STRATEGIC POSITIONING: AN AUTHORIZED FRIEND OR FOE?

A research about the legitimacy of multi-stakeholder initiatives as strategy of development non-governmental organizations

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Preface and Acknowledgments

After a year of adventures in New York, France and Asia, I decided to come back to the Netherlands and finish what I had set into motion nearly a decade ago when I first attended college: getting a master's degree. I started this final adventure of academic life just after the last summer had ended and I am about to finish it now that a new summer is almost upon us. The master's thesis that lies before you has been written in a field that recently gained my attention. I chose the field of development cooperation because of my fondness for different cultures, countries and people and, as a teacher and Public Management student, because of my drive to do good for others. I was lucky enough to get an internship at Oxfam Novib where I could delve deeper into this area of research.

I want to use this preface as a way to thank everyone who has helped me or supported me in these last couple of months. First of all, I would like to thank my supervisor from the university, Albert Meijer, who provided me with tips and suggestions on how to improve my thesis. Secondly, I would like to do the same for my supervisor at Oxfam Novib, Johan Verburg, who made an effort to help me out whenever I was in need of advice. Furthermore, my gratitude goes out to my second reader, Margo Trappenburg, who helped me find a new path in my thesis after reading my research proposal and last but not least to the respondents who were willing to tell me their stories.

All that is left is to thank everyone who stands close to me and helped me out so much. Special thanks goes out to Leah who dedicated some of her (I am quite sure) precious time to correct big parts of my thesis from all the way across the world. I hope you know how grateful I am for this. Milou, who I just met at Oxfam Novib, for simply listening to me each time when I was suffering from a writer's block and for trying to answer some of my impossible questions. And above all, Ties, who had to endure my, sometimes endless, frustration. To him I would like to say: well done and thank you!

Sophie Verdaasdonk
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Abstract

In the last couple of decades a new platform for addressing wicked sustainable problems came into being: Multi-Stakeholder Initiatives (MSIs). In these initiatives, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) started to work alongside industrial companies to make the world a more sustainable place by encouraging companies towards better behaviour. Multi-Stakeholder Initiatives have been welcomed by some organizations as a promising new solution to influence corporate business, while others rejected the platform on grounds of improper practices such as green washing. The division between perspectives on MSIs makes one wonder how participating NGOs are looked upon. Is their decision to employ the MSI-method perceived as legitimate by their stakeholders? This question is essentially the central motif within this research that wonders which tactical choices participating NGOs make, how these choices are perceived by their authorizing environment, and what all of this means for their legitimacy.

This research looked into the matter of legitimacy of NGOs that employ MSI-strategies (as stated above) by creating two models. The first model demonstrated the four possible tactics NGOs can employ within MSIs: *friendly insider, critical insider, friendly outsider* and *critical outsider.* These tactics are dynamic in nature and can differ between *intended* tactics from NGOs and *perceived* tactics by its authorizing environment. The second model focused on figuring out the level of influence from the perceived tactics on the question of legitimacy and how this relation explained why MSI-strategies may or may not be seen as legitimate. The model did so by dividing legitimacy into the two categories: input and output legitimacy. Input legitimacy was measured by the criteria *civil behaviour, discursive behaviour, consensual behaviour* and *distinctive values behaviour,* output legitimacy by *effectiveness, empowerment* and *organizational capacity.*

Subsequently, these models were applied in practice through asking the authorizing environment of the non-governmental organization Oxfam Novib how legitimate they perceived the alignment of the organization's mission with its chosen MSI-strategy in the three MSI-cases: *Roundtable of Sustainable Palm Oil* (RSPO)*, Aquaculture Stewardship Council* (ASC) and *Roundtable Responsible Soy* (RTRS). As it turns out, organizations have the best chance to earn broad, homogeneous legitimacy by being on the inside of an MSI. It also matters for their legitimacy which of the four possible levels of tactics NGOs employ. NGOs need to choose their tactics carefully, because every single one of these approaches has its own ambiguous character that can be seen as more or less legitimate. Above all, organizations need to find adequate ways to communicate their chosen approaches to the outside world, given that the discovered breaches between intended and perceived strategies can, for the greater part, be attributed to insufficient management of stakeholders' perceptions by NGOs.

In the end, NGOs are most likely to obtain legitimacy while pursuing MSI-strategies when they are clear and unambiguous about their strategy. This means that these organizations need to choose their tactics carefully and publically endorse their intentions. If they manage to do so, while actively building alliances with other organizations, having sufficient human resources available and carrying out coherent internal policies, NGOs are most likely to be granted legitimacy by their authorizing environment and achieve their mission in the process.

Content

Abbreviations

Abbreviation	Explanation
ASC	Aquaculture Stewardship Council
COs	Conscientious Objectors
MSI	Multi-stakeholder initiative
NGO	Non-governmental organization
RSPO	Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil
RTRS	Roundtable on Responsible Soy
ShAD	Shrimp Aquaculture Dialogue
WWF	World Wide Fund for Nature

1. Introduction

1.1. Background

Once upon a time, in a country not that far away, existed a brave king who went by the name of Arthur. Together with his knights he fought many battles in order to save his beloved Britain from invaders. Every decision that needed to be made to keep his kingdom from getting harmed, was discussed around a specific table where Arthur congregated with his Knights: the Round Table. This special table had no head, symbolizing that all who sat at it were viewed upon as equals. Over the years the story of King Arthur has been researched, researched and researched even more by academics to find proof of his existence and the existence of the Knights of the Round Table. Whether or not scholars will ever agree upon him being a fictional tale or a true hero does not matter for the impact of his legacy. Even in modern day traces of his tale can be found all over the world.

In the last couple of decades a new form of a Round Table has arisen, known under the name of Multi-Stakeholder Initiatives. Multi-Stakeholder Initiatives are platforms where different groups and organizations – corporate businesses, non-governmental organizations and local actors – come together to work on sustainability issues (Fransen & Kolk, 2007). The organizations within such an initiative feel that governments have failed to take adequate actions to solve some major sustainability problems of this world and try to make up for this deficiency by putting their heads together in what is supposed to be an equal platform for contribution (hence the metaphor of the Round Table). The different actors within MSIs, therefore, aim at making the world a more sustainable place by putting up standards in different sectors (van Huijstee, 2012).

So far a fairytale like picture has been painted of Multi-Stakeholder Initiatives (MSIs). However, in practice, they are not always looked upon from this point of view. MSIs often struggle with legitimacy problems due to their ambitious goals, resulting in the appearance of questions such as: can MSIs be truly inclusive?; do these initiatives aim at equality?; and what is the actual impact MSIs are able to manifest? These questions demonstrate that MSIs are regularly the subject of criticism (Bäckstrand, 2006; Biermann, Man-san Chan & Pattberg 2007; Fransen & Kolk, 2007, van Huijstee, 2012; Mena & Palazzo, 2012; Schouten & Glasbergen, 2012). However, it is not just these initiatives that have to deal with the flow of criticism, the involved organizations get their fair share of comments as well. Especially non-governmental organizations (NGOs) who are critiqued by the outside world because of their liaison with the enemy, known as corporate businesses (van Huijstee, 2012). An example of the involvement of the development non-governmental organization Oxfam Novib with a specific MSI called the *Shrimp Aquaculture Dialogue* (ShAD), serves as an illustration of this. During their participation in the ShAD, Oxfam Novib encountered multiple critical NGOs who felt that Oxfam, as an international development organization, should not be engaging with this MSI and, in extension, help corporate businesses escape their responsibility. Oxfam Novib, a believer in the workings of the ShAD, tried to level with these critical NGOs by giving them a platform and by openly discussing both sides of the story, but as it turned out these attempts were done in vain. The two sides were too far apart to reconcile and as a direct consequence these NGOs started losing faith in Oxfam and brought the organization's legitimacy into question (Holzman, 2015; Pesqueira, 2014; R12).

As this example highlights, legitimacy of an organization can be fragile and it is important for every organization to have significant stakeholders on board with the vision and mission they try to embark upon the world. The importance of legitimacy and how it is granted in relation to MSI-strategies will be the central motif of this research paper.

1.2. Problem justification and limitation

Multi-Stakeholder Initiatives are relatively new phenomena in the world of sustainability. Approximately twenty years ago, different civil-society organizations such as NGOs started to make use of this new method with the purpose of influencing corporate businesses. For many of these NGOs the reason behind adopting this new method was and is the idea that MSIs can be helpful in moving companies towards more sustainable practices. However, not everyone, nor every organization agrees with this rationale. Plenty of organizations do not see the added value of alignments between NGOs and corporate businesses, and go as far as accusing NGOs that adopt the MSI-method of sleeping with the enemy (van Huijstee, 2012). In addition, these critical voices do not believe in the story of inclusiveness that MSIs tell. In their eyes, the balance between North and South (this means respectively Western and local organizations) often shifts in favor of Northern based organizations, making them the sole organizational representatives within MSIs. As a result, Southern organizations have fallen by the wayside. According to the opposing organizations, the question of representativeness is therefore still a big issue (Biermann, Man-san Chan & Pattberg, 2007). As one can see, based upon these critical voices, the legitimacy of NGO-motivation is not a given quite yet.

MSIs in themselves are a contested phenomenon. Many scholars in the last decade found pleasure in diving into this research area and put their findings about the legitimacy of MSIs into writing (Bäckstrand, 2006; Biermann, Man-san Chan & Pattberg 2007; Fransen & Kolk, 2007, van Huijstee, 2012; Mena & Palazzo, 2012; Schouten & Glasbergen, 2012). However, while doing this, they neglected to fully explore a specific subpart of this research area: the matter of legitimacy of NGOs that adopt the strategy of MSIs. This can be seen as curious since numerous papers on legitimacy of NGOs have been written (Atack, 1999; Baur & Palazzo, 2011; Korten, 1987; Ossewaarde, Nijhof & Heyse, 2008; Suchman, 1995), just not in combination with the use of this specific strategy to influence corporate behavior.

Legitimacy has been researched, because it can be seen as a crucial component of organizational survival. As Moore (2000) puts it: legitimacy guarantees *"the sustainability of the enterprise"* (p.199) by mobilizing necessary stakeholders that can contribute to the pursuit of the mission. Why legitimacy of NGO usage of MSI-strategies has never been fully explored, then, remains a mystery, but it does expose the existence of a knowledge gap in literature. As can be expected, this gap was chosen to be the focus of this research paper and provides both the justification for writing this paper as the limitation of the research subject. Any research that can contribute knowledge in general is justified, which makes this paper with its outlook on MSI-strategy of NGOs inherently valuable given that the research on the legitimacy of NGO strategies is scarce. Furthermore, the gap marks the boundaries of this research by making the perspectives explicit: this research is not about the legitimacy of MSIs in itself, nor about the overall legitimacy of an NGO. It is solely about the legitimacy of MSIs as a strategy. However, the legitimacy of specific parts of NGO activities can of course enhance the overall legitimacy of NGOs without it being the main goal. To bring the scope of

limitation to a close, Table 1 has been constructed to provide an overview of the new part of the research area of NGO and MSI legitimacy by stating the central terms used within this paper:

Table 1: Important terms and their definitions within this research paper.

Term	Definition
Development non-governmental organization (NGO)	*"Development NGOs are formal (professionalized) independent societal organizations whose primary aim is to promote common goals at the national or the international level"* within their four main areas of work: humanitarian relief, long-term development, policy formation and political advocacy.* (Martens, 2002, p.282; based upon: Atack, 1999, p.855; Korten, 1987)
Multi-Stakeholder Initiative (MSI)	*An MSI can be defined as a platform for dialogue and collaboration between stakeholders that tries to sustainably improve business practices by discussing existing problems, implementing joint solutions and learning from past endeavors.* (based upon: Fransen & Kolk, 2007; van Huijstee, 2012; Pattberg & Widerberg, 2014; CSR Asia, 2015)
Authorizing environment (stakeholders)	*The authorizing environment of NGOs consists of stakeholders such as donors, corporate businesses, other NGOs, governments, media and people from within the own organization. Together they can provide the necessary authoritative support to an organization, therefore making the actions of this organization valuable.* (based upon: Hall et al., 2003; Balser & McClusky, 2005; Moore, 2000; 2013; Walker & Marr, 2001)
Mission	*The mission of an organization provides the basis upon which organizational legitimacy can be granted.* (based upon: Balser & McClusky, 2005; Moore, 2000; Ospina, Diaz & O'Sullivan, 2002)
Legitimacy:	*"Legitimacy is a generalized perception or assumption that the actions of an entity are desirable, proper, or appropriate within some socially constructed system of norms, values, beliefs, and definitions."* (Suchman, 1995, p.574).

1.3. Purpose of the study

MSIs are argued to be a new way for NGOs to sustainably influence corporate practices. The number of MSIs has increased over time and their existence has become more established. Not only has the knowledge about what MSIs actually do and what they entail expanded, but their overall influence has also grown (van Huijstee, 2012). Please note that 'overall' is an important word in this context, because not all MSIs have seen an increase in influence or can be considered established. To further explain this, it needs to be clear that MSIs in general have always been the subject of criticisms. They have always been seen as controversial, though the reasons why have changed over time (Biermann, Man-san Chan & Pattberg, 2007; Schouten, Leroy & Glasbergen, 2012). In the beginning, all MSIs were criticized the same way. Opposing organizations saw MSIs as opportunities for companies to 'green wash' their activities. This accusation means that these organizations can pretend to be environmentally 'green' by marketing their involvement in different MSIs without actually or minimally changing their practices (Dahl, 2010). However, with the expansion of knowledge over

time, the distinctions between different MSIs became clearer. As a result, some were seen as more legitimate and influential than others, making some of them more or less controversial than others. This applied to the involved actors within an MSI as well. In the earlier days, if an organization was against the use of MSIs they were consequently against all actors involved. This view became less clear-cut later on. Today, disapproval and criticism seem to depend more on how the actors are involved than that they are involved (van Huijstee, 2012; R1; R13).

Despite the fact that criticism has changed over the years, it still exists and MSIs are still in some way seen as contentious. The example of criticism of Oxfam Novib in the ShAD from earlier on in this chapter shows that NGOs often need to explain their chosen path. To help them do this, or to better pinpoint why their strategy is not seen as legitimate, this research aims to develop a model for evaluation. By means of this model, NGOs will receive more insight into the tensions surrounding their involvement in and their use of MSIs. At the same time, by applying this model in practice, these NGOs will see how they can improve their own practices, which strategic choices they have to make to be seen as legitimate and subsequently how they could improve their influence on corporate practices.

1.4. Research question
In order to make the world a more sustainable place, NGOs have taken it upon themselves to influence and enhance corporate practices with different strategies, the latest strategy being private and public partnerships where MSIs are a part of. The challenges surrounding the use of this concept of Multi-Stakeholder Initiatives for NGOs (in combination with the aim of this research paper to provide a model for evaluating legitimacy) beg the question how the MSI-strategy of development NGOs can actually become legitimate. An interesting question, however, it is also a question that cannot be answered. As will later be explained in detail, organizations are granted legitimacy for their actions by their authorizing environment. This authorizing environment consists out of different stakeholders with dynamic and versatile opinions. This means that, despite an organization's best effort, there will always be stakeholders who disagree with certain approaches. The question, therefore, should not be how NGOs will indefinitely be granted legitimacy, but should be more in line with:

When are NGOs most likely to receive legitimacy for their strategies of Multi-Stakeholder Initiatives?

The research question will be answered both theoretically and empirically. The theoretical sub-questions will provide a contribution to the existent knowledge gap in academic literature. The empirical sub-questions will add to the understanding of what a development NGO needs to do in order to have its MSI-strategy seen as legitimate by applying it in practice.

1.4.1. Theoretical sub-questions
The theoretical sub-questions of this research consist of three questions, as followed:

1. *How can we understand development NGOs usage of MSIs as a strategy?*

This question will provide insight into the different strategies development NGOs have used in the past and are using today to influence corporate business. Seeing that MSIs are part of these strategy

plans, these specific initiatives are explained and defined. The aim of this sub-question is to display an overview of the linkage between NGOs and MSIs and to construct a model that displays which tactics NGOs can use within MSIs.

2.   *Which criteria can be used to assess the legitimacy of MSI-strategies of NGOs?*

With this question, the knowledge gap within current academic literature in regard to the use of MSI-strategies by NGOs will be explored and clarified by combining existing knowledge about legitimacy of NGOs and legitimacy of MSIs with each other. The emphasis will, therefore, lie upon the question of how legitimacy is granted and achieved.

3.   *How can we evaluate the legitimacy of MSI-strategies within NGOs?*

In response to this last sub-question, a model will be constructed that can serve as an evaluation tool for NGO legitimacy in regard to MSI-strategies.

1.4.2. Empirical sub-questions
The constructed model for evaluation, outlined through the means of the theoretical sub-questions, will be put into practice by the empirical sub-questions. To see how this model applies in day-to-day operations a specific case study has been chosen: the development organization Oxfam Novib.

Oxfam Novib has engaged with many MSIs in the last decade. They were part of these MSIs nearly from day one and therefore learned how to work with them through a 'learning-by-doing' method. As can be expected with such an approach, these engagements have been more or less successful in the past, making the road towards a consistent MSI-approach quite the challenge for Oxfam Novib (Holzman, 2015; Pesqueira, 2014). The frequent engagement and the obstacles they encountered have made this organization an ideal case study for this research. Two empirical sub-questions have been outlined to dive deeper into the matter:

1.   *How does Oxfam Novib's mission relate to the legitimacy of engaging in the Multi-Stakeholder Initiatives RSPO, RTRS and ASC?*

In this section the choices for (not) joining the three MSI-cases *Roundtable of Sustainable Palm Oil* (RSPO)*, Aquaculture Stewardship Council* (ASC) and *Roundtable Responsible Soy* (RTRS) will be explored on ground of the mission. Both from the perspective of Oxfam Novib as its authorizing environment. In addition, the connection will be made with what this does for the legitimacy of the organization.

2.   *How does Oxfam Novib's tactics influence its legitimacy?*

Within three sections the chosen strategy/tactic in relation to the RSPO, RTRS and ASC will be presented from the point of view of Oxfam Novib and the stakeholders. Each time, the intended strategy and perceived strategy will be compared with one another and the link with legitimacy will be made. In the last section, Section 4.6, overall conclusions on how strategies influence legitimacy will be drawn.

1.5. Significance

This research can be seen as significant due to the fact that it serves both a scientific and an empirical purpose.

1.5.1. Scientific relevance

As mentioned, up until now scholars have omitted paying attention to the legitimacy of MSIs as a strategy of NGOs. The scholars solely focused on legitimacy of NGOs or legitimacy of MSIs and neglected to make the connection between these two aspects, creating a gap in knowledge. This research aims to fill this void by specifically focusing on the issue of legitimacy of NGOs using MSI-strategies. It does so by displaying an overview of what has been researched so far and, through these different perspectives, by building up towards the creation of a new model. This model consists of different criteria which combined can serve as an evaluation tool for NGOs in regard to MSI-strategies. In addition, this research can fill the void by creating an overview of possible tactics NGOs can opt for when they are carrying out MSI-strategies. Through the combination of both models, NGOs can figure out what the most legitimate way to approach MSIs is.

Furthermore, this research is scientifically relevant due to the fact that MSIs are currently growing in number, starting to become more widely known and, in some cases, more influential (van Huijstee, 2012). It is a relatively new area of research for scholars where every new bit of information can help to enhance understanding of this phenomenon. In addition, this research can be seen as scientifically relevant because of its contribution to the already existing literature on the legitimacy of NGOs. In a time where relations between NGOs and their stakeholders are shifting – as can be seen in the number of private-public partnerships that have arisen (van Huijstee & Glasbergen, 2010a; van Huijstee & Glasbergen, 2010b; Rondinelli & London, 2003) – this research can especially make a solid contribution to the research on these new types of collaboration. In sum, this research is scientifically relevant because it opens up new ways of looking at the legitimacy of NGOs and MSIs by expanding the current knowledge through their combination.

1.5.2. Social relevance

The social relevance of this research is twofold. On the one hand it is socially relevant at a broader organizational level, more specifically at the level of the sectoral NGO field. Concretely, this research will provide one organization with insights of what their choice to use MSIs as a strategy does for their legitimacy (Oxfam Novib has been chosen as case study for this research), but it will also give other NGOs in the same field insights of how this applies to them. The knowledge ambition, therefore, is more substantial than to solely improve the knowledge of one organization and may help the sectoral NGO field to enhance its legitimacy.

On the other hand this research is socially relevant at an organizational level, and in this case that means at the level of Oxfam Novib. Oxfam Novib came into existence in 1956 in the Netherlands and has since been an advocate for people who live below the poverty line (Oxfam Novib, 2014). Throughout their existence, Oxfam has used different strategies to try to influence corporate business and, in the end, fulfill their goal of eliminating poverty. The MSI- approach is one of the latest assets to this line of strategies and providing Oxfam with insights of how their actions are perceived by evaluating their level of legitimacy, can be seen as socially important and worthwhile. In

addition, the use of Oxfam Novib as case study allows for the application of the evaluation model (that will be constructed within this research) in practice.

1.6. Outline of the research

The content of this paper fits into five different chapters. Following this first chapter that serves as the introduction, Chapter 2 will present answers to the three theoretical sub-questions of this research. Each section of this chapter will attend to one of the questions. Within the first section, both development NGOs and MSIs will be defined and the linkage between the two will be established. Furthermore, the four possible levels of tactics NGOs can employ in relation to MSIs will be established and explored. The second section will explain the meaning of the concept of legitimacy and construct different criteria of legitimacy. These criteria will be combined in a research model that can be used as a model for evaluation of legitimacy. The third and last section will show the linkage between the four tactics and their causal relation with legitimacy. In addition, Chapter 3 will give an outline of the research design that will be used within this research and Chapter 4 will present the answers to the two empirical sub-questions of this research, divided in five sections. The first section will tell the story of how Oxfam Novib's mission relates to their decision to (not) join the different MSIs and what this does for their legitimacy. The second till the fifth section will shed light on the chosen strategies of Oxfam Novib within the RSPO, RTRS and ASC, how they are perceived and how it has influenced their legitimacy. Finally, Chapter 5 will provide the conclusion, recommendations and discussion of this research and will subsequently answer the main research question.

2. Theory

2.1. MSIs as a strategy for development NGOs to enhance business practices

2.1.1. What is a development NGO?

Up until this section, this research has been referring to non-governmental organizations (NGOs) as if the content of this term is common knowledge. However, the essence of what NGOs are has been discussed intensively over the years. Almost everyone seems to have some idea of what a non-governmental organization is and what this kind of organization does and they never hesitated to put it into writing. It appears, therefore, that there are many different definitions of NGOs that collide with each other, making it time to provide some clarification about how the term will be used within this research.

The term NGO was coined in the years just after World War II when the United Nations was founded (Martens, 2002; Simmons, 1998; Willetts, 2002). For years after that, the term NGO was only used in reference to organizations that worked internationally and were somehow connected to the United Nations (Martens, 2002). In the last couple of decades, however, the term started to outlive this definition. NGOs became, figuratively speaking, a force to be reckoned with in the international power system. Governments, international bodies and companies alike needed to find a way to work with these entities as they became influential on multiple levels (Martens, 2002; Simmons, 1998). According to Simmons (1998, p.84-87), the first level in which these NGOs became influential is the level of agenda setting. From the moment NGOs came into existence, they became known for their forceful nature. Bringing injustices or errors to light by forcing powerful entities to listen through launching public campaigns was their priority. Over the years this tactic remained important for the organizations, but the manner in which these campaigns got set up started to change and bridged the way for the existence of the second and third level. Within the second level, NGOs help to negotiate outcomes because of their relative neutral nature and within the third level, NGOs have the power to allocate legitimacy to corporations. They can do so by bending the public and political opinion towards one way or another by influencing audiences through their campaigns. Therefore, the judgments of NGOs count greatly on an international scale. Finally, at the fourth level, Simmons (1998) argues that NGOs can actually make solutions work. Since NGOs are capable of going behind enemy lines by being relatively neutral, they have the means to verify if agreements become realized in practice and see to it that it becomes a public matter when executers fail to follow the rules of the agreement. Lately NGOs have found a way to go outside the existing power system: by establishing their own standards. It is in this relatively new system where the four influential levels of NGOs come full circle. Through being influential enough to bend the public opinion, NGOs make sure that their standards get on the agendas of governments, corporations and international institutes and consequently force these entities to follow their neatly constructed path towards incorporation of their own system of rules.

Despite the fact that NGOs have become this influential in practice and have also become a well-known subject for research, a clear definition about what the term 'NGO' actually entails (Martens, 2002; Simmons, 1998; Willetts, 2002) still does not exist. However, in 2002, Kerstin Martens comes up with a broad definition of the concept: *"NGOs are formal (professionalized) independent societal organizations whose primary aim is to promote common goals at the national or the international*

level." (p.282). This definition does not completely cover the meaning of the term NGO within this research since this paper specifically focuses on development NGOs. The definition therefore needs to be made more specific by including the four main areas of work of development NGOs as explained by David C. Korten: humanitarian relief, long-term development, policy formation and political advocacy (Atack, 1999, p.855; Korten, 1987). With this information, the definition of Martens (2002) as stated above can be expanded and from this point forward whenever the term NGO is mentioned in this research, the meaning of the following definition lies behind the concept:

> *Development NGOs are formal (professionalized) independent societal organizations whose primary aim is to promote common goals at the national or the international level within their four main areas of work: humanitarian relief, long-term development, policy formation and political advocacy.*
> (Martens, 2002, p.282; based upon: Atack, 1999, p.855; Korten, 1987)

The four different areas wherein development NGOs work were not an incidental phenomenon, rather, they have to do with strategic choices taken by development NGOs. According to Korten (1987), these four areas (humanitarian relief, long-term development, policy formation and political advocacy) are tied to the different strategies development NGOs have employed throughout the years. These strategies do not only co-exist, but are subsequent as well. As for the first area, humanitarian relief, development NGOs almost always start out with a humanitarian goal in mind. They usually come into existence when disaster strikes to help out the less fortunate of the world. At some point, however, these organizations figure out that providing the less fortunate with immediate help is, albeit being a good thing, not enough to solve the bigger issues that lie underneath these immediate needs. It is at that exact moment that they start using the second generation strategies of long-term developmental work. The NGOs want their aid to sustain long after they have left a certain area, so this second strategy aims to make the local people self-reliant. Even though this approach encompasses more than the first approach, it is still on a small scale. The focus stays with local people, NGOs and villages and does not expand to a broader political or institutional context. Within the third strategy, however, the NGOs do expand their horizons by working with governments and institutional bodies. After realizing that they cannot make significant changes to the lives of the less fortunate on their own, NGOs seek to work and negotiate with both private and public organizations (Atack, 1999; Korten, 1987).

According to Korten (1987), every single development NGO goes through these different generations of strategies. They all came into existence when the pressure was high (as often is the case after a disaster) and slowly but steadily started to realize how complex their work actually was. NGOs consequently sought out ways to adjust and evolve their existing strategies, hence Korten's notion of generations of strategies and the fact that they are subsequent and co-existent. As was stated before, when an NGO moves from one strategy onto the next one, the first strategy does not cease to exist. It still has its place in the organization, just in a different way: they "*are more appropriately applied to individual programs than to whole organizations*" (Korten, 1987, p.149). This is what happens with all three levels of strategies. So when an organization keeps developing their strategies, they in fact keep incorporating more and more means to get closer to their desirable ends (Atack, 1999).

2.1.2. Towards the strategy of Multi-Stakeholder Initiatives

In addition to the mentioned strategies, a fourth one, known as advocacy and campaigning gets acknowledged as well (Atack, 1999; Korten, 1987). This last one can be considered ambiguous for it has two possible faces: it can either be part of the neatly constructed line of generations of NGO development or it can be a strategy that is used single handedly. Where the previous three generations of strategies saw growth in NGO-relations to others, the campaigning strategy does not necessarily come attached with ties to different organizations. Some NGOs use the tactic of campaigning to get their points across without partnering up and without aiming at constructing forced dialogues. Other NGOs, however, use the same tactic in combination with other strategies. To them, this tactic is considered complementary to the other approaches and can even be conducted in collaboration with partners.

Despite the fact that NGOs have incorporated multiple strategies to influence corporate behavior, campaigning included, NGOs still have the image of being either a campaigning NGO or a collaborating NGO (van Huijstee & Glasbergen, 2010b; Willetts, 2002). An example of an NGO that belongs to the first category is Friends of the Earth Netherlands. Due to its *"aggressive actions and campaigns towards companies"* (van Huijstee & Glasbergen, 2010b, p.7), Friends of the Earth Netherlands can be seen as an advocacy organization that tries to shed light on environmental issues through confrontation. In contrast, World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) is known for its collaboration with different parties to bring the same environmental issues under attention (van Huijstee & Glasbergen, 2010b), and, therefore, can be seen as a representative of the second category. This does not mean that neither of these organizations employ different tactics as well, they just have preferred approaches (or are maybe simply perceived as such).

The distinction between the two kinds of NGOs can also be made in time. Throughout the existence of development NGOs, their main focus has always been helping the less fortunate of the world by aiming at constructively changing the business sector. In the earlier days, most NGOs did this by confronting the business sector through campaigns. Later on, however, many NGOs converted their campaigning approaches into collaborating approaches, because they recognized the added value of working together with companies to make sustainable and long-term changes to the environment and/or society (van Huijstee & Glasbergen, 2010a; van Huijstee & Glasbergen, 2010b; Rondinelli & London, 2003). The general thought is that if the cooperation is done properly it can be a win-win situation for both sides involved and a step forward for these organizations to achieve their goals (van Huijstee & Glasbergen, 2010a; Rondinelli & London, 2003).

The collaborating approach has especially reached its peak in the last decade. The first form of collaboration between NGOs and corporate businesses is known as the two sided partnership. Just as much as an NGO evolved from campaigning strategies to collaboration strategies, partnerships evolved as well. These alliances between two actors paved the way for collaborations between multiple actors in a complex environment. An example of these kinds of collaborations is Multi-Stakeholder Initiatives. Since the beginning of this century, MSIs have become an important way to challenge existing forms of authority within the sustainable field. This means that NGOs, in collaboration with corporate business, other NGOs, local communities, (local) governments and local smallholders, try to fill different gaps that global government policies regarding sustainability have left behind. These gaps were caused by the fact that neither national governments, nor businesses,

nor social societies on their own were able to provide solid solutions for sustainable problems. The different actors came to understand that they needed each other and global networks to regulate these issues together. Multi-Stakeholder Initiatives offer such platforms where all these different bodies can meet and combine their resources in a joint effort to solve sustainability problems (Fransen & Kolk, 2007; van Huijstee, 2012; Pattberg & Widerberg, 2014; CSR Asia, 2015).

As was the case with the term NGOs, a clear definition of what Multi-Stakeholder Initiatives entail cannot be given because there are differing views on which kind of collaboration (or interaction) can be given the label 'MSI'. Van Huijstee (2012) acknowledges that some people regard every dialogue between different stakeholders as MSIs, while others only regard well-organized and structured platforms as true MSIs. However, a common denominator can be found: "*They are interactive processes in which business, CSOs* [Civil Society Organizations] *and possibly other stakeholder groups interact to make business processes more socially and/or environmentally sustainable*" (van Huijstee, 2012, p.14). Therefore, MSIs can be distinguished from other collaborations between multiple stakeholders – such as multi-stakeholder dialogues or cross-sectoral partnerships – by the fact that they always involve more stakeholders at different levels than any other partnership. In addition, they can be distinguished from other collaborations by the fact that MSIs always go through specific (but different) phases throughout their existence: dialogue/negotiation, formalization, implementation and continuous improvement. Each specific stage has its own goals and function, but the boundaries of each phase are not set in stone. The longer MSIs exist, the more changes occur in focus and issue setting within MSIs and the more participants will change over time (van Huijstee, 2012).

Bearing in mind that there is no consensus on the definition of MSIs, let alone an official definition at all, it is hard to demarcate this concept. However, MSIs always consist of multiple stakeholders: businesses, non-governmental organizations, local communities, (local) governments and local smallholders (Fransen & Kolk, 2007; van Huijstee, 2012; Pattberg & Widerberg, 2014; CSR Asia, 2015). With this knowledge and the fact that MSIs go through different phases (van Huijstee, 2012), a definition can be made within the confines of this research, with the confines being that this research focuses on how MSIs as a strategy can become a tool for NGOs to enhance business practices:

> *An MSI can be defined as a platform for dialogue and collaboration between stakeholders that tries to sustainably improve business practices by discussing existing problems, implementing joint solutions and learning from past endeavors.*

2.1.3. Different approaches to Multi- Stakeholder Initiatives

Despite the fact that the formulation of the definition of MSIs makes the concept of these initiatives more transparent, many questions surrounding the concept still exist, especially when it comes to the objective of MSIs. Van Huijstee (2012) defines the different perspectives that practitioners, experts and scholars all have regarding motives why stakeholders choose to participate in these initiatives. Some see MSIs as the only way towards sectoral change, while others see it as one of many options. There are also people who see it as an instrument for implementing certification standards. These standards represent the minimal responsible behavior a sector should display. Since they cannot rely on formal authority, in their eyes, as many stakeholders as possible should be incorporated within the decision making process so that the standards will become established from

within. Finally, there are people who see MSIs as a last resort when all other options – that is strategies – have failed.

When NGOs are confronted with MSIs, different strategies are taken into consideration on how to handle this kind of situation. The most basal tactic that needs to be figured out is whether or not NGOs want to go forth with joining an MSI and how they should position themselves in relation to this MSI. Basically, their options come down to two approaches: they can either stay outside of the MSI and therefore be an outsider, or go inside of the MSI and be an insider. Both approaches have their benefits: outsiders have the benefit of being able to choose if they want to stay as far away as possible from the MSI or function as critical outsiders (meaning that they have the capacity to put on the pressure when an MSI seems to fail), while insiders have the benefit of being a part of the discussion group, giving them opportunities to contribute to the policies that are being drafted (van Huijstee, 2012; Pesqueira, 2014). However, these approaches might have drawbacks too. It is possible that outsider NGOs might only add something to the mix by criticizing what others do, not by making an actual contribution themselves, while insider NGOs may be in so deep that they cannot see the situation clearly anymore and may not be as influential as they hoped.

Despite the obvious difference between these two groups of insiders and outsiders, the actual separation may not be quite as self-evident as expected. Earlier on in this chapter, another division between two groups of NGOs was roughly sketched: the ones who campaign and the ones who collaborate. These groups with their different tactics need to be added to the mix in order to have a complete view of what it means to be an insider or an outsider of MSIs, given that NGOs pursue multiple strategies at the same time within their organization (Atack, 1999; van Huijstee, 2012; Korten, 1987). An example of this can be provided by Oxfam Novib. Oxfam Novib is known for its collaborating character on the one hand (where frequent engagements with MSIs play a big part of) and on the other hand, they also frequently opt for the tactic of campaigning, as is presently shaped by their latest campaign 'Behind the Brands'. This duality is perfectly summed up by Pesqueira & Verburg (2012): *"Oxfam chooses for a combination of insider-outsider approaches by which it is able to affect multi-stakeholder processes as member collaborating with companies, while remaining able to take an independent perspective and campaign against them."* (p. 137). According to the authors, this gives Oxfam the ability to enter dialogues with the private sector while staying true to their mission and core values.

As is highlighted by the example of Oxfam Novib, NGOs need to continually make the decision on how they are going to position themselves towards MSIs. These positions are not straightforward, since it is not solely campaigning NGOs that are the outsiders, nor can collaborating NGOs solely be called the insiders. The distinction is more nuanced. Insider and outsider roles, therefore, cannot be assigned a priori to specific NGOs. Each time, NGOs need to figure out what their strategy within a strategy is going to be. Table 2 provides an overview of the four possible tactics that they can employ, divided between the two groups of collaborating and campaigning NGOs and the insider and outsider roles:

Table 2: Four possible levels of MSI-tactics for NGOs.

	Insider	**Outsider**
Campaigning	Critical insider	Critical outsider
Collaborating	Friendly insider	Friendly outsider

Critical outsiders are NGOs that refuse to participate in a specific MSI, because they do not believe it serves the right causes. These NGOs therefore opt to remain outside of an MSI and critique what this MSI does through the means of campaigning and protests. The earlier mentioned Friends of the Earth Netherlands is an example of an NGO that often chooses this approach. *Friendly insiders* are the opposite of the critical outsiders. This group believes in the cause of an MSI and therefore opts to be on the inside while willingly working together with other participants, from both the inside as the outside. World Wide Fund for Nature is a good example of an NGO that often chooses this strategy. The group of *critical insiders* is more complex to explain. It contains NGOs that are willing to be inside of an MSI (and therefore willing to collaborate), while keeping the door to campaigning or outside criticasters open. They are highly critical of what an MSI does, but also feel that they can better influence the MSI-policies by critiquing from the inside out instead of functioning as an outsider. However, if this does not completely work out the way they planned, they resort to campaigning tactics in addition to their 'inside work'. Oxfam Novib, as was shown in the example above, often chooses for the tactic of campaigning insider. The last group *friendly outsiders* consists of NGOs that are in favor of collaboration, believe in the workings of an MSI, but still not directly engage with the MSI in question. One could call them either observers and advisors or NGOs who monitor and evaluate, thus having the role of a watchdog. No NGO clearly matches this profile; however, there is one group that might actually fit well into this category: governments. Governments never officially participate in MSIs, but monitor MSIs and are frequently consulted and asked to give advice.

It should be noted that these tactics will never actually be static in practice; instead they are part of the dynamic movement of NGOs. To explain: in the context of MSIs (which are dynamic in nature) participating NGOs often have to reconsider their strategy, either willingly through strategic assessment or because the circumstances demand it, and adjust accordingly to what is happening around them. They, therefore, have the tendency to shift from one tactic to the other during the existence of an MSI. This means that it is entirely possible for NGOs to not only shift between insider tactics or between outsider tactics, but also from the inside to the outside and maybe even vice versa if that is what the situation requires. Furthermore, it is even possible that NGOs use different tactics at the same time to achieve what they set out to accomplish.

Moreover, and importantly, there is also a difference between *perceived strategies* and *intended strategies* (or perceived tactics and intended tactics if you will). To elaborate, the intended strategy is the strategy NGOs pursue. This means that it is a strategy that was decided upon within an organization, through debate or discussions, on the basis of the mission. It was chosen because it serves the intended purpose of the NGO well. The perceived strategy, however (as the name might suggest), has to do with how stakeholders look upon the strategy NGOs decided to employ. There can be quite a difference between strategies NGOs initiate and the interpretation of these strategies by the outside world. When it comes to legitimacy, it is this second variant of perceived strategies

that is important. As will be discussed in the next section, legitimacy depends upon the approval of the authorizing environment of an organization, therefore making the perceived strategy the dominant tactic.

2.1.4. Conclusion

This subsection provided insights into the dynamic world of NGOs and their rationale behind choosing different strategies to influence corporate business. It did so by giving an outline of the history of development non-governmental organizations and how they became known as influential. Furthermore, it displayed the history of the strategies they employed, starting with the strategy of campaigning to the strategy of collaboration and in addition, the notion that NGOs nowadays employ all these tactics at the same time. Both overviews ended up serving as building blocks leading up to the phenomenon of Multi-Stakeholder Initiatives and what they entail.

The background also provided insights into the rationale behind why NGOs seek to use different tactics to influence corporate business. It clarifies the duality of NGOs on two levels: the level of strategies and the level of tactics within strategies. On the first level, the background showed why the distinction between campaigning NGOs and collaborating NGOs is blurred and that both strategies are nowadays often found within one sole organization. On the second level, these overviews showed why NGOs opt for different tactics within a strategy, as explained by the example of the third generation strategy MSI and the different approaches (varying from critical/friendly insiders to critical/friendly outsiders) NGOs can take. All of this answers the first sub-question of this research: *How can we understand development NGOs usage of MSIs as a strategy?* In sum, we can understand this by the realization that NGOs make the decision to use MSIs as a strategy when it best suits a certain goal or mission they have and by seeing it as a complementary approach to other strategies. On a deeper level, we can understand this by the recognition that NGOs decide each time how they are going to position themselves in relation to the MSI at hand.

Now that more understanding of the workings of NGOs in relation to MSI-approaches has been gained, the matter of legitimacy needs to be addressed. After all, how is the use of MSIs as a strategy perceived by the influential stakeholders in the NGO's environment? Do they see it as the right course? Furthermore, if the tactic of MSIs is seen as legitimate, is there a difference between the levels of MSI-tactics? Can one tactic be recognized as more legitimate than others for example? All these questions will be broached within the coming sections of this chapter.

2.2. Criteria for assessing legitimacy of MSIs as a strategy of NGOs

On October 14th 2011, the short documentary '*Shampoo met een luchtje'* (roughly translated: shampoo that smells) was broadcast on Dutch television by Zembla. It told the story of how the Roundtable of Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO) had failed to do what they claimed they were doing: making sure that the contribution of palm oil would be sustainable. They did so by focusing on one company (IOI Group) that was accredited the RSPO certification while actually still growing palm oil on illegally collected land. This resulted in the documentary asking the obvious question: how can such a company have been accredited? Despite the fact that this event had actually happened in reality and that, of course, this was all but desirable, the way it was broadcast made the history too straightforward. During the time the broadcast aired, steps had already been taken by the RSPO and IOI Group to change what was going on. In addition, IOI Group had different plantations as well

where everything was acting according to the standards. So by taking away their certification, would it really improve the livelihood of the locals? These examples show how delicate the work of MSIs actually is and how long it takes to establish something sustainable. However, all of this did not matter for many opposing parties of the RSPO on October 14th 2011. They saw reasons for criticizing the initiative and everyone that took part in it. In short, they called the legitimacy of the RSPO and the involved NGOs into question (van Huijstee, 2012).

As this example shows, the question of *legitimacy* is important when it comes to NGOs joining/using MSIs. It is a question that deserves to be researched and dealt with head-on. Given that legitimacy is yet another term that can be interpreted in multiple ways, the first step towards finding answers is defining this term properly. The most well-known definition of legitimacy within the boundaries of organizational science, and in extension of NGOs, was written down in 1995 by the sociologist Mark C. Suchman:

> *"Legitimacy is a generalized perception or assumption that the actions of an entity are desirable, proper, or appropriate within some socially constructed system of norms, values, beliefs, and definitions."* (p.574).

This definition will serve as the broader framework of legitimacy in this paper, while it will also be peeled off into two parts: *input legitimacy* and *output legitimacy*. Input legitimacy has to do with the process, while output legitimacy has to do with the results, that is the question of effectiveness (Bäckstrand, 2006; Baur & Palazzo, 2011; Mena & Palazzo, 2012; Ossewaarde, Nijhof & Heyse, 2008; Scharpf, 2009). These two terms will be defined and explained in detail in this section at different levels: the level of NGOs, the level of MSIs and the level of MSIs as a strategy of NGOs. Because there is no existing literature on the legitimacy of MSI-strategies of NGOs, the structure of how this last step came into being should be described. At first the issue of input legitimacy of NGOs will be addressed and with it the corresponding criteria on how to measure this type of legitimacy. Subsequently, the same procedure will be executed to find criteria for measuring input legitimacy of MSIs. Next, all these criteria will be combined to find the final principles with which input legitimacy of MSI-strategies of NGOs can be measured and, finally, the same method will be applied to find the final principles of output legitimacy as well.

2.2.1. Input legitimacy of NGOs
With his definition, Suchman laid the groundwork for different legitimating strategies that can be used by organizations as a way to be seen as legitimate by society (1995; Baur & Palazzo, 2011). This groundwork is especially relevant for NGOs, since these organizations make different normative claims. First of all, they claim to be the representatives of universal values. Secondly, they claim to be serving the best interest of the public and, thirdly, they claim to only exist to help people in need who do not have the means to support themselves (Atack, 1999; Baur & Palazzo, 2011; Korten, 1987). With all their different strategies and different objectives, these NGOs try to globally enhance social and environmental conditions by influencing companies and governments. Over the years, they did, in fact, succeed in becoming more influential. However, when looking at their normative base alongside their growing power of influence, upon which measurements can their legitimacy be established (Atack, 1999; Baur & Palazzo, 2011)? Here is where *input legitimacy* comes into play. Input legitimacy can be described as the legitimacy of ongoing processes. It has the potential to build

a framework around the pending question of which measurements support legitimacy by inquiring after relevant issues such as: how credible and fair are mandated regulations?; and how do rules get developed and upon which decision-making process are they based? (Bäckstrand, 2006; Mena & Palazzo, 2012; Scharpf, 2009; Schouten & Glasbergen, 2012).

As mentioned, Suchman (1995) speaks about three legitimating strategies for organizations to gain approval of society: the pragmatic, cognitive and moral legitimacy strategies. According to Baur & Palazzo (2011) the first two of these strategies do not apply well to development NGOs. The pragmatic approach emphasizes too much on the capability of an organization to manipulate the expectations of the audience and therefore does not align well with NGOs who work for the common good. The cognitive approach assumes that all actors involved in a strategy behave according to shared and existing expectations, even though issues surrounding these strategies and NGOs are too complex to already have established 'right behaviors'. The third strategy, however, does apply well to development NGOs, and in extension to the input legitimacy of these organizations, because moral legitimacy *"reflects a positive normative evaluation of the organization and its activities"* (Suchman, 1995, p.579). Therefore, *"it rests not on judgments about whether a given activity benefits the evaluator, but rather on judgments about whether the activity is 'the right thing to do'"* (Suchman, 1995, p.579). With this addition, input legitimacy can be defined as followed:

> *Input legitimacy refers to normative processes in NGOs which evaluate if their activities serve the right purpose.*
> (based upon: Bäckstrand, 2006; Suchman, 1995)

Expanding on this premise, Baur & Palazzo (2011) also notice that moral legitimacy seems to be a good basis for judging the legitimacy of NGOs, because every *"account of moral legitimacy must be linked to a normative theory"* (p.584). They argue that if this linkage does not happen, the 'moral' in moral judgment will be nothing more than a hollow saying and there will be no proper starting point for judgment. To make this basis even more meaningful, they add another dimension: the normative political dimension. According to the authors, the inclusion of the political dimension is relevant, too, since NGOs claim to be working for the common good, making them political actors. This leads up to the use of one specific model: *deliberative democracy*. The deliberative democracy model argues that crucial decisions can no longer solely be made by governments. Legitimacy of political decisions also depends on the public's opinion, because only through the approval of the public can a decision be seen as serving the common good and not just the needs of individuals (Baur & Palazzo, 2011).

As representatives of the voice of the public, NGOs have an important part in the approval of this public. It is therefore not surprising that their moral input legitimacy needs to be established. Especially, since they not only gained more influence in the last couple of decades, but also since they started to create soft laws. Soft laws can be described as *"non-binding and voluntary private rules, generally not enforced through governmental mechanisms"* (Mena & Palazzo, 2012, p.528) where the standards within MSIs are a good example of. The deliberative model offers a way to find proof of this moral legitimacy through the so-called procedural dimension. This dimension "*relates to the fact that NGOs are generally free to decide which strategy they wish to adopt to approach companies effectively"* and therefore shows the importance of the legitimization of the procedure through which NGOs help to align different points of views with one another (Baur & Palazzo, 2011,

p.587). In sum, moral input legitimacy of NGOs can be assessed by the procedural dimension of the deliberative democracy model that consists of the following three criteria:

Civil behaviour	This criterion tests if NGOs display civil behaviour (un-civil behaviour can be categorized as conflict oriented, harmful and non-discursive; civil behaviour promotes consensus and serves the common good).
Discursive behaviour	This criterion tests if NGOs bring up arguments to clarify their claims and whether these claims serve public interests or not.
Consensual behaviour	This criterion tests if NGOs try to align different points of view instead of negotiating the outcomes.

(Based upon Baur & Palazzo, 2011)

The procedural dimension can be enriched by one more criterion that was established by Atack (1999). In his research, Atack distinguishes two different types of legitimacy for development NGOs. The first one is called *formal-procedural* and the second one *substantive-purposive*. It is this first type, formal-procedural, that can be added to the already known dimensions for evaluating moral legitimacy because it has everything to do with the matter of authority of NGOs. The formal-procedural type depends upon the ability of NGOs to provide the public with openness about their programs, or what Atack calls their *representativeness*, and in extension, openness about the ability of NGOs to stay true to their core values. The second type, substantive-purposive, goes one step further by evaluating the impact different strategies of NGOs have. This type focuses on the effectiveness and inclusiveness of strategies where empowerment of the beneficiaries is a big part of. This second type will be explained in depth in the next section of this research about output legitimacy. However, with the first type, the criteria for assessing moral legitimacy can be enhanced and finalized, as shown in table 3:

Table 3: formal-procedural criteria for NGOs to evaluate their moral input legitimacy.

Representativeness	Explanation
Civil behaviour	This criterion tests if NGOs display civil behaviour (un-civil behaviour can be categorized as conflict oriented, harmful and non-discursive; civil behaviour promotes consensus and serves the common good).
Discursive behaviour	This criterion tests if NGOs bring up arguments to clarify their claims and whether these claims serve public interests or not.
Consensual behaviour	This criterion tests if NGOs try to align different points of view instead of negotiating the outcomes.
Distinctive values behaviour	This criterion tests the ability of NGOs to stay true to their core values.

(Based upon Atack, 1999; Baur & Palazzo, 2011)

2.2.2. Input legitimacy of MSIs

The influence of NGOs has become increasingly striking within the last couple of decades, especially due to them incorporating the third generation strategies that Korten (1987) speaks about (within this generation of strategies, NGOs seek out to work together with governments and corporate businesses). The previously specified approach of Multi-Stakeholder Initiatives with its collaborating

dynamic is a good example of such a strategy and will serve as the subject of the second level of input legitimacy. However, the reasons why MSIs get targeted with questions about their legitimacy will be stated first.

MSIs have dealt and are still dealing with recurring questions about their legitimacy (Bäckstrand, 2006; Fransen & Kolk, 2007, van Huijstee, 2012; Mena & Palazzo, 2012; Schouten & Glasbergen, 2012). The question of inclusiveness can illustrate as an example of this: MSIs claim to be representatives of the complete value chain of a certain product within a certain sector. This means that everyone along this chain – from the local farmer to the Western corporations – ought to be included in an MSI one way or another. Many, however, have asked the question if the inclusion of these groups is really happening. In what way are all groups, especially the development-country stakeholders, involved? Do they get the same amount of voice, time and information? Furthermore, does the MSI represent different types of organizations, such as watchdog organizations or hands-on organizations? Given that MSIs construct soft laws in the form of standards, it seems desirable that as many different organizations as possible are granted the chance to be heard (Bäckstrand, 2006; Biermann, Man-san Chan & Pattberg 2007; Fransen & Kolk, 2007, van Huijstee, 2012; Mena & Palazzo, 2012; Schouten & Glasbergen, 2012). This question and other questions surrounding MSIs have to do with what Scharpf (2009) calls the *input* and *output* legitimacy of democracy theory (a distinction that has already been made earlier within this research). Democracy theory entails the collectively shared belief of a society *"that the regulator has the capacity and the authority to impose rules on a community of citizens"* (Mena & Palazzo, 2012, p.528; Scharpf, 2009). It has already been established that NGOs are political actors and are therefore in need of the model of deliberative democracy. This is no different for MSIs with their soft laws. They also claim to have a normative calling to help the public by being their voice in a certain way. This is why MSIs can and need to be evaluated by a democratic model.

The necessity to use the democratic model is also picked up by the authors Mena & Palazzo (2012) as they display that MSIs, indeed, frequently receive criticisms related to their input and output legitimacy. For example, the fact that involvement of corporate businesses is seen as a weak spot of MSIs can be appointed to questions about the input legitimacy of MSIs. It is because of the connection between input and output legitimacy and criticisms surrounding MSIs that the authors decided to construct a model for evaluation of MSIs based upon the democracy theory. Half of this model is shown in Table 4 and explains the different criteria, definitions of these criteria and key questions of the dimension input legitimacy. The other half of the model will be displayed in subsection 2.2.6 regarding the output legitimacy of MSIs.

Table 4: Criteria of democratic input legitimacy of MSIs.

Dimension	Criterion	Definition	Key questions
Input	Inclusion	Involvement of stakeholders affected by the issue in the structures and processes of the MSI	Are the involved stakeholders representative for the issue at stake? Are important stakeholders excluded from the process?
	Procedural fairness	Neutralization of power differences in decision-making structures	Does each of these categories of stakeholder have a valid voice in decision-making processes?

Consensual orientation	Culture of cooperation and reasonable disagreement	To what extent does the MSI promote mutual agreement among participants?
Transparency	Transparency of structures, processes and results	To what extent are decision-making and standard-setting processes transparent? To what extent are the performance of the participating corporations and the evaluation of that performance transparent?

Note. Table 2. Criteria of MSI Democratic Legitimacy. Adapted from "Input and output legitimacy of multi-stakeholder initiatives," by S. Mena & G. Palazzo, 2012, *Business Ethics Quarterly 22*(3), p.537. Copyright (2015) by Cambridge University Press.

In conclusion, the input legitimacy of MSIs can be assessed by the criteria mentioned above which were based upon the research of Mena & Palazzo (2012).

2.2.3. Input legitimacy of MSIs as a strategy of NGOs

So far input legitimacy has been discussed in relation to NGOs and MSIs. The time has come to combine these two to find a common base for the third level of legitimacy: the input legitimacy of MSIs as a strategy of NGOs. They will be combined by merging the established criteria of input legitimacy of NGOs with the criteria of MSIs. Drawing back to earlier discussions, NGOs and their actions needed to have moral input legitimacy which could be evaluated by the four criteria: civil behaviour, discursive behaviour, consensual behaviour and distinctive values behaviour. MSIs also needed to have democratic input legitimacy which could be evaluated by the criteria: inclusion, procedural fairness, consensual orientation and transparency. Table 5 demonstrates how these two types of criteria can merge and how they can make an evaluation tool for evaluating input legitimacy of MSIs as a strategy of NGOs:

Table 5: criteria for evaluating input legitimacy of the use of MSIs as a strategy of NGOs.

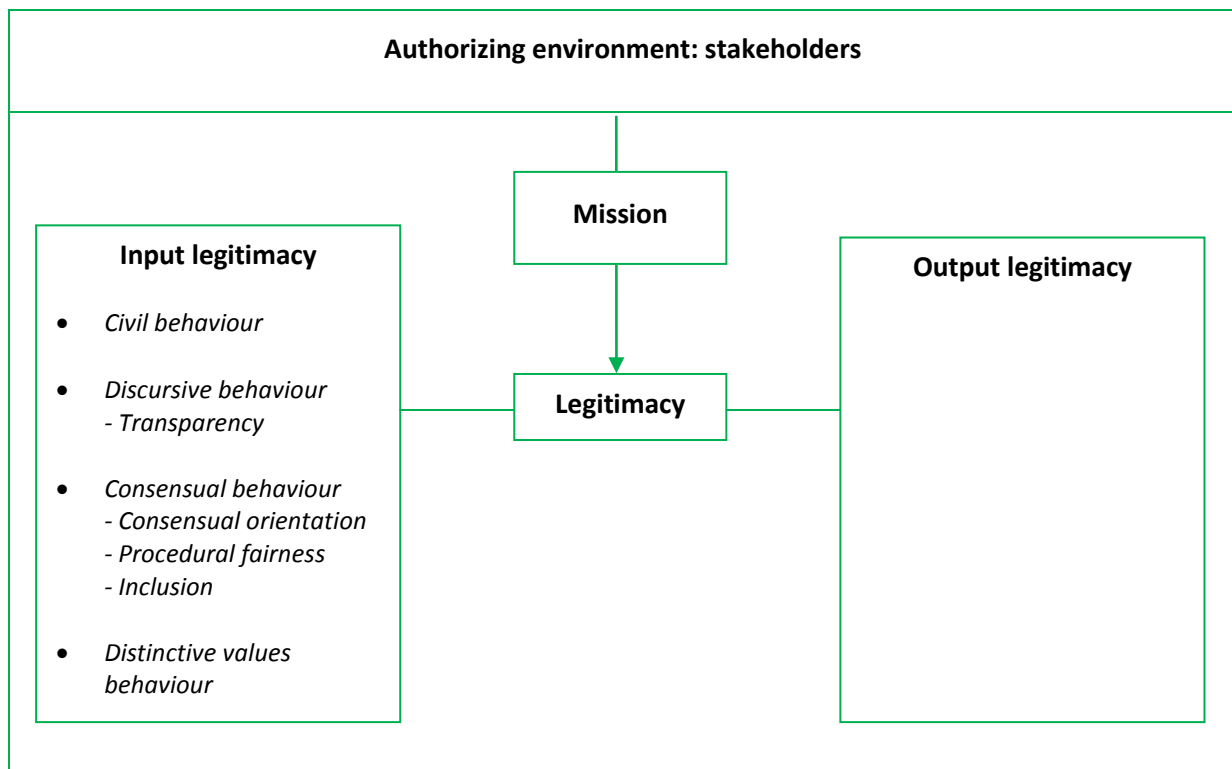| Criterion	Evaluation
Civil behaviour	Does the NGO display civil behaviour (un-civil behaviour can be categorized as conflict oriented, harmful and non-discursive; civil behaviour promotes consensus and serves the common good) while using the strategy of MSIs as a tool?
Discursive behaviour - *transparency*	Does the NGO clarify their claims regarding the use of the strategy of MSIs as a tool? Therefore does the NGO have a hand in making the process of MSIs transparent and publicly known?
Consensual behaviour - *consensual orientation* - *procedural fairness* - *Inclusion*	Does the NGO align different points of view in relation to MSIs or do they negotiate the outcomes? Does the NGO with this strategy aim at reducing conflicts by making outcomes consensual and giving voice to all stakeholders? And does the NGO have a hand in making sure that all stakeholders have a change to participate in MSIs, without exclusion?

~ 25 ~

Now that the criteria of input legitimacy have been established, another question deserves some attention: how is legitimacy granted and who grants it? The answer to this can be found within what Moore (2000) calls the *authorizing environment.* This authorizing environment is composed out of different stakeholders such as donors, corporate businesses, NGOs, clients, suppliers, media, governments, and on occasion people from inside the own organization (Hall et al., 2003; Balser & McClusky, 2005; Moore, 2000; 2013; Walker & Marr, 2001). Together, they have the power to provide organizations with the necessary authoritative support for their actions by acknowledging these actions and making them valuable. The authorizing environment of NGOs – mainly consistent out of donors, corporate businesses, other NGOs, governments, media and people from within the own organization – will, however, only be inclined to provide support when they are convinced of the fact that NGOs stay true to their mission and serve the common good. This means that legitimacy for NGOs will be granted if their stakeholders have faith in their mission and have the belief that every action they undertake works in favor of this mission (Balser & McClusky, 2005; Moore, 2000; Ospina, Diaz & O'Sullivan, 2002). Consequently, part of the tasks of NGOs and the managers in charge is to make sure that this mission stays clear throughout time (Walker & Marr, 2001). They are responsible for this task because the mission determines the value of NGOs to society, establishes their purpose and, therefore, becomes the central factor from where strategies get developed and judged (Bryce, 1992, p.4; Moore, 2002, p.190). If NGOs fail to do so, the organizations are in danger of being accused of something called *mission drift,* making them having to deal with doubts about their integrity (Moore, 2000; 2013). Legitimacy of NGOs can therefore be governed by NGOs through their establishment of a consistent mission.

2.2.4. Conclusion (input legitimacy)

With the latest addition of how legitimacy is granted, the concept of input legitimacy has come full circle. Therefore, the connection between the authorizing environment and the established criteria (Table 5) can be fully explored by the means of Model 1 (on the next page).

In the model it is visible that the legitimacy of NGOs strategies are based upon how the mission is perceived by the authorizing environment. This means that when everyone agrees that the organization stays close to its mission, while pursuing the strategy of MSIs, legitimacy is a given and there should not (in theory) be any criticism of the organization. However, when the NGO does get accused of complete or slight mission drift, it needs to be made clear why this happens and what can be done. This is the part where the criteria for input legitimacy of NGOs and MSIs come into play again, because of their ability to provide explanations. In conclusion, this model is the first part of the bigger legitimacy model that can be used as a tool to evaluate the use of MSIs as a strategy for NGOs.

Model 1: partial model of dependencies of legitimacy (worked out for input legitimacy).

Authorizing environment: stakeholders

Mission

Legitimacy

Input legitimacy

- *Civil behaviour*

- *Discursive behaviour*
  - Transparency

- *Consensual behaviour*
  - Consensual orientation
  - Procedural fairness
  - Inclusion

- *Distinctive values*
  behaviour

Output legitimacy

2.2.5. Output legitimacy of NGOs

Moving beyond the focus of input legitimacy on the way processes are formed, output legitimacy focuses on the results of these established processes and can be described as the effectiveness of the implemented system. Questions as 'do the regulations deliver what they promised for the common good?' or 'are the desired outcomes achieved?' arise (Bäckstrand, 2006; Mena & Palazzo, 2012; Ossewaarde, Nijhof & Heyse, 2008; Scharpf, 2009). The issues that these questions touch upon lead up to the definition of output legitimacy:

> *Output legitimacy refers to the way regulations of NGOs are effective at solving specific problems and objectives.*
> (based upon: Bäckstrand, 2006; Ossewaarde, Nijhof & Heyse, 2008)

As was done in the previous subsections, output legitimacy will be explained at the level of NGOs, at the level of MSIs and at the level of MSIs as a strategy of NGOs.

Within the subsection *Input legitimacy of NGOs,* the importance of seeing NGOs as normative political bodies was highlighted. Baur & Palazzo (2011), as well as Atack (1999), explained this political side of NGOs by presenting theories on the deliberative model through the procedural dimension which *"relates to the fact that NGOs are generally free to decide which strategy they wish to adopt to approach companies effectively"* (Baur & Palazzo, 2011, p.587). Within this procedural dimension, Atack (1999) distinguished the earlier mentioned *formal-procedural* type of legitimacy and the *substantive-purposive* type of legitimacy. As the former has been touched upon previously, the latter, substantive-purposive legitimacy, must be clarified now since it has to do with the output legitimacy of NGOs. The substantive-purposive type of the procedural dimension evaluates the

impact of different NGO-strategies and depends upon the effectiveness of the development goals of NGOs. As Atack puts it: "*one reason for the enhanced role of NGOs in the development process is their presumed efficiency and effectiveness in terms of program delivery and meeting the needs of the poor*" (1999, p.860). Furthermore, this type depends upon the way in which these NGOs succeed in empowering local bodies, meaning that they succeeded in making their target groups capable of managing their own lives. In sum, output legitimacy first of all relies upon the two substantive-purposive criteria effectiveness and empowerment:

| **Effectiveness** | This criterion tests if the development goals of NGOs are sufficiently met through the results. |
| **Empowerment** | This criterion tests if NGOs succeed in making their target groups capable of managing their own lives. |

(Based upon Atack, 1999)

Output legitimacy, however, needs to be enriched with one more principle: solid management. The objectives of organizations can never be effectively achieved if these organizations lack the sufficient resources to support them. Without the right people (expert/professionals), as well as knowledge and funding, organizations are incapable of carrying out their own mission and goals (Moore, 2000; Ossewaarde, Nijhof & Heyse, 2008). In 2003 the researchers Hall et al. wrote a rapport that supports this premise. They researched the capacities of different NGOs and volunteering organizations throughout Canada and found out that the *human resources capacity* – which can be defined as: "*the ability to deploy human capital (i.e., paid staff and volunteers) within the organization, and the competencies, knowledge, attitudes, motivation, and behaviours of these people.*" (Hall et al. 2003, p.5) – played an important part in the achievement of the mission and goals of NGOs. This capacity will therefore be the third criterion for assessing the output legitimacy of NGOs:

Table 6: criteria for assessing output legitimacy of NGOs.

Criterion	Explanation
Effectiveness	This criterion tests if the development goals of NGOs are sufficiently met through the results.
Empowerment	This criterion tests if NGOs succeed in making their target groups capable of managing their own lives.
Human resources capacity	This criterion tests if NGOs have sufficient human resources to back up their own development goals and mission.

2.2.6. Output legitimacy of MSIs

Atack (1999) argues that it is hard to establish whether or not something can be attributed to the work a specific NGO has done, since they are often not the only influential actor involved in a certain process. Especially since NGOs started to make use of second and third generation strategies, their level of influence and control is up for discussion. This subsection will once more take a closer look at the legitimacy of MSIs.

Due to MSIs' claim that they have a normative calling (because of their representation of the public voice, as stated in subsection 2.2.2.), the democratic model of Mena & Palazzo (2012) was chosen to

represent the legitimacy of MSIs. The first half of Mena & Palazzo's model was mentioned earlier in this research, so the second half will be clarified hereafter. According to Mena & Palazzo (2012) output legitimacy *"relates to the capacity of governance mechanisms to effectively take a regulatory role"* (p.536), meaning that MSIs have to determine how they are going to successfully distribute regulations without having any official power. The authors argue that this can be done by ensuring three criteria: high *coverage, efficacy* and good *enforcement* of the rules (p.537):

Table 7: Criteria of democratic output legitimacy of MSIs.

Dimension	Criterion	Definition	Key questions
Output	Coverage	Number of rule targets following the rules	How many rule-targets are complying with the rules?
	Efficacy	Fit of the rules to the issue	To what extent do the rules address the issue at hand?
	Enforcement	Practical implementation of the rules and their verification procedures	Is compliance verified and non-compliance sanctioned?

Note. Table 2. Criteria of MSI Democratic Legitimacy. Reprinted from "Input and output legitimacy of multi-stakeholder initiatives," by S. Mena & G. Palazzo, 2012, *Business Ethics Quarterly 22*(3), p.537. Copyright (2015) by Cambridge University Press.

The first criterion *coverage* questions if MSIs make sure that targets and certain goals are achieved, while the second criterion *efficacy* wonders if the rules of the MSI address the right issue and (according to Bäckstrand, 2006) if MSI goals are realized. The third criterion *enforcement* talks about implementation successes and the way they are verified. The three criteria were chosen because of their characteristics to create isomorphic behavior in one sector. To explain: if an MSI manages to execute all three criteria well, many companies within one sector will be triggered to abide by the rules of the MSI-standard instead of following their own course of action. Therefore, it is these three criteria that asses the output legitimacy of MSIs (Mena & Palazzo, 2012).

2.2.7. Output legitimacy of MSIs as a strategy of NGOs

In the previous subsection about input legitimacy of the MSI-strategy, it was established that legitimacy and support for organizational action can be found within the *authorizing environment* (Moore, 2000; 2013). This is of course no different for output legitimacy (as part of legitimacy). In their research about stakeholder management, Balser & McClusky (2005) claim that an NGO will be seen as effective and capable of realizing goals when the stakeholders are convinced of the right intensions of this NGO. This means that they need to serve the public good with their mission, goals and values while having a consistent approach. Ossewaarde, Nijhof & Heyse (2008) go one step further by proclaiming that it is not just the normative base that will give NGOs legitimacy, it is just as much about the way NGOs are institutionalized and organized. They acknowledge that it can be complicated for NGOs to align their mission with their output legitimacy, because the more institutionalized an NGO gets, the more difficult it will be for this organization to pursue its core values and goals. This alignment of the mission and output legitimacy is therefore an important task for the manager. It is up to them to *manage*, *evaluate* and *monitor* the strategy in such a way that

the NGO in question has room for carrying out its basic principles of trying to change the course of company policies.

Through the means of this last addition (the fact that managers need to *manage, evaluate* and *monitor* their strategies), the criteria upon which the assessment of output legitimacy of MSIs and NGOs are based can be combined. As a result, Table 8 was constructed and displays the criteria for output legitimacy of the use of MSIs as a strategy by NGOs:

Table 8: criteria for evaluating output legitimacy of the use of MSIs as a strategy by NGOs.

Criterion	Explanation
Effectiveness *- efficacy*	This criterion *evaluates* if the development goals of NGOs are sufficiently met when they participate in MSIs.
Empowerment *- enforcement*	This criterion *monitors* if NGOs succeed in making their target groups capable of managing their own lives.
Human resources capacity *- coverage*	This criterion tests if NGOs have sufficient human resources to *manage* the MSI-strategy.

2.2.8. Conclusion

It is time to answer the second theoretical research question: 'w*hich criteria can be used to assess the legitimacy of MSI-strategies of NGOs?'*. That would be the combined criteria from both input legitimacy (Table 5) as output legitimacy (Table 8), which is visualized in Model 2. The model does not need much more clarifying, because it has not changed significantly from the model that was laid out in subsection 2.2.4. Solely the output criteria have been added, making the criteria upon which legitimacy is granted by the stakeholders complete.

Model 2: dependencies of legitimacy.
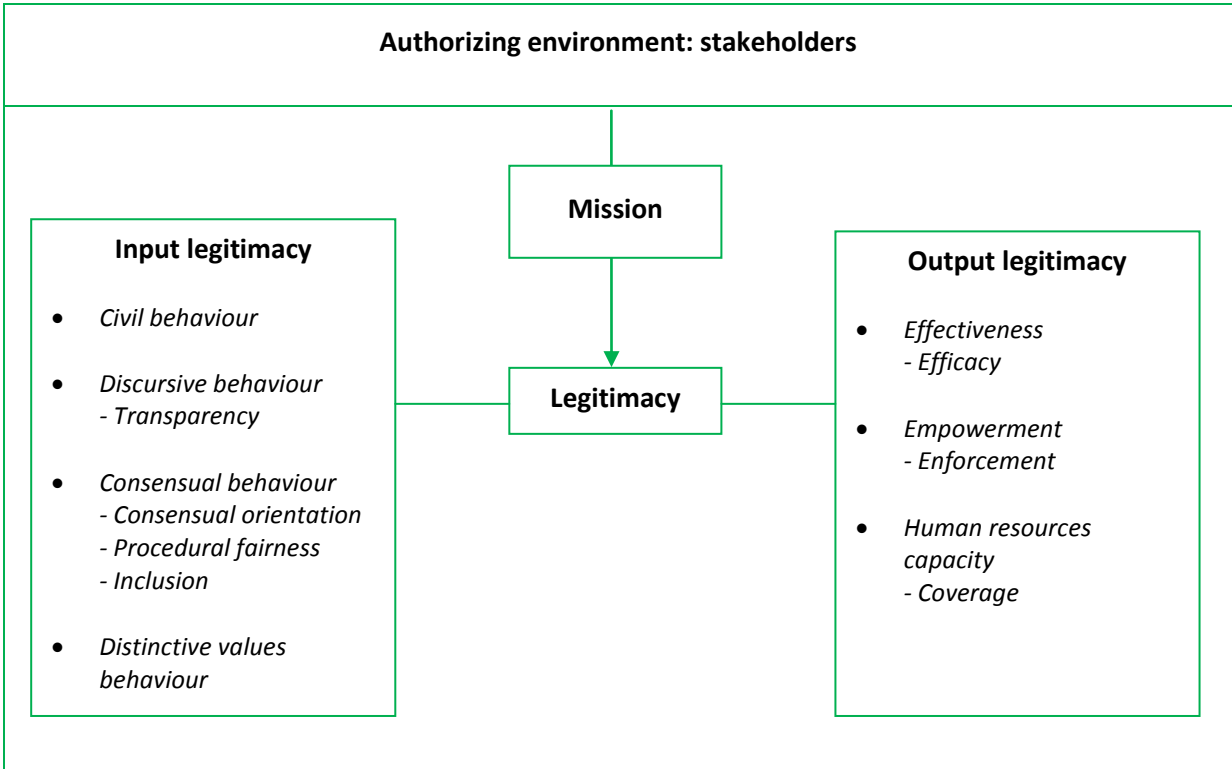
2.3. Legitimacy of MSI-strategy within NGOs

Since a large amount of information in relation to the use and legitimacy of MSI-strategies within NGOs has been presented in this chapter, it would be beneficial to take a step back and reflect on what has been displayed so far in order to reinforce a high level view of the findings on these MSI-strategies.

The first section showed that NGOs use MSIs as a complementary approach to other strategies and are inclined to use it as a tool when it best suits their mission and goals. It also showed that when NGOs come across these MSIs, they have some decision-making to do. Meaning that they have to decide which position best suits their own agenda and reevaluate and adjust accordingly when the context demands it. The possible (dynamic) positions were shown in Table 2 and are repeated here once more:

Four possible levels of MSI-tactics for NGOs.

	Insider	**Outsider**
Campaigning	Critical insider	Critical outsider
Collaborating	Friendly insider	Friendly outsider

The second section showed how legitimacy for the use of MSI-strategies of NGOs is granted (by the stakeholders, on the basis of the mission) and what constitutes legitimacy (input and output legitimacy). Naturally, this begs the question of how these two strings of information from both sections work in relation to one another, or, as summed up by the third theoretical sub-question, '*how can we evaluate the legitimacy of MSI-strategies within NGOs?*'

As the different positions and assumptions show, every NGO can have a different opinion about how to proceed with MSI-strategies. They themselves do not see every single MSI as fit to fulfill their mission and goals in the same manner and therefore choose according to the situation. If NGOs in themselves already have divergent opinions on which position best legitimizes their opinion, it is safe to say that their stakeholders have various opinions about this subject as well. This makes the granting of legitimacy much more complex than just through the mission, but much more interesting as well. Legitimacy can now not only be granted upon the basis that NGOs stay true to their mission, it can also be granted upon the position NGOs take. Therefore, stakeholders have a say in which position they see more suitable for NGOs to fulfill their mission by approving and granting legitimacy or not. Coming back to the final theoretical research question, legitimacy of MSIs within NGOs can be evaluated by the causal relation between tactics on the one hand and legitimacy on the next hand:

Model 3: evaluation of legitimacy.

Tactics	→	**Legitimacy**
Friendly insider		Input legitimacy
Critical insider		Output legitimacy
Friendly outsider		
Critical outsider		

3. Research methods

The subject of this research is the legitimacy of MSI-strategies from NGOs in relation to how this specific course of strategic action is perceived by their stakeholders. Two steps have been taken in order to gain knowledge about this subject. The first step consisted of reviewing the existing (or in this case closely related) academic research on the subject, and the second step consisted of exploring how the theoretical framework could be applied in practice. In this chapter, the second step of empirical research will be outlined and the choices that were made will be explained. What follows is a detailed recollection of how this took place and how the data was analyzed.

3.1. Research strategy: qualitative research

As the theoretical framework has exposed, the amount of knowledge about the legitimacy of NGOs that use MSIs as a strategy is very limited. Complementary to the theoretical base of this research, therefore, empirical findings from day-to-day operations of organizations will be inserted within this research and presented by means of qualitative research. Qualitative research follows the belief that it is people who construct reality and give meaning to it, not outside entities (Boeije, 2005). It aims at describing and explaining subjects from various perspectives of people by providing tools to interpret their social realities in specific situations (Boeije, 2005, p.27).

Within this paper, qualitative research was used to gather various perspectives from different stakeholders of Oxfam Novib. Oxfam Novib is a development organization that not only frequently engages itself with Multi-Stakeholder Initiatives, but can be considered as an organization that participated in MSIs nearly from the beginning (Holzman, 2015). Due to its unique involvement with MSIs, this organization can be seen as a perfect candidate for this research and talking to its stakeholders provided an opportunity to put the constructed model, from Chapter 2, to good use.

3.2. Research design: case study

To adequately compare how different stakeholders of NGOs look upon its legitimacy in regard to MSI-strategies, the so-called research design *case study* was selected.
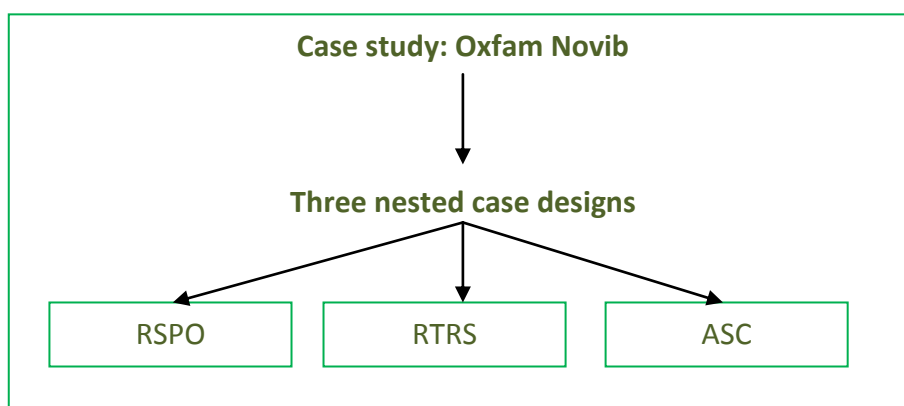

Figure 1: Case study and nested case designs of this research.

This kind of design looks at a specific phenomenon in its natural context (Boeije, 2005, p.21). It is one of the most common approaches in policy and organizational research due to its ability to describe

and explain practical phenomena while painting a holistic picture of what exactly is going on (Boeije, 2005). It, therefore, makes perfect sense that this design was chosen for this research, given that it allows a more comprehensive view of the natural context in which NGOs, such as Oxfam Novib, use MSI-strategies. Quite often when one uses a case study as a design, something needs to be added since a case study can only be thoroughly researched if it is looked upon in different ways. This means that different cases within a bigger case need to be selected in order to jointly provide a holistic picture of the past events. This is called a nested case design (Figure 1).

Within this paper Oxfam Novib was chosen as the subject of the case study, and with it three examples of MSIs they were connected with in some way, the nested case designs: *Roundtable of Sustainable Palm Oil* (RSPO)*, Roundtable Responsible Soy* (RTRS) and *The Aquaculture Stewardship Council* (ASC)*.* In the subsections below the selection of each one of these (nested) cases will be outlined, starting with the bigger case study Oxfam Novib.

3.2.1. Case study: Oxfam Novib

The most advanced case that was selected for this research is the organization Oxfam Novib and with that its use of Multi-Stakeholder Initiatives as a strategy. Oxfam Novib is an international social development organization, which came into existence in 1956 in the Netherlands under the name 'Novib'. When they decided to work together with the international confederation Oxfam in 1994, they changed their name to Oxfam Novib (Oxfam Novib (ON), 2014). Oxfam (the international confederation) consists *"of 17 organizations working together with partners and local communities in more than 90 countries"* (ON, 2015, Who we are, para. 1) and caries out the same mission: "*a just world, without poverty*" (ON, 2013, Mission and Vision, para. 1). Oxfam and all its affiliates have taken it upon themselves to help people escape poverty by the means of three approaches: collaboration with local partners in developing countries, working together with and influencing governments and corporate businesses to take responsibility for their own actions, and using the tactic of campaigning (ON, 2014).

Deriving from these multiple approaches, Oxfam Novib uses different strategies in order to accomplish its mission. One of the latest strategies has been the will to construct long-term sustainable relationships with different actors in the same field (Peters, 2014), a strategy that aligns well with the idea of Multi-Stakeholder Initiatives. Their emphasis on the construction of dialogue between stakeholders is part of the reason why Oxfam Novib was chosen as case study. Oxfam Novib is not the only NGO willing to take up engagement with others (for if they were, the concept of Multi-Stakeholder Initiatives might not exist); however, in comparison to other active NGOs that use MSI-strategies, Oxfam is truly unique in their approach due to their label as 'the social NGO'. Their whole vision and strategy is based upon the ambition to make this world a better place for the people who live in it by enhancing their living conditions, step by step (Holzman, 2015; Peters, 2014). NGOs such as Greenpeace and World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) want to make this world a better place as well, but they try to achieve this by focusing on environmental issues, not on social issues. Aside from their unique approach, Oxfam is one of the only NGOs who started to work with MSIs just after the idea of these initiatives were launched. They were therefore a big part of and contributed to the learning process of MSIs and moreover went through a whole learning process as organization. The only other NGO that went through the same track was WWF, which started even earlier than Oxfam Novib. They are one of the founding members of the RSPO and have since

originated multiple MSIs, each time in collaboration with different stakeholders (WWF, 2015). Given that they are just as – or maybe even more - experienced than Oxfam, one could argue that they make a suitable case study as well. However, their approach in regard to MSIs has always been the same. As can be seen by their frequent engagement with MSIs and their willingness to start them, they have always been in favor of these initiatives and never made distinctions between MSIs or made decisions on whether or not to join a particular MSI, while Oxfam did make these decisions (Holzman, 2015; Peters, 2014). As will later be explained within the three nested case studies (subsections 3.2.2-3.2.4) that were chosen in this research, Oxfam has not joined every MSI for the sake of joining. Each time that they joined an MSI, they lined up arguments to figure out whether or not they should in fact join this particular initiative. It is exactly this decisive rationale that makes Oxfam Novib an interesting case to look at, as one can study the reasoning and rationale behind each of their involvements with MSIs.

In summary, Oxfam Novib was selected as case study because it is a development organization that has incorporated Multi-Stakeholder Initiatives as one of its strategies to influence corporate behavior from a distinct point of view: the social perspective. The organization was one of the first NGOs to align itself with MSIs, making Oxfam Novib an excellent example of how MSIs can find their way into an organization. They also make an interesting case because of their dynamic approach towards MSIs which clears the way for comparing different MSI-approaches that Oxfam Novib has used over the years. All of these factors make Oxfam Novib an attractive subject for empirical research.

3.2.2. MSI: Roundtable of Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO)

The first of the three nested case studies is the RSPO, the biggest and most successful MSI to date. It originated in 2004 when a couple of non-governmental organizations and private companies, led by World Wide Fund for Nature and Unilever, decided to take a closer look at the worldwide production of palm oil together. At that time, the production of palm oil had been labeled as controversial, making these organizations feel that something needed to be done about the negative effects of manufacturing. The controversy was caused by the massive amounts of deforestation that took place in Indonesia and Malaysia in the early 2000's. Palm oil flourishes in valleys that are damp and tropical, exactly the conditions of the rainforest. In order to make a living wage out of manufacturing palm oil, the local farmers, therefore, see deforestation as their only solution to find land to grow this commodity (World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF), ca.2013). Environmentally, this does not qualify as a desirable movement, nor is it desirable from the social perspective of the small-scale farmer. However, since the production of palm oil is thriving, it is an economically profitable sector to be in. Big companies, both in the South as in the North, have noticed this as well and since then have tried to make as much profit as possible. For the local farmer, the consequences of these practices are quite severe. Either their land gets seized by the larger companies or they are forced to work for a non-living wage. As a result of lacking the resources to fight back, these farmers and their communities often end up homeless (ON, n.d.).

After the World Wide fund for Nature and Unilever launched this initiative in 2004, many other organizations decided to join, including Oxfam Novib. The reason for Oxfam Novib's engagement with this MSI can be found in their core values: making sure that the people in this world without a chance and a voice are given one (Pesqueira, 2014). Up until their involvement, the RSPO was solely based upon environmental issues and the social issues were neglected. It was only after Oxfam

joined the initiative that the agenda changed and that both issues received equal attention (Pesqueira, 2014; Holzman, 2015). This shift is one of the reasons why the case of the RSPO was selected: it has the potential of showing how Oxfam Novib operates within MSIs. Another reason is that the RSPO, as well as Oxfam Novib by association, has dealt with controversies from the start. This however has not stopped the organization from joining and becoming an insider of the Roundtable. The rationale behind their ongoing engagement is interesting at the least and at the most provides insight in the workings of this NGO while building a basis upon which legitimacy can be measured. The discussion on their rationale will be presented in detail in the empirical research.

3.2.3. MSI: Roundtable Responsible Soy (RTRS)

Soy is, as palm oil, a fast growing crop and produced in many countries around the globe. The sector is owned by big companies who destroy the environment and push out the small-scale farmer, especially in Latin America (ON, 2011a; ON, 2011b). As reaction to the negative impact of the soy production, another MSI came into existence: the RTRS. The RTRS is on many levels very similar to and at the same time very different from the RSPO. The RTRS came into existence in 2006 in Switzerland at the hands of Grupo Maggi, Cordaid, COOP, WWF, Fetrauf-Sul and Unilever (RTRS, 2014) and had copied its platform and structure directly from the RSPO (Schouten & Glasbergen, 2012). After all, why change a proven formula? Unfortunately, the opinions on the success of this duplication are divided, mainly due to the branding of the RTRS as controversial. The criticisms surrounding this specific MSI have been substantial from the beginning and are still persistent, for example, through the claim that the RTRS only represents the industry, leaving no room for NGOs to get their points across (ON, 2011a; ON, 2011b; Schouten & Glasbergen, 2012).

When Oxfam Novib was asked to join the RTRS, they declined. The controversies surrounding the RTRS collided with their own image and agenda. They especially felt that the RTRS did not have much of its goals aimed at social problems, as made clear by the lack of interest from local civil societies to join the RTRS, and did not show the potential to take these issues on in the future (ON, 2011a; ON, 2011b). Despite their unwillingness to join, however, Oxfam Novib was interested in making a contribution to the platform. They opted for the role of a so-called critical outsider and started to critically monitor what was going on (Holzman, 2015; Pesqueira, 2014).

So once again, Oxfam Novib had decided to play a certain part, but why did Oxfam Novib choose to be a critical outsider instead of an insider. What does this do for their legitimacy? Is it valued more or less because of this thought-out decision? What is the effect that they accomplished by choosing this tactic? These questions complemented with the fact that they have taken a different role in relation to this MSI than to the RSPO, make the RTRS the second interesting case for this research.

3.2.4. MSI: Aquaculture Stewardship Council (ASC)

The Aquaculture Stewardship Council is the umbrella organization of eight different aquaculture MSIs which were initiated by WWF in 2004. These dialogues all covered one of the important aquaculture species: trout, bivalves, shrimp, tilapia, salon, pangasius, abalone and seriola/cobia, and came into existence to contest the negative environmental and social impacts of this specific industry (Aquaculture Stewardship Council (ASC), n.d.).

Oxfam Novib's participation started in 2009 when they took their seat in two dialogues, the Shrimp Aquaculture Dialogue (ShAD) and Salmon Aquaculture Dialogue. Just as the RTRS, the ShAD was surrounded with controversies. Especially NGOs saw this specific MSI as a way for companies to 'green wash' their activities. Despite this sensitive nature, Oxfam nevertheless joined the ShAD and later on the ASC for two reasons: the organization was already familiar with the aquaculture sector and, more importantly, many of the issues from the shrimp-industry had to do with social conflicts such as land grabbing and labor problems, both issues that Oxfam Novib felt compelled to (Holzman 2015; Pesqueira, 2014). Not long after their commitment to the ShAD, Oxfam Novib became the target of criticism. They were seen as compromising their values by helping corporate businesses legitimize their unjust practices. These criticisms were led by a group called the *Conscientious Objectors* (COs). The COs consisted of over seventy NGOs who felt that everyone who participated in the ShAD paved the way for the industry to continue their green washing practices; Oxfam Novib included (Holzman, 2015; Pesqueira, 2014). Despite continuous efforts of Oxfam Novib to align their own opinions on how to enhance the aquaculture sector with those of their opponents, the disagreements between the two parties only seemed to grow. After the standards were delivered in 2012, internal reconsiderations made Oxfam Novib decide to end its official insider role in the ShAD (Holzman 2015; ON, 2012; Pesqueira, 2014).

For this reason, this specific case was selected as well. Oxfam Novib made the decision to join a controversial MSI as an insider and got critiqued because of it. Eventually they left their official post within the ASC (after the shrimp standard was delivered) and resorted to an outsider tactic of giving advice (ON, 2012). The rationale behind this decision and the situation that made them change tactics makes the ShAD a different case from the previous two cases and a worthwhile contribution to this research.

3.2.5. Summary

In the previous subsections, the three nested case studies have been described, along with the reasons why these cases were chosen. Table 9 summarizes the rationale behind the selection of these MSIs:

Table 9: rationale behind the selection of nested case studies.

	Different tactics Oxfam Novib*
Palm Oil (RSPO)	Insider
Soy (RTRS)	Outsider
Aquaculture (ASC)	From insider to outsider

* The different roles and outcomes will be discussed in detail in Chapter 4.

All that is left is to mention that these three cases, albeit exemplifying three different MSIs, cannot be completely seen as independent from one another. Especially the RTRS and the RSPO show traces of case contamination, given that the RTRS directly copied its platform from the RSPO. Furthermore, all three MSIs quite often have some of the same players involved (WWF, Unilever and Oxfam Novib for example) and therefore are indirectly linked to one another.

3.3. Data collection

In the book *'Case study research: Design and methods'* the author Yin – who has earned his stripes as an expert on case studies – describes four principles every researcher should act in accordance with when employing a case study approach: multiple sources of evidence should be presented; a case study database should be formed; a chain of evidence should be created; and electronic sources of evidence should be used with care (2013, p. 102; van Huijstee & Glasbergen, 2010b). The relation between this research and these four approaches will be explained within this chapter. There is another approach that must be mentioned, too, and that is informal conversations. Informal conversations help the researcher gather information and paint a clearer picture of the research area in an informal manner. In this case a few experts on MSIs within Oxfam Novib (a head of the department, two members of the private sector team, a program officer and a policy advisor) shared their knowledge about their engagement in different MSI fields and practices through informal conversations.

3.3.1 Multiple sources of evidence: documents

To start with the first principle, the use of multiple sources of evidence, two different kinds of sources were used within this research: document analysis and interviews. These instruments were selected based on their ability to provide a holistic picture of the chosen subject. The first, document analysis, will be explained in this subsection.

Document analysis consists of the analysis of several documents that exist within an organization. These documents are valuable because they are viewed as representations of the reality of an organization (Bryman, 2012, p.554). Document analysis also consists of gathering relevant documents and analyzing them in order to determine certain facts and perspectives of the organization (Bryman, 2012). Table 10 shows the documents that were collected for this research. These documents are papers that were written by Oxfam Novib, an academic and outside consultant in collaboration with Oxfam Novib:

Table 10: gathered documents for empirical research.

Author	Title	Date	Type
Oxfam Novib	*DRAFT OI position on the RTRS*	January, 2011	Discussion paper
Oxfam Novib	*Roundtable on Responsible Soy (RTRS) and the Soy Sector Positioning and Reactive Policy*	August, 2011	Internal policy paper
Oxfam Novib	*Memo to OI PST*	June, 2012	Internal memo
Luli Pesqueira	*Friendly Outsider or Critical Insider? An Action Research Account of Oxfam's Private Sector Engagement.*	November, 2014	Dissertation
Caren Holzman	*Oxfam's experience engaging with multi-stakeholder approaches: An analysis of progress to date and reflections on the future.*	May, 2015	Discussion paper

The documents lined out above were the result of a process of narrowing down the relevant documents on the subject of this paper. Many internal documents at Oxfam Novib have been written on their participation in MSIs. Quite often, these documents consisted of a few pages with incoherent drafts, thoughts and ideas that were never properly finished or presented internally, let

alone to a broader public. Recently, however, Oxfam Novib tried to combine all experiences, positions and lessons learnt in one bigger paper. The chosen document *'Oxfam's experience engaging with multi-stakeholder approaches: An analysis of progress to date and reflections on the future'* (Holzman, 2015), written by an outside consultant, serves as the result of this effort of this process. This discussion paper naturally found its way into this research, as it displays the vision of Oxfam Novib on their use of MSIs as a strategy. However, this case study demanded a complementary document. The case of the RTRS was under exposed, making it necessary to add the documents '*DRAFT OI position on the RTRS*' and '*Roundtable on Responsible Soy (RTRS) and the Soy Sector Positioning and Reactive Policy*' written as discussion and policy papers within Oxfam Novib. In addition, the document *'Memo to OI PST'* (ON, 2012) was chosen for the same reason, this time in regard to the ASC. Finally, the dissertation *'Friendly Outsider or Critical Insider? An Action Research Account of Oxfam's Private Sector Engagement'* (Pesqueira, 2014) was selected because of its academic value and connection to Oxfam Novib. The document was written by a researcher investigating the broader private sector approach of Oxfam Novib who describes their engagement with ASC, RSPO and RTRS from an academic point of view.

3.3.2 Multiple sources of evidence: interviews

The interviews were held with a specific target group in mind: the stakeholders of Oxfam Novib. Given that the legitimacy model was based upon the premises that stakeholders grant legitimacy or not, it was important that the interviewees were familiar with the practice of Oxfam Novib and at least one of the three cases of MSIs (RSPO, RTRS and ASC), either by direct or indirect involvement. These criteria made it easier to narrow down the wide group of stakeholders that Oxfam Novib has to a small group of potential respondents. However, more cuts needed to be made to the group of interviewees to reduce its size. The group that had been left behind consisted of both Northern and Southern stakeholders (Northern stakeholders in this context are the Western organizations, Southern stakeholders the local partners and organizations) and by choosing one of these groups – the Northern stakeholders – the target group size was significantly reduced. To clarify, the Northern partners were seen as the partners who could say most about the practices of Oxfam Novib in its natural Western context, while being able to talk about their different MSI strategies as well. The focus on the first group made the group of potential stakeholders manageable for conducting an actual target group and a list of interviewees. With the help of Johan Verburg (MSI-expert within Oxfam Novib), the list was constructed with one more criterion in mind: multiple stakeholders. Hailing from varied Northern based organizations, multiple stakeholders needed to be interviewed, given that this research investigates multiple-stakeholder initiatives. Table 11 provides an overview of the original idea:

Table 11: original idea of interviewees from specific stakeholder groups.

	RSPO	RTRS	ASC
Oxfam Novib	X	X	X
MSI	X	X	X
Oxfam (international)	X	X	X
NGOs	X	X	X
Companies	X	X	X
Government	X	X	X
Academics	X	X	X

A couple of things need to be clarified after seeing this original list. During the stage of interviewing, it became clear that many of the people involved in MSIs were directly or indirectly involved in more than one of the MSIs. The overlap between the RSPO and the RTRS was especially noticeable, given that the RTRS was based upon the structure of the RSPO and many organizations were either directly or indirectly involved in them. As a result, the wall of separation between different stakeholder groups within different MSIs came crumbling down. Furthermore only three employees of Oxfam Novib were interviewed and asked about Oxfam Novib's participation in MSIs. Three seems a small number if it were not for the fact that each MSI could only count on the involvement of one Oxfam Novib-employee at a time. They are therefore considered the *main players* of the three MSIs and the ones to go to for information. Table 12 provides the actual list of interviewees, indicated solely by their organizations. The same number in the table indicates the same interviewee. The total amount of interviewed people was 20:

Table 12: list of interviewees, by organization.*

	RSPO	RTRS	ASC
Oxfam Novib	1. Oxfam Novib	2. Oxfam Novib	3. Oxfam Novib
MSI	4. RSPO		5. ASC
Oxfam (international)	7. Oxfam Novib 8. Oxfam Belgium	7. Oxfam Novib	6. Oxfam United States 7. Oxfam Novib
NGOs	9. Greenpeace	10. Solidaridad 11. Both Ends	12. CAPE- CFFA
Companies	13. MVO 14. Ahold	13. MVO 15. Friesland Campina	16. Ahold
Government	17. Economische Zaken 18. Buitenlandse Zaken	17. Economische Zaken 18. Buitenlandse Zaken	19. IDH 18. Buitenlandse Zaken
Academics	20. The Partnerships Resource Centre	20. The Partnerships Resource Centre	1. The Partnerships Resource Centre

* *the same number indicates the same interviewee.*

In sum, both documents and interviews were used and analyzed in order to answer the empirical sub-questions of this research (as presented in subsection 1.4.2). The next section will shed light on how the questions of the interviews were constructed by starting with the operationalization of important variables.

3.4 Operationalization

Interviews within qualitative research can be conducted in different ways, varying between unstructured and structured interviews. The structuring depends on the content, the formulation, the order of the questions and the way of responding (Boeije, 2012, p.57). This research utilized semi-structured interviews because of their ability to gather information about vital topics while giving the interviewees a chance to elaborate whenever they saw fit. The questions were formulated beforehand and served as an interview guide, meaning that these questions were asked in roughly the same manner in each interview (Bryman, 2012, p.417), all the while keeping the interviews flexible. The interview guide can be found in Appendix B.

The questions for the interviews were first of all based upon the mission and the seven criteria of legitimacy: civil behaviour, discursive behaviour, consensual behaviour, distinctive values behaviour, effectiveness, empowerment and organizational capacity. Each criterion and the mission needed to be operationalised, with Oxfam Novib as case study in mind. The result of this process is displayed in Table 13, with the exception of the mission that was operationalised as followed:

Whether (not) joining an MSI is in line with the mission of Oxfam Novib.

Table 13: operationalization of the mission and criteria of legitimacy.

Criterion	Operationalization
Civil behaviour	Whether the behaviour of Oxfam Novib is perceived as decent (strategies are used to build consensus and to help others) or indecent (strategies are used to inflict pain and to advance own practices) in relation to their MSI-strategy.
Discursive behaviour	Whether the reasons for (not) joining MSIs are sufficiently clarified and argued and therefore transparent.
Consensual behaviour	Whether Oxfam Novib aims at mutual outcomes instead of negotiating these outcomes within MSIs; Whether Oxfam Novib aims at inclusiveness and voice for smallholders within MSIs.
Distinctive values behaviour	Whether Oxfam Novib stays true to its core values by (not) joining MSIs.
Effectiveness	Whether the development goals of Oxfam Novib are realized in the eyes of the stakeholders by (not) joining MSIs.
Empowerment	Whether Oxfam Novib promotes self-regulation of local actors by (not) joining MSIs.
Organizational capacity	Whether Oxfam Novib is perceived as having enough human resources to manage MSI-strategies; Whether Oxfam Novib makes sufficient use of the resources of the international confederation Oxfam.

In addition, the four different tactics that Oxfam Novib can use in relation to MSIs needed to be operationalised too and:

Table 14: operationalization of different tactics.

Tactic	Operationalization:
Friendly Insider	Whether Oxfam Novib collaborates with other participants from MSIs and/or with organizations on the outside of MSIs.
Critical Insider	Whether Oxfam Novib takes part in MSIs because they want to influence from the inside out; Whether Oxfam Novib uses both campaigning and collaborating tactics to further the discussion.
Critical Outsider	Whether Oxfam Novib refuses to participate in MSIs because it does not support their mission; Whether Oxfam Novib resorts to campaigning/protest practices as a way to critique MSIs.
Friendly Outsider	Whether Oxfam Novib supports MSIs by giving advice or consults without openly joining, nor disassociating from MSIs; Whether Oxfam Novib monitors/observes an MSI (as a watchdog) without openly joining, nor disassociating from MSIs.

3.5 Data analysis

To make sure that all valuable information from the interviews would find its way into this research paper, entire conversations were recorded and transcribed onto paper. These transcriptions are the starting point for the data analysis and coding of the topics. Even though the semi-structured interviews hinted at the seven criteria of legitimacy, the mission and NGO-tactics, the first step of the data analysis consisted of open coding. After ploughing through all the interviews, the multitude of gathered codes was compared with one another to find common ground or missing links. The next step meant combining the overlapping codes and linking them to the theoretical framework of mission, criteria and tactics. Once again, these topics and codes were compared with one another to find both common ground as missing links. The result of this process consisted of lining up several main codes with their own variety of sub-codes. This paved the way for the last step of finding connections between the results and explaining where they came from.

3.6 Reliability and validity

Two important factors for research are *reliability* and *validity*. Completely reliable qualitative research is hard to come by, as one has to duplicate a study in the exact same manner. Creating an exact replication might prove to be a challenge, since social circumstances have the tendency to change over time (Bryman, 2012). However, certain things can be done to support this process, both internally as externally. Internal reliability evolves out of the use of consistent systematic measurements. The more consistently variables are measured, the more the results can be seen as systematic instead of accidental (Boeije, 2005). In addition, as Yin (2013) points out, the use of multiple resources to investigate these variables helps this process as well. Within this research, the latter was done by carrying out both document and interview based analyses and the former by basing each interview upon the same semi-structured interview guide, therefore making sure that each respondent had the chance to tell their point of view on the same subjects. External reliability evolves out of the creation of a case study database, the creation of a chain of evidence and the careful use of electronic sources of evidence (Yin, 2013). Within this research, all the case study notes and relevant documents were gathered and the actions were all written down systematically. Electronic devices were used to record all the interviews with care (for example, by assuring the respondents that the research would be depersonalized).

Validity refers to researchers measuring the exact thing that was anticipated in their study. Once again, a study needs to be both internally and externally valid. Internal validity calls for the question of whether or not a match exists between the theoretical base of a research and its operationalization (Bryman, 2012). Through the means of a semi-structured interview based on the variables of the theoretical framework, this research made sure that there indeed existed a match between the two. External validity asks the question of generalizability: can findings be generalized across social settings (Bryman, 2012, p.390)? This question is harder to answer in the context of this research. Efforts have been made to try to guarantee this variant of validity by including as many actors working in the same field as possible. However, Oxfam Novib is one of few organizations that have tried working with MSIs. In addition, they are considered early birds and quite unique in their approach, making it hard to compare their social setting to other social settings. Therefore, instead of this study being directly generalizable to others in the same field as Oxfam Novib, it may serve as an example of how it can be applicable to these organizations if they ever sought out ways to insert themselves in MSIs.

4. Empirical findings

A new chapter, figuratively and literally, of this research has arrived: the presentation of empirical results, gathered from the application of Model 3: *evaluation of legitimacy*. Concretely this means that the model was used as a tool to evaluate the legitimacy of Oxfam Novib, consistent with the explained methodology in the previous chapter. To refresh memory, the information was collected through interviews and gathered documents. The five selected documents (subsection 3.3.1), consisted of three documents written by the organization (a discussion paper and internal policy paper on RTRS and an internal memo on ASC); one document that was written by an outside consultant who was asked to combine different internal Oxfam Novib documents on MSIs; and one dissertation that describes Oxfam Novib's engagement with MSIs from an academic point of view. These documents, the website of Both Oxfam as Oxfam Novib and three interviews (which were conducted with the employees from Oxfam Novib who are considered the *main players* in the selected MSIs) will show the perspective of Oxfam Novib. The other interviews will show the perspective of the authorizing environment.

The gathered information will now be displayed. At first more background will be given on the mission of Oxfam Novib and how this was perceived by the stakeholders. This will be followed by the three chosen Multi-Stakeholder Initiatives *Roundtable of Sustainable Palm Oil* (RSPO)*, Roundtable Responsible Soy* (RTRS) and *Aquaculture Stewardship Council* (ASC) from the perspective of both Oxfam Novib as the stakeholders. Lastly, the final dots will be connected through laying out the cases side by side and comparing the results, making this chapter come to a close. As a final remark, the majority of interviews were conducted in Dutch. Whenever a direct quotation is used from one of these interviews, the sentence has been translated in English by the researcher.

4.1. Mission

4.1.1. Perspective Oxfam Novib

The ambition of Oxfam Novib has always been high. After all, they are trying to rid the world of poverty. Sometimes they do this on their own, more often with others, but almost always with the ambition to influence private businesses and/or governmental policies in mind. Throughout the years they have gathered various strategies in the pursuit of their goals, all of the ones Korten (1987) spoke about: working together with local partner organizations, working with governments and corporations to influence policies and campaigning (ON, 2013). One can say that Oxfam Novib has many tools in its toolbox to influence sustainable practices and accomplish its mission of abolishing poverty, with MSIs being one of them.

Oxfam Novib has engaged with MSIs for nearly a decade now, because:

> "Wicked or complex problems require multi-stakeholder solutions for any significant change at scale. In trying to solve these problems there is a need for alternative governance structures that can provide holistic solutions. The only way to find solutions and for viable implementation to take place is through a long-term vision, engaging a critical mass of stakeholders, and providing sufficient support for implementation. For these solutions to work, the most marginalized and

affected populations must have a stake in the solution building, a role in implementation, and benefit from the outcomes. A solution for systemic change in a sector needs to be inclusive, even if that means some level of compromise." (Holzman, 2015, p.12).

The organization has been asked to participate in multiple Multi-Stakeholder Initiatives, including RSPO, RTRS, ASC, RSCE (Roundtable of Sustainable Cocoa Economy), Bonsucro and the 4C Association, due to its image as a social NGO. Their decision to participate in these initiatives has always depended on the potential alignment with their mission (Holzman, 2015; Pesqueira, 2014; R3; R9; R12). In the long haul, therefore, Oxfam Novib's engagement in MSIs should bring the accomplishment of their ultimate mission closer, while, in the short run, it should align well with their rights-based approach too: the belief that the rights of everyone around the world should be respected and weigh in equally (Holzman, 2015, Pesqueira, 2014). The social rights-based approach can be considered the point of departure for strategies, ergo the basis upon which strategies are built. Five key elements of this approach can be deciphered: the right to sustainable livelihood resources, right to basic social services, right to life and security, right to social and political participation and right to an identity (ON, 2013, Mission and Vision, para. 1). According to one of the main players of Oxfam Novib the first and the fourth element are pursued by the organization with the strategy of MSIs (R3), making improving the livelihood of people and giving them a voice the mission that Oxfam Novib directly pursues in MSIs.

4.1.2. Perspective stakeholders

When the stakeholders were asked to give their opinion on the matter of mission, more often than not their answer was also closely related to the matter of core values of Oxfam Novib. Therefore, this subsection will display opinions on both the mission of the organization as its core values.

Once asked about the mission and, in extension, norms and values of Oxfam Novib, all stakeholders from all MSI-cases started talking about the social component Oxfam Novib represents and what the organization values: smallholders, land rights, human rights, land grabbing and local partners (R1; R2; R4-R8; R10; R11; R13-R20). To give a few examples:

> *"It's all about the three P's: people, planet and profit [….] and I think Oxfam is more on the people-side, the social issues"* (R11).

> *"I really see them as a social NGO that stands up for smallholders, land grabbing, land rights, the actual human rights issues"* (R4).

Therefore, it is clear that the authorizing environment is aware of Oxfam Novib's overall intention. However, did they agree upon the organization staying true to their social nature as well?

The stakeholders from the authorizing environment of the RSPO can be divided into two, partially overlapping, groups. Many stakeholders believed that Oxfam Novib could stay true to their core values and mission (R1; R4; R8; R16):

> *"At first it may not look like the mission fits with going into MSIs, but I think* [name employee Oxfam Novib] *does it very well. Indirectly he manages to incorporate their values"* (R1)

In addition, some of the same stakeholders and others also believed that the organization did not necessarily drift away from their mission completely, but had to compromise nevertheless (R4; R8; R13; R16):

"Everyone has to make concessions in a consensus-based model. So if you look at it that way, you cannot stay one hundred percent yourself" (R8).

Within the ASC, the division between the two groups was more clear-cut. Some agreed that Oxfam Novib stayed true to what they believe in (R2; R14), while others were more hesitant (R19; R20). Especially, one interviewee who represents the group of Conscientious Objectors (COs) disagreed completely. She stated that there is still much wrong with the aquaculture sector in the labor department and mentioned that:

"It was a mistake for ON to associate itself with this kind of initiative." (R20).

The stakeholders from the RTRS, finally, seemed to not have put much thought into the question if the reason for Oxfam Novib to stay outside of the RTRS had anything to do with their mission and core values (R10; R15; R18):

"Yes so, I never actually wondered why Oxfam didn't join the soy Round Table" (R10).

4.1.3. Conclusion

One of the interviewees vividly illustrated the division that exists between different groups and NGOs in relation to MSIs. He used the metaphor of the hourglass: on top there are the producers, at the bottom the consumers, and in the middle the (slimming) middle sector of retailers. Where there once were many retailers, today, there only exist a few. MSIs strive to make these companies sustainable. Being involved in these initiatives, therefore, means that an organization aims at this middle sector, thus having already decided upon the fact that this is how the power relations work in our world. In contrast, being against MSIs means that an organization does not feel comfortable with this world image and tries to reduce the growing power of this middle sector instead (R16).

This metaphor makes clear why some stakeholders believe that Oxfam Novib stays true to its mission and values when they take up MSI-strategies, while others see it as a bad thing. The stakeholders related to the RSPO are part of the first group. They believe, despite the fact that Oxfam Novib needs to compromise here and there, that the organization can stay true to its mission and values. Within the ASC, the stakeholders were divided. Part of them had the same point of view as the stakeholders from the RSPO, the others saw the organization's participation as somewhat less than desirable. The stakeholders from the RTRS told a different story. They never really made the connection between the mission and the decision to stay outside of the soy-MSI (which might actually say something about the way Oxfam Novib has communicated its intentions, but more on that later).

Therefore, and simultaneously answering the first empirical sub-question: '*How does Oxfam Novib's mission relate to the legitimacy of engaging in the Multi-Stakeholder Initiatives RSPO, RTRS and ASC?*': the authorizing environment of the RSPO grants legitimacy to the participation of Oxfam Novib within this MSI; the authorizing environment of the ASC only partially bestows legitimacy to

the participation of the organization; and the authorizing environment of the RTRS is indecisive about the subject. In the coming three sections, the RSPO, RTRS and ASC will be explained in detail from the perspective of Oxfam Novib and its authorizing environment. Therefore, the link with deeper levels of legitimacy (input and output) will be made to explain how the results stated above came about. Within each of the three MSI-cases, the tactics will be discussed first, followed by the notion of legitimacy.

## 4.2. Roundtable of Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO)

4.2.1. Tactics

History engagement Oxfam Novib. The Roundtable of Sustainable Palm Oil was initiated in 2004 by Unilever and WWF and, at that time, solely focused on environmental issues (such as deforestation) while leaving the social issues unattended. When Oxfam Novib was invited by Unilever, under the pretext of discussing its side of the story with multiple stakeholders at an international level, it seemed a perfect opportunity for Oxfam Novib to shed light on the issues it cares about most: people and poverty (Holzman, 2015; Pesqueira, 2015). Oxfam Novib joined the RSPO in 2004 without any prior knowledge of what an MSI actually entails, as was the case for all other participants. They saw participating as a logical step since they had come to the realization that complex or wicked problems can only be addressed together, in collaboration with multiple stakeholders (Holzman, 2015; R3). Furthermore, they decided to join, because they witnessed the right dynamics in the RSPO for fulfilling their social agenda, meaning that Oxfam Novib thought the MSI had its nose pointed in the right direction for them to swoop in: opportunities for including smallholders, for assigning focus on land grabbing and reducing poverty seemed feasible (R3). In addition, the governance structure of the RSPO was something Oxfam Novib felt it could work with. The structure was based upon the belief in equal rights for every stakeholder with equal chances to get their agendas brought to the table (Holzman, 2015).

Intended strategy. When Oxfam Novib first joined the RSPO, they did so with an opportunistic approach. They had no prior knowledge of what an MSI was or how one should address such a phenomenon, they just saw the end goal as promising. A clear and focused strategy, therefore, was not set out just about yet. In the beginning, this was not seen as problematic. However, when the initiative assumed more concrete form, more criticasters arose, making it necessary for the initiative and its participants to rethink what they were actually doing. Oxfam Novib realized, too, that they never had written down a clear strategy about their participation and how to move forward with it. Questions as 'what is our ultimate goal?' and 'when do we leave the initiative?' were left unattended. Logically, they started to think about their strategy plan and one of the main points that came out of this was the realization that they should not participate as Oxfam Novib, but as the international confederation Oxfam instead (R3). According to Oxfam Novib's main player within the RSPO, this was, however, the only major change that occurred. In general nothing much changed, except for the awareness what participating in an MSI actually meant, making Oxfam Novib less naïve in their approach (R3). They started to acknowledge the flaws of MSIs: they were time-consuming and capacity-demanding platforms wherein NGOs could get accused of helping the industry green wash their practices. Above all, being solely on the inside failed to deliver the wanted outcomes as pointed out by the criticasters. As a result of this 'crisis' in approach, Oxfam Novib understood that they needed to have a strategy based upon an insider and outsider approach if they wanted to move

the MSI in the right direction (Pesqueira, 2014) and, in addition, that they needed to internally communicate what they were doing to get the Oxfam brand more involved (R3).

Going back to the model of MSI-tactics, Oxfam Novib first employed the strategy of a friendly insider up until the 'crisis' where they had to rethink their actions. After this occasion they apprehended the value of the criticasters for the success of the RSPO and started working with these outsiders by giving them a platform for venting their objections. This was a crucial step for Oxfam Novib in advancing their social agenda (Pesqueira, 2014). This inside strategy with a focus on the outside world was complemented by taking part in several collaborative campaigns such as the Behind the Brands campaign (annual campaign, ranks companies by different indicators) (Holzman, 2015). To make this dynamic movement concrete: the participation of Oxfam Novib, from their point of view, changed over time from a friendly insider to a critical insider. Making the *intended strategy* as followed:

	Insider	
Campaigning	Critical insider	↑
Collaborating	Friendly insider	
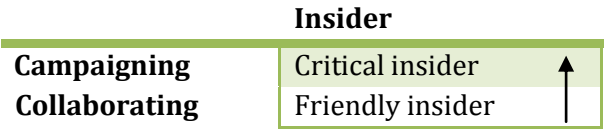
Whether all Oxfam Novib's stakeholders agree with this outlook upon their participation will now be presented.

Perceived strategy. Stakeholders who were interviewed because of their relationship with Oxfam Novib and the RSPO were of mixed opinion on the tactics Oxfam Novib has employed throughout their participation in this MSI. Two interviewees argued that Oxfam Novib used both insider and outsider approaches and viewed this as a positive course of action. To them it made sense that organizations such as Oxfam Novib both enter into dialogue and have different activities (for example the current campaign Behind the Brands which ranks companies by different indicators) on the side to achieve its goals (R1; R8). Although, they also mentioned that this diversity in approaches could lead to distorted relationships (R1; R8), a perspective that was agreed upon by another interviewee who stated that Oxfam Novib indeed uses different tactics which can enhance confusion and distrust among stakeholders (R4). On a different note, other stakeholders perceived Oxfam Novib as a complete insider of the RSPO who, instead of playing the game of ambivalence, focused on a *"complete-in-the-RSPO-path"* and solely *"lays its eggs in one basket"* (R16). According to these stakeholders, the organization would do well to figure out a strategy that incorporates both insider and outsider roles simultaneously (R13; R16). In addition, these stakeholders also labeled the Behind the Brands campaign as *"too sweet"* (R13) and not a beneficial outsider-approach (R13; R16).

In sum, there is a division between stakeholders who actually see that Oxfam Novib uses both collaborating and campaigning strategies at the same time, as a critical insider would do, and stakeholders who think that the organization is solely imbibed in the RSPO, as a friendly insider would be. The perspective of the stakeholders is therefore stuck between a friendly and critical insider:

	Insider
Campaigning **Collaborating**	Friendly or Critical insider?

This picture renders that the *perceived* tactic shows a slight deviation from the *intended* tactic. What this does for the legitimacy will be addressed next.

4.2.2. Legitimacy

Input legitimacy. When it comes to the first criterion of input legitimacy, civil behaviour, all stakeholders from the RSPO saw the organization's behaviour as decent, albeit from different perspectives. Oxfam Novib was either perceived as decent, because they simply lacked painful, action orientated campaigns (R13; R16) or because they did use campaigns next to collaboration practices to enhance dialogue and consensus (R4; R8). This division is interesting, given that all stakeholders agreed upon the organization being decent without agreeing upon this necessarily being a good thing:

> *"In general, I think that their taking action approach has been too modest"* (R16).

Moving on to discursive behaviour, it seems that Oxfam Novib is only perceived as giving transparent information about their rationale for joining through informal canals. For example, one interviewee mentioned that the organization had clarified its rationale quite well, although she stated that she only acquired this information informally, by talking to representatives (R13). Another interviewee thought that the flow of information was too limited, mainly because only a few people from Oxfam Novib were involved in the distribution of this information, and remarked that Oxfam Novib should work on its openness and transparency (R16). Then there was one interviewee who discussed that she never clearly heard why they joined (R4) and that the organization had never taken time to publicly advocate the RSPO (R4; R8). All of this points in the direction of Oxfam Novib distributing their information through a couple of employees, without a clear structure and presence of public statements.

In the RSPO, the stakeholders were not conclusive about the first part of the criterion consensual behaviour (consensus versus negotiation oriented). However, one did argue that Oxfam Novib should announce more publicly that it is part of a bigger, mutual platform of discussion, but hesitates to do so because the organization wants to profile itself as the best (R8). In addition, Oxfam Novib is perceived as not going one step further than taking part in the initiative, making one stakeholder declare that she *"would never go to them if I had a knowledge question"* (R4), since the organization does not make an effort to proactively help and *"operates stand alone"* (R4). Moreover, one interviewee stated that he has no idea if Oxfam Novib aims at consensus/negotiation, because of the lack of a solid communication process (R16). The stakeholders, therefore, paint an indecisive, but somewhat negative picture on this matter. There was, however, more clarity on the second part of this criterion (inclusion and voice of smallholders). Oxfam Novib is perceived as being focused on local partners and is considered to be one of the moving forces behind this issue of voice and inclusiveness of smallholders (R1; R4; R8; R11; R13; R16):

They are: *"the ones who set the agenda for smallholders and inclusion."* (R13)

In addition, Oxfam Novib managed to install a few mechanisms that help to give this group a voice and the organization is an active participant of the smallholder-workgroups (R1; R8).

The last input criterion, distinctive values behaviour, has already been answered in the previous section about the mission. As explained in that section, stakeholders often spoke about the core values and the mission in one breath. Therefore, the results can be repeated here: the stakeholders were positive that Oxfam Novib could stay true to its core values (R1; R4; R8; R16), but mentioned that the organization had to compromise here and there nevertheless (R4; R8; R13; R16):

Output legitimacy. The respondents were fairly positive about the realization of the goals in the RSPO, the criterion of effectiveness. Many stakeholders believed that Oxfam Novib made the right decision in joining this MSI since they were able to significantly contribute to social issues (R1; R4; R5; R7; R11; R14). For example, by arranging different mechanisms in favor of the smallholders, such as the 'conflict resolution mechanism' and 'free prior and informed consent' (R1; R4; R16), or by getting their goals successfully on the agenda (R4; R13; R16). However, not everyone saw the direct link between Oxfam Novib's efforts and the realized social issues. One respondent had heard that the organization (in collaboration with Solidaridad) mainly occupied itself with social issues, but was afraid to say if it actually was Oxfam Novib who succeeded in realizing these issues in practice (R8). She (and others) clearly had a hard time telling what the concrete contribution of Oxfam Novib was (R5; R8; R11; R16). Then there were a few voices (R13; R16) who asked the question if Oxfam Novib would have achieved more if they had not joined the RSPO to begin with, given that it is a slow, step-by-step process (R4; R13).

The next criterion, empowerment, has proven to be a difficult one for the authorizing environment to answer. It is mainly a question of impact and as it turns out, that is still an area left underexposed. Not just by Oxfam Novib, but by all participants in MSIs in general (R6; R8; R16). On the contrary much information was given by stakeholders in relation to the last criterion: organizational capacity. It should be noted, first of all, that whenever a stakeholder spoke about Oxfam Novib's participation, they always spoke about one employee. They mentioned that each MSI could only count on the involvement of one employee as representative of Oxfam Novib and, in extension, Oxfam. Quite often these employees were highly appreciated in the context of their MSI. Within the RSPO, for example, employee 1 is seen as someone who balances relations and Oxfam's goals well. He manages to indirectly insert the mission and goals through *"standing up for his opinion without becoming aggressive"* (R1), while making sure that:

"Many people think he's good and trust him and that works out well" (R4).

His effort and expertise are noticed as well: *"*[Name employee 1] *gets out of bed at two o'clock in the morning for a board meeting"* (R8). In conclusion, the stakeholders agreed upon employee 1 doing a good and constructive job (R1; R2; R4; R8; R13; R14; R19).

On the downside, however, the fact that they only knew one active representative of Oxfam Novib made the stakeholders comment that the organization might not have sufficient capacity and might

suffer from internal miscommunication between Oxfam Novib and the international confederation Oxfam. According to the stakeholders, the international confederation Oxfam seemingly does not have an internally shared consensus on the strategy of MSIs. The affiliates of Oxfam, more often than not, work parallel to each other instead of with one another (R1; R4; R13; R16), explained by one stakeholder as followed:

"This, I find alarming. The fact that I, as an outsider, know that Oxfam has conflicts internally around the strategy. It sends a weak message" (R1).

The involvement of the international confederation in MSIs, therefore, has not always been clear, leading towards confusion and questions of capacity:

"I may certainly hope that it's not just [name employee 1] *who does all the international work on this matter, but if that's the case, the capacity seems limited"* (R11).

More shared this opinion on the confined capacity of Oxfam if it really are just a few employees of Oxfam Novib who are involved (R1; R4; R11; R13; R16). In the end, this lack of manpower and capacity has lead to some stakeholders arguing that Oxfam (Novib) has managed to stay quite invisible in MSIs (R4; R8):

"…, because I work for [one of the MSIs] *and I can't even tell you which crucial part they play. Visibility is a point of improvement"* (R8).

4.2.3. Conclusion

Within the RSPO, the intended and perceived tactic were not that far apart, although a breach was visible between the direct line of the intended strategy from friendly insider towards critical insider and the unclear perceived interpretation from the authorizing environment who was divided between Oxfam Novib being a friendly or a critical insider. This begs the question how this gap affected the legitimacy of the organization's behaviour. When it comes to input legitimacy, the distinctive values behaviour showed that there was a difference in opinion on how well the information was distributed from Oxfam Novib to the outside world. As it turned out, transparency of information was more an informal affair than a public one. How well information was shared depended upon how often a stakeholder was in contact with the representative employee of Oxfam Novib. This notion has a direct link with the breach between intended and perceived tactics. Furthermore, the difference in perspective had an effect on civil behaviour as well. All stakeholders (and Oxfam Novib for that matter) agreed upon Oxfam Novib having a decent insider strategy. However, the stakeholders who envisioned that the organization was a friendly insider advised Oxfam Novib to incorporate more campaigning tactics (because they called the organizational approach too decent), while the stakeholders who saw the organization as a critical insider thought that they had just the 'right amount' of decency. Finally, the stakeholders argued that Oxfam Novib's chosen path of being on the inside of the RSPO had a positive effect on the issues of voice and inclusiveness of smallholders and, in extension, made them stay true to their values, even though they needed to compromise here and there.

When it comes to output legitimacy, it is obvious that stakeholders thought being inside of the RSPO helped Oxfam Novib realize social goals within this MSI, but they could not always tell what the exact contribution of Oxfam Novib was, nor if they might have achieved the same social goals if they had stayed out of the RSPO. Furthermore, nothing in particular can be said about how it improved empowerment. The question of empowerment seems to be interlinked with the question of impact of MSIs in general, an issue that has been left underexposed so far. Lastly, the diversity in intended and perceived strategy has a direct link with the criterion of organizational capacity. According to the stakeholders, if Oxfam Novib had more human manpower and an internal international Oxfam strategy this deviation in strategies might not have occurred. Above all, if more human capacity was incorporated within the RSPO, Oxfam Novib might have been a more prominent player.

In sum, both sides agree upon Oxfam Novib having an insider approach, without agreeing upon which one. On the side of input legitimacy (input legitimacy refers to normative processes in NGOs which evaluate if their activities serve the right purpose), the breach between perceived and intended strategy has led up to confusion about the rationale, but in general the authorizing environment does believe that Oxfam Novib's actions serve the right purpose. On the side of output legitimacy (output legitimacy refers to the way regulations of NGOs are effective at solving specific problems and objectives), however, there is more disagreement. Especially because of the confined belief in the organizational capacity, stakeholders were not conclusive on the effectiveness of Oxfam Novib to solve specific problems and objectives. Therefore, Oxfam Novib's participation in the RSPO has led the stakeholders to, generally, believe in the legitimacy of their actions, with a big side note that the subdivision of effectiveness deserves more attention.

## 4.3. Roundtable Responsible Soy (RTRS)

4.3.1. Tactics

History engagement Oxfam Novib. By the time the RTRS appeared on the radar, Oxfam Novib had already gone through their 'crisis-period' in the RSPO and had decided that every engagement in an MSI should be looked upon on a case-by-case basis from now on (ON, 2011b). That is why, when they were asked to join in 2011, fierce internal discussions arose and two documents were written on the matter of participation, a discussion and internal policy paper. The results of these discussions were fairly straightforward: *"we will not become a member of the RTRS unless these issues are substantially improved"* (ON, 2011a, p.3), with the issues being the lack of a social agenda; no possibility of getting the social issues addressed; the fact that the industry was overly represented, leaving almost no room for NGOs; the deficiency of having a well set up governance system for the RTRS itself; and the refusal of the RTRS-insiders to start a dialogue with the critical outsiders (Holzman, 2015; ON, 2011a; ON, 2011b; Pesqueira, 2014). Put differently by the main player of this MSI, Oxfam Novib had no reason to think that the RTRS would ever make room for social issues due to its governance structure and lack of transparency, but also due to the fact that the small-scale farmer was already driven out of the soy sector by bigger companies. The pro-poor agenda of Oxfam Novib, therefore, would not stand a chance to be realized (ON, 2011a; ON 2011b; R9).

Intended strategy. Oxfam Novib decided to be an outsider and remains so until this day. They have taken it upon themselves to monitor and observe the developments and progress of the RTRS. As with the RSPO, they did change their strategy a little over time though. In the beginning, the

organization was dead set against the RTRS, as reflected by the internal discussions that were held and the crusade of one employee who was very vocal in his disbelief that the RTRS would actually be able to make a contribution to the livelihood of the small-scale farmer (Holzman, 2015; ON, 2011a; ON 2011b, R9), He often gave rants on this subject which were met with disdain by opposing parties. According to this employee, some even got angry, but in the grand scheme of things, their reaction can be considered moderate. As he said himself, he was very vocal as a person, but Oxfam Novib was not vocal itself. The organization never undertook major actions to show its disbelief in this MSI. They rather closely monitored the progress and critique it wherever they could (Holzman, 2015; R9) which, over time, made the organization assume the role of observer and watchdog.

As time passed, the monitoring approach of Oxfam Novib towards the RTRS became more visible. They joined the soy coalition – a coalition in the Netherlands that raises awareness to the negative effects of the global soy production, but works reasonably parallel to the RTRS (R10; R15) – and kept an eye on the progress of RTRS from a distance (R9). Today, Oxfam Novib has left the soy coalition as well. According to the same employee, because of the simple fact that Oxfam Novib seems to have lost its interest in the soy sector (R9). The dynamic movement of Oxfam Novib in this case, and from their point of view, can be deemed as:

	Outsider	
Campaigning	Critical outsider	
Collaborating	Friendly outsider	↓
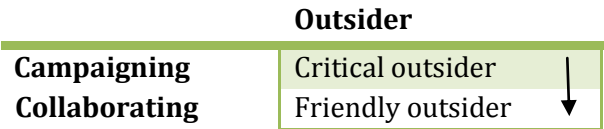
Perceived strategy. Oxfam Novib's perspective is partially shared by the stakeholders. They do see Oxfam Novib as an outsider of the RTRS, just not as a critical one:

> *"Oxfam has never really spoken in favor or against* [the RTRS]*"* and furthermore: *"I mainly had the idea that they joined the soy coalition to see what they could use for their own campaigns, but not that they really wanted to develop their own program on this issue."* (R10)

If anything, this example shows that Oxfam Novib never publicly endorsed its strategic approach towards the RTRS, making the stakeholders guess about the organization's intentions (R10; R15; R18). However, informally, within the soy coalition, Oxfam Novib was on occasion critical about what the RTRS did (R15):

> *"Their point of view was critical and I think they thought the RTRS-standard didn't go far enough for their liking. And they thought that much more things should happen alongside the RTRS to directly support social organizations."* (R15)

Therefore, considering that they did observe and critique, but always from a distance and informally, makes the perceived strategy once again slightly different from the intended strategy:

Outsider	
Collaborating	Friendly outsider

4.3.2. Legitimacy

Input legitimacy. The criterion of civil behaviour left the stakeholders conflicted. They recognized that Oxfam Novib uses both campaigning as collaboration tactics, but mentioned that the organization does not necessarily excel in either one of them, nor use them appropriately at all times (R10; R15; R18). This means that Oxfam Novib is perceived as being stuck between decent and indecent. To support the statement of the latter (indecency), a couple of stakeholders mentioned that Oxfam Novib displayed self-centered tendencies (R10; R11; R15). For example, one interviewee was of opinion that the organization, with Behind the Brands (that incorporates different indicators, the RTRS being one of them), claims all the credit for work that has actually been a joint effort (R11), which was supported by another stakeholder who stated that:

"In the end there is only one Brand that matters: the Oxfam Brand" (R15).

In their eyes Oxfam Novib displayed behaviour that was aimed at enhancing their own agenda. However, this perspective was nuanced by a stakeholder who discussed that Oxfam Novib did try to engage more in partnerships (R18), hence the fact that Oxfam Novib is perceived as balancing between indecent and decent. In the end, Oxfam Novib has the image of an organization that wants partnerships and wants to work together, but also make these collaborations into beneficial opportunities for the organization itself. One interviewee gave an explanation as to why he saw it this way: it might have to do with *"an unclear strategy at Oxfam on how Oxfam wants to work together and associate themselves with companies"* (R15).

Just as in the RSPO, the stakeholders from the RTRS mentioned that they never officially heard why Oxfam Novib decided to stay outside of the RTRS and when they actually did know, the information had gotten to them through informal canals (R7; R10; R15; R18):

Oxfam Novib was interested in the beginning, "*but at a certain time they pulled back, because they didn't completely agree. I think it was because of Genetically Modified Organisms. Well at least that was the breaking point for* [other NGO]. *I don't know why, if there was a social dimension to the story where Oxfam Novib did not agree with or that it was the matter of Genetically Modified Organisms."* (R18)

When it comes to consensual behaviour, no definite answer can be given on the question of consensus/negotiation. However, the story of how Oxfam Novib's actions are seen as debatable does not work in favor of the consensual aspect of this criterion (R10; R11; R15). In addition, no respondent of the RTRS was able to say something about the matter of inclusiveness and voice, given that Oxfam Novib has not actually participated in this MSI. The stakeholders from the RTRS, finally, seemed to not have put much thought into the question if the reason for Oxfam Novib not to participate had anything to do with its core values (R10; R15; R18):

"Yes so, I never actually wondered why Oxfam didn't join the soy Round Table" (R10).

Output legitimacy. Given that Oxfam Novib never actually joined the RTRS, the stakeholders had a hard time answering the question how effective the organization has been by staying on the outside of this MSI. One stakeholder mentioned that the organization should emphasize on finding new collaborating ways to achieve its goals. He did not believe that Oxfam Novib was quite there yet when it comes to partnerships with governments and corporate businesses (R18). Another stakeholder discussed that Oxfam Novib had better joined the RTRS, since the organization by no means could have done, or actually did, anything more on the outside than what they could have accomplished on the inside of the RTRS (R15). In addition, if the organization wanted to stay on the outside, a stakeholder mentioned that the organization could have helped the soy-sector to move forward by being public advocates of the atrocities in this sector. Meaning that even though Oxfam Novib was against the RTRS, the organization still could have helped to create awareness for the soy issues (R10). In the end, the discussion of the effectiveness of Oxfam Novib's involvement comes down to the question if the organization wants to engage with MSIs and try to improve the world through incremental steps or if they want to take more drastic measures, because with MSIs, no one should be able to achieve their goals one hundred percent, but:

"By taking distance, you don't support the companies who dare to stick out their necks and you actually just make it easier for companies who decided to do nothing" (R15).

When it comes to empowerment, once again, the stakeholders were unable to answer the question if Oxfam Novib enhances empowerment, probably due to the fact that Oxfam Novib did not participate in the RTRS and because impact of MSIs in general still deserve more attention (R5; R6; R11). Lastly, the question of organizational capacity of Oxfam Novib in relation to the RTRS got the following remarks: in the soy coalition the representative employee of Oxfam Novib was not seen as fairly constructive. According to the stakeholders, she mainly felt the need to vent her point of view without aiming at dialogue. She was, therefore, perceived as highly critical of everything (R7; R10; R15), however, *"when she was replaced by someone else for a few times, well that was a completely different story. Completely"* (R15). This event made this specific stakeholder wonder if Oxfam Novib actually had a common strategy or if its employees could do whatever they saw fit. Furthermore, in regard to the international confederation, the stakeholders had a hard time seeing coherence between all Oxfam affiliates. They argued that the reason behind their internal fragmentation might have something to do with differences in culture and agendas of the affiliates and the fact that, as a bonus of being part of a big organization, all partners were unable to change their strategies whenever they pleased (R7; R10; R15; R18).

4.3.3. Conclusion

Within the RTRS, the intended and perceived tactic were not that far apart, although, once again, a breach was visible between the direct line of the intended strategy from critical outsider towards friendly outsider and the perceived interpretation from the authorizing environment that Oxfam Novib had always set up base in the friendly outsider category. On the side of input legitimacy, this perceived approach made stakeholders doubt Oxfam Novib's intentions. The stakeholders wondered if Oxfam Novib actually monitored the RTRS out of a watchdog role or because they wanted to further their own agenda. In addition, a link exists between the discrepancy in perspectives and the

fact that Oxfam Novib never officially declared why they were staying on the outside of the RTRS, let alone that they undertook any formal actions against this MSI. As a result of the organization's informal communication, the stakeholders never knew if there was a connection between the core values of Oxfam Novib and their decision not to join.

Furthermore, on the side of output legitimacy, the gap made the stakeholders wonder if Oxfam Novib had actually realized more of its social goals by the decision to stay outside of the RTRS and there was, once again, no clear connection with empowerment. Seemingly, all MSIs would benefit from a better approach on how to improve the matter of impact. Therefore, Oxfam Novib's decision to stay outside and not actively campaign against the RTRS probably did not make a difference on the matter of empowerment. Lastly, the diversity in intended and perceived strategy is also connected to the criterion of organizational capacity. If Oxfam Novib had more human capacity and an internal international Oxfam strategy, the deviation in strategies might not have occurred. They might have, for example, undertaken public actions against the RTRS (as a critical outsider would do), instead of working through the voice of one employee, and shown the world a more coherent strategy.

In sum, both sides agree upon Oxfam Novib having an outsider approach, without agreeing upon which one. On the side of input legitimacy, the authorizing environment does not believe that Oxfam Novib's actions have served the right purpose, because the stakeholders too often questioned the intentions of the organization and because Oxfam Novib's informal transparency led to confusion about the organization's rationale. This goes for output legitimacy as well. Even though the stakeholders have no proof that the organization would have been more effective on the inside of the RTRS, they discussed that Oxfam Novib at least has not been that effective in its role as an outsider. This can, especially, be appointed to the limited coherence of Oxfam Novib with the international confederation Oxfam. Therefore, Oxfam Novib's participation in the RTRS has led the stakeholder to, not completely dismiss, but severely doubt the legitimacy of the organization's actions.

4.4. Aquaculture Stewardship Council (ASC)

4.4.1. Tactics

History engagement Oxfam Novib. The history of the Aquaculture Stewardship Council is quite complex. The ASC started out with eight different dialogues under the name of *The Aquaculture Dialogues*. When these dialogues were finished, an umbrella organization, created with the purpose to monitor these different standards, came into existence: the ASC. Oxfam Novib started its involvement with the ASC in two different dialogues, The Shrimp Aquaculture Dialogue (which focused on shrimp) and Salmon Aquaculture Dialogue (which focused on salmon). The organization was asked to participate after their low-key involvement as lobbyist/advisor in GlobalG.A.P. (an initiative developed by retailers to address agricultural issues (GLOBALG.A.P., n.d.)) on different aquaculture issues (Holzman, 2015; R12).

Intended strategy. Oxfam Novib became an official insider of the ASC in 2009, but not without going through international Oxfam policies first which meant that different perspectives on participation were internally debated through discussions and policy memos (ON, 2012; R12). According to the main player of this MSI, writing and circulating policy memos at that time meant nothing more than

sending these memos to every Oxfam affiliate and wait for their response. If, after a certain time, no-one had objected or if responses failed to come in, the affiliate in question was allowed to continue its chosen path. As this was the case with the ASC, Oxfam Novib as Oxfam became an insider of the shrimp and salmon dialogues (R12).

Especially during their involvement in the Shrimp Aquaculture Dialogue (ShAD), Oxfam Novib encountered multiple NGOs that were critical about their involvement in this initiative. These opposing NGOs felt that Oxfam as an international development organization should not be working with the enemy, that is the corporate world. As a direct consequence these NGOs started losing faith in Oxfam and brought the organization's legitimacy into question (Holzman, 2015; ON, 2012; Pesqueira, 2014, R12). In the beginning, Oxfam Novib tried to cooperate with these *'Conscientious Objectors'* (COs) by giving them a platform and by mediating between them and the ASC (Pesqueira, 2014). This worked out well for a while and earned them their new status as critical insider by trying to influence from the inside out.

A few months into 2012, the status quo between Oxfam Novib, ASC and the Conscientious Objectors was heaved. The last group, consistent of more than 70 critical NGOs, reached out to the director of the international confederation Oxfam by filing an official complaint. The negotiations that followed ended in a deadlock, making Oxfam Novib and the critical NGOs decide to go their separate ways, which happened to be just around the same time the standards from the ShAD were about to enter the market (Holzman, 2015; Pesqueira, 2014; R12). These events underscored the need for Oxfam Novib to review their position in the ASC-system. In a memo, dated June 14th 2012, the private sector team of Oxfam Novib recommended that the organization should:

> *"Remain critically associated to the standard setting mechanism as 'technical advisor' in ASC committees during the implementation phase, although NOT to become a member and NOT to publicly endorse the Aquaculture Stewardship Council proactively."* (p.1).

They felt that this strategy would best warrant Oxfam from any further public criticism and, indeed, Oxfam took part in the ASC as a technical advisor and, therefore, as a friendly outsider.

The strategic journey of Oxfam Novib's intended approach towards the ASC can be summarized as followed: the organization started out as a friendly insider, but moved (over time) towards the position of a critical insider and ended up (even later) as a friendly outsider:

	Insider	**Outsider**
Campaigning	Critical insider	
Collaborating	Friendly insider	Friendly outsider
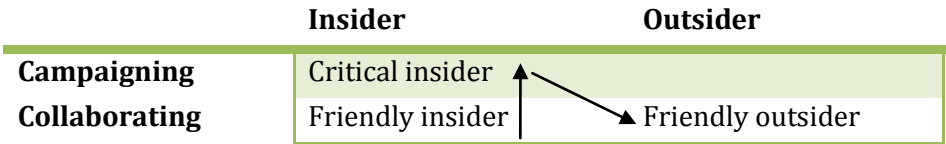
Perceived strategy. After the COs and Oxfam Novib went their own way and the shrimp-standard was delivered, Oxfam Novib chose to change from an insider to an outsider tactic. The organization saw this change in tactics as coherent, a logical follow-up, but its authorizing environment did not follow

this rationale. They kept on seeing Oxfam Novib as an insider of the ASC, although opinions were divided whether they were a critical insider (R2; R19) or a friendly insider (R14; R17; R20):

"Oxfam participates in discussion, but reserves the right to thwart by saying: we are against this, and we are going to make sure it becomes negative publicity. It's a sort of leverage to head the discussion into a certain direction." (R2).

Get out as soon as you can guys. I don't think they can make it better, […] get out and start campaigning, they would find a lot of supporters." (R20)

In fact, there was only one stakeholder who understood that Oxfam Novib had made the transition from insider to outsider, albeit not being very positive about this:

"I can't imagine, and I've said this to [name employee Oxfam Novib] *as well, that if you invest in a shrimp-dialogue for eight years and you sign it no matter how good or bad the document is, that you won't give public support to this document. You just don't dare to do so, because you're afraid the critical NGOs will come back to bite you in the back. I just don't understand that as far as it goes to philosophy. It makes me think that something is wrong with your own attitude. What is it you want?"* (R19)

Therefore, the opinion of the stakeholders is once again different from the perspective of Oxfam Novib. Even though the authorizing environments slightly agrees on the roles of the organization in the beginning (insider), they, in general, did not figure out that Oxfam Novib, over time, had officially jumped over to the outside of the ASC. Leaving their perspective as follows:

	Insider
Campaigning **Collaborating**	Friendly or Critical insider?

4.4.2. Legitimacy
Input legitimacy. Within the group of ASC-stakeholders the common opinion exists that Oxfam Novib is first and foremost a collaborating organization – *"I don't see them as a campaigner-club"* (R17) – that only resorts to campaigning to enhance dialogue and consensus (R2; R14; R17). At the same time, however, it would help the organization to be clearer about when they use one strategy or the other, because stakeholders mentioned that, from the outside, it is not always visible what the organization wants (R17; R19). All of this places Oxfam Novib into the decent-category. Only one interviewee, from the group of Conscientious Objectors (COs) regarded Oxfam Novib's behaviour as indecent. She made clear that collaborating with the industry is inherently an unwanted course, because companies will exploit NGOs for green washing practices, as is the case with Oxfam Novib in the ASC (R20).

In relation to the second criterion, stakeholders who knew something about the rationale of Oxfam Novib for joining the ASC were informed through informal canals (R14; R17; R19), just as in the RSPO and RTRS. Usually that meant through the representative of the organization within the ASC:

"Oxfam Novib participated from a clear position", while adding, once asked what this clear position was: *"Well, yes,* [name employee Oxfam Novib] *just stands for social aspects….."* (R19)

"Well, I think that with my background of MSIs people seek you out and I, of course, go looking for it myself too." (R14)

While the ones who were not informed argued that Oxfam Novib had never stated anything about their participation publicly (R2; R20):

"No, well not for someone from the outside. Maybe for people who were there at the start of the whole process, they know the whole story. But yes it's not very clear for the public if you like" (R20).

Moving on with the third criterion of consensus and inclusiveness/voice of smallholders, Oxfam Novib's authorizing environment of the ASC demonstrated a variety in opinion. To explain, The ASC was mainly made up out of NGOs and just a few people from the industry. When Oxfam Novib decided to join, they were on the one hand inside of the ASC, while on the other hand juggling criticisms from the Conscientious Objectors (critical NGOs) – who saw the dialogue as a green washing exercise (R20) – and, in addition, had to deal with criticisms from the industry who also thought that their side was underrepresented (R19). By trying to mediate between these three groups, Oxfam Novib was perceived in different ways. Some said they were *"all talk and no action"* (R19) or ideological, especially on the points they deemed irrelevant for them (R2; R19), making the organization aim more at consensus than negotiation:

"Oxfam Novib has realistic standards, but on certain issues they become a little bit too ideological. I don't want to call it dreamy, because the thought behind it is very good. But it needs to be applicable in reality, because otherwise we're just building a castle in the air. It needs to stay practical." (R2)

However, it was also mentioned by some stakeholders that Oxfam Novib could be pragmatic from time to time which led to more negotiation manners, especially on points the organization found to be important (R2; R14; R19).

Furthermore, the inclusion of and voice for smallholders has been branded a big theme for Oxfam Novib. It was observed that the representative employee of Oxfam Novib within the ASC had smallholders' best interest at heart and tried to incorporate this group as much as possible, be it through himself as a representative; or by creating a platform for minority groups where they could speak their mind; or by joining workgroups in favor of the social beneficiaries (R2; R17; R19). However, there were also some voices who mentioned that Oxfam Novib should reflect if their MSI-strategy was the best way to go for helping out these smallholders (R19; R20), especially by the representative of the COs:

"I know they value it very highly. [….] I saw that the democracy aspect and also the social aspect were very important for ON. I don't question that. I'm just wondering if Novib's association with the ASC was a mistake." (R20)

Coming back to the question of core values, as already explained (Section 4.1), the division between those who do think Oxfam Novib can stay true to its core values (R2; R14) and who do not (R19; R20) is quite striking and fundamental.

Output legitimacy. The stakeholders involved in the ASC-environment were mostly positive about Oxfam Novib's realization of their goals, at least all but the representative of the COs. The question of inclusiveness, for instance, and smallholders was well taken up by the standards from the beginning, according to the first group (R2; R14; R17; R19):

"…and what you see on the social side is that all MSIs exhibit big gaps on social issues, except for the ASC, which has to do with the fact that Oxfam was involved from the beginning" (R14).

"So I did have the feeling that [name employee Oxfam Novib] *– yes otherwise he would have left a long time ago I think – that they realized big parts in an effective way"* (R17).

In contrast, the representative of the COs argued that by participating Oxfam Novib has realized nothing more than more violations on human rights, which goes directly against what they stand for. Especially In the last years where atrocities in the aquaculture sector have become more prominent than ever (R20).

Also within the group of ASC-stakeholders, the fact that MSIs in itself do not have enough impact measurement systems was mentioned when asked about the criterion of empowerment. That, and the notion that MSIs in general may not be qualified to accomplish this goal (R14; R17; R20). Lastly, when it comes to organizational capacity, the employee of Oxfam Novib in the ASC was greatly valued. It was mentioned that he has a high level of expertise and is seen as someone that works constructively, with the minor notion that he has a more ideological approach than his colleague from the RSPO (R2; R19). Overall, he is seen as competent and capable (R2; R14; R17; R19):

"That is why I speak about him with such high praise, because I have always worked very effectively and well with him. He has much knowledge about the sector and stays realistic" (R17).

However, also this group of stakeholders noted that there was internal disintegration in strategies between Oxfam Novib and Oxfam. Quite a few had no idea that it was not solely the Dutch affiliate that engaged with the ASC, but that it actually was the whole confederation who participated (R17; R19; R20).

You need to make sure that a coherent strategy exist, *"but it doesn't necessarily go well on this point for Oxfam Novib",* because *"[name employee 3] might lose ground against Oxfam. If you don't have leadership there that agrees with you, and your organization is international, and with all sorts of different clubs. Well yes, then you'll never manage"* to get the chosen path incorporated (R19).

All of this made them state that Oxfam Novib has too little manpower to get the job done well (R14; R17; R19; R20).
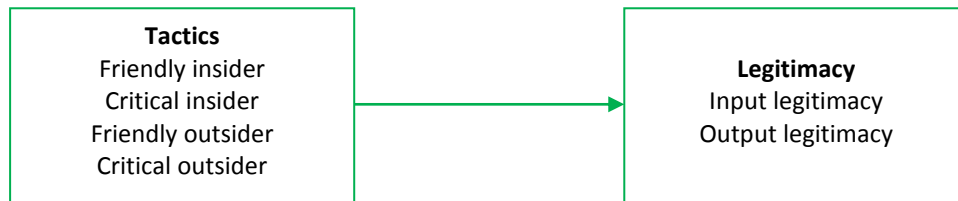
4.4.3. Conclusion

Within the ASC, the intended and perceived strategy mainly differed on the fact that Oxfam Novib had moved from an insider to an outsider role, while this was not observed by (most of) its authorizing environment. In addition, the stakeholders were divided on the matter if Oxfam Novib showed friendly or critical insider characteristics. When it comes to input legitimacy, this resulted in many interviewees seeing Oxfam Novib as an organization that has both campaigning as collaborating strategies, but does not always know when to use which one. Nevertheless, the organization's civil behaviour is in general perceived as decent, except by the representative of the COs. In addition, the breach between the two sides had a direct link with the impression that information was distributed informally by Oxfam Novib, instead of publicly. It also had a direct link with the fact that some stakeholders saw the organization's consensual behaviour as aiming at consensus, while others saw it as aiming at negotiation. Furthermore, the notion that they were seen as being solely on the inside made clear why there was a separation between those who thought that this strategy helped smallholders and those who thought that it did not; which also counts for the separation between those who think that Oxfam Novib can stay true to its core values and those who disagree.

When it comes to output legitimacy, being on the inside, in general, seemed to enhance the effectiveness of Oxfam Novib to realize their goals. Moreover, nothing in particular can be said about how it improved empowerment. Lastly, the diversity in intended and perceived strategy showed once more a link to the criterion of organization capacity, given that stakeholders argued that Oxfam Novib dealt with limited manpower and that the role of Oxfam was unclear, sometimes even unnoticed up until this point.

In sum, both sides saw that Oxfam Novib first employed an insider role (which one, however, was not clear), but the authorizing environment never made it as far as recognizing the latter outsider role of the organization. On the side of input legitimacy, this resulted in two groups: the ones who believe that Oxfam Novib's actions serve the right purpose and the ones who beg to differ. This partially goes for output legitimacy as well, although everyone agrees that Oxfam Novib (and Oxfam) suffers from a lack in capacity. Therefore, Oxfam Novib's participation in the ASC has led to the a segregation among stakeholders, making half of them having doubts about Oxfam Novib's legitimacy and the other half (almost) convinced of their legitimacy.

4.5. Case comparison

In the end, *'how does Oxfam Novib's tactics influence its legitimacy'*, as the second empirical sub-question stated? The causal relation between tactics and their influence on legitimacy was visualized (in Section 2.3) as followed:

```
┌─────────────────────────────┐                    ┌─────────────────────────────┐
│          Tactics            │                    │         Legitimacy          │
│       Friendly insider      │ ─────────────────► │       Input legitimacy      │
│       Critical insider      │                    │       Output legitimacy     │
│       Friendly outsider     │                    │                             │
│       Critical outsider     │                    │                             │
└─────────────────────────────┘                    └─────────────────────────────┘
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To find an answer to the second sub-question, the conclusions from the separate cases will be presented first. In each one of these cases, connections will be made between tactics and legitimacy and it will be revealed how this is interlinked with the perceived legitimacy of the mission.

Palm oil. The level of influence from strategies on legitimacy within MSIs was measured by how it affected the seven criteria of input and output legitimacy. Being on the inside of the RSPO, first of all, meant that Oxfam Novib could count on the stakeholders seeing that the organization served the right causes. Although, the fact that it was unclear if Oxfam Novib pursued a friendly insider or critical insider tactic made the stakeholders declare that the rationale for joining was not distributed well enough. Secondly, being on the inside did help the organization to be effective in some ways, even though these ways were not always sufficient in the eyes of the stakeholders. Oxfam Novib did get to realize some goals, but had no effect yet on empowerment of local actors and worked with too little staff and international coherence.

In the end, the authorizing environment of the RSPO sees Oxfam Novib's insider participation as legitimate, but with the notion that they have to work on their effectiveness (output legitimacy). The stakeholders indicated that effectiveness might be enhanced when Oxfam Novib is clearer about which insider role the organization is carrying out. Oxfam Novib can manage to do so by publicly stating their rationale; by visually incorporating collaboration and campaigning tactics simultaneously; and by finding ways to improve their internal and international organizational capacity. To conclude, the fact that the insider tactic of Oxfam Novib is seen as legitimate, although not always effective, explains why the stakeholders saw Oxfam Novib's participation in the RSPO as being in line with its mission, albeit declaring that the organization would not be capable of accomplishing all its goals in an MSI-based model.

Soy. Based upon the relation to the mission, Oxfam Novib was neither granted legitimacy for their decisions, nor completely accused of mission drift. In fact, the stakeholders were quite indecisive on the matter of legitimacy of the organization's actions. How this came to be can be explained by looking into the relation between tactics and legitimacy. The stakeholders did not see the chosen outsider strategy of the organization as serving the right purpose, nor as being very effective. They came to this conclusion, firstly because they mentioned that Oxfam Novib lacked transparency about both its rationale behind staying outside of the RTRS (information was solely in informal ways) as its intentions. Too often the actions of the organization were mistaken for something called personal gain. Secondly, because strategic coherence between Oxfam Novib and Oxfam was missing, a link that could have helped their cause if it had been there. Thirdly, because the organization should have done something more outside of the RTRS to further its goals, given that the stakeholders argued Oxfam Novib did not realize anything in particular by staying outside of this MSI.

In sum, confusion about the specific role of Oxfam Novib had the upper hand, leading towards doubt about the legitimacy of the organization's actions and in extension, led to the stakeholders being indecisive on the matter of legitimacy of Oxfam Novib's general RTRS-approach.

Aquaculture. The case of the ASC is interesting, because half of the authorizing environment granted legitimacy based upon the mission, while the other half accused Oxfam Novib of mission drift. The same scenario was visible on the deeper level of tactics within the ASC. The fact that the stakeholders perceived Oxfam Novib to be an insider of the ASC, divided them into those who thought that Oxfam Novib did serve the right purpose with their actions and those who disagreed. This was to a lesser extent the case in relation to effectiveness as well. Separation existed between stakeholders who were positive about the realization of certain goals and stakeholders who discussed that these goals could never be accomplished within MSIs. However, everyone agreed that the organization lacked sufficient human resources and coherence with the international confederation Oxfam.

In conclusion, Oxfam Novib's strategies in relation to the ASC are not directly seen as legitimate. Especially, since the organization's transition from the inside to the outside was mostly overlooked by the stakeholders. Once more, public statements and international endorsement of the strategies might have helped to bridge the gap between the intended and perceived strategy. No matter what, in the end the ambiguousness left the group of stakeholders divided between branding Oxfam Novib's participation as (mostly) legitimate or as illegitimate.

In the next section these results will be compared with one another and overall conclusions will be drawn in order to answer the second empirical sub-question.

4.6. Conclusion

The second empirical sub-question stated: *'how does Oxfam Novib's tactics influence its legitimacy?'* and the answer is best explained through the means of the following table, Table 15:

Table 15: overview of the influence of tactics on legitimacy.

Case	Tactic *intended*	Tactic *perceived*	Legitimacy	Mission
RSPO	Insider (friendly to critical)	Insider (friendly or critical?)	Yes, although effectiveness is not clear	legitimate
RTRS	Outsider (critical to friendly)	Outsider (friendly)	Doubts about legitimacy	Indecisive
ASC	Insider & outsider (friendly to critical insider to friendly outsider)	Insider (friendly or critical?)	Partially, although effectiveness is not clear	Both legitimate and illegitimate

As this overview shows, the insider tactic within the RSPO made sure that overall legitimacy was (as good as) granted. The breach between insider tactics, however, clarified why effectiveness remained a point of doubt. The insider tactic within the ASC did partly the same, but the greater split between intended and perceived strategy clarified why some stakeholders saw Oxfam Novib's participation as

illegitimate. Finally, the outsider tactic in the RTRS and gap between strategies confused stakeholders and made them doubt the legitimacy of Oxfam Novib's actions which resulted in an indecisive notion of legitimacy. In conclusion, based upon these results, the strategy of Oxfam Novib influences the legitimacy a great deal. Legitimacy, therefore, depends upon the alignment of the mission with MSI-strategies and the way these strategies are executed.

To explain in more detail the proclamation that chosen tactics have a significant influence on legitimacy, a couple of striking findings can be written down. The first one of these discoveries is that, in every MSI-case that has been looked at, a breach was detected between the intended strategy of Oxfam Novib and the perceived strategy by its authorizing environment. As was shown, this gap had consequences for the legitimacy of the organization's actions. It is important to note that this difference in points of view between both parties (Oxfam Novib on one side and its authorizing environment on the other side) was only found due to the expansion of the two possible sides of positioning (inside and outside) towards the four levels of tactics. Looking back at the empirical research, this statement can be backed up by the empirical findings of the RSPO and RTRS cases. In the RSPO, Oxfam Novib as well as its stakeholders both agreed upon the organization being an insider of the RSPO. The same can be said for the outsider position of the organization in the RTRS. Therefore, if this research had only looked at insider and outsider tactics, no gap would have been found that could have explained the versatile opinions on legitimacy. However, by going one step further, this research managed to reveal where the discrepancies in opinion lie and, subsequently, give an explanation why the perspectives of stakeholders are different from the perspective of Oxfam Novib. In sum, by showing the four levels of tactics more understanding about the gap between intended and perceived strategies has been provided.

This being said, the second discovery delves even deeper into the matter of the four levels of tactics. In general, based upon the results, it can be said that insider roles are more likely to create input legitimacy than outsider roles, while neither variety in roles has the ability to enhance effectiveness. More specifically, however, something can also be said about each of the four different positions an organization can take. The results demonstrated that the position of friendly insider is the most straightforward. As some of the stakeholders from the RSPO and ASC mentioned, being a friendly insider means that an organization is completely imbibed into an MSI. There is almost no possible ambiguity about the positioning and stakeholders either appreciate (see it as legitimate) or dislike it (see it as illegitimate) on grounds of their own feelings towards MSI-methods in general. Being seen as a critical insider is slightly more complicated when it comes to legitimacy. The position of the critical insider is looked upon better than the position of friendly insider, because it combines an inside position with campaigning and gives an organization a more open-minded image. It is, therefore, seen as more legitimate, as some of the stakeholders of the RSPO and ASC argued. However, the level of ambiguity is also quite high since critical insiders can be mistaken for friendly insiders at times and, as a result, might still get opposed by those who are against MSIs in general. The position of critical outsider cannot be highlighted with an example of the researched cases (Oxfam Novib was never seen as a critical outsider in any of the cases by its stakeholders), but the breach between Oxfam Novib's intended critical outsider position in the beginning of the RTRS and the perceived friendly outsider position by the authorizing environment demonstrates that critical outsiders can sometimes also be mistaken for friendly outsiders. This does not necessarily bode well for the legitimacy of the organization, because the position of a friendly outsider is the most

ambiguous of them all. The case of the RTRS, and to a lesser extent the case of the ASC, shows that a friendly outsider tactic leaves stakeholders confused. Friendly outsiders omit to take a clear position towards MSIs, since organizations in this position do not actually collaborate with, nor campaign against, but might, nevertheless, give advice to or monitor what is going on in an MSI. Given that this is a rather vague position, stakeholders have difficulty to figure out the true intentions of organizations that take this approach and, as a result, start questioning their legitimacy.

Finally two more findings can be marked as noteworthy. Firstly, the fact that tactics shift and change over time. The case of Oxfam Novib demonstrated that this organization never kept their original chosen tactic towards an MSI throughout the duration of their participation. In all three cases (RSPO, RTRS and ASC) Oxfam Novib moved from one tactic to another. Tactics are therefore truly dynamic in nature. Secondly, and importantly, communication plays a big part in the gap between intended and perceived strategies. As the results have highlighted, communication flows between Oxfam Novib and its authorizing environment were mostly informal and internationally incoherent. The perceived lack of formal (public) and coherent information could, therefore, be the cause of many a misunderstanding between perceived and intended strategy. For that reason, managing the perceptions of stakeholders is a crucial task for organizations that want to take up MSI-strategies.

In the end, the existence of gaps between intended and perceived tactics demonstrates that the perceived lack of coherence between actions and strategies leads up to confusion (just as some of the tactics do) and eventually plays a part in the authorizing environment's willingness to grant legitimacy.

5. Conclusion and Discussion

This research started out as a way to look at the legitimacy of strategies of NGOs from a unique perspective: it looked upon the relatively new field of how MSI-strategies, as used by NGOs, are perceived by the authorizing environment. Quite a mouthful and as it turned out, it was quite a distinctive goal as well. No research on this specific subject had been done yet, making it a very interesting journey to look at the matter from both a theoretical as an empirical point of view through the means of the following research question:

When are NGOs most likely to receive legitimacy for their strategies of Multi-Stakeholder Initiatives?

In this chapter the answer to this question will be given by looking back at the theoretical concepts of this research in Section 1 and the empirical results in Section 2. These parts will be followed by an overall conclusion in Section 3 and recommendations for NGOs in general and Oxfam Novib in particular in Section 4. Finally, Section 5 will display the discussion of this research.

## 5.1. Brushing up on theoretical concepts

Some non-governmental organizations, together with corporate businesses, local Southern based organizations and smallholders (and on occasion governments), started a modern variant of the Round Table called Multi-Stakeholder Initiatives. NGOs incorporated these initiatives as their new strategy, on top of the already existing ones Korten (1987) spoke about: immediate help for those in need; local long-term development projects and working together with local partner organizations; working with governments and corporations to influence policies; and campaigning strategies (ON, 2013). Even though NGOs use these strategies simultaneously, at present, a distinction can still be made between NGOs that mainly use campaigning strategies and NGOs that prefer using collaborating tactics.

As it happened, the difference between campaigning and collaborating NGOs was not the only distinction that could be made. Zooming in on the matter of MSIs, NGOs could make decisions on how to approach these initiatives by choosing to either use an insider or outsider tactic. The combination of these two let to the following model:

	Insider	**Outsider**
Campaigning	Critical insider	Critical outsider
Collaborating	Friendly insider	Friendly outsider

It was explained that this model is not static, rather dynamic in nature. Tactics can change or overlap during the involvement of NGOs in Multi-Stakeholder Initiatives due to strategic reassessments, criticisms and unforeseen circumstances. In addition, it was explained that there is a difference between *intended* tactics from NGOs and *perceived* tactics by the organization's authorizing environment.

NGOs have decisions to make on two strategic levels: the level of whether or not to incorporate MSI-strategies within the organization and the level of tactics within this specific strategy. The legitimacy of these decisions depends on the opinion of an organization's authorizing environment. How they perceive the actions of NGOs determines the amount of legitimacy an organization is granted. The criteria for measuring this legitimacy were captured in the following model, *dependencies of legitimacy*:
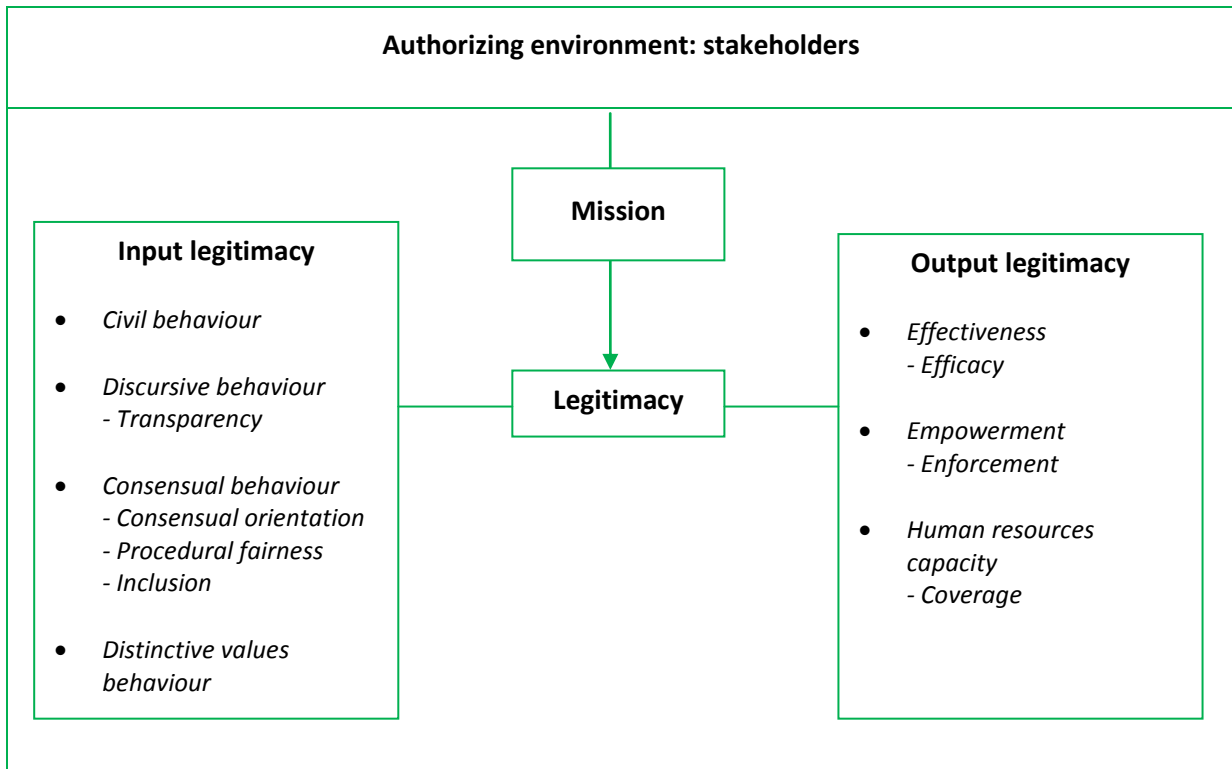
In the model a direct link between the authorizing environment and legitimacy of the organization, symbolized by the arrow, is distinguishable. This arrow goes through the mission, stating that legitimacy for strategic choices of an organization depends on the question if stakeholders agree with the alignment of the mission and the pursued MSI-strategies from NGOs or if they do not. Concretely, this means that stakeholders only agree with choosing an MSI-strategy if it is in line with the mission, otherwise NGOs stand the chance of being accused of mission drift. Furthermore, the seven criteria of legitimacy, divided between input and output legitimacy, can be spotted. These criteria help clarifying why stakeholders either think that there is good coherence between mission and strategy or why they see the connection as far-fetched.

The combination of both models was visualized by the following picture:

This picture demonstrates that the four possible tactics within MSI-strategies influence the legitimacy of NGOs, meaning that different tactics will give different outcomes to the question of how legitimacy is perceived. To make all of the above information come full circle, one more notion should be added: The model does not solely explain what the level of influence from tactics on the legitimacy is, it shows that legitimacy (which is depended upon the chosen tactics) gives insight into why the mission of NGOs is seen as aligning well with MSI-strategies or why some might call it mission drift. In conclusion, this model shows why NGOs are bestowed legitimacy for their choices or not.

5.2. Brushing up on empirical results

Oxfam Novib was used as case study for this research, chosen for its unique involvement in MSIs such as the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil, Roundtable on Responsible Soy and Aquaculture Stewardship Council. The organization's authorizing environment was asked how they perceived Oxfam Novib's legitimacy through the means of interviews. Each one of them gave information on the seven criteria (as stated in the model *dependencies of legitimacy*), the tactics and the mission.

The three MSI-cases that were investigated all had different outcomes on how legitimacy is perceived, visualized through the means of the following table:

Case	Tactic *intended*	Tactic *perceived*	Legitimacy	Mission
RSPO	Insider (friendly to critical)	Insider (friendly or critical?)	Yes, although effectiveness is not clear	legitimate
RTRS	Outsider (critical to friendly)	Outsider (friendly)	Doubts about legitimacy	Indecisive
ASC	Insider & outsider (friendly to critical insider to friendly outsider)	Insider (friendly or critical?)	Partially, although effectiveness is not clear	Both legitimate and illegitimate

It was stated, within the RSPO, that legitimacy was granted by the stakeholders because of the perceived insider tactic, despite the fact that the matter of effectiveness deserves more attention. The connection of Oxfam Novib to the RTRS, with its perceived (friendly) outsider tactic, made the stakeholders doubt the legitimacy of the organization's actions. Lastly, within the ASC, the perceived insider tactic which was far apart from the intended, divided the group of stakeholders. It made them partially grant and partially refuse to grant legitimacy. At the same time, effectiveness was once again not clear.

It was also stated that, from the four possible levels of tactics, the tactic of friendly insider could be defined as the least ambiguous one. Since it was a fairly straightforward position, it made it relatively easy for stakeholders to decide whether they found this tactic legitimate or illegitimate. The position of critical insider had proven to be more challenging. On the one hand, critical insiders could be seen as more legitimate than friendly insiders because the approach gave organizations a more open-minded image. On the other hand, organizations in this position also stood the chance to be mistaken for friendly insiders and, as a result, create confusion. The same goes for the position of

critical outsider which could be mistaken for the tactic of friendly outsider. Oddly enough the most 'critical' position was the one called friendly outsider because of its vague characteristics and ambiguous nature.

Finally, intended and perceived insider strategies were likely to be seen as more legitimate than outsider strategies, although none of these strategies were looked upon as truly enhancing effectiveness. Furthermore, a significant gap was exposed in each MSI-case between intended and perceived strategies, an observation made possible by the formation of the four levels of tactics. This breach demonstrated that the perceived lack of coherence (often due to the lack of solid public communication flows) between actions and strategies played a part in the confusion of stakeholders and their willingness to grant legitimacy.

5.3. Overall conclusion

5.3.1. Answering the research question

At the end of this research, all that remains is answering the main research question. As seen in the case study of Oxfam Novib, the decision to pursue MSI-strategies has quite an impact on an organization. Oxfam Novib's stakeholders, for example, were divided over the matter if NGOs such as Oxfam Novib should engage with MSIs in the first place and, in second place, also showed signs of dissension on what the best way to attend these MSIs is. So,

When are NGOs most likely to receive legitimacy for their strategies of Multi-Stakeholder Initiatives?

Overall, organizations have the best chance to earn broad, homogeneous legitimacy by being on the inside of an MSI, as the cases of the RSPO and partially the ASC demonstrate. However, stakeholders within these cases also mentioned that 'inside organizations' should not lose track of the bigger picture and should work the field between insider/outsider strategies well if they want to increase their level of influence and accomplish effects. An important notion, given that effectiveness (in general) has proven to be hard thing to come by.

Furthermore, it matters for their legitimacy which of the four possible levels of tactics organizations employ. Organizations need to choose their tactics carefully, because every single one of these approaches has its own ambiguous character. Above all, organizations need to find adequate ways to communicate their chosen approaches to the outside world. Especially, given that the discovered breaches between intended and perceived strategies can, for the greater part, be attributed to insufficient management of stakeholders' perceptions by NGOs. So, when are perceptions sufficiently managed? The empirical findings demonstrate that, on the side of input legitimacy, perceptions are inadequately managed when stakeholders make comments on the lack of public endorsement of organizational intentions. For example, the authorizing environment of Oxfam Novib claimed that they seldom heard Oxfam Novib make official statements on their approach towards different MSIs. Intentions should, therefore, be clear and transparent for the public. In addition, perceptions can be managed better when organizations try to build alliances with other organizations. Oxfam Novib, for example, was sometimes perceived as an organization that operates alone instead of proactively seeking ways to build alliances. On the side of output legitimacy, perceptions can be sufficiently managed when organizations have enough human resources (enough employees working on MSIs)

and demonstrate internal (international) policy coherence. This seemed not to be the case for Oxfam Novib and the other international Oxfam affiliates.

In conclusion (based upon the empirical results), NGOs are most likely to obtain legitimacy for their MSI-strategies when they have a clear and, above all, public strategy together with enough organizational capacity, inner coherence and well set-up communication processes. So, in the end, organizations are most likely to earn broad, homogeneous legitimacy when they are clear and unambiguous about their strategy. Not everyone can be pleased, but everyone can be helped to understand why decisions were made. In the end, is that not exactly what King Arthur set out to accomplish with his first version of the Round Table: equality, comprehension and, above all, mutual understanding?

5.3.2. Scientific contribution

The first chapter of this paper (Introduction) made clear that the research on legitimacy of NGO-strategies is scarce and, in addition, that no research has yet been conducted on legitimacy of MSI-strategies within NGOs. The aim of this specific research, therefore, was to fill this theoretical void and it may now be stated that this goal has been accomplished.

Not only has this research created a compact overview of tactics NGOs can employ in relation to MSIs (the four possible levels of MSI-tactics), it has also helped these NGOs to evaluate the influence of their tactical choices on their legitimacy by creating yet another model: *dependencies of legitimacy.* This model came into being after the existing literature on legitimacy of NGOs and legitimacy of MSIs was organized in a neatly manner and led to seven different criteria upon which (input and output) legitimacy and tactics of MSIs could be evaluated. On top of this contribution to the field of academic research, the model *dependencies of legitimacy* cannot just be used by NGOs to evaluate their MSI-strategies, it can also be applied to research practices on other strategies of NGOs. The model is, therefore, a multifunctional theoretical tool that has proven to of value in empirical research.

In sum, this research has made a scientific contribution because it has found a way to evaluate legitimacy of MSI-strategies as employed by NGOs. As a result, it has opened up new ways of looking at the legitimacy of NGOs and MSIs by expanding the current knowledge through their combination.

5.4. Recommendations for development non-governmental organizations

Based upon the empirical findings, a couple of recommendations to enhance legitimacy for NGOs in general and Oxfam Novib in particular can be made. The first and second recommendations have to do with input legitimacy, the third and fourth with output legitimacy and the fifth with the possible tactics NGOs can employ. These recommendations cannot be seen separately as they are interlinked and influence one another:

1. *Make sure to communicate the organization's intentions well. This means internally with one another (and possibly with other affiliates), but most importantly: publicly.*

Stakeholders who knew Oxfam Novib's strategy and intentions in relation to MSIs mentioned that they obtained this information informally, through conversations with a couple of Oxfam Novib's

employees. In fact, no one of the stakeholders seemed to have come across any formal or public statements. This clarified why a big part of the stakeholders were left in the dark about Oxfam Novib's rationale for (not) joining. Therefore, Oxfam Novib should look into ways on how to better coordinate public communication in the future, something that might prove to be beneficial for all NGOs that want to pursue MSI-strategies.

2. *Be active in building alliances with other organizations.*

During the empirical research, some stakeholders mentioned that Oxfam Novib had the tendency to operate alone within MSIs, meaning that they only worked together with others if it furthered the organization's goals. This could have something to do with the perceived limited human capacity of Oxfam Novib, but the organization and other NGOs, nevertheless, might benefit from actively building more alliances with other organizations to become more influential.

3. *Make sure there is sufficient inner organizational coherence on the matter of MSI-strategies.*

In the case of Oxfam Novib, stakeholders quite often saw significant contrasts in the approaches of different international Oxfam affiliates regarding MSI-strategies. For example, some stakeholders knew that certain affiliates were against MSIs, while others also mentioned that many affiliates did not publicly endorse the participation of Oxfam Novib in MSIs. It is therefore important for any NGO that wants to pursue MSI-strategies, Oxfam Novib included, to find ways to align all affiliates behind the same internal MSI policy (perhaps through better internal communication as mentioned in recommendation 1).

4. *Do not solely rely upon the expertise of a few employees: expand your inner human resource capacity.*

Many stakeholders emphasized that Oxfam Novib has a limited human recourse capacity. Even though these stakeholders spoke highly of the so-called *main players*, they also stated that these employees should not be doing all the work on their own. It has, for example, affected Oxfam Novib's level of visibility. Therefore, for Oxfam Novib, it is recommended that the organization not only assigns more of its own employees to MSI-strategies, but that it expands the search for these employees internationally, within Oxfam. For the other NGOs (that want to take up MSI-strategies) it is recommended that they should figure out if they have sufficient human capacity within their organization before engaging with MSIs.

5. *Choose your tactics wisely.*

The results have demonstrated that some of the four levels of tactics can be seen as more hazardous than others. The 'least risky' tactic is the friendly insider position. Least risky in this context does not mean that it will automatically guarantee legitimacy, but the position is pretty straightforward and, as a result, gives organizations the benefit of knowing the consequences of choosing this particular tactic. The positions of critical insider and critical outsider are slightly more ambiguous. However, it is the position of friendly outsider that involves the most risk. Organizations might be wise to avoid this

specific position or only opt for it when they are certain that they can publicly endorse their chosen strategy in a sufficient manner.

Finally, a few more general observations can be made as well. Firstly, by following the five stated recommendations, NGOs that want to pursue MSI-strategies should be able to adequately manage perceptions of stakeholders, bridge the division between intended and perceived strategies and increase their legitimacy. Secondly, improving the organizational capacity, visibility and international coherence of an organization might be a good starting point form where effectiveness can be boosted, given that the empirical results demonstrated how difficult the matter of effectiveness can be. Helping MSIs in general to better map their impact might attribute to this cause as well.

In the end, legitimacy is always a hard thing to come by, simply, because an organization can never please all stakeholders at the same time. Therefore, if NGOs (Oxfam Novib included) want to be granted legitimacy, their first priority should be choosing a well-thought-out coherent strategy that is publicly known. If they manage to do so, while simultaneously working on their human resource capacity, communicative skills and internal policy coherence, they will be able to better address their own authorizing environment and achieve their mission in the process.

5.5. Discussion

5.5.1. Limitations
The central motif of this research, legitimacy of MSI-strategies within development non-governmental organizations, tapped into a new field of legitimacy research in relation to NGOs. To date, little to nothing was known about legitimacy of strategies within NGOs, let alone of MSI-strategies within NGOs, making this research a valuable contribution the research field. By applying it in practice, through the means of a case study, the important factors of how to approach this kind of strategy were revealed.

However, a couple of discussion points of this research need to be highlighted. First of all: the chosen organization. Oxfam Novib was selected as case study for this research. It is, however, entirely possible that another organization may have shed a different light on the matter. Secondly: interviews. As has been mentioned in Chapter 3, the number of possible stakeholders was narrowed down to Northern based stakeholders who were in the know of Oxfam Novib's actions in relation to MSIs. With this decision all Southern stakeholders were cut out of the process. Different insights might have come up if they had been included.

On the same note, because three cases were researched, the number of interviewees per case and per category (for example, the categories of NGOs, companies or MSIs) was restricted. In addition, some of the stakeholders on the list of one of the three MSI-cases were able to comment on other MSIs as well. This means that they often stated their answers in general terms instead of just in relation to 'their MSI'. The relatively limited number of interviewees per case in combination with this overlapping notion in answering made it more complex to get a complete overview of every MSI. This was especially visible in the case of the RTRS, where not that many unique interviewees could be found. On top of that, the stakeholders related to the RTRS sometimes had a hard time answering

the questions of the researcher, because they simply did not know what to say (which can perhaps be attributed to the vagueness that surrounds Oxfam Novib's friendly outsider position in the RTRS).

The third point of discussion is the notion of generalizability. The sample of possible stakeholders in this research does not automatically make all the data generalizable to other NGOs in the same field as Oxfam Novib. More respondents from both Northern and Southern organizations and from each case should have been included to get a more diverse, more heterogeneous perspective.

Next, my own role as researcher: Even though I tried to keep an objective view at all times, I was working as an intern at Oxfam Novib during the formation of this research and might have been influenced by the organization's way of thinking. In order to make sure that this level of influence was restricted, I took a few measures. Boundaries were kept during the interviews by making clear to the interviewees that they were speaking to me as a researcher, not as an employee of Oxfam Novib and by assuring them that their information would be handled anonymously and with care. Moreover, I have kept every note that I took during the process to make sure that every step could be traced back. Finally, I kept the level of objectivity high by incorporating both Oxfam Novib's side of the story as the perspective from the stakeholders in this paper. Despite all these efforts, it is still entirely possible that my interpretation of the data could have been done differently by another researcher.

5.5.2. Recommendations for future research

Some recommendations for future research can be made: by choosing Oxfam Novib as case study a specific direction was chosen, right from the start. Any other organization that uses MSI-strategies may have highlighted different issues. Therefore, both models that were constructed in this research could be tested once more by doing the same research at different organizations. In addition, the scope of Northern stakeholders could be extended, and Southern stakeholders could be included.

Moreover, some expectations were drawn up in earlier versions of this research and erased from the final version, because, as it turned out, they were not fully addressed by the scope of possible respondents. These expectations were:

	Expectations
1.	Stakeholders who favor outsider strategies prefer NGOs to stay in one spot: on the outside (with the possibility to shift between the two outsider tactics)
2.	Stakeholders who favor insider strategies believe that NGOs can shift between all four of the tactics, depending on the specific circumstances.
3.	Stakeholders who favor outsider strategies believe that input legitimacy is best guaranteed when NGOs stay away from MSIs.
4.	Stakeholders who favor insider strategies believe that participating in MSIs means more output legitimacy.

Future researchers might be able to look into these expectations if they attempt to find an equal amount of stakeholders that favor insider strategies and stakeholders that favor outsider strategies.

Furthermore, within Oxfam Novib most of the research on MSIs has emphasized on the commodities of palm oil, aquaculture and cocoa. It might make an interesting case for future researchers to take a

closer look at the RTRS with its commodity of soy. Perhaps a research can be conducted that compares Oxfam Novib's outsider position towards the RTRS with the position of other insider and outsider NGO's towards the same MSI.

Finally, since this research was new to the field of legitimacy of NGOs, it is recommended to do more research on the specific subject of this paper, alongside research on the matter of how different strategies (for example: advocacy and lobby activities, or campaigns) work together in one organization.

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Appendix

A. Documents used in empirical research

Author	Title	Date	Type
Oxfam Novib	*DRAFT OI position on the RTRS*	January, 2011	Discussion paper
Oxfam Novib	*Roundtable on Responsible Soy (RTRS) and the Soy Sector Positioning and Reactive Policy*	August, 2011	Internal policy paper
Oxfam Novib	*Memo to OI PST*	June, 2012	Internal memo
Luli Pesqueira	*Friendly Outsider or Critical Insider? An Action Research Account of Oxfam's Private Sector Engagement.*	November, 2014	Dissertation
Caren Holzman	*Oxfam's experience engaging with multi-stakeholder approaches: An analysis of progress to date and reflections on the future.*	May, 2015	Discussion paper

B. Questionnaire

1) Achtergrond/inleiding
- *Uitleg over mij*
- *Uitleg van geïnterviewde*
  - *Wat is uw connectie met Oxfam Novib?*
  - *Bij welke MSI bent u het meest betrokken geweest?*
  - *Bent u nog steeds betrokken?*
- *Mate van anonimiteit bespreken (opnemen, namen wijzigen, mijn objectiviteit)*

2) Input legitimacy (+ missie)
- Vertoont Oxfam Novib fatsoenlijk of onfatsoenlijk gedrag?

> *Onfatsoenlijk gedrag is als ze strategieën inzetten om materialen, dan wel mensen schade te berokkenen en/of strategieën inzetten om hun eigen belang te dienen. Bij fatsoenlijk gedrag worden strategieën ingezet om consensus te creëren en anderen te helpen.*

- Worden de redenen waarom Oxfam Novib wel/of niet meedoet aan MSIs beargumenteerd en opgehelderd?
- Is Oxfam Novib hier voldoende transparant in en is het duidelijk?

- Probeert Oxfam Novib meer aan te sturen op gemeenschappelijk begrip of zijn ze aan het onderhandelen?
- Zorgt Oxfam Novib er met dit gedrag voor dat er een inclusie ontstaat van alle stakeholders en voice voor alle smallholders?

- Blijft Oxfam Novib dicht bij hun missie als ze wel/niet meedoen aan MSIs?
- Blijft Oxfam Novib dicht bij hun core values als ze wel/niet meedoen aan MSIs?

3) Output legitimacy (+ tactics)
- Bent u van mening dat Oxfam Novib met het wel/niet meedoen bij MSIs de doelen van Oxfam Novib realiseert?
- Is het wel/niet meedoen aan MSIs volgens u de beste manier hiervoor?

- Zorgt Oxfam Novib ervoor met het wel/niet meedoen aan MSIs dat zowel westerse bedrijven als lokale actors zelfregulering krijgen?

- Heeft Oxfam Novib volgens u voldoende menselijk krachten om de strategie van MSIs ten uitvoer te brengen?
- Hoe valt Oxfam in dit plaatje?

4) Tactics
- Zet Oxfam Novib meer in op samenwerking of campagne voeren?
- Gebruiken ze meerdere strategieën tegelijkertijd? Op welke manier zetten ze deze in?

5) Afsluiting
- Als u de kans kreeg om tegen een manager van Oxfam Novib informeel in de wandelgangen iets te zeggen over de strategie van MSIs binnen Oxfam Novib, wat zou dit dan zijn?
- Zijn er nog overige zaken die we niet behandeld hebben?
- Zijn er nog vragen?

- *Kan ik u benaderen voor vervolgvragen als dit noodzakelijk blijkt te zijn?*
- *Hebt u nog een idee van wie ik verder kan interviewen?*