



Master Thesis U.S.E.

Addressing Conflicts in Cross-Sector Partnerships Between Companies and NGOs¹

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Abstract

Cross-Sector Partnerships (CSPs) between companies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have emerged as a prominent avenue for tackling societal issues by combining the capabilities of both organizations. However, conflicts frequently occur within these partnerships, making it challenging to create shared value. This paper explores the strategies and practices used by companies and NGOs to resolve conflicts that occur in CSPs. This is supported by the following research question: *“How do NGOs and companies address conflicts that arise in CSPs, in order to create shared value?”*. A multiple case study approach with in-depth interviews with companies and NGOs was carried out to develop propositions on the strategies employed in conflict resolution. According to preliminary findings, proactive strategies including the adoption of protocols, NGOs adopting a business model, and companies making social impact a core area are necessary for successful conflict resolution in CSPs. The implications of this research extend to the academic and practical domains. This research contributes to the current literature on successfully managing partnerships, by enlightening the mechanisms of conflict resolutions. It also adds valuable insights for practitioners, guiding the implementation of new strategies to efficiently address conflicts and maximise the social and economic gains brought about by the partnerships.

Key Words: cross-sector partnerships; companies; NGOs; conflicts; strategies; multiple case study

JEL-codes: D74; L31; M14

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1. Introduction

The tremendous developments in technology and the economic growth notwithstanding, humanity is currently dealing with a wide range of difficult socioenvironmental problems, including the poverty alleviation, the destruction of natural resources, and climate change. Due to the size and complexity of these concerns, organizations from several sectors have come together to discuss potential cross-sector partnerships (CSPs). Partnerships between companies and NGOs develop to combine resources and efforts to solve common problems. In addition, the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 17 of the United Nations specifically acknowledges their value in tackling sustainability issues (Yan, Lin, & Clarke, 2018). On the premise that these connections can be advantageous for both parties and the well-being of society, more collaborative partnerships have been cultivated (Doh, Tashman, & Benischke, 2019). On the one hand, CSPs enable companies to generate and maximize social profit and they are crucial for defining, forming, and assessing their social responsibility (Hond, Bakker, & Doh, 2015). On the other hand, they facilitate NGOs to address problems that they would not otherwise be able to (Mousavia & Bossink, 2020). This “win-win” (p.3) potential can therefore contribute to creating shared value (CSV) and benefit society (Dentoni, Bitzer, & Pascucci, 2016).

However, conflicts in CSPs, arising from fundamental differences between companies and NGOs’ missions, governance, strategies, and organizational structures, often stifles the effectiveness of the partnerships in addressing the pressing social problems our world faces. This is because according to Hill, Jones, & Schilling (2014), a company is “created by individuals, stockholders, or other companies for the purpose of generating profits through the production and sale of goods and services”. Therefore, at companies’ very core, generating revenues and maximizing profit is their goal. Nevertheless, they are more aware of the importance of ESG standards, so they prioritize performing tasks to the highest standard for the benefit of those they directly aid (Grant, 2015). On the other side, NGOs tend to focus more on cooperative or humanitarian goals than on commercial ones. In terms of organizational structure, they work “both independently and alongside bilateral aid agencies from developed countries, private-sector infrastructure operators, self-help associations, and local governments” (Werker & Ahmed, 2008). Thereby, they offer social services on behalf of both private and public players (Marquez, 2016). Even though NGOs are not required to make profit, they are concerned with finding a balance between their financial demands and their numerous sources of funding in order to maintain their operations and have the greatest possible impact on the ground (Doh, Tashman, & Benischke, 2019).

So, due to their distinct structures and principles, companies and NGOs draw attention to the extra difficulty that CSPs encounter. Even in relationships that seem to have a common set of values and commitments, the lack of shared experience, trust, and communication can occasionally lead to disagreements (Yan, Lin, & Clarke, 2018). Some authors have offered some suggestions for resolving them. First, they emphasize

how crucial it is to address the nature of the societal problem that CSP is solving. Second, since impact indicators still rely on “perceived impact” (p.6) rather than “objectively defined impacts” (p.6), it is also important to consider the overall context. Third, the partnership’s outcomes should be evaluated to determine whether the original goal was accomplished (Tulder & Keen, 2018). Overall, the main suggested strategy for dealing with potential conflicts in CSPs is the use of a Theory of Change (ToC). It contains the assumptions of an intervention strategy results in a complete theory that explains why an intervention is expected to produce the desired impact. Nonetheless, other mechanisms through which companies and NGOs may settle conflicts are largely unknown. As it was mentioned by Vogel et al. (2021), “the micro-level of interactions, where the involved partners enact different sectoral scripts and resolve emergent tensions and conflicts, still awaits further exploration”.

This is problematic because CSPs “are considered to be one of the most effective ways of creating social change” (George, 2014). By addressing these conflicts and leveraging the strengths of both sectors, these partnerships can play a significant role in CSV. This means that they add value to society, overcoming social and environmental issues that strongly impact communities (Porter, 2011). And if they are not addressed, new social changes may appear with unintended consequences (Schuster & Holtbrügge, 2014).

For that reason, the research question addressed by this paper is:

“How do NGOs and companies address conflicts that arise in CSPs, in order to create shared value?”

In the study, we set out to provide insights into the strategies adopted by NGOs and companies to handle conflicts that may emerge in their mutual collaborations. We employ a qualitative multiple case study approach of 4 companies and 5 NGOs who engaged each in CSPs in the last 10 years, to provide an in-depth analysis of the interactions, way of thinking, and understanding of various practices and organizations (Tenny, Brannan, & Brannan, 2017). More specifically, it sought to understand their motivations for being part of CSPs, the outcomes for society and for both organizations, as well as the difficulties they encounter and how they respond to them.

This study supports the previous literature on conflicts faced by for-profit and non-profit organisations. However, it also introduces new conflicts, such as the mismatch of work rhythms and priorities and feeling of devaluation. Regarding strategies, the main contribution lies in filling a gap in the literature regarding the strategies to resolve conflicts in CSPs. Therefore, a proactive approach in preventing conflicts is recommended. It involves creating protocols between the parties and giving more focus to social impact within organizations. These insights could potentially help companies and NGOs develop and manage CSPs successfully, reduce conflicts, and more effectively serve the needs of the community. Furthermore, it can enlighten stakeholders on how to prevent disagreements from escalating and have greater societal impact by comprehending the underlying issues that CSPs are trying to solve.

2. Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

2.1. Creating Shared Value

In order to properly understand how collaborations between companies and NGOs can create shared value, it is crucial to comprehend this business concept. Creating shared value (CSV) seeks to create economic value for both an organization and society at the same time. It is built around the idea that a company may increase their profitability and competitiveness by recognizing and overcoming social and environmental issues that have an impact on their clients and on local communities (Porter, 2011). According to Porter and Kramer (2011), companies should realign their priorities from short-term profits towards long-term sustainability and social impact. This requires a thorough comprehension of the needs and problems encountered by consumers and communities, as well as a dedication to coming up with creative solutions that benefit all stakeholders. One of the strategies that improves economic performance while addressing social and environmental challenges is the CSP between companies and NGOs (Dentoni, Bitzer, & Pascucci, 2016). By taking advantage of the assets of both sectors, these partnerships have the potential to significantly impact CSV. For instance, these two players can identify and address social and environmental concerns that have an impact on the areas in which they operate by combining different resources to achieve common goals. In addition to helping both companies and NGOs to improve their own operations, this can enable them in developing goods and services that respond to the interests of these communities. Moreover, NGOs frequently have experience in policy advocacy and can collaborate with companies to advocate policies that are advantageous to both the firm and society at large, increasing CSV (Yan, Lin, & Clarke, 2018).

2.2. Cross-Sector Partnerships

Cross-sector partnerships (CSPs), as previously indicated, can be an efficient strategy of CSV (Dentoni, Bitzer, & Pascucci, 2016), albeit it is necessary to specify what type of partnerships in particular help with this. To begin with, CSPs are collaborative initiatives across several sectors or industries that “work together in the strive for economic, social, and environmental welfare” (Vogel, et al., 2021). These collaborations between at least two different societal actors - government, non-profit organizations, and private sector business - bring “vehicles for resolving common challenges by recombining resources and leveraging differential cost advantages between public and private sectors” (p.455). Where different sectors may lack the capacity to achieve their interests on their own, CSPs are well suited for developing solutions to large-scale societal and environmental challenges because private-sector innovation and public institutional support are both necessary to such efforts (Doh, Tashman, & Benischke, 2019). As stated by Alvarez-González, Rey-Garcia, & Rodríguez (2015) CSPs can involve multiple partners at various level of engagement and they can fall into four groups: “business-non-profit, government-business, government-non-profit, and business-non-profit-government” (p.1). Joint ventures, strategic alliances, coalitions, and

public-private partnerships are just a few examples of CSPs (NASCA, 2017). This paper will treat the business-non-profit CSP, since it can create collaborative advantage and shared value, when companies and NGOs join their resources, capacities, know-how, and skills. This “win-win potential” (p.35) enables both parties to share organizational learning that allows them to anticipate, react and resolve problems that concern stakeholders and that jeopardize shared value creation. Problems like “poverty, climate change, environmental degradation or food insecurity, have no closed-form definition, emerge from complex systems in which cause, and effect relationships are either unknown or highly uncertain, and have multiple stakeholders with strongly held and conflicting values related to the problem” (p.36) (Dentoni, Bitzer, & Pascucci, 2016). Due to their complexity and scale, they cannot be addressed by a single corporate activity, so companies and NGOs must engage in CSPs to share risks and make use of their expertise (Mousavia & Bossink, 2020).

On the NGOs side, they firstly can contribute with their technical expertise. They have specific knowledge in various fields, not only because they are close to the beneficiaries, but also because of the research they conduct in areas including public health, education, human rights, and environmental sustainability (Doh, Tashman, & Benischke, 2019). This is very beneficial to companies, in particular when it is expensive, ineffective, and time-consuming to create such expertise internally (Mousavia & Bossink, 2020). Second, they play an advocacy role by bringing attention to significant social problems and mobilizing public support for solutions. In that way, they help to guarantee that the needs of vulnerable groups are taken into consideration, and consequently, they gain representation in policymaking processes. Finally, NGOs frequently participate in implementing programs and services into action since their vast networks enable the mobilization of resources, namely volunteers (Doh, Tashman, & Benischke, 2019).

From a business standpoint, companies can support CSPs with financial resources as well as other resources including facilities, equipment, and technology. They can also provide management and strategic expertise, as well as particular knowledge of the market in which they operate. Furthermore, companies can offer new ideas and methods to CSPs because they are frequently at the forefront of innovation. In addition to that, companies have extensive stakeholder networks that can make it easier for them to access new markets and clients (Doh, Tashman, & Benischke, 2019). At last, a significant number of companies have official Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives that place a focus on environmental and social objectives, which can be used to help cross-sector collaborations (Yan, Lin, & Clarke, 2018). As well as the ESG standards, which make companies more aware of the importance of creating social impact (Grant, 2015).

Despite their differences, it is clear that both companies and NGOs need to combine capabilities to successfully address sustainability issues (Mousavia & Bossink, 2020). Each partner benefits when one contributes with resources, expertise, or other assets that

it would be difficult for the other to acquire on their own (Doh, Tashman, & Benischke, 2019). “Accordingly, such partnerships require the partners to go beyond their own logics, organizational routines, and practices, particularly when addressing complex problems” as declared by Carlile (2022), and Dougherty and Dunne (2011) (as cited in (Mousavia & Bossink, 2020)).

2.3. Conflicts in Cross-Sector Partnerships

The drawbacks of CSPs have gotten less attention. The diverse backgrounds of the business and non-profit sectors may cause severe difficulties for the partners. While CSPs allow sectors to join resources to address shared problems, the effectiveness of partnerships is limited since organizations from different sectors have different cultures and missions. Companies pay close attention to the markets, being their primary goal to maximize owner profit quickly. For instance, companies are more interested in cost/benefit analysis whereas NGOs battle for specific impact projections (Tulder, Seitanidi, Crane, & Brammer, 2015). One of the reasons is that the focus on profit generates rewards for managers through bonuses. Besides that, the stakeholder groups they serve may have divergent expectations and interests (Yaziji & Doh, 2009). Furthermore, it is reported that these alliances have frequently been marked by conflict and mistrust because of that disparity in principles and visions. They note that CSPs face the added difficulty of frequently not having the levels of shared experience needed for effective organizational learning. Even when partnerships seem to have same goals and objectives, there may still be disagreements due to the lack of shared experience and communication. Around these collaborations, there are also more specialized threats and difficulties. One is that a company working with an NGO is probably giving them sensitive, confidential information. NGOs may become better partners if they are aware of a company’s R&D initiatives, strategic plans, and internal audits, but they may also become competitively problematic. They can confront corporations because of their more profit-oriented actions (Yaziji & Doh, 2009). For example, if a company’s operation implies the exploitation of natural resources, this might lead to NGO efforts that align companies with existing expectations and social norms in society. Another issue is that, as companies have more resources and power than NGOs, it is a challenge for the latter to significantly influence decision-making. There may also be a lack of trust. For instance, NGOs could have doubts about the intentions of companies and be reluctant to collaborate with them. Because, occasionally, companies use their connections with NGOs to adjust dynamics in their market, to improve their credibility and reputation, and to anticipate and stop unfavourable acts by stakeholders. Moreover, NGOs may hold themselves to higher standards of transparency and accountability than companies, which can lead to conflicts about the necessary levels of reporting and disclosure (Islama & Staden, 2018).

The existing literature has been paying attention to the effectiveness of such CSPs. Thus, to make these alliances be successful, which implies CSV, Yaziji & Doh (2009) point out four strategies: innovative combinations of firms’ and NGOs’ resources; fit

between two parties' goals and agendas; supporting and understanding the local environment; and trust-building. Even though these strategies are imperative to CSV, companies and NGOs don't always succeed in delivering the desired results (Tulder, Seitanidi, Crane, & Brammer, 2015).

The degree to which CSPs are efficient in reaching the goals established for each side is also one of their crucial components. This may shorten the partnership's longevity because companies and NGOs may decide not to renew it in the absence of results. The partnership's context must be taken into consideration since this greatly affects its efficacy in order to more accurately determine whether the planned objectives were accomplished. In addition, it is essential to consider the objective impact rather than just the "perceived impact" (p.6). Examining the type of the gap that partnerships are meant to fill may be another option. In general, it is critical that companies and NGOs create a Theory of Change (ToC) in advance, because this formal planning tool aids in the definition of intended objectives and the impact analysis of their outcomes. Furthermore, Tulder, Seitanidi, Crane, & Brammer (2015) note that establishing impact orders clarifies the concept of a chain of impact effects. Since both companies and NGOs commit money in partnerships without assurance that the outcomes would result in CSV, the difficulties in evaluating the effectiveness of CSPs may put their legitimacy at risk. For instance, there is a risk that companies will take credit for outcomes that partners are unable to produce as cited by Ebrahim and Rangan (2013) in (Tulder, Seitanidi, Crane, & Brammer, 2015).

In conclusion, even though there are some methods to assess the effectiveness of CSPs, additional structural conflicts need to be handled in order to guarantee the CSP's longevity and shared value creation. Because these collaborations are known to be effective vehicles for fostering social change and CSV, it is imperative to create consensus and propose new approaches to conflict resolution. By doing that, these partnerships can maximise their impact, create value for all stakeholders, and avoid unforeseen negative outcomes. For that reason, the present paper will develop new solutions to handle these conflicts that are not suggested by the existing literature.

Conflict Description	Consequence
Disparity in missions and visions	Conflict and mistrust
Divergent expectations and interests from stakeholders	
Different levels of shared experience	Ineffective organizational learning
Different resources and assets	Little influence of NGOs in decision making, due to lack of resources
Share of confidential information by companies	NGOs seen as competitive partners

Lack of clarity in why they want to collaborate	Reluctance to collaborate on both sides
Different levels of reporting	Companies are more interested in cost/benefit analyses whereas NGOs demand for specific impact assessment.
Inefficiency and ineffective attending desired goals	Decrease the durability of the partnerships

Table 1 - Conflicts in CSPs between companies and NGOs

3. Methodology

3.1. Empirical Setting and Method

To respond to the research question, it was necessary to study the object of this analysis, which are the strategies that companies and NGOs employ to settle conflicts resulting from CSPs. To be able to make some conclusions, after identifying the approaches recommended by the literature, they were compared with those gathered during data collection. So, the research is categorised as inductive and exploratory, because it allowed for the establishment of a connection between theory and research (Bryman, 2012). A multiple case study approach was adopted to generate cross-case outcomes that enabled the creation of propositions at a later stage (Creswell, 2013). Thus, multiple cases from companies and NGOs with established CSPs were examined at once. It was necessary to choose eligible cases for this research design, based on a few criteria that are described below.

3.2. Sampling Strategy

The chosen sampling strategy was purposive sampling, a non-probability sample in which the researcher seeks to sample cases strategically, in order to ensure that the samples are pertinent to the research question being addressed (Bryman, 2012).

Bearing in mind that companies and NGOs are the object of analysis, the primary goal was to choose 4 companies and 5 NGOs that had established CSPs. However, due to extreme difficulties in companies' availability, only 4 of them were interviewed and not all collaborate with the NGOs that were also interviewed. Nevertheless, the conduction of 9 interviews contributed to reduce the reliance of the results on a single source, since it allowed to gather different perspectives and backgrounds on the same topic (Leung, 2015). First, it was necessary that both parties have established CSPs and having them as one of their main priorities. In order to determine the extent to which these CSPs were a component of both sides' strategies, it was first needed to analyse the impact/sustainability reports of both companies and NGOs. Conflicts that can be present in these CSPs are difficult to find because they are internal information to both organizations. In order to determine if they would be eligible for an interview, an email was sent to them outlining the topic of this thesis. When the response was affirmative, additional considerations related to the industry sector and the reasons why they want to collaborate on were made to ensure that the respondents were representative.

This choice of sample (Table 2) assures high validity, which is one of its strengths. Due to the ability to target certain relationships and to interview the appropriate parties for the research question, we were able to test the hypothesis that we set out to test, which contributed to the study's excellent internal validity. Additionally, since the participants were kept anonymous, they were uninhibited during the interviews, which helped to assure a higher level of validity. In terms of transferability, due to the intensive study of a reduced sample size, the findings are more focused on the particularity of the context

and the significance of the aspect addressed by the research question. They might, however, be relevant to other CSPs with diverse actors - not just companies and NGOs.

	Industry Sector	Purpose of CSP
Companies		
Company 1 (C1)	Energy & Utilities	To improve social performance through the execution of a fair and sustainable energy transition and a promotion of a corporate volunteerism culture.
Company 2 (C2)	Retailing	To promote social equality and inclusivity through the transformation of corporate culture, encouraging a mentality shift and actively supporting SDGs.
Company 3 (C3)	Energy & Utilities	To develop synergies for a “win, win, win” relationship (company, NGO and society).
Company 4 (C4)	Financial Services	To utilize the company’s resources and employees to change the world and benefit society.
NGOs		
NGO 1 (NGO1)	Social Services	To bring companies and NGOs together to leverage both resources to solve societal challenges.
NGO 2 (NGO2)	Education; Youth Development	To empower girls with education and leadership opportunities, while driving sustainability by fostering collaborations between the commercial, non-profit and academic communities.
NGO 3 (NGO3)	Entrepreneurship & Business Development	To boost impact by helping women entrepreneurs connect with one another and accessing finance to support their projects.
NGO 4 (NGO4)	Health & Wellness; Childhood & Youth Development	To advocate for a positive change, raise consciousness, obtain funding, and promote social responsibility education.
NGO 5 (NGO5)	Disability Services; Education & Training; Community Development	To raise the social performance of companies and transfer its inclusive culture to them so they can contribute to the mission’s longevity and sustainability.

Table 2 - Interviewees, industry sector and purpose of CSPs

3.3. Data Collection

For this qualitative, inductive and multiple case study approach, in-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted. This methodology enabled the collection of open data, the exploration of the participants’ thoughts, feelings, and beliefs, as well as the discussion of intimate and occasionally delicate topics. Besides that, the object of this

study is both NGOs and companies that have established CSPs and qualitative interviews help to explore both sides experiences (Alsaawi, 2014).

Since this methodology presupposes the use of a flexible interview guide reinforced by follow-up questions and comments, participants could discuss predetermined subjects from the literature (DeJonckheere & Vaughn, 2019). Furthermore, using an interview guide allowed for an organized method to acquiring data, ensuring the right information was gathered (Herriott, 1983). The main objective of the interviews is to find how companies and NGOs perceived their CSPs and the conflicts they face, and which strategies they use to tackle them. First, questions regarding the purpose and effectiveness of CSPs were made. Second, the projects in which companies and NGOs form collaborations as well as the difficulties and disputes that may occur were discussed. Third, the strategies that both parties employ to resolve these conflicts were observed (see [8.1. Interview Guide](#)).

Most interviews were conducted online, due to location constraints, and took approximately 35 minutes. These were recorded and transcribed entirely with the interviewee's consent. Additionally, all information gathered from the interviews was used solely for this particular endeavour.

3.4. Data Analysis

After the interviews were conducted and transcribed, coding was performed to then analyse the data collected. Since coding is an essential aspect of data analysis, as it “serves as shorthand devices to label, separate, compile and organize data” the software NVivo was used (Charmaz, 2006). NVivo is a computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS) that enables qualitative researchers organize, examine, and report their data (Dhakal, 2022). According to Zamawe (2015), NVivo “has features such as character-based coding, rich text capabilities and multimedia functions” that guarantee efficacy and efficiency in the coding process.

Open coding, which usually involves going line by line through the data and assigning lead codes to these blocks of data, is the first stage in the coding process. Axial coding, the subsequent stage, includes categorizing codes generated via open coding in order to identify connections between main categories and subcategories (Seidel & Urquhart, 2013). The final step, commonly referred to as selective coding, involves choosing the core category, which serves as the integration point for all other categories (Bryman, 2012). In this instance, however, predominant themes among the different interviewees were selected, with reference to the conflicts and strategies they undergo, as opposed to selecting a core category. The name of this analysis is thematic analysis, and it combines particularly with NVivo (Zamawe, 2015). As cited by Braun & Clarke (2006) in Nowell et al. (2017), thematic analysis is “a method for identifying, analyzing, organizing, describing, and reporting themes found within a data set” and when rigorous, results can be reliable and enlightening. The Table 3 displays the codes derived in open coding, the categories created in the axial coding stages and the themes used in the thematic analysis.

Open Coding	Axial Coding	Selective Coding
Codes	Categories	Themes
Definition of the company / NGO	-	-
Purpose of CSPs	Company	
	NGO	
Description of CSPs	Company	
	NGO	
What they get from CSPs	Company	
	NGO	
Conflicts in CSPs	Company	Join of a competitor Lack of NGOs' capacity Project Unsustainability Mission Misalignment Priorities Misalignment
	NGO	Miscommunication Mission Misalignment Priorities Misalignment Undervalued Feeling
Strategies to address conflicts	Company	Include competitor CSP as a core area Protocols Reactive strategy
	NGO	CSP as a core area Protocols Business model Reactive strategy
Limitations in strategies	Company	-
	NGO	
Examples of partners	Company	
	NGO	

Table 3 - Codes and Categories Created in NVivo

In conclusion, using a thematic analysis in a multiple case study design enabled an inductive approach that helps to identify various interview themes with a level of depth that isn't always possible with other approaches (Castleberry & Nolen, 2018).

4. Results and Interpretation

4.1. Data Sources

Table with Interviewees				
Company	Country	Function	Gender	Interview Duration
Company 1 (C1)	Portugal	Head of Flagship Programs at Social Impact Coordination Office	Male	44 minutes
Company 2 (C2)	Portugal	Institutional Relations and Sustainability Manager	Male	31 minutes
Company 3 (C3)	Portugal	Communications & Social Impact Project Managers	Female (2)	41 minutes
Company 4 (C4)	Portugal	Senior Human Resources Specialist	Female	32 minutes
NGO	Country	Function	Gender	Interview Duration
NGO 1 (NGO1)	The Netherlands	Founder and Director	Female	35 minutes
NGO 2 (NGO2)	Portugal	Head of Stakeholder Engagement (Europe/USA) & Global Partnerships; Head of People & Culture	Female	30 minutes
NGO 3 (NGO3)	The Netherlands	Founder and CEO	Female	37 minutes
NGO 4 (NGO4)	Portugal	Partnerships Manager	Female	38 minutes
NGO 5 (NGO5)	Portugal	Executive President	Female	30 minutes

Table 4 - Interviewees

4.2. Processed Data Collection

An overview of the processed data collection is presented in the table below, that includes the main codes from which the themes were drawn to address the research question (see [8.2. Coding Scheme of Exemplary Results](#)):

Open Coding Codes	Axial Coding Categories 1	Axial Coding Categories 2	# Of Interviews for Axial Coding 1	# Of References for Axial Coding 1	Description	Example Quote
Conflicts in CSPs	Company Perspective	-	5	17	Conflicts arise due to misalignment of values and expectations, lack of resources and talent, communication difficulties and divergent priorities.	<i>“I would say that the most difficult thing is the alignment of the mission and social organizations being able to achieve the objectives they set themselves.”</i>
	NGO Perspective	-	6	24	Conflicts between companies and NGOs arise from language barriers, undervaluation of the nonprofit sector, a misalignment of values, and challenges in managing partnerships.	<i>“If the values are not aligned right up front, that partnership is literally unworkable, and you find that out very quickly.”</i>
Potential Solutions for Conflict Resolution	Company	-	4	21	Flexible protocols should be established, due diligence procedures should be used, communication should be improved, conflicts should be handled proactively, the benefits of partnerships should be evaluated, and project viability should be ensured.	<i>“Whenever possible, and especially in medium-long-term partnerships [we seek] to protocol in a contract, in which it is clear and transparent what is expected of both parties.”</i>
	NGO	-	6	41	Some strategies for handling conflicts include creating strong contractual agreements, involving all workers, encouraging transparency and understanding, and hiring people with experience in for-profit and non-profit sectors.	<i>“We do not use contracts, but protocols (...) where all the conditions are: the donation amount, the duration of the experience, the timings, etc.”</i>
Limitations in Strategies	NGO	-	1	4	The different dimensions between companies and NGOs, the difficulty in anticipating activities from year to year, the necessity for flexibility, and the absence of guarantees for partnership renewal are only a few of the limitations in suggested strategies.	<i>“Many times, it is not possible to anticipate from year to year, which means that having an agreement that has all the interactions that we can have with a company is unrealistic for the way Girl Move works.”</i>

Table 5 - Overview of the Coding Scheme of Exemplary Results

4.3. Findings

As mentioned earlier, the data analysis sought to understand how companies and NGOs handle conflicts resulting from CSPs to avoid jeopardizing CSV. The conflicts that both parties encounter and the strategies they use or plan to use to deal with them were, therefore, the key features that appeared in Table 8 and that were analysed.

4.3.1. Conflicts

Companies

On the side of companies, 3 of them note that they have difficulties while working with NGOs because of the disparity in their respective paces and agendas. For instance, a company does not have many incentives to participate in CSPs if philanthropy is not their major priority. As a result, they will give less importance to initiatives in which they work with NGOs, which will slow down the pace of work. Moreover, it becomes challenging for a company to expect their employees to put in extra time for these endeavours, especially those that often require lengthy working hours. The misalignment in the missions of the two parties, which is cited by 2 of the analysed companies as the main obstacle in CSPs, might be used to justify the pace issue. They contend that NGOs' ideals and methods for operating frequently are incompatible with the company's belief of CSR:

“We realized that the association's values and the organization's way of acting were not aligned with our policy in terms of Corporate Social Responsibility. Therefore, we stopped supporting and monitoring the project.” (C2)

Additionally, each company that participated in the interview emphasized that NGOs face a shortage of capable internal resources and human capital, which causes firms to have unrealistic expectations for management and performance. In fact, it can be quite difficult for NGOs to find qualified human resources, thus it's not uncommon to see the same person performing many tasks. This makes projects less likely to be sustainable because they become wholly dependent on company inputs:

“C1 may be expecting a level of management and a level of performance from an NGO that it later does not match. There is clearly a lack of NGO talent and investment. Sometimes, the opposite can happen. (...) Most of the times they have intervention models that are not self-sufficient.” (C1)

Even though it was less significant, one of the companies also encountered issues when one of their competitors joined the same partnership with the same NGO on the same project. Nevertheless, this indicates that more and more companies are looking to build CSPs:

“Tension can arise when a competitor of C1 joins and also becomes a partner of the NGO. It happens very, very often. It only reveals that the company sees the partnership as something valuable and that it wants this to be a differentiating element from its

competitor. I even see it with some optimism, because [it means] that it is a project that the company values.” (C1)

NGOs

On the side of NGOs, the difference in pace and priorities is also the biggest conflict they face, according to 3 of NGOs interviewed. Contrary to what was previously stated, they claimed that companies typically move at a quicker pace since they have access to greater resources. However, regarding priority, NGOs also consider that companies give little priority to projects in which they collaborate. First, because companies have limited budgets for this area. Secondly, because the timing in which NGOs approach companies to collaborate is not always the best:

“Sometimes, there is investment capacity and will, but the timing in which (NGO2) seeks to approach these companies may not coincide with their timing. The budgets that exist for these areas are also limited, not least because they are still investing as a bet in an area and not as if social responsibility were something transversal to the entire company.” (NGO2)

In terms of mission misalignment, NGOs share the same opinion as companies, as they perceive that mission misalignment makes CSPs unworkable. Additionally, 2 out of the 5 NGOs that were interviewed experience problems as a result of feeling diminished by the companies. This creates some mistrust challenges and makes it harder for both sides to communicate:

“I think the main problem is, for sure, (...) that they don't speak the same language. The language of impact is not the same language of business, that's point number one. Number two, for me, big problem, companies undervalue what it means the (...) non-profit world.” (NGO1)

Lastly, the NGOs themselves also suffer from a lack of internal capacity, which makes it impossible for them to both monitor and evaluate the initiatives of CSPs:

“And what I would like was having more internal capacity to be better able to follow up, [to] manage partners... And on our side that is a handicap that I think if it didn't exist, we could still make these partnerships evolve further. We have a very short team (...)” (NGO5)

4.3.2. Strategies

The strategies used by companies and NGOs to address the conflicts that arise from their CSPs are the main contribution of this paper, as some of the conflicts have already been detailed in the literature review (2.3. Conflicts in Cross-Sector Partnerships).

Companies

On the companies' side, three of those interviewed argue that conflicts should be avoided *a priori*, ensuring from the beginning that partners are aligned with their vision.

By doing this, companies can lower their chances of partnering with NGOs that have a different vision than their own and could eventually grow completely dependent on them. This proactive approach comprises three different strategies:

The first is the implementation of a yearly renewal protocol, which is advised by the 3 companies that support this proactive approach. This ought to include a structured description of the activities and initiatives that both sides collaborate on, together with the metrics used in their evaluation. The usage of a protocol lessens potential difficulties because it helps to define each party's obligations:

“Protocol with annual renewal where the activities and projects in which we will collaborate are described. But the protocols can be changed, as we give a certain margin so that new projects that arise can be framed. This type of protocols helps to reduce possible challenges or tensions that may exist. They help to mark out what are objectives and part by part and safeguard any type of mismatch.” (C2)

The second entails doing a preliminary background investigation on partners - in this case, NGOs - using due diligence procedures. These enable companies to evaluate NGO mechanisms from a financial, management, and ethical perspective:

“In addition to this validation of the organization and the mission of the social organization itself, carry out processes of due diligence, in which we try to reinforce that the mechanisms of social organizations are also robust from the point of view of financial management, from the very issue of ethics and transparency.” (3C)

The third option, which was put out by just one company, is to integrate the social impact into every aspect of a company's operations, turning it into a core area. Thus, all employees can clearly understand the company's goals for generating social impact, and they may also actively participate in CSPs:

“One of the things we do is that we also work according to our stakeholders. And (...) one of our main stakeholders is our people. What our employees think is important for the company. And often the social investments that end up having more support internally gain another strength. Because, effectively, you have the hook of the company's strategy here, but [with] the connection to the community through our people, then you can effectively have a real impact.” (3C)

The other company that had been interviewed proposed a reactive approach that involves handling conflicts as they came up. According to this company, several variables, including the project area and the project manager, might affect which conflicts appear:

“Solve them, that's when they show up. (...) It depends a lot on the project. It really depends on the entity. It depends a lot on the benefit that is seen in this partnership. Depends on the person. A lot depends on the two interlocutors (...)” (C1)

To determine if the CSP should continue or be dissolved, a conflict/benefit analysis of the relationship must also be carried out. Regarding the conflict that can arise from the

addition of a new competitor to the partnership that the company had already established with an NGO, a reactive strategy can be to set aside the issues with the competition and attempt to understand how it might bring value to the partnership.

NGOs

From the point of view of NGOs, the proactive approach they promote combines two of the strategies also advocated by companies with an additional one:

2 NGOs contend that CSPs cannot be exclusive to oral communication, advise the implementation of protocols. To ensure that all sides are on the same page on the degree of expectations, it is required to create a legacy protocol that outlines the terms of the partnership (such as the amount of the donation, the length of the alliance, deliverables, deadlines, etc.):

“You need to make sure that your contracts are strong, with agreements that have been looked at by your legal teams, both on your side as an NGO (...) and also from the company side. You make sure that those contracts are absolutely aligned and that everybody agrees to the terms and that everybody understands very clearly how the relationship is going to work and is documented in those contracts. And it is the way to avoid so many misalignments further down the line (...)” (NGO3)

The second strategy pointed out by 4 NGOs is to make the social impact area an integral part of a company and not an isolated area. In order for the commitment to CSV to become everyone’s responsibility, it is critical that all workers are aware of the CSPs that have been formed including the CEO. But to do that, NGOs believe they must show themselves to the companies, get to know them better, and help them noting the value of their contributes:

“The vast majority of partnerships that are renewed started with an approach with the CEO of the company and then managed to consolidate with all other areas and people of the company. Social responsibility is no longer an area and becomes something that has to do with the core business of the company itself.” (NGO2)

The use of a business model, where the value proposition, available resources, associated costs, etc. are evident, is the third strategy, which was suggested by two NGOs. Additionally, NGOs want to function more and more like companies, with the same access to resources, even if that means paying higher salaries to attract more skilled workers. Because they believe that they can only demonstrate to companies their true methods of addressing societal problems by having qualified, experienced, and motivated employees. Therefore, it is essential to make sure that there is an exchange of needs, knowledge, skills, and opportunities rather than just a one-time donation from the companies’ side:

“A donation is always relevant, it always helps and always contributes, but this is an exchange of expertise, needs, opportunities and knowledge. And that is why, year after year, there is a renewal rate of almost at least 40 companies.” (NGO2)

Finally, one of the NGOs thinks that conflicts should be resolved as they emerge and uses a reactive approach, which is in line with the viewpoint of one of the companies.

The tables below reflect both the conflicts and the strategies mentioned by the companies and NGOs during the interviews:

Company			
Conflicts		Strategies	
		Description	# of Interviewees
Competitor joining the same project	→	Include competitor in CSP	1
Lack of NGO's Internal Resources	→	Making CSPs a core area in the company	1
Projects Unsustainability	↘		
Mission / Values Misalignment	→	Protocols	3
Pace and Priorities Misalignment	↗		
		Reactive strategy, depending on the CSP background	1

Table 6 - Overview of Conflicts and Strategies in Companies' Perspective

NGO			
Conflicts		Strategies	
		Description	# of Interviewees
Miscommunication	→	Making CSPs a core area in the company	4
Mission / Values Misalignment	↘		
Pace and Priorities Misalignment	↗	Protocols	2
Undervalued Feeling		Business Model	2
		Reactive strategy, depending on the CSP background	1

Table 7 - Overview of Conflicts and Strategies in NGOs' Perspectives

Despite the suggested strategies, there are some limitations to their implementations, namely in the case of the protocol. Both companies and NGOs have different sizes, different teams and different budgets. Thus, they are not always able to anticipate from year to year the projects in which they will establish CSPs. Therefore, it is suggested the implementation of protocols that are flexible.

5. Discussion

5.1. Developing Theory

The literature review of this paper mainly highlights the conflicts that result from CSPs. However, as already stated, there is a void in the literature regarding the strategies currently used to settle these conflicts. Only evaluating CSPs' efficacy and efficiency in reaching predetermined goals using formal planning tools is advised by the available literature. For instance, Tulder, Seitanidi, Crane, and Brammer (2015) highlight the importance of defining a Theory of Change (ToC) to gain an overview of the relationship and head off any potential problems. In addition to facilitating the observation of the partnership's objective impacts, the ToC also enables the identification of the "intended outcomes, the activities it expects to implement to achieve those outcomes, and the contextual factors that may have an effect on implementation of activities and their potential to bring about desired outcomes" (Connell & Kubisch, 1998). However, based on the data gathered, ToC was not a strategy suggested by the participants of the multiple case study. Instead, 3 companies and 2 NGOs discussed how the protocols may be used as a strategy to close some of the gaps in CSPs and, as a result, prevent the conflicts that result from them.

Although they look quite similar and are both proactive approaches, a protocol is distinct from a ToC. Since there isn't much information in the literature about the use of protocols, the concept of a protocol will be presented using the data that has been provided. When companies and NGOs enter a particular relationship, a protocol is a contract that is established at the very beginning of the alliance. It is a contract that is blocked by a legal team, to protect its integrity. It also outlines, among other things, a schedule of responsibilities, a timetable of deliveries, metrics to be applied, and data protection requirements. These clear guidelines help to adjust stakeholders' expectations. By doing this, protocols can lessen ambiguity and the chance of conflicts resulting from misunderstandings or divergent interpretations. In addition, they give decision-making, problem-solving, and conflict resolution a formal framework. By establishing a stable and predictable environment, both companies and NGOs can reduce the possibility of problems arising from inconsistency. As a result, if there are disagreements - which there always are - it is always possible to find a way to strengthen the partnership that has been established through negotiation since it is protected by a very solid contractual arrangement. Even though the protocol and ToC have distinct purposes, both can be used because they are complementary. Both sides can agree on a protocol in the initial stage. To guarantee that the project they collaborate on will have the desired impact, they should later prepare a ToC. This increases the likelihood that the partnership will be renewed and both parties will work to resolve any potential disagreements. Due to their size and complexity, ToCs alone do not contribute to conflict prevention. "ToCs are rarely aligned with the complexity of the problem." But it does help and it is critical for building consensus on problem definition, goals and intervention (Tulder & Keen, 2018).

In summary, protocols are more concerned with developing operational norms and procedures than the ToC is with focusing on the causal pathways and results of interventions. However, protocols may reinforce the ToC approach to conflict prevention by offering a useful structure for putting the ToC's desired results into practice and monitoring them. The efficiency of CSPs in CSV can be improved by combining the two strategies.

These insights can be summarized in the following proposition:

Proposition 1. *Implementing protocols as a strategy in CSPs can prevent possible conflicts, by giving clear guidelines, creating a stable and predictable environment, and promoting dialogue and problem-solving.*

The literature also suggests that conflicts should only be looked at when they occur, which is very much in line with the reactive approach recommended during data collection, both by companies and NGOs. According to some authors, the contextual factors of the partnership must be deeply investigated, namely “regional, national and local environments; economic, political, cultural and social conditions; (...) the presence or absence of intermediary organisations and/or key individuals capable of bringing different institutions together” (Rein & Stott, 2009). However, in light of the findings, it is also advised that a partnership's conflict/benefit analysis should be conducted. This entails determining whether the conflict is bigger than the benefit to decide whether the relationship has its own sustainability or whether it ought to cease.

The research also added the idea of due diligence procedures to the literature in order to achieve alignment in the goal and vision of both companies and NGOs. To guarantee that they have, not only the same vision but also the internal resources and capacity to collaborate, due diligence procedures entail conducting some preliminary research on the entities.

Another strategy strongly suggested by NGOs is to integrate social impact into the company's core operation. First, by doing this, companies and NGOs can work more effectively together since there is a stronger feeling of shared purpose. Second, a company shows a commitment to social responsibility, which can result in more openness and trust between the two sides, as well as with clients, employees, and other stakeholders. Conflicts that result from misconceptions or misplaced expectations can be avoided through clear communication and accountability. The NGOs also noted that if a company internally communicated the goal of their collaborations, their staff would become ambassadors for the NGOs' mission, aiding in their diffusion. Third, companies can build a more sustainable business model by integrating social impact into core operations. This long-term strategy can provide NGO collaborations durability because it shows a commitment that goes beyond temporary philanthropic endeavours. As a result, NGOs are more likely to form alliances with companies that genuinely care about having a positive social impact, which may help to prevent future confrontations.

These findings can be described in the following proposition:

Proposition 2. *Integrating social impact into the core operations of companies is a strategic way to resolve conflicts as it produces a feeling of shared purpose, establishes trust and accountability, and develops a sustainable business model.*

Although this approach was proposed by 4 NGOs, only 1 company mentioned it as a potential dispute resolution tactic because it also has certain drawbacks. Companies may face limitations in terms of budget, experience or capacity to implement and sustain social impact initiatives, and integrating social impact into core operations often requires significant resources, both financial and human. Furthermore, companies operate in complex ecosystems of stakeholders, and bringing social impacts as a core area requires navigating these diverse interests and perspectives. These limitations can affect the depth and effectiveness of CSPs when stakeholders have conflicting views about the company's social impact strategy, when they believe it is harmful to financial performance, or when their expectations are not satisfied.

Another strategy rarely offered by enterprises but highly encouraged by NGOs is working with a business model that includes a value proposition, resources, important activities, and other key elements. The key advantage is that a business model offers NGOs a more reliable source of funding, fostering trust in organisations that can support long-term partnerships and lowering the likelihood of conflicts brought on by financial volatility. Additionally, it enables NGOs to identify more clearly the financial, technological, and specialised knowledge gaps they face. Working with a business model also guarantees that both organisations have same goals, strategies, and outcomes in mind and prevents misalignment in the parties' points of view. Divergent tactics and confrontations are less likely when both parties share the same beliefs and objectives.

These insights can be summarized in the following proposition:

Proposition 3. *Implementing a business model that incorporates a shared value proposition, aligned goals, and clear strategies is a possible solution for addressing conflicts in CSPs since it offers reliable sources of funding, cultivates trust, and ensures alignment of values and objectives.*

Companies have probably not advocated this strategy as much because relying extensively on business models for finances and support can make NGOs dependent on the corporate partners. The NGO's autonomy, ability to make decisions, or capacity to pursue activities that are not in line with the partner's objectives may be constrained by this dependence. Additionally, business models frequently function within pre-established operating frameworks. This may jeopardise businesses' necessity to adapt quickly and creatively to new societal issues. Finally, it is important to consider that business models that result from CSPs can be "opportunistic, project-based initiatives rather than deep and fundamental (...) and their interactions are frequently hostile and distrusting" (Dahan, Doh, Oetzel, & Yaziji, 2010).

5.2. Theoretical Implications

This research adds a variety of contributions to the current literature with respect to its theoretical implications.

First, going back to the research question, there is a gap in the literature regarding the methods used by companies and NGOs to settle conflicts resulting from CSPs. This is the article's primary contribution to the literature. After conducting the data collection, there is no doubt that, as indicated in the literature, collaboration between the two sides is one of the most successful strategies to bring about social change (George, 2014). This makes it urgent to settle the conflicts within these collaborative alliances, in order to maximize social change. However, based on the results of the interviews, it is reasonable to draw the conclusion that it is preferable to take proactive measures to avoid conflicts rather than deal with them when they do occur.

Second, although the primary conflicts of CSPs are highlighted in the current literature, there are others that emerged. The "inherent differences in mission, governance, strategy and structure between corporations and NGOs" (Dahan, Doh, Oetzel, & Yaziji, 2010) was the key issue that arose from the available literature. This was also confirmed by the interviewees who confirmed that misalignment leads to mistrust and to an ineffective shared value creation. But the research also showed that there are other issues that could seriously threaten shared value creation. For instance, conflicts about pace are mentioned as one of the most frequent by both type of organizations. The interviewee C3 refers that *"The pace of social organizations is not company's pace, nor is it similar. They are completely different realities. And in the areas of social impact, we take this for granted and, therefore, when we enter into a partnership with an association, we obviously have to be a pressure agent to try to guarantee as much as possible that the project meets the established schedule"*. Furthermore, NGOs also brought up the friction that results from feeling devalued. The literature suggests that NGOs lack resources, but does not mention that, as a result, companies may undervalue them.

Third, the interviews allowed to investigate what the main purpose of CSPs is and what NGOs and companies get from each other through these alliances. In addition to the resources they exchange, and which are mentioned in the literature, workers of both organisations get motivation to be agents of social change on a more personal level. Thus, more research can be done on the role of the companies and NGOs in empowering their employees to CSV, from an individual point of view.

5.3. Practical Implications

With respect to practical implications, the findings of this paper can guide companies and NGOs form and manage CSPs successfully, foster collaboration and minimizing conflicts, while CSV.

This indicates that this paper can assist companies and NGOs in reducing some of the challenges associated with their CSPs as well as better identifying and resolving social and environmental problems that have an influence on the areas in which they operate. As a result, they will be able to respond to these communities' interests. This ultimately helps society and everyone who is interested in finding ways to improve social well-being and address societal issues. They can learn about the problems underlying these partnerships and helping to avoid them in the future.

5.4. Limitations and Future Research

The present paper has some limitations, which will be described below.

To begin with, the research's findings are based on a certain sample of companies and NGOs that develop CSPs. However, the companies and NGOs interviewed do not necessarily have CSPs among themselves. Therefore, comparing viewpoints on the same partnership was not achievable. First off, this indicates that the NGO side had more insights than the business side. Second, the small sample size may have reduced the results' representativeness by raising the level of uncertainty and reducing the likelihood of saturation. Additionally, even in the context of a small sample, not all participants had encountered problems in CSPs; hence, they had not previously considered potential solutions. For this very reason, the eligibility of participants was verified, albeit this is not always guaranteed.

It is important to understand that while this research examines numerous conflict resolution tactics, there may be more strategies that are not discussed. If organizations from multiple countries had been contacted, different approaches may have been considered. The majority of the interviewees are from Portugal, though, because of my wider network there.

The document may have also been sent to all participants to ensure that the information presented here is consistent with their contributions. Additionally, the opinions of many stakeholders, including CSP beneficiaries, may have been gathered. By doing this, the effects of conflicts on the areas where the partnerships operate would have been investigated. This, however, was not feasible because of time constraints.

Future research is encouraged by addressing these limitations. Future studies can be conducted with a bigger sample size and include case studies of specific successful relationships. To learn more about potential conflict resolution strategies, these case studies can also be observed in various European nations. Investigating how these conflicts impact each stakeholder is another suggestion. Finally, since the most frequent stage of conflict occurrence was not examined, future research may concentrate on this. For instance, it should be highlighted whether conflicts are more likely to occur during the formation of partnerships or over their course. This might help companies and NGOs to discover different strategies to use throughout the partnership various stages.

6. Conclusion

To conclude, the main research question “*How do NGOs and companies address conflicts that arise in CSPs, in order to create shared value?*” can be answered through looking at the tables 6 and 7 and at the propositions developed in this study (see 5.1. Developing Theory). It shows the main strategies pointed out by companies and NGOs to address the conflicts that emerge in CSPs. Implementing protocols with clear guidelines, integrating social impact into core operations of companies and implementing a business model in NGOs are potential solutions for resolving conflicts. Consequently, addressing these challenges also contribute to maximize shared value creation and consequently, to positively impact society. Other strategies were considered, taking into account a more reactive approach.

This research allows to fill a gap in the literature when it comes to conflict resolution methods employed by companies and NGOs. So, the findings can guide them in successfully establishing CSPs and better respond to societal needs. In order to maximize the performance of CSPs, future research could focus on the impact of these conflicts on each stakeholder, and at which stage they occur most.

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8. Appendices and Supplementary Material

8.1. Interview Guide

Name:

Company / NGO:

Function:

First Part - The partnership itself

- Can you maybe elaborate on what this collaboration is about?
 - What is the main purpose of the partnership established between ... (company / NGO) and ... (company / NGO)?
 - Which type of partnership is established? (e.g., short-term vs long-term; type of projects; company / NGO sector; etc)
 - Ask for some examples.
- How is the collaboration going?
- Based on your experience and perspective, which leads ... (company / NGO) to collaborate with you?
 - In terms of financial aspects and non-financial (e.g., know-how, human resources, etc).
- What does ... (company / NGO) receive from these collaborations?
 - What is the contribute?
 - Why does ... (company / NGO) continue to invest in these partnerships?

Second Part - The conflict / tensions

- Introduce some conflicts, giving some examples:
 - Misalignment of agendas / missions
 - Miscommunication
 - Legitimacy / transparency
 - Lack of trust
 - Level of experience of both parties
 - The vision that NGOs have of companies and vice-versa
 - New competitors
 - Deadlines
- Which of these tensions does ... (company / NGO) face?
 - Ask for some examples.
- If this happens in a collaboration, how would you resolve this?
- How does ... (company / NGO) try to solve this problem, to increase shared value creation?
- What do you think that can be a solution to solve these tensions?
- Reflect on prior collaborations or collaborations.

8.2. Coding Scheme of Exemplary Results

Open Coding Codes	Axial Coding Categories 1	Axial Coding Categories 2	# Of Interviews for Axial Coding 1	# Of References for Axial Coding 1	Description	Example Quote
Company / NGO Mission	Company	-	3	5	Companies aims to create shared value through supporting communities, hiring employees with disabilities, and promoting a fair energy transition.	<i>“EDP, at this moment, with its relationship with social impact and creating “shared value”, intends to operate what is called a fair energy transition.”</i>
	NGO	-	3	10	NGOs’ missions are diverse: accelerating impact initiatives; empowering women entrepreneurs; promoting the inclusion of individuals with disabilities.	<i>“Ant Element is an impact strategic and consulting organization that helps companies to accelerate their impact projects and initiatives.”</i>
Factors Influencing CSPs	CSPs Purpose	Company	4	21	Companies establish CSPs with NGOs to reduce inequality, create social impact, promote sustainability and leave a positive footprint. Furthermore, CSPs allow companies to accomplish their social performance goals.	<i>“This social concern to help, to contribute to the reduction of asymmetries, to the reduction of inequalities in society, has always been very present.”</i>
		NGO	7	35	NGOs establish CSPs with companies to close the gap between the for-profit and non-profit sectors. In the first instance, CSPs arise from a need for sustainability, but this sustainability is not just financial resources. But also, assets, expertise and strategic vision.	<i>“Most of the times they (NGOs) have intervention models that are not self-sufficient. And, therefore, they need external resources for which they cannot generate financial return.”</i>
	Contributions Received	Company	8	21	CSPs provide several advantages to companies. This includes improved employee engagement and productivity as well as the opportunity to make a beneficial impact on society. It also includes the possibility to test prototypes and exchange expertise.	<i>“It can bring knowledge and know-how about that population that can help the company.”</i>

		NGO	8	21	NGOs gain from CSPs in a variety of manners, including increased visibility, access to financial resources, volunteers, knowledge, and opportunities for innovation.	<i>“EDP also supports [projects] by bringing its knowledge and also some manpower at the volunteer level.”</i>
CSPs Description	CSPs Key Factors	Company	3	14	For companies, creating long-term partnerships, as a result of due diligence procedures and the formulation of protocols, is a key factor in CSPs.	<i>“This is one of our principles: we have long-term partnerships.”</i>
		NGO	5	24	For NGOs, building communities is the main key factor in CSPs with companies. Sharing a common goal with them that involves value exchanges also promotes a win-win relationship.	<i>“Our starting point (...) is that we start with building a community, because it’s very hard for a woman entrepreneur on her own to be able to make the biggest impact on the ground.”</i>
	Project Examples	Company	4	16	Companies work with NGOs on a range of initiatives that entail financial donations, employee volunteerism, the provision of surplus products, and other social innovation projects.	<i>“We work in essentially 3 major areas: 1. Fighting food waste and fighting hunger. 2. Diversity and inclusion. 3. Circular economy projects.”</i>
		NGO	3	12	NGOs collaborate with companies on a variety of project initiatives, such as international experiences, product partnerships, fundraising activities, volunteer work, solidarity sports competitions, catering services, etc.	<i>“They (companies) can hire the catering services that we have to serve coffee breaks in their companies, (...) they can order merchandising to offer corporate gifts (...), they can invite us to do a session, like an inspirational pitch (...).”</i>
		Partners Examples	Company	4	10	NGOs from diverse areas, such as Red Cross, ReFood, SOS Villages,

					Junior Achievement Portugal, and Make a Wish are a few examples of company partners.	<i>with “Crescer” association, which is dedicated to integrating homeless people into the job market.”</i>
		NGO	3	10	International companies including Sonae, L’Oréal, Nestlé, Disney, and Flying Tiger, as well as hotels, the Zoo, the Oceanarium, restaurants, pharmacies, and banks are a few examples of NGO partners.	<i>“The vast majority of them (partners) are in Portugal (...) and are from all sectors. But I can give you examples of companies in the banking sector, such as Santander or Millenium.”</i>
Conflicts in CSPs	Company Perspective	-	5	17	Conflicts arise due to misalignment of values and expectations, lack of resources and talent, communication difficulties and divergent priorities.	<i>“I would say that the most difficult thing is the alignment of the mission and social organizations being able to achieve the objectives they set themselves.”</i>
	NGO Perspective	-	6	24	Conflicts between companies and NGOs arise from language barriers, undervaluation of the nonprofit sector, a misalignment of values, and challenges in managing partnerships.	<i>“If the values are not aligned right up front, that partnership is literally unworkable, and you find that out very quickly.”</i>
Potential Solutions for Conflict Resolution	Company	-	4	21	Flexible protocols should be established, due diligence procedures should be used, communication should be improved, conflicts should be handled proactively, the benefits of partnerships should be evaluated, and project viability should be ensured.	<i>“Whenever possible, and especially in medium-long-term partnerships [we seek] to protocol in a contract, in which it is clear and transparent what is expected of both parties.”</i>
	NGO	-	6	41	Some strategies for handling conflicts include creating strong contractual agreements, involving all workers, encouraging transparency and understanding, and hiring people with experience in for-profit and non-profit sectors.	<i>“We do not use contracts, but protocols (...) where all the conditions are: the donation amount, the duration of the experience, the timings, etc.”</i>
Limitations in Strategies	NGO	-	1	4	The different dimensions between companies and NGOs, the difficulty in	<i>“Many times, it is not possible to anticipate from year</i>

					<p>anticipating activities from year to year, the necessity for flexibility, and the absence of guarantees for partnership renewal are only a few of the limitations in suggested strategies.</p>	<p><i>to year, which means that having an agreement that has all the interactions that we can have with a company is unrealistic for the way Girl Move works.”</i></p>
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Table 8 - Coding Scheme of Exemplary Results