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1. Introduction

The collapse of the Rana Plaza building in April 2013 is known as one of the biggest disasters in history of the garment industry, killing more than 1,100 and injuring more than 2,000 garment workers who produced textiles for international fashion brands (Jastram & Schneider, 2015; Schuessler, Frenkel & Wright, 2019). Poor building and labour safety regulations were found to be the causes of this accident (Chowdhury, 2017). The Rana Plaza disaster led to a broad international debate on labour standards and the social responsibilities of firms in the garment industry (Frenkel & Wright, 2019). As a consequence, several Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives emerged to collectively tackle social and environmental problems (Jastram & Schneider, 2015). In this thesis, CSR initiatives are defined as the policies, practices, and programmes incorporated into operations, supply chains, and decision-making processes of several firms, reflecting the economic, legal, and ethical expectations of society towards businesses (Mohd, Muhamad & Mohd, 2017). An organisational structure, in which these firms are working together today, striving against environmental and societal issues, is the so-called multi-stakeholder initiative (MSI) (Roloff, 2008). MSIs are a subset of CSR initiatives (London, 2012; Tighe, 2016) and are defined as collaborations between firms, governments, and civil society actors to collectively address social and environmental problems (London, 2012). From this definition, it can be stated that MSIs are networks between firms, the government, and civil society organisations which are interrelated actors (Achterbergh & Vriens, 2019; Lundsgaarde, 2017).

The ability of MSIs to tackle complex problems is promising. This is especially relevant in the context of the garment industry as this industry is known for its poor wages and labour conditions (Donaghey & Reinecke, 2018; Scheper, 2017; Schuessler et al., 2019) and as one of the biggest polluting industries of the world (Goworek, 2011; Kant, 2012; Khan & Malik, 2014; Knight, 2017). MSIs have the potential to improve these poor conditions (Lundsgaarde, 2017; Pattberg, 2005; Tighe, 2016). More specifically, Elliott and Freeman (2001) found evidence that organisations have a better performance regarding social and environmental practices when they participate in an MSI. While some scholars see MSIs in the garment industry as impressive game changers in transnational governance (Anner, Bair & Blasi, 2013; Ryan, 2013; Van der Heijden & Zandvliet, 2015), others argue that they have not even dealt with the most pressing issues in the industry (Khan & Wichterich, 2015; Scheper, 2017; Smith, 2014). However, scholars agree that MSIs are superior to other CSR initiatives (Dummet, 2006; Fowler & Biekart, 2017; Jastram & Schneider, 2015).

Recent examples of MSIs that have emerged in the garment industry are the Bangladesh Accord on Fire and Building Safety (Donaghey & Reinecke, 2018), the Fair Wear Foundation (Fair Wear, 2019), and the German Textile Partnership (Jastram & Schneider, 2015). This thesis focuses on a relatively new MSI in the industry which is the Dutch Agreement on Sustainable Garments and Textiles (AGT), founded in 2016 (SER, 2017a). Firms, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), trade unions, business associations, and the Dutch government have joined together in this collaboration to

collectively address environmental pollution, poor labour conditions, and animal suffering (SER, 2017a). The AGT is a classic example of an MSI because, in line with the definition of an MSI used in this thesis, firms are brought together with NGOs, trade unions, business associations, and governmental organisations in a collaboration which is used as a powerful instrument to support sustainable standards in global supply chains (Jastram & Schneider, 2015; Scheper, 2017).

This thesis is interested in the emergence of the AGT as one specific example of an MSI. The emergence of MSIs is an interesting and puzzling phenomenon as MSIs consist of parties with different (conflicting) interests (Bartley, 2007). All these interests should somehow have been brought together in founding MSIs (Cutcher-Gershenfeld, 2015). More specifically, Arenas, Albareda, and Goodman (2020) define MSIs as “spaces for both deliberation and contestation between constituencies with competing discourses and disputed values, beliefs, and preferences” (p. 169). They argue that MSIs can be studied well from a contestatory deliberative perspective which values contestation and consensus in MSIs equally (Arenas et al., 2020). There is a lack of clarity in literature when it comes to the question how MSIs emerge (Ashwin, Oka, Schuessler, Alexander & Lohmeyer, 2020; Bartley, 2007; Fransen & Burgoon, 2011). Multiple scholars recommend future research on the emergence of MSIs to improve labour standards more effectively (Ashwin et al., 2020; Jastram & Schneider, 2015; Marx, 2008). Although interest in the emergence of MSIs is growing (e.g. Ashwin et al., 2020; Bitzer, Glasbergen & Leroy, 2012; Donaghey & Reinecke, 2018), it has not explained yet how different interests are brought together in the founding process. The emergence of MSIs is, thus, a contradictory phenomenon: despite conflicting interests of involved parties, there seem to be conditions under which they bring their interests together in MSIs anyway (Bansal & Roth, 2000).

The objective of this thesis is to provide insights into the emergence of the AGT and particularly to contribute to the existing gap in literature on how interests in an MSI are brought together by developing an explanation model. In order to achieve this objective, a contestatory deliberative perspective is used, judging conflicts and consensus in MSIs equally. The AGT is a representative initiative to focus on in finding these insights due to at least two reasons. Firstly, it is a relatively new MSI and therefore covers a reflection of the most actual form of MSI emergence. Scholars recommend focusing on new MSIs in expanding literature on the emergence of MSIs because these are important reflections of current CSR practices employed by organisations (Bansal & Roth, 2000; Jastram & Schneider, 2015). Secondly, the AGT can be analysed from multiple levels. Several scholars emphasise the importance of using different levels of analysis to understand organisational reactions to private regulation (Aguilera et al., 2007; Arenas et al., 2020; Bansal & Roth, 2000; Bartley, 2007; Lundsgaarde, 2017). A ‘multi-level analysis’ is achieved in this thesis by looking at how the AGT is situated within other MSIs, while looking at societal pressure and national and industrial conditions. The central question in this thesis is thereby as follows: *How can the emergence of the Dutch Agreement on Sustainable Garments and Textiles be explained from a contestatory deliberative perspective?* Based on the gathered insights a model is developed, explaining how interests are

brought together in the AGT's emergence. By conducting a qualitative research consisting of in-depth interviews and document analysis, I aimed identifying actors' interests and finding explanations for how their interests have been bundled. More precisely, the interviews are conducted with actors involved in the AGT's founding as well as current participants, while the document analysis is based on AGT documents, AGT articles, CSR reports, website pages, and annual reports of affiliated actors.

The theoretical contribution of this thesis lies in providing in-depth insights in the interests of actors in an MSI (1), explaining the process of bringing these interests together from a contestatory deliberative perspective (2), and identifying drivers and barriers for this process (3). So far, these areas have been under-researched in literature on MSI emergence (Bartley, 2007). Regarding the first contribution, identifying interests of actors is important as multiple scholars (e.g. Bartley, 2007; Pattberg, 2005; Roloff, 2008; Tighe, 2016) explain MSI emergence by referring to market actors' interests. However, prior literature has not looked at which interests of firms, governmental and civil society actors in MSIs are shared and which are in conflict (Arenas et al., 2020). Secondly, it is important to know more about how MSIs bring interests together as contestations between interests are inevitable in processes involving different types of actors (Arenas et al., 2020; Bartley, 2007). Thirdly, identifying drivers and barriers is important as scholars stress that MSIs are continuously affected by internal and external factors (Pattberg, 2005; Tighe, 2016) and should never be perceived as isolated partnerships (Ashwin et al., 2020; Bitzer et al., 2012; Donaghey and Reinecke, 2018). As the bundling of interests is closely linked to an MSI's founding process (Arenas et al., 2020; Bartley, 2007), it helps getting an understanding of how MSIs emerge, thereby filling the gap in literature.

From a practitioner's point of view, gaining an understanding of the founding process of MSIs is relevant as these insights can be used by entrepreneurs wanting to set up an MSI. Secondly, knowing the interests of actors in MSIs can help (re)designing MSIs in such a way that these interests are met more successfully. Thirdly, insights in how interests are bundled in MSIs are helpful for governments wanting organisations to join MSIs to facilitate the tackling of environmental and labour issues (Bansal & Roth, 2000; Fransen & Burgoon, 2011). The foundation of several MSIs is a good starting point, though more organisations joining these initiatives is essential for realising impactful measures against the problems in the garment industry (Jastram & Schneider, 2015; Scheper, 2017). To sum up, to support the founding of MSIs, to design MSIs which respond to interests of actors, and to attract organisations to MSIs, an understanding of how MSIs emerge is needed (SER, 2017a).

The outline of this thesis is as follows. The following chapter discusses relevant prior research and literature on MSIs, CSR, and their emergence. In addition, the contestatory deliberative perspective is elaborated. Thereafter, chapter 3 explains the methods used in the thesis to answer the central question. Chapter 4 presents the developed model explaining the emergence of the AGT. Chapter 5 positions the findings in relation to theory about MSI emergence by discussing how the findings can be interpreted and how these findings enrich our knowledge. In addition, research limitations, practical implications, and avenues for future research are described.

2. Theoretical background

This chapter gives an overview of existing literature on MSIs, CSR, their emergence, and explains the contestatory deliberative perspective. The outline is as follows. Firstly, MSIs are defined to gain a better idea of what this concept implies (2.1). Secondly, MSIs are positioned in relation to CSR (2.2). Thereafter, extant literature on the emergence of CSR (2.3) and MSIs (2.4) is reviewed. Then, this chapter specifies what is not explained yet in literature on MSI emergence (2.5). Finally, the applied perspective to fill the research gap is outlined (2.6).

2.1 Defining multi-stakeholder initiatives

This paragraph defines the concept of MSIs. An MSI is a specific form of a CSR initiative, consisting of different actors which are brought together in a partnership (London, 2012; Tighe, 2016). Remarkably, there is no consensus between scholars in terms of what qualifies as an MSI (Tighe, 2016). In fact, scholars are unclear about how they define MSIs (Fowler & Biekart, 2017; Schuessler, Frenkel & Wright, 2019). Different labels for MSIs are used by scholars, such as multi-stakeholder collaborations (Airike, Potter & Mark-Herbert, 2016), multi-stakeholder networks (Roloff, 2008), multi-stakeholder partnerships (London, 2012; Lundsgaarde, 2017; Tighe, 2016), and multi-stakeholder processes (Jastram & Schneider, 2015). Lundsgaarde (2017) provides a detailed explanation of what MSIs are. He argues that MSIs provide a platform by which markets can be transformed as a result of facilitating interactions between actors in the private sector (businesses) and national governmental organisations (Lundsgaarde, 2017). Hence, actors from different sectors (business, government, civil society sector) take part in MSIs. In this thesis, MSIs are defined as collaborations between firms, governments, and civil society actors to collectively address social and environmental problems (London, 2012). From this definition, it can be argued that MSIs are networks between different interrelated actors, which can be categorised into firms, the government, and civil society organisations, all having different interests (Achterbergh & Vriens, 2019; Lundsgaarde, 2017).

Bitzer et al. (2012) recommend the foundation of a so-called ‘meta-governance organisation’ in MSIs, which is an industry-oriented entity focusing at steering and coordinating the overall sustainability efforts in a particular industry to improve the impact of the connections. This meta-governance organisation is also called the ‘orchestrator’ (Fowler & Biekart, 2017). More precisely, Fowler and Biekart (2017) argue that MSIs require to be ‘orchestrated’ into existence, after which they should be guided to achieve its objectives. Orchestration is a governance mode which enables actors to cooperate and realise common goals (Fowler & Biekart, 2017). The entity covering the orchestrator role is associated with governments or international organisations (Fowler & Biekart, 2017).

2.2 Positioning MSIs in relation to CSR

Having MSIs defined, this paragraph positions MSIs in relation to CSR. As society is increasingly deteriorating in terms of environmental and social problems, the need for actors to collectively come

in action is reinforced (Dummet, 2006). One way to collective come in action is by coupling actors together in CSR initiatives (Dummet, 2006). More specifically, in terms of the poor conditions in the garment industry, “one way of increasing chances towards achieving equitable society is through the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives by companies” (Mohd et al., 2017, p. 1).

Both the conception and the scope of CSR initiatives have thoroughly been discussed over the last decades. There are different approaches of what CSR initiatives imply (Zerbini, 2017). Some scholars see CSR initiatives as political responses to the organisational environment in which regulations, NGOs, and institutionalised norms cover expectations of what is correct organisational behaviour (institutional theorists) (Campbell, 2007; Jennings & Zandbergen, 1995). Other scholars apply an instrumental perspective, perceiving CSR initiatives as activities which an organisation employs for its own benefits (Burke & Logsdon, 1996; Siegel & Vitaliano, 2007). In this thesis, CSR initiatives are defined as the policies, practices, and programmes incorporated into operations, supply chains, and decision-making processes of several firms, reflecting the economic, legal, and ethical expectations of society towards businesses (Mohd et al., 2017). In CSR initiatives, firms cross their organisational boundaries to collectively solve problems (London, 2012). Examples of CSR initiatives, next to MSIs, are environmental and social policies, codes of conduct and standards, and the promotion of ethical values through incentives and ethics programs (Zerbini, 2017).

Positioning MSIs in relation to CSR, Tighe (2016) states that MSIs are considered more developmental than other CSR initiatives because they have a broader array of participating actors. MSIs stimulate firms to adopt ethical practices, for example by setting up collective projects, auditing a production site together with other participating firms, and by adopting a relational approach towards supply chain governance (Tighe, 2016). The practices promoted by an MSI can be categorised into regulation and monitoring on the one hand and learning, collaboration, stakeholder dialogues, and relational governance on the other hand (Tighe, 2016). Tighe (2016) argues that MSIs help organisations gaining a better understanding of the causes of environmental and social problems by using a participatory approach. MSIs gain an increased visibility as a form of collaborative governance addressing global problems (Lundsgaarde, 2017). Also in literature, a growing number of scholars notice the increasing visibility of MSIs as innovative governance structures dealing with sustainability goals (Andonova, 2014, Lundsgaarde, 2017; Pattberg, 2005). From these arguments it can be stated that MSIs have the potential to be more effective than other types of CSR initiatives.

To sum up, while CSR initiatives are mainly focused on firms only, MSIs have a broader orientation as they bring more different types of actors together in collaborations (London, 2012). Although MSIs are a subset of CSR, they are regarded as superior to other CSR initiatives.

2.3 Explaining the emergence of CSR

Having MSIs and their positioning in relation to CSR explained, in this paragraph I explain the emergence of CSR. As MSIs are a subset of CSR initiatives (Fowler & Biekart, 2017), looking at

research explaining the emergence of CSR initiatives is relevant for this thesis as it can give insights in what interests actors might have in an MSI. Prior research explaining the emergence CSR initiatives is extensive. Much research has gone into looking what drives firms to join CSR initiatives of various kinds. Multiple scholars looked at different types of motives of firms to engage in CSR to explain the emergence of CSR initiatives (Aguilera, Rup, Williams & Ganapathi, 2007; Babiak & Trendafilova, 2011; Bansal & Roth, 2000; Paulraj, Chen & Blome, 2017), while others looked at drivers for organisations to join CSR initiatives more generally (Dummet, 2006). More specifically, Aguilera et al. (2007) argue that firms' motives to join CSR initiatives can be categorised in instrumental (strategic oriented), relational (legitimacy oriented), and moral (responsibility oriented) motives. These motives have also been confirmed in other studies (Babiak & Trendafilova, 2011; Bansal & Roth, 2000; Paulraj et al., 2017). Dummet (2006) identified drivers of organisations to join CSR initiatives which are government legislation or threatening legislation (1), cost savings (2), market advantage (3), protection or improvement of reputation and brand (4), escaping risks or reacting to an accident or environmental threat (5), a 'champion' in an organisation (6), shareholders' pressure (7), consumers' pressure (8), NGO pressure (9), and societal expectation (10). Although these drivers are originally focused on Corporate Environmental Responsibility (CER), these are also applicable as drivers for CSR since CER is a subcategory of CSR (Thompson & Zakaria, 2004).

These studies give insights in what reasons firms can have to join a particular initiative, thereby explaining the emergence of CSR initiatives in general. However, while these studies are providing tentative insights into possible interests in MSIs, they are limited in their applicability to MSIs because they only focus on firms, while this thesis also takes other types of actors (government and civil society) into account in finding an explanation for MSI emergence. Therefore, it is relevant to study prior research explaining MSI emergence to gain a more elaborate view.

2.4 Explaining the emergence of MSIs

Having explained the emergence of CSR, in this paragraph I give an overview of existing literature explaining MSI emergence. Firstly, prior research on the founding process is discussed in terms of bringing interests together. Thereafter, three conditions are discussed, each explaining how MSIs emerge from a relevant point of view.

2.4.1 Founding process

Bartley (2007) and Pattberg (2005) addressed the question why MSIs have emerged and how their founding process can be understood. The theories of these scholars are relevant in terms of the scope and objectives of this thesis, because both Bartley (2007) and Pattberg (2005) also look at the process of MSI emergence, thereby helping to get an understanding of the founding process. Although Bartley (2007) acknowledges that two common theoretical approaches (market-based and political) are relevant to explain MSI emergence, he developed a different relevant approach. In this approach, he

explains MSI emergence “as the outcome of political contestation and by analysing conflict and institutional entrepreneurship among a wide array of actors” (Bartley, 2007, p. 297). More specifically, Bartley (2007) perceives MSI emergence as a political process driven by institutional entrepreneurship of NGOs and governments, policy negotiations, and a neoliberal context. Bartley (2007) argues that important dynamics are overlooked in literature on MSI emergence which he calls the “political construction of market institutions” (p. 297). These dynamics imply political conflicts in terms of regulating global capitalism and the incorporation of these conflicts in rules and scripts, stimulating MSIs to emerge (Bartley, 2007). He argues that conflicts regarding the legitimacy of (inter)governmental regulation led to spaces for MSIs to emerge in which various actors got a lot of different interest (Bartley, 2007). Hence, the founding process of MSIs and the bundling of interests is a political and conflicting process that involves bargaining between actors with different interests (Bartley, 2007). To gain an idea of how this founding process can be understood, it is relevant to include Pattberg’s (2005) perspective on MSI emergence.

Pattberg (2005) argues that the process of founding an MSI needs to be understood as a multi-level process. More specifically, he created a model showing four explanatory factors for the emergence of MSIs, two on the macro level and two on the micro level of political structures. Regarding the macro level, factors explaining the emergence of MSIs are macro systemic transformations and powerful ideas (Pattberg, 2005). Macro systemic transformations have three consequences which are a decrease in public regulatory power (1), emerging civil society as an actor with legitimacy and credibility (2), and an increase in environmental and social impact of firms (3) (Pattberg, 2005). According to Pattberg (2005), powerful ideas serve as common points of reference between different actors, stimulating MSIs to emerge. Regarding the micro level, Pattberg (2005) argues that the problem structure and the availability of resources of the organisations involved are the necessary conditions for MSIs to emerge. Pattberg’s theory (2005) is relevant in terms of the objective of this thesis, because he uses different levels of analysis in explaining the emergence of MSIs. This is in line with the approach of this thesis as it is assumed that MSI emergence can be explained by conducting a multi-level analysis. Molina-Azorín, Pereira-Moliner, López-Gamero, Pertusa-Ortega, and Tarí (2019) state that this type of analysis is important in management research as it bridges the micro-macro gap and the research-practice gap. More specifically in terms of this thesis, Aguilera et al. (2007), Arenas et al. (2020), Bansal and Roth (2000), Bartley (2007), and Lundsgaarde (2017) emphasise the importance of using different levels of analysis to understand organisational reactions to private regulation.

Summing up, Bartley (2007) and Pattberg (2005) highlight that the foundation of MSIs and the bundling of interests is a political and conflictual process that involves bargaining between actors with different interests which needs to be understood as a multi-level process. The following three subparagraphs (2.4.2 to 2.4.4) elaborate on MSI emergence by explaining it from a specific condition, thereby giving a more in-depth view.

2.4.2 Relations between initiatives (condition 1)

Several scholars explain MSI emergence by referring to relations between initiatives (Ashwin et al., 2020; Bitzer, Glasbergen & Leroy, 2012). More specifically, prior research has found that different MSIs have connections with each other as a result of overlapping participations of organisations and institutional linkages (Bitzer et al., 2012). Overlapping participations imply that different MSIs have (a couple of) the same participating organisations, stimulating the creation of networks (Bitzer et al., 2012). According to Bitzer et al. (2012), the institutional linkages have been created over the last decades in which partnerships have changed from small NGO initiatives to large industry-based multi-stakeholder collaborations. What is notable is that “the linkages between partnerships channel the flow of resources and thereby reinforce the capacity of individual partnerships” (Bitzer et al., 2012, p. 355). More specifically, connections between different partnerships serve as a means from which services, financial resources, and information are transferred (Bitzer et al., 2012). As a result of this mechanism, strengths of individual partnerships are being reinforced (Bitzer et al., 2012).

Ashwin et al. (2020) and Donaghey and Reinecke (2018) add valuable contributions to the work of Bitzer et al. (2012). Ashwin et al. (2020) found that multi-firm collaborations emerge on the basis of common group understandings, positive interaction experiences, and trust which are enacted in the relations between different initiatives. More specifically, existing initiatives serve as a platform from which so-called ‘spill-over effects’ are developed, facilitating the creation of new governance initiatives (Ashwin et al., 2020). A spill-over effect implies that organisations involved in union-inclusive industrial initiatives, start increasingly experimenting with other initiatives (Ashwin et al., 2020). The socialisation process created by these arrangements facilitates the spill-over effect (Ashwin et al., 2020). Likewise, Donaghey and Reinecke (2018) found that the co-existing of different initiatives (for example the AGT and the German Textile Partnership) led to the urge of individual approaches to continuously show they were as effective as the other approach. As a result of this competition between different initiatives, Donaghey and Reinecke (2018) found that a levelling up mechanism started to occur. In this way, the existence of different (competing) initiatives can be seen as a condition leading to the emergence of MSIs.

To sum up, Ashwin et al. (2020), Bitzer et al (2012), and Donaghey and Reinecke (2018) emphasise that the emergence of new MSIs can be explained by looking at relations between initiatives. These theories provide relevant insights for this thesis as they create the awareness that MSIs should not be looked at in isolation, which is helpful in terms of understanding MSIs emergence.

2.4.3 Societal pressure (condition 2)

Societal pressure is another relevant condition from which prior studies explain MSI emergence (Fransen & Burgoon, 2011; Marx, 2008; Reinecke & Donaghey, 2015; Schuessler, Frenkel & Wright, 2019). As stated before, the Rana Plaza accident is one of the biggest disasters in history of the garment industry, after which several MSIs emerged (Jastram & Schneider, 2015). Reinecke and

Donaghey (2015) analysed how activist groups and trade unions collectively created a response to this disaster. They found that the coupling of production and consumption power is a powerful mechanism stimulating labour rights in global industries. More precisely, individual contributions of different governance actors complement each other and thereby create coalitional power (Reinecke & Donaghey, 2015). Schuessler et al. (2019) confirmed these findings as they proved that different accidents in the garment industry have different influences on different firms. They focused at the impact of the Rana Plaza accident on garment firms' labour standards and policies and found that firms differed in their responses (Schuessler et al., 2019). As a consequence of the accident, some firms made no changes, while others revised their policies and joined an MSI (Schuessler et al., 2019). In line with Reinecke and Donaghey (2015), Schuessler et al. (2019) found that different responses of firms can be explained by stakeholder pressure, implying that some firms experience a bigger pressure regarding their labour issues from stakeholders such as NGOs, governments, and consumers, while others do not.

Fransen and Burgoon (2011) and Marx (2008) elaborate on the importance of stakeholder pressure in explaining why firms join a particular MSI. More precisely, Fransen and Burgoon (2011) studied why firms choose to join a specific MSI in a context where several other initiatives are available, differing in their ambitiousness. In other words, they explored the conditions under which firms in the garment industry choose to join a more ambitious MSI rather than a less ambitious one. They found that societal pressure positively affects firms' preference for joining more ambitious MSIs (Fransen & Burgoon, 2011). Fransen and Burgoon (2011) argue that societal pressure is mainly performed by activist groups with the aim to influence firms. Other examples of societal pressure are campaigns, cooperation between public and informal actors, and pressure from consumers and media (Fransen & Burgoon, 2011). Marx (2008) also found that NGO pressure combined with organisational public ownership are essential preconditions for actors to join an MSI. According to Marx (2008), this can be explained by the fact that organisations strive to reduce uncertainty, seek to control the external information, and manage their reputation.

To summarise, societal pressure is another relevant condition explaining MSI emergence. Theories elaborating on this area (Fransen & Burgoon, 2011; Marx, 2008, Reinecke & Donaghey, 2017; Schuessler et al., 2019) provide additional insights in how MSIs emerge, making these theories relevant to integrate in this thesis.

2.5.4 National and industrial conditions (condition 3)

Finally, national and industrial conditions are found to be a relevant condition by which MSI emergence can be explained. Fransen and Burgoon (2014) argue that national and industrial conditions have an effect on firms' preference for joining a particular MSI. "In particular, the position of the firm in the value chain and its distance to consumers and manufacturers affect preference for more or less stringent private regulation" (Fransen & Burgoon, 2014, p. 236). This condition seems to be the same

as societal pressure, but the focus in industrial conditions lies more on an actor’s position in the supply chain (Fransen & Burgoon, 2014). In terms of national conditions, Pingeot (2016) argues that the increased interest of governmental actors in MSIs can be seen as a response action to their funding shortfalls combined with their willingness to embrace businesses’ perspectives. The rise of governmental partnerships is therefore explained as a reflection of the institutional survival strategy in which resources are stabilised and government’s legitimacy is increased (Pingeot, 2016).

To sum up, the positions of different parties involved in an MSI in terms of the industrial and national context are relevant to take into account in this thesis, as this contributes to gaining an understanding of how MSIs emerge.

2.5 Specifying the gap in literature

Having summarised what is known in literature on MSIs and their emergence, in this paragraph I will elaborate on what is not explained yet in literature. Figure 1 illustrates the gap in literature on MSI emergence. It shows that scholars have written about actors within MSIs, their interests in private regulation, and the emergence process. However, there is a research gap in how interests of different actors are brought together in the emergence process of MSIs. More specifically, explanations on how the process of bringing interests together can be understood are lacking in literature, which is the gap this thesis aims to fill. Now, I will specify this research gap part by part.

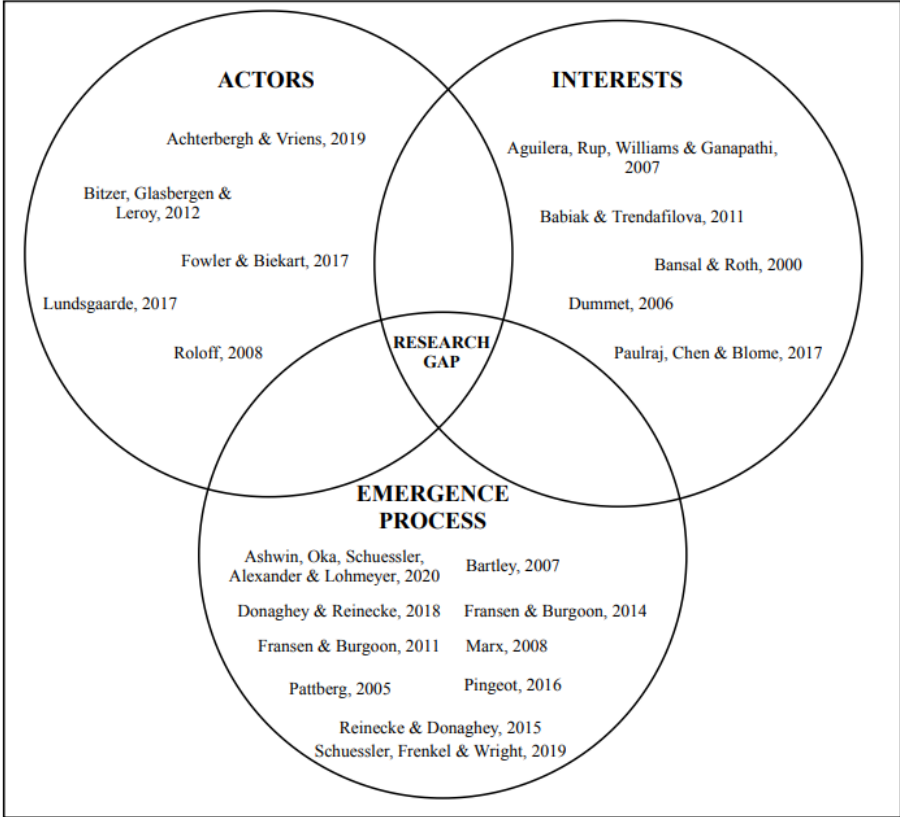


Figure 1 Gap in literature on MSI emergence

Firstly, Achterbergh and Vriens (2019), Lundsgaarde (2017), and Roloff (2008) showed that MSIs consist of different actors. More specifically, actors from different sectors (business, government, civil society sector) take part in MSIs (Lundsgaarde, 2017). Respectively, Achterbergh and Vriens (2019) label the actors per sector firms, government, and civil society. In terms of this thesis, all textile producing companies are considered as ‘firms’, the Dutch government as ‘government’, and NGOs, trade unions, and business associations as ‘civil society’. In terms of actors, Bitzer et al. (2012) and Fowler and Biekart (2017) stressed that the governmental actor mainly covers the orchestrator role. This is an essential role in terms of managing actors within MSIs as the orchestrator enables actors to work together and realise common goals (Fowler & Biekart, 2017). Achterbergh and Vriens (2019) stress that actors within an MSI are interrelated. More specifically, the decisions of individual actors are somehow related to the decisions of others. Fransen and Burgoon (2011), Marx (2008), Reinecke and Donaghey (2015), and Schuessler et al. (2019) showed that societal pressure is an important condition explaining the emergence of MSIs. Societal pressure can be seen as an interaction between firms and civil society. Other examples reflecting the interrelatedness between actors are firms adopting CSR activities as a response to new rules and regulations imposed by the government or civil society actors setting up campaigns to influence governmental regulations.

Secondly, Aguilera et al. (2007), Babiak and Trendafilova (2011), Bansal and Roth (2000), Dummet (2006), and Paulraj et al. (2017) showed what interests actors can have to join a particular initiative, thereby explaining the emergence of private regulation in general. These interests of actors can be conflicting. For example, it can be assumed that firms are primarily interested in joining an MSI to protect their brand reputation or image (Aguilera et al. 2007), while the government and civil society strive for as ambitious as possible requirements in the agreement to press environmental and societal problems (Bansal & Roth, 2000).

Thirdly, it can be concluded that there is much literature written on the emergence process of MSIs more generally (e.g. Bartley, 2007; Pattberg, 2005). In addition, conditions through which MSI emergence can be explained are also researched quite well which can be distinguished between relations between initiatives (Ashwin et al., 2020; Bitzer et al., 2012; Donaghey & Reinecke, 2018), societal pressure (Fransen & Burgoon, 2011; Marx, 2008; Reinecke & Donaghey, 2015; Schuessler et al., 2019), and national and industrial conditions (Fransen & Burgoon, 2014; Pingeot, 2016).

When combining the three research areas, there appears to be a gap in literature on how interests of different actors (firms, governmental, and civil society) are brought together in the emergence process of an MSI (Ashwin et al., 2020; Bartley, 2007). To found an MSI, interests of different actors should somehow be brought together to enable collaboration between actors. However, explanations on how this process can be understood are lacking, which is the research gap this thesis aims to fill. Bartley (2007) argues that MSIs are organised in a structure that does not fully engage with interests of actors and therefore have a limited ability to create productive relations. More specifically, “even if a shared cultural frame allows a wide array of actors to view deforestation or

child labour as problems, divergent interests and overt conflicts will come to the fore when it comes to determining whose problem it is and how it should be addressed” (Bartley, 2007, p. 341). In addition to Bartley (2007), Arenas et al. (2020) state that managing internal contestation is an essential part of the democratisation process within MSIs which is an underestimated element by prior studies on MSIs. Cutcher-Gershenfeld (2015) agrees with the scholars and states that although intra-organisational bargaining may be the most complex process to understand, it is the most essential part to overcome the challenges of society today. Therefore, finding explanations for how the process of bringing interests together can be understood is relevant. How interests are brought together in founding an MSI will be studied empirically in this thesis. The next paragraph elaborates on the literature gap by presenting and explaining the perspective which is applied in this thesis.

2.6 The contestatory deliberative perspective

The contestatory deliberative perspective is a well-fitting theoretical lens to answer the research question and to respond to the gap in literature for the following three reasons. Firstly, the perspective is in line with the MSI definition used in this thesis as it perceives MSIs as collaborations between various actors with different interests (Arenas et al., 2020). In addition, the contestatory deliberative values contestation and consensus between interests in MSIs as equal (Arenas et al., 2020), which is also acknowledged by this thesis. Arenas et al. (2020) stress that studying contestation and consensus within MSIs enables scholars to move beyond the assumptions that MSIs are both solutions and barriers for worldwide private governance. Secondly, the perspective helps to explain how the process of bringing these interests together can be understood (Arenas et al., 2020). More specifically, while other perspectives perceive MSIs as spaces of conflict (political perspectives) or spaces of consensus (deliberative perspectives), the contestatory deliberative perspective explains how consensus and contestation between interests stimulate the emergence process (Arenas et al., 2020). Thirdly, the perspective stresses that managing contestations between interests is vital for an MSI’s viability which is underestimated by prior studies on MSI emergence (Arenas et al., 2020). The process of bringing interests together can also be labelled as managing interests and, therefore, the perspective fits well with the focus of this thesis. Now, I will elaborate on the perspective to gain a better idea of what this theoretical lens implies.

Arenas et al. (2020) studied MSIs as spaces for deliberation and contestation between actors with conflicting discourses, values, beliefs, and preferences. The scholars argue that consensus and contestations between interests are common in MSIs (Arenas et al., 2020). Arenas et al. (2020) translated this in the contestatory deliberative perspective which values consensus and contestation within MSIs equally. More specifically in terms of this perspective, they state that “embracing contestation and engaging in ongoing revision of provisional agreements, criteria, and goals can enhance the democratic quality of MSIs” (Arenas et al., 2020, p. 169). The scholars identified four types of internal contestation that can appear within MSIs which are procedural, inclusiveness,

epistemic, and ultimate goal contestation (Arenas et al., 2020). In procedural contestation, there is disagreement about existing rules and procedures which can be solved by reinforcing or revising these rules and procedures (Arenas et al., 2020). In inclusive contestation, there are “disagreements about who should be represented in the MSI, what would be an equitable and proportional representation, what voices should be heard, and how these voices should express themselves” (Arenas et al., 2020, p. 187). When there are disagreements in how actors assess the facts related to social or environmental problem(s) the MSI aims to solve and the outcomes of decisions and policies, this is called epistemic contestation (Arenas et al., 2020). In the ultimate goal contestation, there is disagreement about the ultimate goal of the MSI (Arenas et al., 2020). If no effort is made to solve these contestations, Arenas et al. (2020) argue that it leads to a blocked deliberation. In terms of this thesis, this blocking would mean that interests of actors could not be brought together. According to Arenas et al. (2020), managing MSIs is a complex and long process aimed at resolving conflicting interests. The authors summarise this by referring to Elinor Ostrom’s (1990, p. 40) phrase, stating that “getting the institutions right’ is a difficult, time-consuming, conflict-invoking process” (Arenas et al., 2020).

In line with Arenas et al. (2020), Cutcher-Gershenfeld (2015) and Zeyen, Beckmann, and Wolters (2016) also studied how different interests in MSIs affect its development. Clutcher-Gershenfeld (2015) argues that complex systems such as an MSI can be understood as a matrix consisting of actors on the one dimension and interests on the other. More specifically, “each stakeholder has a vector of interests and each interest has a vector of stakeholders” (Clutcher-Gershenfeld, 2015, p. 399). Speaking about different interests in an MSI, Cutcher-Gershenfeld (2015) argues that identifying these is a dynamic process. Each party has a different mix of relevant interests and actions taken during the negotiation process affect this mix (Cutcher-Gershenfeld (2015). An important finding of Clutcher-Gershenfeld (2015) is that not all actors are active in MSI negotiations, but that internal dynamics in every party are relevant for the viability of the negotiated agreements. Zeyen et al. (2016) stress that MSIs and the participating actors should manage the development process of MSIs to overcome problems such as a standstill, abuse, or loss of legitimacy. By development process, the scholars mean that pioneer participants should be aware of their different interests in order to negotiate a robust norm (Zeyen et al., 2016). The scholars stress that MSIs will gain benefits if they are clearly aware of the potential trade-offs and tensions that could occur when they get more participants (Zeyen et al., 2016).

To sum up, Arenas et al. (2020) showed that shared and conflicting interests in MSIs are common and that the contestatory deliberative perspective helps understanding this (Albareda et al., 2020). Clutcher-Gershenfeld (2015) and Zeyen et al. (2016) showed that MSIs consist of a wide array of actors with different interests affecting the viability of an MSI. Dealing with contestations between interests can be understood as a development process (Clutcher-Gershenfeld, 2015; Zeyen et al., 2016).

3. Methodology

This chapter describes the methods that have been used to answer the research question. The outline of this chapter is as follows. Firstly, the empirical background of the thesis is discussed, providing more details about the AGT (3.1). Secondly, the research approach is presented in terms of the type of research and the adopted epistemological position (3.2). Thirdly, the sample used in the research is described (3.3). Fourthly, the used forms of data collection are explained (3.4). Thereafter, the development process of the interview guide is described (3.5), followed by the analysis procedure (3.6). Finally, the research quality (3.7) and research ethics will be discussed (3.8).

3.1 Empirical background

In order to set the scene of this thesis, this paragraph presents the empirical background. This thesis has a specific focus on the Dutch Agreement on Sustainable Garments and Textiles (AGT) and the affiliated actors. As stated before, these actors are divided in firms, government, and civil society. The AGT is a good reflection of an MSI because different types of organisations (actors) are brought together in this collaboration to address complex environmental and social problems together by sharing knowledge, power, and skills (Fowler & Biekart, 2017), which is in line with the definition of an MSI applied in this thesis.

The AGT was founded at 4 July 2016 and remains in effect for 5 years (SER, 2017a). The Social and Economic Council of the Netherlands (SEC), founder of the AGT, manages this collaboration. The SEC is an independent advisory organisation of the Dutch government (SER, 2017a). The AGT is managed by assisting participants with their CSR practices for example by sharing expertise, sending helpful analysis documents, spreading questionnaires about how participants can be provided support most effectively, and by sending a monthly newsletter (SER, 2017b). The emergence of the AGT is seen as ambitious and successful by multiple engaged actors (e.g. SER, 2018; Unicef, 2017). The Social and Economic Council of the Netherlands (SEC) (2018), founder of the initiative, reports that the AGT achieves increasing successes as the initiative covers 48% market share and has over 92 participating brands meeting the requirements of the initiative in the Netherlands by 2018. The aim of the AGT is to have 80% of all garment and textile firms in the Netherlands joined the initiative by 2021 (SER, 2017c). Participants of the collaboration are divided in signatories, participating parties, and supporters. Signatories subsume firms that have signed the AGT and are obliged to perform sustainability actions and tasks so that the objectives of the AGT can be achieved. Participating parties entail the Dutch government, industry organisations (VGT, Modint, and INretail), NGOs (Unicef, Four Paws, Solidaridad, Stop Child Labour, and Arisa), and trade unions (CNV and FNV) (SER, 2017c). Supporters cover parties supporting the AGT and its objectives (e.g. ASN Bank, Fair Labor Association, and Save the Children). They are willing to share their expertise and experience with other parties that joined the AGT. However, contrary to the participating firms, they do not have obligatory tasks regarding the initiative (SER, 2017c).

The objective of the AGT is to realise improvements in the garment industry regarding human rights violations, unsafe labour conditions, child labour, animal welfare, and environmental pollution (Demkes, 2019). Organisations participating in the AGT are obliged to investigate the extent to which their activities lead to implications for human rights, environmental responsibility, and animal welfare (SER, 2017a). Examples of implications occurring often in low-wage countries are not paying living wages to garment workers and violating freedom of association (Demkes, 2019). Firms that join the AGT are also obliged to create plans to reduce risks regarding these implications (SER, 2017a). Subsequently, they should execute these plans (SER, 2017a). In order to implement the plans, organisations in this network cooperate with other parties within and outside the collaboration, including trade unions, business associations, NGOs, and the Dutch government. Starting from July 2019, all participating organisations are evaluated annually by the SEC and are offered advice to refine their targets and make further improvements (SER, 2017b).

3.2 Research approach

To find explanations how different interests have been brought together in the emergence process of the AGT, a qualitative research approach was selected as most appropriate as this type of research allowed me to be open for new insights from the empirical field (Bleijenberg, 2015; Myers, 2019; Symon, & Cassell, 2012). More specifically, a qualitative research is more suitable to explore thoughts and ideas of actors than a quantitative study (Symon & Cassell, 2012). Myers (2019) adds that a qualitative research is most appropriate if a researcher aims to understand intentions, reasons, actions, and the context of the beliefs of people which is in line with the objective of this research. Moreover, a quantitative study would require specifying the interests of actors in an MSI and the process of bringing interests together in advance, but these insights are lacking in current literature (Ashwin et al., 2020; Arenas et al., 2020; Bartley, 2007).

In line with the constructivist perspective, I perceive knowledge about reality and reality as socially constructed (Mogashoa, 2014; Symon & Cassell, 2012). In terms of this thesis, this means that I have got in deep conversations with respondents about their interests in the AGT and how their interests are brought together with those of others. By means of these deep social conversations, I aimed to learn how the process of bringing interests together can be understood and how this process explains the AGT's emergence (Mogashoa, 2014). To realise a valuable contribution to literature and to capture a view of practice which is as accurate as the respondents' views on reality as possible, respondents are provided ample space to share their interests in the AGT and their explanations for how these have been bundled with those of others in founding the AGT (Symon & Cassell, 2012).

This thesis has an inductive character, implying that I had some general ideas from literature explaining how MSIs emerge, but that I was open to gain new insights regarding the interests of the different actors and how these have been brought together in the emergence process (Symon & Cassell, 2012). An inductive approach suits well to the objective of this thesis in terms of filling the

gap in current literature on MSI emergence, because this approach allowed me to be open for new insights (Myers, 2019). As the topic of this thesis is under-researched, it was also not possible to create a detailed conceptual model from which reality can be perceived in advance (Symon & Cassell, 2012).

3.3 Sample

Firms, NGOs, trade unions, business associations, and the SEC, all participating in the AGT, are interviewed as these actors are recognised as firms, governmental, and civil society actors. I have decided to include all these actors in the research as this enabled me to gain a broad view on the research question. More specifically, including all actors enabled me to take as much as possible perspectives towards the AGT into account. Legal Officers and Directors (for example CSR Managers, Managing Directors, Sustainability Managers, and CSR Directors) of participating firms as well as people of other organisations participating in the AGT (for example Programme Officers, Policy Advisors, Corporate Specialists, and CSR Consultants) are interviewed to find reliable and rich insights into perspectives towards the AGT. In choosing people to be interviewed, individuals who would be most informative in terms of the research question were selected (Corley & Gioia, 2004). Also the snowballing method was used by asking respondents if they knew other people who could be best contacted to gain insights in terms of the research question (Corley & Gioia, 2004).

The organisations are contacted by e-mail, telephone, and LinkedIn. Some organisations are called first, after which an e-mail with more information about the interview was sent. Other organisations were sent an invitation mail without having had prior contact by telephone. The sent invitation mails can be found in [Appendix I](#). These invitation mails are written collectively with other researchers interested in MSI emergence. Table 1 shows an overview of the interviewed respondents. More specifically, per type of organisation, the table shows the positions of the respondents, and what fictional name is applied to them.

Type of organisation	Position of respondent	Fictional name
Firm	CSR Manager	Pierre
Firm	CSR Employee	Lisa
Firm	Operations Manager	Guido
Firm	Product Manager	Miranda
Firm	Sustainability Manager	Merel
Firm	Managing Director	Pieter
Firm	Sustainability Officer	Gillian
NGO	Corporate Specialist	Niek
NGO	Programme Officer	Lieke
Social Economic Council	Coordinator	Rick
Trade union	Policy Advisor	Annika
Business association	CSR Consultant	Victoria

Table 1 Sample information

3.4 Data collection

Using qualitative data consisting of semi structured in-depth interviews combined with document analysis I aimed to find relevant insights in terms of the research question. In this paragraph, I explain why these forms of data collection are selected as suitable and how these were conducted.

Semi structured in-depth interviews

Semi structured in-depth interviews were chosen to be a helpful tool in exploring perspectives of respondents (Symon & Cassell, 2012). In terms of this thesis, perspectives of actors regarding their interests in the AGT and how their interests have been brought together with those of other actors were particularly relevant since they helped answering the research question. In a semi structured interview the questions and answers are not fixed beforehand, while the themes are (Myers, 2019). This form of interview was selected as most appropriate in this study as it gave respondents more space to share their stories, thoughts, and experiences to their full potential (Myers, 2019). A structural approach was created by using an interview guide which is constructed based on the central research question. The first part of the guide consists of introductory questions, the middle part deals with detailed questions about sensitive topics, and the end part consists of general concluding questions (Symon & Cassell, 2012). Different interview guides were used for different types of actors (firms, government, civil society) interviewed. These interview guides can be found in [Appendix II](#).

In advance, a pilot interview was conducted to look for possible unclear questions and to assure the questions led to enough depth. Due to the Corona outbreak, it was not possible to interview the respondents face-to-face. Therefore, the interviews took place by telephone (8), Skype (3), and mail (1). I was aware that conducting interviews from distance could lead to disadvantages in comparison with face-to-face interviews regarding recruitment, technological issues, and ethics (Deakin & Wakefield, 2014). However, interviewing by telephone also led to advantages in terms of logistics, flexibility, and convenience (Drabble, Trocki, Salcedo, Walker & Korcha, 2016). More specifically, the use of phone increased the convenience to conduct interviews across geographically separated respondents, maximised scheduling flexibility, and created a comfortable privacy for respondents (Drabble et al., 2016). As recommended by Janghorban, Roudsari, and Taghipour (2014), I have studied the pros and cons of interviewing by phone, prior to utilising this method.

Before the interviews, respondents received information about the research objectives and its origin. In addition, respondents were assured that the insights gained would be processed confidentially and that names, brands, and other confidential information would be made fully anonymous (Bell & Bryman, 2007). After some small talk to stimulate the conversation (Drabble et al., 2016) and a comprehensive introduction of the interview, the voice recorder was started and the interviews were conducted. The interviews were conducted on my own as well as in collaboration with other researchers interested in the emergence of MSIs, differing in research focus. In interviews that are conducted in collaboration with other researchers, I have brought in my own focus by asking

questions specifically relevant in terms of my research question. Respondents were encouraged to speak actively, to give as much as possible examples and to share additional insights emerging during the conversation (Symon & Cassell, 2012). During the interviews, I also made additional notes which were elaborated and processed during the analysis process. These notes gave additional information to the results as they reflect my thoughts, feelings, and opinions (Symon & Cassell, 2012).

Document analysis

Additional data was brought into the research from AGT documents, articles on the AGT as well as CSR and annual reports authored by actors participating in the AGT. Only the documents of interviewed organisations were analysed to maintain consistency within the research in terms of data triangulation (Symon & Cassel, 2012). If documents were not available, I analysed organisations' website pages on the AGT. Before website pages were opened in ATLAS.ti, these were first copied to a Microsoft Office Word document. In [Appendix III](#), an overview of all used documents can be found. By analysing documents, I aimed to find actors' interests in the AGT and to find explanations for how their interests have been brought together in the founding process. Documents contain rich data and play an important role in the organisational field, providing details of corporate strategies, policies, and goals (Symon & Cassell, 2012). These documents were brought in because they helped finding an answer to the research question and they added valuable contributions to the interview data (Myers, 2019). More specifically, documents contain additional explanations why actors have joined the AGT, what their main interests are in the AGT and how they managed to bring their interests together with those of others. The following paragraph describes the development of the interview guide.

3.5 Developing the interview guide

The contestatory deliberative perspective explained before was used as guidance for the empirical analysis. All interview questions were derived from this perspective, the central question, and the research objective. The interview questions were categorised in the themes 'interests in the AGT' and 'the process of bringing interests together'. Some examples of questions related to the interests of actors in the AGT are: *"Why did you join the AGT?"*, *"What was your main interest in the AGT?"*, *"Did you experience any differences between your own interests and the interests of other actors?"*, and *"If so, which differences were these?"* These questions were included in the interview guide as they helped gaining a view on what interests actors have in the AGT. Exemplary questions related to the process of bringing interests together are: *"How was your organisation involved in the founding process of the AGT?"*, *"To what extent were you able to bring your organisation's interests into the AGT?"*, *"Were you able to align your organisation's interests with those of other actors participating in the AGT?"*, *"If so, how did you manage that?"*, *"Was there anything that helped in bringing interests together?"*, and *"Was there anything that made it more difficult to bring interests together?"* These

questions were included in the interview guide as they helped gaining an understanding on how interests of different actors are brought together in founding the AGT (Symon & Cassell, 2012).

3.6 Analysis

Before analysing the interviews, these were first transcribed. This activity was performed within one week after the interview so that the conversation was still fresh in mind and that I was able to make adaptations to the interview guide before the next interviews. Transcribing the interview as realistic as possible (including ‘ehms’ and durations of silences) allowed me to stay in touch with practice which increases the reliability of the study (Symon & Cassell, 2012).

To analyse the data, these were coded in first order concepts, second order themes, and aggregate dimensions in ATLAS.ti. ATLAS.ti is an analysis program which is highly recommended to use in qualitative management research (Symon & Cassel, 2012). The ‘Gioia method’ was used because this form of analysis fits especially well with an inductive research approach (Corley, Gioia & Hamilton, 2012). The first step of the Gioia method implies identifying concepts used by the respondents, without putting much effort in creating specific categories. In the second step, I looked for similarities and differences between all categories. This reduced the number of categories to a manageable number of 27 categories. These categories were given a label in respondent terms. In this second analysis stage, I was in the theoretical area in which I asked myself if the emerging themes provided concepts helping to explain the emergence process of MSIs (Corley et al., 2012). Thirdly, I looked if the second order themes could be placed further in aggregate dimensions. Table 2 shows the full data structure. It shows how I came from raw data to concepts, themes, and dimensions in the analysis, which is an essential part of showing rigor in qualitative research (Corley et al., 2012). [Appendix IV](#) shows a more extensive version of the structure as it also shows quotes per concept.

AGT documents, AGT articles, CSR reports, annual reports of affiliated actors, and website pages authored by respondents that were interviewed were also analysed using ATLAS.ti. The analysis procedure (Gioia method) used for analysing the interviews, was also used for analysing the documents. This allowed me to get an overview of all perspectives of actors participating in the AGT, without getting lost in all the data. In addition, the analyses matched up well with each other as they were both analysed in the same qualitative analysis software and by the same analysis procedure.

1 st Order Concepts	2nd Order Themes	Aggregate Dimension
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working together to increase leverage at production sites • Setting up collective projects on most complex problems 	Gaining collaboration benefits	Interests
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information you get from experts • Exchanging information and learning from each other • Bridging knowledge gaps 	Knowledge sharing	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We want to see an impact on social and environmental conditions • Solving problems • Increasing influence is the only way forward 	Making an impact	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Platform to easily get in touch with other organisations • Entrances to other parties • We are seen as a legitimate interlocutor 	Networking	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transparency gives us the possibility to discover issues • Inspiring by creating transparency 	Transparency	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support to improve own essential sustainability themes • Guidance, documents, tools, trainings 	Improving own CSR practices	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You're not going to be pilloried • The holistic approach • Beyond the first tier in supply chain 	Positive culture	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We just think it's important to do our bit • Making the world a more sustainable place • Commitment to CSR 	Contributing to sustainability	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raising awareness for problems • We strive for the most ambitious rules, regulations, and actions 	Lobbying	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Others say how I work and whether it's good or not • Nice to show our customers 	External legitimacy	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They underpinned the founding of the AGT • Basic ground for parties to participate is the same • Collaboration is needed to be able to change • A stimulating, broad way of thinking would be most effective 	Shared interests	Consensus and contestations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are firms that participate for free-riding • NGOs and trade unions can be unrealistic and too ambitious • The AGT does not support themes that are important for us 	Conflicting interests	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The SEC is a mediator who brings parties together • I can link you to that one and that one • Connecting levels to actions and goals • You can bring in your issues and they take these into account 	Orchestrating	Process of bringing interests together
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People start to trust each other more • It takes time and effort to build trust and establish relationships • It is a learning process in which you try to understand each other's role and interest 	Learning process	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consumer expectations • Society is becoming more critical towards sustainability 	Consumer pressure	Drivers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Competition leads to pressure on what the AGT delivers • Working together with other international initiatives to increase impact • It can reinforce each other 	Relations between initiatives	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engaging in dialogues • Compromising until a solution is found in the middle • Typical Dutch model 	Consultation	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Firms further in chain mainly join AGT • Hard to tackle problems in supply chain individually 	Industrial conditions	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Falling back on international agreements (OECD and UNGPs) 	International guidelines	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ali Enterprise, Tazreen, and Rana Plaza • Increased urgency 	Accidents in the garment industry	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interactive meetings • Shared interest in the same subject 	Voluntary meetings	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Everyone is one a different level in sustainability 	Level differences	Barriers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Competitive sensitivity • Hard to communicate • Bone of contention 	Competition	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Change is often quite scary and thrilling • People want to hold on to the robust 	Difficulty to change	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited degree of transparency is a limitation • Civil society organisations do not know what themes firms are working on 	Limited transparency	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inflexibility • Unwieldy mechanism 	High number of parties	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bureaucratic thing, proving them what you do • Limited freedom 	Principled attitudes	

Table 2 Data structure

3.7 Research quality

According to Symon and Cassell (2012), a qualitative research can be assessed by the criteria credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability. Credibility implies showing a good fit between the realities provided by respondents and the reconstructions presented to them (Symon &

Cassell, 2012). I met this criterion by conducting peer debriefing (checking findings with supervisor and colleague students) and member checking (validating transcripts with respondents). Transferability implies that rather than showing that the results can be generalised to all other contexts, the researcher gives details about the specific research context (Symon & Cassell, 2012). This criterion is met by providing a thick description of the research case (the AGT) so that readers can judge themselves what other (comparable) contexts and whether their own context can be informed by the findings. Dependability means showing how changes in methods and reconstructions have been made to enable them for evaluation (Symon & Cassell, 2012). I met this criterion by explaining all choices I have made in terms of methods and reconstructing the realities provided by respondents. Conformability implies making clear where the data have been come from and how these data have been translated into the findings (Symon & Cassell, 2012). This criterion was met by having explained that the data mainly had come from interviews with actors affiliated with and participating in the AGT as well as from documents about the AGT and by describing the analysis procedure. In addition, the data were translated into findings by using peer debriefing and member checking.

3.8 Research ethics

Before starting the research, I perceived that organisations mainly join MSIs to protect their legitimacy and reputation towards society and perform minimal efforts to improve the world, both environmentally and socially. This might have influenced the research approach and the analysis of the empirical data (Symon & Cassell, 2012). However, I aimed to be as neutral as possible in approaching the field and in analysing the findings. This was assured by using peer reviews and member checks, meaning that my interpretations have been checked for accuracy and correctness. I strived to be continuously aware of my role during fieldwork by reflecting on my feelings, thoughts, and hesitations regularly on paper ([Appendix V](#)). I acknowledged that while I would be doing research, I also simultaneously intervened in the phenomenon under investigation. On the other hand, I was aware that I would also be affected by the object under study while intervening in it (Symon & Cassell, 2012).

All respondents of the research have been approached in a professional, social, and confidential way. Before conducting the interviews, the research objectives and origins were informed to the respondents. All respondents were told they were free to refuse particular questions if these became too confidential or even withdrawn from participating in the research when they would not feel at ease (Bell & Bryman, 2007). In addition, respondents were assured that all information gained in interviews and documents would only be used for research purposes. Besides, all respondents providing confidential documents were assured that names of organisations or people and other confidential data would be fully made anonymous. To compensate the people who spend their time, shared their knowledge, or made any other contribution to the research, they received a copy of the final thesis. In this way, I aimed to achieve reciprocity, implying that all participants received a reward for their contribution (Bell & Bryman, 2007; Symon & Cassell, 2012).

4. Findings

This chapter presents the findings in light of the research question. As stated before, the objective of this research is to provide insights in the emergence of the AGT by developing a new explanation model. Therefore, the first paragraph (4.1) of this chapter presents the full developed model. Thereafter, the model is discussed part by part, starting with actors' interests (4.2), followed by the found consensus and contestations between interests (4.3), and finally, the insights explaining how interests are brought together and what its drivers and barriers are (4.4).

4.1 Explaining the emergence of the AGT

This paragraph forms the big picture of this chapter in the sense that it integrates all findings in one model explaining the emergence of the AGT. Figure 2 shows this developed model. It captures a process model, showing how interests of actors lead to consensus and contestations which are managed by orchestrating, leading to the bringing together of interests. I will now explain how this model should be interpreted.

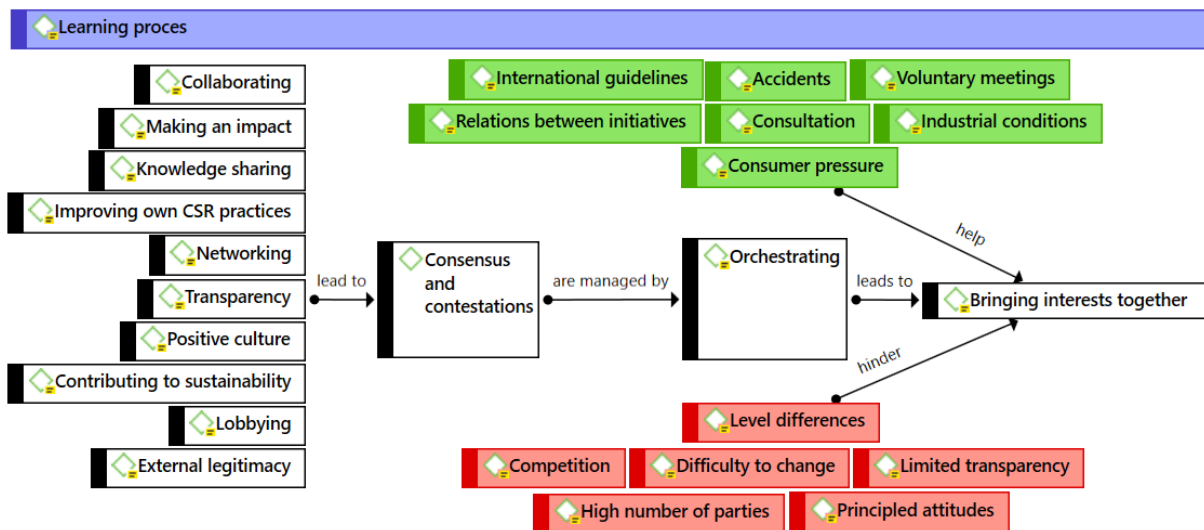


Figure 2 Process model explaining AGT emergence

The whole process of bringing interests together is a learning process. This is the overall gist of the model, shown by the blue part at the top of Figure 3. The learning process implies getting to know each other, building trust, and understanding each other's roles and interests. During this process, openness, trust, and proactive behaviour between actors in the AGT are improved, making it easier to bring interests together. This learning process is experienced as complex and time-consuming by actors participating in the AGT.

In terms of the relations shown by the model, interests of firms, government, and civil society actors in the AGT lead to consensus and contestations as these interests might be shared among actors (consensus) or conflicting (contestation). As shown in the model, consensus and contestations between interests are managed by orchestrating. In other words, shared and conflicting interests are dealt with

by an orchestrator. In the case of the AGT, respondents refer to the SEC, the steering group, or the independent secretariat as being the orchestrator of the initiative. Orchestrating is an essential process in order to bring interests together. It implies connecting actors with a shared interest, aligning sustainability levels of firms with realistic goals and actions, and evaluating issues of participants and the progress of the AGT in determining the future trajectory of the AGT. As shown by the arrow in Figure 3, orchestrating leads to the bringing together of interests which is the final outcome in the model. The difference between orchestrating and bringing interests together is that orchestrating is done by the SEC, while the process of bringing interests together involves all actors. Finally, there are drivers (green) and barriers (red), shown above and under the process of bringing interests together in Figure 3. Drivers help bringing interests together, while barriers hinder this process.

4.2 Interests of actors in the AGT

This paragraph gives an elaborate view on actors' interests in the AGT. The found interests are shown in Table 3, categorised in least (<15 times), average (15-25 times), and most (>25 times) frequently mentioned. In addition, the table shows which interests are present at specific actors (firms, government, and civil society).

		Type of actor				#
		Firms	Government	Civil Society		
Mentioned	Most	1. Gaining collaboration benefits	✓	✓	✓	60
		2. Knowledge sharing	✓		✓	31
		3. Making an impact	✓	✓	✓	28
	Average	4. Networking	✓		✓	25
		5. Transparency	✓		✓	24
		6. Improving own CSR practices	✓			22
		7. Positive culture	✓	✓	✓	19
		8. Contributing to sustainability	✓	✓	✓	18
	Least	9. Lobbying			✓	14
		10. External legitimacy	✓			7

Table 3 Interests in the AGT per type of actor ordered by frequency (*# = times mentioned*)

As can be seen in Table 3, the interests gaining collaboration benefits, making an impact, positive culture, and contributing to sustainability are shared among all actors. Looking further in the table, firms and civil society actors have comparable interests. Little differences lie in the interests improving own CSR practices, external legitimacy (only firms), and lobbying (only civil society). Remarkably, all interests of governmental actors are also present at firms and civil society actors. Now, I will explain the found interests individually in terms of what these imply and what they address, starting with the most frequently mentioned and ending with the least mentioned ones.

1. Gaining collaboration benefits

The most mentioned interest in the AGT by all actors is gaining collaboration benefits. Concretely, these benefits imply an increased leverage at production sites and collective projects on the most complex problems. More specifically in terms of this interest, respondents perceive the AGT as a collaboration enabling and enforcing platform in which they can bundle forces to realise effective change in the garment industry. Merel, Sustainability Manager, explains, “If you're in such a complex chain as the textile industry, you just need each other to take steps. [...] That's why it's so important that you work together, because otherwise you just can't get through” (interview 5). Victoria, CSR Consultant of a business association, states that “firms really like to work together with other firms, because they were all on their own little island trying to figure out how to make the industry more sustainable. That was an important driver” (interview 9). Niek, Corporate Specialist at an NGO, adds that firms also need help of civil society organisations in the AGT, “Firms have very concrete objectives they need to achieve and they are committed to us because our knowledge becomes very essential to them” (interview 7). When asking respondents how they want to collaborate, firms mainly mention they want to conduct audits and tackle problems at production sites together with other parties so that they have more leverage to realise change. Miranda, Product Manager, explains, “We thought it might help us increasing our leverage at a number of production sites. [...]. So we had something of okay, then at least we increase the ability to make certain changes at production sites” (interview 4). Besides an increased leverage, the AGT also enables actors to gain collaboration benefits in terms of collective projects on the most complex problems. Merel, Sustainability Manager, gives an example of a collective project her firm has set up.

We set up a separate working group on leather with, among others, (*business association*) and (*NGO*), who do have knowledge about that. [...] We brainstorm together about what we are up against in the AGT and what we should do. What do we need and who can help us? So a lot of different experts, a number of brands, so something like that happens from the AGT and yes, it's really nice that such a thing can arise (interview 5).

Lieke, Programme Officer of an NGO, adds, “We have worked with a number of firms to identify their supply chains and to implement an improvement programme to address all cases of child labour” (interview 8). From these examples, it appears that collective projects help actors to realise change. In sum, gaining collaboration benefits is a common interest as this enables actors to solve problems in the industry. Actors perceive the AGT as a platform that enables and enforces collaboration between individuals.

2. Knowledge sharing

The sharing of expertise, experiences, and information is the second most frequently mentioned interest in the AGT. This interest is stated by firms and civil society actors. Knowledge sharing

implies gaining information from experts, bridging knowledge gaps, and exchanging information to learn from each other. Respondents stating this interest perceive the AGT as a platform to share knowledge and learn from each other. Merel, Sustainability Manager, elaborates.

What is important to us is the tremendous flow of information we get from it, the expertise of all production countries. That's just great for areas where we just don't know everything. [...] All the meetings, all the information you get from experts, that's just incredibly valuable (interview 5).

Miranda, Product Manager, agrees and states, “We can learn much from it, and also from each other, about what goes well at a certain firm and what doesn't go well. And that's just super educational, I think” (interview 4). This interest seems to be especially relevant for firms as it helps them to bridge knowledge gaps in topics such as living wages in production countries, working with chemicals, and freedom of association. Firms see business associations, NGOs, and trade unions as experts in these topics. It also appears in an AGT factsheet of a trade union that their interest lies in knowledge sharing, “We will, just like other civil society organisations, the government and trade associations, share our expertise to help participating firms carry out their due diligence” (document 16). In sum, sharing expertise, experiences, and information is an often mentioned interest by firms and civil society organisations. These actors stress that the AGT should be shaped as a knowledge exchanging platform to learn from each other.

3. Making an impact

The ability to make an impact by participating in the AGT is the third most frequently called interest by all types of actors. By making impact, respondents mean increasing influence in the context of realising improvements in social and environmental conditions. According to respondents, the AGT should be governed in such a way that it makes the biggest (positive) impact in the industry as possible. Rick, Coordinator of the SEC, elaborates, “Ultimately, of course, for parties it's all about the impact you can make on the lives of workers and the state of the environment and how you deal with animals. That is what you ultimately want to influence” (interview 10). NGOs agree that making impact is their main interest. Lieke, Programme Officer of an NGO, states, “Well, at the end of the day, of course, we want to see an impact on the level of working conditions and the environment in chains. So that's why we got involved” (interview 8). Niek, Corporate Specialist, agrees and adds, “From the opportunity we were offered to make an impact, we stepped in” (interview 7). An article of an NGO elaborates, “Joining forces and increasing influence is the only way forward and this is one of the key elements of the AGT” (document 17). To summarise, making impact in terms of making the garment industry effectively more sustainable is another major interest in the AGT. Respondents telling about this interest stress that the AGT should be governed in such a way that it makes the biggest possible positive impact in the garment industry.

4. Networking

Networking is an interest stated by firms and civil society actors. By networking, these actors mean the entryways to other parties participating in the AGT, gaining advantages from each other's network, and being seen as a legitimate interlocutor. Lisa, CSR employee, explains, "You have more entrances to branch organisations, trade unions, and local parties in the production countries where we are located. So, I think it helps us to achieve more in that sense" (interview 2). When speaking about this interest, firms mainly refer to entryways to NGOs, trade unions, and business associations to gain information about a specific theme. Guido, Operations Manager of a firm, gives an example of how his organisation makes use of the AGT's network, "*(Business association)* is also one of the participating business associations. That's where I go to and ask: do you have any knowledge about chemicals? Yes, we do. Okay, then I'll go to you and we'll talk about chemicals" (interview 3). In this way, the AGT serves as a network, connecting different types of actors. This is summarised by Miranda, Product Manager, "Sustainability encompasses so much and it's so complex and really a jungle of certificates and of terms. So, yes, I think it's just really a good platform for us to learn and easily get in touch with other organisations" (interview 4). Also in a midterm evaluation of the SEC, the value of the AGT's network is emphasised, "The AGT provides NGOs with a relevant network in that they have the opportunity to be in contact with motivated firms" (document 19). Annika, Policy Advisor of a trade union, gives an example of how the AGT enables her organisation to network with firms.

A union leader was beaten up at a production site recently. Then we hear that from the local trade union and immediately link it back to the brand that is buying there. And we can do that because we're in the AGT together and therefore we are seen as a legitimate interlocutor" (interview 11).

A midterm evaluation document of the AGT, authored by the SEC adds, "For NGOs that traditionally had a watchdog role, the AGT has a clear added value because they can apply an 'insider approach' rather than being limited to the role of a watchdog" (document 19). In other words, the AGT offers NGOs the opportunity to be seen as reachable insiders by firms. Networking seems to be closely related to the interest knowledge sharing. Firms, civil society, and governmental actors make use of each other's network to gain knowledge and to learn from each other. At a website page of a brand participating in the AGT, this is illustrated, "Where our knowledge may be lacking, we will always seek contact with organisations that know more about the textile industry in those countries, such as NGOs and business associations" (document 25). Miranda, Product Manager, elaborates, "It's just very interesting that you can take on all that expertise, that you have it so close to you. Quite a big network" (interview 5). In sum, entryways to other parties, gaining advantages from each other's networks, and being seen as a legitimate interlocutor is an often mentioned interest by firms and civil society actors.

5. Transparency

The transparency that is strived for by the AGT, for example by publishing production locations of participating firms, is an interest mentioned an average number of times by respondents, specifically by firms and civil society actors. This interest implies having a possibility to discover issues and inspiring others by creating transparency. Lieke, Programme Officer of an NGO, explains.

We have signed the AGT because of the agreements that have been made regarding transparency. So that at least on aggregated level, lists of all production sites of firms are published. That gives us a possibility, because then we know where firms produce. And that gives us the opportunity to find out what working conditions are there (interview 8).

From this explanation it can be stated that it is important for NGOs that the AGT has transparency rules and policies as this offers them an opportunity to discover poor conditions at production countries. This interest is not only present at NGOs. Firms also mention they value creating transparency in the fashion chain. An AGT report of a participating clothing brand elaborates, “We try to take a leading role in this, inspiring other brands to follow us when it comes to sustainable production. This is why we are 100% transparent about every step of the production chain (document 14). Several firms agree that transparency is needed to make the fashion industry more sustainable. At a website page of a participating firm, it is stated that “it should be that we jointly tackle the working conditions and discuss what is needed for that. Our task is to make this transparent and to discuss it with the various actors in the chain. In short, transparency” (document 25). In sum, transparency rules and policies in the AGT is important for firms and civil society actors. It helps civil society actors to discover issues in the industry, while firms perceive it as an essential sustainability practice.

6. Improving own CSR practices

Some firms mention that their interest in the AGT is to improve the CSR practices which are essential for their core business. Firms stress they want the SEC to facilitate them in improving their CSR practices as much as possible. The SEC responds to this interest by providing firms support by means of tools, documents, assignments, workshops, and events. Guido, Operations Manager of a firm, explains where this interest originates from.

We missed support, so yes, that was the consideration, and the AGT really helps us. It's going to take a lot of work, but otherwise it's just not going to work. This is really an excellent opportunity. [...] We thought yes, this is a great opportunity to really take steps now. (interview 3).

Pierre, CSR Manager, agrees and elaborates that “the AGT provides guidelines, tools, and contacts that make it easier to take significant steps. [...] This will enable us to refine our policy and actions

each time in order to make them more sustainable” (interview 1). Also, in a midterm evaluation of the SEC, participants state that the AGT “is unique in terms of the extensive support and guidance offered to firms” (document 19). It is important to note that within this interest, it is only about the CSR practices which are essential for the core business of a firm. The AGT provides firms support in improving their sustainability practices by giving them assignments and requiring them to submit CSR documents (leading to workload), but also by sharing tools, organising workshops and sharing expertise (facilitating). In sum, the AGT helps firms improving their CSR practices continuously which is an interest for many of them. According to firms, the AGT should be governed in such a way that it provides them maximum support.

7. Positive culture

By positive culture, respondents refer to the stimulating way of thinking and the holistic approach. This interest is mentioned by all actor groups. The interest entails that the AGT is governed in a positive mindset and a holistic approach, implying that every actor is stimulated in a positive way and that social and environmental issues in the whole chain are dealt with by the AGT. In terms of the stimulating way of thinking, Merel, Sustainability Manager, describes “we are not going to do naming and shaming, but we're really going to try to do this together. And you don't get fined if you don't make it. You're not going to be pilloried” (interview 5). In terms of the holistic approach, a midterm evaluation document authored by the SEC states, “The AGT is comprehensive as it covers the whole range of due diligence, looks at risks in the supply chain beyond the first production location and looks at social and environmental themes” (document 19). By holistic approach, respondents mean that the AGT does not only deal with social conditions (for example living wages, working conditions, and freedom of association) or only with environmental conditions (for example recycling, chemicals, and use of water), but covers both of them. Miranda, Product Manager, explains, “We discovered the holistic approach of the AGT and we just realised that it is indeed a real added value, that holistic approach” (interview 4). In addition, the AGT goes beyond the first tier (direct supplier) as it also focuses at players deeper in the supply chain. Lisa, CSR employee, summarises, “The AGT is overarching, so it covers everything in terms of sustainability and all locations in the entire chain” (interview 2). However, the holistic approach also has its boundaries. A document of the SEC states that the AGT’s focus areas fall within nine themes which are “discrimination and gender, child labour, forced labour, freedom of association, living wage, workplace health and safety, resources, water pollution and use chemicals, water and energy, and animal welfare” (document 21). To summarise, the positive culture is an interest shared among all actors. The interest implies that the AGT is governed in a positive, stimulating way and that it is shaped in such a way that it covers both social and environmental issues over the whole supply chain. However, the AGT’s focus areas have its boundaries in terms of that these fall within nine themes.

8. *Contributing to sustainability*

Playing a part in making the textile chain more sustainable is another averagely mentioned interest in the AGT, stated by all types of actors. This interest implies a moral need to make the world a more sustainable place. Lisa, CSR employee, states, “We just think it's important for us as a Dutch firm to do our bit” (interview 2). It seems that this interest to contribute is coming from the intrinsic motivation of actors to do what is morally right. The AGT is shaped in such a way that it enables actors to translate this intrinsic motivation into practice. The following is, for example, shown on a firm's website page.

It was in line with our long-standing commitment to corporate social responsibility and working on sustainable clothing and textiles of the future. We believe it is important that our products are made and delivered under fair and good conditions. The AGT was an excellent opportunity for us to further intensify and professionalise our ambition in this area. Not only to give shape to our own CSR policy through the AGT and its partners, but also to play an active role within the AGT on the issues of sustainable fashion (document 27).

For the SEC, founder of the AGT, the main interest in the initiative also lies in making the world more sustainable. Rick, Coordinator, describes what this interest means for the SEC, “our interest is following up our own advice, making the world more sustainable. [...] It contributes to the socio-economic health of the Netherlands and keeping the world healthy, so the welfare of everyone. That seems not unimportant to me” (interview 10). In sum, contributing to sustainability is an interest shared among all actors. The AGT is shaped in such a way that it enables them to achieve their sustainability ambition and intrinsic motivation in practice.

9. *Lobbying*

Lobbying is one of the least mentioned interests in the AGT and is only called by civil society actors, in particular NGOs and trade unions. This interest implies raising awareness for issues and striving for the most ambitious rules, regulations, and actions. According to respondents, the AGT should be shaped in such a way that it raises awareness for the issues in the garment industry. Niek, Corporate Specialist of an NGO elaborates, “Our primary interest is to create space to draw attention to children's rights. [...] It offers us a platform to do that broadly. To do that within a sector” (interview 7). At an NGO's website, it is also described that “within the AGT, (NGO) is committed to raising awareness of the rights and interests of the child and the influence brands and producers have on them” (document 29). It seems that the AGT works effectively for NGOs and trade unions in terms of lobbying for better sustainability practices. Annika, Policy Advisor of a trade union, adds, “We have put a lot more effort into this, that's why we are in six initiatives, to get the firms at the end of those chains to understand employee interests in their chain and how they can better safeguard them” (interview 11). In terms of lobbying, it is important to note that NGOs and trade unions strive for the most ambitious

rules, regulations, and actions within the AGT. So tells Lieke, Programme Officer of a trade union, “I think what I can say in general is that we prefer to make the demands as high as possible. And yes, that may not always be realistic” (interview 8). To sum up, the AGT provides a platform for NGOs and trade unions to lobby firms in a more direct way. According to these civil society actors, the AGT should be shaped in such a way that it raises awareness for issues in the garment industry. In addition, the rules, regulations, and actions should be as ambitious as possible in terms of governing the AGT.

10. External legitimacy

The least mentioned interest in the AGT is external legitimacy. It is an interest merely mentioned by firms. The SEC, as a credible and legitimacy granting leader, is important in this interest. More specifically, for firms it is important that the AGT is governed in such a way that they are monitored on their CSR practices by a legitimate institution. The AGT’s secretariat is an independent institution which evaluates the sustainability actions and documents of firms participating in the AGT. Firms can show the outside world that they are being monitored by this legitimate institution in order to gain external legitimacy. This seems to be especially important for firms in terms of stakeholder management. Victoria, CSR Consultant, explains that firms’ interest in the AGT is “to demonstrably participate in an initiative that really means something. With independent supervision and a stakeholder relationship, so of course they could also show their stakeholders: look I’m working on this” (interview 9). Pieter agrees and states, “I think it’s very nice to show our customers that we participate. [...] It was very nice to show our customers that we are a signer and if you are a signer, you are really obliged to show results” (interview 6). He elaborates, “I can be controlled. Others say in what way I work and whether that is good or not and that I do not have to tell it myself, because I’m never objective towards a consumer, I am always subjective” (interview 6). It is important to note that all respondents experience that there are firms which are intrinsic motivated to improve their sustainability practices and that there are firms that mainly joined the AGT to show this to their stakeholders without putting much effort in CSR. External legitimacy is an interest mainly present within the latter type of firms. Lieke, Programme Office at a trade union, elaborates.

Some firms really are greenwashing. They tell a lot about what they do and sometimes they make it look much bigger than it is. But there are also firms that are sincere, at least the CSR managers, who have very sincere intentions to improve things. They are often much less vociferous to the outside world about that (interview 11).

The interest external legitimacy hence implies the ability to show stakeholders (e.g. customers, suppliers, society) that you work in a right manner as this is assessed by an independent institution. In sum, external legitimacy gained as a result of being evaluated by a legitimate leader is an important interest for firms in terms of stakeholder management.

4.3 Consensus and contestations between interests in the AGT

This paragraph describes the shared (consensus) and conflicting (contestation) interests of actors. First of all, the interests on which there is consensus among actors are discussed. Thereafter, three contestations between interests are explained.

As shown before, the interests gaining collaboration benefits, making an impact, contributing to sustainability, and the positive culture are shared among all actors. It is a logical finding that there is consensus on these interests among all actors since these interests underpin the founding of the AGT. More specifically, all parties involved in the AGT's foundation recognised that the sustainability problems in the industry would not be solved by the actors' individual efforts and that a collaborative initiative was needed to realise change. Annika, Policy Advisor of a trade union, explains, "Well, I think the basic interest, the most deep, basic ground for people or parties to participate is the same, namely to make the textile chain sustainable in the knowledge that it is not okay now" (interview 11). Rick, Coordinator of the SEC, agrees with Annika and adds, "We acknowledged that we've done a lot and that is not necessarily wrong but we haven't been able to really solve the problems separately, so from now on we're going to try to achieve the solution together" (interview 10). In addition, all actors agreed that a positive culture in terms of a stimulating way of thinking and a holistic approach would be most effective to realise positive change and contribute to sustainability. Miranda, Product Manager, explains, "They made a good decision that we're not going to do naming and shaming. We're all going to take steps and we make sure that you get positive support. [...] The AGT also covers all important topics in the chain" (interview 4). To sum up, actors agreed that a collaboration was needed to increase leverage and to set up collective projects (gaining collaboration benefits) so that the pressing problems in the garment industry could be solved (making an impact). A stimulating mindset and a holistic approach (positive culture) were found to be most effective for all actors to make a successful contribution to the industry (contributing to sustainability). These shared interests lie at the root of the AGT's founding.

Contrary to consensus, three contestations between interests can be identified. From most to least mentioned, these contestations are between the interests external legitimacy and making an impact (1), improving own CSR practices and lobbying (2), and improving own CSR practices and positive culture (3). The first contestation emerges from the fact that there are firms that only joined the AGT to show this their stakeholders and gain external legitimacy, while they might not put that much effort in CSR. Guido, Operations Manager, explains, "I think there are firms that have signed the AGT predominantly for goodwill or to show they are sustainable, while they don't make it happen. [...] They joined more for the outside world than that they believe in it themselves" (interview 3). Firms having this interest are in contestation with actors interested in making an impact because limited efforts in sustainability of firms only seeking legitimacy, hinder realising a positive impact in the industry. Niek, Corporate Specialist at an NGO, adds, "I think you've got some firms that see it as kind of a free-riding". Merel, Sustainability Manager, elaborates, "Some brands participate because of

greenwashing. So yes, there are a lot of different interests when you look at that” (interview 5). While some firms participate in the AGT to make an impact with other parties, other firms only participate to gain external legitimacy, leading to contestation. Lieke, Programme Officer of a trade union, adds, “What I find remarkable is that the firms that do the most, advertise the least about it” (interview 11). In sum, firms mainly interested in gaining external legitimacy can show a kind of ‘pseudo sustainability’ in the sense that they do not make their maximum contribution to improving the industry’s sustainability. In this way, a contestation emerges between the interests external legitimacy and making an impact.

The second contestation emerges between the interests improving own CSR practices and lobbying. Concretely, it is conflicting that firms want to improve their CSR practices as far as this is realistic, while NGOs and trade unions strive for the most ambitious mandatory rules, regulations, and actions for firms. Firms argue that NGOs and trade unions can be too critical and unrealistic. In other words, a contestation emerges about rules and procedures for firms in the AGT in terms of their ambition level. Guido, Operations Manager, gives an example.

I know firms in the AGT that are not in line with NGOs. These firms say they only take stuff from Poland and have their own factories there, their own production sites, but they still have to carry out audits there, while those audits are pointless. Audits only relate to China, so that's superfluous to conduct in Poland. So firms sometimes do not quite come out with NGOs or with the SEC. They differ from vision in terms of the approach and the need or urgency (interview 3).

The ambition levels NGOs and trade unions lobby for, hence conflict with the degree to which firms want to improve their practices. Gillian, Sustainability Officer of a firm, explains.

It's more the way they think how you should get it done. [...] They state you should improve the percentage of women in the factories in Bangladesh. Yeah, that's an unrealistic goal, of course. That doesn't make any sense at all, but it is being fired at you and you have to do something with it. We can't do that, we don't want to do that and we don't think that's efficient. It is not necessary. So, yes, we do see a contradiction in that (interview 12).

Lieke, Programme Officer of an NGO, explains that the discussion about ambition levels of actions, rules, and regulations, is a point in the AGT on which parties cannot agree.

There are certain points within the AGT on which we just cannot agree, simply because opinions differ. I think an important example is legislation. Yes, in general, NGOs and trade unions are of the opinion that there should be Due Diligence legislation. In general, business associations and firms don't think that's a good idea (interview 8).

Victoria, CSR Consultant of a business association, agrees with firms and adds that “you notice a tendency that NGOs and trade unions always want the ideal world and everything as quickly and as strictly as possible for firms” (interview 9). The contestation between these interests hence emerges from the ambition level and how to realise the AGT’s objectives in practice. Pieter, Managing Director, summarises, “There are interests that are often contradictory. [...] The question is, how far do we go, where do the accents lie (interview 6). To summarise, firms’ interest to improve their own CSR practices as far as realistic conflicts with the interest of NGOs and trade unions to lobby for the most ambitious rules, regulations, and actions for firms. It is a conflict that emerges from the discussion about how to realise the AGT’s objectives in practice and how ambitious the rules, regulations, and actions for firms should be.

The third contestation emerges between the interests improving own CSR practices and positive culture. More specifically, the overarching, holistic approach of the AGT’s culture does not include all CSR themes that are important for firms. It is a contestation about what voices should be heard, those of firms or those of the SEC. While firms are interested in improving specific CSR practices which are essential for their core business, these practices are not always supported by the positive culture. This is because the themes the AGT covers are limited to the nine themes stated before. Gillian, Sustainability Officer of a firm, gives an example.

We are very much on circular raw materials and how we can deal with that better. We are very active and do a lot of research in this area, while the AGT doesn't include that at all. You even get a strange look when you do that. So of course, because it does not fall within the scope of the AGT, it is not necessarily seen as negative, but it is not assigned anything (interview 12).

Merel, Sustainability Manager, adds, “For some firms cotton is a crucial element and a pillar, and for us because we use so little cotton, not at all. [...] The attention is paid to materials, but the attention for leather is quite non-existent” (interview 5). From these quotations it appears that the AGT does not cover and support all CSR themes, while these might be essential for a firm’s core business. Gillian elaborates, “It is clear that there are nine themes and that it has to fall within them” (interview 12). In sum, the positive culture in terms of the holistic approach conflicts with the interest of firms to improve their own CSR practices. The positive culture does not support CSR practices that fall outside the nine themes, leading to contestation as firms specifically want to improve on these areas.

To conclude, there is consensus on the interests gaining collaboration benefits, making an impact, contributing to sustainability, and the positive culture among all actors. These interests underpin the founding of the AGT. Contestations between interests are between external legitimacy and making an impact (1), improving own CSR practices and lobbying (2), and improving own CSR practices and positive culture (3).

4.4 Bringing interests in the AGT together

This paragraph explains how interests in the AGT are brought together. Firstly, the relevant process of orchestrating is described. Secondly, the finding that bundling interests is a learning process is presented. Thereafter, drivers and barriers are explained that respectively help and hinder bringing interests together.

4.4.1 Orchestrating

When asking respondents how their interests are brought together with those of other actors, many refer to the orchestrator of the initiative. More specifically, respondents refer to the SEC, the steering group, and/or the independent secretariat as being the orchestrator of the AGT. Orchestrating implies connecting parties with shared interests, aligning sustainability levels of firms with realistic actions and goals, and evaluating issues of participants and the AGT as a whole in determining the future trajectory of the AGT. I will now explain these parts of orchestrating one by one, followed by describing how they are applied to the identified shared and conflicting interests.

In terms of connecting parties, seven of the twelve interviewed respondents mention that the orchestrator plays an essential role in getting to know interests of participants and subsequently connecting parties with shared interests. Guido, Operations Manager, explains.

Everyone brings in points and then the SEC or the steering committee just looks very closely at the points and checks if they match with what the NGOs want. [...]. They really mediate. So, the SEC is also a mediator, they bring firms, NGOs, other parties together. That's where it's all aligned. [...]. Points from firms, from NGOs, there is always looked at, for a good coherence (interview 3).

From this quotation, it can be stated that the SEC is a mediator that connects parties with shared interests. As a result, these parties can work together with an increased leverage, helping them to solve problems more effectively. Miranda, Product Manager, explains, “This is also what the AGT itself actively does. For example our contact person, she also says I can link you to that party and that party, depending on what your risks are and how you prioritised them” (interview 4).

In terms of aligning levels of firms with goals and actions, Merel, Sustainability Manager, explains, “I think the SEC looks very well at the different levels of firms and connects actions and goals to those levels. And they have very good conversations about that” (interview 5). By levels of firms, respondents mean the experience and expertise a firm has in sustainability. The orchestrator plays an important role by aligning these levels with suitable goals and actions for firms, thereby facilitating them to achieve realistic improvements. In an evaluation document of the AGT, the SEC describes how it is seen by participants. According to the document, “the AGT secretariat is highly appreciated and clearly contributed to the progress made by individual firms, both by supporting firms and by assessing their progress” (document 19). As a result, “the support lead to progress of firms in

the steps of the due diligence process and the assessment is a push for them to do better” (document 19).

In addition to connecting parties and aligning firm levels with realistic goals and actions, the SEC also evaluates issues of participants in determining the future trajectory of the AGT. The orchestrator offers firms customised support for their issues. Guido, Operations Manager, shows this by giving an example of how the orchestrator acts in times of the Corona crisis in 2020.

In itself, the SEC does a lot with their members. [...] This week, a whole questionnaire was sent about what kind of impact the crisis makes and what we run into and how they can support us in these times. Yes, there is just so much shared and supported by the SEC (interview 3)

From this example, it can be stated that the SEC takes issues of participants seriously and aims to provide them the best support. In addition, the SEC is also critical towards the AGT’s progress in general. Guido, Operations Manager, explains, “Every year an evaluation is drawn up, fresh harvests are shared among all developers about how the year went and there is looked critically at the results” (interview 3). Pieter, Managing Director, adds, “The SEC continuously looks at where they can make improvements” (interview 6). From these quotations, it can be stated that the SEC evaluates issues of actors and the AGT’s progress to determine what support should be provided and what improvements could be made in the future trajectory of the AGT.

When applying the orchestrating process to the shared and conflicting interests presented before, it seems that the SEC connects parties with shared interests (consensus), makes it impossible for firms to participate only for external legitimacy (contestation 1), monitors the AGT’s progress based on the OECD guidelines (contestation 2), and evaluates issues of actors in order to provide them customised support (contestation 3). More specifically, in terms of interests on which there is consensus, the SEC connects parties having shared interests. In this way, the SEC is a mediator which bundles shared interests. The quotations shown before showed this. Regarding the first identified contestation, the SEC makes it impossible for firms to participate only to gain external legitimacy. The SEC does this by imposing goals and actions to firms and assessing them on these. Merel, Sustainability Manager, explains, “The great thing about the AGT is how it's set up. You can join it as a greenwasher, but that's quickly made impossible because certain things are expected of you” (interview 5). By expectations, Merel refers to the goals and actions firms get imposed by the SEC which are aligned with their sustainability level. Lieke, Programme Officer of an NGO, agrees and adds, “Yes, I think the level playing field created by the AGT is a very important one” (interview 8). By imposing goals and actions to firms for participation, a level playing field is created and greenwashing is made impossible. In this way, the contestation between external legitimacy and making an impact is mitigated. In terms of the second contestation, the SEC aims to create coherence

between what firms want and what NGOs and trade unions want regarding the ambition level of rules, regulations, and actions. The SEC deals with this by monitoring the AGT's progress on the international guidelines for responsible business conduct. Rick, Coordinator at the SEC, explains.

The SEC monitors what happens and whether this is in line with the OECD guidelines for Due Diligence. This is where the role of the SEC lies, to monitor this. In some cases there is a difference in importance. I understand that within the AGT, for pragmatic reasons, this step is currently being taken. That may not be tenable in the long run, but it may be a good intermediate step. And sometimes the interests are not entirely in line (interview 10).

From this quotation, it seems that the SEC plays an important role by monitoring whether the AGT's progress is in line with the OECD guidelines. The OECD guidelines offer a middle ground between firms' perspectives on the ambition level of rules and actions and those of NGOs and trade unions. In this way, the contestation between improving own CSR practices and lobbying is mitigated. Regarding the third contestation, the SEC pays attention to issues of firms and provides them customised support. The quotations shown before substantiate that the SEC takes issues of firms seriously in order to offer them the best fitting support. It could, for example, be the case that sustainability themes which the AGT does not cover yet, are added to the AGT's future program to respond to firms' interests. The SEC continuously balances interests and issues of actors so that a good coherence is maintained. In this way, the contestation between improving own CSR practices and positive culture is mitigated.

To sum up, the orchestrator plays an essential role in bringing interests together. The orchestrator can be seen as a mediator that connects actors with shared interests (consensus). As a result, the development of the AGT is improved as actors with shared interests can work together with more leverage, thereby solving sustainability problems more effectively. In addition, the SEC aligns sustainability levels of firms with realistic goals and actions, thereby improving the probability that firms are able to achieve these and that greenwashing is made impossible (contestation 1). The SEC also monitors if the AGT's progress is in line with the OECD guidelines. These guidelines serve as a middle ground for the ambition levels firms and NGOs and trade unions strive for (contestation 2). Firms' issues are continuously evaluated to determine what support could be provided best and what improvements step could be implement in the AGT's future trajectory (contestation 3).

4.4.2 Learning process

A remarkable finding is that many respondents (nine of twelve) experience the bringing together of interests as a learning process. This learning process implies getting to know other participants, building trust between each other, and understanding each other's roles and interests. Niek, Corporate Specialist of an NGO, explains this.

It's like a learning process. [...]. At first, we could explain it for a long time and you felt like: okay, we hit a wall, they don't quite understand what I mean. And now, you notice that after repeating the story a couple of times, answering questions, engaging in dialogues and workshops, and executing projects, firms say: ah yes, good one! And we, that's funny, I must also say, we also understand firms much better now (interview 7).

From this quotation it can be stated that bringing interests together is a learning process for both firms and civil society actors. Respondents experience that during time everyone is getting more open towards each other in terms of sharing information, sharing interests, and approaching each other in a proactive way. Merel, Sustainability Manager, explains, "What I experienced is that everyone was much tighter in the beginning. They thought I keep my mouth shut because I don't want to say anything about it. Fortunately, people are getting freer in their parts now" (interview 5). During the learning process, interests are brought together in an improving way as actors come closer to each other and get to know each other's roles and interests better. Also in an appreciation document of the AGT, authored by the SEC, this process is described.

With regard to the cooperation within the AGT, it is concluded that parties and firms needed time to get to know each other, and each other's role and expertise, but they have known each other better and better and trust between parties and between parties and firms has grown strongly (document 20).

It can hence be stated that the learning process implies getting to know each other, building trust, and understanding each other's roles and interests, and that it takes times to go through this process. Also in an AGT factsheet of a participating labour union it is mentioned that, "The basis for working together on sustainable change lies in building trust, respecting each other's interests and seeking the shared interest together" (document 16). Lieke, Programme Officer of an NGO, tells about how she experiences this learning process.

I think if we look at the past year, trust between parties and the individual firms has increased. We have noticed that ourselves. There is now also more one-to-one contact, in which firms tell much more openly about the problems they are facing. As a result, we can play a better role in advising and passing on relevant contacts (interview 8).

Thanks to increased one-to-one contact, more openness, and improved proactive attitudes, interests can be brought together better and better with time. Firms experience this as a positive process as they start to experience benefits from the increased openness. Merel, Sustainability Manager, tells, "It's very nice to see people start to trust each other more, people start to share more with each other, and that they are more daring of okay, you are a competitor, but we can still sit around the table" (interview 5).

Summing up, bundling interests together of interests is a learning process. This process entails getting to know other actors, building trust, and understanding each other's roles and interests. During this process, openness, trust, and proactive behaviour between actors are improved, enabling actors to bring their interests together. The process of bringing interests together has several drivers and barriers. I will discuss these one by one in the next paragraphs.

4.4.3 Drivers helping to bring interests together

Several drivers can be identified helping to bring interests together. These drivers help understanding under what conditions the AGT emerged. Seven drivers have been identified. From most to least mentioned, these drivers are consumer pressure (1), relations between initiatives (2), consultation (3), industrial conditions (4), international guidelines (5), accidents in the garment industry (6), and voluntary meetings (7). I will now explain these drivers in detail.

Driver 1: Consumer pressure

Consumer pressure is the biggest driver helping to bringing interests together in founding the AGT. More specifically, this pressure has stimulated actors to organise themselves in terms of the AGT to collaboratively work on the problems in the garment industry. In an article of an NGO participating in the AGT, it is described that “consumers around the world expect firms to do everything they can to ensure that their products are free from child labour and other human rights abuses” (document 17). From this quotation, it seems that consumers are putting an increased pressure on firms in terms of producing fair products and using sustainable production practices. Guido, Operations Manager of a firm, also tells he sees that there is an increased customer demand for sustainable business practices. “Consumers just want to know where the product comes from, how it's made, and that you take that seriously. In the future that just becomes a condition. [...] In the future you're more or less obliged to do that as a firm” (interview 3). Hence, firms certainly experience that consumers are becoming more critical towards the sustainability of products and business practices. This has stimulated firms to bring interests together in the AGT. The consumer view is thereby an influential factor that explains why actors have organised themselves in the AGT. This is also supported by Annika, Policy Advisor. “I notice that when there is external pressure, for example on child labour or forced labour which are really boundaries that are so clearly laid down by society, that there is more interest, because people absolutely do not want that on their conscience” (interview 11). This quote substantiates that firms are particularly interested in bringing interests together on subjects having high consumer pressure. In sum, pressure of consumers in terms of their expectations and critical view on firms' practices has stimulated them to organise themselves by founding the AGT.

Driver 2: Relations between initiatives

Relations between initiatives is a second important driver that helped bringing interests together. Rick, Coordinator of the SEC, tells about the conditions prior to the AGT's founding.

There were several systems on the market. [...] They thought that all these different initiatives were complicated and wondered if they couldn't all be harmonised in one system. As a result, competition arose in the market in meeting minimum social standards. And that's very healthy" (interview 10).

Seemingly, competition between earlier initiatives is a condition under which the AGT emerged. Pieter, Managing Director, elaborates, "Seemingly, earlier initiatives have not succeeded or have been insufficient, and one could also say that the AGT is a continuation or a bundling of all those initiatives into one big initiative" (interview 6). Competition between initiatives can hence be seen as a driver which helped to bundle interests and found the AGT.

By contrast, instead of competing, it also appears that initiatives seek to improve their development by working together. In a factsheet of a labour union it is stated that "the AGT and the German Union for Sustainable Textiles and Clothing have signed a cooperation agreement and active links are being sought with initiatives elsewhere in the EU" (document 16). An appreciation document of the SEC elaborates that "the AGT actively seeks international cooperation in order to maximise its impact and create a level playing field" (document 20). Thus, cooperation between initiatives contributes to making impact and realising a level playing field. An evaluation document of the AGT, authored by the SEC, adds that "alignment with other initiatives also leads to efficiency for AGT firms who are member of more than one initiative. And through alignment, AGT firms have more leverage at production locations as they can work together with members of these other initiatives" (document 19). Working together with other initiatives does hence not only lead to achieving an increased impact and a level playing field, but it also leads to efficiency benefits. In sum, relations between initiatives in terms of both competition and cooperation helped to bring interests together and founding the AGT.

Driver 3: Consultation

Consultation is also mentioned by respondents as a driver that helped bringing interests together. Pieter, Managing Director, elaborates, "You can never go in one particular direction, and there cannot be dogmas. There is always a consultation economy and an initiative is a consultation system" (interview 6). It seems that consultations between actors help them to bundle interests. Lieke, Programme Officer, explains that having a consultation also works well for her to bring her interests together with those of other actors. She gives an example of how she does this in situations in which she talks with other actors about how to tackle sustainability issues in practice.

Well, I guess what's really important, is to come up with information. That gives a much more specific and broader picture of what is actually going on. And when it is accepted by firms that we come up with that information, you can much better engage in dialogues about how to tackle issues. [...] It's really a matter of bringing firms along and providing them with

information and entering into dialogues so you can come closer. I also inherently think that the more often you talk to each other, the better you see each other's work and discuss it (interview 8).

The fact that consultation is seen as a driver in bringing interests together fits well with the context in which the AGT has emerged. Respondents mention that The Netherlands is known for its consultative economy. Victoria, CSR Consultant of a business association participating in the AGT, explains that “it really is a typical Dutch model of compromising and ending up somewhere in the middle. That's usually the case” (interview 9). Rick, Coordinator of the SEC, agrees, “Holland is a crazy country and one of our crazy characteristics is that we are very good at talking to each other until we have a way to go, so that eventually we have a solution that everyone agrees with” (interview 10). Summing up, consultation is a driver helping to bring interests together. It implies compromising between interests and reaching consensus in the middle, which is a typical Dutch model.

Driver 4: Industrial conditions

Fourthly, industrial conditions also act as a driver that helped to bring interests together. More specifically, this driver shows why it was so difficult for actors to tackle problems on their own and which firms mainly joined the AGT. In an article of an participating NGO, it is described that “clothing production is a complex process, with a variety of risks at each stage of production, including child labour, many of which go unnoticed and are not addressed” (document 17). It is difficult for actors to tackle specific problems on their own because every step or tier in the supply chain has different risks. It seems that the problems in the garment industry are often hidden deep in the supply chain. In addition, it is also hard to make links between firms and the places where problems are found. The NGO's article elaborates, “Beyond the first link, the researchers found that direct links to the participating brands were difficult to make due to the frequent use of intermediaries and the scarcely documented or formalised business relationships” (document 17). Industrial conditions show that it is hard for actors to solve problems individually and to make links between problems and firms.

In addition, industrial conditions also show which actors mainly have joined the AGT. More specifically, it seems that mainly firms involved deeper in the supply chain organised themselves in the AGT as they have more direct links with problems in the garment industry. Victoria, CSR Consultant, explains this.

Some retailers develop their own items and also have one foot in the supply chain and other retailers such as smaller retailers only buy from brands. So they're further away from the supply chain. [...] So you notice that the large retailers who develop their own products are the ones that mainly join and not the shops on the corner or something like that (interview 9).

Pieter, Managing Director of a relatively small firm compared to others, agrees and tells, “When I compare myself with other AGT participants, I am actually a micro participant and I actually fall outside the scope and objective of the AGT” (interview 6). To sum up, industrial conditions helped to bring interests together as they show that firms were not able to tackle problems on their own (1) and it is hard to make links between problems and firms (2). In addition, this driver also shows that firms involved in the supply chain having links with problems in the industry mainly joined the AGT (3).

Driver 5: International guidelines

International guidelines underpinning the AGT also help bringing interests together. These guidelines are the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises and the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (UNGPS). These guidelines act as non-binding legal frameworks, regulating firm behaviour in terms of human rights and responsible business conduct (OECD, 2011; United Nations, 2011). Victoria, CSR Consultant of a business association, explains, “Because the OECD was already there, there were already international guidelines they could look at” (interview 9). Annika, Policy Advisor, elaborates on the support she gets from these international guidelines.

What's really helping us is falling back on international agreements that have been made. [...] For example, the OECD guidelines are mandatory, but they are not enforced compulsorily by governments. When they do that, as is currently the case with child labour, then you really get a different incentive. So that's one thing that can help (interview 11).

International guidelines can hence be seen as another driver as it helps actors to refer back to as one of the underpinnings the AGT. However, this driver would be even more effective if the international guidelines were enforced stricter and in a more compulsorily way by the Dutch government. In sum, international guidelines are legal frameworks that helped bringing interests together. They underpin the AGT which helps actors to look at and refer to in interest negotiations.

Driver 6: Accidents in the garment industry

Prior to the founding of the AGT, several accidents happened in the garment industry. Besides the Rana Plaza accident in 2013, similar accidents happened in garment factories Ali Enterprise and Tazreen in 2012. Although there are no direct links between these accidents and the founding of the AGT, several respondents mention that these accidents helped bringing interests together more quickly. Rick, Coordinator of the SEC, explains.

Anything that helped bringing interests together? Sure. And unfortunately, those were Ali Enterprise, Tazreen, Rana Plaza. [...] It was perfectly clear, something had to be done about that. That's not something the AGT created, but it certainly helped. I guess we also would have managed to found the AGT without those disasters, but not so quickly (interview 10).

From this quotation, it seems that the occurrence of accidents in the garment industry increased the urgency for actors to start a collective initiative to improve the circumstances. Victoria, CSR Consultant of a business association, adds, “We had been working on problems for years and then the Rana Plaza came and as a result, the whole world was over the industry” (interview 9). From this quotation it appears that the industry was already working on the problems, but that the occurrence of accidents accelerated actors to fall into action. Summing up, accidents in the garment industry is a driver that helped bringing interests together, given that they increased the urgency to set up a collective initiative to do something about the poor conditions in garment factories.

Driver 7: Voluntary meetings

The use of voluntary meetings also helps bringing interests together. By voluntary meetings, respondents refer to the workshops, trainings and projects organised by the orchestrator. All actors in the AGT can voluntarily participate in these meetings. The meetings are all based at one of the nine themes the AGT focuses on, for example child labour or animal welfare. Merel, Sustainability Manager of one of the participating firms, explains that “it often happens automatically in workshops or trainings that are interactive and you start working on something in groups. You then quickly start sharing with each other and hang out with each other and see, hey, we can do this” (interview 5). According to Merel, the interactive meetings help bringing interests together as you start working together in groups on a shared interest. Gillian, Sustainability Officer of another firm, agrees with Merel and tells that “you have projects on all themes and you can sign up for them, you can participate in them. So you automatically have a group that is interested in a certain subject so you can bring those interests together” (interview 12). In sum, voluntary meetings can be seen as a driver of bringing interests together as it automatically connects actors within the AGT with a shared interest.

4.4.4 Barriers hindering to bring interests together

While drivers help bringing interests together, several barriers hinder this process. Six barriers are identified. From most to least mentioned, these are level differences (1), competition (2), difficulty to change (3), limited transparency (4), high number of parties (5), and principled attitudes (6). I will now discuss each of these in detail.

Barrier 1: Level differences

The main barrier mentioned by respondents is that they experience level differences between firms participating in the AGT. By level differences, respondents mean the experience and expertise a firm has in sustainability. This is perceived as the biggest barrier to bring interests together according to the respondents. Merel, Sustainability Manager, explains this barrier.

There really are different levels when it comes to firms. There are a couple of firms that joined from the beginning which had already done a lot of sustainability work. They are seen as the best guys in the class. [...] They were on a whole different level when they came to the AGT. There was already a certain level in those firms and a certain interest and importance. [...] And then there are a lot of other firms for which it is totally new. Which, so to speak, have only been here for a year now. Very small Dutch firms [...] where it's all still invented. So, of course, there's also a completely different interest and a completely different motivation (interview 5).

From this quotation it appears that level differences in terms of experience and expertise in sustainability lead to differences in interests in the AGT among participating firms, making it hard to bring them together. Pierre, CSR Manager, agrees with Merel and states “there are big differences. This is because there are many different firms involved, each at a different level of sustainability” (interview 1). In sum, differences in sustainability levels cause differences in interests, making it harder to bring them together.

Barrier 2: Competition

By competition, respondents mean the barrier to share competitively sensitive information with actors in the MSI, hindering to start dialogues and bringing interests together. Gillian, Sustainability Officer, gives an example of how this barrier hinders the communication process.

Of course, the steering committee consists of 5 firms from which one is just a direct competitor of us. That just makes it harder to communicate, to bring things up, if you know a firm does not have your best interests at heart. Yeah, that's tough (interview 12).

Merel, Sustainability Manager, adds that this barrier is two-sided in the sense that there is a bone of contention between sharing competitively sensitive information and working together.

What also comes with it is that there will be a competitive sensitivity. That's such a bone of contention. When I look at ourselves, there's no other brand that's like us. There's potentially one brand that might join and that's (*competitor*). That's just a very big competitor of us. But at the same time, I would find it very interesting if they join, because I hope to be able to do certain things with them anyway, because we have the same interest in the chain and I'm very curious about how they see and do certain things (interview 5).

Summarising, the fact that there is some degree of competitiveness between firms in the AGT, makes it hard to bring interests together. It is experienced as a bone of contention in the sense that firms do not want to openly share competitively sensitive information, but they are willing to learn from their competitors.

Barrier 3: Difficulty to change

Another barrier in the bringing together of interests is the difficulty for firms to implement change. Annika, Policy Advisor of a trade union, explains what this barrier entails.

What doesn't help is the business logic of making profit and reducing costs. [...] It does make sense because you are in a competitive position with each other and other firms in other countries. But that's a major barrier to really achieve sustainable change (interview 11).

This barrier seems to be closely related to the competitiveness barrier as it is hard for firms to change because of the competitive industry. Miranda, Product Manager, tells how she experiences this barrier.

What I've noticed is that the clothing and textile industry is really old-fashioned and slow. Change is often quite scary and exciting. I have the idea that this is the reason why firms don't necessarily dare. [...] And yes, if your whole business is set up in a certain way, then of course it's not very easy to say okay, instead of normal cotton, I buy organic. [...] So firms don't always move as fast as you'd like (interview 4).

The difficulty to change is, thus, coming from the internal business logics of firms according to Miranda. It seems that they find it scary to implement huge changes in terms of sustainability. Rick, Coordinator of the SEC, also experiences this barrier, but has another inspiring explanation.

It's more psychological. The correlation between a change and sand is that when someone says you have to do something, you either go with your heels in the sand or you go with your head in the sand. So, just because you understand that you can't do it on your own and that you want to change doesn't mean that you can do something else than what you were used to do. You understand that you have to try to turn left, but before it happens that you turn left, that's just a complicated process. We all have to deal with that as human beings. That has nothing to do with clothing and textiles at all, but with the fact that we are human beings. We want to avoid pain, we want to hold on to the robust because it's easy (interview 10).

In sum, actors participating in the AGT are experiencing a difficulty to change, hindering the process of bringing interests together. Respondents mention that this barrier comes from the competition, but also from the internal business logics and the fact that we as human beings want to hold on to the robust. This barrier seems to be especially present within firms.

Barrier 4: Limited transparency

The fact that information of firms participating in the AGT is shared with NGOs and labour unions only at an aggregated level is another barrier to bring interests together. Lieke, Programme Officer, elaborates that “this limited degree of transparency is of course also a limitation for parties. The

information that the secretariat receives cannot be passed on to parties like us” (interview 8). Also in an evaluation document of the AGT, authored by the SEC, it is stated that this limited transparency is a barrier as “NGOs and trade unions do not know what specific issues individual firms are working on in their value chains and what problems they want to address. Second, firms struggle with whom to contact for what because of the ambiguity in terms of how NGOs and trade unions perceive their role and how firms and other internal stakeholders see their role” (document 19). In sum, limited transparency is a barrier in bringing interests together as it makes it unclear for actors where they are working on. As a result, it is hard for actors to identify parties with shared interests.

Barrier 5: High number of parties

The fact that a lot of different parties are involved in the initiative makes it hard to bring interests together. A high number of parties implies a high number of different interests which must be brought together. Pieter, Managing Director, explains, “We have now entered such a process of massiveness, of organising something on a massive scale, that it has become a very unwieldy mechanism and that we cannot turn in 1, 2, 3. It is not a speedboat” (interview 6). Because of the high number of parties, it is hard for actors to bring their interest together and to be flexible as an MSI. Victoria, CSR Consultant, agrees and states that “what makes it difficult is that we are with a lot of parties and a lot of people in such a steering committee, which means that there is little space and that it is less personal than in a smaller group” (interview 9). In sum, the high number of parties is another barrier in bringing interests together as it makes the AGT unwieldy and inflexible.

Barrier 6: Principled attitudes

Finally, the principled attitudes of governmental and civil society actors are experienced as a barrier to bring interests. This barrier is especially experienced by firms. Pieter, Managing Director of a brand, elaborates, “The principled attitudes of NGOs, truly principled, and rightly or wrongly that is often number two, why this principled attitude? We say, we claim something, and you have to do what we say. That's the biggest obstacle” (interview 6). According to the firms, the SEC also has a principled attitude, so tells Gillian, Sustainability Officer of another firm. “It's going to be a very bureaucratic thing, because you have to prove them that you're doing something. [...] And that just feels like duplication, unnecessary, and with the question of why do I have to prove this to you? (interview 12). The principled attitudes of NGOs and the SEC lead to limited freedom for firms in terms of what sustainability practices they can conduct. Gillian gives an example about his experience.

We focus very much on circular raw materials and what better ways are to use that. We do a lot of research in this area and we are very active in this area. And the AGT doesn't include that at all. Then you even get a strange look when you do that. So of course, because it does not fall within the scope of the AGT, it is not, it is not necessarily seen as negative, but there is not assigned anything for (interview 12)

To sum up, respondents experience that they are restricted by the NGOs' and SEC's will and that there is ample space to conduct practices they feel are more effective or fitting better with their organisation. Therefore, the principled attitudes hinder bringing interests together.

Summarising this chapter, ten different interests of actors in the AGT were identified. These interests are gaining collaboration benefits (1), knowledge sharing (2), making an impact (3), networking (4), transparency (5), improving own CSR practices (6), positive culture (7), contributing to sustainability (8), lobbying (9), and external legitimacy (10). Interest 1, 3, 7, and 8 are shared interests among all actors and underpin the founding of the AGT. The interests 10-3, 6-9, and 6-7 were found to be conflicting. The SEC plays an essential orchestrating role by connecting parties with shared interests, aligning sustainability levels of firms with realistic actions and goals, and evaluating issues of participants and the AGT as a whole in determining the future trajectory of the AGT. By means of orchestrating, interests can finally be brought together. Furthermore, consumer pressure, relations between initiatives, consultation, industrial conditions, international guidelines, accidents in the garment industry, and voluntary meetings are drivers that helped bringing interests together. Level differences, competition, difficulty to change, limited transparency, high number of parties, and principled attitudes are barriers that hinder to bundle interests. This whole bundling of interests is a learning process, as actors need time to get to know each other, build trust, and understand each other's roles and interests. During this learning process, openness, trust, and proactive behaviour between actors are improved, enabling actors to bring their interests together.

5. Discussion

This chapter discusses the findings of this study in terms of their meanings and contributions to theory. The outline of this chapter is as follows. Firstly, the interpretation of the findings in the light of knowledge about MSI emergence is discussed (5.1). Secondly, the contributions to theory are explained (5.2). Thereafter, implications of the findings for MSI founders, governments, firms, NGOs, and trade union participating in MSIs, as well as non-participating actors are described (5.3). Finally, a critical reflection is given on the limitations of this study combined with recommended further research and a reflection of my role during the research (5.4).

5.1 Interpretation of findings

In line with theories of Arenas et al. (2020), Bartley (2007), and Pattberg (2005), this thesis has found that the emergence of the AGT is a complex process consisting of contestation and consensus between interests. In terms of the developed explanation model, ten different interests are identified. While four of these interests led to consensus among actors, three combinations of interests were found to be in conflict (contestation). This can be explained by the contestatory deliberative perspective, perceiving contestation and consensus in MSIs as equal (Arenas et al., 2020). While the consensus between actors served as an important underpinning for the AGT's founding, conflicts between interests contributed to the development of the AGT. Bartley's (2007) statement that "divergent interests and overt conflicts will come to the fore when it comes to determining whose problem it is and how it should be addressed" (p. 341) is a well-fitting explanation why conflicts between interests emerged about how to solve the sustainability problems in practice. More specifically, in the discussions about rules, regulations, and actions for firms, divergent interests emerged in terms of how high the ambition level should be (Bartley, 2007). This was also the case in the discussions about what CSR themes the AGT should cover (only the nine themes of the AGT or also the themes put forward by firms) and what aims firms should have for their participation in the AGT (intrinsic motivation to improve the industry or greenwashing). In terms of the types of contestations distinguished by Arenas et al. (2020), the contestation in the AGT can be labelled as a mix between procedural and inclusiveness contestation. More specifically, conflicting interests in the AGT were found regarding rules and procedures for participating firms (procedural) and what voices should be heard (inclusiveness).

Arenas et al. (2020) stressed that conflicting interests (contestations) should be managed to prevent a blocking of deliberation. Consensus and contestations are managed by orchestrating which is a process performed by the SEC. The argument of Fowler and Biekart (2017) that the entity covering the orchestrator role is associated with governments is confirmed by this thesis as the SEC is a governmental actor. Orchestrating is an essential process to understand how the AGT emerged. In fact, this research showed that the bringing together of interests highly depends on the orchestrator. Fowler and Biekart (2017) and Bitzer et al. (2012) explain that MSIs require an orchestrator guiding the emergence and goal achievement. However, this thesis has also provided additional insights into what

this process of guiding an MSI implies. The orchestrator is a mediator that connects parties with similar interests and sets goals and actions for individual firms based on their sustainability level. In addition, conflicting interests are mitigated by imposing goals and actions to firms, monitoring the AGT's progress, and providing firms customised support for their issues. In sum, orchestrating is the management of conflicting and shared interests between actors, thereby facilitating the emergence process of an MSI. This matches with Bartley's (2007) explanation that an MSI's founding and the alignment of interests is a political and conflicting process that involves bargaining between actors with different interests.

A remarkable finding is that the respondents experience the bringing together of interests as a learning process. During this process, it gradually becomes easier for actors to bring their interests together. Respondents experienced that going through this process is hard and takes time. Zeyen et al. (2016) label this learning process 'the development process of an MSI' which should be managed by participating actors. According to these scholars, it is important that actors are aware of their different interests so that a robust norm can be negotiated (Zeyen et al., 2016). In terms of the AGT, this implied getting to know each other, building trust, and understanding each other's roles and interests.

Adding to the knowledge of MSI emergence, this thesis showed which drivers helped and which barriers hindered bringing interests together. These findings respond to recommendations of scholars (e.g. Bansal & Roth, 2000; Bartley, 2007) on research geared to the conditions under which MSIs emerge. In addition, the drivers and barriers can be used to explain why certain MSIs have emerged successfully and why others face relatively more difficulties in their emergence. External pressures combined with internal conversation tools helped to bundle interests, thereby having a driving relation with the bringing together of interests. More specifically, the finding that consumer pressure, accidents in the garment industry, and international guidelines served as drivers can be explained by stakeholder pressure (Fransen & Burgoon, 2011; Dummet, 2006; Marx, 2008, Reinecke & Donaghey, 2017; Schuessler et al., 2019). An increase in pressure on firms as a result of changed consumer demands, accidents, and governmental regulation, stimulated them to bring their interests together, resulting in the founding of the AGT. Relations between initiatives is a driver that can be explained by theories of Ashwin et al. (2020), Bitzer et al (2012), and Donaghey and Reinecke (2018), stressing that MSI emergence can be understood by looking at relations between initiatives. In terms of the AGT, these relations imply both competition (Donaghey & Reinecke, 2018) and cooperation (Ashwin et al., 2020; Bitzer et al., 2012) between initiatives. Industrial conditions showed that firms positioned deeper in the supply chain mainly have joined the AGT. As the AGT is perceived as a more ambitious initiative by respondents compared to other initiatives, this finding fits well with Fransen & Burgoon's (2011) explanation that firms positioned further in the chain prefer more ambitious private regulation. More specifically, these firms have more (direct) links with problems in the garment industry. Since these problems are hard to tackle individually, they experience a higher need for collaboration. Consultations and voluntary meetings are internal drivers that helped to bring interests

together. These drivers seemed helpful in negotiating about interests and connecting parties with shared interests. Arenas et al. (2020) explained that the negotiation process of “embracing contestation and engaging in ongoing revision of provisional agreements, criteria, and goals” is common in MSIs (Arenas et al., 2020, p. 169).

Regarding barriers, differences between actors in terms of professionalism, sensitivity to competition, transparency, and attitudes have made it more difficult to bundle interests, thereby having a hindering relations with the bringing together of interests. More specifically, differences in expertise, experience, and attitudes of actors in the AGT led to adverse effects in bringing interests together. Roloff (2008) explains that actors need each other’s expertise and experience in MSIs to be able to work together. Level differences, competition, limited transparency, and principled attitudes are barriers that hinder having effective dialogues and exchanging knowledge (Roloff, 2008; Tighe, 2016). The difficulty to change and the high number of parties are other factors that hindered to bring interests together. Clutcher-Gershenfeld (2015) explains that complex systems such as the AGT can be understood as a matrix consisting of actors on the one dimension and interests on the other. An increase in the number of participants, leads to an increase in complexity as more interests are present (Clutcher-Gershenfeld, 2015). The difficulty to change can be explained by Marx’s (2008) argument that organisations strive to reduce uncertainty and seek to control external information. In nature, organisations are averse towards change (Marx, 2008).

In sum, different interests in the AGT led to both consensus and contestations (Arenas et al., 2020). Consensus is managed by connecting parties with shared interests, while contestations are mitigated by imposing goals and actions for participation, monitoring the AGT’s progress, and providing customised support for issues. Orchestrating leads to the bringing together of interests as the orchestrator plays an essential role in managing consensus and mitigating contestations between interests. In other words, by means of orchestrating, interests can be bundled together. External pressures and internal conversation tools helped to bring interests together. Differences between actors in terms of professionalism, sensitivity to competition, transparency, and attitudes have made it more difficult to bundle interests, thereby hindering to bring interests together.

5.2 Contributions to theory

In the light of knowledge about MSI emergence, this thesis adds what interests firms, governmental, and civil society actors might have in an MSI, how their interests differ from each other, and how they are brought together during the emergence process. In addition, several drivers and barriers of reaching this consensus are found. Although different scholars (e.g. Arenas et al., 2020; Bartley, 2007) have explained that the emergence of MSIs can be understood as a process of contestation and consensus between different interests, insights into the process of bringing interests together within MSIs was lacking. This thesis has presented in-depth insights on how this process can be understood and how it has led to the AGT’s founding, thereby contributing to the gap in literature how MSIs

emerge (Ashwin et al., 2020; Bartley, 2007; Fransen & Burgoon, 2011). In line with recommended future research by Arenas et al. (2020), this thesis has applied a multi-level analysis combined with a contestatory deliberative perspective to explain how consensus between interests is reached in the AGT. This perspective is under-researched in terms of MSI emergence (Arenas et al., 2020; Bartley, 2007). In addition, this study has presented under which drivers and barriers the AGT emerged, thereby contributing to the gap in literature under which conditions MSIs emerge (Bansal & Roth, 2000; Bartley, 2007).

The puzzling phenomenon in terms of how interests are brought together in MSIs is solved, but there are still open ends with respect to how MSIs deal with interests in the long term. The AGT is, for example, reaching its final year (2021) and actors have critical views on the AGT's future. More specifically, respondents mainly mention they have built up their networks and knowledge and thereby they increasingly believe that they can work on sustainability on their own. A major challenge lies ahead for the SEC in terms of convincing participants that an extension is worthwhile. In addition, this thesis has not answered the question how the bringing together of interests relates to the effectiveness of MSIs. It might be the case that controversial interests stimulate an MSI's effectiveness as contestations enhance the democratic quality of an MSI as a result of ongoing revision (Arenas et al., 2020), but this is not proven by this thesis.

5.3 Practical implications

The results of this thesis have several implications for practitioners. Firstly, MSI founders (for example the SEC) can use the knowledge of this thesis to manage the founding process of MSIs more effectively. It is especially relevant for MSI founders to recognise the importance of the orchestrator in MSIs as this actor seemed to play an essential role in bringing interests together (Fowler & Biekart, 2017). The drivers shown in this research, for example voluntary meetings, can be used in an MSI to stimulate the bundling of interests. In addition, by being aware of the barriers of bringing interests together, founders can make efforts to avoid these as much as possible (Arenas et al., 2020). Zeyen et al. (2016) stress that MSIs will gain benefits if they are clearly aware of the potential trade-offs and tensions in MSIs. This thesis has shown what these trade-offs and tensions are in terms of the AGT, for example competition between firms, limited transparency, and principled attitudes of NGOs. The SEC, for example, would be well advised to explore improvement opportunities regarding the level differences and the competitiveness between firms as respondents mentioned these as the main barriers of bundling interests within the AGT.

Governments can use the insights of this research in attracting (specific) actors to MSIs (Bansal & Roth, 2000; Fransen & Burgoon, 2011), by responding to their interests. According to Jastram and Schneider (2015) and Scheper (2017), more organisations joining MSIs is essential for realising impactful measures against the pressing issues in the garment industry. Firms can be attracted by responding to their interests in gaining collaboration benefits, external legitimacy, networking,

knowledge sharing, and the ability to improve their CSR practices. NGOs and trade unions can be attracted by responding to their interest lobbying as MSI participation allows them to lobby in a more direct and broader way.

Firms can learn from this thesis by recognising that participating in MSIs is a learning process. By being aware of the fact that the bringing together of interests is a time consuming process which involves getting to know each other, building trust, and understanding each other's roles and interests, firms will gain a better understanding why participating in an MSI and aligning interests is complex and takes time. In addition, by being aware of their essential role in the development of an MSI, firms can prevent a standstill, abuse, or legitimacy loss more effectively (Zeyen et al., 2016).

Participating as well as non-participating NGOs and trade unions can make use of consultation and international guidelines to influence firms' actions and practices more effectively. These drivers proved to help bundling interests between firms and civil society organisations. Actors not participating in MSIs can take benefit of the drivers and barriers presented in this thesis as most of these also apply for collaboration in general within organisations. Consultation, for example, seemed to be a helpful tool in interests negotiations and compromising till a shared solution is found.

5.4 Limitations and directions for further research

In terms of the limitations of this thesis, a first limitation is that during the interviews it appeared that not all respondents were involved in the negotiation process of the AGT prior to its founding in 2016. Unfortunately, most of the people participating in these negotiations already left the organisation they represented. Although many respondents mentioned they had received detailed information about the organisation's interests in the AGT and the negotiations, information could also have been lost. As a result, insights in interest deliberation during the AGT's emergence are mixed with contemporary interest deliberation within the AGT. Future research is advised to put more focus on the deliberation of interests prior to an MSI founding. This is relevant in terms of understanding the emergence process of MSIs as this will give additional insights into what positions actors adopt in negotiations and in what steps they manage to reach consensus.

A second limitation is that firms are interviewed more than other actor groups. This limitation is caused by the fact that there are more firms than other actors participating in the AGT and because firms were more willing to be interviewed than governmental and civil society actors. As a result, perspectives of firms on the AGT are dominating in the interview transcripts which could have influenced the conclusions that were drawn from the analysis. Future research should aim to realise a more balanced view. More specifically, the focus should lie more on governmental and civil society actors as these actors seemed to play an essential role in orchestrating the MSI (governmental actor) and in sharing their knowledge with firms (civil society actor). In addition, future research should aim to realise a better sample by categorising firms into starting, advanced, and specialised regarding their sustainability level. In this thesis, it appeared that most firms perceived themselves as specialised,

sustainable firms. As a result, the less advanced firms are somewhat underexposed in this thesis which could have distorted the picture on firms' interests in the AGT.

A third limitation is that the research was conducted during the global outbreak of the Corona virus in 2020, leading to the difficulty that respondents could only be interviewed by telephone, Skype, or mail. Future research could put more light on conducting this research with other approaches. For example, a longitudinal study focused at inter-organisational meetings within an MSI could provide rich insights into the negotiations of interests within MSIs. This is important as it gives scholars a more insider's view into how actors in MSIs affect each other and what strategies they apply to reach consensus.

Reflecting on my own role during this thesis, I think I did well in staying as neutral and objective as possible in conducting the research. When reflecting on the research, I think that I managed the process very independently. Although I faced many challenges along the way, I have been able to deal with these continuously by participating in research trainings, delving into online information, and watching video tutorials. However, I also see limitations on my role during the research. In terms of the interviews, I think that more depth could have been created by asking more questions about the negotiation process prior to the AGT's founding. Although these negotiations were long ago and therefore often blurred in the respondents' minds, more questions could have been asked about their feelings, thoughts, and memories of this negotiation process. In addition, I would have gained a better picture of actors' interests when asking them more questions about how they think the AGT should be shaped and governed in terms of rules, regulations, objectives, and themes. It seemed that contestations between interests mainly emerge within these themes. In terms of structuring the research, I experienced it as a challenge to guide outsiders through the story of how MSIs can be perceived and explaining why interest contestations are unfavourable to telling what these interest differences are and how these could be solved in practice by orchestrating. In addition, it was hard to identify conflicting interests initially as respondents mentioned relatively comparable interests. By specifying the interests more and analysing what they address, clear contestations between interests appeared. On balance, I believe that outsiders are provided an understandable and interesting story in this thesis and that I have added relevant scientific contributions to literature on MSI emergence.

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Appendixes

I. Invitation mail organisations

Invitation mail, no prior contact by telephone

Dear Sir/Madam (*surname employee organisation*),

We are Johanneke, Linda, Marritt and Hugo and are currently in the final stage of our Master in Business Administration at Radboud University in Nijmegen. Our master theses focus on the topic of sustainability in the context of the garment industry. The focus lies on the Dutch Agreement on Sustainable Garments and Textile and particularly the reasons for why organisations participate in this agreement, the interests of organisations in the agreement and the degree of commitment in this agreement. At the website of the agreement, we saw that (*firm name*) is participating and therefore we would like to involve your organisation in our study. Our question therefore is: would you like to participate?

Participating in our study means that we would like to conduct one interview with a member within your organisation who was involved in the decision to participate in the agreement. The questions cover the reasons of your organisation to participate in the agreement, your interest in the agreement and your involvement in the foundation process. The interview will take about 1 to 1.5 hours at maximum. The information will be treated confidentially and anonymously, that is, names and other confidential data will be made anonymous in our master thesis.

We would appreciate the opportunity to conduct the interview in person, visiting your office. If this is not possible, an interview by telephone would also be an option.

Please let us know if we can have an open conversation in which we can exchange knowledge no later than Friday 6 March. If you have any questions, please mail us or call us on the numbers below.

After completion of our master theses you will receive a copy of our research report, providing you with insights into the agreement and its participants.

Kind regards,

Johanneke de Bruin (+31 6 11972015)
Linda Kersten (+31 6 81639799)
Marritt Raaijmakers (+31 6 51156218)
Hugo Horstik (+31 6 57751848)

Invitation mail, after contact by telephone

Dear Sir/Madam (*surname employee organisation*),

Following our telephone conversation, we would like to share more information about who we are and the content of the interview. We are Johanneke, Linda, Marritt and Hugo and are currently in the final stage of our Master in Business Administration at Radboud University in Nijmegen. Our master theses focus on the topic of sustainability in the context of the garment industry. The focus lies on the Dutch Agreement on Sustainable Garments and Textile and particularly the reasons for why organisations participate in this agreement, the interests of organisations in the agreement and the degree of commitment in this agreement.

As discussed by telephone, we would like to conduct one interview with you on these themes as part of our investigation. The questions cover the reasons of your organisation to participate in the agreement, your interest in the agreement and your involvement in the foundation process. The interview will take about 1 to 1.5 hours at maximum. The information will be treated confidentially and anonymously, that is, names and other confidential data will be made anonymous in our master thesis.

We would appreciate the opportunity to conduct the interview in person, visiting your office. If this is not possible, an interview by telephone would also be an option.

Please let us know if we can have an open conversation in which we can exchange knowledge no later than Friday 6 March. If you have any questions, please mail us or call us on the numbers below.

After completion of our master theses you will receive a copy of our research report, providing you with insights into the agreement and its participants.

Kind regards,

Johanneke de Bruin (+31 6 11972015)
Linda Kersten (+31 6 81639799)
Marritt Raaijmakers (+31 6 51156218)
Hugo Horstik (+31 6 57751848)

II. Interview guides

INTERVIEW GUIDE FIRMS

Introduction

Introduce the conversation with the information below.

○ **Small talk**

Introduce ourselves.

We are very happy that you want to help us by participating in this interview.

○ **Objective of the research**

With this interview you are participating in our research about the emergence of the Dutch Agreement on Sustainable Garments and Textiles. Our aim is to conduct 5 to 10 interviews with different parties which are participating in this agreement (e.g. garment firms, NGOs, SEC). Our research focuses at explaining the emergence of the agreement. I am particular interested in the interests of parties in the agreement, how they differ from each other and how you managed to bring all interests together in the founding the agreement. My colleague students are mainly interested in the motives of parties to participate in the agreement.

○ **Subjects**

This interview consists of the following subjects:

- Your organisation
- Dutch Agreement on Sustainable Garments & Textiles
- Motives to participate in the AGT
- Interests of your organisation in the AGT
- Process of bringing interests together

○ **Anonymity and confidentiality**

All information that will be shared in this interview will only be used for the research. This interview is anonymous which means that your personal data will not be used or mentioned in the interview.

○ **Exiting the interview**

You are always free to exit the interview before its end if you want to. Then we will stop the interview immediately.

○ **Recording**

We would like to record this interview so that we can analyse it in detail afterwards. We are obliged to ask your permission for this. Therefore, when the recorder is started we will ask this permission of you. *Do you grant us permission to record this interview?*

○ **Division of roles**

Both of us will conduct this interview with you. I will start with my question and my colleague student will then ask her questions.

Themes and central questions

Every theme should be discussed. Asking all questions per theme is not necessary. Continue asking question based on the answers of the respondent. Ask for examples.

- **General background information**
 - Can you introduce yourself?
 - Can you tell something about your organisation?
 - What entails your position within the organisation?
- **The Dutch Agreement on Sustainable Garments & Textiles**
 - How would you define or describe the AGT?
 - How did your organisation discover the agreement?
 - In what way do you in your position have to deal with the AGT?
- **Interests in the AGT**
 - Why did you join the AGT?
 - What was your main interest in the AGT?
 - You can see the AGT as a collection of all kinds of different interests. Did you experience any differences between your own interests and the interests of other actors (for example NGOs, government, trade unions)?
 - If so, which differences were these?
 - How do you deal with those differences between interests?
- **Bringing interests together**
 - How was your organisation involved in the founding process of the AGT?
 - To what extent is it currently possible to bring your interests into the AGT? Can you give examples of this?
 - Did you also experience this in the beginning?
 - As mentioned before, you see the AGT as a collection of all kinds of different interests. Were you able to align your organisation's interests with those of other actors participating in the agreement? If so, how did you manage that?
 - Was there anything that helped to bring interests together? Can you give examples?
 - Was there anything that made it difficult to bring interests together? Can you give examples?

Closing

Close the interview by following the order below.

- **Closing remarks**
 - Is there anything you would like to add to this interview?
 - Are there any important topics that are not discussed in this interview?
- **Member check**

This interview will be worked out by transcribing and analysing it. Do you want to receive a copy of our analysis so that you can check if our main conclusions are correct?
- **Thanking the interviewee**

We would like to thank you for your time and participation in this interview. You have helped us a lot in our research. We hope you feel that you could bring in all your stories and that we listened to it.
- **Contact details**

If any questions arise after today, feel free to contact Hugo Horstik (+316 577 518 48 / hugohorstik@live.nl)

INTERVIEW GUIDE GOVERNMENTAL ACTORS

Introduction

Introduce the conversation with the information below.

○ **Small talk**

Introduce ourselves.

We are very happy that you want to help us by participating in this interview.

○ **Objective of the research**

With this interview you are participating in our research about the emergence of the Dutch Agreement on Sustainable Garments and Textiles. Our aim is to conduct 5 to 10 interviews with different parties which are participating in this agreement (e.g. garment firms, NGOs, SEC). Our research focuses at explaining the emergence of the agreement. I am particular interested in the interests of parties in the agreement, how they differ from each other and how you managed to bring all interests together in the founding the agreement. My colleague students are mainly interested in the motives of parties to participate in the agreement.

○ **Subjects**

This interview consists of the following subjects:

- Brief introduction of yourself and the Social Economic Council
- Interests in the AGT and motivations to participate/found the AGT
- Bringing together interests in the AGT

○ **Anonymity and confidentiality**

All information that will be shared in this interview will only be used for the research. This interview is anonymous which means that your personal data will not be used or mentioned in the interview.

○ **Exiting the interview**

You are always free to exit the interview before its end if you want to. Then we will stop the interview immediately.

○ **Recording**

We would like to record this interview so that we can analyse it in detail afterwards. We are obliged to ask your permission for this. Therefore, when the recorder is started we will ask this permission of you.

○ **Division of roles**

We'll take turns asking you questions. Then we'll start the recording now. *Do you grant us permission to record this interview?*

Themes and central questions

Every theme should be discussed. Asking all questions per theme is not necessary. Continue asking question based on the answers of the respondent. Ask for examples.

○ **General questions**

- Could you briefly tell us about the Social and Economic Council?
- What is your position within the organisation?

○ **The Dutch Agreement on Sustainable Garments & Textiles**

- To what extent were you involved in the creation of the AGT?
- Can you tell us something about how the founding process looked like?
- What role does the SEC play in the AGT?
- How did the SEC contact firms, partners and supporters?

○ **Interests in the AGT and motivations to participate**

- Why did the SEC choose to set up a AGT for the clothing industry? How was this decided?
- What were the advantages for the SEC/Government of establishing a AGT?
- What is the SER's main interest in the AGT?
- What does the SEC expect to achieve by participating in/founding the AGT?
- Have you experienced differences between the interests of the SEC and those of other parties? If so, what were these differences?
- How does the SEC manage differences between interests in order to achieve the same goal?
- How do you recommend participation in the AGT to parties?

○ **Negotiation process**

- How was the SEC involved in the process of establishing the AGT?
- To what extent were you able to bring the interests of the SEC into the AGT?
- Were you able to align the interests of your organisation with those of other parties? If so, how did you do that?
- How do you manage the various stakeholders/parties who are parties to the AGT?
- Was there anything that helped to bring interests together?
- Was there anything that made it more difficult to bring interests together?

Closing

Close the interview by following the order below.

○ **Closing remarks**

- Is there anything you would like to add to this interview?
- Are there any important topics that are not discussed in this interview?
- Do you have any acquaintances from the AGT we could approach for an interview?

○ **Member check**

This interview will be worked out by transcribing and analysing it. Do you want to receive a copy of our analysis so that you can check if our main conclusions are correct?

○ **Thanking the interviewee**

We would like to thank you for your time and participation in this interview. You have helped us a lot in our research. We hope you feel that you could bring in all your stories and that we listened to it.

○ **Contact details**

If any questions arise after today, feel free to contact Hugo Horstik (+316 577 518 48 / hugohorstik@live.nl)

INTERVIEW GUIDE CIVIL SOCIETY ACTORS

Introduction

Introduce the conversation with the information below.

○ **Small talk**

Introduce ourselves.

We are very happy that you want to help us by participating in this interview.

○ **Objective of the research**

With this interview you are participating in our research about the emergence of the Dutch Agreement on Sustainable Garments and Textiles. Our aim is to conduct 5 to 10 interviews with different parties which are participating in this agreement (e.g. garment firms, NGOs, SEC). Our research focuses at explaining the emergence of the agreement. I am particular interested in the interests of parties in the agreement, how they differ from each other and how you managed to bring all interests together in the founding the agreement. My colleague students are mainly interested in the motives of parties to participate in the agreement.

○ **Subjects**

This interview consists of the following subjects:

- Brief introduction of yourself and your organisation
- Motives to participate in the AGT
- Interests in the AGT
- Involvement in the founding process

○ **Anonymity and confidentiality**

All information that will be shared in this interview will only be used for the research. This interview is anonymous which means that your personal data will not be used or mentioned in the interview.

○ **Exiting the interview**

You are always free to exit the interview before its end if you want to. Then we will stop the interview immediately.

○ **Recording**

We would like to record this interview so that we can analyse it in detail afterwards. We are obliged to ask your permission for this. Therefore, when the recorder is started we will ask this permission of you.

○ **Division of roles**

We'll take turns asking you questions. Then we'll start the recording now. *Do you grant us permission to record this interview?*

Themes and central questions

Every theme should be discussed. Asking all questions per theme is not necessary. Continue asking question based on the answers of the respondent. Ask for examples.

○ General questions

- Could you briefly tell us about the Social and Economic Council?
- What is your position within the organisation?

○ The Dutch Agreement on Sustainable Garments & Textiles

- To what extent were you involved in the decision to participate in the AGT?
- How did your organisation discover the AGT?
- How did you come up with the idea to participate? Was everyone behind it?
- What thought steps were taken when deciding to participate in the AGT?
- What does participation in the AGT mean for your organisation?

○ Interests in the AGT and motivations to participate

- Why did you join the AGT?
- What were the main reasons for participating?
- What were the advantages for you to become a member?
- What was your main interest in the AGT?
- The AGT can be seen as a collection of interests. Have you experienced differences between the interests of your organisation and those of other parties?
- If so, what differences were these?

○ Negotiation process - Hugo

- Was your organisation involved in the process of setting up the AGT? If so, in what way?
- As said, the AGT can be seen as a collection of interests. To what extent are you able to bring your interests into the AGT? Was this also the case in the beginning?
- NGOs, firms and the SEC all bring their own interests. Were you able to align the interests of your organisation with those of other parties? If so, how did you do that?
- Was there anything that helped to bring interests together?
- Was there anything that made it difficult to bring interests together?

Closing

Close the interview by following the order below.

○ Closing remarks

- Is there anything you would like to add to this interview?
- Are there any important topics that are not discussed in this interview?

○ Member check

This interview will be worked out by transcribing and analysing it. Do you want to receive a copy of our analysis so that you can check if our main conclusions are correct?

○ Thanking the interviewee

We would like to thank you for your time and participation in this interview. You have helped us a lot in our research. We hope you feel that you could bring in all your stories and that we listened to it.

○ Contact details

If any questions arise after today, feel free to contact Hugo Horstik (+316 577 518 48 / hugohorstik@live.nl)

III. Overview documents

Document number	Type of document	Author	Reference
12	Policy plan	Firm	(Ducky Dons, 2019)
13	Action plan	Firm	(Schijvens, 2019a)
14	AGT report	Firm	(Kings of Indigo, 2019)
15	Annual report	Trade union	<i>Personally received by mail</i>
16	Factsheet	Trade union	(CNV, 2018)
17	Article	NGO	(Stop Kinderarbeid, 2017)
18	Action plan	SEC	(IMVO Convenanten, 2020)
19	Midterm evaluation	SEC	(IMVO Convenanten, 2019a)
20	Appreciation midterm evaluation	SEC	(IMVO Convenanten, 2019b)
21	AGT Sustainable Garments and Textiles	SEC	(IMVO Convenanten, 2016)
22	CSR Policy	Firm	(The Sting, 2019)
23	Website page	Firm	(Goosecraft, 2020)
24	Website page	Firm	(Groenendijk, 2016)
25	Website page	Firm	(From Scratch, 2020)
26	Website page	Business association	(Modint, 2016)
27	Website page	Firm	(Rademakers Fur Fashion, 2020)
28	Website page	Firm	(Schijvens, 2019b)
29	Website page	NGO	(Unicef, 2018)

IV. Data structure

Quotes	1 st Order Concepts	2nd Order Themes	Aggregate Dimension
<p>“It is therefore very important and the great interest that you work together because otherwise you just can't get through when you look at it” (interview 5)</p> <p>“The goal of the participants is to work together towards sustainability goals that they cannot achieve individually or with difficulty” (document 16)</p> <p>“So we had something then at least increase the possibility of making certain changes at production sites” (interview 4)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working together to increase leverage at production sites • Setting up collective projects on most complex problems 	<p>Gaining collaboration benefits</p>	<p>Interests</p>
<p>“What's important to us is the tremendous flow of information we get from it” (int. 5)</p> <p>“In addition, the CNV, just like other civil society organisations, the government and trade associations, will contribute its expertise for the instruments to be developed to help participating firms” (document 16)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information you get from experts • Exchanging information and learning from each other • Bridging knowledge gaps 	<p>Knowledge sharing</p>	
<p>“Well, at the end of the day, of course, we want to see an impact on the level of working conditions and the environment in chains. So that's why we got involved” (interview 8)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We want to see an impact on social and environmental conditions • Solving problems • Increasing influence is the only way forward 	<p>Making an impact</p>	
<p>“The AGT provides NGOs with a relevant network in that they have the opportunity to be in contact with motivated firms” (document 19)</p> <p>“It's just very interesting that you can take on all that expertise. That you have it so close to you. Quite a big network” (interview 5)</p> <p>“Legitimacy for a conversation. I do notice that it just provides a platform” (int. 11)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Platform to easily get in touch with other organisations • Entrances to other parties • We are seen as a legitimate interlocutor 	<p>Networking</p>	
<p>“In order to increase transparency, also towards consumers” (int. 6)</p> <p>“We are convinced that we have to tell the honest story and that this is the way to make each other more sustainable” (document 25)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transparency gives us the possibility to discover issues • Inspiring by creating transparency 	<p>Transparency</p>	
<p>“The AGT gives guidelines, tools and contacts that make it easier to take steps” (int. 1)</p> <p>“It is unique in terms of the extensive support and guidance offered to firms” (document 19)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support to improve own essential sustainability themes • Guidance, documents, tools, trainings 	<p>Improving own CSR practices</p>	
<p>“We are going to try to make steps together and you will get positive support from how you can do that” (interview 5)</p> <p>“Yes, the AGT is more overarching, so it covers everything in terms of sustainability and all locations in the entire chain” (interview 2)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You're not going to be pilloried • The holistic approach • Beyond the first tier in supply chain 	<p>Positive culture</p>	
<p>“This was in line with our long-standing commitment to CSR” (document 27)</p> <p>“To give concrete form to our ambition, we signed the Sustainable Clothing & Textiles AGT at the end of 2018” (document 12)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We just think it's important to do our bit • Making the world a more sustainable place • Commitment to CSR 	<p>Contributing to sustainability</p>	

<p>"(NGOI) is committed to increasing attention to the rights and interests of children" (doc. 29) "our interest is primarily to draw attention to children's rights" (interview 7)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raising awareness for problems • We strive for the most ambitious rules, regulations, and actions 	Lobbying	
<p>"I also think it's very nice to show our customers that we participate. That we are participating, but that we also are actually going to do it" (interview 3)</p> <p>"So, of course they could also show their stakeholders: look I'm working on this" (interview 9)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Others say how I work and whether it's good or not • Nice to show our customers 	External legitimacy	
<p>"Well, I think the basic interest, the most deep, basic ground for people or parties to participate is the same, namely to make the textile chain sustainable in the knowledge that it is not okay now" (interview 11) "We acknowledged that we've done a lot and that's all not necessarily wrong but we haven't been able to really solve the problems separately, so from now on we're [...] going to try to achieve the solution together" (interview 10)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They underpinned the founding of the AGT • Basic ground for parties to participate is the same • Collaboration is needed to be able to change • A stimulating, broad way of thinking would be most effective 	Shared interests	Consensus and contestations
<p>"They joined more for the outside world than that they believe in it themselves" (interview 3) "It is clear that there are nine themes and that it has to fall within them" (interview 12) "You notice a tendency that NGOs and trade unions always want the ideal world and everything as quickly and as strictly as possible for firms" (interview 9)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are firms that participate for free-riding • NGOs and trade unions can be unrealistic and too ambitious • The AGT does not support themes that are important for us 	Conflicting interests	
<p>"They sent out a whole questionnaire with questions about what kind of impact it makes, what we run into and how they can support us in these times. Yes, there is just so much shared and supported from the SEC" (int. 3)</p> <p>"The AGT secretariat is highly appreciated and clearly contributed to the progress made by individual firms, both by supporting firms and by assessing their progress" (document 19)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The SEC is a mediator who brings parties together • I can link you to that one and that one • Connecting levels to actions and goals • You can bring in your issues and they take these into account 	Orchestrating	Process of bringing interests together
<p>"Firms have needed time to get to know each other, each other's role and expertise, but they now find each other better and better, and trust between parties and between parties and firms has grown strongly" (doc. 20)</p> <p>"In the beginning, we could explain it for a long time and it felt like: okay, we run into a wall. And now, after repeating the story several times, answering questions, engaging in dialogue and workshops, and executing projects, you notice that firms say: ah yes, good! And that's funny, I must also say, we understand firms much better" (interview 7)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People start to trust each other more • It takes time and effort to build trust and establish relationships • It is a learning process in which you try to understand each other's role and interest 	Learning process	
<p>"Consumers around the world expect firms to do everything they can to ensure that their products are free from child labour and other human rights abuses" (document 17)</p> <p>"I also notice that when there is external pressure, for example on child labour or forced labour, these are really boundaries that are laid so clearly by society, that there is more interest there" (interview 11)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consumer expectations • Society is becoming more critical towards sustainability 	Consumer pressure	Drivers

<p>"So competition arose in the market for meeting minimum social standards. And that's very healthy" (int. 10)</p> <p>"The AGT and the German Bündnis für nachhaltige Textilien have signed a cooperation agreement and active links are being sought with initiatives elsewhere in the EU" (document 16)</p> <p>"Cooperation with international initiatives on these themes is crucial to the success of these collective projects" (document 21)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Competition leads to pressure on what the AGT delivers • Working together with other international initiatives to increase impact • It can reinforce each other 	<p>Relations between initiatives</p>	
<p>"It's a typical Dutch model of compromising and ending somewhere in the middle" (interview 9)</p> <p>"You can never go in one particular direction, there can't be dogmas, let me put it this way, there is always a consultation economy and a AGT is a consultation system" (interview 6)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engaging in dialogues • Compromising till a solution is found in the middle • Typical Dutch model 	<p>Consultation</p>	
<p>"Clothing production is a complex process, with a variety of risks at each stage of production, including child labour, many of which go unnoticed and are not addressed" (document 17)</p> <p>"You notice above all that those large retailers who buy themselves are the ones that connect and not the shop on the corner or something like that" (interview 9)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Firms further in chain mainly join AGT • Hard to tackle problems in supply chain individually 	<p>Industrial conditions</p>	
<p>"We always refer to what is agreed on in the labour standards signed by countries" (int. 11)</p> <p>"Because the OECD was already there, there were already international guidelines they could look at" (interview 9)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Falling back on international agreements (OECD and UNGPs) 	<p>International guidelines</p>	
<p>"That's not something the AGT created, but it certainly helped" (interview 10)</p> <p>"Especially with that in Bangladesh when that factory collapsed and all the alarm bells went off at the same time" (interview 6)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ali Enterprise, Tazreen, and Rana Plaza • Increased urgency 	<p>Accidents in the garment industry</p>	
<p>"It often happens automatically when you have workshops or trainings that are interactive and you start working on something in groups" (interview 4)</p> <p>"You have projects on all themes and you can sign up for them, you can participate in them. So then you automatically already have a group that is interested in a certain subject so you can bring those interests together" (interview 12)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interactive meetings • Shared interest in the same subject 	<p>Voluntary meetings</p>	
<p>"We were already 10 steps further, I dare to say" (interview 4)</p> <p>"Firms were less advanced in terms of due diligence than expected at the start of the AGT" (document 19)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Everyone is one a different level in sustainability 	<p>Level differences</p>	<p>Barriers</p>
<p>"That makes it harder to communicate if you know that firm is a competitor" (interview 12)</p> <p>"There's a brand that might join and that's (<i>competitor</i>), and that's just a very big competitor of ours. But at the same time I would find it very interesting if they join, because I hope to be able to do certain things with them anyway, because we have the same interest in the chain and I'm very curious about how they see and do certain things" (interview 5)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Competitive sensitivity • Hard to communicate • Bone of contention 	<p>Competition</p>	

<p>“We want to avoid pain, we want to hold on to the robust, because it's easy” (interview 10)</p> <p>“What I've noticed is that the clothing and textile industry is really old-fashioned and slow and change is often quite scary and exciting” (interview 4)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Change is often quite scary and thrilling • People want to hold on to the robust 	<p>Difficulty to change</p>
<p>“NGOs and trade unions do not know what specific issues individual firms are working on in their value chains and what problems they want to address” (document 19)</p> <p>“That limited degree of transparency, so that information that the secretariat receives and cannot be passed on to parties like us, is of course also a limitation for us” (interview 8)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited degree of transparency is a limitation • Civil society organisations do not know what themes firms are working on 	<p>Limited transparency</p>
<p>“It has become a very unwieldy mechanism, we can't turn 1 2 3. It's not a speedboat” (interview 6)</p> <p>“What makes it difficult for me is that we are with a lot of parties and a lot of people in such a steering committee, so there is little space and it becomes less personal than in a smaller group, so to speak” (interview 9)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inflexibility • Unwieldy mechanism 	<p>High number of parties</p>
<p>“They say, they claim something, and you have to do what we say. That's the biggest obstacle” (interview 6)</p> <p>“Of course it's going to be a very bureaucratic thing, because you have to prove to them that you're doing something” (interview 12)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bureaucratic thing, proving them what you do • Limited freedom 	<p>Principled attitudes</p>

V. Feelings, thoughts, and hesitations researcher

Friday 3 april 2020, 01:00 PM

I proposed the other students of the thesis circle to have a Skype conference call every Friday to discuss each other's progress, challenges and plans. I am sure that this will improve our final result and it will at least be helpful for our mental health as face-to-face contact is now impossible because of the Corona outbreak.

Tuesday 7 april 2020, 11:00 AM

I received a GO for my research proposal! This has given a boost to my confidence and discipline. I experience it as a big step towards finishing my Master. I will work hard to reach that goal. I feel it is best to start improving my report based on the feedback after the Skype call with my supervisor, as this meeting will make clear what parts require most attention and improvement.

Friday 11 april 2020, 01:00 PM

Instead of finishing my thesis in week 24 (8-14 June), I aim to finish the report by the first of June. To meet this deadline, I aim to conduct all interviews in April, so that I can analyse and report all data in May. This brings me peace of mind and enables me to meet the deadline more easily.

Thursday 16 april 2020, 09:00 AM

So far, I have conducted 2 interviews with firms. 5 interviews have been planned for the coming 2 weeks from which 3 with firms and 2 with NGOs. I am in doubt whether I will manage to interview industry organisations (Modint and INretail) and trade organisations (CNV and FNV). I get the feeling that they ignore my mails and messages at LinkedIn. If I won't manage to conduct interviews with them, I will compensate this by including more reports and AGT documents of these organisations in the document analysis.

The Skype call with my supervisor Nora gave me a good feeling as I am on the right track. The adjustments and improvements needed in my first three chapters are mainly small ones. There seems to be confusion for the co-reader how the concept MSI is defined in the thesis. I need to use less general, complex labels for this concept, thereby preventing that the concept is seen as a formal agreement. In addition, there should be included literature about interest negotiation or deliberation of interests in MSIs. It would also be a good idea to adopt a particular lens of framework in the thesis in order to do more in the findings section than just describing what respondent said. With a particular lens, I am able to explain what the respondents say. I should now look for literature on these themes and read these so that I can get an idea what labels to use when coding the data.

Monday 20 april 2020, 12:00 AM

During this morning, I read all kinds of articles, papers, researches and other scientific documents about deliberation of interests in MSIs. Different lenses appeared from prior work, for example institutional dynamics, multi-stakeholder dynamics, value creation perspective and the neo-Gramscian theoretical perspective. I will take these lenses with me when coding the transcripts and documents so that I can evaluate which perspective will eventually fit my data best.

Thursday 23 april 2020, 05:00 PM

Today I have conducted the first two interviews with NGOs. It is interesting to see that they have a totally different perspective towards the AGT than firms do. Meanwhile, I experience that the interviews are conducted in an improving way. While some questions in the first interviews were hard to understand for respondents, these are now often clear for them as a result of introducing the context of particular questions more.

Friday 8 May 2020, 02:30 PM

I feel shocked because I still have to do quite a lot of work, unless the fact that almost all interview have been conducted. I'm in doubt whether I will manage to conduct a good analysis in Atlas.ti,

resulting in clear findings from which I can draw proper conclusions. Therefore, I have decided to participate in workshops about analysis in Atlas.ti which will definitely help me.

Monday 11 May 2020, 08:00 PM

I started writing the findings section and I feel this went pretty well. In addition, my supervisor sent me an interesting paper about contestation in MSIs. The coming days, I will work further on my findings chapter and make a decision about which theoretical lens I will apply in my thesis. This depends on what findings I will get from the analysis in Atlas.ti.

Friday 15 May 2020, 02:00 PM

Last Tuesday, I conducted my twelfth and last interview. This feels as a little milestone, but there is much work left to do. Luckily, I finished writing findings section this week and I started to make improvements in the first 3 chapters based on the feedback received on my research proposal. My confidence has been increasing as a result of writing my thoughts and findings down on paper. The coming weekend I will work further on the feedback and I will send a copy of my findings section to friends to check if my story is understandable and easy to read for outsiders.

Wednesday 20 May 2020, 05:00 PM

My draft findings section is finished and will be checked by other students within my thesis circle. I also have been working on my discussion chapter which feels as a big challenge. Parts of my thesis are getting in line with each other and the structure is improving.

Sunday 24 May 2020, 08:00 PM

I'm in doubt whether I will manage to structure all the findings in a good way in the final thesis. Today, I changed my whole findings chapter as a result of processing >100 feedback comments from a colleague student.

Monday 25 May 2020, 09:00 AM

I asked a friend for feedback on my findings section to make it even better. In addition, a colleague student will read it again this week. In this way, I hope to create a well-structured findings section which is good to follow for outsiders and covers all important aspects.

Thursday 28 May 2020, 4:00 PM

Today, I finished my last chapter (discussion)! In addition, I have worked out the feedback comment of my friend in the findings section. This weekend I will send the full thesis to my supervisor for the last feedback. For the coming last two weeks I have planned to make the final adjustments in terms of lay-out, grammar and sentence formulations.

Tuesday 2 June 2020, 7:00 PM

From the feedback of my supervisor it appears that my findings and discussion section need more clarification. I agree that the interests do not conflict that much yet so I think that I need to specify these more in terms of what they address. In addition, the explanation model can be presented more clear by first explaining the model in general, followed by explaining the parts of the model.

Wednesday 10 June 2020, 02:00 PM

I felt it as a challenge to process all feedback of my supervisor, colleague students, and friends, but I managed to achieve this. In my view, the thesis is finished now which feels as a milestone. The coming final days I will read the thesis over and over again to find improvements regarding redundancies, formulations and consistency.

Sunday 14 June 2020, 01:00 PM

The thesis has got a finishing touch and I will hand it in today which feels very good. After months of hard work, I am very proud of the final result!

VI. Research integrity form

Research Integrity Form

Research Integrity

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: Hugo Horstik	Student number: 1029827
RU e-mail address: Hugo.Horstik@student.ru.nl	Master specialisation: Organisational Design and Development

<p>Thesis title: <i>Bringing interests together in multi-stakeholder initiatives: understanding the emergence of the Dutch Agreement on Sustainable Garments and Textiles</i></p> <p>Brief description of the study: <i>Qualitative study into interests of firms, government, and civil society actors in the Dutch Agreement on Sustainable Garments and Textiles and finding explanations how their interests have been brought together in the emergence process including what drivers and barriers for this process were.</i></p>

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:  Hugo Horstik Date: 29 May 2020

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: _____

VII. Research consent form

Consent Form for submitting a thesis in the Radboud thesis Repository

Consent Form for submitting a thesis in the Radboud thesis Repository

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

1. To archive theses for a minimum period of seven years, in accordance with legal requirements (Wet versterking kwaliteitswaarborgen hoger onderwijs, Art. 7.3, lid 5).
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.

The repository serves as an archive in which all theses will be included. This consent form serves to also enable the publication of those theses.

By submission and publication in the theses repository copyright is not transferred. Therefore, students can at any time revoke their consent for publication.

Rights and obligations of the student

If the student grants permission to Radboud University to make his/her thesis available within the thesis repository to users inside and outside Radboud University, the student states that:

- Users are allowed to use the thesis private study and/or educational and research purposes, in accordance with the provisions of the Copyright Act (Auteurswet), with full mention of the name of the student and the location of the thesis.
- Neither the organization offering internship nor the client of the thesis has any objections against making the thesis publicly available in the thesis repository.
- The student has obtained permission from the copyright holder of any material used in the thesis to incorporate this material as part of the thesis in the theses repository and make it available to others inside and outside Radboud University.
- The student grants Radboud University the right to make the thesis available in the thesis repository for a minimum period of seven years, barring earlier withdrawal by the student. Permission to make the thesis available to third parties will take effect on the date indicated on this form.
- The student grants Radboud University the right to change the accessibility of the thesis and limit it if compelling reasons exist.

Rights and obligations of Radboud University

- The student's non-exclusive license grants Radboud University the right to make the thesis available to users inside and outside Radboud University.
- Radboud University is allowed to include the thesis, in accordance with legal requirements, in the theses repository for a minimum period of seven years.
- Radboud University can make the thesis freely accessible for users of the theses repository inside and outside Radboud University and allow them to use the thesis for private study and/or educational and research purposes, in accordance with the provisions of the Copyright Act (Auteurswet), with full mention of the name of the student and the location of the thesis.
- Radboud University will ensure that the author of the thesis is listed and make clear that if the thesis is used, the origin must be clearly stated.
- Radboud University will make clear that for any commercial use of the thesis the student's explicit consent is required. In relevant cases, explicit consent of the organization offering internship or the client of the thesis is required as well.
- Radboud University has the right to change the accessibility of the thesis and limit it if compelling reasons exist.

Rights and duties of the user

As a consequence of this consent form a user of the theses repository may use the thesis for private study and/or educational and research purposes, in accordance with the provisions of the Copyright Act (Auteurswet), with full mention of the name of the student and the location of the thesis.

Student number: 1029827

Student name : Hugo Horstik

Thesis title : Bringing interests together in multi-stakeholder initiatives:
Understanding the emergence of the Dutch Agreement
on Sustainable Garments and Textiles

- 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).
- No, I do not grant permission to make available my thesis with the above title in the Radboud thesis Repository (permanent embargo).

Signature:



Date: 10 June 2020