

From Confrontation to Collaboration

A Case Study on Arla Foods and NGO-MNE Collaboration on CSR

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Abstract

This research is centered around the largely debated, evolving phenomenon of NGO-MNE collaboration on CSR. The study further focuses on the European dairy industry through studying NGOs in relation to global dairy cooperative Arla Foods. The study's key objective is to explore the influencing capacity of NGOs on MNE's CSR initiatives through collaborative engagement methods. Such influence is studied through focus on three themes formulating the study's research questions, namely the type, length and value of collaboration affecting influence. Such a focus aims to contribute to the current research gap on influence from the NGO viewpoint, across contexts and cases. The theoretical approach is formulated around the field of CSR, more specifically NGO-MNE collaboration and further influence within collaboration.

Moreover the study follows a qualitative approach, where structured phone interviews were conducted with altogether 10 representatives from 9 NGOs as well as 2 representatives from Arla. The sampling method of purposive sampling was used where NGOs were selected from Arla's main markets: Sweden, Denmark, Germany and the UK. Qualitative content analysis of the interviews is further used in order to uncover the NGO views in-depth.

Finally the key findings uncover the effects of type, length and value on influence. Higher involvement types tend to lead to higher influencing capacity due to frequency of contact and relationship length building trust, networks and involving resources. With higher, longer involvement the potential benefits (informational, reputational, financial or network-based) seem to increase competitive advantage and further influencing potential. Hence according to the study NGO influence on MNEs tends to be based on the value obtained from collaboration, which may differ based on type and further change over time.

Although such findings are common, there is difference between NGO and MNE viewpoints and the presence of discrepancies. Such cases show how influence and value may be achieved even with shorter, lower involvement types such as dialogue. Overall the findings refute the pessimistic scholarly arguments of NGOs' inability to function as influencers, while they support the optimistic assertion of potential NGO influence following the stakeholder approach. Here the power and legitimacy of NGOs may be increased through the studied themes. Such findings provide fruitful insights for both scholars, furthering possible theory development around the themes' connectedness, and practitioners, strengthening collaboration and increasing value in the future.

Keywords CSR, NGO, MNE, NGO-MNE Collaboration, NGO influence, Dairy industry

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Tiivistelmä

Tämä tutkielma keskittyy kansalaisjärjestöjen ja monikansallisten yritysten yhteistyöhön yritys vastuullisuuden (CSR) saralla, mikä on ilmiönä laajan väittelyn keskiössä. Tutkimus paneutuu eurooppalaiseen meijeriteollisuuden tutkimalla kansainvälisen meijeriosuuskunnan Arla Foodsin ja kansalaisjärjestöjen välistä kanssakäymistä. Päätaivoitteena on lisätä ymmärrystä siitä, miten kansalaisjärjestöt pystyvät vaikuttamaan monikansallisten yritysten CSR strategiaan yhteistyön kautta. Kyseiseen vaikutusvaltaan pureudutaan tutkimalla kolmea pääteemaa, joihin lukeutuvat yhteistyön muoto, pituus sekä arvo. Tutkimuskysymykset koostuvat kyseisistä teemoista, joiden avulla pyritään täydentämään puutetta tutkimuskentässä erityisesti koskien kansalaisjärjestöjen näkökulmaa näiden vaikutusvallasta eri konteksteissa. Tutkimuksen viitekehys keskittyy CSR:n tutkimuskenttään sekä erityisesti yhteistyöhön ja vaikutusvaltaan kansalaisjärjestöjen ja yritysten välillä.

Tutkimus toteutettiin laadullisena tutkimuksena, missä käytettiin strukturoituja puhelinhaastatteluja. Haastatteluihin osallistui 10 edustajaa yhdeksästä kansalaisjärjestöstä sekä kaksi yritysedustajaa Arlalta. Haastateltavat olivat Ruotsista, Tanskasta, Saksasta sekä Iso-Britanniasta. Laadullista sisällönanalyysyä käytetään haastattelujen tutkimiseen.

Lopulta tutkimuksen tulokset osoittavat miten yhteistyön muoto, pituus ja arvo voivat vaikuttaa kansalaisjärjestöjen vaikutusvaltaan. Kansalaisjärjestöillä joilla on enemmän kanssakäymistä yrityksen kanssa on useimmiten myös enemmän vaikutusvaltaa. Tämä johtuu muun muassa yhteistyön tiheyden sekä pituuden kasvattamasta luottamuksesta, verkostoista sekä siihen liittyvistä resursseista. Yhteistyön muoto nähdään myös vaikuttavan arvoon, sillä mitä enemmän kanssakäymistä pitemmällä aikavälillä on, sitä suurempi yhteistyön arvo vaikuttaisi olevan. Arvo voidaan mitata muun muassa informatiivisena, maineena, rahallisena sekä verkostoitumisena, joiden kautta yritys voi kasvattaa kilpailukyvykkyytään. Kyseinen potentiaalinen kilpailuetu kasvattaa kansalaisjärjestöjen mahdollista vaikutusvaltaa. Näin ollen vaikutusvalta voi määräytyä yhteistyön arvon perusteella. Arvo voi edelleen muuttua yhteistyömuodon sekä ajan myötä.

Tulosten ollessa yleisiä tutkittujen kansalaisjärjestöjen kesken, suurimmat eroavaisuudet näkyvät järjestö- ja yritysedustajien erilaisissa mielipiteissä. Havaittavissa on myös poikkeavia tuloksia, jotka viittaavat mahdolliseen vaikutusvaltaan myös vähemmällä kanssakäymisellä, lyhyemmällä aikavälillä muun muassa dialogin kautta. Yleisesti tulokset kumoavat väitteet kansalaisjärjestöjen kykenemättömyydestä vaikuttaa yrityksiin, kun taas ne vahvistavat sidosryhmä teorian (stakeholder theory) mukaista optimistista näkemystä. Kyseisen näkemyksen mukaan vaikutusvalta kasvaa vallan ja laillisuuden ohella. Kyseiset tulokset osoittautuvat antoisaksi niin akateemisessa kuin ammatillisessa mielessä. Tutkimus on merkittävä sekä teorian kehittämisen että yritysmaailmassa yhteistyön vahvistamisen kannalta.

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1. INTRODUCTION

During the past few decades multinational enterprises (MNEs) have been increasingly facing boycotts, civil lawsuits and illegitimacy claims externally as well as retention issues internally due to poor corporate citizenship. With rising public demand for corporate social responsibility (CSR) around the globe, MNEs have shifted from reactive strategies of “name and shame” to more proactive ones of “know and show”, sparking the phenomenon of NGO-MNE collaboration over confrontation (Carroll & Shabana, 2010, pp. 85-89; Wernick, 2011, p. 49; Yaziji, 2004, p. 111; Arla, Andersen). Despite the high scholarly interest in the phenomenon, the research is currently lacking depth and limited largely to context-bound, one-sided views of MNEs.

This is where my research study comes into play, where I focus on the non-governmental organizations’ (NGOs) perspective of collaboration with and influence on MNEs. More specifically my study is placed in the European dairy industry focusing on nine NGOs in Sweden, Denmark, Germany and the UK collaborating with a single MNE, namely Arla Foods (to be referred to as Arla). In addition to the research being executed for thesis purposes, it will further contribute to Arla’s wider materiality analysis. Hence the research process involves cooperation with representatives from Arla’s CSR department in both Sweden and Denmark.

Finally the paper is divided into eight subsequent chapters with separated sections within them as follows. The introducing chapter begins by outlining the phenomenon in focus, the research problem and questions. The second chapter then digs deeper into previous research on the topic of NGO-MNE collaboration as well as the dairy industry in general. After this I move on to outlining the research method in terms of data collection and analysis in chapter three. Finally chapter four explores the key findings of my thesis followed by a discussion on the linkage between theory and data in chapter five in order to address the research questions proposed in the beginning. The paper is then completed with concluding remarks as well as bibliography and appendices.

1.1. Background

One of the 21st century's megatrends, namely the rise in concern for both environmental and social sustainability in the business sphere has pushed companies to develop their CSR initiatives. This has been in order to both remain competitive and avoid sanctions for irresponsibility (Perrot, 2015, pp. 41-42). Despite such a push, companies are currently facing the challenge of successfully applying and integrating their CSR strategy in order to meet the demands from their numerous stakeholder groups including consumers, suppliers, governments and non-governmental organizations, just to name a few (Yuan, Bao & Verbeke, 2011, pp. 75-76; Bosch-Badia, Montllor-Serrats & Tarrazon, 2013, pp. 11-13).

In order for their CSR initiatives to properly address demand, companies increasingly rely on their key stakeholders for collaboration. This brings me to the phenomenon of study, NGO-MNE collaboration, strengthening and developing the CSR initiatives of companies. Although many other factors co-influence MNE's CSR initiatives and NGO collaboration is only one potential way of influence, the subject's limitations in previous research raises its importance for exploration. Generally such NGO-MNE collaboration is viewed as bringing higher social benefits in addition to financial profit. These benefits are obtained by engagement accelerating innovation, offering technical expertise, decreasing risk of conflict and increasing legitimacy (Yaziji, 2004, p. 114). Moreover whether NGOs and MNEs decide to collaborate depends largely on the fit between values and strategic concerns of the two parties. Such collaboration can take the form of low to high involvement, exemplified through philanthropy to CSR integration and innovation, which will be further described in chapter 2 (Riutta, 2015, p. 38; Holmes & Smart, 2009, p. 395).

Overall in the 21st century rising stakeholder pressure on MNEs to enhance sustainable business practices has sparked the trend of NGO-MNE engagement. This has been coupled with the rise in numbers and scope of NGOs. Such a global trend has shifted discussion from the traditional shareholder approach to the stakeholder approach to CSR, further discussed in chapter 2. This has opened up the discussion on wider stakeholder cooperation, strongly involving the external stakeholder group of NGOs in MNE decision-making (Riutta, 2015, pp. 4-5; Yaziji, 2004, p. 111; Bosch-Badia, Montllor-Serrats & Tarrazon, 2013, pp. 11-12).

1.2. Motivation

NGO-MNE engagement has currently received high interest in the field of CSR. The field however is saturated with disputes on the nature, process and outcomes of collaboration. Furthermore a rather one-sided, MNE-focused view on the relationship is prevalent. Hence in present literature the NGO point of view is overlooked and MNE subjectivity has resulted in the relationship being framed overly positively (Riutta, 2015, p. 7; Kourula & Halme, 2008, pp. 561-562).

This brings me to the contribution of my study, which will be further outlined in section 2.4. As the phenomenon is new, disputed and underrepresented, I aim to fill this gap by studying the NGO perspectives in particular. By focusing on a case company in the sustainably controversial industry of dairy production, with high carbon, water, natural resource and waste intensity (WRAP; WWF UK, Vijn), I believe Arla demonstrates an excellent case for in-depth understanding of such a complex phenomenon through a qualitative approach. However by studying multiple NGOs in relation to Arla, comparison is allowed enhancing the relevance of my study. Finally as the research is conducted for company purposes, it is also relevant in practice helping the company assess their CSR concern areas, practices and collaboration.

1.3. Research questions and objectives

The purpose of this study is to understand how NGO-MNE collaboration takes place in practice. More specifically I will focus on how the currently unexplored viewpoint of NGOs is in effect. This I do by focusing on specific aspects in the collaboration including the benefits obtained and the type and length of the relationship affecting influence. Although there are other factors affecting influence, the selected ones were based on the gap in previous research outlined in section 2.4 and narrowed down based on the Master's thesis scope. The objectives of my study allow for more practical understanding of collaboration than previous research has provided. Ultimately for such in-depth, NGO-sided understanding I believe focusing on numerous NGOs in relation to one MNE is appropriate. Furthermore the MNE viewpoints are incorporated for comparison purposes, to obtain more in-depth understanding of the NGO views in relation to Arla.

In order to reach my objectives I have formulated the following research questions, which my study aims at addressing. Despite having initial questions in place in the beginning of the research process, the formulation of the questions has been modified throughout the process. As according to Eriksson and Kovalainen (2008, p. 129) this is common for inductive research such as mine, which aims at formulating theory from data. Finally my questions are worded to suit a qualitative approach of in-depth understanding of a phenomenon by rather answering “how” than “why” (Bryman, 2012, pp. 470-473).

Main research question

How do NGOs influence MNE’s CSR initiatives?

In order to better address the research question above, I have formulated three sub questions, which will help structure the data collection and analysis process.

Sub research questions

1. How does type of collaboration affect the influence NGOs have on MNEs?
2. Hoes does length of collaboration affect the influence NGOs have on MNEs?
3. What is the value generated from NGOs influencing MNEs?

As will be further discussed in the following chapter, the sub questions are formulated based on literature to help answer the main research question. Firstly according to scholarly views the type of collaboration, which evidently develops over time, is assumed to affect the influencing capacity of NGOs on MNEs. This is seen for instance in moving from simple dialogue to deeper partnerships. Secondly the influencing value to both MNEs and NGOs is relevant since it is assumed to affect influence, where with higher benefits there is a tendency of higher potential influence on MNEs. Finally, the relevance of critically examining influence from the NGO viewpoint is key in order to fully understand the true influencing capacity from the currently unexposed side. This may further counteract possible green washing, which accounts for MNEs’ deceptive image and reputation building through CSR (Skouloudis, Evangelinos & Malesios, 2013, pp. 96-97; Yaziji, 2004, pp. 110-114; Halme & Laurila, 2008, p. 336). The following chapter moves on to exploring the current field of research and further outlining the current gap to be filled.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter aims at giving an overview of the existing research on the field of CSR and more specifically NGO-MNE collaboration. A structured funnel approach is applied where I begin by outlining the common definitions and the discussion on the field of CSR. I then move on to exploring the current phenomenon of NGO-MNE collaboration and more specifically the themes of type, length and value affecting influence. This is in order to further outline the gap in existing literature. Finally I will apply the theoretical views on collaboration to the dairy industry where I provide background information on both the industry and case company Arla.

2.1. Definitions

For clarity purposes I begin this section by providing definitions of the commonly used terms in this paper, including *CSR*, *NGO*, *MNE*, *stakeholder*, *stakeholder engagement*, *collaboration*, *NGO-MNE collaboration* and *NGO influence*. Despite the varying usage of the terms and the existence of synonyms, the specified terms were selected due to their high commonality in the field of research.

CSR

Firstly, although various definitions of *corporate social responsibility (CSR)* exist, one of the most common ones is outlined by the European Commission as “the responsibility of enterprises for their impacts on society.” Here enterprises “integrate social, environmental, ethical, human rights and consumer concerns into their business operations and core strategy” (European Commission, 2017). This is in order to “act in the interests of legitimate organisational stakeholders” (Greenwood, 2007, p. 315). Here companies are viewed as fulfilling activities beyond that of a market economy; simple economic and legal responsibility, as they also attend to broader societal and environmental needs (Carroll, 1991, pp. 40-42; Barnett, 2007, pp. 795-796; Banerjee, 2008, p. 60).

Despite the prevalence of various competing concepts such as “corporate citizenship, business ethics, stakeholder management and sustainability” (Carroll & Shabana, 2010, p. 89), CSR is generally viewed as the most accepted and widely used concept (Carroll & Shabana, 2010, p. 89; Schwartz & Carroll, 2008, p. 156). Furthermore CSR initiatives, as represented in the main research question, are viewed as the activities and policies of

companies fulfilling these needs and can take both voluntary or regulated form (Halme & Laurila, 2008, pp. 326-327).

NGO

The term *NGO* on the other hand is commonly defined by the United Nations as a “non-profit, voluntary citizens’ group, which is organized on a local, national or international level” (Skouloudis, Evangelinos & Malesios, 2013, p. 96). However the concept can be further operationalized into different levels as depicted by de Bakker, den Hond and van der Plas (2002, p. 9). It may be viewed firstly as civil society in terms of operating between the private and public sector, secondly as drivers of social movement in terms of initiating and organizing movements or finally as collective actors coming together to challenge and work towards common societal outcomes. In my work I believe each three aspects is relevant in terms of a group of actors collectively working together to influence in my case MNEs in the dairy industry towards sustainable, responsible practices.

Furthermore NGOs’ roles include providing expertise, analysis, monitoring and implementation of international agreements in order to work towards social and/or environmental objectives and interests (Wernick, 2011, p. 15). As their mission does not derive from fulfilling shareholders’ financial concerns, NGOs are driven by different concerns and commonly align with different values than “for-profit” organizations such as MNEs (Holmes & Smart, 2009, p. 395; Baur & Schmitz, 2011, pp. 10-11; Cho, 2006, pp. 34-35). Moreover NGOs apply pressure on companies through different means such as direct influence through collaboration or by mobilizing public opinion and confrontation (Wernick 2011, p. 15).

MNE

MNEs are commonly defined as “geographically dispersed and goal-disparate organizations” (Bartlett & Ghoshal 1990, p. 603) where operations are spread in two or more countries. Through the rise in globalization, international trade and technological advancements businesses are increasingly expanding abroad. This has resulted in the sharp rise in number of MNEs in the 21st century. As depicted previously MNEs functioning as “for-profit” organizations makes them accountable to their direct shareholders, while increasingly to wider stakeholders as well according to the stakeholder approach explored further in the next section (Halme & Laurila, 2008, pp. 325, 335; Baur & Schmitz, 2011,

pp. 10-11).

Stakeholder

A commonly accepted definition of a stakeholder is that by Freeman (1984, p. 46) according to whom a stakeholder is “any group or individual who can affect or is affected by the achievement of the organization’s objectives” (Wernick, 2011, p. 21; Buchholz & Rosenthal, 2005, pp. 137-138; Stafford, Polonsky & Hartman, 1998, p. 6). Such achievement of objectives may be seen through the “actions, decision, policies, practices, or goals of the organization” (Carroll, 1996, p. 74). Hence it can be said that stakeholders have “some kind of stake in what the business does” while “the basic identity of the firm is defined independent of, and separate from, its stakeholders” (Buchholz & Rosenthal, 2005, pp. 137-138).

A general mapping of stakeholders may include consumers, customers, suppliers, competitors, employees, governments, shareholders, NGOs and the society in general (Buchholz & Rosenthal, 2005, pp. 137-138). Classifications of different sorts exist, for instance the division of stakeholders into internal and external, narrow and broad, owners and non-owners or rather primary and secondary ones (Decarolis, 2015, pp. 17, 20; Skouloudis, Evangelinos & Malesios, 2013, p. 108; Greenwood, 2007, p. 320). The widely acknowledged categorization is that of stakeholder theory with the division into primary and secondary actors. Here primary stakeholders are identified as “having something at risk on the firm” and “vital to the survival and success of the organization” (Greenwood, 2007, p. 320 cited Freeman, 1984). Secondary stakeholders are however not necessarily vital although they also “can affect or is affected by the corporation” (Greenwood, 2007, p. 320 cited Freeman, 1984). NGOs are generally classified as secondary stakeholders together with other “civil society organisations, public authorities and academic institutions” (Goodman, Korsunova & Halme, 2017, p. 7). The group of primary stakeholders includes actors “such as shareholders, employees and suppliers” (Goodman, Korsunova & Halme, 2017, p. 7).

Stakeholder engagement

Companies’ *stakeholder engagement* is broadly defined as “corporate responsibility in action” (Greenwood, 2007, p. 315). Here stakeholders’ viewpoints are integrated into the

companies' decision-making and they may be included in joint projects (Decarolis, 2015, pp. 17, 20; Skouloudis, Evangelinos & Malesios, 2013, p. 108; Greenwood, 2007, p. 315). Engagement can be divided into high and low, in terms of the number and quality of the engagement (Greenwood, 2007, pp. 321-322, Riutta, 2015, p. 10). The so-called quality or form of engagement can vary from projects and “multi-stakeholder initiatives, partnerships and platforms” (Goodman, Korsunova & Halme, 2017, pp. 1-5) to “sharing information, dialoguing” (Trapp, 2014, pp. 43-44) and “embracing corporate citizenship initiatives, including voluntary codes of conduct, private certification schemes, and philanthropic support” (Wernick, 2011, p. 44).

Views on the purpose of engagement differ, as according to stakeholder theory engagement is “about managing potential conflict stemming from divergent interests” (Goodman, Korsunova & Halme, 2017, p. 5 cited Frooman, 1999, p. 193). On the other hand for managerialist scholars stakeholder engagement is a means for company risk management, while for critical theorists it is rather as a means for control. Finally responsibility and accountability theories regard engagement as “a mechanism by which organisational accountability and responsibility towards stakeholders can be acquitted” (Greenwood, 2007, p. 318). In order to get a broad understanding of engagement in the case of Arla and selected NGOs, I use a combination of these approaches. This is since the approaches are not “mutually exclusive” and engagement can “perform several of these functions depending on the particular circumstance even within a single organisation” (Greenwood, 2007, p. 318, de Bakker, den Hond & van der Plas, 2002, p. 5).

Finally in the field of CSR NGO-MNE relationships can be characterized by different conceptualizations of “interaction, engagement and collaboration with stakeholders” (Trapp, 2014, pp. 43-44). Hence it is significant to note that in my study the term engagement is approached as any interaction between the two parties and hence it is viewed as broader than collaboration.

Collaboration

Collaboration in general terms may be referred to when “partners who see different aspects of a problem can constructively explore their differences and search for solutions” (Stafford, Polonsky & Hartman, 1998, p. 3). Here the co-operational nature of the

relationship and the aim for each party's views to be "taken into account in decision-making" (Greenwood, 2007, p. 318) brings affront the positive form of engagement. Furthermore collaboration may advance "collaborative innovation and creative activities" and it is a means to "advance a shared vision" (Greenwood, 2007, p. 318).

In the business sphere this is commonly related to organizational arrangements in order to conduct exchanges between the parties in order to bring benefits such as resources, capabilities and further returns (Holmes & Smart, 2009, pp. 394-395). Finally it is important to note that collaboration is seen as having an "evolving nature" (Greenwood, 2007, p. 8) and hence a longitudinal study of collaboration length and its effect on type is significant, further explored in section 2.3. In contrast with the co-operational aims of collaboration, confrontation on the other hand involves action such as boycotts, protests, civil lawsuits and illegitimacy accusations resulting from conflicting visions (Carroll & Shabana, 2010, p. 89; Wernick, 2011, p. 49; Greenwood, 2007, p. 318).

NGO-MNE collaboration

NGO-MNE collaboration then is depicted as its name shows, a form of collaboration between a single or multiple NGO(s) and MNE(s). As a form of stakeholder engagement, there are various possible interaction types in place. These range from for instance sponsorship, dialogue and consultation, direct partnerships, workshops and volunteering as defined previously on engagement. Despite such general definitions there are disputes over the nature of collaboration and the effects, further described in section 2.4 (Baur & Schmitz, 2011, pp. 10-11; Riutta, 2015, p. 10; Holmes & Smart, 2009, p. 39; Goodman, Korsunova & Halme, 2017, p. 8).

NGO influence

Finally *influence* in general can be depicted as when "one actor provides information to another one with the intention to alter the latter's actions" (de Bakker, den Hond & van der Plas, 2002, p. 10 cited Knoke, 1994). Another depiction is when "A brings about that B makes decisions or changes in its behaviour such that the activities of B become more congruent with the interests or aims of A than otherwise would have been the case" (de Bakker, den Hond & van der Plas, 2002, p. 10 cited Dahl, 1957). In the case of NGOs

influencing MNEs, there are various aspects affecting the influencing capacity of NGOs including the availability of resources, power and legitimacy (Greenwood, 2007, p. 318).

Furthermore there are varying views on whether stakeholders including NGOs should be viewed as influencing MNEs or rather claiming. Claimant stakeholders are seen as having high legitimacy while low power or urgency, whereas influencers having the opposite (Greenwood, 2007, p. 321). As “NGOs tend to enjoy high levels of legitimacy” (Wernick, 2011, p. 2) they are seen to belong to the first group. Hence according to this notion they have low influencing capacity compared to primary stakeholders. This is also since “managers do pay attention to more powerful stakeholders” namely the primary ones (Greenwood, 2007, p. 321) as “secondary stakeholders have no contractual bond to the firms they seek to influence, little resource leverage, and are less vital to organizational survival” (Wernick, 2011, p. 22). However others argue contrarily as will be depicted later. Next I move on to exploring previous research on the field of corporate social responsibility, which will help to ground my study on NGO-MNE collaboration in the wider field.

2.2. Field of corporate social responsibility

My study is placed in the field of CSR, which has evolved through three distinct phases. The first phase was initiated by Friedman’s (1970) shareholder theory in the 1960s. Here CSR is viewed as destroying value, financially non-beneficial and takes the form of philanthropy, namely initiatives external to core business strategy such as charity and employee voluntarism (Halme & Laurila, 2008, p. 329; Greenwood, 2001, p. 29; Carroll & Shabana 2010, p. 85). Here business responsibility and accountability are seen as solely to the shareholders with the aim of maximizing shareholder profits. It is argued that philanthropy, most commonly in terms of charity donations, is executed simply to minimize reputational harm or increase market opportunity (Garriga & Mele, 2004, p. 133; Bosch-Badia, Montllor-Serrats & Tarrazon, 2013, p. 12).

The turn of the 21st century however initiated a push towards recognizing interest groups outside of shareholders, where companies became liable to a wider range of actors. This marked the second phase in the 2000s centered on Freeman’s stakeholder theory, regarded as “the cornerstone of the business case for CSR” (Barnett, 2007, p. 796). Contrarily to the

shareholder approach here it is argued that CSR creates, rather than destroys, value for a wider range of stakeholders. Other actors apart from shareholders, including the external community and NGOs, employees, customers, suppliers and consumers became acknowledged as part of corporate governance. Hence instead of separating business from ethics as in the first phase, here CSR alignment with business strategy is seen as potentially creating value and further competitive advantage (Bosch-Badia, Montllor-Serrats & Tarrazon, 2013, p. 13; Porter & Kramer, 2006, pp. 2, 10; Crane et al., 2009, p. 10).

Through such a stakeholder approach MNEs are to strategically manage their stakeholders' interests and be influenced by groups external to simple shareholders. This tends to lead to MNEs balancing a broad range of viewpoints in decision-making and strategy development (de Bakker, den Hond & van der Plas, 2002, p. 8; Frooman 1999, p. 191). However as depicted earlier this can cause diverging interests and lead to the division between stakeholders according to their power, legitimacy and resources bringing influencing capacity (Wernick, 2011, p. 22). This has further led to the critique on secondary stakeholders such as NGOs being able to influence MNEs in practice, which accounts for the purpose of my study.

Moreover current developments in stakeholder theory have moved companies to increase their focus on CSR and closer stakeholder engagement. This has led the move from simple philanthropic initiatives to higher involvement by CSR integration and innovation. In CSR integration existing operations are improved in terms of responsibility by for instance ensuring high product quality and safety, enabling equality in employee wages and supplier support, where benefits include reputation, cost-savings and risk reduction. In CSR innovation new responsible business models are created in order to address existing societal or environmental problems. Here benefits are to be win-win; bringing profits to the company and the society at large by for instance creating new products or services following eco-efficient business models (Halme & Laurila, 2008, pp. 329-331).

Freeman's perspective is largely acknowledged today with further developments by scholars such Porter and Kramer following Freeman's footsteps in their shared value approach. As its name says, the approach focuses on MNEs creating value outside the simple shareholder concerns, but rather creating "shared" value and benefits for the wider society. In terms of NGOs and MNEs then, such an approach focuses on the possible joint

goals achieved by collaboration. Furthermore this approach depicts CSR as a source of competitive advantage and innovation. This is due to markets being defined not solely by economic needs but also societal needs. By a shared value approach businesses in the short term may be pressured for profits while in the long term they may create more sustainable value chains bringing sustained profitability. Today we are witnessing an increasing number of studies on the phenomenon of a positive relationship between corporate responsibility and financial performance (Halme & Laurila, 2008, p. 325; Porter & Kramer, 2006, pp. 2, 10; Pelosa & Falkenberg, 2009, p. 95).

This has led to scholars advocating for CSR innovation and integration into core business strategy across the whole organization, rather than looser means of philanthropy. Such a perspective is largely common in today's business landscape where consumer needs are increasingly defined as following responsible, sustainable values. A current trend on the move from low to high involvement; philanthropy to innovation, brings in higher stakeholder engagement involving NGOs as according to numerous scholars this furthers dynamic capabilities fostering innovation (Decarolis, 2015, p. 1; Porter & Kramer, 2006, pp. 2, 10; Crane et al., 2009, p. 10; Riutta, 2015, p. 38). Given the traditional stakeholder approach's wide acknowledgement in current literature, my study is largely based on it. Furthermore with current developments in the shared value approach for instance, I aim to account for this novel take on Freeman's approach in my analysis as well.

Ultimately despite the approach's wide acceptance, it is significant to acknowledge existing criticisms. Stakeholder theory has been criticized for the point that simple engagement with stakeholders does not necessarily translate to a company's responsibility. It is hence debated whether stakeholder engagement is "the appropriate manner in which business should fulfill its responsibility towards society" (Greenwood, 2007, p. 322). Furthermore proponents of the shareholder approach argue for the single responsibility of companies, which is to their owners or shareholders. According to this approach the responsibility over social issues should rather fall on the government and legislation (Carroll & Shabana, 2010, p. 88).

Other arguments focus on the lack of expertise in the social sphere for managers to manage and further the financial and competitive pitfalls of CSR initiatives, which however have been refuted by others (Barnett, 2007, p. 796; Carroll and Shabana 2010, p. 88). Moreover

the stakeholder approach is seen as furthering “an involuntary redistribution of wealth, from shareholders, as rightful owners of the corporation, to others in society who have no rightful claim” (Barnett, 2007, p. 796). Furthermore newer approaches deriving from stakeholder theory, such as that of Porter and Kramer’s, have been further criticized for ignoring the evident tensions between purely economic and social goals. This may create false perceptions of the ease of obtaining win-win situations for both the company and wider society (Crane et al., 2014, pp. 134-136).

However proponents on the other hand argue for the available resources and expertise of MNEs and the possibility to lay off governmental regulation. Corporate responsibility may be viewed as the better alternative for proactivity over reactivity, where costs are minimized by reacting to possible social problems before they emerge. Finally as argued previously the general public seems to increasingly require responsible orientation from companies, which brings CSR on the forefront in terms of responding to market demand (Carroll & Shabana, 2010 p. 88). Furthermore it may be argued that “CSR contributes to the bottom line via its favorable influence on the firm’s relationships” (Barnett, 2007, p. 796). Hence according to the stakeholder approach “CSR is, in fact, in firms’ best interests” (Barnett, 2007, p. 796). Having explored the widely acknowledged approaches in the field, I now dig deeper into the phenomenon of focus namely NGO-MNE collaboration within the field of CSR.

2.3. NGO-MNE collaboration

Evolution of collaboration

The path from the 20th century shareholder theory to the early 21st century stakeholder theory and further shared value approach has simultaneously affected the scholarly view on business accountability to external stakeholders such as NGOs. Since the 1980s NGOs have increasingly stabilized their presence in the business field as they have quadrupled in numbers and increased in influencing power (from simple watchdogs to pivotal actors furthering social awareness and solidarity). This is commonly due to the rise in societal and environmental concerns (Yaziji, 2004, p. 111; Skouloudis, Evangelinos & Malesios, 2013, p. 96). Simultaneously during the past two decades MNEs have gained power at the expense of nation-states, which has also increased their liability and wider responsibility to

the society. This has furthered the intensification of CSR concerns, due to initially governmental regulations and later companies' self-regulation given rise in competition and market demand (Halme & Laurila, 2008, pp. 325, 335).

Here social and environmental issues have increasingly become strategic concerns for companies pushing them to incorporate CSR into their business strategy. In order to better do this companies are pushed to manage innovation, engaging wider stakeholders and further collaborating with diverse NGOs. Such a trend of increasing presence of NGOs and increasing CSR concerns of MNEs has brought the two actor groups into closer collaboration in the 21st century. Such collaboration has been in order to better fulfill their individual and common needs and wishes (Yaziji, 2004, p. 111; Holmes & Smart, 2009, p. 395). However there is an ongoing debate on whether the secondary stakeholder group of NGOs is, through collaboration, able to influence MNEs in reality. This brings my study to the forefront. In order to research this I will next explore selected themes, in terms of the research questions laid out previously; collaboration type, length, value and overall influence, which will further guide the analysis.

2.3.1. Type of collaboration

On NGO-MNE collaboration there are various views on how the type of collaboration affects the influence NGOs may have on MNEs. As outlined previously, collaboration can vary from high to low involvement. The simplest, low involvement forms may include simple dialogue between the parties, philanthropy and simple codes of conduct. In philanthropic relations simple, infrequent donations are made in terms of money or services without recurring communication or engagement between the parties. This form is generally seen as representing the ideals of the shareholder approach in the late 20th century (Riutta, 2015, pp. 10, 34-35; Baur & Schmitz, 2011, pp. 10-11; Kourula & Halme, 2008, p. 562; Wernick, 2011, p. 44). Furthermore dialogue is generally viewed as "exchanging ideas and prospect outlooks of the business or the NGO's cause" (Halme & Laurila, 2008, p. 336). Hence due to the lack of tangible resources exchanged, dialogue is similarly viewed as a low involvement form.

However despite the norm, frequent dialogue between MNEs and NGOs may lead to higher involvement where "the dialogue transforms into a systematic forum for changing

ideas” (Halme & Laurila, 2008, p. 336) or “multi-stakeholder platforms of dialogue” (Skouloudis, Evangelinos & Malesios, 2013, p. 108). Such types may allow for higher influencing capacity as they are “requiring additional resources from the MNE and NGO thus making it a part of the higher involvement stages” (Halme & Laurila, 2008, p. 336). In addition to viewing dialogue as the exchange of views, it may also be approached as a “social reporting process” and thus “a means by which the stakeholders can participate in the activities of the company” (Halme & Laurila, 2008, p. 336). Here the influencing capacity may be measured. Finally although dialogue generally arises from the collaborative aims of the two parties, in some cases it can also be initiated through confrontation. Here “confrontation and potential conflict might also lead to actual collaboration [with] some type of dialogue that created an opportunity for potential or actual collaboration” (Halme & Laurila, 2008, p. 336). Hence despite the general nature of the low involvement types, they may generate higher influence in cases where the aim is to avoid conflict for instance.

However a move towards higher involvement and more transactional and further integrated approaches is evident in the 21st century following the stakeholder approach. Here NGO-MNE collaboration is advanced from simple one-way philanthropy to two-way transactions including sponsorship, licensing, marketing activities, workshops or partnerships. Furthermore this form of integration involves resources and commitment from both parties through initiatives such as consultative services, providing expertise or partnering on specific projects. Finally, as according to the shared value approach a final dimension is represented by CR innovation. Here NGOs and MNE’s may collaborate in order to develop new business models or launch new services or products to the market (Riutta, 2015, pp. 10, 34-35; Baur & Schmitz, 2011, pp. 10-11; Kourula & Halme, 2008, p. 562).

Furthermore as depicted by Skouloudis, Evangelinos and Malesios (2013, p. 96) the influencing power of NGOs has increased over time from “adversarial or community watchdog roles and name-and-shame activities” to “pivotal actors of powerful institutions”. This has resulted from the developments from confrontation to collaboration and further down the line from lower to higher level involvement by increasingly offering tangible and intangible resources to MNEs (Skouloudis, Evangelinos & Malesios, 2013, p. 96). Such developments are supported by de Bakker, den Hond & van der Plas according

to who compared to confrontation “collaboration increases the likelihood of stakeholder influence over the firm” (de Bakker, den Hond & van der Plas, 2002, p. 15). Furthermore NGOs can “get more direct influence on a firm by developing or maintaining closer contacts” following the argument of higher involvement leading to higher influence (de Bakker, den Hond & van der Plas, 2002, p. 15). Influencing capacity may be further associated with the controlling of critical resources or networks for an MNE’s operational efficiency. Hence NGOs’ influence on other actors, such as primary stakeholders and commonly consumers may allow for indirect influence on MNEs (Frooman, 1999, p. 193; Skouloudis, Evangelinos & Malesios, 2013, p. 96).

Despite the laying out of specific types of collaboration in theory, in practice as argued by scholars “the exact nature of that relationship is often debated” (de Bakker, den Hond & van der Plas, 2002, pp. 6-7). This is furthered by arguments on the unconventionality of the relationship as it “involves formal cooperation between traditional adversaries” (Stafford, Polonsky & Hartman, 1998, p. 6). However others argue for the move from such an “adversarial relationship -- into a new and more complex relationship that often involves elements of collaboration, dialogue and partnership” (Wernick, 2011, p. 21).

Examining the influencing capacity more specifically, as depicted by Halme and Laurila (2008, p. 336) both the financial and societal outcomes of companies “differ depending on the type of CR action conducted”. According to the authors lower involvement initiatives such as “philanthropy seems to have the most modest societal benefits” (2008, p. 336) compared to higher involvement. These views are supported by the shared value approach where potential influence and furthermore mutual benefit does arise from higher involvement (Porter & Kramer, 2006, pp. 2, 10). However critics argue that “strategic CR (here CR integration and CR innovation) tends to be perceived as more self-interested and thus less beneficial” (Halme & Laurila, 2008, p. 336). Given the debated nature, scholars contend for the relevance of studies such as mine where it is key to ““look behind the CR label” and investigate the kinds of outcomes produced by each type of CR” (Halme & Laurila, 2008, p. 336).

Finally the reasons for collaboration have been categorized in varying ways by scholars. Trapp (2014) distinguishes between informational, persuasive and dialogue strategies. Here the type of collaboration comes into play as it much depends on the purpose, where

the dialogue strategy “refers to the active involvement of stakeholders in the organization's decision-making” (Trapp, 2014, p. 43). The persuasive strategy on the other hand “refers to an organization's attempts to change stakeholders’ knowledge, attitudes or behaviors in a way that is beneficial for the company” (Trapp, 2014, p. 43). Finally the informational one is focused on simply “informing stakeholders about something” (Trapp, 2014, p. 43). Here the first strategy includes highest involvement, while the third one the least.

Although in a single MNE there usually exists “a pre-dominant action-type – [still] hardly any contemporary company relies on one type of CSR actions only” (Halme & Laurila, 2008, p. 336). Hence it is supposed companies will have a combination of types with different influencing capacity. The divergence in type is assumed to be caused by the length and quality of the relationship between MNEs and NGOs, further explored in the next section. Here NGO size, membership and shape may further affect influence (Skouloudis, Evangelinos & Malesios, 2013, p. 96).

2.3.2. Length of collaboration

As previously discussed, collaboration is regarded as having an “evolving nature” where in general there is a move from lower to higher involvement and simultaneously an increase in influencing capacity (Goodman, Korsunova & Halme, 2017, p. 8; de Bakker, den Hond & van der Plas, 2002, p. 15). By “developing or maintaining closer contacts -- an NGO could try to get more direct influence” which evidently develops over time (de Bakker, den Hond & van der Plas, 2002, p. 15). Similarly by “gaining an understanding of the level of salience a firm attached to their mutual relationship could strengthen the NGO’s influence over that firm” (de Bakker, den Hond & van der Plas, 2002, pp. 18-20). Hence collaboration length can be viewed as affecting type and furthermore influencing capacity. This argument is further supported by the depiction in the previous section on for instance dialogue “transforming” or being “sustained” over time and developing higher influence or alternatively developing from confrontation to collaboration (Halme & Laurila, 2008, p. 336; Goodman, Korsunova & Halme, 2017, p. 8).

Furthermore according to Greenwood “the more an organisation engages with its stakeholders, the more accountable and responsible it is likely to be towards these stakeholders” (2007, p. 316). This furthers the argument that the duration of the

relationship builds trust and accountability between the parties, furthering the potential for influence. Moreover as the views on financial and societal profitability of CSR are mainstreaming, MNEs increasingly move from one- to two-way transactions (Riutta, 2015, pp. 10, 34-35; Baur & Schmitz, 2011, pp. 10-11; Kourula & Halme, 2008, p. 562).

Finally in addition to the duration of the relationship between a NGO and MNE, also the length of operation and expansion within the NGO may affect influencing capacity. As further argued by Riutta (2015, pp. 39-40) the length of operation, size and reputation affect the selection of NGOs for collaboration, as for resource limitations MNEs must select which ones to collaborate with. As depicted by de Bakker, den Hond and van der Plas' study "if an NGO grows through addition, the likelihood of stakeholder influence over the firm could increase" (2002, p. 14). Hence there seems to be a relationship between size and influence. This evidently links to developments over time, as organizations generally grow in size over time. Such growth may also increase reputation and further bring power and legitimacy, which may also affect influencing capacity explored next (de Bakker, den Hond & van der Plas, 2002, pp. 14-15).

2.3.3. Value of collaboration

Moving on to the third theme of value, or in other words benefits obtained from NGO-MNE collaboration, there are various scholarly views on the topic. Value creation in NGO-MNE relations is commonly depicted as "when business meets society's needs by producing goods and services in an efficient manner while avoiding unnecessary negative externalities" (Schwartz & Carroll, 2008, p. 168). Overall value can be discussed in terms of benefits to MNEs and NGOs.

Firstly on the MNE side the benefits of collaboration range from more pessimistic to optimistic views. From the pessimistic end of the spectrum MNE's are seen as simply benefitting by avoiding costly conflict by increasing legitimacy. NGOs are not seen as controlling critical resources for MNEs' operational efficiency and hence they are seen primarily as a means to avoid reputational harm. Conflict between the two parties has primarily resulted from conflicting value systems and missions on fulfilling shareholders' financial needs or alternatively wider societal needs. These viewpoints date back to the 1990s marked by striking confrontation between NGOs and MNEs where the former

commonly used boycotts and campaigns in order to challenge irresponsible companies marked by scandals in areas such as human and labor rights, animal welfare and environmental degradation (Yaziji, 2004, pp. 110-114; Wadham, 2009, p. 60; Skouloudis, Evangelinos & Malesios, 2013, p. 96; Carroll & Shabana 2010, p. 92).

However other scholars such as Wernick (2011, p. 44) point that there is “no evidence that such a strategy [collaboration] reduces the risk of being targeted by activists” and hence points out to other benefits in line with the optimistic approach. Here collaboration may further enhance MNEs’ competitive advantage by broadening networks, providing resources, expertise, innovation as well as legitimacy through a “more robust “social license” to operate” (Wernick, 2011, p. 44) and awareness of market needs. (Yaziji, 2004, pp. 110-114; Wadham, 2009, p. 60; Skouloudis, Evangelinos & Malesios, 2013, p. 96; Carroll & Shabana 2010, p. 92) Furthermore compared to confrontation collaboration is seen as bringing higher benefits as “contesting takes time, it may be expensive and often is little productive” (Riutta, 2015, pp. 39-40).

Currently the benefits to NGOs are broadly defined as a means to facilitate civil society interests and social impact, gain funding and technical resources and access to economic actors in order to mitigate CSR challenges (Wernick, 2011, p. 21). Moreover collaboration may “accelerate innovation” in the social sphere (Goodman, Korsunova & Halme, 2017, p. 10). Hence the collaborative relationship is viewed as bringing mutual benefit to both parties. However more pragmatic scholars argue that such collaboration rarely results in societal developments due to the limited power and leverage of NGOs over MNEs (Skouloudis, Evangelinos & Malesios, 2013, p. 96; Wadham, 2009, p. 60). Such lack in impact together with ideological and reputational issues may lead NGOs to avoid MNE collaboration if they “regard co-operation as dangerous for an NGO to keep to its ideals” (de Bakker, den Hond & van der Plas, 2002, p. 15).

However as a counter argument scholars such as Frooman propose that ““it is the dependence of firms on environmental actors (i.e., external stakeholders) for resources that gives those actors leverage over a firm.”” (Frooman, 1999, p. 195) Hence following the RBV, by offering resources such as expertise in terms of market, legal or scientific knowledge NGOs are able to increase their power. Such intangible knowledge based resources in addition to connectivity through networks may “enhance firms’ ability to

outperform competitors” and hence the vitality of NGOs increases in the eyes of the MNEs (de Bakker, den Hond & van der Plas, 2002, p. 19).

Finally examining more closely the potential benefits associated with each type of collaboration outlined previously, it is generally acknowledged that higher-level involvement tends to bring higher financial and social value (Halme & Laurila, 2008 p. 335). This conception is based on the assumption that as higher involvement, associated with CSR integration or innovation, is closely linked with the MNE’s core business it would bring benefits directly associated with company operations. Hence it is viewed that “financial and societal outcomes of CR Integration are more substantial than those of Philanthropy” (Halme & Laurila, 2008, p. 335). Similarly scholars suggest that “benefits of collaboration increase as the intensity of engagement increases over a period of time” (Holmes & Smart, 2009, p. 397 cited Austin, 2000). This is due to long-term higher involvement creating deeper resource, competence and knowledge transfer between the parties. Additionally the influencing capacity goes in line with the higher involvement and higher benefits accrued explored as the final theme (Halme & Laurila, 2008, p. 335; Holmes & Smart, 2009, p. 397 cited Austin, 2000; Riutta, 2015, pp. 10, 34-35; Baur & Schmitz, 2011, pp. 10-11; Kourula & Halme, 2008, p. 562).

2.3.4. Influence in collaboration

As depicted earlier, according to widely acknowledged scholars Mitchell, Agle and Wood the influence stakeholders have on MNEs depends on their power, legitimacy and urgency (Mitchell, Agle & Wood, 1997, pp. 853-855; Wernick, 2011, p. 1; Oates, 2013, p. 52). Here stakeholder power is commonly defined “in terms of network structure and position” and in consideration of “size in terms of budget and staff” (Frooman, 1999, pp. 191-193). Commonly primary stakeholders are viewed as “influencer stakeholders” while secondary are not (Greenwood, 2007, pp. 316-321). This is due to their lack of resource leverage, contractual bonds or vitality for MNE survival as depicted earlier (Wernick, 2011, p. 22).

However proponents of NGO influence argue for their influence on performance in the bottom line as “managers not only pay attention to these secondary stakeholders, they often meet their demands” (Wernick, 2011, pp. 1, 22-23). Here the reason for influence is commonly “to minimize the firm’s negative impact on their own interests or on some

perceived social good” (de Bakker, den Hond & van der Plas, 2002, pp. 7-8). Moreover the success of influence seems to depend on various factors. These include firstly the availability of resources (de Bakker, den Hond & van der Plas, 2002, p. 10) and networking capability with other stakeholders and media (Wernick, 2011, pp. 22-23). Secondly the dependence on the NGO (through possession of legitimacy and urgency) and potential benefits accrued either socially or economically (Oates, 2013, p. 52; Stafford, Polonsky & Hartman, 1998, p. 3). Thirdly the possible reciprocity or a shared, compatible vision (Greenwood, 2007, p. 321; Stafford, Polonsky & Hartman, 1998, p. 3).

Moreover the highest scholarly assertions on influence success are centered on the RBV and network views. Firstly the network view of relationships has lead scholars to study influence not based on single relationships but rather as networks affecting each other, which has increased the potential influencing capacity of NGOs (Wernick, 2011, pp. 22-23). Hence MNEs increasingly “respond, rather, to the interaction of multiple influences from the entire stakeholder set” (de Bakker, den Hond & van der Plas, 2002, p. 7). Secondly according to the RBV expertise, reputation, financial resources and facilities affect NGOs’ capacity to influence MNEs (de Bakker, den Hond & van der Plas, 2002, p. 10). Here NGOs may offer both “topical or substantial expertise” on their area of focus as well as “strategic expertise” in terms of business implications (de Bakker, den Hond & van der Plas, 2002, p. 10).

Finally NGOs are deemed to develop specific influence strategies. There are various scholarly categorizations, where a traditional one is laid out by Frooman according to whom there exists “usage” and “withholding strategies” in terms of either direct or indirect influence (1999, pp. 201-202). A withholding strategy implies the withholding or withdrawal of significant resources to the MNE. A usage strategy on the other hand applies the continued supply of resources although with specific conditions in place. Furthermore the level of dependence of the MNE on the NGO affects which strategy is used and whether it is done directly or indirectly. With low interdependence, an indirect withholding strategy through for instance other stakeholders tends to be used. With high interdependence on the other hand, a direct usage strategy is used given the close connection to the welfare of the MNE (Frooman, 1991, pp. 200-202).

However various novel categorizations exist including that of de Bakker, den Hond and

van der Plas outlining “conflict strategies, growth strategies and co-operational strategies” (2002, pp. 10-12). Here conflict strategies are rather for confrontation than collaboration including acts of protests or lobbying. Such a strategy seems to be applied when there is “a large gap between the current, contested behavior of the firm and the desired behavior” (de Bakker, den Hond & van der Plas, 2002, p. 12). Growth strategies on the other hand apply the logic of size of operations and networks affecting power and reputation and further influence as depicted earlier. Finally co-operational strategies apply the “developing or maintaining closer contacts” in order to get “more direct influence on a firm” (de Bakker, den Hond & van der Plas, 2002, p. 12). This again goes in line with the arguments of length of collaboration affecting type and further influence.

To conclude, by studying wide scholarly assertions on each theme and their possible connections it may be assumed that each studied theme has an effect on the influencing capacity of NGOs on MNEs. Bringing together theoretical viewpoints explored previously, overall NGO influence on MNEs may be regarded as based on collaboration value, which may differ based on type and change over time. However it is important to keep in mind the narrow scope of the scholarly views applied in this research, excluding other possible aspects affecting influence. For my study’s purpose I will apply the theoretical viewpoints from each theme to guide the analysis, which are further summarized in the following section.

2.3.5. Synthesis of theory

In order to allow for theoretical clarity in the analysis, I have summarized the key scholarly assertions around each theme in the following table.

Table 1: Synthesis of theory on NGO-MNE collaboration

<p>Type of collaboration</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaboration tends to bring higher influence than confrontation • Potential development from confrontation to collaboration through dialogue • Level of involvement based on the tangible resources exchanged • Low involvement types include dialogue and philanthropy • High involvement types include projects and partnerships • Low involvement has potential to develop, from simple
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	<p>dialogue to platforms</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Higher involvement tends to sustain higher influencing capacity • Dialogue, persuasive and informational strategies of involvement
Length of collaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evolving nature of collaboration: low to high involvement over time • Higher influence over time based on closer contact, trust, salience and accountability • Possible development from confrontation to collaboration over time • Length of operation, size and further reputation of NGO may affect influence
Value of collaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaboration over confrontation for time, money, productivity considerations • MNE benefits include reputation, avoiding conflict, resources, networks, expertise, innovation • NGO benefits include social impact, innovation, funding, technical resources • Higher involvement seems to sustain higher financial and social benefits • In a longer relationship the benefits are accrued over a longer time period • Higher value may involve higher influence
Influence in collaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Influencing capacity dependent on financial and knowledge resources, power, legitimacy, reputation, shared vision, potential benefits, networks • Power in terms of networks, size, financial resources • Low influencing capacity compared to primary stakeholders according to claimant - influencer division (high legitimacy, low resource or power leverage) • Influencing strategies range from usage and withholding strategies to conflict, growth and co-operational ones • Overall influence may be based on value from collaboration differing based on type and changing over time

2.4. Current gap in literature

As depicted in the literature review so far, the nature of NGO-MNE collaboration is rather debated and currently lacking depth due to the newness of the phenomenon. This is where my study comes into play, as the overarching aim of my research is to contribute to the current lack of research on the NGO side of the relationship. As will be depicted in this section, there are various gaps to be filled in the field. Firstly according to Halme and Laurila (2008, p. 326), Skouloudis, Evangelinos & Malesios (2013, p. 95) and Frooman (1999, pp. 191-192) the current literature is saturated with managerial perspectives on collaboration. Here insights on the type of collaboration, its effectiveness and benefits from the NGO side are significantly underrepresented while they are commonly “viewed largely from the firm’s vantage point” (Frooman, 1999, pp. 191-192). This is since the value of CSR is often measured in terms of value to MNEs, which creates unbalance and inequality of parties in the relationship. This evidently creates further challenges on how to effectively collaborate in practice as depicted by Yaziji (2004, pp. 110-114). Hence one should “investigate the kinds of outcomes produced by each type of CR” (Halme & Laurila, 2008, p. 336) in terms of outcomes for both parties.

Secondly there is much debate on the actual influencing role of NGOs in shaping MNEs’ CSR initiatives in practice as “the mechanisms by which these groups [NGOs] exert their influence remain poorly understood” (Wernick, 2011, p. 13). Furthermore scholars argue for the current lack of “any systematic attempt to treat stakeholder influence strategies in the broadest sense - that is, as phenomena that can be categorized and built into a descriptive model” (Frooman, 1999, pp. 191-192). Therefore according to scholars “it would be interesting to study the influence strategies that NGO’s employ in such collaborative approaches” and “to really test this effectiveness” (de Bakker, den Hond & van der Plas, 2002, pp. 21-22; Skouloudis, Evangelinos & Malesios, 2013, pp. 96- 97).

Thirdly scholars argue that the unbalanced relationship creates incentives to frame the collaboration in an overly positive manner from the MNE side, commonly “the more powerful party” (Greenwood, 2007, p. 318). This limits the reliability and validity of research, which would benefit from further study on the NGO side (Riutta, 2015, p. 7, Kourula & Halme, 2008, pp. 561-562; Greenwood, 2007, p. 318). This is furthered by

Greenwood according to whom “the notion of stakeholder engagement is ripe for further exploration” (2007, p. 318).

Fourthly examining the existing studies it is evident that they are saturated by single case studies examining the phenomenon in single countries. Hence there is lack of research variety in terms of context-, sector- and organization-wise (Riutta, 2015, p. 7; Halme & Laurila, 2008, p. 336; Goodman, Korsunova & Halme, 2017, p. 8). Thus according to Skouloudis, Evangelinos and Malesios “comparative studies of larger samples in diverse institutional environments and qualitative research would be particularly welcome in order to address the issue of NGOs’ posture toward CSR” (2013, p. 108). This is linked to Halme and Laurila’s (2008, p. 336) assertion for a need of comparison between the outcomes produced by different types of engagement and Decarolis’ (2015, p. 2) argument for a lack of research on collaboration developments over time. Overall as depicted by Greenwood “the engagement of stakeholders is an under-theorized area”, which calls for studies especially on “the attributes of the relationship between organisations and stakeholders” (Greenwood, 2007, p. 318).

My study aims at addressing each of the four aspects in the current literature gap. The first aspect is addressed by focusing specifically on the NGO perspective on engagement and benefits by studying the views of 9 selected NGOs (main research question, sub question 3). The second and third ones I attend by addressing the questions of influence and reporting on influence from the NGO viewpoint (main research question). Finally the fourth aspect I address by studying the phenomenon of NGO-MNE collaboration from the viewpoint of several NGOs from four different contexts (Sweden, Denmark, Germany, UK) and sectors (ranging from nature conservation to health care). Finally through comparison of the NGO viewpoints I aim to study different types of engagement over time (sub questions 1 and 2). By addressing each of these aspects in studying 9 NGO relations with a single MNE in a rather controversial industry CSR-wise, I believe my study merits of high value for both current and future research. In order to dig deeper into the industry and company in focus, I now move on to outlining how CSR is positioned in the diary industry.

2.5. Dairy industry and Arla Foods

Moving on to the specific industry in focus, the dairy industry was selected due to its rather negative image in regards to environmental and social effect. Within the industry Arla was selected given its pioneer position in terms of CSR. Overall due to the 21st century's continued population growth, income increase, urbanization and westernization, there is a growing demand for food and dairy production. Despite the current increase of 2 % in production per annum since year 2008, in order to manage the high global population growth, the rise in production should increase by 70 % by year 2050 in order to fully satisfy the demand. Global demand for dairy products is no longer driven by solely Western countries but increasingly by China and India as well. According to recent statistics around 270 million dairy cows are used currently in the production of milk (WWF, 2017a; Augustin et al., 2013, p. 2; Giménez & Shattuck, 2011, pp. 110-115; Oosterveer & Sonnenfeld, 2012, pp. 1-3).

Such increased demand and furthermore production is creating various harmful effects on the environment. However the scale of these effects largely depends on the sustainable practices of the dairy and feed producers. The most substantial environmental effects include firstly greenhouse gas emissions from dairy cows and their manure. Secondly water and soil resource degradation from poor handling of fertilizer and manure. Finally there is the harm to and loss of ecological areas including forests, wetlands and prairies due to conversion to agricultural land. Furthermore according to German Animal Protection Federation representative the dairy industry is saturated with “very severe animal welfare problems” with for instance male calves unsuitable for milk production. In order to react to and mitigate the future risks of dairy farming, it is vital for dairy companies to pursue sustainable business practices (WWF, 2017a; Augustin et al., 2013, p. 2; Perrott, 2015, pp. 41-51).

Moreover on social sustainability, the security of dairy farmers is threatened due to the industry's volatility and the worsening of price policies (German Animal Protection Federation). Events such as China's reduced dairy imports and Russia's trade embargo in 2014 as well as fluctuating dairy-free trends have decreased global trade in dairy up to 2017. Hence dairy companies currently face difficulties in keeping the business running due to unprofitability (Johnsson-Sederholm & Du, 2016, pp. 3-6). Arla being a farmer-

owned cooperative, the company has had to cut prices paid to farmers during the past years. Despite the challenges, since its establishment in 1915 Sweden through various mergers, including that Danish dairy company MD Foods in 2000, Arla has continued to expand internationally. With 12,000 owners in seven countries in Europe, operations in 38, production in 17 and products sold in over 100 countries the company continues to aim at converting highest possible profits to their farmers while remaining profitable. They currently have three global brands namely Arla, Lurpak and Castello with a total annual revenue of 9,6 billion euros in 2016. The company continues to be the world's fourth biggest dairy company in terms of milk intake whereas sixth largest in terms of turnover (Arla Foods, 2016a, pp. 73-77; Arla Foods, 2014, pp. 5-6, 18; Bellamy & Bogdan, 2016, pp. 1-8).

Examining their CSR initiatives, the company is largely focusing on their current Good Growth 2020 strategy. This covers four areas: responsibility (in terms of labor rights, fraud/bribery elimination, sourcing), health and nutrition, sustainable dairy production (animal welfare, water and energy, climate impact, waste and recycling) and responsible relations (external partners, human rights). Arla's operations are guided by their code of conduct first published in 2008 while adhering to various global guiding principles such as the UN Global Compact, OECD Guidelines for MNEs and UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (Arla Foods, 2016b, pp. 7-9; Arla Foods, 2016a, pp. 73-77; Arla Foods, 2014, p. 10; Bellamy & Bogdan, 2016, pp. 1-8).

Through the company's key CSR milestones of for instance decreasing their climate impact by 12.4 % since 2005 and ensuring 98 % of all production takes place in GFSI (global food safety initiative) certified sites, the company has achieved a position of a pioneer in responsible business practices in the industry. Furthermore many stakeholders "regard Arla as a frontrunner" (Danish Society for Nature Conservation) compared to competitors. In terms of their CSR the key goals of the Good Growth strategy are to increase production while decreasing emissions simultaneously by 25 % till 2020. They also aim to decrease water usage and food waste (zero-waste to landfill in 60 % of production sites) and increasingly switch to renewable energy sources and increase transportation efficiency (less fuel consumption). Arla is currently the world's biggest organic milk producer and has a reputation of maintaining high animal welfare and good relations throughout their supply chain. Finally in terms of collaboration with NGOs Arla

has a long history of collaborating with numerous NGOs especially in their core markets Sweden, Denmark, Germany and the UK. The NGOs' focus areas range from social to environmental responsibility further outlined in section 3.2 (Arla Foods, 2016b, pp. 7-9; Arla Foods, 2016a, pp. 73-77).

Finally Arla's pioneer position in CSR is generally based on their past efforts on CSR, adherence to various global guiding principles, achieved recognition, commitment to and collaboration with external stakeholders and finally their future Good Growth strategy as previously outlined. The reason for selecting such a pioneer company is for the importance in understanding how pioneering companies excel in their CSR initiatives in order for further progress in the future. I will be focusing on how this can be bettered through NGO collaboration, which for Arla is quite common.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Research approach

Moving on to the research method, as depicted previously my study will take a qualitative approach where my research method is a single case study. The selection of a qualitative approach is due to the study's scope, which is to understand the meanings behind discourses around a rather debated, new phenomenon of NGO-MNE collaboration on CSR, which benefits from in-depth analysis as depicted by Bryman (2012, pp. 32-35) and Goodman, Korsunova and Halme (2017, p. 5). The qualitative tradition is deemed suitable for such focus on construction of meaning and understanding different perceptions on CSR, since as depicted by Silverman (2001, p. 29) in studying such social construction of phenomena, the quantitative approach is not applicable. This is due to its focus on explaining causality rather than understanding perceptions and attached meanings in the qualitative approach. This latter approach is also visible through the research questions outlined in chapter 1, aiming at understanding rather than explaining through "how" rather than "why" questions as aligned with Bryman (2012, p. 35).

Moreover on the philosophical assumptions of my research, I apply a subjectivist view to ontology, namely constructionism. This I believe is the best approach for my research problem as the phenomenon of NGO-MNE collaboration is constantly developing through changing views on regulations, measurements and MNE strategies. Furthermore I take a subjective epistemological position of interpretivism. Here reality is perceived as socially constructed, where the researcher is incorporated into constructing meaning. For studies on CSR this is significant as its conceptualization may be seen as context and time bound (Farquhar, 2012, pp. 19-20; Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008, pp. 13-14).

Ultimately in regards to the relationship between theory and research by following the tradition of interpretivism outlined previously, I will take an inductive approach in my case study. Here I aim at attaining understanding of a phenomenon in a given context, the European dairy industry, while making generalizations is not my goal. Thus I will be focusing on producing thick descriptions from the data, which will hopefully contribute to the understanding of NGO-MNE collaboration in the selected context and may be furthered in future research (Farquhar, 2012, pp. 22, 90-95).

Finally by applying the qualitative case study methodology I aim at exploring different NGO perspectives on a single MNE's CSR initiatives through data collection method of interviews as primary data and data analysis method of qualitative content analysis. The research approach of studying multiple NGO views on a single case company Arla was selected due to numerous reasons. The case study approach is firstly selected given the aim of gaining in-depth understanding of a context-bound phenomenon (Farquhar, 2012, p. 5; Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008, pp. 115, 121). Arla as a company may be seen as unique or extreme in that the dairy industry represents largely controversial environmental effects, while the company is a pioneer in CSR practices as depicted in chapter 2. For studying such a unique case, the case study method is again deemed suitable as depicted by Eriksson and Kovalainen (2008, pp. 115) The reason for selecting numerous NGOs and producing comparative analysis of their collaboration with a single company is for this method commonly bringing more fruitful, extensive analysis as depicted by Bryman (2012, pp. 32-35) and Yin (2002, pp. 20-22). This is also linked to the current research gap of studying the phenomenon cross-countries and sectors as depicted in chapter 2. My overarching goal is to generate both understanding of each case individually as well as generate comparison in order to explore emerging patterns in order to bring new insights into the currently debated theoretical viewpoints of NGO-MNE collaboration.

3.2. Research context

Overall my study is placed in the context of the European dairy industry. The external context, namely the wide setting where the case is embedded, is the dairy industry. This industry was selected due to its controversial nature in regards to CSR and sustainable business practices as depicted previously. For the internal context, namely the immediate social context, the organization in focus is Arla. As depicted in section 2.5 Arla was selected for its pioneer position in terms of CSR.

The reason for focusing specifically on the dairy industry in the European context, in selected countries, was the following. Firstly, as depicted previously the selection of NGOs operating in several different countries and sectors was for the generation of more fruitful analysis and filling the existing research gap. Secondly, the selection of the specific countries in focus, namely Sweden, Denmark, Germany and the UK were chosen given Arla's longest and core NGO collaborations being situated in these four main markets.

Hence it was deemed most suitable to focus on these locations in order to get better insights on existing collaborations over a longer time-period (Arla, Andersen, Lundén Pettersson).

Furthermore in selecting the specific NGOs to study, purposive sampling was used based on relevance and accessibility. Together with representatives from Arla's CSR department we identified the key NGO groups Arla collaborates with in these four countries. We further attempted to select organizations from differing sectors, ranging from animal welfare to health and nutrition. In addition to selecting based on sector and country, we aimed to select NGOs in different stages of collaboration; some with many years of collaboration with Arla and others with close to none so far. This scale was selected in order to explore different types of existing collaborations as well as possible future developments.

The initial aim was to have interviews with representatives from around three NGOs in each of the four countries to ensure balanced representation. However due to accessibility issues and especially in Germany the limited number of relevant contact persons knowledgeable on the topic to allow for in-depth analysis, the number of interviewed NGOs per country varies. The limitations of this are further discussed in chapter five. Finally in total nine NGOs were interviewed, four from Denmark (Action Aid, Danish Heart Foundation, Danish Diet and Nutrition Association, Danish Society for Nature Conservation), two from Sweden (WWF Sweden, Swedish Consumers' Association), two from the UK (WWF UK, WRAP) and one from Germany (German Animal Protection Federation). A description of each NGO is provided in appendix three.

In each case one representative from each NGO participated in the interview, however two representatives took part in the case of WWF UK due to both interest and wider knowledgeability from the NGO. Furthermore I trust that nine interviews with NGOs will suit the scope of a qualitative Master's thesis, not aiming at making generalizations, which according to Eisenhardt (1989) is attained with a minimum of four cases (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008, pp. 123-128 cited Eisenhardt, 1989). However in order to further widen the analysis I decided to include interviews with two representatives from Arla's CSR department. The aim was to both compensate for the limited number of NGO interviewees than initially planned as well as provide a point of comparison to the NGO viewpoints

from the MNE side. As according to Eriksson and Kovalainen (2008, p. 129) this specification and definition of cases taking place before or after the data collection process is common for qualitative studies, depending on accessibility and relevance, which is the case in my study as well. The selection of representatives from each organization was based on the representatives' relevance in terms of knowledge of the topic and background in CSR. In analyzing the data the representatives from each organization are referred to by the organizations' name for analysis clarity, however for details on full names and positions see appendix four and five.

3.3. Data collection

Moving on to the method of data collection, as depicted in the previous section my aim is to collect data from multiple sources. This is in order to allow for data triangulation, which according to Creswell (1998, pp. 256-260), Farquhar (2012, p. 95) and Eriksson and Kovalainen (2008, p. 61) is a suitable data collection method for case studies. This method advances reliability as I rely on various data sources and apply comparison of views from the NGO and MNE viewpoints on their collaboration. I believe in studying such a debated issue as NGO-MNE collaboration on CSR commonly argued to be lacking in transparency, it is especially important to compare cases and examine the phenomenon from different viewpoints.

In data collection I am relying on gathering primary data through the method of structured telephone interview with in total 12 individuals (10 representatives from 9 NGOs, 2 representatives from the MNE). Additionally I rely on secondary data in terms of NGO and MNE websites for simple background information on the organizations. The primary data collection method of interviewing was selected due to its high usage in qualitative research given several advantages compared to other methods. These include the documentation of issues outside observation, the possibility to reconstruct events and allow for longitudinal research. Furthermore others include the presence of ethical considerations and informed consent and finally allowing the interviewer to understand specific viewpoints of the interviewee, which is specifically valuable for my study focusing on the different NGO viewpoints (Bryman, 2012, pp. 494-496).

Secondly the type of interview, namely structured telephone interview was selected based on accessibility. As argued by Irvine (2010, pp. 1-6) and Bryman (2012, pp. 477, 488) for geographically dispersed interviewees, such as those in my study located in four different countries, the suitable interview types are through telephone, Skype or other applications and online. Due to face-to-face interviews, the most common type in qualitative studies, not being possible given time and cost constraints with geographical dispersion, the telephone interview was selected as most appropriate. Despite some arguments on the telephone interview's limitations such as the lack of non-verbal communication, the higher possibility of misunderstanding due to limits to verbal communication and possible problems with telephone lines or technical difficulties with recording, its strengths are deemed as overshadowing its possible weaknesses. These strengths include firstly higher possibility of asking sensitive questions and going back to recordings with no regards to non-verbal communication. Moreover it involves saving costs and time hence allowing for a higher number of interviews in a shorter time-period. In my case this was very important in order to perform the 11 interviews within time limitations given the busy schedules of the interviewees (Bryman 2012, pp. 477, 488; Irvine, 2010, pp. 1-6).

Furthermore as depicted by Irvine (2010, pp. 1-6) telephone interviews are commonly supported, as there is limited evidence of vital differences in the telephone and face-to-face interview processes and outcomes. Moreover the telephone interview's limitations of concern for rapport or loss of meaning may be exaggerated. Furthermore out of the remaining non-face-to-face options, using Skype was initially abandoned due to lack of access with some interviewees combined with other possible limitations such as problems with Internet connection and recording. Online interviewing was also abandoned due to its further limitations on the content of the data collected, which may be limited due to absence of follow-up and probing questions as well as bias present with pre-determined questions (Meho, 2006, p. 1285; Bryman, 2012, p. 477).

Finally, the structured nature of the interviews was selected based on its applicability to the telephone interview. As depicted by Bryman (2012, p. 470) structure is generally needed in phone interviews due to the lack of personal presence possibly limiting understanding. Furthermore for comparison purposes structure allows for better comparison between the interviews with the focus being kept on specific topics of interest specified in the interview guide (Appendix 1 and 2). Since a clearly specified set of research questions is to be

answered, the interview questions should be formulated in a structured manner as well. However as explored by Bryman the available interview types are generally seen as extremes, where in practice there is flexibility allowed while "most qualitative interviews are close to one type or the other" (Bryman, 2012, p. 471). This is relevant in my study, where although the interviews are kept rather structured for comparison purposes and to overcome limits of telephone interviewing, in order to allow for in-depth data analysis following the qualitative approach, the interview questions are however kept quite open ended in order to explore case-specifics rather than aim for generalizability. Hence my aim is to allow for a degree of structure together with flexibility in order to pursue the interest and focus areas of the interviewees.

As seen in the interview guide, the questions include introducing, intermediate and ending questions following Bryman (2012, p. 479). I begin by open-ended questions after which I move on to more specifics with follow-up questions along the way as guided by Charmaz (Bryman, 2012, p. 479 cited Charmaz, 2002). Although having a predetermined interview guide in place, with interview topics and questions based on the initial research questions that are further based on the gap in previous research, flexibility in the questions is allowed. This is since following Bryman's (2012, p. 476) footsteps in order to collect data generating most relevant analysis, the interview guide should be adjusted along the data collection process. Hence after piloting with the first few interviews, the interview questions were revised a bit to better address the research questions. Thus the interview guide was finalized during the data collection process, with some re-wording of questions and specification on for instance collaboration benefits, not highly elaborated on in the beginning.

Finally in terms of practicality the duration of the interviews was around 35-40 minutes per interview (see Appendix four and five). The difference in duration was mainly based on access, interviewee time limitations and their knowledge and interest in the topic causing variability. The interviews were recorded word-to-word for transcription purposes in order to avoid misinterpretation and data leakage. This was also to ensure higher focus on the interviewee by limiting note taking during the interview to some key points and opening up the possibility for repeated examination and secondary analysis in the future. Also it is to be mentioned that before the interviews, a list of topics to be discussed was sent to the interviewees beforehand in order to allow for some preparation advantaging more precise

answers. Finally although the interviews covered the topic of materiality as well, for the company purposes of Arla, this was not included in the data analysis in my study due to limits to scope and time (Bryman, 2012, p. 473; Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008, pp. 80-81).

3.4. Data analysis

After collecting and transcribing the interview data it is then analyzed through qualitative content analysis. This method of analysis allows for in-depth analysis of meaning construction significant especially for abstract, debated concepts such as CSR and NGO-MNE collaboration. This goes in line with the applied constructionist approach and interpretivist paradigm, discussed in section 3.1. Through such a method of analysis I am conducting inductive research where I aim to develop concepts and codes from the data itself (Farquhar, 2012, pp. 92-93).

Open coding is hence utilized in the method of content analysis, where the codes are emergent in nature following the inductive approach. However, some initial codes may be developed based on theory before data analysis in order to allow for better focus in the data analysis and further addressing the research questions. However they will be adjusted along the data analysis process. In my research coding takes place already during the data collection process in order to allow for initial analysis and flexibility in for instance the sample size that changed during the process or the interview and research questions that were adjusted for better fit as depicted earlier (Bryman, 2012, p. 569; Farquhar, 2012, pp. 90-92). Due to my personal preference and previous experience in coding I performed manual coding without the use of computer programs.

The specific steps taken in the data analysis process include the following. The coding begins by giving labels or codes to significant data components. In the coding schedule these codes are called first order concepts. After this phase the initial codes are grouped together based on similarity to create wider categories, called second order themes. From such categorization the final step includes creating 3rd order categories, where establishing relations between several categories take place in order to come up with conclusions drawn together with previous literature. During this process possible hypothesis may be generated from the categorization, while theory formulation may take place through the final step of establishing relations between categories exploring a phenomenon such as NGO-MNE

collaboration (Gibbs, 2007, p. 40; Bryman, 2012, pp. 568- 570; Farquhar, 2012, pp. 92-94).

Ultimately after coding the data and creating the coding schedule, the writing out of the analysis takes place. In the analysis I use both the coded transcripts and the brief notes I took during the interviews themselves. This combination is to allow for in-depth word-to-word analysis without losing any key thoughts arisen already during the interview. As depicted in the next chapter, I structure the findings chapter into firstly providing a brief synthesis of case-by-case findings. This is followed by comprehensive comparison of the findings in order to better address the research questions and take a wider stance to the topic on collaboration. In order to allow for structural clarity in analysis, I follow a thematic structure based on the research questions, including sections on type, length, value and influence in collaboration. Such structuring of the analysis follows Eriksson and Kovalainen (2008, p. 130) according to whom a mixture of within and cross-case analysis allows for both structural cohesion and analytical value.

3.5. Critical considerations

Moving on to evaluating my research, this section aims to account for the reliability, validity and generalizability of my study. Firstly by documenting and justifying the theoretical, methodological and analytical approach used in my study, the reliability is ensured. Furthermore by such documentation and the use of recorded and transcribed telephone interviews, possible replication or furthering of the study in the future is enabled as depicted earlier. However this may be limited due to the subjective nature of my study, possible researcher bias and social setting alterations as outlined by Bryman (2012, p. 390).

Secondly examining validity, by thorough case selection based on previous research, applicable theory definition and data triangulation, the internal validity, accuracy of the study and credibility of the findings may be furthered. On external validity however, my study simply aims to develop insights on NGO-MNE collaboration in a selected context without making further generalizations, decreasing the external validity. However I do not believe the lack of generalizability will account for a crucial limitation in my study as it on the other hand credits from extensive context-bound findings. My study may further be

used in future research on the topic aiming for more general findings and conclusions (Bryman, 2012, p. 390). Furthermore by incorporating views from both the NGO and MNE side of the collaboration, the validity of the results is furthered. Here the MNE interviews were conducted after the NGO interviews, in order to apply the key findings from the NGOs in developing the interview guide for the MNE representatives.

Finally in addition to the traditional criteria of evaluation followed by Bryman (2012) and Eriksson and Kovalainen (2008), I also aim to consider and alleviate other issues that may limit my study. Firstly through the challenge of data access, as depicted in section 3.3 modifications to my initial data collection plan were required, affecting the sampling and interview type. This is seen for instance with the upholding of structure in the interviews that was crucial in order to fully capture perceptions of the interviewees in a comparable manner despite the possibility in losing depth compared to semi-structured interviews. By such structured interviews, the reliability and replicability may also be advanced by somewhat limiting the flexibility and possibility of follow-up, probing questions outside the interview guide.

Secondly in order to better evaluate a broad, rather abstract conception of NGO-MNE collaboration I aim to create some sort of building blocks guiding my analysis by creating sub research questions supporting the main question. Thirdly throughout my research process I aim to uncover possible limitations and ways to overcome them as depicted by for instance with the accessibility issues. Finally in order to decrease the effect of bias, in terms of bias during the interview on both sides of the interviewer and the interviewee as well as during data analysis and coding I try to keep this in mind throughout the research in order to limit it. Also on a rather sensitive topic such as CSR, it is important to keep in mind the possible bias of the interviewees in framing the issue overly positively in order to avoid difficulties with their collaborations in the future or to otherwise construct an overly positive image. However by specifically depicting the independent nature of my study in the beginning of the interviews, I hope to limit this subjectivity to a large extent.

3.6. Ethical considerations

Finally throughout my study I aim to consider ethics in each step of the research process as outlined by Eriksson and Kovalainen (2008, pp. 64-65, 70-75). This is done by firstly identifying and complying to Arla's non-disclosure agreement on confidential company reports and possible sensitive matters before starting the research. In the first phase of studying previous literature I aim to utilize publications from academic journals or books that are highly cited and accredited and available from my institution's database or other similar ones. Secondly in the start of the data collection phase I achieved the informed consent of each interviewee to firstly participate voluntarily in the interview and secondly for the interview to be recorded. I also outlined the purpose of the research, the company in focus as well as the main topics to be covered before the interview, in order to allow for both preparation and consent.

Furthermore professional discretion was maintained by asking each interviewee for their consent to use the interviewees' proper names and their organization's names in my thesis. For each interviewee this was allowed as long as they get a read through and possible alteration of their statements before thesis submission. In data analysis I attempt for accuracy by reporting on each step as depicted in the previous section and by keeping record of audio recordings, transcripts, interview notes, coding schedule etcetera. This is to ensure the possibility for replicability and further use by future studies on the topic. Finally by applying proper referencing according to Harvard referencing guidelines and avoiding plagiarism throughout my study, reliability and replicability is amplified. By both avoiding excess direct quotations, rather rephrasing other academics and running my final paper through my institution's plagiarism software, I ensure the following of proper ethical guidelines. Having accounted for both critical and ethical considerations I now move on to exploring the findings, based on the research methods outlined in the current chapter.

4. FINDINGS

In this chapter I explore the key findings from the data collection and analysis processes outlined previously. The chapter is opened with a synthesis of case-by-case findings. The rest of the findings are structured thematically according to the theoretical focus areas explored earlier, including type, length, value and influence in NGO-MNE collaboration. In order to allow for in-depth comparison and contrast, findings from the 11 interviews are combined in each section to come up with common patterns further explored in the discussion chapter.

4.1. Synthesis of individual findings

The following two tables briefly outline the key findings from each interview in terms of the studied themes.

Table 2: Synthesis of NGO viewpoints

Country	Organization	Type	Length	Value	Influence
Denmark	Action Aid	Human rights policy, impact assessment dialogue, feedback given to Arla reporting	Since 2011, fast developments in collaboration	Higher focus on human rights, knowledge sharing through ongoing dialogue	Through reporting, before Arla been more responsive, in 2016 less responsive to human rights issues
	Danish Heart Foundation	Joint my good life partnership on workplace health, dialogue on common strategy, joint articles by CEOs	Dialogue and concrete partnership since 2015, more frequent communication over time	Impact on consumers' habits by reduction in salt, fat at Arla, new product offerings	Through changes in product offerings, limited evidence overall
	Danish Diet and Nutrition Association	Currently no concrete projects, rather dialogue, sharing knowledge	At least four years, members have collaborated longer	Satisfied with the collaboration, information sharing	By sharing knowledge on preferred practices

	Danish Society for Nature Conservation	No specific projects, but an app to share knowledge on sustainable practices for farmers	At least for past few years, colleagues for a few years longer, on and off	Financing with the app and other sponsorships e.g. waste collections, sharing knowledge	Influence through farmers; influence seen in changes in farmer behavior
Sweden	WWF Sweden	Participation in two joint platforms for dialogue: Sustainable Supply Chain for Food, the Swedish Soy Dialogue	Since 2005 sporadic dialogue, platforms initiated in 2014 and 2015	Mutual learning, complementary activities on joint priorities e.g. certification schemes	Participation in the soy scorecard (European initiative), reporting enforced
	Swedish Consumers' Association	No direct collaboration due to independence, however dialogue with Arla's retailers	No concrete projects so far	Through possible collaboration companies taking issues seriously, consumer interests furthered	Hard to report on influence on change in consumer behavior
Germany	German Animal Protection Federation	Not currently collaborating, since no official request made from Arla's side. With other companies currently dialogue	Not collaborating	Pushing issues forward, putting pressure and campaigning	Not Arla, but generally through dialogue can influence by pushing standards, animal welfare levels
The UK	WWF UK	Informal dialogue on water stewardship, participation in common conferences, distant relationship	Sporadic for 6-7 years	Getting impact on greenhouse gas methodology, water footprint	Not tracking reporting, uncertain, based on the soy and palm scorecards
	WRAP	Voluntary agreements on food waste, carbon impact, Arla's own	7 years, fast development from dialogue to projects	Helping charitable objectives, keep on doing projects	Driving change, bringing the industry together,

		projects		cofounded by the government	annual report and board level letter yearly
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Table 3: Synthesis of MNE viewpoints

Denmark	Arla Foods	Dialogue regularly, some interviews, workshops	For many years (from main markets to others as well and from dialogue to more concrete over the years)	Knowledge, influence, affecting political climate	Longer the term, increased influence. Reporting of biggest collaborations in annual report
Sweden	Arla Foods	Mainly dialogue since for projects need financial backup, resources, no push from top management at Arla	Longest one being with WWF since 2005 (moving from initial dialogue deeper over the years)	Learning, guidance on operations, avoiding business risk, developing position	Longer the term, increased influence due to trust, reporting the influence

4.2. Type of collaboration

This first section of the analysis chapter focuses on the first sub research question on type of collaboration between NGOs and Arla. The specific topics I will cover are based on the common themes arising from the interviews. These include the commonality of different types, their content, the reasons for divergence and finally accounts for developments between engagement forms and reasons for lack of engagement.

Low involvement types most common with potential for higher involvement

In examining the data there are various commonalities in the type of collaboration the selected NGOs from Sweden, Denmark, Germany and the UK have with Arla. Interestingly the most reoccurring type is that of dialogue, which takes currently place with

7 of the 9 NGOs with exception of the German Animal Protection Federation and the Swedish Consumers' Association with which Arla currently does not collaborate. However in addition to simple dialogue, Arla applies other higher involvement types such as multi-stakeholder platforms of dialogue (WWF Sweden), partnerships and voluntary agreements (Danish Heart Foundation; WRAP). What is striking however is the lack of concrete projects, which with the exception of WRAP's involvement in Arla's projects on "improving their recyclability and increasing the recycled content of milk bottles" (WRAP) or "the waste mapping exercise" (WRAP) are otherwise not applied at Arla.

Exploring deeper the specifics of the types, in most cases simple dialogue is enforced with partnerships in the form of agreements. By collaborating with WRAP through participation in their voluntary agreements and Courtauld commitments on carbon impact and food waste, the dialogue around these issues is based on finding "overarching objectives" and "helped them [Arla] delivering them" (WRAP). Similarly the Danish Heart Foundation's close dialogue aims at "developing Arla's strategy on health" (Danish Heart Foundation) and is furthered through both parties' membership in a joint "my good life partnership" on workplace health as well as top-management commitment through CEO-level dialogue.

In addition to such voluntary agreements, the before-mentioned platforms of dialogue are common where according to Arla the highest level of involvement is achieved with WWF Sweden, Arla's longest collaborator. Here the collaboration depth is based on the duration of the relationship, its quality and "fruitful[ness] for both parties" (Arla, Lundén Pettersson) as well as systematic communication around the platforms: "I talk to representatives there maybe almost every month" (Arla, Lundén Pettersson). Compared to WWF's subsidiaries, the dialogue in the Nordics where WWF is headquartered is commonly depicted as more "formal" than in the subsidiaries experiencing "informal" dialogue and a "fairly distant relationship" (WWF UK, Perkins) in the sense of having no concrete collaboration with rather ad hoc interaction.

However an interesting contradiction arises in the differing viewpoints on the concreteness and level of involvement of collaborations. As according to WWF Sweden in the platforms where Arla participates, namely the Sustainable Supply Chain for Food and the Swedish Soy Dialogue, Arla works as "members in these platforms, but we don't consider that as partnerships" (WWF Sweden). This is since partnerships are seen as going much further

than dialogue and platforms at WWF Sweden, which are joint together with several other companies. Similar low involvement arises with other NGOs where the concreteness and project-based interaction types may be refuted. For instance with the Danish Diet and Nutrition Association the dialogue is “information based that we share common knowledge of common wishes” rather than “collaboration as in projects or common goals” (Danish Diet and Nutrition Association). Similarly with the Danish Society for Nature Conservation their collaboration is seen “not [as] concrete projects [but rather] talks with Arla” (Danish Society for Nature Conservation). Here the dialogue around the NGO’s tool check app utilized for farmers’ knowledge sharing on biodiversity and household waste is however seen as rather concrete compared to Arla’s other collaborations.

Dialogue based on knowledge sharing and commitment

Moving on to the content of the dialogue between NGOs and Arla, there is overall similarity in content. The dialogue tends to be centered on the exchange of intangible “information-based” (Danish Diet and Nutrition Association) resources, making it a low involvement type involving knowledge sharing. Here from both MNE and NGO perspectives the aim is to “listen, we discuss and try to find solutions that we can both agree on” (Arla, Lundén Pettersson) by exploring “what are the challenges, what are the possibilities” (Action Aid) and possible “overarching objectives” (WRAP). However as depicted by Action Aid representative the extent to which these improvement areas are actually executed by Arla is open for critique based on their human rights assessment reporting further described in section 4.5. Such limitations to concrete changes being made as per NGOs’ suggestions enforces the low level of involvement in dialogue as NGOs’ viewpoints are not necessarily incorporated into decision-making.

Differing type depends on intension, resources and commitment

As argued by Arla representative Lundén Pettersson the most common collaboration type “is dialogue actually, we are not having these big projects”. The reason for such a lack is the need for “financial backup, it includes backup from top-level management” (Arla, Lundén Pettersson). In addition to resources and commitment another reason for differing type of collaboration is the intention as argued by Arla representative Andersen. For instance with the Danish Society for Nature Conservation a rather knowledge-sharing

dialogue-based engagement is deemed appropriate given the intention of “sharing knowledge about biodiversity” (Arla, Andersen). On the other hand a rather strategic one involving “negotiations” works with Action Aid due to their consultative relationship as further explored in the following section.

Developments from confrontation to collaboration possible

Moreover although Arla’s engagement with NGOs is generally of collaborative nature rather than confrontational, there are however instances where the collaboration has sparked from conflict. This has taken place between Arla and Action Aid with initial accusations of Arla “not taking human rights seriously when going into new markets” (Arla, Lundén Pettersson) and filing a complaint based on inadequate assessment of human rights issues. However developments toward a more strategic dialogue of “negotiations” (Action Aid, 2017) between the two parties is perceived where Action Aid is currently guiding the company “with regard to Arla’s lack of human rights risk assessment or human rights impact assessments before or in relation to selling milk powder into developing countries” (Action Aid). In addition when entering new markets, the networks of Action Aid have been used as they have helped Arla to connect with “some local stakeholders” (Action Aid).

Here contradictory to the common dialogue of information sharing with the rest of the NGOs, Action Aid’s focus may be viewed as more concrete and strategic by having “contributed to the methodology” of human rights impact assessments as well as “provided feedback and input on the actual reports and drafts” (Action Aid) making it a rather “close dialogue” (Arla, Lundén Pettersson). Here through such developments the influencing capacity of Action Aid may be seen as increasing by their controlling of critical resources, leveraging their reputation/legitimacy claims and influencing through local networks. Generally however from the MNE viewpoint, collaboration is much preferred over confrontation due to its “long-term perspective” (Arla, Andersen) rather than an attempt to “put pressure [without being] interested in the results” (Arla, Lundén Pettersson). This is argued to bring higher benefits from both MNE and NGO viewpoints, further explored in section 4.4.

Lack of collaboration due to independence, alternative influence and resources

In addition to the collaborative and confrontational relations explored previously, a lack of engagement was identified in two cases. The key reasons for not currently collaborating with Arla were identified by the Swedish Consumers' Association and the German Animal Protection Federation as based on independence and resource limitations. In the prior case collaboration tends to be regarded as a threat to “our independence [which] is our main asset so to speak” (Swedish Consumers' Association). This results in a lack of MNE collaboration in general, which is however substituted by high engagement with governments and politicians “on a high level policy makers in Sweden and the EU”. Here through influence on the political realm, the push for consumer interests is being ensured.

Additionally limitations to time and resources seem to lead to both NGOs' abstinence from MNE collaboration. Similarly from Arla's side the lack of “capacity to work with all of them” (Arla, Andersen) is one major reason for selectivity in NGO collaboration. For the German Animal Protection Federation a further reason is deemed as the lack of initiation from Arla's side. However such a current lack of “no direct collaboration with Arla” (German Animal Protection Federation) could develop in the future, as “it could be interesting because we have this animal welfare labeling and we're actually labeling for dairy products, which might be a possibility to get in collaboration with Arla”. Similarly as depicted by Arla representative Lundén Pettersson it is still vital to “keep up good relations and there could be areas where we could hear what they think—[despite] not a formal collaboration due to their purpose and their independence”. Hence collaboration with such organizations may be possible in the future.

4.3. Length of collaboration

Moving on to exploring the length of collaboration, here the section is divided into three themes. Here I firstly account on the increase in Arla's engagement with NGOs overall, secondly on the developments to higher involvement within engagements and finally I explore the initiation of collaboration to better understand developments over time.

Collaborations increasing in number and scope

In examining the developments in overall collaboration, it is evident that Arla's collaborations with NGOs have increased both in number and scope. It has developed from firstly solely environmental focus to increasingly health and human rights issues during the past 10 years. Currently the collaborations are "spread out through the organization" (Arla, Andersen) and not solely associated with the CSR department, which with limits to five employees "don't have the capacity to work with all of them" (Arla, Andersen). This evidently goes in line with the mainstreaming and expanding of CSR focus within the MNE over time. However it seems to be that the larger the scale and length of the collaboration, the wider the involvement is within the organization (Action Aid; Danish Heart Foundation). With Action Aid and the Danish Heart Foundation for instance the contact spans from employees in different departments in the prior case and even includes the CEOs in the latter. Although collaboration is still saturated in the core markets with the longest collaborations, when entering new markets there is increased local dialogue with branches of for instance Action Aid in developing countries (Arla, Lundén Pettersson).

Developments from low to higher involvement over time

In addition to the collaborations expanding in general, the collaboration types have developed over time. In terms of dialogue with their longest partner WWF Arla's dialogue has developed from not "something very sort of established" (WWF Sweden) to regular dialogue and communication over the platforms "almost every month, every second month" (Arla, Lundén Pettersson). Through the multi-stakeholder platforms the dialogue seems to have moved to higher involvement. Similarly with the Danish Heart Foundation and the Danish Diet and Nutrition Association, the dialogue between the parties has evolved into "pretty close dialogue" throughout the organizations. This includes both CEOs (Danish Heart Foundation) where the content of dialogue is aimed to be expanded where potentially Arla "would collaborate on other topics that are not part of their CSR strategy" (Danish Heart Foundation). Although in both cases the dialogue has grown more frequent over time, its frequency is saturated around projects with daily to monthly dialogue as it "has been on a daily basis when we had the big projects together" (Danish Diet and Nutrition Association; Danish Heart Foundation). Such frequency of contact has

affected the involvement level, as the more frequent meetings are held the “more solid our collaboration” tends to be (Danish Heart Foundation).

Although from Arla’s viewpoint, developments in type are commonly associated with length: “before we go into a bigger project we would probably have worked with them for a while” (Arla, Andersen), exceptions do arise with for instance WRAP or Action Aid. In the first case since the collaborations’ initiation in 2010 it “has evolved” where “the sort of dialogue phase is relatively short. We fairly quickly moved into projects” (WRAP). Also the breadth of the projects has increased as they have “increasingly more larger scale projects, projects that are sort of trying to move the industry to a more sustainable future in a more significant way” (WRAP). Similarly with Action Aid since 2011 swift developments from initial dialogue “to discuss the [human rights] report and whether Arla could improve” (Action Aid) to increasingly “other issues that were outside the scope of our agreement, so there's been a lot more in recent years—we have collaborated in conferences and public events and so on” (Action Aid). This shows a general movement from simple one- to two-way transactions over time from simple to “wider, broader – larger scale projects” (WRAP) although the duration for such developments depends on the case.

Similarly with the Danish Society for Nature Conservation the “on and off” dialogue that has saturated around projects has developed as the involvement has increased: “since Arla got involved in our nature check and the work with that it has improved a lot” (Danish Society for Nature Conservation). From such developments the two organizations are “strengthening our ties and I regard it as just positive, also because it gives us a better way of getting influence” (Danish Society for Nature Conservation). As argued by Danish Heart Foundation representative the more frequent meetings are held the “more solid our collaboration”. Hence regularity in meetings and duration in overall collaboration strengthens the ties between the NGO and MNE (Danish Heart Foundation).

However in regards to others with a shorter span of collaboration, such as WWF UK, the dialogue is still regarded in the low involvement phase due to sporadic, ad hoc and less frequent contact (WWF UK, Perkins; Arla, Lundén Pettersson). Similarly with the Swedish Consumers’ Association Arla simply meets occasionally where they “exchange views on something that is very ad hoc” (Arla, Lundén Pettersson). Hence the influencing

capacity of these organizations can be noted as lower due to their lack of frequent contact, building of ties and trust as furthered later.

Initiation of collaboration from both sides while for different reasons

Finally in order to fully understand the developments in engagement, it is key to discuss its initiation since it evidently affects the intention with collaboration and further the type as argued in the previous section. Overall in Arla's case the initiation is claimed to be possible from either MNE or NGO side, although it currently occurs mainly through Arla. Overall from the MNE side initiation of collaboration is commonly done in order to gain knowledge, expertise and other resources as well as to avoid reputational harm and "to protect our brand and our business" (Arla, Andersen). Contrarily with NGOs the initiation is not commonly based on pre-empting reputational harm but rather on conflict resolution as "there's usually some sort of dilemma when people contact us" (Arla, Andersen) creating the "slight difference in the way we approach each other" (Arla, Andersen). However as in the case of Arla, being generally regarded as a pioneer and "already a leading player" (WWF UK, Perkins) in CSR in the field, the lack of NGO initiation is not striking as there is no need for initiation in most cases. Such commonality for MNE initiation with increased CSR concerns and collaborative aims may lead to holding MNEs responsible for initiation. This as seen in the previous section was the case for the German Animal Protection Federation where "there hasn't been any official request from Arla" (German Animal Protection Federation).

However as seen with Action Aid, the collaboration sparked specifically from such a conflict case with the critique of lack in human rights risk assessments in Bangladesh. From then on the collaboration has been balanced with initiation from both sides (Action Aid). Despite the initial reason for engagement, whether for pre-empting or resolving conflict, the example of Action Aid well represents the possible development from confrontation to collaboration as argued in the previous section. Finally, further selection criteria are used in selecting NGOs, again linked to NGOs intention whether for just campaigning or finding common solutions through collaboration. The reason for not collaborating with organizations such as Greenpeace is exactly for their interest to "put pressure but they are not so interested in the results" (Arla, Lundén Pettersson). Hence the clash in collaboration purpose and differing missions may cause failed initiation. Further

selection criteria include reputation especially with governments in foreign markets and knowledge and networks to be gained from (Arla, Andersen, WWF UK, Perkins).

4.4. Value of collaboration

The third section on value focuses on three common themes. These include the exploration of value in different engagement forms, the most common benefits and finally the link between value and influence.

Collaboration bringing higher benefits than confrontation

Firstly examining the two forms of engagement, in the case of Arla it is recognized that collaboration in general seems to bring higher value than confrontation. As according to German Animal Protection Federation representative higher benefits are reached by “not only claiming in the publicity but get into dialogue and look for solutions” (German Animal Protection Federation) which may save time and resources in the long-term. Similarly for the MNE according to Arla representatives collaboration brings better results as the MNE may “avoid business risk and we can also increase reputation” (Arla, Lundén Pettersson). Hence for highest value MNEs seem to “need to maintain a very close dialogue with the stakeholders” (Action Aid) over continuous collaboration.

Information and influence-based benefits most common in collaboration

On the specific benefits of collaboration, these can be divided into common and individual benefits for the NGO and MNE. Common benefits are firstly information-based where the NGOs are said to have “particular knowledge maybe that we [Arla] don’t have” (Arla, Andersen) and are hence seen as valuable “competence centers” (Arla, Lundén Pettersson) giving “guidance how to improve” (Arla, Lundén Pettersson). This is vital for MNEs for furthering competitive advantage especially on “commodities like cocoa, soy etcetera” (Arla, Lundén Pettersson). Hence in order to keep the business running in such areas, external input and expertise is required. NGOs may also provide innovation, which allows Arla to get “benefits through making more efficient use of resources, driving out waste, finding funding and potentially new, more resource efficient opportunities for their byproducts” which may generate higher income (WRAP).

Mutual benefit is further incurred for the NGOs as the profitability of MNEs allows them to “have a positive impact” (Action Aid) as “by obtaining higher standards [they] can get a higher price for that” (German Animal Protection Federation). Further information-based benefits are evident as well as NGOs mutually “get knowledge from us” (Arla, Andersen), a “positive learning experience” (Danish Diet and Nutrition Association) in terms of informational benefit (Swedish Consumers’ Association) as well as “data upon biodiversity in both farm and nature” (Danish Society for Nature Conservation) in terms of technical resources that may further social innovation. Furthermore the funding and sponsorship of various projects such as “the nature check app – [and] yearly collection of garbage in the nature which has been partly sponsored also by Arla” (Danish Society for Nature Conservation) are seen as benefits. However, again due to the limited financial resources, funding is not the case in all occasions where especially for high involvement projects “there needs to be significant investment” (WWF UK, Perkins) which is not the case currently (WWF UK, Vijn).

In addition to these benefits, further benefits are outlined as those to the society: “those that the food and drink goes to”, “internally within the organization” as well as for governments (WRAP). Such influence-based benefits allow NGOs to “show an impact— [and] see that there is progress on the ground which is for their purpose to make things change” (Arla, Lundén Pettersson). Such impact benefits are reported for most of the NGOs interviewed, where for instance with WRAP they are able to influence Arla by furthering their “understanding [of] the amounts of waste and byproducts that are reduced in their operations and what can we do about it” (WRAP). Through this the NGO can “deliver its charitable objectives which is a world where resources are used sustainably” (WRAP). Likewise with the Danish Heart Foundation the key benefit has been that Arla recognizes the needs of the foundation in terms of people’s unhealthy habits and reacts to this by for instance a reduction in salt and fat consumption in their product offerings (Danish Heart Foundation). Similarly with the Danish Society for Nature Conservation collaboration allows them to, through Arla, “guiding the farmers towards what we think is a more sustainable way of farming” as Arla is “an important link between farmers and the consumer” (Danish Society for Nature Conservation). Similarly with the two NGOs currently not collaborating with Arla, the potential value of influence and “if it serves our overall objectives” (Swedish Consumers’ Association) could allow for initiation in the future.

Furthermore for the MNE influence-based benefits are more in terms of company reputation and maintaining “our license to operate” (Arla, Andersen). By collaborating with NGOs the company may “avoid business risk and we can also increase reputation” (Arla, Lundén Pettersson) as NGOs are seen as having “a lot of influence also on perhaps the political climate” (Arla, Andersen).

Higher involvement tends to lead to higher potential benefits and influence

In the previously mentioned examples the influencing capacity is reported especially in those collaborations showing higher involvement such as WRAP, the Danish Heart Foundation and the Danish Society for Nature Conservation. This tends to be based on higher involvement types incorporating NGO views in MNE decision-making more than in simple information-based types as dialogue, explored earlier. In addition to the type of collaboration affecting value generation, the length tends to affect as well as argued by Action Aid where continuity and frequency in “maintain[ing] a very close dialogue” is key for value generation. This tends to be since value is created over a longer time-period.

Despite influence and high value being reached in some cases as depicted earlier, there are various potential benefits currently not achieved. This is due to Arla’s case of frequency of lower involvement engagement, where the lack of concrete, long-term projects is significant (Danish Society for Nature Conservation; Danish Diet and Nutrition Association, WRAP). Hence in order to fully reap the potential benefits, there should be increased accountability and activeness on part of the MNE (WWF Sweden) as well as “challenging conversations” (Danish Society for Nature Conservation) “closer cooperation and dialogue” (Action Aid) that is ongoing. This would advance that “both parties are actually able to benefit and learn” (Arla, Andersen).

Finally in order to achieve wider societal impact as outlined previously by Action Aid and WRAP representatives there is need for “collective impact” (WRAP) with collaboration across the industry: “everybody working together for common goals, with common objectives, with measurement, that’s where you can genuinely deliver change” (WRAP). Hence in order to reach full value, the collaborations should expand from single to multiple collaborations across the industry. Here Arla could “take the leadership role in the dairy

industry” (WWF UK, Vijn) in order to reap the benefits for both the company and wider society. This could be done by “sharing information”, “identifying opportunities” and reporting on them with “measurable targets” with NGOs instead of simply reaching endorsements, common for the dairy industry (WWF UK, Perkins).

4.5. Influence in collaboration

Finally in this section I draw conclusions from the previous three themes in order to address the topic of NGO influence on MNEs. Here I cover firstly the aspects affecting influence, secondly the reporting of and tracking of influence and finally the assessing of influence through alternative means.

Influence stemming from long-termism, concreteness, trust and common goals

Finally exploring the influence NGOs have on MNEs, the general consensus is that NGOs are able to influence Arla, although in most cases it is not tracked by the NGOs in reporting. However there is a general demand for increased reporting of measurable influence, which is quite controversial. Firstly examining the roots of influence from Arla’s viewpoint the duration of the relationship and influence are linked as when “you’ve worked with them [NGOs] for a longer time, they would’ve probably had more influence” (Arla, Andersen). This is since “you build trust over time with the organization” (WRAP) “you also get their way of thinking—and that could have a long term influence on your own way of thinking” (Arla, Lundén Pettersson). Here the factor of understanding the salience of the relationship and the benefits accrued increases potential influence.

Although such a relationship between length and type on influence is evident especially with high involvement “projects we’ve done together [that] have built that trust” (WRAP), shorter-term collaboration in terms of lower involvement initiatives such as dialogue may be influential as well. This may occur if it is “a fruitful dialogue – [where we] focus on the areas where we agree” (Danish Heart Foundation) and it can further “turn out to be something that we would make use of” (Arla, Andersen). In such cases, given knowledge and expertise benefits from NGOs generating innovative ideas, NGOs can “have an influence even if you're only in a dialogue with us” (Arla, Andersen). Hence the relevance of potential benefits from the collaboration is key in increasing influencing capacity.

However there is potential for higher influence as although NGOs “are definitely able to do it [influence] already, maybe it could be even more with projects” since it would probably be more intense instead of ad hoc over “a longer period” (Arla, Andersen, Lundén Pettersson). In addition to resource-based value, the value of networks may increase influencing capacity through stakeholder connections in foreign markets with Action Aid for instance.

This is agreed by most of the NGOs as well where higher influence could be achieved with “better engagement of different parties in the journey forward” (WWF UK, Vijn). Similarly “strengthening our ties—gives us a better way of getting influence” (Danish Society for Nature Conservation) where the collaboration could be more “constructive and results in action” (WRAP). Furthermore Arla does not change their views “just because someone else has said we should do it but we want to understand it ourselves and have the connection at our business” (Arla, Lundén Pettersson). Such a business connection and strategic aspect reflects to the benefits obtained, evidently affecting the influence NGOs may have. Through these examples, further elaborated on in the previous three sections, it is evident that the three studied themes of type, length and value do have an effect on influencing capacity.

NGO’s systematically tracking influence strikingly lacking

Despite the quest for higher influence, most of the interviewed NGOs do not track the influence achieved through collaboration. From Arla’s side the company generally reports, “when we go into bigger collaborations” (Arla, Andersen) “either in the annual report or perhaps in our human rights disclosure” (Arla, Andersen). Here they report on “what are the main areas we work in, who we are having dialogue with” (Arla, Lundén Pettersson). However they lack in reporting quantifiable outcomes as “we are not assessing on a scale from 1-10 what impact they’ve had” (Arla, Lundén Pettersson). Nevertheless NGOs are given “the opportunity to comment our statement or change our statement” (Arla, Lundén Pettersson), which does add to their influencing capacity. For instance with Action Aid they have provided “feedback and input to the actual reports and the drafts” in human rights issues in Nigeria and Senegal (Action Aid). However as depicted by Action Aid representative the continuity of the reporting and evaluating is significantly lacking. Hence despite the “positive press and a lot of positive feedback-- they should not just sit back and

rest but they should continue to develop further” (Action Aid). Arla’s lack in human rights reporting last year compared to the previous year shows significant downgrades even if the actions would be continued as such: “it’s actually a setback when it comes to the human rights report” and hence for NGOs such as Action Aid assessing their influence is hard without current, transparent reporting (Action Aid). Improvements in reporting are planned for the future on Arla’s side where they are hoping to move from “name and shame” to “know and show” (Arla, Andersen) where dialogue would pre-empt bad cases and conflict and change their processes beforehand giving influence to the NGOs from the very beginning.

Hence the general consensus among the interviewees is that the reporting should be improved, as in some cases there is no account for such. However an interesting controversy arises as not all NGOs track the reporting and hence influence they have had. As according to Swedish Consumers’ Association, WWF UK and WWF Sweden representatives they “don’t know how much we influence Arla” (WWF UK, Perkins) as they do not “follow precisely Arla in every step they take” (Swedish Consumers’ Association) or “track your or their responses to our policy positions and suggestions” (WWF UK, Perkins). With the longer-term relations such a lack of tracking influence may be for the trust among the parties, while for the shorter there is evidently a lack of resources and time, which evidently limit both the tracking of influence as well as influence itself.

Assessing influence through change in practice rather than reporting

Examining concrete influence, as depicted by Arla representative the influence of NGOs is vital due to them being “influencers and opinion makers” having a “huge impact actually on our business” (Arla, Andersen). An example would be Action Aid, where the discussions “lead to changed practices and focus in Arla” in terms of human rights assessments, which is measurable (Arla, Andersen). With WWF the influence is seen in the identification of “problems at the moment”, “suppliers that we definitely should avoid” in order to move “in a positive direction” (Arla, Lundén Pettersson; WWF Sweden). WWF requires Arla to report on their commitments of the platforms. Additionally in the future the Sustainable Supply Chain for Food platform will feature KPIs to be reported on. Similar reporting is required for WRAP as a commitment to their voluntary agreements

where “we do see whether changes have been made through the annual reporting” (WRAP). However such measurable impact is not necessarily the case for the rest of the NGOs.

Here instead of reporting, NGO influence on Arla is assessed by Arla’s change in practices according to the NGOs recommendations. For WWF this is seen by getting Arla to participate in the soy scorecard, by making them agree to paying credit for palm oil expellers, which they have not previously covered (WWF Sweden). Furthermore the Danish Society for Nature Conservation sees impact through “the behavior of the farmers” and “the surrounding environment—what’s happening in the field and what’s happening to the species that lives in the farmland” (Danish Society for Nature Conservation). This is an effect from the membership of Arla obliging the change in farmer standards. Similarly for the Danish Heart Foundation Arla’s changes toward healthier product offerings shows some influence however there is limited evidence that the changes stem from the collaboration itself. This lack of quantifiable, measurable outcomes makes it hard for NGOs to assess whether the MNE’s changes in practices has stemmed solely from them: “it’s always hard to tell because we can’t exactly say that it was because of this dialogue” (Swedish Consumers’ Association; WRAP). Furthermore as argued by WWF UK representative Perkins the reasons for change in Arla’s policy is hard to assess given their general lack of innovation outside their core business when it comes to dairy replacements for instance, going against the mission of a dairy company while bringing higher benefits sustainability-wise. Hence Arla’s changes must work closely with their business intentions and hence changes may not be directly attributed to the NGO’s wishes per se (WWF UK, Perkins).

Finally assessing alternative influencing mechanisms, there is disagreement as according to Swedish Consumers’ Association representative influence is the highest on the political landscape as “no one is stronger and in need to achieve consumer changes” (Swedish Consumers’ Association). While according to Danish Society for Nature Conservation representative “politicians are not always able to move the farmers or anyone else” and hence through focusing on the supply chain of MNE’s “it’s a much easier way to get a change of behavior – [due to MNE’s] strong ties to the farmers” (Danish Society for Nature Conservation). Hence “it’s much more efficient when the companies themselves are bringing up these new demands” (Danish Society for Nature Conservation). But

whichever means is seen as more efficient, it is to be concluded that by MNE collaboration influence is generally evident although its measuring should be improved in order to further transparency and accountability (WWF UK, Vijn; Perkins).

Finally whether NGO influence on MNEs is tracked through reporting or changed practices, whether it brings limited or broad value and whether it occurs through high or low involvement, it can be concluded that in Arla's case influence is apparent. By studying each three theme: type, length and value in relation to influence my study has brought about interesting findings. In order to further ground the findings in context and relate them to the existing theoretical field I now move on to the final discussion.

5. Discussion and Implications

5.1. Synthesis of findings and addressing research questions

As seen in the previous findings chapter, the influence NGOs have on MNEs depends on various factors and can be regarded differently by NGO and MNE representative viewpoints. Moreover although NGO collaboration offers only one path of influence on MNEs, as many other factors co-influence CSR initiatives, the findings show significant implications of NGO weight. While the data showed significant correspondence to scholarly discussions on influence, one should note the general refuting of arguments against NGO influence on MNEs due to their inability to function as “influencers” given their secondary stakeholder status lacking a “contractual bond to the firms they seek to influence, little resource leverage, and are less vital to organizational survival” (Wernick, 2011, p. 22; Greenwood, 2007, p. 321). From both NGO and Arla’s viewpoints influence is evident although its scope may vary based on the studied themes.

In studying this discrepancy I have aimed at addressing each of the three sub research questions and finally the main question on influence. Synthesizing the findings, in addressing the first sub question of collaboration type affecting influence it can be concluded that in Arla’s case, just as the theory suggests, higher level of involvement has been leading to higher influencing capacity (Halme & Laurila, 2008, p. 336; Kourula & Halme, 2008, p. 562; Frooman, 1999, p. 195; Skouloudis, Evangelinos & Malesios, 2013, p. 96; de Bakker, den Hond & van der Plas, 2002, p. 15). This is firstly due to the frequency of contact and the duration of the relationship further building trust and mutual understanding. It is further based on the expanding networks and requirement of higher investment in terms of resources. Such effects may advance higher influence given the increased power and legitimacy of NGOs (Halme & Laurila, 2008, p. 336; Kourula & Halme, 2008, p. 562; Frooman, 1999, p. 195; Skouloudis, Evangelinos & Malesios, 2013, p. 96).

Despite the commonality of higher involvement leading to higher influence as seen with Arla’s longest collaborators WWF and the Danish Heart Foundation for instance, there are however discrepancies. In some cases such as Action Aid lower involvement types have resulted in high influence as well (Arla, Lundén Pettersson; Danish Diet and Nutrition

Association; Danish Heart Foundation, WRAP; WWF UK, Vijn; Action Aid). Here collaboration types such as dialogue may be influential, providing the dialogue is fruitful and the expertise and innovation from the NGO works towards strategic business implications (Oates, 2013, p. 52; Stafford, Polonsky & Hartman, 1998, p. 3).

Furthermore examining Trapp's (2014, p. 43) three collaboration strategies, the most applicable are the information and dialogue strategies. This is since most of the dialogue is about the exchange of intangible "information-based" resources (Danish Diet and Nutrition Association), uncovering "overarching objectives" (WRAP) and the "exchange of views" (Arla, Lundén Pettersson). Hence it is rather centered on sharing knowledge and views rather than necessarily changing them. This evidently limits the influencing potential of dialogue in many cases as it is rather about "exchanging ideas and prospect outlooks of the business or the NGO's cause" (Halme & Laurila's, 2008, p. 336). Hence, although the dialogue strategy takes place in some cases where NGO viewpoints are incorporated into decision-making and can be reported through changed practices for instance in product offerings and farmer standards (Danish Society for Nature Conservation; Danish Heart Foundation), the lack of such concrete measures and execution of improvements in other cases tunes towards the information strategy.

On the second sub question on length affecting influence, it can be concluded that as the collaboration type generally develops over time from low to higher involvement, then longer relationships seem to lead to higher influencing capacity (Skouloudis, Evangelinos & Malesios, 2013, p. 108; Goodman, Korsunova & Halme, 2017, p. 8; Halme & Laurila, 2008, p. 336). At Arla this is seen in moving from simple dialogue to multi-stakeholder platforms with WWF or alternatively to concrete projects with WRAP and the Danish Society for Nature Conservation. Hence there tends to be a move from one- to two-way transactions (WWF Sweden; WRAP; Danish Society for Nature Conservation; Riutta, 2015, pp. 10, 34-35; Baur & Schmitz, 2011, pp. 10-11; Kourula & Halme, 2008, p. 562). Here such an "evolving nature" of collaboration as argued by Goodman, Korsunova and Halme (2017, p. 8) and the developments have evidently resulted in building trust and salience through frequency in contact as supported by scholars (de Bakker, den Hond & van der Plas, 2002, pp. 18-20; Oates, 2013, p. 52; Stafford, Polonsky & Hartman, 1998, p. 3). Together with increased collaboration, the dialogue between the parties has extended to broader within the organization, increasing commitment further. Although in most cases

the dialogue has grown more frequent over time, its frequency is saturated around projects and hence given the current lack in projects the influencing potential is currently limited. A further controversy is the divergence in the views on the MNE and NGO sides of the developments in reality. Despite the common theme of influence over time exceptions arise with WRAP and Action Aid's swift developments to higher involvement. This shows how the duration for such developments depends on the case and can be speeded up, further explored later.

On the third sub question on the value acclaimed affecting influence, the general claim is applicable according to which, where there is higher potential benefits the higher the influence tends to be. This is since the main benefits; informational, network-based, reputational and financial may be viewed as affecting MNE competitive advantage and hence giving NGOs higher power and legitimacy (Wernick, 2011, p. 44; Yaziji, 2004, pp. 110-114; Wadham, 2009, p. 60; Skouloudis, Evangelinos & Malesios, 2013, p. 96; Carroll & Shabana 2010, p. 92; Arla, Lundén Pettersson; WRAP; German Animal Protection Federation). As for instance informational and network benefits are viewed as larger with longer-term, higher involvement collaboration at Arla, each three studied themes may be regarded as affecting influencing capacity.

As the influence is commonly perceived through changes in Arla's CSR practices, these changes may be seen to reflect varying influencing strategies. According to Frooman's (1999) categorization as the NGOs in Arla's case function more in terms of sharing their technical knowledge and networks rather than controlling vital assets for the company's operational efficiency, the usage strategy may be in place. This may be seen with Arla's explicit commitments to WWF and WRAP's voluntary agreements with applied annual reporting and in the future increasingly KPI and other indicators for reporting (WWF Sweden; WRAP). However with lower involvement NGOs such conditions are not necessarily in place, limiting influence.

Furthermore following to more novel scholarly categorizations, co-operational strategies are present with most NGOs where higher influence is maintained by "maintain[ing] a very close dialogue with the stakeholders" (Action Aid), enduring "challenging conversations" (Danish Society for Nature Conservation) and generally having "closer cooperation and dialogue" (Action Aid) for higher influence (de Bakker, den Hond & van der Plas, 2002,

pp. 10-12). However given the limited resources, time and commitment such close contact is limited with others with lower involvement bringing lower financial and social benefits (Halme and Laurila, p. 335). Furthermore conflict strategies are mainly avoided, although “policing more than consulting” (Arla, Andersen) strategy of confrontation is used when there is “a large gap between the current, contested behavior of the firm and the desired behavior” (de Bakker, den Hond & van der Plas, 2002, p. 12). This was the case with Action Aid for instance with significant lacks in Arla’s human rights assessments. However such a conflict strategy has further developed into a co-operational strategy leading “to changed practices and focus in Arla” (Arla, Andersen; Action Aid).

Finally as the choice of influencing strategy seems to be in line with the intentions for engagement and further potential value generated, it can be concluded that according to Arla’s case NGO influence on MNEs tends to be based on the value obtained from collaboration, which differs based on type which further changes over time. This addresses the main research question on NGO influence on MNEs (Arla, Lundén Pettersson; Action Aid; WRAP).

Ultimately by addressing the research questions, I have reached my study’s objective of exploring the NGO perspective in collaboration, currently lacking in previous research as depicted by various scholars (Halme & Laurila, 2008, p. 326; Skouloudis, Evangelinos & Malesios, 2013, p. 95; Frooman, 1999, pp. 191-192; Holmes & Smart, 2009, p. 406). The relevance of understanding the NGO viewpoint has strengthened given the study’s findings of differing views between the NGOs and Arla on for instance the concreteness and level of involvement in collaboration as well as the level of reporting on developments in CSR initiatives. The consequences of such deeper, two-sided understanding of the relationship between NGOs and MNEs could lead to better collaborations in the future given mutual understanding of preferred collaboration types, collaboration objectives and anticipated benefits and impact. As seen in the findings section it was exactly for such differing views on human rights impact assessments that sparked conflict between Arla and Action Aid for instance. Hence in order to avoid such conflict and enable successful collaboration a two-sided view is key. This is backed up by scholars according to whom a limited view of generally the MNE side, seen as “the more powerful party” (Greenwood, 2007, p. 318), may lead to overly positive framing of the collaboration and green washing. Furthermore examining influence and value, such framing may push for inadequate portrayal of social

value and impact, overshadowed by MNE's financial value. This evidently raises the question of whether, given such unequal, controversial value and impact assessments, the actual societal and environmental value of collaboration could be refuted and the reason for NGO-MNE collaboration questioned given their limited impact.

In terms of the sustainability field this is key especially in industries such as food and dairy production. It is due to the urgent need for increased sustainable business practices, given the industry's harmful effects on the environment and increased social dilemmas outlined in section 2.5. As stakeholder engagement and more specifically NGO-MNE collaboration offers one viable solution to addressing these effects, the development of such collaborations to offer highest value and impact would be key. My study has aimed at contributing to such an effort by exactly offering a two-sided perspective on existing collaborations in terms of type, length, value and influence. Although in itself my study provides useful insights on NGO-MNE collaboration for both scholars and practitioners, it further raises interesting questions and themes for exploration in future research, which will be explored next.

5.2. Further implications for scholars and practitioners

Having addressed the research problem of NGO influence on MNEs, what still needs to be explored is the further implications of my findings in order to ground my study in context. In this section I hence dig deeper into selected key findings that arose from the research and should be explored further in the future. These include questions such as firstly given discrepancies whether pioneering in CSR should suppose high level of involvement and value? Or can lower involvement such as dialogue prove to be valuable? Secondly who should take responsibility over collaboration and social responsibility in general? Thirdly how does the move from confrontation to collaboration show possible future developments? Through addressing these questions arising from my findings I aim to open up the scene for future research and finally conclude the study with overall suggestions for successful collaboration between NGOs and MNEs.

5.2.1. Pioneering supposing high involvement and value

As argued by Trapp (2014, pp. 42-43) despite wide theoretical discussion on stakeholder engagement and ideal types, there are significant limitations to studies on the extent of

company cases fitting these types. In terms of this argument the case of Arla is especially interesting due to the MNE's widely acknowledged pioneer position in CSR and lengthy collaboration with NGOs supposing higher level of involvement. Given scholarly assumptions of developments from low to high involvement over time (Skouloudis, Evangelinos & Malesios, 2013, p. 108; Goodman, Korsunova & Halme, 2017, p. 8; Halme & Laurila, 2008, p. 336) Arla's most common low involvement type of dialogue, occurring in each interviewed case of collaboration, comes as a surprise. Despite developments from simple dialogue to multi-stakeholder platforms with longest partners such as WWF, from the NGO viewpoints such developments still lack in concreteness and higher-level involvement.

Given the frequency of such low involvement types then, it is interesting to witness however the presence of value and potential influence despite low involvement as argued by both NGO and MNE representatives (WRAP, Arla, Danish Heart Foundation). This gives way to questioning scholarly assertions of involvement and value going hand in hand, supporting higher involvement types of CSR integration and innovation over lower ones as argued by Halme and Laurila (2008), Kourula and Halme (2008) and Holmes and Smart (2009). By questioning such assertions my study opens up for future discussion on preferred types of collaboration and the possibility of high value, high impact collaborations with lower involvement initiatives as well. Although CSR integration and innovation vouch for longer-term positive outcomes given the business link of CSR, lower involvement may bring value in shorter term as well as outlined by Action Aid and WRAP's collaborations for instance. Here as knowledge and competence transfer occurred swiftly, value was generated already in the early phases of engagement. This is significant especially for those organizations with limited resources, given the assertion of resource-dependence of higher involvement projects. Hence for such organizations collaboration with NGOs could be initiated at an earlier stage with limited resources bringing potential value faster, encouraging future collaborations of any type and breadth. Furthermore given the largely MNE-sided viewpoints of engagement, as depicted earlier the value of CSR is often measured as financial value rather than social value. This points to the general supporting of CSR integration and innovation over lower involvement types, given their business and hence income-linkage (Yaziji, 2004, pp. 110-114).

However, despite such exceptions in general the conclusions from my findings point towards higher involvement bringing higher value and impact as outlined earlier. There are however preconditions which may speed up the value generation from lower, shorter involvement initiatives including value alignment, mutual understanding and business connection as explored in the findings section (Kourula & Halme, 2008, p. 562; Holmes & Smart, p. 395; Arla Lundén Pettersson, Danish Heart Foundation; Action Aid). Such a connection to core business may lead lower involvement types such as dialogue to be regarded as a form of CSR integration, which again breaks the sharp divisions between types in theory. Such integration is exemplified by Arla and the Danish Heart Foundation through changes in product offerings or the Danish Society for Nature Conservation's impact on Arla's farmer behavior. Furthermore such impact resulting from dialogue points towards Trapp's (2014, p. 43) dialogue over information strategies, where the involvement of NGOs in MNE decision-making is needed for high value and influence. However despite such a need, in Arla's case the dialogue is still rather informational in most cases and should be developed further (Action Aid, WWF UK). Overall such discrepancies in findings as outlined in this section open up for further research on case-by-case differences and influencing effectiveness more specifically in relation to type of involvement (Skouloudis, Evangelinos & Malesios, 2013, pp. 96- 97; Frooman 1999, pp. 191-192).

5.2.2. Responsibility over initiation, reporting and tracking

Moving on to the second theme to be discussed, a highly interesting finding is around the question of who is more duty-bound when it comes to collaboration between NGOs and MNEs? This further links to the question of which of the actors should be more active in establishing collaborations and tracking the results of such collaborations? In order to begin to address these questions, further intended for future research, one may begin by questioning the responsibility over sustainability and CSR more generally in society. As the scholarly discussion points out MNE responsibility over social issues has arisen given various factors. These include the inability of governments and transnational organizations to act alone, the high economic power of MNEs carrying responsibility, the increasing public demand for CSR extending MNEs' social contracts and increasing need for social legitimacy of MNEs in order for survival (Yaziji, 2004, pp. 110-111; Holmes & Smart, 2009, p. 395; Yaziji & Doh, 2009, p. 33). Despite these views following the stakeholder approach, others may still question the moral agency of MNEs following the shareholder

approach, building the current debate explored in chapter two (Moore, 1999, pp. 329-330; Banerjee, 2008, pp. 58-61; Hillman & Keim, 2001, p. 125). Whether one follows one camp or the other, more research should be conducted on real life cases and both NGOs' and MNEs' views on their responsibility.

Interestingly in Arla's case the lack of initiation of collaboration was argued to be based on lack of initiation and invitation from Arla, a lack of resources and the need for independence. Here interestingly the responsibility of actors is similarly as to scholarly arguments pinned down to economic power and resources (Arla, German Animal Protection Federation). This would point to the MNE moral agency argument, although the reasons for initiation and collaboration may be judged as largely based on potential value generated rather than simply acting as responsible actors. Furthermore as outlined in the findings chapter, the initiation is commonly based on differing causes from MNE and NGO sides. For the former it is for value generation and conflict preemption whereas for the latter it may be for conflict resolution or improvement in practices as in Action Aid's case (Arla, Action Aid, WWF UK). Given these reasons for initiation one may question whether NGOs' initiation is more based on responsibility and moral agency claims while MNEs' for value and profit claims. This may be tied down to the organizations' missions: for MNEs, despite the widening of stakeholders to be addressed, primary stakeholders are generally regarded in higher importance, while for NGOs it is the wider public and society (Yaziji & Doh, 2009, p. 33; Banerjee 2008, p. 58-61; Moore, 1999, pp. 329-330). This subject is again ripe for further exploration leading to the relevant questioning of whether the developments in the CSR field and sustainable development in society at large are at risk given the lack of accountability and responsibility on either side?

In addition to initiation, the tracking of influence is of high interest in the studied data. As the findings display many studied NGOs in fact do not systematically track the developments following their engagement with Arla. The reasons for this are again pinned down to limited resources and time in some cases, while trust prevailing in others (WWF UK, Swedish Consumers' Association, WWF Sweden). This again relates to the issue of responsibility tied to economic resources in the first case and MNE accountability and moral agency in the second case. Whatever the reasons behind the lack of tracking, what should be explored is its implications for society at large. Evidently without systematic

tracking of developments, the societal value and impact of collaboration cannot be efficiently assessed. This may further cause the questioning of the purpose of collaboration as explored earlier and lead to cases of green washing and overly positively framing the collaborations for MNE financial benefits over societal ones (Greenwood, 2007, p. 318; Halme & Laurila, 2008, p. 326; Frooman, 1999, pp. 191-192; Holmes & Smart, 2009, p. 406).

5.2.3. Developments from confrontation to collaboration

The final theme to be explored in this paper and potentially furthered in future research is the development from confrontation to collaboration. As studied in Arla's case with Action Aid, the possibility of moving from direct confrontation to fruitful collaboration opens up an optimistic view for future developments. The significance of such developments can be explained through the higher financial value (competitive advantage, cost savings, reputation) and social value (societal, environmental impact) generated from collaboration than from confrontation and the time and resources saved as argued by both scholars and interviewees (Halme & Laurila, 2008, p. 336; Skouloudis, Evangelinos & Malesios, 2013, p. 96; Yaziji, 2004, p. 110; Arla, Action Aid, German Animal Protection Federation). Hence in order for social value to be generated in terms of alleviating environmental and social harm from the dairy industry for instance, more collaborative engagement forms should be cherished. Advancements in this area could further more collaborative engagements and possibly develop those currently in confrontation to collaboration such as Action Aid or possibly Greenpeace discussed in the findings chapter.

A further interesting exploration from Arla's case is related to the selection of partners to engage with. Here the selection process is largely based on reputation, where Arla's initiation of collaboration is generally with NGOs with good reputation. On the other hand from the NGO viewpoint collaborations with companies causing reputational harm are avoided in the Swedish Consumers' Association's case. This occurrence is backed up by scholars as well (Yaziji, 2004, p. 112; Holmes & Smart, p. 394-395). Such a notion of reputation affecting collaboration opens up the contradiction of whether such selection criteria is in fact counterintuitive in achieving social impact. This is since MNEs with bad reputations in terms of CSR would probably be in highest need of changed practices and impact from the NGO side, given their knowledge and expertise. Hence if individual

reputation and independence is deemed as key criteria for collaboration, the highest potential value may not be achieved in these cases if rather confrontation strategies are used. This, together with the other outlined subjects, should be further explored in future research. Finally having contributed to the current gap in research on NGO viewpoints on collaboration and accounted for further areas of exploration, I now turn to outlining the limitations of my research after which I provide final conclusions and actionable suggestions for practitioners.

5.3. Limitations

Finally in regards to limitations there are various aspects to consider as depicted in section 3.5. Firstly due to the study's qualitative nature, it being restricted to the context of the European dairy industry and a single MNE and selected NGOs, the findings are not representative of wider contexts. However overall the research offers extensive insights on the NGO collaboration of one of the biggest dairy companies pioneering in CSR and sustainable business practices. Hence despite generalizability not being possible, the study may provide valuable insights for both companies and academics in the field on how to successfully execute CSR initiatives and how this is linked to collaboration with external stakeholders.

Secondly due to issues with access, an unbalanced number of NGOs were interviewed per country. This evidently has the effect of representing mainly NGOs' views operating in Denmark, with 4 interviews, while those in Germany, 1 interview, are limited. However as the collaboration is not as such country-based, with Arla collaborating highly with NGOs in each of their four main markets, I do not believe this causes a substantial limitation. Furthermore with two representatives joining the interview in WWF UK's case, I do not believe this creates issues given the main reason to add knowledge otherwise limited on the topic of collaboration.

Thirdly as explored in section 3.5 some limitations to data collection access such as geographical dispersion pushing for the use of structured interviews due to their taking place over the telephone may cause some limitations to the depth of my findings. Furthermore from Arla's side, by interviewing representatives from the CSR department it may be questioned whether their opinions are representative of the wider organization.

Hence the interviewee's focus and closeness to CSR and NGO collaboration was to be kept in mind when considering the findings, as they may put higher emphasis on NGO collaboration's importance.

Similarly the subjectivity and bias involved in the study is evidently present, although aimed at being minimized as outlined in chapter 3. This is the case for both the researcher as well as the interviewees, who due to the sensitivity of the topic may portray the collaboration overly positively. Finally as the previous research on the topic is limited due to the newness of the phenomenon of NGO-MNE collaboration, the lack of previous data evidently weakens the theoretical backing of my study. However on the other hand this strengthens the purpose of my study and its relevance in contributing to the currently limited field.

6. CONCLUSION

This research study has shed light on the currently underexplored perspective of NGOs in relation to their impact and value generated from collaborating with MNEs. The relevance of such exploration is based on scholarly arguments of studies on NGO-MNE collaboration being saturated by one-sided, managerial perspectives focusing on financial over social benefits and lacking insights on possible influencing potential (Halme & Laurila, 2008, p. 336; Frooman, 1999, pp. 191-192; Wernick, 2011, p. 13; Greenwood, 2007, p. 318). Moreover given the increasing urgency of CSR especially in industries with harmful effects on the environment, solutions for counteracting such harms is needed. One solution is regarded as MNE engagement with stakeholder groups such as NGOs, providing expertise, knowledge, networks and resources to solve such global issues in the sustainability field (Wernick, 2011, p. 44; Wadham, 2009, p. 60; Carroll & Shabana 2010, p. 92). Despite rising scholarly interest on the topic, the practical implementation of such collaboration is currently challenging.

This is what my study aims at reacting to through a qualitative case study on global dairy cooperative Arla Foods and the company's collaboration with 9 NGOs in the European context. In studying the practical implementation of collaboration I focus on specific aspects of collaboration, namely value, type and length in addressing the main research question of how do NGOs influence MNE's CSR initiatives?. These focus areas were selected based on previous research's assumption of type, length and value of collaboration having an effect on influence (Holmes & Smart, 2009, p. 397; Frooman, 1999, p. 195; Oates, 2013, p. 52; Stafford, Polonsky & Hartman, 1998, p. 3).

Overall most of the findings of my study show correspondence to previous research, although some discrepancies exist, highlighting interesting points for further exploration in the future. Firstly on areas of correspondence, overall in Arla's case with longer duration, higher level of involvement there seems to be higher potential value generated and influence asserted on MNEs. This is mainly caused by the frequent contact between the two parties, the building of trust and mutual understanding over time and the requirements for resource investments in the relationship. Examples of such high involvement types include infrequent projects and partnerships with a few NGOs while dialogue, a lower involvement initiative, is the most common in the case of Arla (Halme & Laurila, 2008, p.

336; Kourula & Halme, 2008; Frooman, 1999, p. 195). Furthermore through attempting high value, in terms of informational, reputational or network benefits for instance, an MNE's competitive advantage may be furthered simultaneously giving NGOs power and legitimacy claims as argued by scholars (Wernick, 2011, p. 44; Yaziji, 2004, pp. 110-114; Wadham, 2009, p. 60). Such benefits are regarded at Arla as developing over time with especially higher involvement initiatives.

However despite such overall correspondence with scholarly arguments, in Arla's case discrepancies were noticeable. Firstly on collaboration type and duration, even shorter-term dialogue-based engagement has resulted in influence in the case of WRAP or Action Aid for instance. From these findings one may question the clear-cut connection between level of involvement and influence, shedding positive light on lower involvement initiatives as well, which require significantly less resources and time. Secondly although my study focused mainly on the engagement form of collaboration, it has shed light on confrontation as well, given Action Aid and Arla's engagement being sparked from conflict. Here the possibility for entering in collaboration through other means than friendly initiation was studied, exploring further how developments between engagement types are possible. Finally my study looked at the rather debatable issue of responsibility over collaboration, where although initiation took place from Arla's side in most cases, pointing toward the company's responsibility and moral agency, it may be argued that further NGO initiation could be profitable in terms of furthering societal sustainability, especially with MNEs of "bad cases" in terms of reputation.

Finally looking forward with actionable suggestions for practitioners, my study may be seen as providing several recommendations for successful NGO-MNE collaboration. Firstly in order to obtain highest value from engagement, collaborative forms seem to be favored over confrontational ones. This includes and is especially vital for organizations with lacking CSR initiatives, irresponsible practices or placed in controversial industries in terms of sustainability. Secondly from the wide range of collaborative engagement types, longer-term higher involvement types of projects and partnerships tend to generate higher value and impact both financially and socially. However given limitations of resources or capabilities in some cases, lower involvement types such as dialogue may result in fruitful impact and value as well. Hence the selection of type tends to be linked to internal capabilities as according to the RBV. Thirdly in order for full potential value and impact to

be generated, systematic reporting of and tracking of developments on both sides should be enhanced furthering transparency, common understanding and agreements on both sides. These suggestions aim to react to the current challenges of implementing collaboration, attaining value on both sides and ensuring long-termism of relationships and should be further explored in future research across cases and contexts for more broader-scale implications (Yaziji, 2004, p. 110; Holmes & Smart, p. 394-395; Wernick, 2011, p. 22; Halme & Laurila, 2008, p. 336).

Although my study has not aimed at generalizations outside the selected context, given its qualitative nature, the findings should be regarded as of high value. By studying rather successful collaborations between NGOs and a MNE pioneering in CSR my study enhances the understanding on how to develop stakeholder collaboration and through it increase value generation and societal impact. By placing the study in the context of the dairy industry, a rather controversial industry in terms of environmental responsibility, the findings show positive implications on how MNEs even in such industries facing various challenges may successfully engage in CSR initiatives together with NGOs. My study may hence be used as a stepping-stone for future research exploring NGO influence, developments from confrontation to collaboration and overall responsibility over collaboration, each topic ripe for further exploration.

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8. APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Interview guide for NGO representatives

Introduction and Background

Researcher introducing purpose and background of research, interview structure, asks permission for recording and anonymity

1. What is your NGOs area of focus?
2. What is your current/previous position(s) and how does it relate to collaboration with Arla Foods?
3. How long have you been collaborating with Arla?

NGO-MNE collaboration

4. In what ways does your NGO collaborate with Arla if at all? (Can you give concrete examples; dialogue, workshops, meetings etc.)
5. Do you view your NGO is able to influence Arla's CSR initiatives? If so, how? (please give concrete examples)
6. How can you tell whether you have had an influence on Arla? (Does it transfer to certain initiatives at Arla or does it get reported on?)
7. What are the benefits you get from the collaboration?
8. Who initiates the initial collaboration and current engagement?
9. How often do you collaborate/communicate with Arla?
10. Who are your main contact persons at Arla? (Are they from the CSR department or from others as well?)
11. Are you satisfied with the collaboration and level of involvement?
12. How could this collaboration be improved? (In terms of higher involvement in Arla's initiatives, better communication, organization of collaboration)
13. What is your view of NGO-MNE collaboration more generally in the dairy industry? (balance, communication, engagement)
14. How would you envision a "perfect" collaboration between a NGO and MNE? What would it consist of?

Thanking for the time and participation, possible further questions/comments from interviewee.

Appendix 2: Interview guide for MNE representatives

Introduction and Background

Researcher introducing purpose and background of research, interview structure, asks permission for recording and anonymity

1. What is your current position and how does it relate to collaboration with NGOs?
2. Who in Arla is in charge of the collaborations? (Is it mainly the CSR department or others?)
3. How long has Arla had collaboration with NGOs in general?
4. What areas does your collaboration focus on? (social, environmental sustainability, both?)
5. Which NGOs do you collaborate with and where? (main markets or elsewhere?)

NGO-MNE collaboration

6. How do you select NGOs for collaboration?
7. Generally who initiates the collaboration? How much does Arla control the activities?
8. Can you give an example when collaboration started from the initiation of an NGO? How did they approach Arla?
9. What is the most common type of collaboration (e.g. dialogue, projects, workshops)?
10. Why the specified type of collaboration, why not others?
11. Can you think of other possible collaboration activities you have together with NGOs?
12. Does your type of collaboration with NGOs change over time? (e.g. moving from initial dialogue to concrete projects later on)
13. In your opinion how does the type of collaboration affect the influence NGOs may have on Arla's CSR initiatives?
14. At Arla how do you assess the effects of collaboration? (e.g. the influence NGOs have on your CSR, do you report it etc.)
15. Why do you collaborate with NGOs? What are the benefits for both parties?

16. Can you think of what could be improved in collaboration with NGOs?
17. Are you satisfied with the collaboration and involvement?
18. Can you give a concrete example of an NGO you have high engagement with?
(briefly explain type, length, benefits and influence)
19. Can you give a similar example of one you have low engagement with?
20. What is your view of NGO-MNE collaboration more generally in the dairy industry? (balance, communication, engagement)
21. How does Arla position itself in the dairy industry?

Thanking for the time and participation, possible further questions/comments from interviewee.

Appendix 3: Description of NGOs

Action Aid	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Human rights based development organization operating in 45 countries since 1972 • Focus on human rights issues, sustainable development, climate, responsible tax behavior, conflict and crisis resolution • On dairy sector focus on farmer conditions and rights and environmental footprint (Action Aid; Action Aid, 2017)
Danish Heart Foundation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Denmark's second largest patient organization in operation since 1962 • Over 143 thousand members • Focus on cardiovascular disease prevention, treatment, research and counseling • On dairy sector concentration on health, nutrition and safety in regards to food and drink (Danish Heart Foundation; Danish Heart Foundation, 2016)
Danish Diet and Nutrition Association	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on working conditions, wage levels, educational systems around public gastronomy such as hospitals, schools • Influencing politics around food and health; malnutrition, obesity, food for elderly • On dairy sector focus on health, nutrition and safety in regards to food and drink (Danish Diet and Nutrition Association; Danish Diet and Nutrition Association, 2017)
Danish Society for Nature Conservation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Denmark's largest nature conservation organization • Since 1911 focus on local work, lobbying, conservation projects • Focus on landscape conservation, biodiversity, emissions, waste and water • 130 thousand members • On dairy sector focus on ecological footprint of dairy farming (Danish Society for Nature Conservation; Danish Society for Nature Conservation, 2017)
WWF Sweden	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Operations since 1971 focusing on environmental sustainability (biodiversity, natural resources, aquatic

	<p>environments, landscapes, ecological footprint)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Branch of WWF network, operating in over 100 countries with over five million supporters • On dairy sector focus on landscapes, ecological footprint of dairy farming and sustainable supply chains (production and trade) <p>(WWF Sweden; WWF, 2017b; WWF, 2017c)</p>
Swedish Consumers' Association	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Since 1990s working as an independent federation consisting of 23 member organizations • Focus on strengthening consumer power and position through mainly political influence • Areas of influence include food, financial services, digital rights, consumer rights • On dairy sector focus on consumer position and rights (safety, knowleagability, awareness of sustainability) <p>(Swedish Consumers' Association; Swedish Consumers' Association, 2017)</p>
German Animal Protection Federation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Animal welfare federation, currently largest in Germany with around 800 members since 1881 • Focus on all animal welfare issues from pet, wild to farm animals and animal testing • On dairy sector focus on living conditions of farm animals, insensitive production, male calves <p>(German Animal Protection Federation; German Animal Protection Federation, 2017)</p>
WWF UK	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Branch of WWF network, similarly to WWF Sweden • On dairy sector focus on the environmental impact of dairy production, specifically on areas of highest global biodiversity and focus on water usage <p>(WWF UK, Vijn, Perkins; WWF, 2017d)</p>
WRAP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on resource-efficiency and sustainability in the supply chain • Specific focus on food and drink, clothing and textiles as well as electrical and electronics • In operation since 2000 • On dairy sector focus on sustainability of food and drink production and consumption <p>(WRAP; WRAP, 2017)</p>

Appendix 4: List of NGO representatives

Country	Organization	Interviewee	Interviewee position	Area of focus	Interview date and duration
Denmark	Action Aid	Troels Børrild	Senior policy and advocacy advisor	Poverty alleviation	27.4.2017 48 minutes
	Danish Heart Foundation	Morten Ørsted Rasmussen	Head of the department on prevention and patient support	Prevention of cardiovascular diseases	18.4.2017 27 minutes
	Danish Diet and Nutrition Association	Kristine Bælum	Head of Professional Development	Health care and nutrition	26.4.2017 21 minutes
	Danish Society for Nature Conservation	Thyge Nygaard	Senior Agricultural Policy Officer	Conservation of natural habitat	8.5.2017 26 minutes
Sweden	WWF Sweden	Margareta Renström	Senior Advisor in Market Transformation	Environmentally and socially responsible production and trade of important commodities	18.4.2017 35 minutes
	Swedish Consumers' Association	Jan Bertoft	Secretary General	Consumer interests	16.5.2017 22 minutes
Germany	German Animal Protection Federation	Claudia Salzborn	Head of Animal Welfare Department	Animal welfare	1.6.2017 25 minutes
The UK	WWF UK	Sandra Vijn	Director,	Conservation of	14.6.2017

		Richard Perkins	Sustainable Food (WWF US) Food Agriculture and Land Use Specialist	natural habitat	60 minutes
	WRAP	Richard Swannell	Development Director, Food and drink team leader	Resource-efficiency and environmental effects	30.5.2017 36 minutes

Appendix 5: List of MNE representatives

Country	Organization	Interviewee	Interviewee position	Interviewee area of focus	Interview date and duration
Denmark	Arla Foods	Susanne Andersen	Senior Project Manager in CSR	Social sustainability and human rights	2.6.2017 36 minutes
Sweden	Arla Foods	Kjell Lundén Pettersson	Senior Manager in CSR	Environmental sustainability	2.6.2017 54 minutes