Albeit a list of questions can be developed, the use of those questions can vary from interview to interview, by adding, excluding, or reformulating questions (ibid.). Saunders et al. (2016) emphasised that the use of semi-structured interviews is advantageous if the study requires more explanation to understand a specific response and personal contact which facilitates the understanding of complex questions. Given the flexibility of the semi-structured interview, this method is suitable when conducting this thesis as it gives the chance to understand the partner search process in more depth and if needed ask for more specifications. Furthermore, according to Saunders et al. (2016), semi-structured interviews are mostly conducted on a face-to-face basis. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic occurring during the time of the thesis, the interviews are conducted on a virtual basis using platforms such as Zoom. It can therefore be secured to still have a visual interview with the interviewee and the security of the participants (Saunders, et al., 2016). Furthermore, it is also beneficial to contact interview partners who are geographically spread, which is the case in this thesis (ibid.). To give our interview partners an insight into the research area, the interview guideline was sent in advance (*see Appendix 2*).

3.5 Operationalisation

Before developing the research question, it is important to know what the literature has researched about the topic (Jacob & Furgerson, 2012). This process is about understanding each key concept in detail after describing it in the literature review (ibid.). The questions were formulated using language which would be understandable for the interviewees as the way which the questions are formulated can influence the type of information, we strive for (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). *Table*



2 summarises the questions based on the pre-defined key concept in the background (1.1.) and literature review section (chapter 2).

Concepts	Interview Questions	Reasoning
General Information	1-3	The general information questions are to introduce the interviewees and the NGO they are employed in. Furthermore, it helps to create a general understanding of the position of the interviewee and the experience of corporate collaboration.
Environment	4-5	To find out how the environmental issues are presented to the business partner and what the NGO can bring to solve environmental issues through the collaboration.
Internationalisation degree	6-7	These questions help to identify the partner search in the international scope. They aim to understand if the proximity of the partner and related national policies play a role in the partner search.
Collaboration formation	8-9	To identify the different types of collaboration the NGO looks for and how this can influence the partner search
Partner Search	10-13,16	This section refers to identifying who starts the collaboration and further understanding the NGOs' choice of partner search in existing or new networks. Lastly, it identifies how NGOs can make themselves attractive.
Drivers	14-15	These questions help to analyse what the motivations for the collaborations are and whether it is possible for the NGO to identify them.
Compatibility	17-18	To investigate how the compatibility between the partners can be measured and what role does the organisational structure has in the partner search.
Resource and capability	19-20	To investigate how can NGOs identify the resources and capabilities involved and where they find the information.
Relational factors	21	The last question relates to the success factor trust and aims to explore how the trust level can be guaranteed for the collaboration.

Table 2: Relevance of the Interview Guideline

3.6 Data Analysis

Managing data is seen as important in order to be properly analysed, especially when intending to conduct a case study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). First, the data has to be prepared and in the case of interviews, this can be done by transcribing the response of interviewees and cleaning up errors for precision (Saunders, et al., 2009). The prepared data must then be given an identification for simplification purposes which then can be used to be sorted, saved, and reorganised (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Given that this thesis has three single case studies, the cases have to be further compared to each other which will be conducted similarly to the multiple-case study



(ibid.). The analysis for multiple-case studies can be conducted in two stages, first by analysing qualitative data in form of single cases and then cross analysing the cases with each other (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). This is particularly important since it is possible to gather the context more easily on single cases and then conduct the cross-case analysis (ibid.). The challenge in this scenario still remains at the management of data, as it contains more raw data to be transformed (ibid.). Therefore, it is possible to rely on computer-assisted software for qualitative data analysis to assist data management (Yin, 2018). Yin (2018) emphasise that using software for data management is seen as a supportive role, but it is the researcher that interprets the results and determines meaningful patterns. He further implies that the search for patterns occurs when playing with data by, e.g., creating graphs or matrices, classifying data by chronological sequences, or into different themes and subthemes.

In this thesis, the interviews will be transcribed using the software otto.ai. The derived data will then be merged into a table to facilitate the comparison. The analysis can be found in *Appendix 4*.

3.7 Quality of Research

The data gathered through the defined research method passes through different stages until it can be used as a conclusion (Kumar, 2011). Merriam and Tisdell (2016) argued that throughout the process of collecting, analysing, and interpreting the data and with the use of the chosen methods, the quality can be affected. When conducting quantitative research, the concepts of validity and reliability are better developed as it is for qualitative research (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Kumar (2011) explained that this is due to the flexibility and spontaneity offered by qualitative research. In this regard, Guba (1981) and Guba and Lincoln (1981) introduced credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability as new terminology for qualitative research.

3.7.1 Credibility

The concept of credibility reflects the validity used in quantitative research (Kumar, 2011). It is important to deliver the information in the most credible way, which means that it has to reflect the respondent's opinions and feelings in a precise way (ibid.). Guba (1981) argued that credibility can be assured by gathering different perspectives from various sources or return the information to the participants for information correctness. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) define the former method as triangulation, which can be done on method, data, and researcher basis, and the latter can be defined as respondent validation. They argued that triangulation requires the use of multiple methods for research such as complementing the interviews with documents and observations. In the context of respondent validation, Saunders et al. (2016) argued that this method of credibility ensures that the information is valid, however, it also gives the opportunity for the respondent to



change shared information, which influences the interpretation and analysis of the data.

For this thesis, to ensure the credibility of the data we first asked respondents to read through the gathered data (respondent validation) and then by analysing the data separately to have different perspectives and interpretations (triangulation).

3.7.2 Transferability

Transferability deals with the generalisation context, which is commonly known for quantitative research (Kumar, 2011). According to Guba (1981), transferability relates to the concept of finding hypotheses that can be used in other contexts but do not necessarily have to be true all the time. This concept can be achieved by using strategies such as detailed description and sample variation (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The former involves describing data, situations, and participants as detailed as possible and presenting the findings with its details (ibid.). The latter suggests using different samples to secure a larger range of transferability, therefore referred to as maximum variation (ibid.). Nevertheless, Merriam and Tisdell (2016) emphasise that the use of typical samples can serve as an alternative for the maximum variation strategy. This is because a typical case serves as a comparison for other cases and captures the uniqueness of the situation (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

In this thesis, the transferability is ensured by first providing an extent of variation of the sample. As mentioned in sub-chapter 3.4.1 the NGOs are selected by following a certain set of criteria, nevertheless, each NGO is characterised in its own way creating a unique case. Transferability is further provided by delivering a detailed description of the process (For example check the list of contacted NGOs in *Appendix 1*)

3.7.3 Dependability

Guba (1981) argued that reliability is a requirement for validity. According to Merriam and Tisdell (2016), the concept of reliability consists of the degree to which the results of the research findings can be replicated to other findings and is commonly in quantitative research. Since in qualitative research human behaviours are analysed, which in term comprises different sets of interpretation, the concept cannot be fully applicable (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Guba (1981) therefore suggested dependability as a framework for qualitative research to replicate reliability. To ensure dependability different strategies can be applied (ibid.). For example, Merriam and Tisdell (2016) suggested that triangulation and peer examination can be used to evaluate not only credibility but also dependability. A further strategy is to use an audit trail, which suggests a clear and detailed process description, e.g., in form of a journal, which documents how data was collected and categorised as well as which decisions were made throughout the process (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).



To ensure dependability in this thesis, we follow the strategies suggested before and clearly document the process of data collection, categorisation, and decision making independently. This is further supported by the triangulation strategy while we analyse the independent journals to get different perspectives towards the research.

3.7.4 Confirmability

The last concept for ensuring the quality of the research is the concept of confirmability (Guba, 1981). Bell et al. (2019) described that the research must be conducted in good faith and therefore being as neutral as possible. In other words, personal values should not be overly reflected in the research, therefore keeping a degree of neutrality (Bell, et al., 2019). This can be ensured by following the previously discussed triangulation strategy and applying reflexivity (Guba, 1981). The strategy of reflexivity comprises the revelation of assumptions and thoughts made during the process, which might influence the research in any direction (ibid.).

In this thesis, it is important that personal values are not integrated into the analysis of the results. This can be assured by reflectingly capturing any assumptions made during the research and during the analysis.

3.8 Research Ethics

With the previously defined criteria in sub-chapter 3.7, it can be ensured that the quality of the research is intact. However, this is ensured primarily by the researcher, since according to Patton (2015) in qualitative research the trustworthiness of the data gathered connects to the trustworthiness of the researcher, who manages the data. In this context, the researcher must act ethically and in good faith to establish a trustworthy procedure when gathering and analysing the data (Saunders, et al., 2016). Ethical dilemmas can occur throughout every process of your research (ibid.). First while designing the research and asking for data access, ethical issues can occur and have to be carefully addressed (ibid.). For example, Saunders et al. (2016) argued that when asking for access the participants should not be pressured to participate. Furthermore, they argue that it is not guaranteed that the participants consent to use the data. While doing questionnaires, therefore quantitative research, the consent can be regarded as the return of the questionnaire (Saunders, et al., 2016). However, this is different for qualitative research (ibid.). Saunders et al. (2016) therefore suggested informing the participants about their rights and thus obtain consent. Second, during the data collection process, ethical issues such as confidentiality and anonymity must be considered (Saunders, et al., 2016). Merriam and Tisdell (2016) argued that during interviews, the participants might feel a violation of privacy by revealing personal information. It is also possible that the participants reveal information that should not have been revealed (ibid.). It is therefore important to keep information confidential (Saunders, et al., 2016). The online environment and its ethical aspect should also be considered when collecting data (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). It is important to deal



with online data with confidentiality and anonymity since most of the time consent is not given (Saunders et al 2016). Finally, during the data analysis and reporting phase ethical issues occurs on the researcher side (Saunders, et al., 2016). As it is the researcher who decides which information is important for the analysis, the data can be biased according to the researcher's view (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Similar to the previous phases, confidentiality and anonymity should also be considered during the analysis and reporting of the data (Saunders, et al., 2016). According to Saunders et al. (2016), the gathered data should not be presented in any way which could harm the participant and require care when presenting it and not making references to personal attributes. In addition, they mentioned that the data should be used only for the declared purpose and implies that the gathered information will not be transmitted to other parties for any other use.

When conducting this thesis, ethical issues were identified and addressed in an appropriate manner. The participants were contacted in a friendly approach through emails and not pushed to conduct the interviews. This was also assured when the reminder email was sent. Furthermore, the rights of the participants, the intent of the research, the use of their data as well as the storage and elimination after the research were presented through a participant information letter. The participant information letter was handed in before the interviews together with the interview guideline. In addition, after the interviews, the consent to use the information provided by the interviews and the use of their names and the organisation's name in the thesis were obtained. We assured that there was no distortion, invention of any data and that the data was collected, analysed, and managed in good faith and according to GDPR regulations of the EU (European Parliament, 2016). This, therefore, helped to comply with the criteria mentioned in sub-chapter 3.7 to ensure trustworthiness.

3.9 Author's Contribution

As this thesis was written in pairs, it is important to identify and describe the contribution of each author. As both are full-time students, we adopt the role of external researcher. According to Saunders et al (2016), external researchers have to gain access to organisations and people of whom they would like to collect data. Both of us knew about the topic in general, nevertheless, we both had to get familiar with the literature and the process at first. Therefore, over 80 articles regarding CSC were identified and read to gain such knowledge and to identify the research gap. After identifying the research gap, the introduction chapter was written together, as it serves as the basis for this thesis and for the following chapters. In general, all the chapters were primary discussed in the group before being developed individually. This provided that both of us had the same information. Martin Stazic was in charge of the literature chapter and the analysis whereas Carolina Köppel was in charge of the methodology chapter and the presentation of the empirical findings.



The empirical findings were also gathered and analysed together. Martin Stazic interviewed two of the three interview partners whereas Carolina Köppel interviewed one. While one person conducted the interviews, the other one was responsible for taking notes and later transcribing the interviews. The conclusion chapter was written in the group. Albeit the distribution of the chapters, we always supported each other and were thus constantly communicating, brainstorming, and discussing.



4 Empirical Findings

The empirical chapter summarises the findings of the interviews and the secondary data. First, the cases will be presented individually by introducing the NGO, the interviewee, and the connection to CSC. Afterwards, the findings will be presented following the conceptual framework in order to give a clear structure.

4.1 Cases

All the interviewees are involved with their NGOs' CSC activities, however to a different extent. As environmental NGOs, all cases present a high focus on achieving the environmental goals in the national and international business scope.

4.1.1 Naturskyddsforeningen

Naturskyddsforeningen is a Swedish member-based environmental NGO. The NGO collaborates with around 40 organisations in Africa, Asia, Latin America, and Eastern Europe on a project base. However, they are mainly operating on a local level. Their vision is to create a sustainable future by lobbying and collaborating with organisations and people. They are actively working against climate change, seas and fishing preservation, forest, agriculture, and environmental toxins on a national but also global level (Naturskyddsforeningen.se, 2021). They collaborate internationally with researchers, authorities, and companies (Andersson, 2017). Andreas Drufva is the interviewee partner for Naturskyddsforeningen. He is the head of marketing and fundraising and has been working for the organisation for four years. Before starting at Naturskyddsforeningen he has been working in the NGO sector for over 15 years as a consultant for CSC. Currently, he is involved in the initial stages of the collaboration process, working with a small unit responsible for collaboration.

4.1.2 Environmental Defence Fund Europe

Environmental Defence Fund (EDF) is a member-based environmental NGO striving for a better future. As one of the most influential environmental organisations in the United States, they are active in the global scope to address environmental issues and find solutions in this regard. They collaborate with companies to create solutions to address environmental problems and have collaborated with over 30% of the fortune 100 companies to address environmental goals (business.edf.org, 2021). In 2016, the EDF founded a legal entity to develop the work of EDF into Europe and established two offices in the United Kingdom and the Netherlands. This subsidiary is focusing solely on environmental related issues within Europe. With their extensive knowledge, image, and market-based approach, they want to address and find solutions for the environment in the European market (edfeurope.org, 2021). Pedro Martins-Barata is the interview partner for EDF Europe. He is the Senior European Union climate policy director. Before working for EDF Europe he was running a



consultancy company for 15 years and simultaneously worked for the Portuguese government to address climate change-related issues.

4.1.3 World Wildlife Fund

World Wildlife Fund is the world's leading NGO for the preservation of nature and people. With local offices in 100 countries around the world, they collaborate with governments and companies to “(...) *save the planet*” (Johansson, 2021). This is achieved by having experts who are specialised in the work fields of WWF such as climate, food, forest, freshwater, oceans, and wildlife. By addressing all the areas equally, it creates the opportunity to have a clear big picture of the potential work areas and therefore achieve the mission (worldwildlife.org, 2021). Katrina Johansson is employed by the WWF office in Sweden and has been the key account manager for the collaboration of WWF and the multinational fashion retailer H&M Group for the last five years. Before being responsible for the CSC between WWF-H&M, she was a sustainability consultant for seven years. The collaborations with businesses are normally divided among the team members that at least one person has the full overview of the collaboration. According to her, it is a full-time job that requires enough time to understand the partner's needs, which is why they have individuals in charge for each collaboration.

4.2 Environment

Naturskyddsforeningen

Mr. Drufva from the NGO Naturskyddsforeningen emphasises that the main environmental goal when collaborating with businesses is to achieve a better performance towards environmental issues. “*It could be that the company that we work with, that they should perform better in sustainability issues*” (Drufva, 2021). Another important goal could be to influence a sector or legislation. When collaborating with businesses, especially with those businesses that have a big influence on the industry or legislation, Naturskyddsforeningen might increase their impact by influencing political decision-making. Not only the collaboration is helpful to address such environmental goals, “(...) *it is both to make businesses perform better and the fundraising drivers, as we collect money from businesses*” (Drufva, 2021). Their contribution to businesses on the other hand is shown in different ways. According to Drufva, when collaborating in a smaller scope the NGO can provide the businesses with a certificate to signalise their engagement for environmental solutions. For bigger collaborations, their expertise can be a big contributor to their business partners. Through their expertise, as being one of the well-known NGOs in Sweden, it is possible to help businesses to further develop and also help to communicate with other groups in an efficient way.



EDF Europe

As the organisation's primary goal is to save the environment, the focus of the collaboration lies primarily in addressing and solving environmental issues. Martins-Barata, therefore, explains that *"EDF aims to work with businesses as much as they can without losing focus on the environment by finding solutions in that regard. EDF is not shy to build relationships and collaborate with many businesses across all different sectors and industries. In the end, it is not about the people within the businesses, it is about what they do to the environment"* (Martins-Barata, 2021). Their contribution to the collaboration to solve environmental problems is by having unique expertise and knowledge. Martins-Barata mentions that the scientific basis and the technical-scientific knowledge create a strong advantage for EDF Europe which has a high impact on the collaboration. Furthermore, EDF Europe helps its business partners to reach their full potential when conducting and implementing sustainability practices.

WWF

The collaboration to achieve environmental solutions is the main goal for WWF Sweden. Johansson explains that *"we know the world is not going in the right direction when it comes to sustainability issues and the environment in general. But it has no point to get depressed and say, well it is too late (...)"* (Johansson, 2021). WWF rather sees it positively and tries to actively strive for solutions and opportunities to save the planet. When collaborating with businesses, WWF tries to point out that this is achievable, and the collaboration should help to encourage businesses to address environmental issues and find solutions together. According to Johansson, this also influences their partner search when it is clear that businesses are eager to address environmental issues and be positive about a change. The contribution of WWF to the potential business partner for the collaboration is the knowledge of their experts who can educate companies on their behaviour towards the environmental issues. WWF also helps companies to identify where their biggest impact is and addresses the area with the biggest footprint through collaboration. They see the biggest potential of impact among the big companies. In the case of WWF-H&M, WWF saw the opportunity to change the resource-intensive textile industry. On the other hand, the company realised that to continue doing business for the next years, it is important to address the environmental issues and to conduct their business in a more sustainable way. The process of changing the business model takes time and dedication, as not only the business itself is involved but the customers and suppliers. The collaboration helps to push the company to a more sustainable business practice but also to push the industry to become better and sustainable.



4.3 Internationalisation Degree

Naturskyddsforeningen

Naturskyddsforeningen is mainly active in Sweden, nevertheless, they also have international activities. As Swedish nationals it is easier to collaborate with Swedish businesses, e.g., when collaborating with IKEA it is more efficient and easier to collaborate with IKEA Sweden rather than the global IKEA. The influence of Naturskyddsforeningen on Swedish businesses, especially those businesses which are internationally spread, can have an impact internationally. Drufva exemplifies: *“When we go back to IKEA Sweden, the timber they buy is mostly from other countries and then we have a dialogue if it is from Romania or Asia. So, in that context, we can influence their global activities even though the legal contract is between IKEA Sweden and SSNC Sweden”* (Drufva, 2021). Therefore, even though the NGO can influence the businesses indirectly, their impact does influence the global activities of their business partners. In terms of direct influence in the international scope, Naturskyddsforeningen works with global networks to local organisations (naturskyddsforeningen.se, 2021). National environmental policies also influence the collaboration and the search to some extent.

EDF Europe

According to Martins-Barata *“EDF is similar to Greenpeace or WWF, both are internationally active, with the distinction that EDF focusses on the USA whereas Greenpeace and WWF are more international”* (Martins-Barata, 2021). Even though the main focus is still on the US market, EDF is internationalising into the European market at a small pace, which is why the legal entity EDF Europe was founded. In the European entity, the focus lies on key issues such as shipping and aviation emissions. They are starting to collaborate with big European NGOs and important businesses to establish themselves in the European market. With their strength of having a technical approach as a contribution to the collaboration, they aim to approach leading businesses to obtain funding and find specific solutions for environmental issues. During the internationalisation process, the national environmental policies also influence the actions of EDF Europe to great extent, especially since the European entity is collaborating more with the government than its parent organisation in the US. Martins-Barata indicates that

“It [national environmental policies] influences EDF actions a lot since they have strict rules on how to apply for government funds. We only ask governments with a good track record for funding. The governments which provide the greatest funding opportunity are mostly these which have the best environmental policies”
– (Martins-Barata, 2021)



WWF

WWF considers local partners as well as international partners. Johansson explains that when collaborating with businesses around the world, WWF starts the collaboration where the headquarters are located. As the headquarter of H&M is located in Sweden, the local office of WWF in Sweden was in charge of the collaboration. WWF further collaborates with Google and Levi's which headquarters are located in the United States, which means that key account managers of WWF US are in charge of the collaborations. During the partner search, national environmental policies also influence with whom WWF works.

"(...) when we want to achieve things nationally and internationally and we see that we can make use of each other, then we take that opportunity. It affects whom we work with, but it is more the opportunity that comes up. More often they ask us for collaboration, but we have to say no quite often" – (Johansson, 2021)

4.4 Partner Search

Naturskyddsforeningen

Naturskyddsforeningen and businesses can initiate the collaboration, and therefore search for their partners, in an equal way. Finding their business partner is also dependable on the project. Drufva explains that collaboration can start with a business partner within the existing network. Furthermore, he emphasises that before entering into a collaboration they *"(...) can have a discussion with the partner for 3-5 years before actually entering into a collaboration"* (Drufva, 2021). The choice of looking for new partners often occurs when Naturskyddsforeningen decides to have a new campaign and does not have the partners within the existing network. Therefore, Naturskyddsforeningen relies first on their existing network *"(...) if they have ideas to what companies to reach out"* (Drufva, 2021) before searching for partners outside their network. Drufva also emphasises that when reaching out to new partners, the first contact is mostly personally through a phone call. Naturskyddsforeningen itself can also contribute to the partner search by making it attractive for business partners. According to Drufva, most companies want to collaborate with NGOs with a good and well-known brand, which is one of the strengths of Naturskyddsforeningen. Furthermore, the NGO can provide businesses with a strong personal relation strategy. For the collaboration to be effective, it is important that businesses know that the NGO understands their challenges and the business in general.

EDF Europe

The search and initiation of the collaboration between EDF Europe and the potential business partners can be by both parties as it is dependent on the situation. Martins-Barata highlights that *"If you have funding available to you, then the NGO will initiate the collaboration by asking them if they would like to join certain projects"* (Martins-Barata, 2021). Nevertheless, their actions are limited to the limited co-funding. He



further argues that *“In general, we are always looking for opportunities for funding and therefore, are approaching individuals, businesses, and most recently governments. We offer them our help and even if they do not accept it right away, they can call us and take us up on our offer”* (Martins-Barata, 2021). This is usually done in their existing network as they can work with the best partners who can reflect their organisation in the best way possible. Especially relying on the existing network is easier since EDF Europe is a rather small NGO compared to other European NGOs and therefore, the need to strengthen themselves is not a priority. However, considering that they have a more market-based approach, they also have the chance to find partners outside their existing network. This is rather a naturally emerging situation and specific for each case. Also, in the case of new partners, they still search to work with the best partners possible, and therefore they rely on a screening process to identify the potential partner. Not only their market-based orientation helps to find new partners but also their strengths have an influence on the search. As previously mentioned, EDF Europe has strong technical expertise and knowledge that is recognised by business partners and seen as an attractive feature for collaboration. Through those strengths and collaboration business partners can benefit from their reputation and higher credibility.

WWF

WWF is approached by potential business partners to start a collaboration, especially in the case of new business partners. Nevertheless, whenever they are actively searching for a partner, it is mostly initiated naturally. When collaborating with business partners, either initiated by WWF or by the potential partner, the partners are mostly found in the existing network as it is easier. The reason behind choosing an existing partner is explained by the importance of building trust in collaboration. Johannsson explains *“In these partnerships, it is a lot about trust in both ways. If we trust the company and if they trust us. Or they think we are going to the barricades and do not understand what the company is and its core. So, it is a lot about building trust”* (Johannsson, 2021). WWF contributes to the collaboration being a well-known and respected brand and providing expertise to the companies which need support.

4.4.1 Formation

Naturskyddsforeningen

The collaboration type between Naturskyddsforeningen and businesses depends on the situation as they collaborate in different forms. He explains that *“It is hard to say, we have all these kinds of collaboration. We try to balance the efficiency or impact. But if we have a donation of 1 million crowns without any projects that is ok too. It is hard to say which one is better”* (Drufva, 2021). On the other hand, when choosing to collaborate with businesses in the long-term, he argues that *“We search for partners that have an impact on that sector, on that environmental issue that we focus on. We, therefore, prefer to work closely”* (Drufva, 2021).



EDF Europe

EDF strives mostly for a philanthropic and long-term relationship with its business partners. Martins-Barata argues that this is due to the lower involvement of money and time to find funding alternatives. As EDF Europe is a member-based NGO, this is very much dependent on the amount of co-funding available for the cause. *“The majority of environmental NGOs in Europe have very little co-funding. They usually survive through grants from foundations because they cannot survive based on membership fees”* (Martins-Barata, 2021). Overall, EDF Europe expects that the chosen collaboration type, philanthropic or long-term collaboration, is reciprocal and can support the work of EDF Europe.

WWF

WWF’s goal is to collaborate with businesses to address environmental issues and find solutions. WWF does not want to engage in philanthropic collaboration since they are not sufficient to provide environmental protection. Nevertheless, they also engage in a more philanthropic collaboration with caution. They accept the money for funding if the intention behind it is not to greenwash. Johansson explains this with the WWF-H&M collaboration below.

“(…). They wanted to give us money from the plastic bags that they sold. They wanted to donate the money they received from the plastic bags they sold, which was due to the rule that you have to charge for plastic bags. We are in discussion with the government against plastic bags, that is why we cannot take money of these kinds of sales. So, if you want to donate for the sale of paper bags, then you can do that, but not for plastic bags.” – (Johansson, 2021)

This would not be in compliance with their vision and mission. Therefore, the NGO prefers to collaborate in a long-term and close way. The well-established collaboration between H&M Group and WWF started in 2011 with the goal of making the textile industry more sustainable (wwf.se, 2021). The collaboration first started addressing the water management of H&M’s value chain and simultaneously influencing collective actions locally in countries like China, Bangladesh, and Turkey. Later in 2016, the collaboration expanded by including other environmental issues like climate change. The aim is that H&M Group wants to become climate positive by 2040 and this will be reached with close collaboration with WWF. Not only the collaboration is helping to make the value chain of H&M more sustainable, but it also helps to develop a framework that wants to bring brands together to become climate positive. Simultaneously with the climate change dialogue, H&M-WWF also focused on biodiversity. In 2020, it addressed, among others, raw materials where H&M has its largest impact.



4.4.2 Drivers

Naturskyddsforeningen

To understand the motivations behind the business partner collaborating with Naturskyddsforeningen, they have a general understanding of the main drivers for businesses. Drufva explains that *“We have a general understanding and use 9-10 known drivers for companies”* (Drufva, 2021), which helps to identify the motivation for the collaboration. For example, it could be that a company wants to enhance their sustainability work, to hire young and qualified people who value organisations active in sustainability, or to simply improve their brand. According to Drufva, those drivers are good indicators to see how motivated the company is to collaborate with as well as for them to identify *“(...) for that company what driver could be most important for them”* (Drufva, 2021). If a company does not show any strong driver for the collaboration, the collaboration is most likely not going to be pursued further. They also engage with co-branding where they allow businesses to use their sub-brand to show their engagement in environmental focus. The co-branding strategy also helps to show the motivation of the company and ensure the level of trustworthiness. As this is done via a screening process, it is clear to what extent the collaboration can add value.

EDF Europe

For EDF Europe, what drives potential business partners to enter into a collaboration is clear from the beginning. The important thing to keep in mind is that the goal of EDF Europe is to create environmentally friendly change. Martins-Barata explains that when a business wants to enter into a collaboration with EDF Europe, many drivers where *“some of them are negative like greenwashing or to cover other things, some are positive like the wealth of knowledge or improve environmental impact”* (Martins-Barata, 2021). In every case, it is important to consider the resources and capabilities of the business partner so that EDF Europe can create the best positive impact on the environment. Normally not every motivation might be accepted by EDF Europe, and it is possible that the collaboration will be rejected when it is clear during the partner search process, that the business partner is only looking to greenwash their business model.

WWF

WWF identifies the motivations of the business partner during a long-lasting negotiation phase. In the case of H&M, before initiating the collaboration in 2011 the negotiation process started ten years before. In addition, throughout the process, a due diligence procedure was used to further identify their credibility. With the help of an external company, it was also useful to identify how sustainable and transparent H&M is. In terms of co-branding. Johansson stated that businesses are in general very ambitious to conduct transformational change and WWF helps them to achieve this



kind of goal. However, the demand for CSC with WWF is high. Businesses would like WWF to launch more CSC projects whereas they might just simply follow the same path. That has the advantage that WWF does not need to develop a new project. They only have to ensure that the businesses are aligned with the project goals. WWF allows companies to use the brand whenever the business partner can achieve a certain level of climate neutrality. The collaboration further helps businesses to reach a certain level of ambition.

4.4.3 Compatibility Naturskyddsforeningen

It is important to identify how compatible the business is in terms of CSC and consider it as a parameter within the partner search. In the case of Naturskyddsforeningen, they conduct a screening with predefined questions to learn about the company's business model, finances, and organisational- and ownership structure. Drufva adds that *"one part of the screening is the risk management, to see if they were working with businesses that are bad for the environment so that they might not be trustworthy"* (Drufva, 2021). Naturskyddsforeningen aims to work not only with the best companies which have good sustainability practices. According to Drufva, it is more valuable to collaborate with low-performing businesses as the impact of Naturskyddsforeningen for change is bigger. In terms of organisational structure, it is easier to collaborate with businesses that have a similar structure as Naturskyddsforeningen. Drufva highlights that *"we are present in most of the Swedish municipalities and ICA is also present in Swedish municipalities. So, we can find a match not only nationally but also locally. It is easier to find a good match when you have a similar organisational structure"* (Drufva, 2021).

EDF Europe

According to Martins-Barata from EDF Europe, if the business partner has different strengths and capabilities this can give a good indication of compatibility. In other words, EDF Europe is aware of the capabilities and strengths of the potential business partner and to which extent it is complementary to theirs. What EDF Europe expects from their partner is dependent on the project. The information about the partner's resources and capabilities are gathered through referrals. Martins-Barata refers that *"...we get the information through our network by attending certain meetings to discuss which organisations are currently working on environmental issues and how certain strengths could improve their performance"* (Martins-Barata, 2021).

WWF

Assessing the compatibility level between WWF and the business partner is a natural process. The important factor when assessing compatibility for WWF is when they want to achieve the targeted outcome, the business partner has to have a leading role in the market. Therefore, the organisational structure matters during the partner



search. Johansson explains that WWF does not work with small companies as these can be supported in another way. Since it is important to have a big impact on the market WWF searches for big companies which have a big impact. For smaller businesses, WWF provides a practice model to guide small businesses to do the change by themselves. Johansson explains it through the example of Gina Tricot, a smaller Swedish business that used the practice model to engage in water stewardship, and now they even achieved the same level as H&M.

4.4.4 Resources and Capabilities

Naturskyddsforeningen

When asked about what the expected resources and capabilities of their collaboration business partners are, Andreas Drufva states that for Naturskyddsforeningen funding is the most often resource asked from their business partner. However, not only their funding can be a valuable contribution to the NGO, but it is also possible that the business partner can have communication methods that are beneficial. Drufva exemplifies with the co-branding initiative *rädda bina* where “*Arla prints the campaign message on how to save the bees on 20 + million boxes, so we can see the reach to the customers/citizens*” (Drufva, 2021). Furthermore, the potential business can contribute by providing expertise and knowledge for the NGO which might help them develop even further. Before entering the collaboration, Naturskyddsforeningen looks for those resources and capabilities through an online search, media archives, as well as annual and sustainably reports. When searching for partners it is therefore important that the resources and capabilities are complementary in order to have a long-term collaboration.

EDF Europe

Generally, the resources and capabilities of the business partner must be complementary to those of EDF Europe. Nevertheless, the expectations differ among the collaborations. Martins-Barata exemplifies the case of the university in Madrid where “*the university had a lot of experience in shipping technologies whereas EDF had broader knowledge in costing and economic analysis*” (Martins-Barata, 2021). The information is mostly gathered through different meetings where it is discussed “*(...) which organisations are currently working on environmental issues and how certain strengths could improve their performance*” (Martins-Barata, 2021)

WWF

WWF expects that the contracting parties achieve what has been agreed upon during the negotiation phase. During the search for business partners, they ensure that the resources and capabilities are complementary, and the information is gathered throughout the extensive negotiation process. At a later stage, WWF applies a schedule of three colours (red, green, and yellow) where they can identify how the progress of achieving the set targets are and what resources are being used. This helps



to identify whether the collaboration is following the right path or whether it has to be terminated. The whole process of matching resources and capability requires time and a full-time position. This was the case with H&M where they first created the ambition to be active in biodiversity. WWF, therefore, assigned their resources, which are their experts in biodiversity, to respond to this situation.

4.4.5 Trust

Naturskyddsforeningen

As trust is important to have an effective collaboration, it is interesting to assess how the NGOs can evaluate the trust level when searching for partners. Drufva explains that *“It’s always people who collaborate with people, so we try to create an atmosphere to see if there are cultural differences in organisational culture. We try to put some energy into creating an agreement on how we should meet how often we should meet, if we should take notes in the meetings, who should convene the meeting. It is to create a structure and as a part of that structure to create an atmosphere and a way of performing the meetings that suits them and suits us”* (Drufva, 2021). In this context, he explains that the alignment of objectives and cultural values is important for trust and in the partner search in general.

EDF Europe

Being mainly active in the United States as well as having a small team in Europe, the trust-building level is more difficult for EDF Europe than for other European environmental NGOs.

“EDF is not very well known in Europe. EDF is perceived as the American “rich kid of the block” because they are relatively very well-funded. Moreover, in the past, EDF is reported having taken credit for projects while working in partnership with other organisations. Through that, we have experienced a lack of trust, especially when collaborating with other NGOs”- (Martins-Barata, 2021).

According to Martins-Barata, EDF Europe is starting to strengthen its reputation to achieve a certain level of trust. This is achieved by following regulations and being transparent about their operational activities, goals, and expertise. Therefore, the collaboration with different organisations, namely other European NGOs and businesses can help to achieve the targeted level of trust.

WWF

As the collaboration between WWF and potential business partners is strongly related to trust, this is ensured by good communication from both sides. Johansson explains it takes



“A lot of talking, being honest and open. On both sides, we can question H&M, but they can also question us. I would not say they have complained, but it is like saying what works well and whatnot, or that we need to do this quicker or slower. But it is about talking, discussing, and having an open conversation”
– (Johansson, 2021)

Furthermore, keeping the vision throughout the negotiation process and during the actual collaboration is important as it could lead to termination. WWF further considers that both collaborating parties differ from each other.

“It is also important to know that we come from different spots or different areas. Part of WWF’s goal is to reduce consumption, not to encourage consumption. And we say that to H&M that this is part of our goals. For example, when we have this campaign, whether it is Earth Hour or the work of biodiversity in general where we encourage people to consume less, they understand that we are working from a different spot”- (Johansson, 2021)



5 Analysis

This chapter analyses the empirical findings with connection to the conceptual framework derived from the literature review. The similarities and differences between the empirical and the theoretical findings will be highlighted and discussed. The chapter is structured according to the operationalisation and the empirical finding's structure and emphasising the different internationalisation degrees.

5.1 Environment

The empirical findings show that the three NGOs use collaboration to address environmental issues. The general goal was, however, described differently among the NGOs. Drufva from Naturskyddsforeningen explains that their goal of the CSC is to achieve better performance towards environmental issues. EDF Europe describes the goal of CSC as saving the environment whereas WWF describes theirs as saving the planet. Hereby, we see different scales of impact they want to reach with the collaboration which might be in relation to the internationalisation degree. According to Huwart and Verdier (2013), complex environmental issues like climate change are a global problem which requires a global solution. Since Naturskyddsforeningen is focusing mainly on the Swedish market it is plausible that they are not primarily seeking solutions but rather to enhance performance. EDF is an international NGO, however, EDF Europe, which has been interviewed, is solely focusing on the European market, and therefore their scale of impact can be described as regional which matches their goal. Moreover, EDF Europe is focusing on shipping and aviation emissions which underlines their goal of saving the environment. WWF is a well-known NGO that operates globally among different spheres. They encourage businesses to become more active in environmental-related issues and to collaborate in order to provide joint solutions. Their global activity suits their goal of saving the planet. That WWF encourages businesses to engage in environmental issues reflects Bendell and Murphy (1997) described the transformation of NGOs, which historically changed their approach from confronting business to supporting business. We argue that a local approach to environmental issues may be sufficient to address global environmental problems as long as the majority of countries follow an appropriate environmental standard. For this to happen, however, commitment to environmental protection must become more popular. Following the logic that many actors with the low impact each can create in sum a significant impact.

According to Dacin et al. (1997), success in CSC relies on compatible goals, mutual motivation as well as the provision of strategically important resources, particularly in an international context. This was also confirmed by Rondinelli and London (2003) which defined the joint goal and shared interest as a mandatory condition for CSC. All interviewed NGOs state that the common goal is enhancing the environmental impact and is important for CSC. In fact, EDF Europe as well as WWF mentioned that if a high interest in creating positive environmental impact was not noticeable,



they would reject to collaborate with businesses. Therefore, we declare that the mutual interest in achieving environmental goals that fit the NGOs' mission is an important factor that determines whether CSC is formed or not.

Besides closely collaborating with businesses, NGOs also engage in fundraising programs which further help to support their core activities. This, however, differs among the NGOs. For example, Martins-Barata emphasises that “*fundraising is a central activity for EDF*” (Martins-Barata, 2021). For Naturskyddsforeningen, fundraising is also a key activity whereas WWF also accepts funds as long as they are not intended for greenwashing. This aspect is described by Menden et al. (2019) as a process that is usually conducted as a charity model whereby businesses provide financial resources to NGOs and NGOs are using this funding in order to pursue their goals. Moreover, according to UN Environmental Programme (2021), environmental issues are too large to be addressed only by one sector. This aspect was further elaborated by Menden et al. (2019), which stated that NGOs are dependent on the financial resources of businesses in order to solve environmental issues. Therefore, it is plausible that NGOs, especially the ones which are less known and small, are focused on fundraising. However, in the case of WWF fundraising is not a central activity. This could be correlated to the internationalisation degree of the NGOs since the potential of fundraising is limited to their operational scope. EDF Europe states in this regard that the European co-founding capacity is “scarce”. We declare that through WWF's global prominence and scope they are relatively well funded and therefore, do not have to put as much effort into fundraising as smaller and less known NGOs.

The last aspect of how NGOs create positive environmental performance is through influencing industry, sector, or legislation which was mentioned by WWF and Naturskyddsforeningen. Naturskyddsforeningen tries to change national legislation whereas WWF tries to change the industry by collaborating with leading businesses and exemplifying that sustainable work can be attractive. Austin and Seitanidi (2012) found in this regard that through collaboration with business, NGOs might benefit from greater political influence. According to Martins-Barata, EDF Europe is a rather young entity and therefore not well established yet in the European market. They first approach big European NGOs and important businesses for collaborations in order to increase their impact. We argue that EDF Europe did not mention this aspect because they are relatively new in the European market and therefore, they have to first establish a certain level of presence in order to have the power of influencing the industry, sector, or legislation. However, we argue that EDF once properly established has a great potential to lead to significantly transform the shipping and aviation industries.



5.2 Internationalisation Degree

Hailey (1999) stressed that NGOs' level of engagement is changing from a local approach to an international one. Therefore, he emphasised that NGOs are increasingly internationalising in order to promote development and increasing their impact geographically. However, the empirical findings indicate that the NGOs are not necessarily striving for internationalisation but still have an international impact to some extent. The three interviewed NGOs differ from the level of internationalisation which is also reflected in their search and approach of business partners.

With a more local engagement for collaboration and some cross-border projects, Naturskyddsforeningen finds it easier to collaborate with other Swedish companies since they are familiar with the national context. Nevertheless, Naturskyddsforeningen's international involvement also implies collaboration with local multinational companies which have an international impact. Another perspective to the partner search is through the establishment of legal entities in a certain area to facilitate business. This is reflected by EDF Europe, where the American parent organisation EDF created the legal entity in 2016 to further address environmental issues in Europe. WWF, on the other hand, is the most internationalised NGO in this study. They collaborate with businesses in over 100 countries to address global environmental issues. As Johansson explains with the examples of H&M and Google, the NGO collaborates in those local offices where the headquarters of the collaborating business partners are located, which would be Sweden and the USA respectively. This also corresponds to the local work on-site, which is also carried out by the local offices. In this context, Meulman et al. (2018) argue that organisations tend to seek local partners because of familiarity with the context and business practices as well as proximity to the partner. In all three cases, we saw a tendency of proximity to the collaborating partners whereby WWF and Naturskyddsforeningen tend to prefer to collaborate in a local context and EDF in a regional one. Like previously mentioned Naturskyddsforeningen prefer local businesses as they are easier to work with. Therefore, the familiarities of the context and business practices tend to be important for CSC in general. WWF, by collaborating with businesses in the businesses' home country, also strives for familiarity.

According to Hajifimitiou and Georgiou (2002), the internationalisation process and its associated greater access to international markets increase the opportunities for CSC formation for the internationalising organisation. Through the greater collaboration possibilities enlarge the extent of accessible resources and capabilities (ibid.). WWF emphasise that by stating that through their national and international scope, various opportunities for collaborations emerge. EDF Europe and Naturskyddsforeningen did not mention something in this regard. This might be because of the national focus of Naturskyddsforeningen and due to the low level of



establishment of EDF Europe. We argue that the level of internationalisation does indeed create opportunities since the NGOs have greater access to potential partners, resources, and capabilities.

The national environmental policies affect the partner search of all NGOs. Drufva explains that local environmental policies are most important for the partner search of Naturskyddsforeningen and matter when it comes to changing the legislation or when relying on them. For EDF, Martins-Barata explains that national environmental policies influence to a large extent. Since EDF Europe relies on funding from the government, they also search for those governments with the best environmental policies and therefore with an active interest in environmental issues. Johansson explains that for WWF the national environmental policies can create opportunities which therefore also influences with whom they work. These statements are in line with the findings of Yang and Liu (2018) which detected regional differences in the engagement in environmental issues which were caused by a divergence in national environmental policies. They further explained that this may have negative effects on CSC formation. Therefore, we argue that a nation's environmental policies define its attractiveness for CSC. Moreover, we argue that the tendency of proximity to the business partner is also associated with the familiarity of environmental policies.

5.3 Partner Search

Although the interviews with NGOs were conducted in order to examine their partner search process, all NGOs described that the initiation of CSC can be done by both NGO and business. Nevertheless, which party is making the first step towards CSC formation depends on the situation, project, or emerging opportunity. Drufva from Naturskyddsforeningen explains that when *"...we are actively searching for partners, we go for companies which are important actors. We search for partners that have an impact on that sector, on that environmental issue that we focus on"* (Drufva, 2021). Since EDF Europe's main activity is to seek funding, they actively search for business partners which can support them with financial resources. In the case of WWF, they are approached by business partners rather than actively seeking them. However, Johansson explains that WWF actively searches for partners when there is an opportunity to collaborate. Although the literature rarely described the partner search process in the CSC context as a two-sided process, most literature described the partner search process from each side, where businesses are seeking NGOs (Rondinelli & London, 2003; Feilhauer & Hahn, 2021) or NGOs are seeking businesses (Menden, et al., 2019; Prescott & Stibbe, 2017). We associate this distinction in actively searching for a collaborating partner with the difference in internationalisation degree, size, and prominence. We argue that due to WWF's international scope and its prominence, they have an advantage compared to the other two NGOs. They must not invest much effort in the partner search since they are a relatively attractive business partner as well as have greater possibilities to collaborate with business. Their comparably lower interest in fundraising activities could also be



associated with these factors. Johansson explained that businesses ask for more activities from WWF and that the NGO often has to refuse.

When asked where they find their CSC partners, all NGOs answered similarly, namely that they find them within and outside their network. However, entering CSC with existing partners seems to be a preference for all interviewed NGOs as it is perceived as a simpler process. Naturskyddsforeningen first seeks businesses within their network which fits their goal. In the case of EDF Europe, they try to find a collaboration partner which can reflect them in the best possible way. Both, Naturskyddsforeningen and EDF Europe conduct a screening process in order to find the most compatible partner in this regard. WWF on the other hand seeks businesses that are eager to engage in environmental issues and protection. In this regard, they also first search in their existing network. Johansson explained this through the importance of the presence of mutual trust as a central aspect of CSC for WWF. In the case of WWF, the partner search process consists of a long-lasting negotiation process, due diligence procedure, as well as sometimes through external agencies. WWF conducts these more advanced partner search methods in order to identify the credibility and intention of the business partner. Seitanidi et al. (2010) argued that the research lacks explicit descriptions of the partner selection in CSC, particularly the partner search processes of NGOs. Feilhauer and Hahn (2021) attempted to describe the CSC partner search process with the social network theory whereas they use the *network reinforcement theory* (collaborating with partners from the existing network) and *network boarding theory* (collaborating with organisations outside the network). They conducted the research from the perspective of how businesses search NGOs in the context of CSC. Therefore, their findings have only limited application for this research. Feilhauer and Hahn (2021) further found that businesses prefer to collaborate with NGOs from their existing partners rather than looking for new partners. They explained this preference through increased trust, protect reputation and, cost reduction which is associated with lower coordination costs. Compared to the empirical findings some similarities can be found. All NGOs prefer to conduct CSC within their existing network, if possible, like Feilhauer and Hahn's (2021) findings indicated. However, their motivation differs to some extent. All NGOs stated that they prefer to collaborate with existing networks due to the simpler process which was not mentioned in the literature. However, none of the NGOs mentioned protection of their reputation nor cost reduction in association with collaboration within the existing network as suggested by the literature.

Another similarity between the research of Feilhauer and Hahn (2021) and this study can be found in the trust aspect. Austin and Seitanidi (2012) indicate that the information in the early phase of CSC can give an indication of the compatibility and trustworthiness of the organisation. That is in line with the findings of the empirical part which indicates that the NGOs conduct any kind of partner search method in order to find the most compatible partner. We argue that the process of finding the



most compatible partner within the existing network ensures homogeneity between the organisations, which in turn, protects their reputation to some extent as the collaboration has a greater probability for success. We claim that this is one main goal for WWF as they conduct the most advanced partner search methods among the three interviewed NGOs. We argue that more similarities might be found than indicated from the comparison. For example, the fact that the three NGOs interviewed prefer to conduct CSC within their existing network may indicate that this form of partner search could have some financial benefits. The gap between the literature and empirical findings might be associated with the construct of the interview guideline which consists of rather broad and open questions that allowed NGOs to state any motives for their preference to search for partners within their existing network.

The other described way of finding partners is through a new network which is defined as the *network broadening* strategy (Feilhauer & Hahn, 2021). When Naturskyddsforeningen does not find any appropriate partner e.g., for their new campaign within their existing network, they expand their search outside their network. Thereby they rely on recommendations of the existing network. Martins-Barata claimed that for EDF Europe, it is comparably easier to find new partners as the NGO has a more market-based approach. Feilhauer and Hahn (2021) found that the *network-reinforcing* strategy is more effective than the *network broadening strategy* in the context of CSC. This study does not present a clear indication of the effectiveness between these theories but emphasises that NGOs tend to prefer the *network-reinforcing* strategy. In the literature, no further indications are found which cover Martins-Barata statement that EDF Europe's market-based approach facilitates the partner search. However, we argue that their market-oriented approach leads to more intersections of homogeneity between the NGOs with businesses. That in turn might influence the perception of the compatibility of each other and therefore facilitate the partner search process. Moreover, we do not fully comply with Feilhauer and Hahn's (2021) finding that the *network-reinforcing* strategy is more effective in the context of CSC. They defined the CSC as a continuous process where the organisations develop their relationship over time. However, the literature review indicated that also another interpretation of CSC exists which defines it as an instinctive process that was created to reach a certain goal (Prescott & Stibbe, 2017). This can be associated with the partner search within and outside existing networks. In this case, we question if the *network-reinforcing* strategy is the more effective one for NGOs, especially because enlarging one's network is also associated with several benefits. We argue that the effectiveness of the strategies depends on the individual goal, the purpose of the CSC as well as prevailing conditions.

According to Menden et al. (2019) organisations first must evaluate the value of their resources and capabilities and create a clear vision of the desired goal before starting the partner search. This helps to find the most compatible organisation based on the conditions of the searching organisation. All three interviewed NGOs know exactly



which of their assets make them attractive in terms of CSC. In this context, Naturskyddsforeningen states that their well-known brand, the provision of certificates which show environmental engagement, as well as their knowledge in personal relation strategy are factors which attract business to collaborate with them. EDF Europe has through their market orientation as well as through their high scientific-technical expertise a rather unique approach for an NGO. WWF's brand which is very well-known and respected as well as their rather large expertise in environmental topics makes them attractive for businesses that want to engage in environmental issues. We argue that the partner search process is two-sided. Therefore, it is important to evaluate one's resources in order to make oneself attractive by emphasising one's strengths and thereby find the best potential partners.

5.3.1 Formation

The empirical findings showed that all NGOs pursue various forms of CSC. The form of the CSC depends on the joint goal of the collaboration and therefore could rather be from philanthropical character or require more integration between the organisations. NGOs like Naturskyddsforeningen and EDF Europe which are more reliable on fundraising, prefer philanthropic CSC. EDF Europe in fact stated that they prefer "*philanthropic and long-term*" (Martins-Barata, 2021) as it is correlated with lower involvement of money and time. On the contrary, WWF favours a more advanced relationship within the CSC context. Even though, they do not preferably want to engage in philanthropic collaboration they "*do not say no to money*" (Katrina Johansson, 2021) as long as it is not associated with something that goes against WWF's values. However, philanthropy can also happen simultaneously to close collaborations. The example of WWF-H&M showed that during the close long-term collaboration between the organisations, the company once tried to provide a philanthropical additive. Even though the attempt failed due to insufficient coverage of WWF's values, the attempt could have been realised if it would be in conformance with the vision (no plastic bags but rather paper bags). In this context, research provides different definitions of CSC forms. Nevertheless, all research seemed to follow more or less the same logic. We define Rondinelli and London (2003) as the most suitable definition because they are the only ones that focused solely on environmental issues. Moreover, they created a tool that facilitates CSC formation by determining which CSC form should be applied depending on prevailing conditions. Rondinelli and London (2003) defined in this respect, arm's length relationship, interactive relationship as well as intensive environmental management alliances, as the three forms of CSC. Arm's length relationship can be referred to the philanthropic characterised collaboration whereas businesses have the function of providing financial resources and NGOs use this financial support in order to pursue their goals. Thereby this transaction forms the only connection between the two organisations. WWF's close and long-term collaborations, like the one with H&M, can be defined as intensive environmental management alliance, as their core activities are determined by the collaboration and as they are sharing key resources and capabilities



in order to conduct transformational change. As previously argued in the network strategies, we have missed some kind of dependency among the theory with the prevailing conditions, joint goals, and purpose of the collaboration. Rondinelli and London (2003) included this while defining the successful formation of CSC forms in the environmental context as the dependent process of prevailing conditions. That definition with their implication for managers is what makes their tool so valuable in our perception. According to Menden et al. (2019), the more advanced and inclusive the collaboration between NGOs and business is, the greater the scale of impact but also the higher the complexity of CSC. This logic can also be applied to the definition of Rondinelli and London (2003). Consequently, an arm's length relationship would have a rather low impact and fewer complexes whereas an intensive environmental management alliance has great impact and are rather complex in nature. We argue that in order to create a positive environmental impact all CSC forms are equally important. With the different levels of CSC, a broader level of businesses might be approached to engage in environmental issues and different goals and purposes might be pursued. Finally, we argue that WWF is able to conduct more advanced collaboration forms than the other NGOs because they have the necessary resources for it. Even though EDF Europe is well funded, it is not established yet in the European market which might also have an effect on the CSC formation.

5.3.2 Drivers

The empirical findings as well as the literature review showed that NGOs and businesses have different drivers for CSC. Moreover, both chapters summarised addressing environmental issues as the mutual driver of CSC. Like previously mentioned, EDF Europe and WWF focus on seeking businesses that are engaged in environmental issues. However, Drufva emphasises that they have a greater impact on businesses that have relatively low performance in addressing environmental issues since they have a greater potential for transformation. Prescott and Stibbe (2017) stressed that NGOs prefer to collaborate with larger businesses since they have the required resources to conduct CSC effectively and therefore increase NGOs' impact. The empirical findings underline this statement. All three NGOs tend to target large businesses in order to create a greater impact with the collaboration. The reason for WWF goes even further. WWF wants to collaborate with leading businesses in the industry in order to change the industry in a more sustainable way. In this regard, Rondinelli and London (2003) stressed that NGOs seek CSC in order to define best practices for environmental matters, create circular business models, foster environmental awareness, and demonstrate that such circular business models can be beneficial. The WWF-H&M collaboration is doing exactly that. Besides making the business model more sustainable, generally increasing their environmental impact, and influencing the industry, the empirical research showed that NGOs identify further drivers for CSC such as improvement of the brand, reputation, influencing political decision-making, fundraising, expertise, knowledge, and market-oriented business activities which influence the partner search process. These drivers are all



covered through the literature review. However, the empirical findings did not mention all drivers which were discussed in the literature review. Drivers which were suggested by Austin and Seitanidi (2012) are greater visibility and notoriety which was not found by the empirical findings. We argue that due to the open and broad question of the semi-structured interviews that it is only natural that not all drivers have been found. Nevertheless, most of the drivers described in the literature review were described in the empirical part. We further argue that the vision and the internationalisation degree influence the impact the NGO wants to achieve. For example, WWF as being an international NGO and visualising to save the planet attempts to impact not only the collaborating business but also the industry whereas Naturskyddsforeningen being more locally and visualising the better performance on environmental issues will strive to further collaborate with businesses that are not the best in class.

There are various drivers which motivate businesses to conduct CSC. The empirical findings found that increasing environmental performance, expertise, knowledge, and reputation are common drivers of businesses which all interviewed NGOs experienced. Naturskyddsforeningen and WWF declare that co-branding strategies could also drive businesses to conduct CSC. Naturskyddsforeningen further states that due to their prominence, a co-branding strategy might increase the trustworthiness of the business. In fact, higher credibility was also mentioned by EDF Europe as a possible driver for CSC. However, according to Poret (2019), higher credibility is not the only factor that drives a business to conduct a co-branding strategy in CSC. Businesses try with a co-branding strategy to lower the information asymmetry between businesses and customers. This is performed by the signal effect of the co-branding which indicates that the business is engaged in environmental issues. That in fact, can positively influence the sales of the business. According to Hartman and Stafford (1997), the main drivers of businesses for seeking CSC are to improve their reputation or gain a competitive edge. Moreover, all mentioned drivers of businesses were also discussed in the literature review part. However, similar to the drivers of NGOs, some drivers are missing in the empirical findings. These are access to institutional networks, legitimacy, and pressure from external actors. For this gap, we have the same explanation as for the drivers of NGOs, namely that it is only natural that not all drivers are being mentioned due to the structure of the interview. We emphasise that all drivers found from the empirical part can be categorised to one of the two main drivers defined by Hartman and Stafford (1997).

According to Selsky and Parker (2005), although NGOs and businesses address the same environmental issue, they most likely have different perspectives of the problem because of their adverse characteristics. Therefore, researchers suggest in order to create a successful collaboration an organisation must understand the drivers of the collaborating partner. All interviewed NGOs highlighted that it is important to examine the drivers of business for CSC in order to find their intentions. Businesses'



drivers might be negatively or positively perceived from the perspective of the NGOs. Negative drivers include practices like greenwashing whereas positive drivers are businesses' engagement in environmental related issues for example. When businesses do not show strong positive drivers, all NGOs interpret it as a lack of motivation and therefore they do not further develop the relationship for CSC. The identification of drivers is done within the partner search process which varies among the organisation in both, time and method. For example, WWF spent around 10 years negotiating with H&M Group before committing to the collaboration. During this time WWF identified the drivers of H&M and tested their credibility. Naturskyddsforeningen does the same only in a smaller time frame which is three to five years. We argue that it is important to understand each other's drivers, especially in the CSC context where two adversarial organisations want to collaborate. Through the identification of the drivers, compromises might be found in order to define a joint objective. Moreover, we associate the distinction in negotiation time with the available resources of the NGOs.

5.3.3 Compatibility

Research suggests that the compatibility between the two collaborating organisations is an essential factor that determines the success or failure of CSC. Summarised from the research, compatibility might be defined as the alignment of values, objectives, mission, commitment, and organisational structures. This alignment creates a balance between benefit and risk as well as profit and environmental protection. In fact, according to Mironska and Zaborek (2019), trust and the alignment process are essential for the success of CSC because they are related to all kinds of the value creation process. Research further emphasises that information in this regard can be collected within the formation phase as well as from previous actions and interactions. Due to blurred definitions formation phase cannot be exactly defined or categorised. The empirical findings indicate that compatibility is indeed an important factor for the interviewed NGOs when searching for a business partner. As previously mentioned, all NGOs reject to collaborate with businesses that are not compatible with their values. Further, WWF and Naturskyddsforeningen highlight that through adequate identification of the organisational structure, such as business model, finances and size, it is possible to assess the compatibility for this collaboration. Martins-Barata on the contrary, states that businesses have different strengths than NGOs which can be seen as an indicator of compatibility. This information is gathered through the different partner search methods of the NGOs. For example, Naturskyddsforeningen and EDF Europe conduct a screening process where drivers are identified to measure compatibility. This screening process includes a risk assessment which is conducted through the evaluation of previous actions and the assessment of the general perception of the business partner. WWF determines the compatibility through a long-lasting partner search process which consists of a negotiation process, due diligence procedure, as well as sometimes through external agencies. Although all NGOs underline the importance of compatibility, only



Naturskyddsforeningen describes the process of alignment, namely, to align objectives and cultural values. We argue that compatibility is an essential factor for CSC as it indicates the capability to create value without putting one party at a disadvantage. Moreover, that Naturskyddsforeningen and WWF take so much time before starting the collaboration, indicates that the process of alignment is important and takes time.

5.3.4 Resources and Capabilities

The research of Austin (2000a) indicates that the resources and capabilities among NGOs and businesses should be complementary in order to compensate for each other's shortcomings and therefore create a successful CSC. The empirical findings confirm that resources and capabilities must be complementary in the CSC context. Drufva in fact states that the complementarity of resources and capabilities is an important condition for long-term CSC. Martins-Barata argues that the resources and capabilities of each other must be considered in order to create the greatest possible positive impact on the environment. However, the NGOs state that the expected kind of resources and capabilities depend on the kind of collaboration. For EDF and Naturskyddsforeningen, funding is perceived as an essential resource that is expected during collaboration. Furthermore, the empirical finding identifies that communication methods, expertise and knowledge are seen as further capabilities expected by the collaboration. Identifying those resources and capabilities can be done during the partner search process, negotiation process, and other tools like annual reports and media reports. Expertise and knowledge can be identified as the main contribution of all NGOs and depending on the degree of collaboration, the NGO can also further provide other resources. For example, Drufva explains that Naturskyddsforeningen provides a certificate of engagement for smaller collaborations. In terms of communication, Naturskyddsforeningen further helps businesses to communicate with different target groups. EDF provides distinctive scientific-technique expertise, for NGO's unique approach because it is rather market-oriented. WWF provides support for the identification of a company's footprint and how this can be addressed. We comply with the theory of resource complementarity in order to compensate for each sector's weakness. Therefore, through collaboration, the organisations are able to create a unique value in an effective way which they would not be able to create by themselves.

5.3.5 Trust

All interviewed NGOs assess trust as an important factor that is strongly related to CSC. Naturskyddsforeningen defines CSC as the collaboration with people whereby it is important to ensure an adequate level of trust. Furthermore, Martins-Barata (EDF Europe) claims in this regard that the alignment of objectives and cultural values between the organisations is important since they are correlated to trust. Both Naturskyddsforeningen and WWF create an atmosphere that promotes trust by open and honest communication in order to identify differences and address concerns. EDF



Europe has a different approach in this respect than the other two NGOs. This is mainly due to their low level of establishment in the European market and because they experienced a lack of trust because of past actions. EDF Europe is trying to rebuild trust by strengthening its reputation through successful CSC and by being transparent in its operational activities, objectives, and expertise. Furthermore, the findings of the partner search from the literature review as well as from the empirical part indicated that NGOs prefer to engage in CSC within their existing network because they experience a higher level of trust. Atouba (2019) found that high reputation is positively correlated with trust which in turn, enhances communication between the organisations. Like previously mentioned, Mironska and Zaborek (2019) found that trust and the alignment process are correlated to the value creation process in CSC and therefore determine the success or failure of the collaboration. Additionally, they found that the relational factors, namely commitment, alignment, as well as trust are positively correlated towards each other. Trust and complementarity between the organisations are in fact, defined as fundamental success factors by many researchers. We also define trust as a fundamental condition for successful CSC because this enables the organisation to rely on each other and ensures effective collaboration between the two adversarial sectors.



6 Conclusion

In this chapter, we first provide answers to the research questions based on the analysis in chapter 5. It will be structured according to the cases which further present the different internationalisation degrees. After concluding the answers to the research question, we provide theoretical and practical implications. Finally, we present the limitations of this study and discuss the suggestions for future research.

6.1 Answering the Research Question

In order to succeed in CSC, it is important to carefully search and select partners for the collaboration. When organisations internationalise affects their partner search. The partner search is not only affected by the degree of internationalisation but also by the environmental issue that has to be addressed, the motivations for the collaboration, the type of formation as well as the success factors. As the CSC partner selection process of businesses has been investigated in the literature so far, this thesis investigates the partner search and selection process of the NGO perspective. This thesis is designed to answer the research question “*How do environmental NGOs, with different internationalisation degrees, search business partners for CSC?*”

The NGOs in this study have internationalisation degrees which are related to the familiarity when collaborating. For example, a local NGO, which Naturskyddsforeningen is, as a Swedish NGO, mainly focused to collaborate with other Swedish organisations. The regional NGO, EDF Europe, is focusing to collaborate with European businesses and European NGOs. The internationalisation process started by the American parent company where they established the European entity to be closer to the European market. The international NGO, WWF, is close to collaborating partners with their local offices. Although the NGOs collaborate in a more familiar environment, the degree of internationalisation can be observed throughout some steps of the partner search process.

The result of this study showed that NGOs are moving from confronting businesses to collaborating with them. Therefore, the main goal is to use collaboration to address environmental issues, however, the description of the main goal varies among NGOs, which we argue that can be linked to the different internationalisation degrees. Thus, the local NGO strives for better performance and therefore collaborates not only with local big businesses but also small businesses with weaker environmental performance. The regional NGO focuses on the rescue of the environment which is highlighted by their strategy to collaborate with European businesses and European NGOs. Lastly, the international NGO strives for the rescue of the planet, and therefore with their local offices, they attempt to address issues related to the whole planet. Nevertheless, if it is clear that the business partner is not eager to address the environmental issue the collaboration in all cases is dissolved, which is persistent among all the NGOs. Besides the main goal, the aim of raising fund seems to be present among all NGOs, however, differ on the importance. The local and regional



NGOs both have fundraising as one of their central activities, as it should help them to further pursue their goals. The international NGO accepts funding as long it is consistent with their vision and not intended for greenwashing. The findings further show that several forms of CSC can be pursued simultaneously; this however was only found on the international NGO.

The search for partners can be initiated by both parties. The findings suggest a prominence of relying on existing partners, which was argued as the simplest way for collaboration. The international NGO was mostly approached by businesses rather than searching for them. This can be explained by their prominence and good establishment of their brand. Nevertheless, the possibility of finding new partners is mainly through recommendations of the existing network and is campaign-based. Although the search for existing partners seems the most used among the interviewed NGOs, there is no clear tendency to emphasise that the network-reinforcement strategy (searching for existing partners) is generally preferred over the network-broadening strategy (searching for new partners). We conclude that the partner search process is two-sided.

This study showed that identifying what drives businesses for collaboration is also important for NGOs. The main driver is to address environmental issues. This again differs slightly among internationalisation degrees. In general, all NGOs attempt to collaborate with large businesses as this provides a certain degree of impact. Nevertheless, the local NGO also collaborates with smaller businesses as they argue that the impact is bigger among those businesses which are low-performing in addressing the environmental issue. On the other hand, the international NGO further strives to impact the industry through collaboration. Furthermore, other drivers found are compatible with the existing literature of CSC. Businesses strive for expertise, better performance regarding environmental issues, knowledge, and enhancement of their reputation. NGOs are aware of this process and actively try to identify the drivers as it influences their partner search.

The identification of success factors is more or less similar among all NGOs. The importance of being compatible is argued by examining strengths, business models, and finances. When NGOs know what the intention of the business is for the collaboration, the compatibility can be easier assessed. In terms of resources and capabilities, some NGOs actively look for businesses (local and regional NGOs). Further resources and capabilities are identified as communication and expertise which the business can provide for the NGO. The most important success factor is trust. The level of trust is established throughout the search and negotiation process, where it is important to communicate in an open and honest way and to align objectives and organisational cultural values.

Overall, the partner search process of the NGO is not a standardised procedure. Through the literature review, key aspects could be highlighted which can have an



impact on the partner search. These were identified as the focus on the environment, the degree of internationalisation, the type of collaboration, the partner search in or outside the network, the drivers of businesses as well as success factors. The degree of internationalisation of each empirical case did influence the identified key aspects in different ways.

6.2 Theoretical Implication

The partner search and choice for CSC have been so far studied from the firm perspective (Feilhauer and Hahn, 2021). Their research appeals to the so far missing NGO perspective, where a gap was identified. In general, the partner search on the NGO perspective is rather scarce (Atouba, 2019). Furthermore, the literature does not investigate the dependency of internationalisation degree in regard to the partner selection nor partner search. This research addresses the above-mentioned gaps and therefore investigates the partner search of NGOs with different internationalisation degrees. The research contributes to the literature on partner selection by further distinguishing the partner search as well as provides insight into the partner search from the NGO perspective.

This research is based on the existing research on CSC with a special focus on the partner selection process, where the partner search is integrated however not well distinguished. The findings of this thesis showed that the key aspects identified for the partner search are somehow interrelated, which supports the lack of distinguishing from previous studies. Nevertheless, this study suggests that NGO's partner search is influenced on the environmental issue, internationalisation degree, formation, partner search, drivers, and success factors. Furthermore, the partner search was evaluated based on the network-reinforcing and network-broadening strategy which is seen as part of the social network theory. Even though the findings suggest no clear preferences on either one of the strategies, this thesis can contribute to the literature of social network theory.

6.3 Practical Implication

The findings of this research suggest that there is no one right way to search for a partner for CSC. The main objective remains to address environmental issues. When it is visible to the NGO that companies want to engage in addressing and better performing the environmental issues, the likelihood of collaboration is higher. Nevertheless, the reasons for both NGOs and businesses to engage in a collaboration can go beyond the environmental issue. The findings, therefore, suggest that it is important for the NGO to clearly identify the motivation of the potential business partner already in the partner search process.

Furthermore, the partner search is primarily conducted within the existing network as it provides simplicity for future collaboration. Nevertheless, the empirical findings showed that NGOs search for businesses outside their existing network by mainly



asking existing partners for their recommendations. This way, the NGOs find new partners, however, rely on the trustworthy recommendation of their existing network.

Trust is in that context also an important implication for NGOs. The empirical findings suggest that trust is one of the most important success factors for collaboration with businesses. This is established by having an open conversation allowing each other to be critical. The trust can be developed throughout the partner search and negotiation phase, where the findings suggest that this process can take time.

6.4 Limitations and Future Research

This thesis has several limitations which further appeal for future research. First, the cases were constructed to reflect different internationalisation degrees. Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and the limited time available, it could not be assured that the cases correspond to the typical or best practice cases. Nevertheless, the cases could provide an indication of the partner search process given different internationalisation degrees. Future research could aim to find best practice examples with more remarkable features on the internationalisation degrees. This is especially applicable to the regional case, which provides another limitation. The case of EDF Europe is classified as a regional NGO as their activities are in the European region. Still, EDF Europe is a rather new NGO established in the European market which could lead to vague assumptions for the findings of the regional NGO. The findings of this thesis cannot be used for generalisation. The cases cannot represent solely international focus, as two of three cases have a more Swedish perspective, whereas one is an American-based legal entity in the European market. In this regard, more cases should be analysed in different countries to provide an international focus. Secondly, the partner search of the NGO perspective should be investigated based on other qualitative research, preferably longitudinal research. As the empirical findings showed, the partner search is included in the negotiation process which can last between three to ten years. The result of this study reflects more past processes, with past collaboration. It would therefore be interesting to investigate the ongoing process through longitudinal qualitative research. Lastly, this thesis only includes some of the key aspects mentioned in the existing cross-sector literature. There are different definitions for the different key aspects. One example was made by Selsky and Parker (2005) where they highlight that the success factor trust has different definitions. They define that trust in the for-profit sector is more based on a forced contractual exchange whereas trust for the non-profit sector is based on solidarity. Therefore, the partner search process can be further researched based on different key aspects.



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Appendix 1 -List of Contacted NGOs

	NGO	HQ Location	Response	Key words	Internationalisation degree
1	WWF	Sweden	Accepted	Climate, oceans, forests, agriculture and environmental toxins	Global
2	WWF	Switzerland	Declined	Climate, oceans, forests, agriculture and environmental toxins	Global
3	Ceres	USA	n.a.	Carbon asset risk, climate crisis, human rights, water, land use and climate, policy, disclosure, governance	Local
4	WRI	USA	n.a.	Climate, energy, food, forests, oceans, water	Global
5	Carbon Trust	UK	Declined	Carbon emission, climate change	Global
6	Global Action Plan	UK	n.a.	Clean air, post consumerism	Local
7	Global Footprint Network	USA/CH	n.a.	Climate change, sustainable development, biodiversity	Global
8	Earth Island	USA	n.a.	Wilderness, wildlife and ocean, conserve environment	Local
9	NRDC	USA		Climate, energy, food, water, communities, the wild, health	Local with international ties
10	Croplife	Belgium	n.a.	Sustainable agriculture, look after planet	Global
11	Ipieca	UK	n.a.	Climate, nature, people and sustainability	Global
12	WBCSD	Switzerland	n.a.	SDG, circular economy, climate and energy, people, food and agriculture	Asian Region
13	Fauna and Flora International	UK	n.a.	Conservation, environment, species, biodiversity	Global
14	Naturskyddsföreningen	Sweden	Accepted	Climate, food, forest, freshwater, oceans and wildlife	Local with international projects
15	Climate Collaborative	USA	n.a.	Agriculture, energy efficiency, food-waste, forest, renewable energy, carbon emission	Local
16	EDF Europe	UK/Netherlands	Accepted	Climate, energy, ecosystem, oceans and health	Europe Region
17	EWG	USA	Declined	Food, chemicals, farming, energy, regional issues, water	Local
18	Biovision	Switzerland	Declined	Human health, animal health, plant health and environmental health, SDGs	Global
19	IICA	Belgium	n.a.	Chemicals, energy and climate, plastic, sustainability	Global
20	Green cross	Switzerland	n.a.	Environmental security and sustainability, water, smart energy	Global
21	CarboCare Innolab	Hong Kong	n.a.	Carbon emission, climate justice, resource conservation	Local
22	AFED	Beirut	n.a.	Water, air pollution, contamination	Arab Region
23	Eurowildlife	Czech Republic	n.a.	Climate change and wildlife	Europe Region
24	Rainforest alliance	USA	n.a.	Forest, livelihoods, climate, human rights	Regional (Asia, Africa, America)
25	Restore the earth	USA	n.a.	Forest and wetland ecosystem, SDGs	Local
26	Earthwatch	USA	n.a.	Biodiversity, sustainability, natural resources	Global
27	Conservation International	USA	n.a.	Land, water, climate change, biodiversity, oceans,	Global
28	Nature conservancy	USA	n.a.	Biodiversity, climate change, land and water, food	Global



Appendix 2 – Interview Invitation

21. April 2021

Dear Sir or Madam,

Our names are Carolina Köppel and Martin Stazic, we are business students at Linnæus University in Sweden. For our thesis, we are studying the partner selection process of NGOs for collaborations with businesses.

To gain insights of the partner selection process, we want to conduct expert interviews with NGOs, which are active in such collaborations, and we believe that collaborating with you would be very beneficial and valuable for our study.

It would be an honour to have you as one of our valuable interview partners. We look forward to hearing from you and thank you in advance for your time and consideration.

Best regards,

Carolina Köppel, ca223jn@student.lnu.se

Martin Stazic, ms226kr@student.lnu.se

Reminder

Dear Sir or Madam,

We are referring to our previous email regarding the interview invitation.

As we have not received any response from you yet, we kindly want to ask if you would be available for an interview with us. The interview is about your partner selection process for collaborating with businesses.

Gaining you as an interview partner would add a great value to our thesis. We thank you in advance for a response by 03.05.21 since we are on a tight schedule.

We wish you a pleasant rest of the week and we are looking forward to hearing from you soon.

Best regards,

Carolina Köppel, ca223jn@student.lnu.se

Martin Stazic, ms226kr@student.lnu.se



Participant information

Research on NGO's partner search when collaborating with businesses

This bachelor thesis research investigates the partner search of NGOs for cross-sector collaborations (collaboration with businesses), particularly whether it is searched in the existing network or new networks as well as the compatibility of businesses for collaboration with regard to resources, capabilities and the relational factor trust.

Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. You have the right to withdraw at any time, if at any point you wish to no longer take part in the research.

All the information you give will be anonymous and confidential and only used for the indicated research. The thesis will be published on the platform DiVA (Digital Vetenskapliga Arkivet). DiVA is an institutional source for research publications and student theses from 49 universities and research institutions.

If you agree, the discussion will be recorded using an audio device. The information recorded will be anonymised and transcribed and the recordings will be destroyed in a proper manner afterwards. Furthermore, the data will be used to not harm you individually and secure anonymity. The transcript can be sent back to you for verification.

If you have any questions or if you are unsure about anything mentioned, do not hesitate to contact us.

We thank you for your cooperation and trust.

Best regards,

Carolina Ellen Alves Nunes Köppel (ca223jn@student.lnu.se)

Martin Stazic (ms226kr@student.lnu.se)

Supervisor: Rosalina Torres (Rosalina.torres@lnu.se)

Institution: Linnaeus University, Kalmar



Appendix 3 – Interview Guideline

Interview Guideline

Information about the interviewee and company

1. Could you state your name, age and position in the company?
2. What kind of work experience do you have?
3. Could you describe the company shortly and state the company's mission?

Environmental focus

4. What is the main goal when pursuing a collaboration with businesses? (Environmental focus)
5. What is your contribution in this collaboration? (e.g., help environmental business model)

International scope

6. How does the proximity to your partner influence your partner search? (International or local partners?)
7. To what extent does national environmental policies affect your partner search?

Formation of the collaboration

8. In terms of intensity of collaboration, what kind of collaboration do you aim and why? (e.g., Philanthropic, project based, long-term collaboration etc.)
9. How does this intensity affect your partner search?

Partner search

10. Who initiates the collaboration?
11. Where do you find your partners? (e.g., existing networks, new networks)
12. Related to question 8, why do you choose this strategy?
13. If you choose to collaborate with new businesses (non-existing collaboration) where do you find them and how do you approach them?

Drivers for collaboration

14. How can you identify the motivation of your partner to collaborate with you?
15. To which extent does these motivations affect your partner search?
16. How can you make yourself attractive for collaborations?



Compatibility

17. How do you assess the compatibility of businesses for collaboration?
18. How does the organisational structure of the business partner influence your partner search?

Resource and capabilities

19. What resources and capabilities do you expect from your partner?
20. Where do you obtain this information and to what extent do they influence your partner search?

Relational factor

21. Trust is considered as an important factor for successful collaboration. How do you ensure an adequate level of trust within the collaboration?



Appendix 4 – Interview Analysis

	Naturskyddsforeningen	EDF Europe	WWF
General			
Age	47	51	48
Position in the company	Head of Marketing and fundraising	Senior European Union climate policy director	Key account manager for Partnership with H&M
Work experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Primarily in non-profit sector (+15 years), Before in the for-profit sector - As consultant for NGOs in interaction with business - Currently only involved in the beginning of the collaboration (first pitch) - Funds: private person 90 %, businesses 10 % 	Before EDF, I was running my own consultancy for over 15 years as consultant working with businesses and industries	Working for five years as key account manager Before working as consultant for sustainability
NGO's mission	<p>Broad environmental member-based organisation Mainly in Sweden but also have international collaboration in Southern countries in the globe Vision is a sustainable future Working with lobbying, activating members and donors, private persons and businesses</p>	<p>The mission is to safeguard the world's ecosystem Largest membership-based organisation in the US Now accepting government money and focus of funding from the business sector</p>	<p>Save the planet by having members who support the goal. WWF has local offices in 100 countries with different kind of collaboration 20 % stays in Sweden and 80 % goes around the world They save the world by having different experts specialised in different fields. They collaborate with the government, decision-makers and businesses. They mitigate climate change, improve biodiversity and making water cleaner → looking for the big picture</p>
Environment			
Main goal for collaboration	<p>End goal is to have better performance in addressing environmental issues. Company should perform better in sustainability issues, they drive the sector or legislation Team up with companies to influence political decision making <i>"For us it is both to make businesses perform better and the fundraising drivers, as we collect money from businesses"</i></p>	<p>Fundraising as central activity They have strategic access of fundraising approach due to prominence Focus on environment but collaborating with businesses</p>	<p>Collaboration is the key word (neither Greenpeace nor Naturskyddsforeningen) Being positive, not just against, looking for solutions and opportunities When collaborating with businesses it is to show what they can achieve Target big companies to have big impact, push them and the industry (example H&M)</p>
NGO contribution	<p>Small partnership we give some kind of sign of engagement or communication kit (for customers and staff) Expertise and help to develop their business Help with communication (how to with different target groups)</p>	<p>Great scientific basis in-house High quality technical-scientific knowledge teams Provide solutions to its business partners</p>	<p>With experts and their guidance Identify where the company has the biggest impact and work in those areas (large footprint) Company wants to change and be sustainable (H&M example)</p>



Internationalisation degree			
Proximity to partner	As Swedish national entity, it is easier to work with other Swedish entities Our input also integrates internationally	EDF is present in USA, EDF Europe for Europe with focus on shipping and aviation emissions Collaboration in a more active approach, for business a technical component and approaching leading businesses in Europe	International and local partners by communicating via headquarters (example google)
National environmental policies	Swedish legislation plays a role Legislation which we can lean on or we want to change	Big influence since EDF Europe is accepting government funding Government with good funding are those with best environmental policies	It affects who they work with, and the opportunity arises
Partner search			
Initiation	50 / 50	Both ways When funding is available, NGO approaches them. Actions are limited to the funding. The other party can also contact the NGO in a later stage	Emerging naturally but they are mostly approaching WWF
Where do you find your partners	We have a network (discussion of 3-5 years) <i>When we do have a campaign and we don't have partners within the existing network we also look for new partners and reach out further outside of the existing network</i>	Mostly existing network because of small team in Europe (collaborating with best possible partner) Having a market-based approach makes it easier to find new partners (example Madrid)	Depending as there is so many collaborations in different levels More existing networks but sometimes also new network. This is due to the level of trust required in the collaboration
New partners	Existing network Referrals (asking people if they have ideas) Mostly over phone or email	Naturally emerges from scenario (market-based approach)	Approach us instead of WWF approaching them
Making yourself attractive	Good brand /well-known brand Personal relation (understand the business partner)	Knowledge and technical expertise make them attractive Business partners receive reputational benefits and higher credibility	Most well-known brands Having discussion before the collaboration to evaluate where the expertise is needed
Formation			
Collaboration type and impact on search	Balance efficiency or impact. Both philanthropic (example of 1 mio crowns) and also close collaboration for having a big impact (mostly done when actively searching)	Most desired is philanthropic and long-term (less money and time needed for alternative) Constrained to the level of co-funding (ENGOS of Europe have little co-funding) Hoping for harmonic relationship to address environmental issues	Not philanthropic but long-term and close collaboration Don't say no to money as long it is not greenwashing (example H&M)



Drivers			
Motivations of business partners	General understanding (9-10 known drivers) e.g., improve brand, hire people <i>Then we try to think for that company what driver could be most important for them.</i>	Motivations are clear; positive or negative Goal is to make environmentally friendly transformational change	Dialogue of almost 10 years before entering collaboration to identify motivations Doing due diligence (blacklist and external sources)
Impact on partner search	<i>it is hard to find those drivers, we might not reach to the phone to contact them because they might not be that motivated. So, we won't go for collaboration as they don't have any drivers.</i>	If it is clear that it is bad (greenwashing, bad intention) it will be rejected	-
Extra Question: Co-branding	On campaign basis by not going too close with own brand (example rädda bina) Screen partners for conditions to see if they are trustworthy and to make sure that it adds value	-	Don't use logo until they prove that they are on the right track (extra sign of motivation) Businesses want to have more actions and that we start mor projects. We have to decline a lot. They need to be patient.
Compatibility			
Assessment	Screening of partners with set of questions (e.g., finance) Risk management if important to see what impacts they had (trustworthiness) Not only for big players but on low performing <i>Because in our policy and in our strategy, we can actually have the most impact on a low-performing business rather than on high-performing business. That's because we can change or move them from one place to another.</i>	Replicate the strengths of our organisation (different strength than we do) Important the competencies do not overlap in terms of collaboration (fill the gap)	<i>It comes sort of naturally. We look for compatibility when we want to achieve outcomes that show who can influence this area or market.</i>
Organisational structure	Looking for business that can mirror our organisational structure (example ICA)	<i>EDF Europe does not spend lot resources in understanding the organisational chart of the partner</i>	Don't work with small businesses (supported in other ways) It is important to have big impact Small business can follow a model (example H&M)
Resources and capabilities			
Expectations form business partner	Primarily funding, Communication methods (example Arla with rädda bina), their expertise and knowledge for our development It is important that it is complementary	Must be complementary, expectation depends on the project (example Madrid)	Having an agreement and defining the expectation and right resources Checking in if the expectations have been fulfilled (red, green, yellow scheme) This helps to identify if collaboration can be further pursued
Where do you obtain information	Sources like google, annual and sustainability reports and other publicities	Information through existing networks by attending meetings	During the negotiation process (example H&M)



Relational factor			
Ensure trust level	<p>It's about people, creating an atmosphere, consider cultural differences in organisational culture, aligning objectives and cultural values</p> <p><i>We try to put some energy into create an agreement on how we should meet, how often we should meet, if we should take notes in the meetings, who should convene the meeting. It is to create a structure and as a part of that structure to create an atmosphere and a way of performing the meetings that suits them and suits us.</i></p>	<p>EDF is not very well known in Europe (rich kind of the block, credits of other projects)</p> <p>Lack of trust during collaborations</p> <p>Ensure trust by being transparent about operational activities, goals and expertise</p>	<p>A lot of talking, being honest and being open on both sides</p> <p>Not to say something that is against WWF's vision</p> <p>Important to keep in mind that both parties are from different areas (example H&M)</p> <p>Dedicating a full-time job for the collaboration (example team)</p>