# Discourse Dynamics Promoting the Deliberative Democratic Quality of Multi-Stakeholder Initiatives

*The Case of Beyond Chocolate.*

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# 1. Introduction

In the past years, the civil society has raised concerns about (un)ethical business practises by companies and corporate social responsibility (CSR) issues in the global supply chain (Bowrey & Clements, 2019). While these concerns spread across industries, a fair share of attention has been given to (child) labour conditions in West-Africa (Luckstead et al., 2019). Concerns about labour issues in the supply chain are usually highly complex and involve companies while also increasing pressure on governments and state actors worldwide. Intergovernmental agreements and private governance mechanisms have tried to tackle these issues, however most of them have shown to have several drawbacks in solving complex issues that involve multiple stakeholder groups (Arenas et al., 2020).

Research has shown that multi-stakeholder initiatives (MSIs) have proven to be a good solution to approach complex governance issues across sectors (Hahn & Weidtmann, 2016; Moog et al., 2015). MSIs are "private governance mechanisms involving corporations, civil society organizations, and sometimes other actors such as governments, academia or unions, to cope with social and environmental challenges across industries and on a global scale" (Mena & Palazzo, 2012, p. 528). While other governance mechanisms, such as individual corporate codes of conduct, usually only concern a specific company, MSIs outperform these by regulating business activities through voluntary adherence to their norms while at the same time fostering collaboration within an industry. This collaboration and closer relationships can lead to a more sustainable solution to social and ethical issues and are therefore seen as more advanced (Tighe, 2016). In addition, they are tailored towards a specific problem and are constantly reshaped by their members and influenced by developments in society (Zeyen et al., 2016). Moreover, norm and rule-setting is often done in a democratic way in which all stakeholders work together, are treated equally and are held accountable to the MSI's standards (Martens et al., 2019). Deliberation then allows for discussions and adjusting rules and standards even after the MSI's initial emergence (Arenas et al., 2020; Dryzek, 2002; Martens et al., 2019). Through negotiation, these rules and standards can constantly be questioned and reshaped by its members (Zeyen et al., 2016), which enhances their democratic quality. Hence, deliberative democratic quality implies that MSIs are democratic spaces for negotiation and deliberation between members and that the quality is enhanced through room for discussions and equal involvement of all stakeholders. Therefore, MSIs as governance mechanism provide a deliberative democratic solution for companies, government and civil society to align interests, bridge norms and take a joint stance on CSR (Bäckstrand, 2006; Moog et al., 2015).

Extensive research exists in the field of MSIs. A broad range of literature has looked at partnership agreements as new possible governance mechanism to tackle the problem of labour conditions jointly (Bartley & Smith, 2010; Fransen, 2012; Köhne, 2014). Researchers have then looked at the

emergence of partnerships and within the emergence, studies have focused on the motivation of the different actors to participate in an initiative (Airike et al., 2016; Bartley, 2007) and the legitimization of private governance initiatives (Mena & Palazzo, 2012; Schouten & Glasbergen, 2011). However, what still remains under-researched, are the discourse dynamics between stakeholders and the deliberative processes in MSIs, once they exist (Arenas et al., 2020; Sanderink & Nasiritousi, 2020). Understanding dynamics of negotiation between stakeholder groups within MSIs seems relevant given that MSIs are spaces for "purposeful decisions and negotiations of pioneer members with diverse interests" (Zeyen et al., 2016, p. 342). Discourses and negotiation therefore lie at the very core of how MSIs work. The dynamics of MSIs are increasingly complex as they *define* norms of behaviour while they are at the same time *formed* by the stakeholders' behaviour (Zeyen et al., 2016). We therefore assume that, even after the emergence of an MSI, the stakeholder groups are involved in discussions and processes of deliberation on matters of concern which is why research is needed on the discourse dynamics between stakeholders in MSIs.

Research has looked at these dynamics from an economic, political, and deliberative perspective. Past research has mostly taken an economic perspective, which is mainly concerned with cost-benefit analysis and, thus, rational consensus, or a political perspective, which looks at MSIs as the outcome of conflicts between governmental and society actors, resulting in settlement on the base of practices, power relations and the actors justification (Bartley, 2007; Kaplan & Lohmeyer, 2020; Turcotte et al., 2014). Only recently, scholars have started to develop a deliberative perspective, which sees MSIs as spheres for discussion of different viewpoints with the goal of achieving legitimate consensus (Arenas et al., 2020; Bächtiger et al., 2010; Mena & Palazzo, 2012). Different from the political perspective, the deliberative perspective does not aim at settlement and justification but on discussing viewpoints and evaluating choices that are open for further deliberation. Furthermore, MSIs as "spaces for deliberative negotiation" (Moog et al., 2015, p. 471) are often strongly dependent on their members and the context their operate in. Within the deliberative perspective, authors have called for more research on actor dynamics in MSIs, to develop insights on mechanisms related to conflicts and the development of MSIs (Zeyen et al., 2016). More specifically, Zeyen et al. (2016) emphasise the need to focus on the various stakeholders involved to better understand conflicts and negotiation processes, aiming at a broader understanding of actor and institutional dynamics. Hence, more research on the discourse dynamics between stakeholders is needed to develop insights on how these dynamics might promote the deliberative democratic quality of MSIs.

One study that has addressed this is Arenas et al. (2020), who have already identified the democratic quality of MSIs, and focused on internal contestation as space for democratisation. They came up with four types of internal contestation – procedural, inclusiveness, epistemic, and ultimate-

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goal – that engage in revising agreements and goals, and enhance the democratic quality of MSI. They furthermore claim that contestation, at some point, needs to be overcome and argue for an overall meta-consensus that is needed to do so, through deliberation. Therefore, this approach, called the contestatory deliberative perspective, values conflict and plurality, which underlie an overall meta-consensus. However, the authors call for research on broadening their work through the empirical exploration of new types of internal contestation within MSIs. Furthermore, they stress the necessity of further research on the combination of contestation and meta-consensus in order to shed light on how this enhances deliberation and democratic quality in MSIs and how it can be managed (Arenas et al., 2020). To close this gap and combine insights on deliberation and the democratic quality of MSIs, this research builds on and extends research on the contestatory deliberative perspective – especially the work by Arenas et al. (2020) – and aims to gain insights on how both the discourse dynamics of contestation and consensus between stakeholders promote the deliberative democratic quality of MSIs. This will be done through focussing on stressing the role of consensus within each type of internal contestation in their theory. Instead of relying on the assumption of meta-consensus, I aim at exploring types of consensus that can be seen as counterparts or matching types to Arenas et al. (2020) types of internal contestation, in an empirical approach. This results in the following research question:

*How do the discourse dynamics of contestation and consensus between stakeholders promote the deliberative democratic quality of MSIs?*

is question will be addressed in a form of a case study within one particular MSI – the MSI *Beyond Chocolate* – in the cocoa industry. The MSI, founded in 2018, aims at certification standards for all chocolate produced and sold in Belgium, end deforestation, and has a specific focus on ensuring a fair living income for all stakeholders involved in the cocoa production. Additionally, *Beyond Chocolate* has a specific emphasis on empowering stakeholders through cross-sector dialogue to positively impact the industry within their field of influence, fitting to this research aiming at generating insights into the discourse dynamics between stakeholders. Currently, various partnerships can be found in the cocoa sector and one might assume it to be regulated sufficiently. However, looking at the cocoa sector from a broader angle, we see a variety of problems but also opportunities for long-term solutions which need to be researched further (Wijaya et al., 2018). Furthermore, in the past years, agricultural sectors in general have been under attack by NGOs highlighting that the labour conditions are often to be found unethical (Bitzer et al., 2012; Schouten & Glasbergen, 2011). Therefore, research in this field is of high relevance in order to find long-term solutions.

This research will contribute to the body of literature on the democratic quality of MSIs by focusing on the influence on consensus and contestation dynamics between stakeholder groups by the means of a case study. A case study will contribute to theory as it can broaden constructs and dive deeper into the dynamics' influence within MSI discussions (Ridder, 2017). Building upon the existing theory by Arenas et al (2020), this case study will expand their existing construct on the democratic quality of MSIs through the exploration of new types of contestation and consensus. Theorizing contestation and consensus separately from one another can potentially shed light on the relative importance of either one of them in promoting the deliberative democratic quality. Moreover, by an equal focus on both contestation and consensus, this study aspires to find possible ways to manage these dynamics successfully. While Arenas et al. (2020) have researched this in a *conceptual* manner, this research will *empirically* explore the influence of contestation and consensus on the democratic quality of MSIs. This research will therefore argue for the need for both contestation and consensus in deliberation as a deficit of consensus may create difficulties in successful decision-making (Zeyen et al., 2016). Moreover, uncovering the discourse dynamics that promote the deliberative democratic quality of MSIs will highlight the importance for further research on the importance of MSIs as global governance mechanisms.

Regarding the practical implications, this study is built on the assumption for the need for deliberative dialogue within MSIs, recommending MSIs as governance mechanism to allow for tension between stakeholder opinions while enabling ways to find consensus. This research focussed on the cocoa industry as in April 2021, the official price of cocoa in West-Africa has dropped by 25%, meaning companies are now paying less which is bound to lead to farmers being pushed into poverty, fuelling suspicious and stakeholder discussions between companies and NGOs (Parry, 2021). Therefore, MSIs – in the cocoa sector and beyond – can benefit from this research through insights on the importance of both contestation by stakeholders on these issues and the equal need for consensus to be present to allow for ways to enhance trust to promote the deliberative democratic quality of MSI and thereby tackle issues jointly. This stakeholder dialogue is expected to improve the consensual orientation and transparency, framed by Mena and Palazzo (2012) as "input legitimacy", increasing the overall democratic legitimacy of MSIs. An enhanced deliberative democratic quality of MSIs can then be a strong base for stakeholder compliance and reaching the MSIs overall goal through adequate and effective rules, referred to as "output legitimacy" (Mena & Palazzo, 2012), contributing to the overall democratic legitimacy of the MSI. For the management organisation of a MSI, these findings could shed light on how to manage contestation and consensus and acknowledging the need to incorporate stakeholder discussion outcomes into the MSI's governance and regulations (Fowler & Biekart, 2017). In addition, this research is relevant for governments, companies and the civil society as they can benefit from insights on the promotion of the deliberative

democratic quality between stakeholder with a chance to positively contribute to an advanced sustainable and ethical market development outside of the MSI and, again, improving the output legitimacy within the MSI (Airike et al., 2016; Locke et al., 2009; Mena & Palazzo, 2012).

Thereby, research in this field is needed to uncover the discourse dynamics of stakeholders involved in social and ethical issues that promote the deliberative democratic quality of MSIs and ensure a sustainable long-term solution to threats in the cacao industry and beyond.

# 2. Theoretical background

In the following section, I will firstly elaborate on MSIs as a new governance mechanism to solve international cross-sectoral issues. Secondly, insights on the deliberative democratic quality of MSIs will be discussed, including the need for further research in the field. Thirdly, I will review the relevant literature on the discourse dynamics and argue how this research will go beyond what has been researched already by theorise contestation and consensus separately. Finally, taking these concepts together, I will present a conceptual model, illustrating the concepts and relationships between them.

## 2.1 MSIs as new governance mechanism

Due to globalization, companies are doing business across borders and national governments are overburdened in dealing with societal demands, unable to control corporate operations (Nolan, 2013). Companies are being pressured by the civil society to get politically involved in societal issues beyond their CSR practices in their home country (Bowrey & Clements, 2019; Scherer & Palazzo, 2011). Supply chain issues increasingly come to the surface and even though workers in the supply chain are often not directly linked to a specific company, companies need to unwillingly take responsibility (Ashwin et al., 2020). Even though companies introduce their own corporate governance mechanism, these do have some shortcomings as the web of actors becoming involved in CSR are much more complex (Reinecke & Donaghey, 2017; Soundararajan et al., 2019). In terms of long-term sustainability, individual corporate codes of conduct fail to actually contribute to improvements in society as an organizational structure and management by itself only regulate activities and do not tackle a societal issue (Schneider & Meins, 2012). Mere certification labels also seem to fail to tackle CSR issues as they are often used as symbolic approach instead of a substantive change (Dahlin et al., 2020). So instead of the civil society blaming companies to pursue unethical practices and companies trying to live up to CSR expectations through own governance mechanisms while governmental institutions failing at regulating business activities, MSIs provide a governance mechanism where these three actors work together in a democratic way (Arenas et al., 2020). Firstly,

they address other governance mechanisms' limitations by encouraging companies to actively play a role in improving working conditions in supply chains. Secondly, they create a space for open stakeholder dialogue to understand the origins of a societal problem and reflect on own interests and power relations. Thirdly, they create room for more collaboration between companies, governmental institutions and civil society while they also hold companies accountable to comply to the MSIs standards (Tighe, 2016). MSIs are therefore a more advanced governance mechanism as their participants jointly tackle issues in the supply chain (Hahn & Weidtmann, 2016; Moog et al., 2015).

MSIs are contextualised by the collaboration of actors from the different sectors market, state and civil society actors, enabling collective action in the public and private sector (Arenas et al., 2020; Bitzer et al., 2012; London, 2012). They are often characterised by a joint stance of the various stakeholder groups to collectively strive to address a current societal issue (Ashwin et al., 2020; Zeyen et al., 2016). In the literature, they are also referred to as multi-stakeholder standard-setting initiatives (Arenas et al., 2020), inter-sectoral partnerships (Bitzer et al., 2012), transnational industrial relations agreements (TIRAs) (Ashwin et al., 2020) or simply MSIs. Rules, values and norms are shaped by their members which is also why rules often change when a member enters or withdraws (Zeyen et al., 2016). The stakeholders therefore collectively create as well as devote themselves to rules that are agreed upon in the MSI by all members. The stakeholder groups involved in MSIs therefore take on a political role and get involved in greater responsibilities beyond their usual ones (Martens et al., 2019; Soundararajan et al., 2019).

In recent years, national government laws alone are not sufficient when finding regulations to tackle societal issues (Scherer & Palazzo, 2011). We see a growing importance of soft law regulation by MSIs to address global issues, national governments cannot account for anymore (Mena & Palazzo, 2012). Soft law regulation in MSIs implies a voluntary commitment to adhere to the rules and standards that were agreed on with members across sectors and thereby differentiate from legally binding laws (Mena & Palazzo, 2012; Moog et al., 2015). With MSIs being a cross-sectoral initiative, Zürn (2004) argues that private regulatory initiatives still face the same demands as governmental institutions but while national governments often tackle many problems of its citizen simultaneously, MSI neither just involve people nor are bound to a specific territory. Instead, MSIs centre a specific issue and engagement is taking place across borders and sectors (Dryzek & Niemeyer, 2008; Martens et al., 2019). Hence, through soft-law regulation, MSIs enable governmental institutions to be involved in rule setting and norm-shaping in societal issues across borders which can often not be addressed by national governments (Mena & Palazzo, 2012; Moog et al., 2015). In order for this soft-law regulation across sectors and nations to be warranted, the MSI needs to account for deliberative

democratic discourses.

In the corporate world, MSIs foster the development of social standards while they also have benefits for member companies at the same time (Mena & Palazzo, 2012). Through the network of organizations, MSIs, enable communication and coordination between firms in the same sector, placing a restriction on immoral labour conditions and therefore inhibiting races at the bottom (Ashwin et al., 2020), showing the inherent importance of deliberative democratic dialogues across, as well as within sectors. In addition, this intra-industry engagement can result in sector-wide beneficial spill-overs as companies are operating on the same higher standard (Ashwin et al., 2020). Therefore, corporations play a big role in MSIs, both in committing to rules and standards set by the MSI and democratically involve in developments in and outside of their industry.

In MSIs, the civil society – amongst others including NGOs, community groups, charity organizations and labour unions – often take the lead in developing codes of conduct and the ethical norms of the MSI (Locke et al., 2009). Corporations are then obligated to adhere to these rules and are otherwise excluded (Soundararajan et al., 2019). This often leads to friction between the stakeholder groups requiring effective negotiation and navigation in order to be successful (Boersma, 2018). Hence, a deliberative space is needed in order to account for a democratic MSI.

What we see is that companies, governmental institutions and civil societies often have different stakes in societal issues which can result in tensions (Boersma, 2018). Instead of individually addressing these issues by CSR policies, imposing rules or blaming other parties, MSIs can foster joint efficient action through including different sectors, creation and negotiation of regulations and collaborative goal-setting. MSIs can thereby create a democratic space for mutual accommodation and deliberative democratic discussions beyond borders.

## 2.2 The Deliberative Democratic Quality of MSIs
In the following section, this research will discuss the need for insights on the deliberative democratic quality of a MSI.

Scholars have increasingly reviewed MSIs to have characteristics of a deliberative democracy (Arenas et al., 2020; Martens et al., 2019; Moog et al., 2015). In general, a democracy opens a space in which members of a democratic community have access to shaping a system or culture (Hammond, 2020). Ideally, it implies that members of a MSI rule themselves through rules, equality and accountability for joint decisions (Mena & Palazzo, 2012). Even though procedures might be considered as fair and democratic, we often see the vote of the majority being the one that counts while losing some of the decision's content (Hammond, 2020). Hence, scholars consider the process of deliberation as needed in order to go against domination in democracies by the majority, including the way in which people

decide on their own decisions and reflect upon them (Dryzek, 2002). Deliberation can be defined as "A process of careful and informed reflection on facts and opinions, generally leading to a judgement on the matter at hand" (King, 2003, p. 25). Thereby, deliberation strives for incorporating various viewpoints and the constant evaluation of decisions (Dryzek, 2002). A variety of literature on deliberation in MSIs stems on the work of Jürgen Habermas who, in his research, looks at the conception of the incorporation of deliberative democracy in a nation. In his view, regulation is not about the democratic institution itself but on the degree to which the participants are involved (Habermas, 2009). While his research mainly looks at democracy within a nation with an emphasis on government and society, researchers have recently employed his view in research on the political role of corporations and also in evaluating the democratic characteristics of MSIs (Martens et al., 2019).

Mena & Palazzo (2012) built upon Habermas' concept of deliberative democracy and altered this concept to fit to the context of MSIs. In their research, the authors highlight the importance of MSIs being a democratic space in order to shift nation-state processes and regulation to private transnational partnerships like MSIs. They discuss the need for inclusion, fairness and transparency among stakeholders involved (input legitimacy) as well as the need for actual rule effectiveness enforcement, rule credibility and compliance to standards (output legitimacy) (Mena & Palazzo, 2012). However, some scholars argue that this theory of achieving democratic legitimacy has failed to incorporate the evolution of MSIs that change over time due to institutional and political-economic developments (Moog et al., 2015). Therefore, deliberation within MSIs seems to be crucial in being able to adjust to developments over time, aiming for deliberative democratic characteristics.

Martens et al. (2019) took Habermas' perspective further and showed how cross-border MSIs that have democratic characteristics can compensate for shortcomings in governance of complex CSR initiatives. Furthermore, the authors claim that MSIs often have their own democratic principles regarding their processes of decision-making. Hence, according to the authors, MSI's democratic quality is dependent on "collective agency" of stakeholders (Martens et al., 2019, p. 1117). The authors conclude that democratization could be achieved through "gradual and long-term institutionalization of deliberative democracy for MSIs" (Martens et al., 2019, p. 1131). Here, we see the importance of collective decision-making and negotiations within MSIs to ensure a deliberative democratic quality within MSIs. To tie in with this, Arenas, Albareda & Goodman (2020) studied the democratic quality of transnational governance by looking at discussion and disputes among the stakeholders involved. In their view, MSIs are scopes for deliberation and contestation. They take different theoretical frameworks a step further and develop the contestatory deliberative perspective in which contestation and deliberation are taken into account. MSIs are therefore not static regulatory mechanisms, but rather scopes of for deliberation and contestation which enhance

the deliberative democratic quality of MSIs (Arenas et al., 2020). Taking these studies together, the deliberative democratic quality of MSIs is determined by the following characteristics. The agreement on legitimate principles of the MSI are created by the members that are affected and involved by them. In addition, decisions are therefore done in a collective way through the MSI's principles which are seen in their decision-making processes (Martens et al., 2019).  In this research, this will be referred to as *inclusion of stakeholders*. Secondly, taking the work by Mena and Palazzo (2012) into account, the democratic quality is seen as legitimate if their input and output legitimacy is accomplished. The democratic quality is thereby determined to the *input legitimacy* which is the degree of which *transparency* and *fairness and consensual understanding* is given, and on the other hand, *rules that adequately tackle the issues,* here referred to as *output legitimacy*. Thirdly, important here is the notion of *deliberation* which implies that choices are open for further deliberation after they have initially have agreed upon. This includes the reflection of decisions and opinions on matters of concern. These are displayed in figure 1, below.

As we can see, in literature, attention has been given to deliberative democracy in abundance. In sum, the transition from a deliberative democratic nation regulation to deliberative democratization in MSIs has been made (Habermas, 2009; Habermas & Benhabib, 1996; Martens et al., 2019; Mena & Palazzo, 2012). The democratic quality is established through collective agency by its members (Martens et al., 2019) and the overall legitimacy of the deliberative democracy is determined by its input and output legitimacy (Mena & Palazzo, 2012), valuing both contestation and deliberation, resulting in the contestatory deliberative perspective (Arenas et al., 2020). However, while authors have looked at deliberative processes to ensure legitimacy, mainly focusing the emergence of a MSI, we are still lacking are insights into how MSIs as democratic spaces are guaranteed, even after the emergence and more specifically, how the various interests of stakeholders are incorporated in the MSI in order for it to promote the deliberative democratic quality of MSIs (Arenas et al., 2020; Sanderink & Nasiritousi, 2020). While Arenas et al. (2020) have already focused on the internal contestation, the notion of consensus is not sufficiently incorporated in the deliberative democratic quality of MSIs yet, calling for more research on the discourse dynamics of contestation and consensus.

## 2.3  Discourse dynamics

As explained above, scholars have looked at stakeholder dynamics from various viewpoints. Earlier, studies have theorised MSIs from an economic perspective, focusing on rational consensus, and a political perspective, concerned with power relations and settlements between parties (Bartley, 2007; Kaplan & Lohmeyer, 2020; Turcotte et al., 2014). In a deliberative approach, it is all about the understanding of different viewpoints and therefore account for room discussions, rethinking earlier

choices and finding new temporal agreements. Applying this to the setting of MSIs one can assume that the deliberative democratic quality of a MSI is a dynamic concept that depends on the stakeholder interactions, especially as a MSI's norms and standards are defined by the stakeholders and formed by their actions and therefore need to constantly be revised in order to stay legitimate (Moog et al., 2015; Zeyen et al., 2016).

Arenas et al. (2020) have addressed this in their research through their theory on internal contestation in MSIs that enhance the democratic quality and argue that internal contestation appreciates plurality and conflict in the sense that it can foster democratic processes in MSIs. Nevertheless, the authors argue that, despite the necessity for contestation, it also needs to be overcome at some point to manage contestation through overall meta-consensus. This implies, that certain principles are accepted by all members, including the right to express one's opinion, respect, inclusions, provisional agreements and revision of principles. However, the authors invite for further research on the combination of meta-consensus and contestation and how this can advance the democratic quality of MSI while also calling for the empirical exploration of new types of internal contestation. To close this gap, this research builds upon the contestatory deliberative perspective on MSIs by the exploration of how consensus and contestation promote the deliberative democratic quality in MSIs. As briefly stated above, instead of theorizing for the need for a general meta-consensus in MSIs, this research conceptualises and differentiate between different types of consensus that match with the types of internal contestation in stakeholder discourses while still argue for an interplay between contestation and consensus through deliberative stakeholder discourses. Especially as deliberation in MSIs is seen as "an approach that blends consensus- and conflict-oriented processes" (Soundararajan et al., 2019, p. 389). The discourse dynamics of contestation and consensus are therefore central in this research and their conceptualization will be elaborated on in the following sections.

### 2.3.1   Contestation

In literature, various approaches have conceptualised contestation in different manners. While the economic approach sees contestation as risk and cost which should be avoided, the political perspective claims contestation to arise from power differences, and the deliberative perspective acknowledges contestation but sees it as something that should be overcome. Building upon the contestatory deliberative perspective, contestation is valued as discourse dynamic that can promote the democratic quality of MSIs (Arenas et al., 2020; Bächtiger et al., 2010). This perspective and Arenas et al.'s theory are therefore central in conceptualizing contestation in this research. Here, deliberation is not only dependent upon consensus but states that contestation is needed to question viewpoints and challenge decisions that have been made earlier. This will also enhance the

probability of minorities being involved more clearly instead of majorities making the rules (Arenas et al., 2020). Therefore, this research assumes, contestation is needed in order to promote the democratic quality of MSIs. In their research, Arenas et al. (2020), the authors conceptualised four types of contestation. A similar categorization can be found in the work by Niemeyer and Dryzek (2007). *Procedural contestation* comes in place when former rules have been violated and there is a lack of approval on governance within the MSI. Regarding their effect on the deliberative democratic quality, Arenas et al. (2020) state that this type is meant to enhance the institutional legitimacy, trust and collaboration between stakeholders. Through the means of *inclusive contestation*, discourses on who is involved in decision-making arise with the aim of the inclusion of all stakeholders. *Epistemic contestation* can be beneficial when actions by members of the MSI don't align with the values of the MSI. Through this type of contestation, these actions and values can be questioned and disputed, possibly leading to changes in actions which positively contributes to the input legitimacy. *Ultimate-goal contestation* which can arise when stakeholders do not share fundamental values due to different prioritizing goals can open a space to discuss formerly set goals. Thereby, this type of contestation can enhance the input legitimacy as well as support the MSI to be open for further deliberation. Furthermore, this research aims at the exploration of further types at contestation which is also to be found in the model.

### 2.3.2   Consensus

Despite the advantages of contestation in promoting the democratic quality of MSIs, researchers claim that contestation, at some point, needs to be overcome in order to move forward. Where *contestation* promotes questioning viewpoints and fosters discussions, in the deliberative perspective, rational *consensus* and legitimacy decisions are achieved through the final incorporation of different viewpoints and preferences in disputes (Arenas et al., 2020). Overall, it implies closure and an ideal outcome which is often harder to attain when many voices are being raised (Arenas et al., 2020; Bächtiger et al., 2010; Niemeyer & Dryzek, 2007). Deliberation in MSIs should allow for consensus on choices when taking into account evaluations of all stakeholders involved but it should not comply with an overall belief or a specific ultimate set of values that cannot be revised (Niemeyer & Dryzek, 2007). Consensus should therefore be made possible in deliberation while it is not the final outcome of deliberation (Bächtiger et al., 2010).

Building on the theory by Arenas et al. (2020), this research aims at the exploration of possible matching types of consensus to their types of contestation as well as discovering new types that promote the deliberative democratic quality of MSIs. Looking at ways to overcome contestation, *procedural consensus* could aim at a revisions of procedures and governance of the MSI and thereby promote transparency within the organization. Procedural consensus could be reached by a temporal

approval of set rules to move forward which are still open for further deliberation in order to promote deliberative democratic quality. *Inclusiveness consensus* in discourses on who to involve in decision-making should therefore aim at ways to overcome endless discussions resulting in an agreement on (new) involvement rules. In a consent temporary consensual agreement, all stakeholders should be included through a fair procedure, agreed on through consensus. *Epistemic consensus* is needed when disputes arise due to actions that go against the fundamental values of the MSI. This could imply plenary discussions on how actions like this are treated within the initiative, potentially promoting transparency (input legitimacy) while also contributing to consistent and effective rules (output legitimacy). *Ultimate-goal consensus* possibly resolves conflicts through revision of ultimate priorities, new targets or a possible split-ups into subdivisions or independent MSIs.

Figure 1 shows the conceptual model which includes the above explained concepts of deliberative democratic quality, contestation and consensus. As this research aims intends at finding matching types of consensus to the already identified types of contestation by Arenas et al. (2020), this research proposes a deliberative stakeholder dialogue between contestation and consensus, while still conceptualizing the types separately from one another. In addition, as this research also intends to explore further types, boxes with "…" are added to the model. This research therefore assumes that both contestation and consensus promote the deliberative democratic quality of MSIs as MSIs account for "spaces of participatory multi-stakeholder deliberation" (Arenas et al., 2020, p. 173) by focusing on the characteristics inclusion of all stakeholders, input legitimacy (transparency, and fairness and consensual understanding), deliberation and output legitimacy. These conditional propositions are displayed in figure 1.

**Figure 1**

*Conceptual model of discourse dynamics in MSIs*
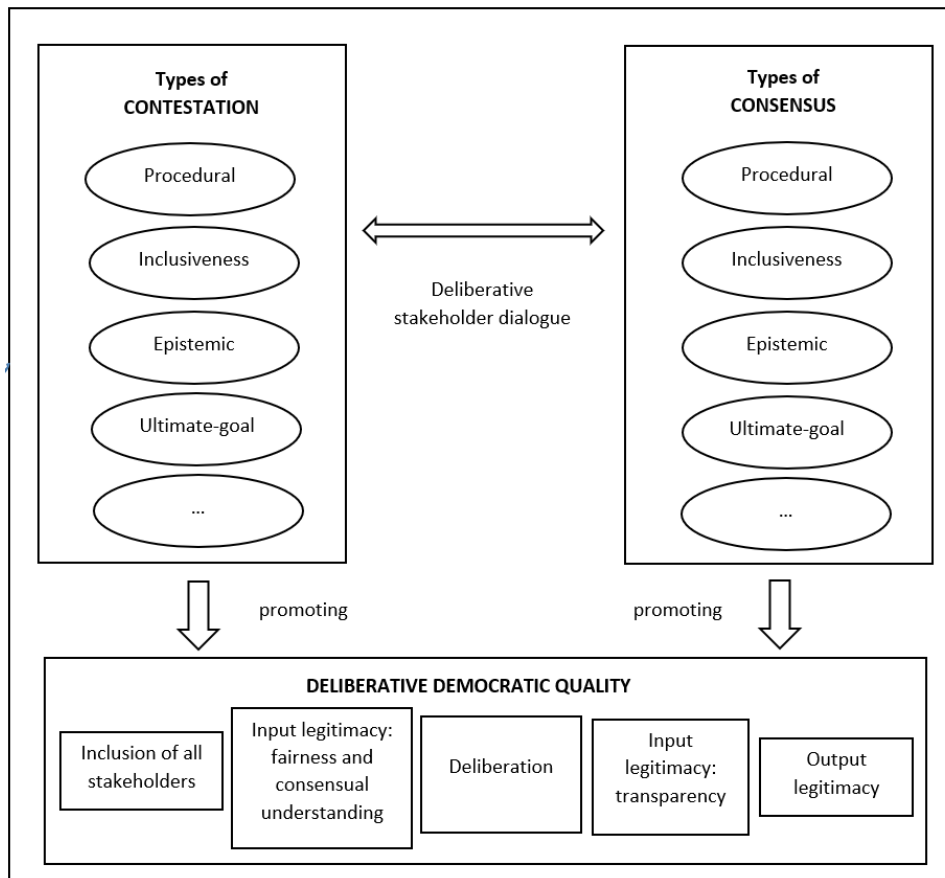


## 3. Methodology

In the following chapter, the methodology of this thesis as well as the research ethics will be discussed. Firstly, the research design will be elaborated, discussing which research method will be applied and why. Secondly, the case context of this research will be explained. Thirdly, the data collection will be discussed, followed by fourthly, the explanation of the analysis procedure. In a separate section, I will review the methodological choices made in this research to elaborate on the research ethics. Throughout this chapter, the research quality criteria of creditability, transferability, dependability and conformality discussed by Symon and Cassel (2012) will be elaborated on.

### 3.1 Research design

This subsection discusses the applied research method and the methodological choices taken regarding the design of the research.

In order to research the discourse dynamics promoting the democratic quality of MSIs, a qualitative approach was chosen. A qualitative research approach is most suitable for understanding a particular subject in depth. Dynamics are socially constructed and the deliberative democratic quality of a MSI is shaped in social and institutional contexts. Hence, they can therefore best be understood through

a qualitative approach (Myers, 2019). As research on the dynamics between stakeholder groups requires in-depth knowledge, the chosen research strategy is a case study because it is appropriate in studying holistic contexts of groups (Dubois & Gadde, 2002; Ridder, 2017; Yin, 2003). Among other thing, single case studies have its advantages in the detailed investigation of phenomena to generate knowledge on how and why things are and study comparisons between systems (Ridder, 2017). A case study can thereby contribute to theory by finding possible additions to existing concepts, suitable for this research aiming at extending insights on contestation and consensus promoting the deliberative democratic quality of MSIs.

This research is being done in a constructivist manner. This perspective implies that human action determines knowledge in a way that humans create an understanding through their own experiences and interpretations (Dziubaniuk & Nyholm, 2020; Myers, 2019). Knowledge is therefore often reshaped and adapted to new ideas even if these might be conflicting with old ideas (Amineh & Asl, 2015). This is suitable for this research as deliberation is one of the central aspects in this research, also aiming at reshaping and adapting earlier agreements. To collect information and data as sources for answering the research question, conversations, interviews and email contact will be the main methods of gathering information, resulting in the information being socially constructed in conversations, thus, accounting for the respondents view of reality and therefore in line with the constructivist perspective (Myers, 2019). As this perspective allows for conflicting ideas, it fits well with the focus of this research being stakeholder discourse dynamics promoting the deliberative democratic quality in MSIs.

This research is of abductive nature with a grounded theory approach. This approach implies that theory building is bottom-up based from data, to codes, to concepts, to theory building while primary ideas on the topic are present. This allows for theory exploration and theory building while it compares concepts to existing ideas in literature (Gioia et al., 2013; Symon & Cassell, 2012). Doing this in an abductive manner allows for "systematic combining" (Dubios & Gadde, 2002, p. 554) in which the development of theory is done through matching the theoretical framework and empirical fieldwork in case studies (Dubois & Gadde, 2002). Hence, initial ideas on the theory exist while there are still possibilities for further theory exploration. It therefore fits this research to allow for the exploration of further types of contestation and consensus while it also develops from the existing theory by Arenas et al. (2020). This research therefore aims to contribute to knowledge on the field of discourse dynamics promoting the deliberative democratic quality in MSIs through a qualitative abductive approach in a constructivist manner by the means of a case study.

## 3.2 Case context

In this subsection, I will elaborate on the MSI that will serve as case context for studying the discourse dynamics enhancing the democratic quality of a MSI. The case central in this study is the

partnership *Beyond Chocolate*. The partnership will be referred to as MSI. All information is taken from their website (*https://www.idhsustainabletrade.com/initiative/beyondchocolate/*).

The Belgian MSI *Beyond Chocolate* was chosen for this research. By specifically focussing on a MSI in the cocoa sector, this research raises attention to the recent increase in global customer demand in cocoa alongside drawbacks in productivity in farming, highlighting the need for sustainable development of cocoa (Bitzer et al., 2012; Kongor et al., 2018). In addition, the industry is threatened by the following developments. First, cocoa farming is limited to specific areas of which 70% is produced in West-Africa which is threatened by climate change and deforestation (Bitzer et al., 2012; Boeckx et al., 2020). In the long term, this can become critical as it will lead to a decrease in farmland and creating conflicts because of a shortage of cocoa (Yao Sadaiou Sabas et al., 2020). Secondly, the intense cocoa production has consequences for the environment. Thirdly, only 15% of families in Ghana involved in cocoa farming earn a sufficient level of income (Boeckx et al., 2020). Fourthly, due to the recent price drop of cocoa by 25% in West-Africa, bigger companies are benefitting from paying less for cocoa while farmers are unable to earn a decent living income (Parry, 2021). This imbalance of power between global companies and African farmers therefore asks for deliberative dialogue between stakeholders involved in the cocoa supply chain. While some companies keep on exploiting the industry due to rising customer demand, there are other companies start to make use of CSR practices and getting involved in adhering to global standards for ethical cocoa, by for example certification schemes like Fairtrade, Rainforest Alliance (Sumberg & Sabates-Wheeler, 2020). We therefore see possibilities of deliberative stakeholder dialogue in which MSIs serve as a successful governance mechanisms to jointly address these issues and potentially contribute to sustainable market development (Airike et al., 2016). For this research, a Belgian initiative is suitable as the country has a sizable chocolate industry and the population attaches great importance to chocolate in all its aspects, including the social and environmental conditions under which it is produced and processed.

In 2018, the partnership *Beyond Chocolate* was founded under the lead of Alexander De Croo, politician for the *Open Vlaamse Liberalen en Democraten* party and Minister for Development Cooperation at that time, and is funded by the Belgian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Since the emergence, the MSI is managed by the organisation IDH – the Sustainable Trade Initiative. Its 50 members are mainly active in the chocolate (e.g. Barry Callebaut, Puratos, Mars) and retail sector (e.g. ALDI, Carrefour, Colruyt), public sector (e.g. Enable, BIO, Ministry of Foreign Affairs), civil society including NGOs (e.g. WWF, Oxfam, ISEAL alliance, Fairtrade Belgium), social impact investors (e.g. Alterfin, Kampani, LadyAgri), trade unions (e.g. ACLVB, CSC) and knowledge institutions (e.g. Universiteit Gent, VUB). There is a steering committee with a representative from each sector. Some

sectors also engage in sector-specific meetings and initially set-up working groups in which members from all sectors are present, account for cross-sector dialogues. *Beyond Chocolate* therefore qualifies as a subject research as it has multiple stakeholder groups which creates insights on the discourse dynamics between them. The MSI's main commitments are sustainability certification standards for all chocolate produced and sold in Belgium by 2025, end deforestation due to cocoa growing for the Belgian chocolate sector by 2030, and ensure a living income for all partners by 2030. These goals address the recent developments above, aiming at the sustainable development of the cocoa industry. The initiative wants to reach these by stating that the MSI "empowers all stakeholders to have a positive impact on the sustainability level of the cocoa supply chain within their sphere of influence". This inherently fits into the topic of this research of studying the discourse dynamics between stakeholders in MSIs that are designed to positively contribute to improving labour conditions in the supply chain. In addition, the MSI states that all members are active in the partnership are empowered to influence their sector through shared learnings, a statement which aligns with the definition of a deliberative democracy.

Central to this MSI are generating shared learnings, increasing investment into the sustainable development of the cocoa sectors, and yielding research to contribute to the visibility on this issue. This is expected to generate long-term improvements and show contributions to the three commitments mentioned above. These topics, involving the participation and cooperation its members, were focused on in the interview questionnaire and are suitable to get to shed light on the dynamics between the stakeholders to get insights into the promotion of the democratic quality of MSIs.

### 3.3 Data collection
In the following section, I will elaborate on the data collection, aiming at collecting first-hand knowledge on the dynamics between stakeholder groups promoting the democratic quality of MSIs.

As indicated argued above, *Beyond Chocolate* accounts as case for this research. *Beyond Chocolate* exists for three years, making it a suitable MSI as it is not too old have a developed organizational culture and is not too young to still be in the founding process as the dynamics between stakeholder groups once a MSI exists are central in this research. In addition, it represents a MSI in which actors from multiple sectors are involved accounting for a variety of perspectives. This makes it comparable to multiple MSIs that contributing to the transferability of the findings (Symon & Cassell, 2012).

For this research, 13 respondents from mainly the public sector, companies and civil society were interviewed. These sectors are present in most MSIs, making it easier to compare it to similar cases. All respondents that were interviewed, were working for one of the partners of Beyond Chocolate, or were part of the organization managing the MSI. The interviewees that were selected from each

organisation were all active in the partnership or even the responsible contact person for the respective organisation. The snowballing method, which implies asking interviewees for recommendations and contact details of other possible interviewees (Myers, 2019), was used as suitable method to find other participants that are the most knowledgeable in the field that connects to this research on the dynamics promoting the democratic quality of MSIs (Corley & Gioia, 2004). These were contacted via email, phone and LinkedIn.

In order to gain in-depth information on the dynamics determining the democratic quality of MSIs, the data collection focused on first-hand knowledge of member organizations. Therefore, interviews with members of stakeholder groups of Beyond Chocolate account as primary data source. In total, 13 semi-structured interviews from five different stakeholder groups were conducted over a period of four weeks. A list of all respondents and their respective sector can be found in table 1. Semi-structured interviews allow for "both retrospective and real-time accounts by those people experiencing the phenomenon of theoretical interest" (Gioia et al., 2013, p. 19) and therefore a convenient method to study the dynamics in MSIs. The questionnaire was designed for specific themes to have a structure while questions and answer options are not fixed. This allowed the respondents to share their opinions and experiences on the topics and, at the same time, open up the possibility of adding new insight (Myers, 2019). The questions were derived around initial ideas on the concepts elaborated on in the theoretical background as well as in figure 1, aiming at insights on the discourse dynamics promoting the deliberative democratic quality in MSIs. Appendix 1 shows a table with the connections between the theory background and the respective question.

Due to the fact that this study was conducted during a worldwide pandemic, all interviews were conducted through the platform Zoom or Microsoft Teams. I am aware that interviews via video-based software applications do have some disadvantages in terms of the commitment to appointment and possible technological problems. In addition, some information might have gotten lost through not being able to pay attention to non-verbal language and mimicry. However, they also bring some advantages in terms of flexibility, being location-independent and the possibility to individually chose a space for the interview in which both the interviewer and interviewee feel most comfortable (Seitz, 2016).

Beforehand, every interviewee received an email with background information on this research and information on how confidentially is granted, including the anonymity of the interviewee and organization. This allowed for a confidential talk which stimulated the interviewee to speak freely. The email template can be found in appendix 2. After an introduction and background information on the research, each interview took around 60 minutes on average, the shortest being 30 (due to the availability of the interviewee) and the longest 90 minutes. Firstly, a short introduction of the research and the researcher was given. Secondly, the process and rights of

the interviewee were explained and consent to record the interview was asked before the recording was started. Thirdly, the interview questions were asked. Lastly, there was room for questions for the researcher and the further process was elaborated on. For the interviews, a slightly different questionnaire was designed for the members of the management organisation compared to the questionnaires for the member organisations. The interview guide was first rehearsed with a fellow student and small adjustments took place after the rehearsal as well as after the first real interview. The interview guides can be found in appendix 3. Afterwards, every transcribed interview was sent back to the interviewee via email, asking for approval of the interview and kindly asking him/her to mark things that, after considering own statements for the second time, should not be included in the research. This member checking technique of getting a final approval on the content aimed at enhancing the creditability of this research (Symon & Cassell, 2012). The email template can be found in appendix 4. In total, two respondents made changes to the transcript after it was used in the analysis. This furthermore ensured that, also after conducting the interview, the interviewees were treated in a respectful and confidential manner (Symon & Cassell, 2012).

**Table 1**

*List of respondents with respective sector*

| Interview number | Sector |
|---|---|
| 1 | Management organisation |
| 2 | Management organisation |
| 3 | Public sector |
| 4 | Public sector |
| 5 | Public sector |
| 6 | Chocolate sector |
| 7 | Chocolate sector |
| 8 | Chocolate sector |
| 9 | Retail sector |
| 10 | Social impact funds |
| 11 | Civil society |
| 12 | Civil society |
| 13 | Civil society |

### 3.4 Data analysis

Every interview was transcribed within five working days after conducting it in order to still be fresh in mind. This research made use of a word-by-word transcription method, including breaks (…), sentences that weren't finished, "uhm"s and "uh"s and repetition of words in order to stay as close as possible to what had been said. After the transcription, all transcripts were read in depth and initial thoughts and themes were noted down. Afterwards, in order to make sense of the data, coding
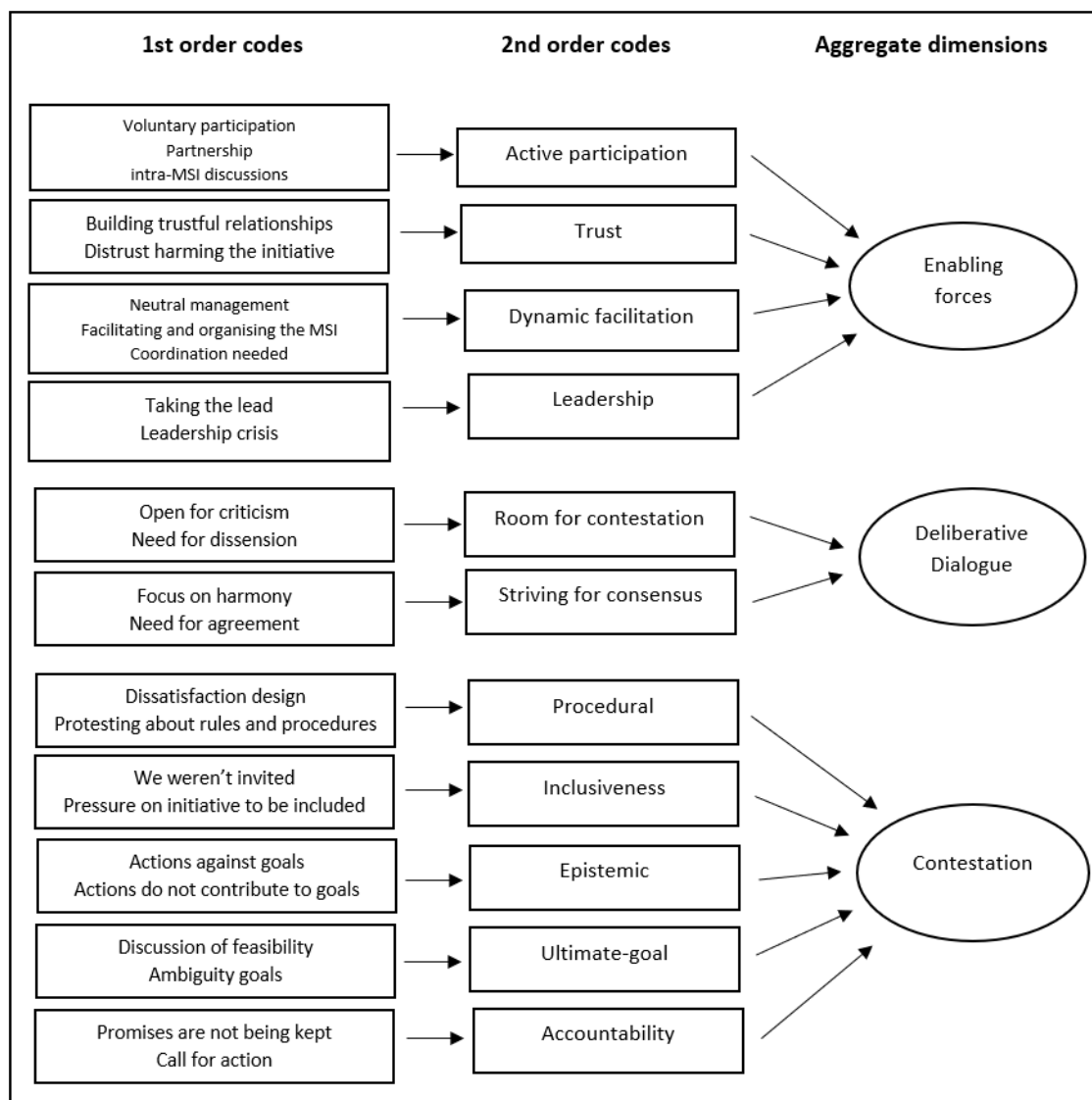
was pursued. Babbie (2001) defines coding "the process of transforming raw data into a standardized form" (p. 309). Throughout the whole coding procedure, the analysis software ATLAS.ti was used. Coding softwares such as ATLAS.ti have the advantages of data linking, graphic mapping and the possibility of a frequency analysis (Myers, 2019). All data was therefore first imported into ATLAS.ti before continuing with the analysis.

Coding was done according to the grounded theory methods by Glaser & Strass (1967) and Strauss & Corbin (1990). Classical grounded theory is generally an inductive approach but also makes use of deduction as it allows for the emergence of relevant elements arising from the data (Symon & Cassell, 2012) and therefore applicable for deriving insights in an abductive manner. As already elaborated on in the research design, this approach fits to this research as it aims at extending Arenas et al.'s (2020) theory on stakeholder dynamics promoting the deliberative democratic quality while also exploring new discourse dynamics. Hereby, the analysis started from the data to the convergence into codes, resulting in themes and connecting them to theory. To discover emerging codes, the analysis was initiated with open coding as introduced by Corbin and Strauss (1990), giving text fragments conceptual labels. These open codes were then grouped together and put into categories through axial coding. By the means of selective coding, these categories were then related to core categories. Through multiple rounds of coding, this process was not merely done linearly but included jumping back and forth between open and axial coding. Proposed by Gioia et al. (2013), the coding process was done in an interpretative way in which the understanding of events was captured and modelled through the interviewees' meanings by the means of a coding scheme. This process supported the creditability of this research through demonstrating the relations between the interviewees' realities and the translations and reconstructions (Symon & Cassell, 2012). To limit unintentional bias, the coding evidence was partly checked and discussed with a fellow student as second independent coder, contributing to coding validity (Ryan, 1999; Symon & Cassell, 2012). This scheme was divided into 1$^{st}$ order codes, 2$^{nd}$ order codes and aggregate dimensions, accordingly to the model by Coley and Gioia (2004). The process of analysis therefore emerged from the data to the aggregate dimension. The 1$^{st}$ order codes imply grouping codes that could be summarised under a specific expression (Corley & Gioia, 2004; Gioia et al., 2013). An example of how this was done in this study can be seen in the quotes "At this stage, again, it's a voluntary partnership, I think I'm going to respond positively to the question because we have high participation" (Interview 1) and "the whole idea of, of Beyond Chocolate is also that you sign your entry ticket to being around the table […]" (Interview 2) that were grouped under the 1$^{st}$ order code *Voluntary participation.* These 1$^{st}$ order codes were then grouped into categories through which the 2$^{nd}$ order codes were derived. To illustrate, the 1$^{st}$ order codes *voluntary participation, partnership, need for successful participation, call for intra-MSI discussions* and *free to exit at any point* were grouped through the 2$^{nd}$ order code

*active participation*. These generic 2<sup>nd</sup> order codes were therefore generated through grouping 1<sup>st</sup> order codes, resulting in a concept (Huber & Schormair, 2021). Aggregate dimensions, comparable to the result of selective coding (Corbin & Strauss, 1990), serve as core category for specific categories. Here, *active participation* is a concept under the aggregate dimension of *enabling forces*. It should be noted that quotes and codes in this research were not mutually exclusive as some were found to fit to various codes and concepts. This data scheme can be found in figure 2. An extension of this data scheme in the form of a code book, including the quotes, can be found in appendix 5, contributing to the confirmability of this research (Symon & Cassell, 2012).

**Figure 2**

*Data scheme*

**Figure 2 (continued)**
*Data scheme*



| 1st order codes | 2nd order codes | Aggregate dimensions |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Finding middle ground on practices / Consent on governance | Procedural | |
| Feeling heard / Consessions on who to include | Inclusiveness | |
| Adding value in a different way | Epistemic | Consensus |
| Setting the bar high / Agreement on goals | Ultimate-goal | |
| Making progress / Common objective | Accountability | |
| Open atmosphere / Enabling environment | Climate of collaboration | |
| Asking for feedback / Equality | Inclusion of all stakeholders | |
| Dynamism / Adaptations | Deliberation | Deliberative Democratic Quality |
| Issues with transparency / Improving on transparency | Transparency | |
| We're on our way but not there yet / Change in society | Output legitimacy | |

Despite the qualitative nature of this research, quantitative magnitude coding was used to determine the frequency of $2^{nd}$ order codes (Saldaña, 2021). Through this frequency coding technique, I compared the $2^{nd}$ order codes of different types of contestation and consensus that were found throughout the data in order to draw conclusions on the importance of contestation and consensus in MSIs. Backing the overall qualitative approach, it helped to be more specific in the findings on the dominance of specific types of dynamics involved in promoting the democratic quality of a MSI between different stakeholder groups. In addition, the frequency of the $2^{nd}$ order codes regarding the changes and adaptations within the MSI that could be linked to the types (procedural, inclusiveness, epistemic, ultimate-goal and accountability) of contestation and consensus were included. These were then given a grade, ranging from 0 (no changes) to 5 (a lot of changes). The grades were given according to the number of changes (0=0; 1=1-10; 2=11-20; 3=21-30; 4=31-40; 5=41-50). This was done to explain which type of contestation and consensus accounted for most changes within the MSI. In connection to this, a comparison was drawn whether contestation or consensus was more prominently found within a specific type. The relative frequency of contestation

and consensus was determined through a range of 1-20 which 10 implying a balance of both while a number above 10 indicated more contestation and a number below 10 more consensus. By including this in the analysis of the frequency of the types, specific conclusions could be drawn on whether contestation or consensus account for changes regarding the specific types.

All in all, the methodology as explained above laid the ground work for doing the analysis of the data and aiming to answer the research question of how the dynamics of contestation and consensus promote the deliberative democratic quality in MSIs. By elaborately explaining methodological choices and adjustments throughout the research process, this research meets the quality criteria of dependability as proposed by Symon and Cassel (2012).

## 3.5 Research ethics

Doing empirical research comes with moral issues regarding my role as a researcher and the information collected and interpreted during this study. I am aware of the fact that this research is to some extend influenced by subjectivity. Not only through initial thoughts on the topic but also during conducting the research (Symon & Cassell, 2012). I therefore respect the principles of integrity in research that are stated in the Netherlands code of conduct. In order to account for honesty and transparency, I reported on my choices in this research as well as through notes in my paper research diary. This can be made available upon request. In addition, I grant for independence by promising that this research is not of any commercial of political interest of other parties. Through the methodological choices outlined above, I aim at scrupulousness by using methods that are scientifically relevant in undertaking this research. Before conducting interviews, my interview guide was checked by peers and by my supervisor in order to minimise bias. All people involved in this research were approached respectfully and confidentially. All interview respondents had the right to withdraw from this research at any point, also stated before every interview. Their names and brand names are treated confidentially. Furthermore, as stated above, the transcribed interviews were sent to the respondents asking for a final consent to include their statement in this research. To compensate for their effort and time, every respondent will receive a copy of the final research for insights on the discourse dynamics in MSIs and as inspiration for possible implications in their work.

## 4. Findings

In the following chapter, the findings of this study will be elaborated on. The findings are divided into four parts and are also presented in figure 3. These will be elaborated on in the subsections below.
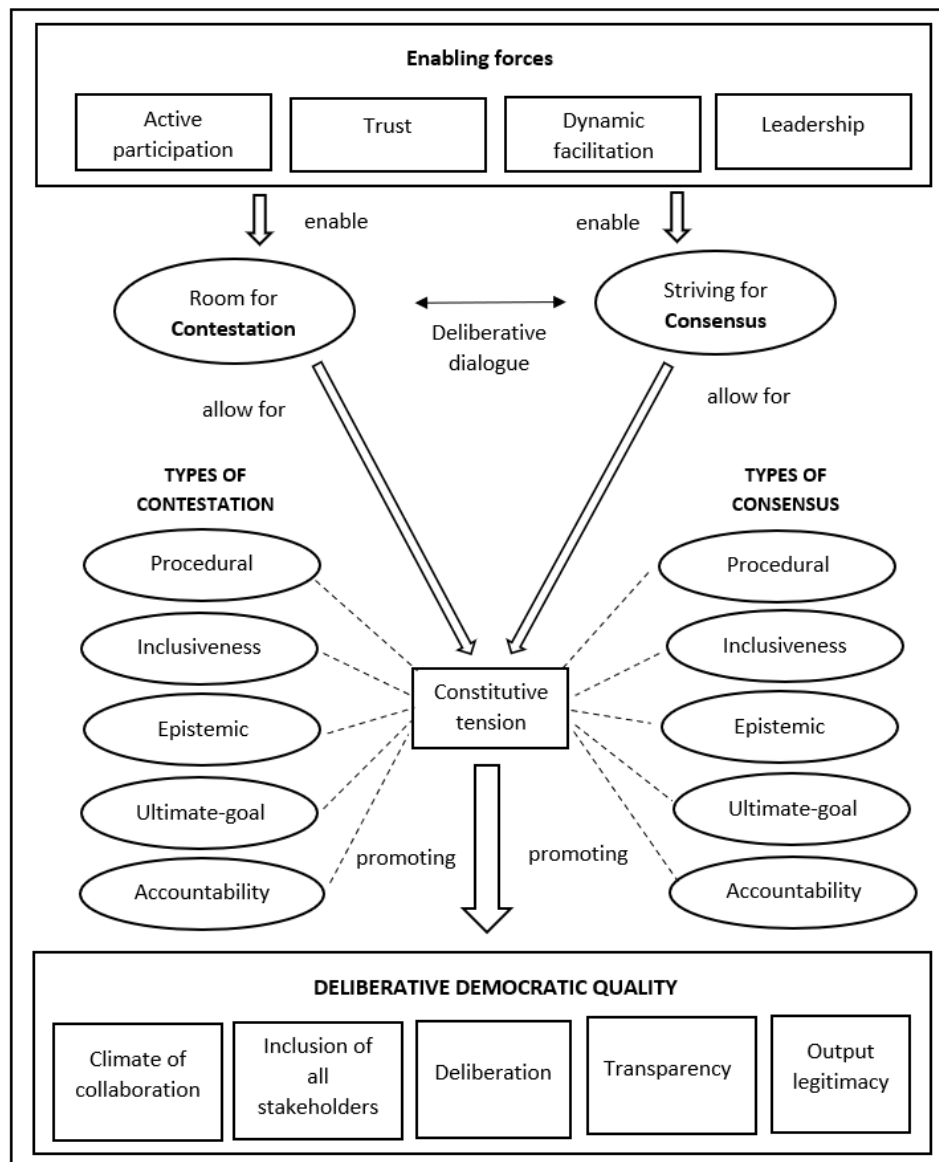
As to be seen in the model, four forces enabling deliberative dialogue were identified, namely active participation, trust, dynamic facilitation and leadership. These interdependent enabling forces were found to enable room for contestation and striving for consensus which allowed for a constitutive

tension between contestation and consensus. This constitutive tension was created through five types of contestation and five types of consensus. Next to the four types of internal contestation that were already identified by Arenas et al (2020) and elaborated on earlier (procedural, inclusiveness, epistemic and ultimate-goal contestation), a new type was found referred to as "accountability contestation". Next to that, for every type of contestation, a matching type of consensus was identified. Through the deliberative dialogue between contestation and consensus, the deliberative democratic quality of the MSI was found to be promoted. The characteristics of the deliberative democratic quality that came to the fore and were enhanced through contestation and consensus are climate of collaboration, inclusion of all stakeholders, deliberation, transparency and output legitimacy.

**Figure 3**
*The discourse dynamics of contestation and consensus promoting the deliberative democratic quality of MSIs.*

## 4.1.    Enabling forces

Stemming from the analysis of the data, four types of enabling forces of deliberation were identified, enabling room for contestation as well as striving for consensus. These are active participation, trust, dynamic facilitation and leadership. These types should not be seen as completely independent from one another but influence each other to some extent. By means of a deliberative dialogue, contestation and consensus were balanced and managed, allowing for a constitutive tension. Deliberative dialogue implies an exchange and negotiation between the two. *Room for contestation* implies the need for dissension and an "initiative that really has teeth to it" (Interview 13) and at the same time be open for criticism "in a very healthy and constructive way" (Interview 2) while asking for negative comments. *Striving for consensus* on the other hand, entails a focus on harmony and the need for agreement. By the management, the initiative is referred to as a "much more consensus-based model" (Interview 2) "And this, this consensus allows us and allows the Beyond Chocolate initiative to implement what we have decided" (Interview 3). These connections are displayed in figure 4 and will be elaborated on in the following sub-sections.

**Figure 4**

*Enabling forces*
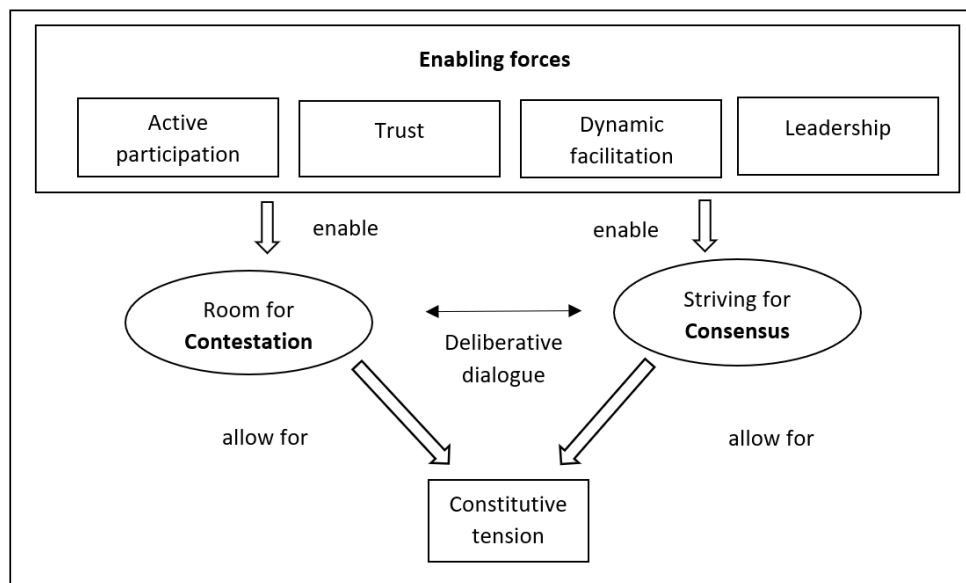


*Active participation*

Through the interviews, the members of the MSI agreed that "participation is another ingredient that is needed for us in a multi stakeholder partnership" (Interview 1). It should be noted here that the case MSI is an opt-in initiative in which actors voluntarily join the initiative. Some partners therefore see the willingness to participate as condition to successful stakeholder dialogue: "But you have a condition, you know, the condition is that you need to have actors that really want to, to make a

difference. And uhm that's, finally, that's the choice of each one of the actors, you know." (Interview 6). In addition, there is a danger of organisations leaving the initiative again if they do not see the need to actively participate and only show their membership through being a signatory:

> "Organizations that have all joined at the initiative, or at least sort of sign up to the commitment. Then, yeah, I think they haven't always clearly defined how they can actually help drive these commitments. And that makes them then also then to pull out at a certain point." (Interview 7)

Furthermore, one respondent from the civil society emphasised the need of adequate knowledge around the issues discussed in the partnership: "And to understand them, it's the minimum entry point of being part of the discussion is quite high, you need to do your research" (Interview 12). Merely being present in discussions is therefore not seen as sufficient, active participation is, thus, characterised through involvement with adequate knowledge of the matters being discussed.

Thus, active participation seems to provide the means to shared learnings and exchange in discussions. A respondent from the chocolate sector described it as: "It's more at finding collaborative ways towards sustainability by exchange, learning and trying new things." (Interview 7). Deliberative dialogue within a MSI is therefore being enabled through the active participation of its members.

### Trust

Once participation is given, the partners perceive trust to be essential in enabling deliberative dialogue. Perceptions around trust were voiced through statements on building trustful relationships and distrust harming the initiative.

> "Now, of course, that's also not always very comfortable for the parties because you have to sit at the table with people who don't necessarily share your point of view. Trust is very important and sometimes it is difficult to have trust. But I think it's probably the best way to do it" (Interview 11)

Participation therefor needs to be supported by trust in order to enable dialogue. In addition, trust is not automatically given when participating in discussions, it seems to be "probably the best way to do it" (Interview 11) in order to increase participation. It appears that trust is essential in the dialogue between room for contestation and striving for consensus. As one interviewee of the management organisation put it: "trust is definitely one of the keys" (Interview 1).

### Dynamic facilitation

Dynamic facilitation was also found to be one of the enabling forces. The term dynamic facilitation refers to supporting the stakeholders in self-organisation, in which the facilitator plays an active role.

By the respondents, facilitation was mainly referred to as "convening, the monitoring, and evaluation and communication on the progress of the partnership" (Interview 2). Agreements on the need for facilitation were found throughout the answers of a multitude of respondents. Most respondents see IDH as the facilitator and service provider of the initiative. However, they were not the only party that was referred to, the administration of Foreign Affairs that was involved in the founding process of the initiative seems to play a role:

> "The administration of Foreign Affairs, ▇▇▇▇ and also IDH, they play an important role in bringing together the different stakeholders […] the authorities they have an important role in uhm in balancing this and coming to an outcome, an agreement that is okay for, for everyone." (Interview 8)

What can be observed is that facilitation was also mentioned as important balancing factor in dialogue to come to an outcome and therefore needs to have dynamic characteristics. In order to enable successful deliberative dialogue, the IDH management mentions coaching a steering committee in "how we can use these arguments and bring them at the table in the steering committee in a way that drives the discussion" (Interview 1) in a way to enhance the discussions. However, one respondent mentioned the danger of becoming too dominant when intervening in discussions "it's like in anything, if one party becomes too dominant it is not good" (Interview 11) which is why facilitation should not be confused with taking a too prominent role *inside* the discussion. Some criticism was voiced towards the coordination of the initiative, not particularity referred to IDH but to the initiative as such through the use of 'we': "I think we have to really create a better coordination. So when we make these decisions, they actually lead to something positive." (Interview 13). The management acknowledges that they are more or less neutral "as a facilitator of, uhm of Beyond Chocolate, our role is being ready to be a neutral convener and facilitator" (Interview 1) while they do understand their responsibility towards the members and the government "because at the end, it always boils down to IDH being responsible towards something government." (Interview 2). Various respondents pointed out that external moderators are often present at meetings, facilitating the meetings as external parties. This can be seen as a compromise of managing the initiative while still trying to not intervene in all meetings.

In sum, facilitation is needed for the successful deliberative dialogue between consensus and contestation. However, it does bring difficulties with it on where to draw the line between facilitation and interfering in discussions.

*Leadership*

Next to facilitating dialogue within a MSI, various respondents were referring to leadership as an essential part to enable a successful deliberative dialogue. A member of the civil society pointed out that "but coordinating and leading, these are two different things" (Interview 11). In general, it could be observed that leadership of a mix of various actors was appreciated: "So the whole convening of Beyond Chocolate early days was done via the cabinet, and then broadening the actors doing that to ███ and IDH. And that triangle, for me was really the convening power of, of the partnership." (Interview 2). Next to positive remarks about the leadership, a call for leadership was mainly addressed towards the plenary with often pointing out the need for political support as the initiative was initially set up by the Belgian government. This was voiced by one respondent: "I have to say, I miss a little bit of leadership from the Belgian authorities in there" (Interview 11). The danger of having a lack of leadership or having "no real teeth in the initiative" (Interview 13) can result in the question who is responsible in making decisions and who can be consulted when raising a concern:

> "There isn't really someone taking the lead in the whole initiative. There's a steering committee and no one, no one really represents all stakeholders. So there's this kind of difficulty on who do you direct yourself to?" (Interview 13)

While facilitation was proven to be necessary for stakeholder dialogue, leadership is also needed for balancing consensus and contestation while at the same time moving the initiative forward.

> "I think the only the danger I see is you can perfectly facilitate what you say the tension between consensus, concern, being open and having a perfect multi-stakeholder initiative according to the rules of the game, but yet missing the point." (Interview 9)

Active participation, trust and dynamic facilitation therefore need to be supported by leadership.

*Deliberative dialogue through room for contestation*
*and striving for consensus*

The following section will explain how the forces of active participation, trust, dynamic facilitation and leadership enable the room for contestation and striving for consensus. In addition, evidence was found that there seems to be the need for a deliberative dialogue of contestation and consensus, both room for contestation and striving for consensus for successful negotiations within the initiative.

Within the MSI, the deliberative dialogue is characterised through adaptations and dynamism. A respondent describes it as "it's very much an alive project" (Interview 12) and the dialogue to be a "flowing river" (Interview 1). To the question whether the initiative is open for reviewing decisions, a

respondent from the public sector said "well, I think, it's probably not always so black and white." (Interview 5) and elaborating on discussions in the early stages of the initiative went into an open discussion on defining the pillars of the initiative and in the end finding middle ground through proprietary standards. Here, we see the opportunities for room for contestation and striving for consensus.

The four interdepend forces of active participation, trust, dynamic facilitation and leadership were found to enable room for contestation and striving for consensus. Room for contestation was characterised through need for dissension and being open for criticism. When talking about stakeholder discussions, one respondent from the management organisation stated:

> "Because, you know, one thing is being trustworthy, but at the same time, you also have to be able to be critical." (Interview 1)

While "being trustworthy" is mentioned as one condition, being "able to be critical" is desirable in the deliberative dialogue. Here, we see a connection between trust and allowing for criticism and dissension.

In terms of having a deliberative dialogue, striving for consensus does not imply to reach an ideal outcome in which all partners are entirely in favour of but rather agreeing on an approach that is not set in stone. Consensus was mainly determined through focus on harmony and need for agreement. Even though being critical is appreciated, there seems to also be a need for striving for consensus by being solution-oriented: "So again, this is about, really, about building trustful relationships with all stakeholders that asks also to be rational, fact-based and solution-oriented." (Interview 1). Here, we see active participation and trust playing a role in 'building truthful relationships' while at the same time be 'solution-oriented', a characteristic known for leadership. In addition, 'being transformative' was found to support this relation of trust and leadership while 'welcoming the different perspective[s]' can assume dynamic facilitation in the process of deliberative dialogue:

> "So, you know, so it means that those people believe that there is this initiative has some value and can be transformative, and that there is some room for, let's say, also welcoming the different perspectives there and so on." (Interview 4)

Acknowledging the difficulty of bringing interest and opinions together, the members do understand the complexity of the partnership and highlight the need for dynamic facilitation in balancing room for contestation and striving for consensus, voiced by a member of the chocolate sector: "I think IDH plays an important role as a facilitator and sort of convener of the platform [...] I think that they try. But it's sometimes difficult, or it's also difficult, uhm yeah" (Interview 6).

All in all, we see the enabling forces interdependently supporting the deliberative dialogue between room for contestation and striving for consensus. This deliberative dialogue then allows for a constitutive tension between contestation and consensus. It implies that in the balancing act of room for contestation and striving for consensus, a constitutive tension is built up through types of contestation and consensus which will be further explained in the following section.

## 4.2.   Types of contestation and consensus

Appearing from the analysis of the data, various types of contestation and consensus came to the fore. These discourse dynamics and their frequencies are displayed in the table below.

**Table 2:**

*Frequencies of types of discourse dynamics*

|  | Procedural | Inclusive-ness | Epistemic | Ultimate-goal | Account-ability | Total | Total in % |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Contestation** | 41 | 29 | 5 | 35 | 63 | 173 | 51,5% |
| **Consensus** | 25 | 42 | 3 | 33 | 60 | 163 | 48,5% |

In general, contestation was slightly more prominent in the initiative than consensus. However, with a difference in frequency of about 2%, it can be concluded that contestation as well as consensus play a prominent role in the discussions. Looking at the various types individually, it can be seen that for procedural and epistemic, contestation was more prominent that consensus. For inclusiveness on the other hand, consensus seemed to appear more frequently. For both accountability and ultimate-goal, contestation and consensus are more or less in balance. What can be observed is that there is no clear pattern of one dynamic being more prominent than the other throughout all types. In the following sub-sections, the findings on the different types of contestation and consensus will be elaborated on. In their research, Arenas et al. (2020) identified four types of internal contestation that enhanced the deliberative democratic quality within MSIs, namely procedural, inclusiveness, epistemic and ultimate-goal contestation. In this study, next to the same four types of contestation, four matching types of consensus were found. In addition, a newly discovered type of accountability contestation was determined, together with its matching type of accountability consensus. The findings on these five different types of both dynamics of contestation and consensus will be individually explained through the analysis of the data.

*Procedural contestation and consensus*

To be seen in table 1, procedural contestation was more prominently found than procedural consensus. Procedural contestation was voiced through dissatisfaction regarding the design and

protesting about rules and procedure. Remarkably, the sector groups seemed to voice different issues. On the one hand, the civil society was raising more dissatisfaction regarding the set-up and specifically highlighting the call for a redesign. This was voiced by various civil society actors, for example: "we were not happy with the way the multi stakeholder platform was set up" (Interview 12) and "I would have liked to see a more uhm a more of a redesign of the structure." (Interview 13). One respondent also voiced that some civil society organisations criticised that funding was mainly given to companies. This was supported by the call for "binding regulations" (Interview 13) by the Belgian government. For the cocoa sector and retail sector on the other hand, instances of contestation were referring to the monitoring and evaluation framework of documenting progress as companies were claiming they don't have the data and also about the unclarity on what to report on exactly. One respondent talked about discussions within the sector, resulting in unanswered questions on "Do we still have to report on this or not? Those things were not clear." (Interview 9). The respondent furthermore explained that a middle way was agreed on within the sector "and that's now resolved, I think" (Interview 9).

Procedural consensus implies finding middle ground on practices. Regarding the redesign, called for by the civil society, less consensus was reached as they indicated that the changes taken were not sufficient. For companies, again, monitoring and reporting instances were central. There, consensus was often found on mainly learning by doing through "we should start somewhere" (Interview 2) and then later finding an agreement on the simplification of the reporting scheme. A probable reason for the fact that procedural contestation was more at hand than procedural consensus could possibly be explained trough the complexity of the partnership which was voiced by various respondents and the fact that it was initially set up by the government. In addition, it was highlighted a lot that every organization works differently and reports on different things while other sectors often do not fully understand the complexity of such decision. Therefore, consensus appears to be harder to reach. Nevertheless, contestation and consensus need to both be present and be balanced out through a constitutive tension. Overall, there seemed to be understanding for the complexity of decision-making and acceptance on the degree to which procedural instances can be influenced by the members, here framed by a respondent from the chocolate sector:

> "And it's also, I guess, then at certain points about choosing battles so, yeah, […] And at some point, it's it's sort of it's there, right, and there are things that you have been able to influence and others not" (Interview 7)

### Inclusiveness contestation and consensus

Most instances on inclusiveness contestation were surrounding the inclusion of actors. One instance that was mentioned by various respondents was the fact that, initially, the partnership was mainly

set up to just include the government and the chocolate sector, including companies that had a connection to these sectors. According to a member of the civil society, there was some dissension on including the civil society:

> "At the very beginning, they were really not keen on having civil society partners on board, they were a little bit scared of it because the industry was very reluctant of having us around the table" (Interview 11)

The civil society then raised their concern in the media and to the initiative directly. Consensus was found through highlighting the value the civil society would bring to the partnership:

> "But then we kind of lobbied, a little bit forced our way into it. You know, knowledge, bringing solutions, bringing something around the table that wasn't there." (Interview 11)

Mutual understanding was brought to the table and the initiative as a whole opened up to other stakeholder groups as well. Most consensus on inclusiveness was found in the way in which stakeholders are involved in dialogue and discussions. Here, consensus was voiced in ways through actors feeling heard and included. This mainly accounts for the high number of consensus. One respondent stressed the fact that "everybody can - really has adequate time to provide input if they want" (Interview 13) and "Everyone could, yeah, contribute and say what they wanted to say" (Interview 8) and "I felt really comfortable and gradually more comfortable in, let's say, being part of this. So very agreed" (Interview 4). Nevertheless, it should be noted that an ongoing debate is still in place about a crucial stakeholder group that is not yet involved: the cocoa farmers.

What we see is that there is a lot more agreement on the inclusiveness of stakeholders as "inclusiveness and representativity is essential" (Interview 1) to allow for a constructivist tension in the first place. Hence, this supports that inclusiveness consensus is more prominently found that inclusiveness contestation.

*Epistemic contestation and consensus*

Compared to the other types, epistemic contestation and consensus were barely present. It should be noted here that Beyond Chocolate is a rather young initiative. However, to the question of whether cases were observed in which the initiative as such or specific members were involved in actions against the fundamental values of the initiative, one respondent talked about "suspicion towards companies" (Interview 11). Most others emphasised the fact that the initiative is set up in a way that participation is voluntary and opt-in. It can therefore be concluded that epistemic contestation and consensus have not had a very prominent role in the initiative (yet).

*Ultimate-goal contestation and consensus*

To be seen in table 2, contestation and consensus of ultimate-goal are found to be more or less in balance. Contestation regarding the ultimate goals was voiced through a perceived ambiguity of the goals through "the mandate of Beyond Chocolate isn't super clear" (Interview 13) and the call for intermediary goals:

> "We have questions about the real commitment to reach them. And that's why actually what we've been asking now, the partnership, to say living income, please give us something earlier than 2030. Please, what we want to do is intermediary reports of the different signatories that we are going to reach that. Because at the moment, we don't see much happening." (Interview 11)

Connected to the call for intermediary targets, standards and explicit goal-setting regarding the living wage for farmers were discussed. Here, desirably, the standards shouldn't be too low and "watering down the ambition" (Interview 5) while also not aiming to high as it could potentially lower the willingness to enter (cf. Interview 5). Consensus was mainly found on the overall agreement of the goals as this is central to joining the partnership:

> "the ultimate objective is clear, it's written out, you know, you have by 2025 and 2030 objectives, they are clear. That's what you sign up to, when becoming a member of Beyond Chocolate." (Interview 10)

The balance of contestation and consensus could therefore be explained by the overall commitment to the goals and the final objective of Beyond Chocolate while at the same time questioning the feasibility of reaching the goals and thereby calling for intermediary targets.

*Accountability contestation and consensus*

Next to types of contestation by Arenas et al. (2020) elaborated on earlier, a newly discovered type could be identified, namely accountability contestation. In addition, a matching type was found, referred to as accountability consensus. Appearing from the frequency analysis of the dynamics, we see more or less a balance of the two. Throughout the different sectors, issues surrounding the accountability of the partnership were voiced. Accountability contestation implies raising concern that promises might not be kept and actors might not be serious about making an effort to contribute to the overall mission of the MSI. One respondent refers to it as "a lack of focus" (Interview 12). Contestation is voiced through a call for action that more should be done and a concern "that we feel that the initiative is losing strength" (Interview 12). One respondent refers to this as "to me, we talk a lot but we don't talk about the, uhm, somehow about the essential problem" (Interview 9) and thereby raising the issue of committing to why the initiative was initially set up for while also underlining the need for dialogue in order to make a change. A respondent from

the civil society challenges the initiative through a call for action in which he emphasises the need for contestation: "I think we have a role of civil society to say guys, okay, it's good to make promises but what about it now? What are you doing to make these promises happen? And, and are you really serious about it?" (Interview 11). The respondent also addresses the danger of not changing ways to ensure accountability can lead to members exiting the initiative "Because staying on board also means that you give a kind of seal of approval to an initiative" (Interview 11). Hence, the call for action voiced by various actors towards the initiative as such as well as addressing a specific sector, stresses the need for dialogue.

Moreover, several instances of accountability consensus were discovered. Accountability consensus implies agreeing on a "common understanding" (Interview 8) of a common objective and willingness to commit to the overall mission of the initiative in the eye of "it was really a kind of positive attitude" (Interview 4). What should be noted here is that accountability consensus does not imply the actual success of reaching the goal of the initiative of but the feeling of responsibility and commitment towards the mission of Beyond Chocolate. Furthermore, consent was found on improvements in accountability and *showing* commitment:

> "We see small initiatives, I guess, to be fair, and what Beyond Chocolate has achieved is
> to put the topic clearly on the table, we've made commitments, and it's very good." (Interview 11)

The feeling of responsibility kept reappearing "I think we have a responsibility to the wider international cocoa sector on saying, you know, we keep a hold on this initiative" (Interview 13), supporting the commitment of partners to interact and negotiate with various stakeholders and various viewpoints, which again, fuels the dialogue of contestation and consensus. Also emphasised was the joint ambition within the partnership, enabling sophisticated communication between the stakeholders:

> „The thing is that here you have again the level of maturity in the dialogue among stakeholders
> that is higher. And so on the top line ambitions actually, there's little, little discussion" (Interview 1)

A respondent from the public sector stressed the fact that there does not need to be an agreement on a universal way of committing to the mission of Beyond Chocolate but that, through consensus, there were accommodations various path on implications and being held accountable:

> "The result of the of that work is very good, because it's a result of common language of
> different paths of, the paths implicated in the value chain, right" (Interview 3)

What we see is that even though the members agree on a "common language" (Interview 3) within the initiative, the acceptance of different paths and different ways of showing accountability are excepted. Furthermore, discussions and resigning from claims and priorities were mentioned, which

stresses the constitutive tension between contestation and consensus through deliberative dialogue when leaving some things and advancing in others:

> "So I'm convinced that they have to discuss their priorities within a partnership, in like
>
> Beyond Chocolate, to move the things because each one has to discuss and to leave
>
> some things, but to advance on other things." (Interview 3)

What came to the fore is that both accountability contestation and consensus were both found to play a role within the initiative. In addition, there seems to be a tension between contestation and consensus, which is being addressed through deliberative dialogue.

## 4.3.    Deliberative democratic quality

The following subchapter discusses the findings on the deliberative democratic quality within the MSI under two different aspects. Firstly, the characteristics of the deliberative democratic quality that were found to be promoted will be discussed. Secondly, changes and adaptations within the initiative that are made or currently in discussion regarding the five different types of contestation and consensus will be looked at.

Throughout the data, five characteristics of the deliberative democratic quality could be identified, namely climate of collaboration, transparency, deliberation, inclusion of all stakeholders and output legitimacy. Through the constitutive tension between contestation and consensus, these characteristics were found to be promoted in various ways and will be elaborated on while also giving a rough indication of which types of contestation and consensus (indicated in bold) led to a promotion of the respective characteristic. Remarkably, the characteristics also seemed to positively promote one another (indicated in italic), resulting in an even stronger promotion of the deliberative democratic quality of the MSI.

*Climate of collaboration*

Most dominantly found of all characteristics was climate of collaboration. This implies creating an enabling environment, mutual understanding and an open atmosphere within the initiative. Most prominently, the respondents see the biggest success of Beyond Chocolate in putting the topic prominently on the table and allow for stakeholder discussions. This was supported by the management organisation in "this enabling environment that empowers all actors to play their role" (Interview 1). Contestation and consensus on **accountability** fostered collaboration among stakeholder, resulting in cross-actor initiatives in order to show commandment: "Some civil society organizations are actually uhm aiming at running projects with companies" (Interview 13). This again shows the climate of collaboration within the initiative to a point that the constitutive tension between contestation and consensus actually leads to changes in implementation to work together.

Furthermore, to the question of how the initiative makes sure that everyone is treated fairly, most respondents gave rather vague answers. They stated that there are differences in the importance on the specific actors and that some players are more crucial in making a change in the industry but that, overall, everyone gets to be part of the discussions as long as they show an adequate degree of participation. When asking the same question to a respondent from the management organisation, this was supported by stating everyone gets to h "And so here, the thing is that one seat is a seat. And so it doesn't matter if you're one of the gigantic players in the field or, or a small, a smaller NGO" (Interview 1). We here see that *climate of collaboration* goes hand in hand with the *inclusion of all stakeholders* while climate of collaboration is more affiliated with actively playing a role and the inclusion of all stakeholder is given through a seat at the table. In addition, as elaborated on earlier, **inclusiveness** contestation and consensus were found to promote the climate of collaboration by seeing the benefits on including civil society and then opening up to other stakeholder groups which showed

### *Transparency*

Transparency was mainly found in building trustful relationships and improvements in transparency. Regarding the enhancement of transparency within the MSI, **accountability** contestation and consensus were found to have a strong effect on *transparency*. Contestation was raised on the ways in which the steering committee is discussing and in how that is being communicated to the management: "And so I also understand that maybe simply sharing the minutes is not sufficient, then maybe we should more actively work on this transparent decision making." (Interview 1). Here, **accountability** contestation while **accountability** consensus was found to promote this through "fact-based discussions" (Interview 1). In addition, **procedural** contestation on the monitoring system, solved by consensus through adaptations by *the inclusion of stakeholders* was found to increase transparency and in turn solve issues of accountability and implementation "we have to be clear and transparent. To see if each year we can progress to this objective, and why we make progress or no progress" (Interview 3)

Furthermore, a respondent from the retail sector stated that at the start, meetings were less structured with ambiguous decisions while now, they see a more transparent path, indicating the constitutive tension between contestation and consensus leading to more *transparency* and thereby promoting the deliberative democratic quality of the MSI:

> "And the change is more that in the beginning there were much more meetings, but maybe
> a little bit less focused. Now, there are much less meetings but you, at least I, see a clearer trajectory"
> (Interview 9)

Here, the respondent also refers to changes regarding the monitoring and evaluation of companies in the cocoa sector, mainly promoted through **procedural** contestation and consensus**.**

*Deliberation*

Deliberation was found to mainly entail adaptations being made within the initiative through the dynamics between the stakeholders.

Instances of **inclusiveness** contestation and consensus were found to impact deliberation within the initiative. As explained earlier, the initiative initially included the public sector and companies in the chocolate sector before opening up. To the question the management organisation of the MSI how the initiative reacted to the contestation and how consensus was found, one respondent stated: "In explaining why we took the decision in the beginning. And then of course, being open to once the time comes doing it's another way". (Interview 2). We here observe characteristics of *deliberation* and *inclusion of stakeholders* after cases of contestation and consensus, also indicated an interrelation between characteristics of the deliberative democratic quality.

Regarding cases in which various opinions were voiced, throughout all interviews, deliberation on **procedural** instances was found through "fine tuning" (Interview 9) and "a little bit of learning by doing" (Interview 10), while similar answers were found on contestation and consensus regarding the **ultimate-goals** "It's about dynamism" (Interview 1).

However, cases were found where members state that the initiative could still improve in deliberation. Contestation voiced on **accountability** of all partners and the specification of the **ultimate-goals** was "it has been discussed, but it hasn't been addressed." (Interview 12) and that sometimes, the initiative feels like a "diplomatic affair" (Interview 13) not entirely evolving on deliberation. Nevertheless, the stakeholders seem to have a certain degree of confidence that the initiative welcomes deliberation on these issues due to the fact that the initiative is "alive" (Interview 13) and "dynamic" (Interview 1): "But I think there's a real opportunity that things will happen. Again, it's very much an alive process" (Interview 13). In addition, contestation in the form of discussions while also having the ability to leave or end discussions promote the deliberation on currently unsolved issues:

> And so I think that's part of this dynamics also. it's not only sitting around the table and disagreeing, but seeing things coming, leading to discussions internally within stakeholders and then leaving discussions to avoid this becoming a conflictual issue in the meeting itself." (Interview 5)

We here see how contestation and consensus have a positive impact on the stakeholder dynamics and deliberation within the initiative, while it at the same time allows for a constructive climate of

collaboration. Hence, we see contestation and consensus promoting deliberation, contributing to an increased deliberative democratic quality of the MSI.

*Inclusion of all stakeholders*

At the start of the initiative, the management organisation reached out to mainly companies to join Beyond Chocolate. They therefore first ventured out and asked companies to join. However, after the civil society raised contestation on **inclusiveness** to being included, the initiative found consensus to include them while at the same time opening up to other stakeholder groups as well. A respondent from the civil society framed it as:

> "They started including those who are not too difficult, you know, those who are nice and, and will not rock the boat too much. And little by little they started including other organizations as well. So no, I think it's good, then people could come and motivate" (Interview 11)

By "motivate", the respondent is referring to the fact that the process switched to new members having to officially declare they want to be part of it and thereby also linking to **procedural** changes as well as changes in showing **accountability** within the MSI. A respondent from the chocolate sector framed it as "they have to explain publicly why they report on Beyond Chocolate and why they want to become partner of Beyond Chocolate." (Interview 8).

Through **procedural** contestation and consensus, changes and adaptations regarding the reporting and monitoring. It promoted the inclusion of stakeholders in such a way that the management organisation fostered learnings through trainings, in which all stakeholders get a broader understanding on how these changes came about involving stakeholders on how these changes were incorporated into new way to document:

> "We also recently had an introduction on uhm – or maybe it was more like a training by [the management] on how to fill out the *new* questionnaires and how to do the monitoring *this* year with a new system" (Interview 9).

We here also see an indication of inclusion of all stakeholders fostering transparency and improving understanding towards changes by the management.

Through the inclusion of various stakeholder groups, the initiative created room for discussion which, according to a respondent from the chocolate sector, fostered the dialogue and "it helped to get actors involved in a dialogue that that weren't previously" (Interview 7), also hinting towards creating room for deliberation. This again confirms that the characteristics of the deliberative democratic quality also promote one another. All in all, Beyond Chocolate went from a company-government initiative to including stakeholders such as port or universities to being "very open for anyone to join

or has even vague links with perse the Belgian chocolate sector" (Interview 13) through the constitutive tension of contestation and consensus.

*Output legitimacy*

The term output legitimacy in MSIs, theorised by Mena and Palazzo (2012), aims and identifying "to what extent [regulations] effectively sole the issues that they target" (p. 528). Resulting from the findings, in this research, *output legitimacy* was determined through acceptable rules and standards in the MSI that influenced changes within the MSI and thereby also in society, often connected to the goal to prominently stress the topic of sustainability in the cocoa sector. Agreement was widely found on the MSI's success to make a change in the cocoa sector, framed by one respondent:

"Sustainability is on the table, and there is a positive pressure to do something about it. So that's extremely positive because before Beyond Chocolate, nothing was happening." (Interview 11)

The positive pressure implies characteristics of **accountability contestation and consensus** to hold the initiative accountable and live up to its commitments and therefore promoting the outcome legitimacy. Furthermore, **procedural** instances were found to affect the *outcome legitimacy* by the civil society sector indicated changes were made in the formulation of the declaration and that they "it was very clear that we managed to get some of the language in it like introducing the living income concept, which has become the central concept of the whole initiative" (Interview 13) before it was signed by all members. This hints towards **procedural** contestation promoting the *output legitimacy* of the partnership while at the same time foster *the inclusion of stakeholders*.

However, unresolved dissatisfaction was also voiced on instances of contestation and consensus, especially around the inclusion of farmers, not successfully promoting the outcome legitimacy as the main goal of the initiative is ensuring a living income for the farmers. Elaborating on this, a civil society respondent claimed that various participating NGOs have found ways to include farmers in the individual strategies and set-ups of the NGOs (e.g. ownership models) but no explicit effort had been taken place to also introduce them in the MSI. Mixed responses were given to changes in showing accountability by members and the initiative as a whole. Improvements that also lift *output legitimacy* were mainly concerning improvements monitoring and evaluation as **procedural** instance while others still claimed a lack of transparency regarding the real efforts of the initiative. While broader internal and external audits were suggested by one respondent (Interview 5), another respondent commented on the difficulty of introducing effective rules that help to frame sustainability and the fact that the initiative is 'not there yet':

"And if you're in that process, but, but it feels intuitive to say "all the chocolate needs to be sustainable" and to explain that it's it's, it's difficult. And it's - I don't think we're there yet still right" (Interview 7)

All in all, we see various types of contestation and consensus to promote the deliberative democratic quality of the MSI through a constitutive tension. Summarised by the following quote, while there seems to be still room for improvement, evidence was widely found on progressive effects contributing to outcome legitimacy. Promoting the deliberative democratic quality of MSI:

"Well, you have to accept, you shouldn't, you know, step out of an initiative or kill an initiative because it's imperfect. But you equally shouldn't accept this imperfection. So you have to keep working on these aspects." (Interview 11)

### 4.4. Contestation and consensus accounting for changes and adaptations in the MSI

The following section looks at the types of dynamics that promote discussion on changes and adaptations made in procedures, inclusiveness, actions against the values of the MSI (epistemic), the ultimate-goals of the initiative and the accountability of the initiative and its members.

What should be noted here is that the initiative, at the point of the data collection, is fairly young (three years old) which is why not only cases in which changes and adaptations have already taken place but also the ones that are in discussion are taken into account. The table below displays the frequency of changes and adaptations made or currently in discussion of cases in which the five types of contestation and consensus played a role. As explained earlier, grades were given regarding the frequency of changes with categories, ranging from 0 (no changes) to 5 (a lot of changes). The third column shows the indication of the frequency of contestation relative to the frequency of consensus, ranging from 1-20. While 10 indicates more or less a balance of contestation and consensus, a number above 10 accounts for contestation and a number below 10 for more consensus.

**Table 3**

*Changes and adaptations within the initiative*

|  | changes and adaptations made or currently in discussion | Changes grade from 1-5[1] | Contestation relative to consensus |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Procedural** | 36 | 4 | 17 |
| **Inclusiveness** | 46 | 5 | 7 |
| **Epistemic** | 0 | 0 | 16 |
| **Ultimate-goal** | 21 | 3 | 11 |
| **Accountability** | 25 | 3 | 11 |

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[1] The grades were given according to the number of changes (0=0; 1=1-10; 2=11-20; 3=21-30; 4=31-40; 5=41-50).

For procedural instances, a fairly high number of changes and adaptations were found, indicated by the grade 4. Looking at the fair right column, we see the highest amount of contestation relative to consensus. For institutional instances on the other hand, the highest number of changes and adaptations were found, graded with 5. Surprisingly, consensus was way more dominant in inclusiveness instances, indicated by the number 7, indicating contestation relative to consensus. Overall, there were no instances found for changes after epistemic contestation and consensus. This could be due to the fact that the initiative is still fairly young. Becoming apparent from the table, instances regarding changes due to the constitutive tension found for ultimate-goal and accountability, a moderate number of changes were found (indicated by the grade 3) while contestation and consensus seem to be more or less in balance for both types (indicated by a relative amount of 10). It can therefore be concluded that a balance of contestation and consensus, like it was the case for ultimate-goal and accountability, shows an overall moderate number of changes and adaptations. Furthermore, there is no significant answer on more changes being made when contestation or consensus are more prominent which can be seen in the higher scores of 4 for procedural and 5 for inclusiveness as procedural has a higher frequency of contestation while inclusiveness has a higher frequency of consensus. The changes and adaptation made or currently in discussion are high for both of them.

All in all, the observations elaborated above and seen in figure 3 show all developments and relations, central are the concepts of contestation and consensus that promote the deliberative democratic quality of the MSI. Of importance is that, overall, contestation and consensus need to balanced out and managed through a constitutive tension which was emphasised through the comparison with a tent by one respondent:

> "We want to bring these different realities together and see how we can combine and strengthen the different the different interventions. And so here the last, and this is maybe, uhm, maybe a good one, good quotes. But I think in any in any multi stakeholder partnership, you need the right amount of tension. And it works a bit like a tent. […] you need the right amount of tension. This means that if you have too much tension your tent will break apart, if you have not enough tension, you know, these two parts of your tent will touch each other and the water will simply go through, right? So you need the right amount of tension. And that's, that's exactly the, the game that we're playing." (Interview 1)

It can therefore be concluded that various types of contestation and consensus were identified that promoted the deliberative democratic quality of the MSI in different ways by climate of collaboration, deliberation, inclusion of all stakeholders, transparency and output legitimacy. The constitutive tension between contestation and consensus, enabled through participation, trust,

facilitation and leadership, was needed in order to get to discussions around changes and adaptations regarding the initiative as such.

# 5. Discussion

This final chapter of this research, firstly, summarises the key findings, aiming at answering the research question. Secondly, the theoretical contributions to the existing body of literature on the promotion on deliberative democratic quality in MSIs are presented. Thirdly, practical implications and contributions for MSIs and their management teams, governments, firms and, civil society as well as organizations that are currently not part of MSIs are explained. Finally, the limitations of this research will be demonstrated, followed by recommendations for further research.

## 5.1. Conclusion

Aiming at answering the research question of how the discourse dynamics of contestation and consensus promote the deliberative democratic quality of MSIs, this research has shown that both contestation and consensus play a significant role in deliberative stakeholder dialogue by leading to changes and adaptations within the MSI and thereby promote its deliberative democratic quality. The findings show that enabling forces of deliberation. Namely active participation, trust, dynamic facilitation and leadership, enable a deliberative dialogue between room for contestation and striving for consensus. In addition, balancing contestation and consensus then allows for a constitutive tension between the five different types of contestation and five types of consensus being procedural, inclusiveness, epistemic, ultimate-goal and accountability. In addition, this research has found that a balance of contestation and consensus within a type implies a moderate amount of informal or formal changes and thereby deliberation to the partnership while an imbalance of the types heats up the discussion and leads to more adaptations. Thus, although a balance as well as an imbalance of the discourse dynamics promote the deliberative democratic quality of MSIs, this is even more advanced when one type is found more prominently. Ultimately, contributing to the overall aim of this research, this study has demonstrated that the discourse dynamics of contestation and consensus promote the deliberative democratic quality of MSIs characterised through climate of collaboration, inclusion of all stakeholders, deliberation, transparency and output legitimacy.

## 5.2. Theoretical contributions

So far, most research on MSIs has looked at MSIs as new possible governance mechanism to address complex social and ethical issues (Bartley & Smith, 2010; Fransen, 2012; Köhne, 2014), the emergence of MSIs and the motivation of actors to become part of a MSI (Airike et al., 2016; Bartley, 2007) as well as the legitimization of these initiatives (Bäckstrand, 2006; Mena & Palazzo, 2012; Schouten & Glasbergen, 2011). What was still missing, were insights on the discourse dynamics

between stakeholders after the emergence (Arenas et al., 2020; Sanderink & Nasiritousi, 2020), especially as the dynamics determine as well as form stakeholder interactions and behaviour (Moog et al., 2015; Zeyen et al., 2016). Addressing the research gap of studying the discourse dynamics in deliberative processes in MSIs, this research has proven that contestation and consensus play a role even after the emergence of a MSI. Contributing to the body of literature on deliberation and discursive dynamics enhancing the deliberative democratic quality of MSIs (Arenas et al., 2020; Martens et al., 2019; Zeyen et al., 2016), this research studied stakeholder dynamics in an empirical manner. While Arenas et al. (2020) have studied internal contestation from a conceptual point of view, this study applied and extended their conceptual ideas empirically through a case study, allowing for an in-depth understanding on how the dynamics of contestation and consensus play out in an example MSI in the cocoa industry. With this, this study contributes to the body of literature on deliberative democracy in several ways.

First, corresponding with the contestatory deliberative perspective, this research supports the notion of both contestation and consensus to be equally necessary. Instead of relying on a wider form of meta-consensus as theorised by Arenas et al. (2020) and Niemeyer and Dryzek (2007), my research conceptualised five different matching types of consensus. This study therefore adds onto the contestatory deliberative perspective and thereby provided more explicit insights on the role of contestation. This changes the understanding of meta-consensus by individually theorizing a more nuanced interpretation of consensus through distinguishing between various types. This is important as we thereby see how consensus is understood in specific situations that match instances of contestation. Moreover, the exploration of individual types of consensus significantly broadens the understanding of the deliberative dialogue between the two dynamics, resulting in a constitutive tension, promoting the deliberative democratic quality of MSIs.

Second, building upon the work by Arenas et al. (2020), this study extended the contestatory deliberative perspective through the exploration of a new type of contestation, namely accountability contestation, and thereby addressing Arenas et al.'s (2020) call for the further empirical investigation of other types of contestation. Accountability contestation, implying stressing the need for commitment and implementations within MSIs, also seemed to play a role in promoting output legitimacy, connecting to Mena and Palazzo's (2012) theory on legitimacy of MSIs. Out of the five types that were found in this study, accountability contestation was the most prominent one, highlighting its importance in stakeholder discourses in MSIs. It therefore broadens the understanding of how contestation can be presented, next to the types already identified by Arenas et al. (2020), and stresses the importance of accountability of actors within the MSI.

Third, the combined effect of five different types of contestation and consensus were found to promote the deliberative democratic quality of MSIs, characterised through climate of

collaboration, inclusion of all stakeholders, deliberation, transparency, and output legitimacy. In line with Mena and Palazzo (2012), characteristics of input and output legitimacy were found to play a role in the deliberative democratic quality of MSIs. Input legitimacy was found through inclusion of all stakeholders and transparency. There was no direct evidence found for procedural fairness as fairness, by the participants in this research, was perceived as something rather abstract and often combined with being heard in relation to the degree the which members engage in discussions. Instead, features of fairness and mutual understanding were overlapping with features of climate of collaboration and inclusion of all stakeholders. This research therefore alters the understanding of input legitimacy through excluding procedural fairness as a specific characteristic and including fairness and mutual understanding in the overall need for climate of collaboration. While Mena and Palazzo (2012) frame output legitimacy as "to what extend [regulations] effectively solve the issues that they target" (p. 528), in this research, output legitimacy was mainly defined through MSI's achievement in adjustments of rules that help to put social and ethical issues prominently on the table and effectively fostering mutual learning throughout sectors and thereby successfully approach the issues that they target. The way in which output legitimacy is theorised in this research, allows for a more deliberative definition of *approaching* issues as *solving* issues implies an end goal. Moreover, my study therefore pays specific attention to deliberation in promoting the deliberative democratic quality of MSIs, important in the contestatory deliberative perspective. This is particularly valuable as earlier research has stressed the importance for deliberation in MSIs (Dryzek, 2002; Martens et al., 2019; Zeyen et al., 2016).

Forth, apart from showing that the combined effect and overall balance of contestation and consensus were found to promote the deliberative democratic quality of MSIs, my research has highlighted how a balance of contestation and consensus regarding a specific type leads to a moderate amount of changes and adaptations within the MSI while an imbalance of the two (entailing that either contestation or consensus is more prominently present within one type) leads to an even higher degree of changes and therefore promoted the deliberative democratic quality of MSIs. This is particularly important as it sheds light on the effect of an imbalance of contestation and consensus regarding a particular type demands more changes to increase the deliberative democratic quality. In addition, it therefore proves that instead of relying on an overall meta-consensus, consensus should be more specifically and separately be researched in MSIs.

Fifth, in their research, Arenas et al. (2020) suggest further empirical research on managing contestation with regards to meta-consensus and the combined effect on deliberation and democratic quality. My research has discovered that deliberative dialogue is needed to balance out contestation and consensus backed by Zeyen et al. (2016) who states that MSIs allow for interactions of various stakeholder groups and "creating a dynamic interplay of even more diverse interests" (p.

342). In responding to how this is managed, my study has discovered four different interdependent types of enabling forces, namely active participation, trust, dynamic facilitation and leadership. While active participation was earlier also found to play a key role in successful stakeholder dialogues (Zeyen et al., 2016), my study has explicitly stressed the role of trust to be needed. Regarding characteristics of dynamic facilitation and leadership, comparable insights were theorised by Fowler and Biekart (2017) who highlight the role of an "interlocutor" (p. 84) managing the MSI and Martens et al. (2019) who framed the importance of "administrative mechanisms" (p. 1128). These studies have highlighted "orchestration" (Fowler & Biekart, 2017, p. 83) as a way to facilitate actors to achieve the MSIs goals and leading collaborative action, indicting a blurry line between facilitation and leadership. Alternatively, my study has clearly distinguished between dynamic facilitation and leadership. Leadership was more referred to behaviour by the coalition as a whole with special attention to the government, while dynamic facilitation was attributed to the MSI management organisation that was hired by the government as service provider and manager. This study therefore changed the way we understand the administration and orchestration of a MSI and empirically shed light on enabling forces to successfully manage contestation and consensus through a deliberative dialogue.

## 5.3.    Practical implications

Resulting from this study, various practical implication can be conceived. These implications for MSIs in general, the MSI management team, the most prominent actors (governments, companies and civil society) and organisations that are not yet part of MSIs will be elaborated on.

In general, evidence has been found on MSIs as new governance mechanism opening up possibilities for stakeholder deliberative dialogue through an enabling environment. Above all, this research advises MSIs, in the cocoa sector and beyond, to acknowledge the need for both contestation and consensus to be present in MSIs, in order to create a deliberative democratic atmosphere within stakeholder meetings. In line with Arenas et al. (2020), the deficiency of contestation can lead to a bureaucratic, non-dynamic "private club" (p. 192), not fulfilling the characteristics of a multi-stakeholder initiative. In the case of inclusiveness for example, the civil society was openly challenging the initiative to be included as the initial set-up only consisted of the public sector and companies. Through highlighting the solutions and knowledge the civil society could bring to the table, consensus was found and the MSI opened up for other stakeholder groups, strengthening the partnership and shedding light on possible ways to tackle issues in the cocoa sector. This shows that both contestation and consensus are needed to promote the deliberative democratic quality of MSIs which is why this research advises MSIs to allow for both dynamics to be acquainted. Furthermore, MSIs can learn from this research in accepting an imbalance of contestation and consensus within a

specific type (procedural, inclusiveness, …) as it has shown to lead to more changes and adaptations and thereby promote the deliberative democratic quality.

Moreover, the findings highlight that room for contestation and striving for consensus were both crucial in allowing for constitutive tension through a deliberative dialogue and require active management which often necessitates successful negotiation and navigation by a facilitation team (Boersma, 2018). To illustrate, this was found in the way in which welcoming different perspectives can be transformative in enabling collaboration across sectors when accompanied by being solution-oriented and providing input. Highlighting the importance of managing the constitutive tension between contestation and consensus, the management team of MSIs can therefore learn from this study by creating room for contestation and striving for consensus in order to allow for deliberative dialogue. In addition, the importance of their role as dynamic facilitator was highlighted through this study, corresponding with the theory of Fowler and Biekart (2017) of practical guidelines of managing and the "orchestration" (Fowler & Biekart, 2017, p. 83) of various viewpoints. My research therefore demonstrates the need of actively managing and allowing for contestation and consensus, helping the MSI management to more successfully facilitating stakeholder dialogue.

Furthermore, this research demonstrated that distinguishing between various types of contestation can help the members of the MSI to become aware of how given instances can be resolved through the right type of consensus. To clarify, a prominent instance of procedural contestation was found throughout the data in which members were explicitly voicing issues regarding the monitoring and evaluation of progress in companies. This was then discussed within the initiative and consensus was found in finding middle ground on practices through a simplification of the reporting scheme and extending this along the way through shared learnings. Hence, being more aware of the various ways in which contestation can be voiced, targeting a specific issue, can help in finding consensus more easily by responding in line with the matching type of consensus.

Individual stakeholder groups can profit from the findings of this research in distinct ways. For governments that solely rely on legislations, this research highlighted the importance of consensus on (policy) changes, fostered through creating rules *with* stakeholders instead of *for* stakeholders to bridge the gap between stakeholder interests (Zeyen et al., 2016) and enhancing output legitimacy of decisions towards society (Mena & Palazzo, 2012). The insights of this research on the constitutive tension between contestation and consensus can thus be employed by governments outside on the MSI through recognizing the need for finding consensus across sectors (e.g. public sector, private sector, civil society) by the use of deliberative stakeholder dialogue and soft law regulation, also emphasised by Mena and Palazzo (2012) and Moog et al. (2017). This and the findings on how these dynamics promote the deliberative democratic quality among stakeholders can then help to be implemented on a national level across industries outside of the

MSI.

 Companies that are being attacked by civil society to solve social and ethical issues and therefore have recently been forced to take upon a political role in international operations (Martens et al., 2019; Scherer & Palazzo, 2011) can use the insights on the constitutive tension to see the benefits of contestation carried out by, for example, the civil society. Next to acknowledging the need for contestation to inherently promote the deliberative dialogue between companies and civil society, these issues can be solved through the insights on the way in which consensus can be found.  To illustrate, after an instance of inclusiveness contestation, voiced by the civil society due to initially being excluded from the MSI, consensus was found to even open up to wider stakeholder groups which helped to set ambitious targets (output legitimacy) and promoted the deliberative democratic quality within the MSI. Moreover, after contestation was found on showing accountability towards the end goals, consensus was found in the way that companies are now working together with the civil society on projects to deliberatively find solutions to international societal issues. Additionally, this can potentially lead to mutual learnings and thereby exploring new ways of CSR. Hence, companies as well as the civil society benefit from the enhanced deliberative dialogue.

For various civil society organizations that merely rely on contestation through the media, this research has laid out opportunities of how the usage of different types of internal contestation can help to more directly address companies and the government and find consensus more easily through deliberative dialogue. Especially the insights on accountability contestation and consensus come in handy as the civil society often raises concern about unethical business practices (Bowrey & Clements, 2019) and advances ethical norms within MSIs (Locke et al., 2009). Illustrating this through the findings in this research, a civil society actor stressed the role and duty of civil society to assure that promises are being kept by the MSI. Accountability consensus was widely found through a common understanding and the willingness to commit to the overall mission of the initiative then accounted for a felling of responsibility. The civil society can therefore benefit from this research through the application of accountability contestation and engage in accountability consensus through stakeholder dialogue leading to an increased deliberative democratic quality of MSIs.

For actors across sectors who are currently not part of MSIs, this research highlighted the importance of being inside of a MSI to be part of a deliberative democratic dialogue across sectors. By joining a MSI, actors can use the insights on, for example, ultimate-goal contestation, to actively play a role in targeting a specific societal issue of their interest while finding middle ground with the other sectors through ultimate-goal consensus. The deliberative dialogue that is enabled through the participation in an MSI will foster a climate of collaboration and contribute to an enhanced deliberative democratic quality in MSIs which then again allows to increase the input legitimacy on the MSI and thereby the overall democratic legitimacy (Mena & Palazzo, 2012). Hereby, particularly

the insights on inclusiveness contestation and consensus improve the accessibility of MSIs for outside actors. As illustrated above, contestation on being included has led to the MSI valuing inclusiveness and representativity to be fundamental for the partnership. In addition, through insights on the enabling forces of deliberative dialogue, actors outside the MSI can more critical consider joining a MSI by evaluating the degree of active participation they would bring to the partnership.

In sum, understanding the importance of discourse dynamics of contestation and consensus fosters fundamental insights on successful stakeholder dialogue. The different types of contestation and consensus then add to the constitutive tension, promoting the deliberative democratic quality of MSIs.

## 5.4. Limitations and recommendations for future research

Regardless of its contributions, this study has its limitations. Some of these open avenues for future research. Firstly, these findings are based on a single case study of one MSI in the cocoa sector. It should be noted that the MSI was a voluntary, opt-in initiative which is not the case for all MSIs. Irrespective of its insights on developments, it is therefore not directly transferable to other MSIs operating in other contexts. Hence, further research would be needed to see whether similar discourse dynamics can be found in other types of MSIs, characterised by different stakeholder groups in a different sector (Moog et al., 2015). Similarly, Beyond Chocolate being a Belgian initiative focused on all chocolate produced and sold in Belgium, various respondents within this research were calling for the harmonization of similar initiatives on EU level. The production of chocolate was highlighted to be a complex process with a long supply chain, including various countries and sectors. Further research is therefore needed to investigate the discourse dynamics within MSIs through cross-initiative research, also highlighted by Arenas et al. (2020) and therefore also shedding light on international regulations and MSI standards when being active in difference political and institutional settings (Arenas et al., 2020). This is especially important as national governments, companies and various civil society groups often engage in activities on an international level (Mena & Palazzo, 2012; Moog et al., 2015; Scherer & Palazzo, 2011).

Furthermore, the subject of research is a rather young initiative with goals for 2025 and 2030 so nothing can be said about developments of the deliberative democratic quality once it gets closer to the goals and initially set-up targets need to be reached. This research therefore leaves the question unanswered whether contestation and consensus promote the deliberative democratic quality in the long-term. Corresponding with Arenas et al. (2020), a longitudinal study at a later point in time would therefore be needed to make explicit statements about whether contestation and consensus lead to structural changes in the long-term and strengthen the findings of this research.

Even though five different stakeholder groups were incorporated in the data collection, the

MSI has smaller stakeholder groups, such as knowledge institutions and ports, whose views were not taken into account. This was mainly due to the scope of this research and can also be advanced on in future studies. This would be particularity important as contestation might be voiced and consensus experienced differently by smaller and, thus, often less powerful actors which could add crucial observations and potentially lead to the exploration of further types of contestation and consensus.

Regarding the methodology of this research, the results are based on interviews as primary data. Even though interviews help to get first-hand knowledge from participants, direct observations of stakeholder meetings would have enriched this research through insights on first-hand stakeholder interactions. Observations of stakeholder meetings could shed light on the stakeholder dynamics in MSIs as opposed to the interviewees' perspectives and provide tacit knowledge (Symon & Cassell, 2012). In addition, non-reactive methods like minutes of the meetings, press release and MSI reports could have advanced triangulation (Myers, 2019). Such data would be essential in minimizing subjectivity of respondents and the influence of the researcher (Macnamara, 2005; Symon & Cassell, 2012)

Overall, despite the effort to remain objective and discussing findings and interpretations with fellow students and the supervisor, his research was done by a single researcher which has probably led to unintentional bias. Subjectivity of the research is therefore acknowledged. In future research, this could be minimised by involving multiple researchers studying the deliberative democratic quality of MSIs and thereby strengthening the findings of this research.

In summary, future research could strengthen the findings of this research in various ways by addressing the acknowledged limitations and advancing research on discourse dynamics promoting the deliberative democratic quality of MSIs.

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# Appendices

## Appendix 1: Conceptualisation of questionnaire

| Theory | Aspect | Question | Initial ideas on example instances |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Space for deliberation present? | In order to discuss certain issues and cases, do the members of Beyond Chocolate meet regularly? Is the majority of partners usually present? | (from the website: ) steering committee meetings, working groups, bilateral meetings |
| | DDQ: Input legitimacy: Mutual understanding | I can imagine that different partners have different interests in debates. Are these usually voiced in an open discussion or is a moderator present at meetings? | Open debates or moderators. (who moderates?) |
| Mena and Palazzo (2012) | DDQ: inclusion of all stakeholders | When it comes to decision-making, would you say that all members or partners of the initiative are being heard and included in debates? Is there a way to make sure that all members can voice their opinion? Do you have an example? | (e.g. taking turns, raising hands, voting procedures) |
| Mena and Palazzo (2012) | DDQ: input legitimacy: Fairness | In which way does the initiative ensure that everyone is treated fairly? | |
| Mena and Palazzo (2012) | DDQ: input legitimacy: Transparency | During a meeting between the members of the initiative, do you usually receive a protocol of what has been said which is distributed to all members? | e-mail newsletter, ways to share feedback |
| Dryzek (2002); Martens et al. (2019) | DDQ4: choices are open for further deliberation | Does it happen that decisions that have been taken are still being questioned by someone afterwards and therefore reviewed? If so, how often does that happen? Can you give me a concrete example of a situation where that happened? | Deliberative dialogue, veto, feedback |
| Mena and Palazzo (2012) | DDQ5: output legitimacy | If decisions or rules are agreed upon, do you feel like these are consistently enforced afterwards? | Information email around how things were changed, |

| | | (later included: Does the initiative contribute to changes in the cocoa sector?) | adaptations in declaration |
|---|---|---|---|
| Arenas et al. (2020) | CONT1: procedural contestation CONS1: matching type Procedural consensus + informal/formal changes that were made afterwards | The first question is about the procedures and governance of the initiative. Can you remember a case in which a member openly raised concerns about governance procedures and decision-making? Can you think of an example? How was this resolved in the end? In what way do you feel like consensus was reached? Do you feel like the initiative made formal or informal changes to their governance afterwards? | CONT1: concerns about how the MSI governs itself, voting procedures, how to deal with cases in which members did not comply with the governance CONS1: closure, move forward, accepting not agreeing |
| Arenas et al. (2020) | CONT2: inclusiveness contestation CONS2: inclusive consensus + informal/formal changes that were made afterwards | Can you think of a case in which a partner/member of the initiative stepped forward and raised concerns because they felt unheard or excluded from the decision or debate? Can you give me an example of a case where voices seemed to be unheard? How did the initiative react to that? What happened? Was everyone, especially the member, accord with the way in which it was handled? Do you think that the member stepping forward caused the initiative to make changes to member inclusion? Were there formally or informally integrated afterwards? | CONT1: Inclusion issues, not feeling heard and included CONS2: through acknowledgement of all parties opinions and demands, acceptance of a decisions by all members even though not all demands could be incorporated into the decision, demands are not disregarded fully but kept in mind for further deliberation. |
| Arenas et al. (2020) | CONT3: epistemic contestation CONS3: matching type + informal/formal changes that | Beyond Chocolate's main commitments are certification standards for all chocolate produced and sold in Belgium by 2025, end deforestation due to cocoa growing for the Belgian chocolate sector by 2030 and ensure a living income for all partners by 2030. Have there been cases in which these goals | CONT3: actions against fundamental values and goals |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | were made afterwards | and values were disregarded by one of the members through a specific action? Can you think of a specific example?<br><br>How were these addressed by the members? Did one step forward to raise concern?<br>In the end, how were these resolved and what were the consequences for that party/ the initiative?<br>Were any long-term changes within the initiative afterwards? Like formal or informal regular practices, policies or rules? | CONS3: revision of rules of behaviour, sentence/penalty, |
| Arenas et al. (2020) | CONT4: ultimate-goal contestation CONS4: Ultimate-goal consensus<br><br>+<br><br>informal/formal changes that were made afterwards | In terms of the goals of the initiative, has an organization every thought about exiting because it had differing opinions and priorities on the fundamental goals of the initiative? —such as whether one goal is more important than the other or wanting to focus on a totally different commitments and goals —of Beyond Chocolate?<br><br>  How was this dealt with?<br>Did members in the end exit the initiative? Where there discussions about splitting up into different initiatives?<br>If not, how was consensus reached in the end? | CONT1: discussions of priorities of goals<br><br><br>CONS4: sub-divisions, members only committing to certain goals, exiting the initiative, initiative splitting up |
| | CONT5&CONS5: exploration of further types<br><br>+<br><br>informal/formal changes that were made afterwards | Can you think of a major disagreement which fuelled a discussion between the different member organisations that had a big impact on Beyond Chocolate and its governance?<br><br>How was this addressed by the initiative? How was consensus reached in the end? | |
| | **Closing**<br><br>Cover things that haven't been covered | do you have any further remarks regarding the negotiation between the members of Beyond Chocolate?<br><br>Is there anything from your side you would like to add or where you think that I missed aspects that you feel are important? | |
| Myers (2019) | Snowballing method: Ask for | | |

| | further respondents | Are there any specific members of Beyond Chocolate that you feel would be particularly valuable talking to for me? | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |

## Appendix 2: First contact email

**First contact e-mail**

Dear Mr./Mrs./Ms.,

My name is Nora Zonneveld, I'm currently doing research on multi-stakeholder initiatives and I have chosen the Beyond Chocolate partnership for a case study. For this, I am conducting interviews with representatives of the partner organizations. I was in contact with a few members of Beyond Chocolate who mentioned you as the representative for ……

As part of my Master's degree at Radboud University Nijmegen in the Netherlands, I am writing a Master's thesis on the stakeholder dynamics that promote a democratic atmosphere within the initiative. I am interviewing different people from Beyond Chocolate and the different organizations that are part of the partnership in order to find out more about the dynamics between the partners and the negotiations. Within this field, I am specifically interested in how discourses and (dis-)agreements between the members influence the MSI and how consensus is reached (these can be 1on1, within groups, things that are communicated to the steering committee).

I was therefore wondering if you would be interested to give an interview on this topic? The interview will approximately take 1 hour and will be taking place in English via Zoom. The interview and the data will be treated anonymously, that means, names and company names will not appear in any public document. I would also like to ask for permission to record the interview in order to be able to transcribe it later on.

In case you would be interested in helping me after reading this information, I am looking forward to being in touch to schedule a possible date for the interview.

I am happy to share more information beforehand when needed.

Kind regards,

Nora Zonneveld
n.zonneveld@student.ru.nl

## Appendix 3: Interview guide

**Interview guide 1: representative of member organization**

**Opening**

Thank you very much for your time and willingness to participate in this research. I will first of all give a short overview of what the interview will look like before continuing with the questionnaire. The whole questionnaire will approximately take 45-60 minutes.

*Introduction interviewer, name and background information on the study programme, scope of the Master thesis trajectory.*

**Information on the research project and objective**

This research looks at negotiation dynamics between stakeholders within a multi-stakeholder initiative. This is being done by the means of interviewing representatives of the different partners of Beyond Chocolate. I'm particularly interested in how actors from different societal sectors negotiate, debate and find consensus. If you have more questions, I can certainly provide you with more insights after the interview.

**Information for the interviewee**

*Anonymity and confidentiality*

Your data will be treated anonymously, that means, no personal information will appear in any public document. Furthermore, all information shared in this interview will only be used in this research.

*Disclaimer and exiting the interview*

If you don't feel comfortable answering a question, you, of course, don't have to. In addition, you are therefore also allowed to exit the interview if you wish to do so.

*Recording*

If you give me the permission, I would like to record this interview via zoom and via phone in order to be able to transcribe it later on. After transcribing the interview, you will receive the fully transcribed interview via mail. If you wish to not disclose any information, you are free to indicate certain parts that will be taken out and then excluded from this research. I would kindly ask you to indicate these changes within 5 days after receiving the transcribed interview. Afterwards, I will start incorporating the statements into the analysis of this research. I would therefore like to ask you if you give me permission to record this interview?

**Description of themes and subjects within the research**

I would like to, first, ask you a few questions about yourself, your position within the organization and organization you work in, including since when your organization is part of Beyond Chocolate.

**Questionnaire**

I would like to, first, ask you a few questions about yourself, your position within the organization and organization you work in, including since when your organization is part of Beyond Chocolate.

1. **Background information interviewee**
   – Would you please introduce yourself and tell me about your position within the organization? And since when are you working in this organisation?

- In a few sentences, could you describe the organization you work in?
- Since when is your organization part of Beyond Chocolate?
- Have you always been the person representing your organization in Beyond Chocolate? If not, since when is this the case?
- As a member of Beyond Chocolate, do you/does your organization actively involve in decision-making or would you say that your organization stays in the background in Beyond Chocolate?

Secondly, I would like to now ask you some questions around how the different members of the initiative work together and negotiate about issues and decisions. These will mainly be about the inclusion of members and people affected by decisions the initiative takes, perceived fairness and understanding of different viewpoints.

2. **Deliberative democratic quality of the MSI**
- In order to discuss certain issues and cases, do the members of Beyond Chocolate meet regularly?
  - Have you been present in any meetings?
- I can imagine that different partners have different interests in debates. Are these usually voiced in an open discussion or is a moderator present at meetings?
- When it comes to decision-making, would you say that all members or partners of the initiative are being heard and included in debates?
  - Is there a way to make sure that all members can voice their opinion?
- (In which way does the initiative ensure that everyone is treated fairly?)
- After a meeting between the members of the initiative, do you usually receive a protocol of what has been said which is distributed to all members?
- Does it happen that decisions that have been taken are still being questioned by a partner afterwards and therefore reviewed?
  - If so, how often does that happen? Can you give me a concrete example of a situation where that happened?
- OR: after a decision has been made and enforced in by the initiative, have you ever questioned their decision openly in order for it to be reviewed?
- Broadly speaking, in your opinion, do you feel like the partnership is successfully contributing to solving the issues in the cocoa sector?

Thirdly, as this research looks at the negotiation between the members of the initiative. The questions will particularly focus on arguments and disagreements as well as decision-making and accommodation. The four main aspects are procedures and governance, inclusion, specific actions and ultimate-goals.

3. **Contestation & consensus**
- The first question is about the procedures and governance of the initiative. Can you think of an example in which someone within the initiative neglected the rules and procedures and did you or someone else raise concern about that?
  - And how did the initiative react to that? And how was this resolved?
  - How was this resolved in the end?
  - In what way do you feel like consensus was reached?
  - Do you feel like the initiative made formal or informal changes to their governance afterwards?

- Have you or another member ever stepped forward because you or that person felt unheard or excluded from decisions the initiative made?
  - How did the initiative react to that?
  - Were you accord with the way it was handled?
  - Do you think stepping forward caused the initiative to make changes to member inclusion? Were these formally or informally integrated afterwards?
- Beyond Chocolate's main commitments are certification standards for all chocolate produced and sold in Belgium by 2025, end deforestation due to cocoa growing for the Belgian chocolate sector by 2030 and ensure a living income for all partners by 2030. Have there been cases in which these values were disregarded by one of the members through specific actions? Do you have a specific example?
  - How were these addressed by the members? Did one step forward to raise concern?
  - In the end, how were these resolved and what were the consequences for that party/ the initiative?
  - Were any long-term changes within the initiative afterwards? Like formal or informal regular practices, policies or rules?
- In terms of the goals of the initiative, did your organization every think about exiting because you had differing opinions and priorities on the fundamental goals of the initiative? —such as whether one goal is more important than the other or wanting to focus on a totally different commitments and goals —of Beyond Chocolate?
  - OR: Were you ever not sure whether you wanted to continue to be part of the initiative?
  - *Answer no:* Can you remember a discussion in which the members had differing opinions and priorities on the fundamental goals —such as whether one goal is more important than the other or wanting to focus on a totally different commitments and goals —of Beyond Chocolate?
    - How was this dealt with? Did members in the end exit the initiative?
    - Where here discussions about splitting up into different initiatives?
    - How was consensus reached in the end?
    - Do you feel like there were any major changes within the governance of initiative after this incident?
- Can you think of a major disagreement which fuelled a discussion between the different member organisations?
  - How was this addressed by the initiative?
  - How was consensus reached in the end?
  - Has this instance caused any structural or long-term changes within the initiative?

4. **Closing**
   - do you have any further remarks regarding the negotiation between the members of Beyond Chocolate?
   - Is there anything from your side you would like to add or where you think that I missed aspects that you feel are important?
   - For my research, are there any specific members of Beyond Chocolate that would be particularly valuable talking to?

**Thanking the interviewee and further information**

Thank you again for your time. The information given will be very valuable for this research. In the upcoming days, this interview will be transcribed and sent to you before it will be incorporated into the analysis. After finalizing this research and master thesis trajectory, you are invited to receive a copy via email if you would like to.

## Interview guide 2: Representative management team

Interviewee profile: IDH management team

**Opening, small talk**

Thank you very much for your time and willingness to participate in this research. I will first of all give a short overview of what the interview will look like before continuing with the questionnaire. The whole interview will approximately take 60 minutes.

About myself, I'm 23 years old and I study business administration with the specialisation organisational design and development at Radboud university in Nijmegen. Next to my studies, I also work at University in international admissions and recruitment for 3 years and I'm currently doing a part-time board year at the international youth organization AIESEC.

During this Master's programme I learnt about multi-stakeholder initiatives and got in touch with the professor who was lecturing about that topic and I then decided to do my thesis on it.

**Information on the research project and objective**

This research looks at negotiation dynamics between stakeholders within a multi-stakeholder initiative. This is being done by the means of interviewing representatives of the different partners of Beyond Chocolate. I'm particularly interested in how actors from different societal sectors negotiate, debate and find consensus. If you have more questions on this research or why I picked BC for my case study, I can certainly provide you with more insights after the interview.

**Information for the interviewee**

*Anonymity and confidentiality*

Your data will be treated anonymously, that means, no personal information will appear in any public document. Furthermore, all information shared in this interview will only be used in this research.

*Disclaimer and exiting the interview*

If you don't feel comfortable answering a question, you, of course, don't have to so. And if you don't know the answer to a question that is also perfectly fine. In addition, you are therefore also allowed to exit the interview if you wish to do so.

*Recording*

If you give me the permission, I would like to record this interview via zoom and via phone in order to be able to transcribe it later on. After transcribing the interview, you will receive the fully transcribed

interview via mail. If you wish to not disclose any information, you are free to indicate certain parts that will be taken out and then excluded from this research. I would kindly ask you to indicate these changes within 5 days after receiving the transcribed interview. Afterwards, I will start incorporating the statements into the analysis of this research. I would therefore like to ask you if you give me permission to record this interview?

**Description of themes and subjects within the research**

I would like to, first, ask you a few questions about yourself, your position within the organization and organization you work in, including since when your organization is part of Beyond Chocolate.

**Questionnaire**

1. **Background information interviewee**
   – Would you please introduce yourself and tell me about your position within the organization? And since when are you working in this organisation?
   – In a few sentences, could you describe the organization you work in?
   – Have you always had this position in Beyond Chocolate? If not, since when is this the case?

Secondly, I would like to now ask you some questions around how the different members of the initiative work together and negotiate about issues and decisions. These will mainly be about the inclusion of members and people affected by decisions the initiative takes, perceived fairness and understanding of different viewpoints.


2. **Deliberative democratic quality of the MSI**
   – In order to discuss certain issues and cases, do the members of Beyond Chocolate meet regularly? Is the majority of partners usually present?
   – I can imagine that different partners have different interests in debates. Are these usually voiced in an open discussion or is a moderator present at meetings?
   – When it comes to decision-making, would you say that all members or partners of the initiative are being heard and included in debates?
     o Is there a way to make sure that all members can voice their opinion? Do you have an example?
   – In which way does the initiative ensure that everyone is treated fairly?
   – During a meeting between the members of the initiative, do you usually receive a protocol of what has been said which is distributed to all members?
   – Does it happen that decisions that have been taken are still being questioned by someone afterwards and therefore reviewed?
     o If so, how often does that happen? Can you give me a concrete example of a situation where that happened?
   – (OR: after a decision has been made and enforced in by the initiative, have you ever questioned their decision openly in order for it to be reviewed?)
   – If decisions or rules are agreed upon, do you feel like these are consistently enforced afterwards?

Thirdly, as this research looks at the negotiation between the members of the initiative. The questions will particularly focus on arguments and disagreements as well as decision-making and

accommodation. The four main aspects are procedures and governance, inclusion, actions and ultimate-goals.

**3. Contestation and consensus**

– The first question is about the procedures and governance of the initiative. Can you remember a case in which a member openly raised concerns about governance procedures and decision-making? Can you think of an example?
  - How was this resolved in the end?
  - In what way do you feel like consensus was reached?
  - Do you feel like the initiative made formal or informal changes to their governance afterwards?

– Can you think of a case in which a partner/member of the initiative stepped forward and raised concerns because they felt unheard or excluded from the decision or debate? Can you give me an example of a case where voices seemed to be unheard?
  - How did the initiative react to that? What happened?
  - Was everyone, especially the member, accord with the way in which it was handled?
  - Do you think that the member stepping forward caused the initiative to make changes to member inclusion? Were there formally or informally integrated afterwards?

– Beyond Chocolate's main commitments are certification standards for all chocolate produced and sold in Belgium by 2025, end deforestation due to cocoa growing for the Belgian chocolate sector by 2030 and ensure a living income for all partners by 2030. Have there been cases in which these goals and values were disregarded by one of the members through a specific action? Can you think of a specific example?
  - How were these addressed by the members? Did one step forward to raise concern?
  - In the end, how were these resolved and what were the consequences for that party/ the initiative?
  - Were any long-term changes within the initiative afterwards? Like formal or informal regular practices, policies or rules?

– In terms of the goals of the initiative, has an organization every thought about exiting because it had differing opinions and priorities on the fundamental goals of the initiative? —such as whether one goal is more important than the other or wanting to focus on a totally different commitments and goals —of Beyond Chocolate?
  - How was this dealt with? Did members in the end exit the initiative?
  - Where there discussions about splitting up into different initiatives?
  - If not, how was consensus reached in the end?

– Can you think of a major disagreement which fuelled a discussion between the different member organisations that had a big impact on Beyond Chocolate and its governance?
  - How was this addressed by the initiative?
  - How was consensus reached in the end?
  - Has this instance caused any structural or long-term changes within the initiative?

**4. Closing**

– do you have any further remarks regarding the negotiation between the members of Beyond Chocolate?

– Is there anything from your side you would like to add or where you think that I missed aspects that you feel are important?

– Are there any specific members of Beyond Chocolate that you feel would be particularly valuable talking to for me?

**Thanking the interviewee and further information**

Thank you again for your time. The information given will be very valuable for this research. In the upcoming days, this interview will be transcribed and sent to you before it will be incorporated into the analysis. After finalizing this research and master thesis trajectory, you are invited to receive a copy via email if you would like to.

## Appendix 4: E-mail final approval and transcript

**E-mail final approval and transcript**

Dear Mr./Mrs./Ms,

Thank you again for your time and willingness to answer my questions about the Beyond Chocolate partnership.

Attached, you will find the transcribed interview. For my thesis, I had to transcribe it word by word in order not to lose any information but this makes it a little harder to read, I hope that's okay for you (it therefore includes "uhm"s and sometimes a repetition of words). Everything that is marked in yellow will be made anonymous. Feel free to read it and let me know if there are parts you don't feel comfortable about and which you would like to be taken out of the analysis. Please indicate them with a colour or a comment in the document.

I would kindly ask you to do that within a week time or tell me that you need more time to read it, so I can start with my analysis soon. If everything is fine the way it is, feel free to ignore this email. If I don't hear back from you within a week, I will start to incorporate the interview into my analysis. In the final thesis, only a few anonymous quotes will be visible, not the whole interview of course.

I will be referring to this interview as "Interview no. x, … sector" in order to make it as anonymous as possible while still making a rough distinction between the stakeholder groups if that is okay for you. Feel free to tell me if you would rather be referred to differently or if you want me to leave out the sector. I am happy to adjust this to your preferences.

Thank you again and you will hear back from me at the end of the summer with the final thesis.

Kind regards,

Nora Zonneveld
n.zonneveld@student.ru.nl

## Appendix 5: Data scheme

### Coding scheme

| Quotes | 1st order codes | 2nd order codes | Aggregate dimensions |
|---|---|---|---|
| „At this stage, again, it's a voluntary partnership. But so here, I think I'm going to respond positively to the question, because we have high participation." (Interview 1)<br><br>"The whole idea of, of signing Beyond Chocolate is also that you sign your entry tickets to being around the table for them the more difficult discussions because signing a commitment is a very good first step" (Interview 2)<br><br>"And uhm it helps, of course, that this initiative was an opt in, you know, you decide to become a member of in sign up to be on chocolate. So, you're automatically, of course, half organizations becoming an member that understand the importance of what Beyond Chocolate tries to do." (Interview 10) | Voluntary participation | Active participation | Enabling forces |
| „Let's see, because, you know, it's like any relationship or partnership, you need to see how it goes in rough times and there, we'll have to see." (Interview 11)<br><br>"Well, for me, I think for a lot of people, it's really a true multi stakeholder partnership. And not only initiative, it's really a partnership that sets common goals in a very clear and well-targeted way" (Interview 2) | Partnership | | |
| "People feeling the urgency to, to join in and to contribute and others sort of, yeah, make decisions around when or whether or not to join." (Interview 7)<br><br>„And to understand them, it's the minimum entry point of being part of the discussion is quite high, you need to do your research" (Interview 12)<br><br>"new signatories and are asked to motivate a bit to uhm, okay, this is not just window dressing, no, you have to motivate" (Interview 8)<br><br>"participation is another ingredient that is needed for us and multi stakeholder partnership." (Interview 1)<br><br>"it's not so easy to put all those people at the same table." (Interview 4)<br><br>"But you have a condition, you know, the condition is that you need to have actors that really want to, to make a different." (Interview 6) | Need for successful participation | | |
| „Now, the important part for me is that we need them to have this discussion within Beyond Chocolate and not outside of it. Otherwise, it would not contribute to our mission." (Interview 1)<br><br>„uhm doing then bilateral conversations, meetings around a certain topic, and then doing these moments of general meetings wherever we could call out: "this is not ambitious enough!", "if this is the case, we will not be signing" if it's that atmosphere, it was very in a healthy and constructive way." (Interview 2)<br><br>"They voice, sometimes, these opinions to me but I think it's not a discussion we could have bilaterally [...] it's a discussion we should have with the consortium [...] But I think we missed the point of a multi stakeholder initiative by not putting it on the table there" (Interview 9) | Call for intra-MSI discussions | | |
| „so I have actually very little tools to oblige anyone to do anything, if someone wants to step out, they can step out" (Interview 1)<br><br>"They did keep in mind that at some point they could exit. And I think that's very healthy" (Interview 2) | Free to exit at any point | | |

| Quotes | Code | Subtheme | Theme |
|---|---|---|---|
| "And it is kind of uhm, these are the kind of discussions that are difficult. Uhm yeah, because it's about uhm Yeah, I mean, you need a secure setting where you know, that the opinions will not go outside of the walls because that will be very detrimental for everything." (Interview 9)<br>"Now, of course, that's also not always very comfortable for the parties because you have to sit at the table with people who don't necessarily share your point of view. Trust is very important and sometimes it is difficult to have trust. But I think it's probably the best way to do it" (Interview 11)<br>"Because, you know, one thing is being trustworthy, but at the same time, you also have to be able to be critical." (Interview 13)<br>"And there, honestly, we can always do better. There's a lot of things that we need to do. But this is an essential part also to maintain trust between the partners. So this is a word I did not use yet for interview, but trust is definitely one of the keys" (Interview 1)<br>"And you're like, in any partnerships, so you need trust." (Interview 11) | Building trustful relationships | Trust | |
| " And there are so many other actors who could make good use of some money in order to make their contribution to the to the sector. So yeah, that's what that's that's where I also feel I mean, it doesn't make me trust the initiative anymore" (Interview 13)<br>"when you see that, at the same time, they try to undermine the initiatives of government that try to get better prices for farmers, that creates a little bit of tension and of crisis of confidence" (Interview 11) | Distrust harming the initiative | | |
| "And I think what is very important is that we find a better way, we manage to have a better coordination among civil society organizations internationally on these initiatives" (Interview 13)<br>"There, it was a bit different. I mean, in terms of there were people prepared to work that facilitated your contribution, uhm I mean, IDH was, broadly speaking, I don't know exactly what was on the paper there but it was coordinating the whole stuff. And so it was really done in a professional way and in a very efficient way" (Interview 4)<br>"I think we have to really create a better coordination. So when we make these decisions, they actually lead to something positive." (Interview 13) | Coordination needed | | Dynamic facilitation |
| "Yeah, my main point would be, I think that [the management team] are doing a very good job because they are open, they have good facilitation qualities. They really are always stressing their help" (Interview 9)<br>"And so here uhm, what I'm trying to do ███████████ here is not to not to avoid that discussion. But to try to rationalize it." (Interview 1)<br>"And they are doing a good job at coordinating it" (Interview 11)<br>"I think, I think we see also IDH as the convener of different actors having an important role to do that." (Interview 7)<br>"And there are such organizations as I mentioned like the authorities they have an important role in uhm in balancing this and coming to an outcome, an agreement that is okay for for everyone." (Interview 8) | Facilitating and organizing the MSI | | |
| "Again, they are okay. But at the end of the day, it's a private organization. Don't get me wrong, they have an agenda but they're not completely neutral, they're not." (Interview 11)<br>"it's important for us as, as IDH, as a facilitator of, uhm of Beyond Chocolate, our role is being ready to be a neutral convener and facilitator" (Interview 1) | Neutral management | | |
| "I think the only the danger I see is you can perfectly facilitate what you say the tension between consensus, concern, being open and having a perfect multi stakeholder initiative according to the rules of the game, but yet missing the point." (Interview 9)<br>"Now, it's becoming a bit technocratic and I think it's a little bit dangerous. And we need now again, to have political leadership in this in this group, otherwise, it becomes a little bit risky." (Interview 11)<br>„You could argue even that it was a subject matter and agenda item that didn't even belong, at the level of the steering committee, it was more of a management decision. But so yeah, you mean, I found that a very interesting debate. But so yeah, it's." (Interview 10)<br>"But we had to ponder on you know, we clearly saw that there were no real teeth in the initiative." (Interview 13)<br>"but coordinating and leading, these are two different things" (Interview 11) | Call for leadership | Leadership | |

| Quotes | Code | | |
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| "And so far, it's unclear if the initiative is going to react. That's why I think for me, there is a little bit of a leadership crisis. Because then they come back with processes and so on. But then you know, in a human organization, there is only so much a process can solve." (Interview 11)<br><br>"Yeah, it's a Yeah, it's difficult. It took some time to organize that but it's possible. So if it's possible for us, then it's possible for them so but again, it's about leadership. It's about leadership is about you know, defining indeed the difficult things you are going to doSo I guess we'll keep on pushing to have that" (Interview 11) | Leadership crisis | | |
| "I think what helped a lot is that uhm, the political involvement" (Interview 12)<br><br>"we could think about going towards the minister to come to the minister or the cabinet and ask them to, you know, give a strong political message." (Interview 1) | Political support | | |
| "Because when you raise a question, I know, it's when I raise a question to the Minister, the cabinet is calling IDH, what should I answer? Come on, guys. I mean, you know, it doesn't work that way, you should have your own experts, you should have your opinion, you should not depend upon people whose revenue depends a lot on the industry" (Interview 11)<br><br>"I've tried different ways. It's one of the hard things is, you know, there's not someone, uhm, there isn't really someone taking the lead in the whole initiative. There's a steering committee and no one no one really represents all stakeholders. So there's this kind of difficulty on who do you direct yourself to?" (Interview 13)<br><br>„So the whole convening of Beyond Chocolate early days was done via the cabinet, and then broadening the actors doing that to ▮▮▮▮ and IDH. And that triangle, for me was really the convening power of, of the partnership, doing bilateral meetings, doing workshops, per different category, if you can call them that of stakeholders, and then doing joint stakeholder meetings to decide on way forward raising of commitments, and things like that." (Interview 2)<br><br>"And I think then the new chair, but also the previous chair, they do a very good job making sure that that's done. Yeah, so yeah. An empathic yes." (Interview 10)<br><br>„And, and this is, I think, with these initiatives, in the end, credible leadership is maybe the key to the story credible in the sense that people feel adequately represented by them" (Interview 5) | Taking the lead | | |
| "One of the problems there was that, among civil society organizations, there wasn't a full consensus among civil society organization because there's a variety of civil society organizations and some of them had have a different vision on that." (Interview 13)<br><br>"So let's say within the civil society group, there's room for disagreements, to be discussed openly to be tackled, for example, someone not to sign certain communication, specific communication, or for everyone to reach a consensus of what we can as a minimum voice as our common opinion" (Interview 12)<br><br>"yeah but I asked for negative comments (laughing). I think it would be too easy. You know, I think that the strengths of the partnership are pretty clear to everyone. And what works well. We - I'm much more interested in in What does not work well." (Interview 1)<br><br>"We discuss and we discuss and everyone can express its opinion. And then if we have two different points of view, each one can add comments to see. Okay, you say that, but maybe if you if you think about this consequence, or maybe no, maybe no, the discussion is going well, it's not a discussion which is very hard with people that are angry no, no, it's a it's a very constructive discussion each time." (Interview 3) | Open for criticism | Room for contestation | Deliberative dialogue |
| "No, maybe one thing, which is that you do have a very diverse group. And so this is really like it's a multi stakeholder initiative uhm so the divergence of views, makes a very, very rich debate, very insightful debate. So that, that is a dynamic that helps the initiative a lot." (Interview 10)<br><br>"What I don't like is that we're probably the biggest critical actor in it, I would like to have other organizations that are more critical of it. So I'm afraid if we would step out of it, there would be no critical voice in it anymore. And then uhm … and that wouldn't be uhm, I think IDH wouldn't like that, because they kind of need political actors because so that's how it works." (Interview 13)<br><br>"And then simply also challenging each other that's worked really well because civil society in Belgium – and that's good! – as a tradition to really be very vocal about things" (Interview 2) | Need for dissension | | |

| Quotes | Code | Subtheme | Theme |
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| "But which they find sometimes not helpful. And they, you know, they're afraid we're gonna ruin the good, the good atmosphere, they are trying to build up the trust between the actors, which is very important, which is also very tricky for us" (Interview 13)<br><br>"So we always ad hoc organize ourselves in such a way that consensus can be reached. Okay, with input from everyone." (Interview 12)<br><br>"Uhm, we always thrive to find consensus. And so you you you surely have seen also that that is the way that we want to make most of the decisions in Beyond Chocolate." (Interview 1)<br><br>"And this this consensus allows us and allow the Beyond Chocolate initiative to implement what we have decided." (Interview 3)<br><br>"there were kind of sometimes diverging uhm… diverging positions. And the idea was to find a consensus. And so I would say, nobody has been kind of frustrated by the final decision. This this, this is the impression that I had" (Interview 4)<br><br>"No, no, no, we, we, we decide by consensus. And so we uh we talk until there is one." (Interview 10)<br><br>"trying to see where the space for consensus is, and then trying to get the others move along." (Interview 5) | Focus on harmony | Striving for consensus | |
| "That was like the strategy all the time, like keep the heat down. They absolutely wanted to have an agreement. That's not it's, it doesn't lead to a lot of seriousness." (Interview 13)<br><br>"Because you need the vote of everybody in the room while we were much more consensus-based model" (Interview 2)<br><br>"because if not, okay, you defend your own position and you don't go forward." (Interview 3)<br><br>"And so the big fights the fireworks that you can find elsewhere. They just don't happen here." (Interview 10) | Need for agreement | | |
| "And again, the whole giving money, official development aid money to companies, is still, it is still controversial and we never agreed with that. Actually, we always we always posted but we kind of, you know, it's it's one of the concessions we've, we've had to make, but we haven't made it publicly, we still oppose to it." (Interview 13)<br><br>„as civil society, we were not happy the way the initiative was set up, and the way the multi stakeholder platform organized representation" (Interview 12)<br><br>„Yeah, I think we have voiced that through different ways. And it's also, I guess, then at certain points about choosing battles so, yeah, so I think we have been quite actively involved in trying to shape the MSI structure, for example. And at some point, it's it's sort of it's there, right, and there are things that you have been able to influence and others not. And at some point, you have tried different things" (Interview 7) | Dissatisfaction design | Procedural | Contestation |
| "Not really. No, because there was no real willingness to change that or to question that." (Interview 11)<br><br>"Not at the moment, I know that they are trying to simplify it, but for the moment, nothing has changed." (Interview 6) | No willingness to change | | |
| "Look, we cannot go that further. We don't have this information. This is more for the certification bodies, or this is more for the ▆▆▆▆▆ to deliver whereas they and the certifications and ▆▆ saying yeh but we don't know either… so yeah, a little bit more these dynamics." (Interview 9)<br><br>"We just need to make sure then that it doesn't become a kind of, of monster. You know, General de Gaulle called that 'Un bidule'. Because it's become a kind of technocratic machine with a lot of talking." (Interview 11)<br><br>"And I and so me and other people started to see the opportunity to raise a couple of concerns that were then taken into the agreement, because he absolutely wanted to have an agreement so it was very chaotic. It was like, I raised my hand, I take the microphone, and I say, I think this and this, and that should be in the in the in the agreement." (Interview 13)<br><br>"And that was a, that was a concern also from us. And of course, that's what we're trying to remedy as much as possible and going down into the dropping down. And going into the nitty gritty of how can we actually start measuring the gap? How can we collect more data and in a sensible way?" (Interview 2)<br><br>"Well, I know that some uhm some, some went as far as to say that if this is a monitoring system is going to be implemented. We feel that it's not contributing to uhm… that we signed the way to initiative. It's something uhm, it's too much. You don't know how we work, you don't know how this can be implemented" (Interview 12)<br><br>"Yes, we have been quite vocal about, you know, wanting reporting to be very clear and wanting especially this." (Interview 11) | Protesting about rules and procedures | | |

| Quote | | | |
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| "Yeah, a very…. Uhm… I experienced it as a very big gap between the between both worlds" (Interview 9)<br><br>"But let's say for the private sector, for example, it was not set up in such a way that people who wanted to take initiative were feeling represented or were involved in decision making, for example, working closely with ▓▓ on the ▓▓ chocolates, he also has done his research, he wanted to take an active role, but the setup of the Beyond Chocolate initiative, certain decisions or certain uhm .. how do you say that… certain items came to the fore, which he wasn't consulted with at all, whereas the initiative represented it as some opinions coming out of the private sector because they simply assigned roles of representation." (Interview 12)<br><br>"The debates that we're having in the committee are far more interesting than then debates we're having in that working group of the civil society. Because you really get completely different angles uhm" (Interview 10) | Hierarchy | Inclusiveness | Contestation |
| "Another criticism is that actually the most important people in this issue are not around the table, and who are the most important people: the cocoa farmers. So the cocoa farmers are not around the table. So you have a bunch of middle aged white people talking about something and the most important people are not there so that we can hear their voice. And that's also an issue" (Interview 11)<br><br>„I know in the private sector group, though, because the way the representation was organized or not organized from the start, that at the start of initiative that was some threatening of "I will not sign this, I will not sign that" because of the problem of not being represented." (Interview 12)<br><br>"Is it any chocolate producing country is a selection? That was a very interesting and fairly complex debate about footprint and spreading too thinly, where you have different points of view." (Interview 10) | Important actors/regions are not being represented | | |
| "We're not there from the very beginning, really. At the very beginning, they were really not keen on having civil society partners on board, they were a little bit scared of it because the industry was very reluctant of having us around the table" (Interview 11)<br><br>"So they they came together and they appointed for themselves through a formal representative." (Interview 2)<br><br>"So yeah, we have uhm we have insisted on being included in the process. And if it wouldn't have been included, we have been one of the most vocal opponents to it. So they've been smart, and they have listened to it, they have included us and they have taken up some of some of our language in it. So yeah, especially in the beginning, you know, we kind of had to insist on being included" (Interview 12)<br><br>"But then we kind of lobbied, a little bit forced our way into it. By also demonstrating our added value and the fact that we were bringing. You know, knowledge, bringing solutions, bringing something around the table that wasn't there." (Interview 11) | Putting pressure on the initiative to be included | | |
| "Well, as especially in the very early stages, very early stages, we weren't invited. So it was hard. There is a there's quite some controversy around it, that will that will not go away, per se." (Interview 13)<br><br>"informally, they were disappointed that we addressed this directly to the Minister at an informal stage as well, that was then answered that, yes, but we feel that our concerns are not taking seriously" (Interview 12)<br><br>"Yeah, yeah, yeah, it does ring a bell, it there was something … but who was it. I think it was with.. I thought there was something about one of the chocolates companies that felt not involved in one of the working groups" (Interview 2)<br><br>"And I think there was one NGO involved in there... uhm…. but it was, it was very much company-dominated" (Interview 13) | We weren' t invited | | |
| "And then, of course, I've seen some some things that are not so (laughing) that are not so good regarding the, uhm, regarding the goals of Beyond Chocolate" (Interview 6) | Actions against goals | Epistemic | Contestation |
| "The problem is, because you study business, if everybody worked on productivity, what is happening, the produced quantity goes up, and the price go down. And so the revenues of farmers don't increase. And as a fundamental question, in case of the big elephants, if you want the revenues of farmers to go up, you need to increase productivity and to increase price. And governments need to create a context where that is possible. But at the end of the day, the task of the industry is to work mainly on increasing prices, and a little bit on productivity and what is happening now, they are not at all working on prices, they only will be working on productivity." (Interview 11) | Actions do not contribute to values | | |

| Quote | Code | Second-order | Dimension |
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| "At some point, ▮ called me and said, ▮ we want out, because we don't feel we can contribute to the partnership because ▮ , it does not contribute at all to the social aspects of what we're trying to do." (Interview 2) | | | |
| "Uhm I can imagine that, depending on who you are, you may also be looking for the low hanging fruit. I think, for example, an NGO was not directly involved in the cocoa chain, there is no economic interest in a chain, it's very easy to cry out: "Yeah! living wage by 2025! And no deforestation" Because for them, there's no there's no price to pay, if you wish. Whereas for a company any effort that you have to do additional to what you're currently doing in the first upfront, it's going to cost time and money. And so if I would imagine then, that the first thing you do is well, where is the low hanging fruit? Which one is easier for me to achieve? So getting a standard accepted is relatively easy." (Interview 5) | Only going for the low hanging fruit | | |
| "And this discussion, I mean, this price drop is from March, we are in May now and we have never talked about it. I talked about it like left and outside of the context. Uhm and I'm wondering if it will be put on the table and if we will go into an in-depth discussion about what it means in general, what it means about our commitments. So that is for me the essence that maybe sometimes we do not really tackle the difficult issues. And that's for sure, I told it to ▮ already." (Interview 9) <br> "Then in the early stages uhm in the first year of Beyond Chocolate, I think I also was quite active and trying to set up intermediate targets. But I have to say it has led to some frustration." (Interview 13) <br> "Uhm, yeah, well, I think the mandate of Beyond Chocolate isn't super clear" (Interview 13) <br> "sharing our concerns that we really want, again, to emphasize the end targets of the initiative, and that we have to define intermediate targets" (Interview 12) <br> "And then what comes after that is HOW do we get in here? Again, I think it's important to also understand the complexities and bring nuance, there is no silver bullet." (Interview 1) <br> "And then the question is, why do we actually make a claim around sold, cocoa sold and produced? Why shouldn't we make claims about how many farmers were going to support in Ivory Coast, right? So it brings up a bit the debate around how that commitment was framed and what it actually means. And that's sort of a never ending dialogue, right?" (Interview 7) | Ambiguity goals | Ultimate-goal | Contestation |
| "Yes, we that's when I started like in September, October, we had lots of discussions about the feasibility or non-feasibility." (Interview 9) <br> "And then of course, strict rules or regulations of doing the whole funding with divulging money of the corporation and team with that private sector and other actors. It's really very strictly regulated there. You have to keep course very strong focus on those three uhm on those three targets with all the aspects" (Interview 2) <br> "So I think those commitments are I mean, are clear, I think what is then as I mentioned, sort of less clear is, do we all really understand what that means, and what is needed for that, right." (Interview 9) | Discussions on feasibility | | |
| "He will argue that, you know, he comes from ▮ , he will argue that that concern about deforestation is an inherent part of the ▮ model. And that you don't necessarily need ▮ to put that higher on the priority list. It is high on the priority list. I think that's part of I think that's really captures how well how someone like him would look at it. And I tend to disagree." (Interview 10) <br> "And how was that consensus reached? I don't know. It just feels a little bit of each time, there is a bit of an uphill battle a bit of a struggle." (Interview 10) | Uphill battle to discuss all goals equally | | |
| "My point is that we should put on the agenda, the core issues, and the core issues are for me, for instance, certification, the challenges with its living income reference price, the challenges with it" (Interview 9) <br> "And that's where again, I think we have a role of civil society to say guys, okay, it's good to make promises but what about it now? What are you doing to make these promises happen? And, and are you really serious about it?" (Interview 11) <br> "Yeah, there are no real…, I mean, you know, you can be ambitious in it, like you can claim very big ambitions. But if you don't put any means in order to reach those ambitions with that, then it's not really a very useful battle to fight" (Interview 13) <br> "And if there's no clear answer, and I don't expect clear answers, then we want to know then what is the next step? And how is everyone going to report on that?" (Interview 12) <br> "And I mean, the real issues, we have to talk about this uhm…. governance issues in the co-operative, the gap between the standards of the certification and the implementation | Call for action | Accountability | Contestation |

| Quote | Code | Procedural/Inclusiveness | Consensus |
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| on the field, the living income reference price and how we can pay it and what are the drivers? And where is it blocking? Initiatives, like what happened before to evade the living income reference price? Yes, I think we should talk about it."(Interview 9) <br> "Without or without Beyond Chocolate and that's really, for me, the big fundamental question. Are these elephants going to move? Yes or no?" (Interview 11) | | | |
| "At some moment you have people who step up and say, "Hey, guys, this is where we go, this is what we commit to". Yes, we bring people together but that's not happening at the moment.. So maybe it's just a small crisis that we have at the moment. But I think it's interesting, probably for you because it shows where, you know, where these initiatives can be become fragile." (Interview 11) <br> "And the real difficult discussion about this, we do not have it. I don't know if you understand what mean" (Interview 9) <br> „"Hey, guys, are we really serious here? Do we really mean business?" because if someone commits to take 10 steps forward, and then the first thing they do is taking two steps back. It's like, "Yeah, but then that's in 2030". "Yeah, but you just took two steps back". So where there is a tension at the moment, I'm not going to hide that." (Interview 11) <br> „Well, there seems to be a lack of focus on the one hand" (Interview 12) | Concern that people are not serious about it | | |
| "So you have the industry around the table, if at the end of the day, what they do is what they would have done anyway, then you're a kind of place to hide for the And they do what we what were planning to do anyway" (Interview 11) <br> "So more can be done and more should be done from our perspective" (Interview 12) <br> "There's definitely tension on the different the different implementation strategies for sustainable cocoa." (Interview 1) | More should be done | | |
| "And you start questioning actually the credibility of these companies and saying, well, you are you really serious about living income?" (Interview 11) <br> "If, for example, there will be no reply, then we will call for such a meeting" (Interview 12) <br> "The pre competitive safe space and also holding on to that, because that's a bit my worry now with the discussions, I think now for the first time, we could see the partners drifting away." (Interview 2) | Promises are not being kept | | |
| "Yes, they knew about it and ….okay, but finally, we we agreed and discussed this with the minor position. So it was not a majority of us, it was a minority and then… uhm so this company agreed on finally on the text so we wrote it down. And then all the text was agreed and signed off by everyone, so yeah." (Interview 8) <br> "So they they came together and they appointed for themselves through a formal representative" (Interview 2) <br> "So you know, basically, the fact that it said those working groups were put in place that they were well managed, and that the the agenda and the mandate of this working group were so well defined. This is something that gives you a signal of, let's say, appropriate governance." (Interview 5) | Consent on governance | Procedural | Consensus |
| "So that I think all the retailers said, look, let's just take it easy and report just on the chocolate." (Interview 9) <br> "Yes, I think uhm… it was just like learning by doing and then adapting. So the very first exercise we did, there was much unclarity, which is I think, normal right because you can think about something in theory and then often when you start doing it in practice, you notice that actually, it's, it's quite difficult, or it's even maybe impossible." (Interview 9) <br> "Yeah, I think we also mentioned within the steer-co. And then it came deliberately, of course, also with those guidelines, and not describing that case, but I think the people involved knew why it wasn't. And the others, of course, also received those guidelines. And we're also of course to follow." (Interview 2) <br> "But what they did in the end, was that they accepted also company proprietary standards" (Interview 6) | Finding middle ground on practices | | |
| "Well, if you would sort of I don't know, if you have been looking into other sort of like-minded initiatives, for example, in other countries or in country origins, this initiative in Belgium is quite unique in the sense that it has, yeah, at least linked up to some some stakeholders that you don't necessarily always see in these type of initiatives, then I must say, like they, they are also probably not as involved… so so but I think sort of for Beyond Chocolate, the the line of thinking has been like there is quite some openness for organizations to join." (Interview 7) | Concessions on who to include | inclusiveness | Consensus |

| Quote | Code | Category | Theme |
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| "So no, my impression is that at the end, we were all heard, and that the people in charge of really putting together the positions of the different members were sufficiently smart or sufficiently diplomat uhm diplomatic to, to make it kind of right balance between the different positions, or to find the best ways. And if not, it was always supported this, I remember well, always supported by really expertise." (Interview 4)<br>"No, I think they ▉ they are super open, you can reach them easily. No, I think that you always have the possibility to, to voice your concern. I feel it as a, It's very, very open setting" (Interview 9)<br>"we take an initiative that we agree on that someone is to draft something, there is adequate time to provide input and then before the thing goes out" (Interview 12) | Feeling heard | | |
| "And then I managed to convince them to stay on board also, because I think it's important. A partnership is of course a voluntary initiative, people can enter and sign. It's not that they can never leave. But there are ways to avoid the perception or the people thinking: "Oh, we can leave". So I managed to convince them early. It's true as well. I think they bring added value on to environmental ecological side of things." (Interview 2) | Adding value in a different | Epistemic | Consensus |
| "And let's say civil society and private sector actors were very surprised by the high targets, the level of the bar, right, the level of the commitments, the ambitions was very high" (Interview 12)<br>"And so on the top line ambitions actually, there's little, little discussion, for example, that if we want to really speak about sustainability in cocoa we need to be to enable living income for cocoa farmers- little discussion about that" (Interview 1) | Setting the bar high | | |
| "No, I think we do agree with the commitments." (Interview 11)<br>"And so everyone is still kind of, you know, "we're open to we all want a good story""" (Interview 13)<br>"No, no, I think there was a common understanding" (Interview 10) | Agreement on goals | | |
| "Yes, I would think so, I think at the end of the day there is a willingness to make progress and to listen to everybody so far. So, yes, I would say that everyone's treated fairly. Not at the start, but it is the case now." (Interview 11)<br>"So they try to have as much an inside look as possible to kind of know who or which ones, which companies are really the front runners and with whom they can actually count. That's often referred to as a 'coalition of the willing'" (Interview 13) | Willingness to make it work | Accountability | Consensus |
| "It got small players, the pioneers, the small players have been moving. So you have a lot of small initiatives, of small-ish, initiative that are being taken." (Interview 11)<br>"Again, it's very much an alive process." (Interview 12)<br>"It is a young initiative, and that's fine. And it's, it's understood, you know, you just, you know, there's Flemish word, or Dutch, you know, voortscheidend inzicht. I don't really know how that translates. You learn and you get new insights. And so that's fine. I don't think that that's a problem. Yeah." (Interview 10) | Making progress | | |
| "And for me, if the civil society wants to make their voice heard, they can do it inside the board of Beyond Chocolate." (Interview 4) | Keeping the discussions inside | | |
| "We see small initiatives, I guess, to be fair, and what Beyond Chocolate has achieved is to put the topic clearly on the table, we've made commitments, and it's very good." (Interview 11)<br>"So let's say that all of them, issues or the targets within Beyond Chocolate are important" (Interview 12)<br>"The process of the partnership to put together everybody on common objective is good." (interview 4) | Common objective | | |
| "Of course, tensions are everywhere where you come together with a bunch of people. But it's not made – we don't discuss openly about it." (Interview 9)<br>"And it's good, because it creates a little bit of a community but I think what is very positive about Beyond Chocolate is that it puts the topic very prominently on the agenda, there's no escaping now" (Interview 11) | Open atmosphere | Climate of collaboration | Deliberative democratic quality |
| "I KNOW what- that we work together with all the stakeholders on on a complete accountability monitoring and evaluation framework." (Interview 1)<br>"But there was a lot of openness and understanding" (Interview 2)<br>"And so here, the thing is that one seat is a seat. And so it doesn't matter if you're one of the gigantic players in the field or, or a small, a smaller NGO" (Interview 1) | Mutual understanding | | |

| Quote | Subtheme | Theme | |
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| "it is my job to create an enabling environment that empowers all the stakeholders within their function." (Interview 1)<br>"And so uhm… it's important of course, to have this kind of setting up collaboration to to uhm, to work together and to have a climate of, yeah, of confidence, I would say" (Interview 8) | Enabling environment | | |
| "And I think what it resulted into is that the objectives and the targets of Beyond Chocolate are ambitious targets, I think also thanks to the inclusion of civil society" (Interview 11)<br>"so inclusiveness and representativity is essential" (Interview 1)<br>"So I think we try, how do you say this in English, uhm find a balance, ensuring good representation, but not a formal one. It was not a process by boat." (Interview 2)<br>"so when I talk to members, I do it proactively. I contact some members from where I see and I feel that they have uhm, they would be open to sign." (Interview 8) | Feeling heard | Inclusion of stakeholders | |
| "Yes, I would think so, I think at the end of the day there is a willingness to make progress and to listen to everybody so far. So, yes, I would say that everyone's treated fairly. Not at the start, but it is the case now." (Interview 11)<br>"And so here, the thing is that one seat is a seat. And so it doesn't matter if you're one of the gigantic players in the field or, or a small, a smaller NGO" (Interview 1) | Equality | | |
| "Yeah sort of, they are reaching out and listening, I would say so" (Interview 11)<br>"And then, of course, also constantly repeating that. We not only ask them to give us feedback, we NEED the feedback from members." (Interview 1)<br>"And I mean, the idea was then that you submit proposals" (Interview 7) | Asking for feedback | | |
| "Also, based on the observation that there was so little transparency, so I think they really did an effort" (Interview 9)<br>"I feel that there is a lack of transparency or a lack of reporting." (Interview 12)<br>"So there's intensive need for for communication to work on this transparency." (Interview 1)<br>"Do we still have to report on this or not? Those things were not clear. And that's now all resolved, I think" (Interview 9) | Issues with transparency | Transparency | |
| "Well, there's an email list. So everybody's keeping uhm is being kept up to date about everything, minutes of the meetings, recordings of the meetings are publicly shared. So yes" (Interview 12)<br>"But of course, this transparency towards the, again, the signatories, and the whole constituency of Beyond Chocolate is fundamental" (Interview 1)<br>"It's, it's pretty well done at from that point of view, so yes, I would say that it is quite transparent." (Interview 11) | Improvements transparency | | |
| "I agree – that we maybe need more time but I think yeah, we uhm… the level of trust maybe already has increased" (Interview 9)<br>"And you're like, in any partnerships, so you need trust." (Interview 11) | Building trustful relationship | | |
| "And here I'd like to say that probably probably everyone is right within their own reality. And that's the trick in that's why we have Beyond Chocolate. We want to bring these different realities together and see how we can combine and strengthen the different the different interventions." (Interview 1)<br>"and in a few weeks, it was amazing, but in a few weeks, we work with these different groups, and then we made a first draft of declaration of issue with all the these parts and everybody is was agreeing to go and step forward and then it was so dynamic" (Interview 4)<br>"but it's also about bringing that dynamism amongst the stakeholders." (Interview 1) | Dynamism | Deliberation | |
| "Yes, I think uhm… it was just like learning by doing and then adapting." (Interview 9)<br>"their approach is to incrementally change it with a lot of patience." (Interview 13)<br>"And so we need to also have the openness to share different models, different business models, different implementation strategies, I'm not pretending that I know how to fix this, right? What I know is that we are all engaged here." (Interview 1) | Adaptations | | |
| "And I think we don't know, at this stage it's a dream, it's a hope. Personally, I'm, let's say, cautiously optimistic. Although I've become more and more optimistically cautious" (Interview 11)<br>"So more can be done and more should be done from our perspective" (Interview 12)<br>"There's definitely tension on the different the different implementation strategies for sustainable cocoa. So you know, the, the targets are clear, the way to get there is less" (Interview 1) | O our way but we're not there yet | Output legitimacy | |

| Quote | Category | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| "So it's a very long answer. But for me, it's also I mean, it's a success, It's a testament, or it's a success, I was made possible because of these bigger societal historical trends. But the at face value, it still is quite surprising for this to exist in the first place." (Interview 10) <br> "When Beyond Chocolate was established, it made a big change" (Interview 12) <br> "But for me, the mere fact that stakeholders as diverse as these, were, you know, cajoled by the government into getting together like this in signing up to a shared platform, etc. That is, I think, a big success, a huge success" (Interview 10) | Changes is society | | | |
| "And if you're in that process, but but it feels intuitive to say "all the chocolate needs to be sustainable" and to explain that it's it's it's difficult. And it's - I don't think we're there yet still right." (Interview 7) <br> "And I think that can be internal audits, or even external audits." (Interview 5) | Audit | | | |
| "Yes, they responded to that. But to this date, they just they just went ahead at the time, and then they opened up the groups a bit." (Interview 12) <br> "So, yes, it should be checked, but definitely structured in a way that they can expect that most of the recommendation were taken into consideration." (Interview 4) | Incorporation on agenda setting | | | |
| "They simplifies the monitoring system. But if it's that, if it's enough, I don't know." (Interview 12) <br> "Yes. Yes, simplification and harmonization." (Interview 8) <br> „Yeah, I think, one one effort that IDH has taken to get a bit more clarity on that piece is to start benchmarking how different companies drive sustainability in their supply chains." (Interview 7) | Changing procedures | | Procedural changes and adaptations | |
| "And the change is more that in the beginning there were much more meetings, but maybe a little bit less focused. Now, there are much less meetings but you, at least I, see a clearer trajectory" (Interview 9) <br> "So one exercise that has been quite central is sort of defining the way organizations report out on annual progress made against commitments and that involves a lot of feedback loops, and a lot of in-and-back and then meetings… I think, in that exercise, IDH has been quite good at sort of documenting, yeah, updates and change, yes" (Interview 7) | Changes in strategies and tools | | | Changes and Adaptations |
| "I mean, in the beginning, it was very clear that we managed to get some of the language in it like introducing the living concept, which has become the central concept of the whole initiative." (Interview 13) <br> "There'll be managed a bit and if you talk about structural and more deliberate ways of governing and taking decisions" (Interview 2) | Adaptations in formulation | | | |
| "And then at the end of the day, I think they realised that it was more productive to have us around the table and that it was important to have civil society around the table. So at the end of the day, we ended up being included into the approach." (Interview 11) <br> "And then research institutes are able to join, financial institutions are able to join companies who have a link to the processing are able to join, so it's very open." (Interview 12) | Seeing the benefits of including | Changes and adaptations in Inclusiveness | | |
| "They started including those who are not too difficult, you know, those who are nice and, and will not rock the boat too much. And little by little they started including other organizations as well. So no, i think it's good" (Interview 11) <br> "It's not the steering committee who decides. We ask to the branch to the branch to decide themselves who is the representative and we agree on that." (Interview 4) | Revision of who to include | | | |
| "we as ▮ are sometimes more pragmatic in the sense that we try to look at the problems from everyone's perspective, not only from what should be ideal, but also what can be realized, given the circumstances, given the world that we operate in now" (Interview 12) <br> "So I think you have to find ways of these, these groups relating to each other, not so much by my by playing parliament, by having everybody vote" (Interview 6) | Changes in involvement | | | |
| "We do get the feedback from our representor at the steerco meetings. Then IDH also does communication on the reports and on the work that they're doing." (Interview 12) <br> "there were definitely you know, exchanges of notes of each each group meeting so that helps and then there are requests for feedback on that. So I think there's, in general a level of documentation of each meeting." (Interview 7) | Asking for feedback | | | |

| Quote | Code | Category |
|---|---|---|
| "And that that helps to, to take decisions or to reshape the way we work a little bit. So that that would be the way I approach it. Again, it's a multi stakeholder partnership." (Interview 1) „Use this then to develop or to reshape our refined, let's say, our strategy, our strategy, our top priorities for 2021." (Interview 1) "I have far more vital discussion was around the concrete targets to be had. And by which date and the setting of intermediate targets, they measure whether, you know, to get a sense of whether we were getting near the official least set target. Yeah, those are, those really go to the heart of" (Interview 10) | Vital discussions around concrete targets and | Changes and adaptations in Ultimate-goals |
| "Well, they responded to it, just explaining what they were doing. But still, our concerns are not being tackled enough.." (Interview 12) "Is it not understood? Or is it the conscious balance with other voices that are trying to influence that? Yeah, so so there are definitely some elements that that continue to be - or remain unadressed and continue to be an issue, I guess, yeah" (Interview 7) | Some issues are still unadressed | |
| "That would have been, I think, a fundamental point of dissent because companies would not have accepted that they couldn't, you know, in a way benefit from these funds when they were themselves investing in initiatives that were kind of showing the way to go. So I think it would have been very difficult to remove that now, , I was not in the engine room of the negotiation, but maybe something has been done to reassure some of the partners ." (Interview 11) | Small dissensions on the goals | |
| "But still getting to work and doing everything and delivering on the targets. That is the real challenge that you are in the process of doing and trying to realize, Now, of course" (Interview 2) | Getting to work and deliver on | |
| "And you could see also, when we were then deciding at the level of the Committee on the composition, you could see how the heavy hitters, they were put in the working groups that were higher on the priority list." (Interview 10) | Aligning set-up with the ranking of | |
| "So you can make some compromises, you can have a little bit of patience, you can, you know, sometimes put a little bit of water in your wine." (Interview 11) "I mean, sometimes it just led to the little extra pressure that was needed for the, for the initiative to get on track somehow." (Interview 13) | Recentre to hold everyone | Changes and adaptations in accountability |
| "For me, these platforms should be a way to accelerate progress in making supply chains more sustainable, and then let's discuss what sustainable means." (Interview 11) "And there was a consultant that was hired to that used to phrase, you know, "we are dry swimming", I thought that was an interesting one. Because he said, you know, we can keep talking about things, but we don't have any data. It's like, we're swimming without water. And he said the companies have to start reporting." (Interview 13) | Progress | |
| "see, a lot of players are really doing a great job and really moving forward and really, you know, changing things fundamentally" (Interview 11) "But we are still convinced, two or three days afterwards, that you can go forward if everybody linked with the value chain is inside the discussion" (Interview 4) | Cases successfully resolved | |

**Research Integrity Form**

All parties involved in education and research at the Radboud University Nijmegen have a responsibility in maintaining integrity in science and scholarship. Therefore, the general principles of professional academic conduct will have to be complied with at all times. These principles have been laid down in the Netherlands Code of Conduct on Scientific Practice *(Nederlandse Gedragscode Wetenschapsbeoefening)*. Radboud University Nijmegen has endorsed this code as a guideline.

Research entails all investigations undertaken in order to acquire knowledge and deeper understanding. It is powered by a drive to discover and understand. This academic freedom is based on the understanding that researcher act according to high expectations with regard to research practice. Standards of professionalism and integrity must always be upheld.

Delivering excellent research does not only require intellect but also a high standard of integrity. We seek to sustain a research environment that fosters integrity in research. Integrity is about how research activities are undertaken. It demands that we pay thorough attention to detail in order to assure the accuracy and credibility of data and analysis.

We should ensure that our behaviour towards those involved in, or affected by our research, meets the highest standards. We should also fully consider our responsibilities towards stakeholders and society at large. Moreover, research integrity is fostered in a supportive culture that is conscientious, reflective and where genuine mistakes are permitted if they are admitted, carefully corrected, and learnt from.

Integrity and professional conduct require researchers to be:
- Honest and ethical;
- Professional;
- Critical of self and others;
- As skilful, careful and rigorous as possible;
- Respectful to anyone involved in and/or affected by the research;
- Working in ways that are lawful and accountable;
- Collegial: sharing, engaging in open discussions with colleagues and assisting others in their personal and professional development;
- Mindful of their duty to keep their knowledge and skills up to date;
- Risk-aware and responsible for risk management;
- Responsible: communicating honestly, accurately and as openly as possible;

The previous listing applies to all research activities undertaken by both staff and students, wherever and whenever they take place. It is critical that good research principles and practices are observed, and that their observation is monitored. The individual researcher is primarily responsible for upholding good research practices when undertaking research activities and is expected to be committed to intellectual honesty. Supervisors of students are expected to be role models of good practice and professionalism.

Should anyone encounter a situation in which unacceptable research practices (irrespective of whether they are deliberate or negligent deviations) are committed, they are expected to act on

these concerns by intervening personally or by contacting the confidential advisor (see below). Some practices are clearly unacceptable, but there are also grey areas. The boundary between creative insight and fabrication may not be obvious in the case of selective use of research data. Open discussions of such grey areas provide an opportunity to critically reflect on the robustness of justifications in research practices.

**Unacceptable Research Practices**
All unacceptable practices are to be avoided, as they can lead to different adverse consequences (such as financial loss, waste of resources, or causing psychological and/or reputational harm). Mending problems once they have occurred may range from advice, guidance, mentoring or formal training through an investigation of potential research misconduct. Any innocent errors or mistakes that result in unacceptable research practice(s) should be disclosed transparently and quickly, immediately when they are discovered, and the appropriate reasonable remedy should be supportive. Such remedy should encourage a constructive discussion of ethical dilemmas and challenges in which errors and mistakes can be learnt from.

In particular, the following research practices are regarded as unacceptable:

1. **Fabrication** of data (creation of/making up false data or other aspects of research including documentation and participant consent).
2. **Manipulation** of data, imagery and/or consent forms).
3. **Plagiarism** (general misappropriation or use of (parts of) others' ideas or work (written or otherwise), and submitting them as your own without acknowledgement or permission).
   a. Plagiarism can be either intentional or unintentional and may take the form of cutting and pasting, taking or closely paraphrasing ideas, passages, sections, sentences, paragraphs, drawings, graphs and other graphical material from books, articles, internet sites or any other source without proper referencing;
   b. Submitting bought or commissioned work (for example from Internet sites or essay banks) is a serious form of plagiarism. This may take the form of buying or commissioning either the whole piece of work or part of it and implies a clear intention to deceive the examiners.
   c. Double submission (or self-plagiarism) means resubmitting previously submitted work on one or more occasions (without proper acknowledgement). This may take the form of copying either the whole piece of work or part of it. Usually, credit will already have been given for this work;
   d. Collusion is where two or more people work together to produce a piece of work, all or part of which is then submitted by each of them as their own individual work. This includes passing on work in any format to another student. Collusion does not occur where students involved in group work are encouraged to work together to produce a joint piece of work, that is truly based on all individual partners' efforts and input, as part of the assessment process.
4. **Misrepresentation**
   a. of data (e.g., suppression of relevant results and/or data, or knowingly presenting a flawed interpretation of data);
   b. of interests (including failure to declare material interests either of the researcher or of those who fund the research);
   c. of qualifications and/or experience (including claiming or implying qualifications or experience which are not held).
5. **Mismanagement or inadequate preservation of data and/or primary material**
   a. failure to keep clear and accurate records of the research procedures followed and the results obtained, including interim results;
   b. failure to hold records securely in paper or electronic form;

     c. failure to make relevant primary data and research evidence accessible to others for reasonable periods after the completion of the research;

     d. failure to manage data according to the research funds' data policy and all relevant legislation;

     e. failure to provide careful feedback to respondents if such agreements have been made.

6. **Breach of duty of care**

     a. disclosing the identity of individuals or groups involved in research without their consent, or other breach of confidentiality;

     b. placing anyone involved in the research in danger, whether as subjects, participants, or associated individuals, without their prior consent and without appropriate safeguards even with consent; this includes reputational danger where that can be anticipated.

     c. not taking all reasonable care to ensure that risks and dangers, broad objectives, and sponsors of the research are known to participants or their legal representatives, to ensure appropriate informed consent is obtained properly explicitly and transparently;

     d. a supervisor not working with a student to establish an effective supervisory relationship; and vice versa, a student not working with a supervisor to establish an effective supervisory relationship;

     e. lack of support for researchers' academic freedom in those situations where researchers are faced with unreasonable pressure from external organizations (for example from a sponsor or other interested party with a vested interest in the research) to produce research results that are in their own interests, or to suppress reporting of results that are not in their interests.

7. **Abuse of status as a member of an academic profession** (deliberately exploiting status and reputation as a research professional in areas which have no relevance to the field of expertise).

8. *Taking reprisals against (an) individual(s) who made an allegation of research misconduct and/or attempting to cover up reprisals taken against (that) individual(s).*

Breaches of the code of conduct with respect to academic integrity (as described / referred to in the thesis handbook) should and will be forwarded to the examination board. Acting contrary to the code of conduct can result in declaring the thesis invalid

## Research Integrity Form - Master thesis

| Name: Nora Zonneveld | Student number: s1008592 |
|---|---|
| RU e-mail address:<br><br>n.zonneveld@student.ru.nl | Master specialisation:<br>Organisational Design and<br>Development |

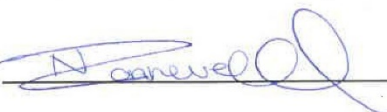| Thesis title: Discourse Dynamics Promoting the Deliberative Democratic Quality of Multi-Stakeholder Initiatives. The Case of Beyond Chocolate. |
|---|
| Brief description of the study:<br>This study shed light on the discourse dynamics of contestation and consensus between different stakeholder groups in a multi stakeholder initiative in the cocoa industry. In a qualitative manner through conducting interviews within one specific MSI, various types of contestation and consensus were found to contribute to the constitutive tension promoting the deliberative democratic quality of MSIs. |

It is my responsibility to follow the university's code of academic integrity and any relevant academic or professional guidelines in the conduct of my study. This includes:

- providing original work or proper use of references;
- providing appropriate information to all involved in my study;
- requesting informed consent from participants;
- transparency in the way data is processed and represented;
- ensuring confidentiality in the storage and use of data;

If there is any significant change in the question, design or conduct over the course of the research, I will complete another Research Integrity Form.

Breaches of the code of conduct with respect to academic integrity (as described / referred to in the thesis handbook) should and will be forwarded to the examination board. Acting contrary to the code of conduct can result in declaring the thesis invalid

**Student's Signature:** _____ **Date:** 01/07/2021

**To be signed by supervisor**

I have instructed the student about ethical issues related to their specific study. I hereby declare that I will challenge him / her on ethical aspects through their investigation and to act on any violations that I may encounter.

**Supervisor's Signature:** _____ **Date:**

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Radboud University Nijmegen (hereafter Radboud University) has set up a thesis repository. The purpose of this repository is twofold:

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2. Wherever possible and allowed, make theses available to potential users inside and outside Radboud University.

This supports the process of creation, acquisition and sharing of knowledge in the educational setting.

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Student number : s1008592

Student name : Nora Zonneveld

Thesis title : Discourse Dynamics Promoting the Deliberative Democratic Quality of Multi-Stakeholder Initiatives. The Case of Beyond Chocolate.

X

Yes, I grant permission to make available my thesis with the above title in the Radboud thesis Repository.

No, I do not grant permission to make available my thesis with the above title in the Radboud thesis Repository, but the thesis is allowed to make available with effect from ................................................. (temporary embargo).

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Signature: _Zonneveld_                    Date: 01/07/2024