

# **Taming the Entrepreneur to do Institutional Work**

- A Case Study on Institutional Entrepreneurship in RSPO

Master Thesis

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## Abstract

This paper studies institutional entrepreneurship in the multi-stakeholder initiative (MSI) the Roundtable of Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO). With the aim to investigate the strength in the legitimacy claim of the MSI, the authors analyse the General Assembly (GA) of the RSPO. They test to what extent characteristics inherent of actors influence the conditions to propose resolutions in this forum, and to what extent events external to the actors influence these conditions. Based on a relativist ontology and constructionist epistemology, the history of resolutions in the RSPO GA is studied through a theoretical framework of institutional theory. The data consists of meeting minutes corresponding to all GA's in the history of RSPO between 2004 and 2015, as well as qualitative interviews with members. The data is analysed through thematic analysis and pattern matching. The study concludes that characteristics to a large extent influence the conditions for institutional entrepreneurship. Events show indications for influencing the conditions for institutional entrepreneurship at certain periods in time. The study identifies a pattern between when events are followed by resolutions, and when they are not. Furthermore, in periods of relative stability, institutional entrepreneurs seem to use characteristics that are usually attributed to institutional work in order to promote their agenda. Based on these findings, the authors propose that the institutional entrepreneur is tamed to do institutional work when the emerging institution is in a stable period.

## Contents

Abstract .....	1
Contents .....	2
1.1. The rise of multi-stakeholder initiatives (MSIs) .....	5
1.2. The case of palm oil .....	6
1.3. The Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO) .....	7
1.3.1. Problem statement .....	8
1.3.2. Research questions .....	8
1.4. Structure of the paper .....	10
1.5. Delimitations .....	12
2. Background .....	14
2.1 Origins of social responsibility .....	14
2.2 Rise of Activism .....	17
2.3 Evolution of public-private partnerships .....	19
2.4 MSIs .....	20
2.5 Case: The MSI RSPO .....	25
2.5.1 Formation .....	25
2.5.2 Structure .....	26
2.5.3 Operations .....	27
2.5.4 Critique on RSPO .....	28
3. Literature review .....	32
3.1 Previous research on MSIs .....	32
3.2 Historical background of institutional theory .....	35
3.3 Neo-institutional theory .....	37
3.4 Institutions .....	43
3.5 Institutional work and institutionalisation .....	44
3.6 Institutional entrepreneurship .....	47
3.7 Theoretical Framework .....	49
3.7.1 Beckert's Dynamic Model of Interests and Institutions .....	51
3.7.2 Characteristics .....	56
3.7.3 Events .....	58
3.7.4 Critiques and limits of the model .....	60
4. Methodology .....	61

4.1 Research Philosophy .....	61
4.1.1 Ontology .....	62
4.1.2 Epistemology .....	63
4.2 The research design.....	64
4.2.1 The case study approach .....	64
4.2.2 Abductive approach .....	66
4.2.3 Textual data analysis.....	66
4.2.4 Theoretical framing.....	68
4.2.5 Interviews.....	69
4.3 Data analysis .....	71
4.3.1 Thematic analysis.....	72
4.3.2 Pattern matching .....	72
4.4 Criteria for quality in research design.....	73
4.4.1 Construct Validity .....	74
4.4.2 Internal Validity and Credibility .....	75
4.4.3 External Validity and Transferability .....	76
4.4.4 Reliability and Dependability .....	77
4.4.5 Confirmability.....	77
4.5 Critique of methodology .....	78
5. Findings .....	79
5.1 Clarifications.....	79
5.2 Characteristics.....	80
5.2.1 Resources .....	80
5.2.2 Rationales.....	83
5.2.3 Relations .....	88
5.3 Events.....	91
5.3.1 Occurrence of topics in resolutions.....	91
5.3.2 Pattern matching .....	93
5.3.3 Perception of influence of context .....	94
5.4 Managers.....	95
6. Discussion.....	102
6.1 Reflection on initial assumptions.....	102
6.2 Characteristics influence the conditions for institutional entrepreneurship.....	104

6.2.1 Collaboration.....	107
6.3 Events have an influence on conditions for institutional entrepreneurship at times.....	109
6.4 Institutional entrepreneurs in periods of stability and instability.....	113
6.4.1 The tamed entrepreneur .....	114
6.4.2 A new period of instability?.....	115
7. Conclusion .....	118
7.1 Practical implications.....	119
7.2 Theoretical implications.....	120
7.3 Limitations and further research .....	121
8. References.....	123
9. Appendices.....	132
Appendix A: Resolutions according to sponsor.....	133
Appendix B: Resolutions according to topic .....	136
B. 1 Definitions of topics and other codes.....	136
B. 2 Resolutions coded by topic .....	138
Appendix C: Occurrence of topics on the GA agenda.....	145
Appendix D: Interview Guide.....	146
Appendix E: Interview Transcripts.....	148
Appendix F: Events found in the literature.....	224
Appendix G: Merged events from researchers and respondents .....	228
Appendix H: Occurrence analysis of resolutions.....	230
Appendix I: Pattern analysis of events and resolutions .....	232
 Figure 1: Beckert's Dynamic Model of Interests and Institutions, modified.....	 52
Figure 2: Overview of the analysis of all resolutions between 2004 and 2015.....	91
Figure 3: Overview of all events analysed between 2004 and 2015.....	93
 Table 1: Reference details of interview respondents.....	 79

The globalisation of production and trade are two of the most important new features of the contemporary economy (Gereffi, Humphrey & Sturgeon, 2005). This global development over the recent decades has led to possibilities of industrial growth in several developing countries and to a vertical disintegration of transnational corporations. These corporations now focus more on their own core competencies, while relying to a greater extent on other actors for ‘non-core’ functions, such as generic services. Therefore, an important concept in this international organisation of trade is the value-added chain (Kogut, 1985). A value-added chain can be understood as the “process by which technology is combined with material and labor inputs, and then processed inputs are assembled, marketed, and distributed. A single firm may consist of only one link in this process, or it may be extensively vertically integrated . . . “ (Kogut, 1985, p. 15).

Hence, in most value chains of globally traded commodities today, several actors are involved. The move from transnational companies owning the whole value chain, to an approach of reliance on external actors upstream and downstream, demands new forms of monitoring to assure compliance with laws, regulations and policies throughout the whole production (Gereffi et al., 2005). This need for transparent monitoring has become yet more important with the increasing concerns of businesses’ role in a sustainable future.

The growing concern of corporate responsibility towards the natural and social environment is putting pressure on businesses. Coercive pressure might come from national and international regulations, while the increasing popular awareness of threats towards the environment also makes consumers demand more of companies than the law requires. How companies cope with these pressures from different stakeholder groups is reflected in the increasing environmental influences in corporate strategies (Menon & Menon, 1997).

### 1.1. The rise of multi-stakeholder initiatives (MSIs)

As one way to tackle these complex sustainability issues in global value chains, the formation of MSIs began in the 1990’s (van Huijstee, 2012). The aim of these organisations is to bring the conflicting

interests of several stakeholder groups regarding a certain issue into one space. By combining the resources and capacities of all these groups, they can address what none of them can solve on their own. Today, MSI's exist *inter alia* for forestry, fishing, soy, palm oil, and cut flowers.

As shown in the Background chapter of this paper, there is a multitude of characteristics an MSI may, but is not limited to, have. Two of these are their consensus-seeking approach (Dentoni & Peterson, 2011; Utting, 2002; Ponte & Cheyns, 2013; Cheyns & Riisgaard, 2014; Ponte, 2014), and a certification scheme for sustainable production (Mena & Palazzo, 2012; Bernstein & Cashore, 2007; Ponte, 2014). At their cores, however, lie the aim for legitimacy (Ponte, Gibbon & Vestergaard, 2011; Bernstein & Cashore, 2007; Mena & Palazzo, 2012). Legitimacy is key for an MSI to drive the agenda of sustainability to become the norm of the industry. In this paper, we have identified the main claim of legitimacy for MSIs to be enacting inclusiveness and neutralising asymmetries through a democratic organisational structure (Cheyns & Riisgaard, 2014; Cheyns, 2014; Ponte et al., 2011). Thus, the key to general legitimacy is also to gain legitimacy internally. In the context of MSIs, this means, for instance, that all voices from all members should be heard. One of the MSIs that is considered to be successful with the aim of certifying an important share of the commodity market is the MSI addressing the production of palm oil (Nikoloyuk, Burns & de Man, 2010).

## 1.2. The case of palm oil

Palm oil is used in approximately 50% of what is bought by a regular westerner, including food and snacks, detergents, cosmetics, fuels and pharmaceuticals (The Guardian, 2014). Due to the specific traits of palm oil, such as its relatively high saturation for a vegetable oil and semisolid texture in room temperature, the demand for palm oil has increased rapidly, particularly in China and India (Norman, 2012). This has made the expansions of plantations of oil palm in Southeast Asia triple in just a decade (The Guardian, 2014). In Latin American and African countries, the expansion has been slower, but is predicted to soon follow the path of the Asian production (The Guardian, 2014). Currently, Indonesia and Malaysia are the two main grower countries of oil palm (Green Palm, 2016).

The ideal growing conditions for the oil palm are found within ten degrees north and south of the equator, a preference it shares with tropical rainforests (Green Palm, 2016). The rainforests of the world only cover six percent of the planet's surface, but are home to more than half of the plant and animal species of the earth. These forests also recycle significant amounts of the world's carbon dioxide into oxygen. Due to the increasing demand for land to plant oil palm and rubber trees on, the rainforest is being subject to the threat of deforestation, which has severe consequences for its biodiversity and for the raising levels of carbon dioxide, contributing to global warming. For instance, the World Resources Institute estimates that Indonesia lost more than six million hectares of primary forest between 2000 and 2012 (The Guardian, 2014). The expansion of land use for palm oil plantations is, thus, seen to be in direct competition with the conservation of the remains of primary rainforest. Furthermore, while the palm oil industry is providing many thousand people with a way out of poverty, its expansion has in many cases proven to be at the expense of local communities who get thrown off the land they have lived on for generations (The Guardian, 2014).

Clearly, the palm oil industry is complex and full of tensions. The verdicts differ regarding whether palm oil can ever be sustainable. Some believe palm oil has no place in a sustainable future, while others claim that a production of palm oil can be achieved in tandem with protection and conservation of environment and biodiversity (The Guardian, 2014). Actors holding the latter view, came together in the early years of the millennium to address this issue through the forming of an MSI.

### 1.3. The Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO)

The RSPO was founded in 2004 to respond to the increasing public pressure to clean up an unregulated and destructive industry. The initiative was formally founded by five organisations, all belonging to different stakeholder groups. Today, 13 years after its founding, RSPO consists of 3334 members, all belonging to one of seven stakeholder membership categories. The RSPO also has a certification scheme. This standard has up until now certified over 2.5 million hectares of oil palm plantation, leading to over 12 million tonnes of (Certified Sustainable Palm Oil) CSPO annually (RSPO, 2017a).



### 1.3.1. Problem statement

All bodies in RSPO are functioning with a consensus-seeking approach to decision making, except its General Assembly (GA), where voting with a simple majority is used to make decisions (RSPO, 2015). The GA is the highest decision-making body of RSPO, as confirmed by their statutes: “The General Assembly meeting has the power to take all necessary or useful actions to accomplish the purpose of RSPO” (2015, p. 9). Thus, the actions in the GA play an important role in shaping the future of RSPO and its standard. For being an MSI aiming to neutralise asymmetries between stakeholder and “give voice to all” (Cheyns & Riisgaard, 2014, p. 410), we find it puzzling that only 63 members out of the currently 3334 RSPO members, have ever brought a resolution to the agenda of the GA throughout the history of RSPO. Thus, the legitimacy claim of hearing all voices does not seem to be fulfilled. The problem statement this paper targets is thus **the fact that only 63 members in the history of RSPO, out of currently 3334 members, have proposed resolutions at one of the 13 GAs ever held appears to be in contradiction to the legitimacy claims of an MSI.**

For an organisation that is aiming for legitimacy through a deliberative democracy model, this skewed participation appears problematic. In the aim for RSPO to become the norm in the industry, they have to be legitimate, which goes hand in hand with becoming an institution. For initial reference, an institution is a “more-or-less taken for granted repetitive social behaviour that is underpinned by normative systems and cognitive understandings that give meaning and social exchange and thus enable[s] self-reproducing social order” (Greenwood, Oliver, Sahlin & Suddaby, 2008, p. 4). In other words, only when it is more legitimate to buy CSPO than uncertified palm oil, is sustainable palm oil the norm, meaning, it is taken for granted to use CSPO in production. Thus, for an MSI working towards making the certification of a specific commodity the norm in the industry, reaching institution status is crucial.

### 1.3.2. Research questions

Institutional theory provides several views on how institutions emerge, including both unintentional and deliberate explanations. An MSI that is consciously working towards creating a

normative system to spark new, taken-for-granted, repetitive behaviours in an industry is subject to the deliberate account. Scholars have identified different ways that actors are carrying out this intentional work, including theories about institutional entrepreneurship (e.g. Boxenbaum & Battilana, 2004; Hardy & Maguire, 2008) and institutional work (Lawrence & Suddaby, 2006; Lawrence, Suddaby & Leca, 2011; Zilber, 2013). Institutional work refers to the intention and effort to create an institution (Lawrence et al., 2011). Institutional entrepreneurship is encompassed by this concept, but is in theory more specific about the activities individual institutional entrepreneurs carry out to create institutional change, such as “activities of actors who have an interest in particular institutional arrangements and who leverage resources to create new institutions or to transform existing ones” (Maguire, Hardy & Lawrence, 2004, p. 657). Institutional entrepreneurs are “actors to whom the responsibility for new or changed institutions is attributed” (Hardy & Maguire, 2008, p. 198), while institutional work focus more on collective action.

We have defined all RSPO members as being institutional workers, due to their intentionality and effort they put in by complying with their duties to fulfil the membership criteria (Lawrence et al., 2011). Furthermore, the 63 member organisations, who have ever sponsored a resolution to the GA, are defined as institutional entrepreneurs, since suggesting a change to the MSI can be defined as an activity favouring the sponsor’s interest in a particular institutional arrangement (Maguire et al., 2004). The scope of the study has been focused on how the actors that have sponsored resolutions (institutional entrepreneurs) get their ideas onto the agenda by gathering support from other players. By contributing with results on this matter, we hope to provide a point of departure for later research to compare these results to the realities of the group of members who have never sponsored (institutional workers) to reveal potential inequalities in conditions. We prepare for such comparison by testing if endogenous or exogenous explanations to institutional change account better for the opportunities to do institutional entrepreneurship, through addressing two research questions:

*To what extent do characteristics of actors influence their conditions for institutional entrepreneurship?*

*To what extent do events influence the conditions for actors to do institutional entrepreneurship?*

As we in this study find that characteristics influence the conditions for institutional entrepreneurship a large extent, this has implications for RSPO and its legitimacy claim. As characteristics influence the possibility to sponsor resolutions, the RSPO is not fully succeeding in neutralising asymmetries and making all voices heard. We also find that events can have an influence, as we see that events in 50% of the cases are followed by actions of institutional entrepreneurship, i.e. the proposing of resolutions. This indicates, that events can have an influence on the conditions of institutional entrepreneurship, and thus that characteristics cannot explain these actions alone. However, we need further research to understand what it takes for an institutional worker to act when the conditions are favourable. If further research confirms our finding that events have an influence, this finding questions the focus in institutional entrepreneurship theory on the inherent characteristics of the institutional entrepreneur.

In practical terms, two fields benefit from our results. First, in the fields of MSI's the different initiatives tend to look at each other (Djama et al., 2011), and RSPO is a successful example of an MSI certification scheme. Our results provide insights into do's and don'ts for these MSI's. Second, the palm oil industry as a whole is struggling for legitimacy, and RSPO is an important player in the industry. By contributing to insights that can help strengthening the legitimacy in RSPO as an organisation, this study contributes to a more sustainable palm oil sector.

## 1.4. Structure of the paper

We have structured this paper in six chapters. In the first chapter, which you are currently reading, we present the relevance of this thesis at the current time as well as state the problem statement and our two research questions that we are investigating.

Chapter two introduces the background to the study. Thus, it elaborates on the origins of MSIs and how they have emerged. Furthermore, we introduce our case organisation, the RSPO, and explain why it is relevant to study them. The purpose of this chapter is for the reader to understand the peculiar

aspects of MSIs as an organisational structure and why it is interesting to study this new organisational format.

The third chapter describes the literature review and theoretical framework. We start out by giving a brief review of scholarly work on MSIs that has taken place until now before we outline the historical evolution of institutionalisation. This ends with the concept of institutional entrepreneurship, which leads to our theoretical framework. Here we will explain how we use Beckert's Dynamic Model of Interests and Institutions. This model outlines an interesting aspect to institutional change as it not only looks at institutional entrepreneurs as internal to the institution but also at managers who resist to the proposed changes. Furthermore, we extended the model to also take external events into consideration. This enables us to investigate the reasons behind the unbalanced participation in the RSPO's GA, by researching whether events can enable any institutional worker to become an institutional entrepreneur.

Chapter four is an outline of our research methodology, data and validity of the study. Here we explain how we analysed the meeting minutes of the GAs as well as how we conducted the interviews. The aim of this section is to enable the reader to understand the progression of the thesis and the rationale behind it.

In chapter five, our findings are presented and analysed by integrating our empirical data and theory. Based on our data from the analysis of the meeting minutes, the interviews and secondary data, we apply the theoretical framework introduced in the literature review chapter. These findings are structured according to our theory, hence regarding characteristics, specifically resources, rational and relations, as well as events and context. We have found Resources to be divided in five kinds: skills, finance, time, ability to acknowledge dependence of the organisation on other actors, and geographical scope. Regarding events, out of 20 identified events, we have found 11 to be followed by a resolution in the GA. The final part presents the data about the manager role in RSPO, where we have identified the RSPO board and the growers as managers, and their resistance to change. These findings are used to answer our two research questions and thereby address our problem statement.

Finally, in chapter six we discuss our findings in regards to our problem statement and research questions. In total, we have found that characteristics are relevant to a large extent, and, thus, characteristics can be indicators for the unbalanced representation. Furthermore, we have found that some events might influence the GA agenda as they are followed by resolutions. This finding has indicated periods of stability and instability in the existence of the RSPO. These periods seem also to influence how institutional entrepreneurs act, as we have identified a link between the characteristics used in periods of stability, and institutional work. We end this paper with an outline of limitations of this study and how these can be developed in future research.

## 1.5. Delimitations

This paper researches to what extent characteristics of individuals or external events influence the conditions for institutional entrepreneurship in the RSPO's GA. Therefore, we focus mostly on the idea-for-change creation and the actions in order to propose the change. While several authors have criticised the MSI structure for its limited impact (see e.g. Pattberg, 2006; Ponte, 2014), we decided not to look into the implementation of the proposed changes or the impact they achieve, as we wanted to give priority to the processes leading up to the resolutions.

As stressed by Yin (2003), our research would have been yet more potent in terms of analytical generalisation if we could have applied the same research design on two or more cases. However, due to the limited scope of this paper, we chose to study one single case organisation. We look to future research to adopt this research design onto other MSIs to support or reject our findings. Moreover, by limiting ourselves to only taking into consideration the RSPO, consequently, we do not study the entire palm oil sector, which means e.g. other important standards are excluded. This is why we focus on the RSPO as an institution rather than the entire palm oil sector as a field.

Within the RSPO, we have limited our approach to the annual GA, as resolutions and thus, changes to 'the rulebook' of RSPO, are passed in this negotiation space. Thereby, we have excluded to look at other elements of the organisational structure such as working groups, the board and also the

secretariat. By focusing on the meeting minutes, we have identified the resolutions as the big changes, whereas smaller day-to-day changes take place in other places that happen more frequently than once a year for most the time. This meant that while we see institutional work as a concept close to our research (Lawrence et al., 2011), we narrow our focus to the big change propositions, hence, institutional entrepreneurship.

Finally, when analysing the events, we have only looked for positive correlations, meaning an increase in resolutions proposed. We did not take into consideration any negative patterns, as our focus lies on institutional entrepreneurs, thus actors that propose resolutions. In case an event does not improve the situation for an institutional entrepreneur to propose but rather leads to no action at all (regarding proposing), in this study we no longer consider that actor an institutional entrepreneur.

## 2. Background

*In this chapter, we outline the background to this study. We start out by summarising the historical background of social responsibility to explain how and when modern corporate responsibility emerged. Furthermore, we look at the rise of Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and how they increased their influence over time ultimately leading to the vast amount of public-private partnerships we see today. These partnerships were the stepping stone for the creation of MSIs. First, we explain the characteristics an MSIs can have before we introduce the case study of this research, the RSPO. We will be looking at the organisation's formation, structure, operations and critiques that have risen up against it.*

### 2.1 Origins of social responsibility

The modern academic discussion of social responsibility started in the 1960s with studies that looked at the perceived responsibilities of managers besides their traditional focus on economic success. Whereas responsibilities of companies have been discussed throughout time, the modern discussion on the responsibility of the corporate sector and its implementation in practice is rather a post-World War II phenomenon (Carroll, 1999; Carroll & Shabana, 2010). With the book 'Social Responsibilities of the Businessman', the 'father of corporate social responsibility', Howard R. Bowen, initiated the modern academic discussion of corporate and social responsibilities in 1953. At the time mostly mentioned as social responsibilities, he studied the responsibilities managers perceived themselves to have, besides the company's economic success. In the business world, the discourse of corporate social responsibility (CSR) was limited. However, accounts do exist for how, for instance, managers at Standard Oil Company in 1951 raised concerns that as the world appeared increasingly complex, "companies had to think not just about profits but also about their employees, customers and the public at large" (Carroll & Shabana, 2010, p. 86).

In the 1960s, scholars started to argue that some actions of social responsibility will have a positive economic return in the long term due to the increasing interests of other actor groups (Carroll,

1999). Keith Davis is considered to be the main contributor to the CSR field at the time in this regard. As the thought of getting payback from doing responsible investment appeared rather appealing, this idea took shape among business leaders throughout the 1960s. Furthermore, on the consumer end, the development was spurred, primarily in the US, by the social movements of civil rights, women's rights, consumer rights and environmental concerns that defined the times (Carroll & Shabana, 2010). As businesses saw an urge to respond to these demands from society, they acted on what Davis (1960) described as the 'Iron Law of Responsibility'. He pointed out the relation between the power of businesses and social responsibility and stated that if power and social responsibility are to some extent equal "then the avoidance of social responsibility leads to gradual erosion of social power" (as cited in Carroll, 1999, p. 73). In a business context, this would imply that powerful businesses, who do not take adequate social responsibility, would be punished for this by society. Walton was prominent by highlighting that the voluntary nature is essential to the concept of social responsibility and that commitments of this kind will imply costs which might not be justifiable by measurable economic returns directly (Carroll, 1999). However, social responsibility also met resistance. As the economist Milton Friedman famously pointed out "the business of business is business" (cited in Steurer, 2006, p. 58), arguing that the sole responsibility of a firm is to be profitable in order to sustain itself. The investor Steven Lydenberg even remembers how investors would chuckle and see it as a joke (Lydenberg, 2005).

Heald started to address the necessity of social responsibilities to be included in policies, as he criticises its philanthropic and communal nature (Carroll, 1999). Johnson, in his book 'Business in Contemporary Society: Framework and Issues', indicates the "multiplicity of interests" (Carroll, 1999, p. 273) and mentions several groups with these interests, thus, he actually implies a stakeholder approach, without directly mentioning it at the time. Hence, a socially responsible firm does not only look at profit maximisation for the shareholders but it balances it out by, at least partially, taking into account the interests of suppliers, dealers, employees, local communities, as well as the nation (Rahman, 2011). Furthermore, Johnson pointed out that social responsibility will lead to long-term profit maximisation, for



instance, through utility maximisation, which means that the focus is spread on more than just one variable.

In the 1970s, the business case for CSR started to emerge when a social contract between businesses and society was identified. Due to the period of changing social consciousness and overall recognition of responsibility in society, the businesses slowly started to look beyond the previous philanthropic practices that had prevailed up until then and began discovering the business case for CSR (Carroll & Shabana, 2010). In 1971, the concept of CSR was further developed in a publication commissioned by the Committee for Economic Development (CED) with contribution from both practitioners and academics and thus, legitimately viewing both perspectives (Carroll, 1999; Lee, 2008). The CED describes that businesses' purpose is to constructively serve society's needs, hence, that a social contract between business and society exists and that it was changing substantially. Therefore, the future of a business depends on the managerial response to the altering expectations of the public. This goes as far as the moral obligation of a business being strong enough that it has to act even though this might reduce profits. Hereby social responsibilities increase in relation to the size of the business.

Nevertheless, the financial aspect of business was still prominent, only that now responsibilities of a firm were considered in risk calculation. Some papers stressed the point that businesses were remaining economic institutions with the ultimate goal of generating profits (Steiner, 1971). Social responsibilities, rather than changing the way decisions are made, alter the way a manager approaches the decision-making tasks. Davis (1973) explains that social responsibility starts where the sphere of the law stops. Lee (2008) stresses Wallich and McGowan's explanation on how the rationale amongst shareholders was changing at the time. While they agreed that the business's responsibility was to maximise profits for its shareholders, these shareholders were no longer only investing into one business, but several, to spread the risks. Therefore, they were not interested in increased profits on the account of other businesses as it would decrease their total portfolio. The focus was, thus, shifted to social optimisation to spread social costs evenly among the firms. However, the tight coupling between CSR practices and financial performance only became important first in the 1980s, when the research on the topic exploded.

Until today there is only limited consensus on the definition of CSR (Aguinis & Glavas, 2012), nonetheless, more and more investors and shareholders acknowledge that implementing CSR in the corporate strategy pays off in the long term. Many different authors came up with definitions of social responsibility in the 1970s, though varying in what aspects and characteristics to include (Carroll, 1999). As several studies were conducted based on annual reports by companies in the mid-1970s (Carroll, 1999), we see that this was not just an academic debate but that corporations were answering to the increasing questioning from the external stakeholders. As Lee tells, “[i]n 1977, less than half the Fortune 500 firms even mentioned CSR in their annual reports. By the end of 1990s, close to 90% of Fortune 500 firms embraced CSR as an essential element in their organizational goal, and actively promoted their CSR activities in annual reports” (2008, p. 54).

Thus, in the beginning, CSR was seen as something apart from business. It was a voluntary addition. However, since the 1970s, CSR as a concept “went through a progressive rationalization” (Lee, 2008, p. 54). The discussion was moved from macro-social effects to an organisational level and had been related to strategy and its effects on market outcomes. This shift to explicit ideas led to an increasing amount of shareholders and investors to accept that incorporating CSR into the corporate strategy would be financially rewarding in the long term (Menon & Menon, 1997). One of the causes for this shift, Lee (2008) argues, was Meyer and Rowan’s introduction of ‘rationalised myths’, which we will elaborate further in the literature review chapter.

## 2.2 Rise of Activism

Simultaneously to the development of the social responsibility agenda, in the 1980s and 1990s, another group of actors started to become more prominent: NGOs. There is a wide variety of definitions and names for this stakeholder group. In this paper, we refer to NGOs as defined by Martens: “NGOs are formal independent societal organizations whose primary aim is to promote common goals at the national or the international level” (2010, p. 1039). While NGOs are no new concept, indeed, many of the most famous ones were formed in the 19th and beginning of the 20th century, their sphere of action is claimed

by some to be yet depending on the government (Lewis, 2010). Even though by definition non-governmental, NGOs still are reliant on the government regarding how much “room for maneuver” they are provided with (Lewis, 2010, p. 1060).

This action space of NGOs increased significantly with the accelerated trend “towards liberalization and deregulation of the global economy” (Silva-Castañeda, 2011, p. 361) in the past decades. As NGOs were seen as “bringing fresh solutions to longstanding development problems”, they were pushed into the role as “cost-effective alternative to public sector service delivery” (both Lewis, 2010, p. 1059). However, this is not the only task NGOs take on. According to Lewis (2010), the roles of NGOs have three distinct components, which are implementer, catalyst and partner. In other words, NGOs mobilise resources to help the ones in need; they “inspire, facilitate and contribute to improved thinking and action to promote social transformation” (Lewis, 2010, p. 1057) and they work together with government and donors but also the private sector on joint initiatives. Particularly, the second role, as catalyst, has had an immense impact on the corporate sector when it comes to social responsibility. For instance, through the increasing criticism of doing business in South Africa during the Apartheid, particularly in the US, NGOs rose up to criticise businesses (Luthans & Doh, 2012). The campaigning against trade with a regime supporting the white privilege found a lot of ears in the US. The impact of NGOs today can not only be seen in the countless amount of organisations that exists, but also the multi-billion dollars of aid money the sector receives indicate that NGOs are considered part of the global international relations system (Riddell, 2009). In 2000, the UN estimated that around 35.000 large established NGOs exist, while the overall number counted closer to “a few hundred thousand” (Lewis, 2010, p. 1057).

The high degree of power that NGOs tend to enjoy presently was, among other things, enabled through the development of tools to influence the masses. In particular, they have been able to extend their role as watchdogs of the business sector through modern technology (Utting, 2002). Several firms, therefore, implemented their own regulatory frameworks, for instance in the form of codes of conducts for their suppliers, in order to avoid criticism (Mena & Palazzo, 2012; Utting, 2002). However the firms,

particularly big branded corporations, realised that they “can run but they cannot hide” (Utting, 2005, p. 380). As social and environmental standards are the expertise of NGOs, more and more corporations, therefore, decided to partner with the enemy rather than becoming a target themselves.

## 2.3 Evolution of public-private partnerships

As mentioned before, due to withdrawing government action, economic liberalisation shifted power from the states to private sector, corporations and NGOs. In addition, with the increasing internationalisation of corporations, the regulatory system of nation states was seen as increasingly weak and pushed beyond its limits (Mena and Palazzo, 2012; Ponte et al., 2011). Due to the technological revolution, and the information technology that development brought along, regulating social, cultural and economic life has become increasingly complex, and changes take place faster (Reinicke & Deng, 2000; Ponte et al., 2011). As laws and regulations are limited by national borders, a gap was arising of who would hold multinational corporations in check (Waddock, 2008). Therefore, the public was more and more pushed to take responsibility to hold companies at accountable. This role was taken on by the NGOs.

Initial scepticism from the companies to what role civil society organisations can play in the corporate world was overcome when certain academic theories gained popularity, in particular, stakeholder theory, risk management and organisational learning theories. Stakeholder theory let companies see who and what they are impacting and who can impact them; theories of risk management highlighted the importance of managing these stakeholder relations in dialogue; and organisational learning theories showed the benefits of collaboration, for example, with NGOs, with regards to gaining knowledge, values and competencies necessary to “survive, adapt and successfully compete in an increasingly risky world” (Utting, 2002, p. 68).

With increasing pressure, firms learned to turn from a reactive strategy, a defensive approach or even greenwashing, to proactive strategies engaging with social activists and the agenda of responsibility (Utting, 2005). This way, they were not only able to proactively shape the CSR agenda in entire industries and in a way favourable to the business but also avoid governments stepping in with regulations (Utting,

2002; 2005). As a consequence, a corporate responsibility infrastructure developed, with companies, mostly voluntarily, altering their responses to responsibility and showing entirely new practices and behaviours (Waddock, 2008). Thereby, the gap left behind by withdrawing governments was filled with private and non-governmental organisations who are holding firms “accountable, responsible, transparent, and ecologically sustainable” (Waddock, 2008, p. 87).

The next step of civil regulation led to the emergence of MSIs. As we can see, a lot has happened in the recent decades when it comes to regulating companies and, particularly, multinational enterprises (MNEs). We have shown how traditional “command and control regulation” (Utting, 2005, p. 380) occurring in the 1960s and 1970s shifted to corporate self-regulation in the following decades. Recently, this has then shifted to co-regulation (Utting, 2002). We can now witness a transformation to another approach of civil regulation. This new approach is said to overcome the limitations of the two previously discussed approaches, government regulation and corporate self-regulation. Hereby the economy is not seen as an “aggregate of mechanical forces” but a “set of social relationships among people” (both Kelly, 2004, p. 290). Then “corporate decisions affecting all players in the industry [are] made through a process of mutual interaction” (Kelly, 2004, p. 290). In accordance with this, in the 1990s, a new form of private governance emerged: MSIs.

## 2.4 MSIs

MSIs have an unusual organisational form of partnership as it brings the public, private and non-governmental sectors together (Roloff, 2008). Thus, the distinction between MSIs and general public-private partnerships is that rather than just two stakeholders working together, all stakeholders are brought together in one space discussing industry issues. Particularly, since the beginning of the millennium, increasing amounts of private governance mechanism and initiatives are being created (Cheyns, 2014). Nevertheless, or maybe because of, these growing numbers, except bringing various players to negotiate together, there is no one definition for an MSI. Looking at various MSIs, we can see that they differ in structure and goals. Regardless, when comparing several MSI definitions, we find certain recurring

characteristics that we will present below. However, worth emphasising is that an MSI is not required to have all these features to be classified as such (Gilbert & Rasche, 2008). As the characteristics of an MSI make it such a unique structure, we find it essential to understand them in order to understand the institutionalisation process of an MSI. In total, we have found five groups of characteristics that MSIs show, tackling scope, structure, purpose, goal and action.

First, regarding scope, many MSIs are international initiatives (Roloff, 2008) operating on a global scale (Mena & Palazzo, 2012) which are not restrained by national boundaries and, thus, “post-territorial” (Schouten & Glasbergen, 2012, p. 54). However, MSIs can also operate on a different level, for example, on local level tackling local challenges (Roloff, 2008). Scholars are further disagreeing whether an MSI runs across industries (Mena & Palazzo, 2012) or is an industry specific entity (Roloff, 2008). Besides, Dentoni and Peterson (2011) establish that MSIs are long-term partnerships.

Second, regarding structure, Ponte (2014) explains the management structures as MSIs having an executive board or a board of directors; an executive director who is supported by staff to handle day-to-day operations and technical advisory committees of appointed experts. In addition, a General Assembly or council brings decision-makers together to define the goals and direction of the MSI (Dentoni & Peterson, 2011). In these GAs or councils, all types of stakeholders are represented and can participate equally (Cheyns & Riisgaard, 2014). Another important aspect of the MSI structure is its constitution out of at least two actors (Mena & Palazzo, 2012, Dentoni & Peterson, 2011) namely, corporations and local or international civil society organisations (Mena & Palazzo, 2012, Utting, 2002, Dentoni & Peterson, 2011). According to Roloff, “tripartite” (2008, p. 7) is important whereby other involved actors can vary from governments and governmental agencies (Dentoni & Peterson, 2011) to academia and unions (Mena & Palazzo, 2012) to knowledge institutions (Dentoni & Peterson, 2011). Additionally, MSIs are learning platforms (Mena & Palazzo, 2012) by providing a forum for learning processes to take place (Utting, 2002). As Bernstein and Cashore (2007) point out, this learning takes place over time and across stakeholders, while being guided by deliberate processes which facilitate “mutual understanding, information transfer, process learning and [...] conflict management” (Roloff, 2008, p. 3).

Third, regarding purpose, MSIs help firms to defend themselves against activism from, for instance, NGOs (Utting, 2002). However, the purpose of MSIs is also to solve these tensions, existing conflicts or anticipated clashes and open conflicts (Roloff, 2008). The aforementioned learning processes are the tool to overcome the tensions between the different conflicting actors.

Fourth, the goal of MSIs is to cope with environmental and social challenges globally (Mena & Palazzo, 2012, Bernstein & Cashore, 2007; Gilbert & Rasche, 2008; Utting, 2002). By working together, MSI members can then define and work on reaching these sustainability objectives collectively. Hereby, it is noteworthy that MSIs may not only promote labour rights (Utting, 2002), sustainable production and consumption practices (Schouten & Glasbergen, 2012) but further ensure that members comply with the environmental and social standards (Ponte, 2014). Consequently, the objectives often fill regulatory gaps of the national and also global policy field. Through soft laws (Mena & Palazzo, 2012, Utting, 2002) and “authority beyond the state” (Pattberg, 2006, p. 580), MSIs complement current legislation (Gilbert & Rasche, 2008) as well as, address gaps in current self-regulatory codes (Utting, 2002). Through rule implementation (Pattberg, 2006) and auditing and compliance mechanisms, MSIs are governance institutions (Bernstein & Cashore, 2007), which have “a state-like function” (Mena & Palazzo, 2012, p. 536) as they organise political spaces (Pattberg, 2006). Though, the rules and regulations issued by MSIs are voluntary and non-binding (Mena & Palazzo, 2012). Besides filling regulatory gaps, MSIs aspire to improve the quality of transparency processes in general (Utting, 2002). By assisting in the progress of information exchange and mutual understanding (Roloff, 2008), MSIs aim to professionalise monitoring, reporting, auditing and verification processes (Utting, 2002; Ponte, 2014). Utting (2002) particularly mentions the need for independent monitoring so to ensure adhering to the standards set. To be able to enforce these goals, MSIs strive for authority. For this, they need to gain “support, approval and legitimization from a broad group of actors” including states (Ponte et al., 2011, p. 6) as well as interested audiences (Bernstein & Cashore, 2007). In order to reach the necessary legitimacy, MSIs need a vast scope of members, efficiency and the power to enforce and monitor their rules (Mena & Palazzo, 2012). Through all this, MSIs strive to be able to achieve their ultimate goal of constituting industry norms.

Through standardised ethics (Gilbert & Rasche, 2008), MSIs can harmonise and homogenise the wide variety of codes of conducts that exists in the different industries (Utting, 2002). Furthermore, they can reinforce their strategies and objectives by influencing policy discussions and stakeholder relations (Pattberg, 2006).

Last, regarding action, MSIs act by providing labels, certification and accreditation (Mena & Palazzo, 2012, Bernstein & Cashore, 2007, Ponte, 2014). They utilise the market as “a coordinating mechanism” (Schouten & Glasbergen, 2012, p. 54). Moreover, MSIs rely on stakeholders providing resources, whether this is technology or human capital (Dentoni & Peterson, 2011). By recognising, tracking and labelling products and services from responsible firms (Bernstein & Cashore, 2007), companies benefit from this exchange, despite the standards and implementation procedures which have been designed fairly rigorous (Utting, 2002). In addition, MSIs provide mechanism for auditing and compliance (Mena & Palazzo, 2012, Bernstein & Cashore, 2007) and conduct impact evaluations (Ponte, 2014), rather than just monitoring member performance (Utting, 2002). Salient to highlight is that actors voluntarily but purposely lead themselves toward collective goals and values (Bernstein & Cashore, 2007) to tackle the problems that affect all of them with a common solution (Roloff, 2008). For this, consensus-seeking on operational definitions of sustainability is key (Dentoni & Peterson, 2011, Utting, 2002, Ponte & Cheyns, 2013, Cheyns & Riisgaard, 2014, Ponte, 2014). Afterwards, members then are split up into smaller groups to implement the specific sustainability projects (Dentoni & Peterson, 2011). Besides, MSIs set behavioural standards (Mena & Palazzo, 2012, Pattberg, 2006, Gilbert & Rasche, 2008) and enact inclusive processes (Cheyns, 2014, Cheyns & Riisgaard, 2014). For the former, they adopt “standard-making virtues of transparency, inclusiveness, and consensus” (Cheyns & Riisgaard, 2014, p. 410), follow “codes of best practices in standard making” (Ponte, 2014, p. 262) and generate rules that push for more responsible behaviour of firms (Ponte & Cheyns, 2013, Pattberg, 2006). In an MSI, members stand for a set of shared virtues (Cheyns & Riisgaard, 2014) consisting of “predefined norms and procedures for organisational behaviour” (Gilbert & Rasche, 2008, p. 756) based on the concepts of transparency (Cheyns & Riisgaard, 2014; Ponte, 2014; Ponte et al., 2011); inclusiveness (Cheyns &



Riisgaard, 2014; Ponte, 2014; Cheyns, 2014; Ponte et al., 2011) and accountability (Ponte et al., 2011; Ponte, 2014). To enact inclusiveness, MSIs use, for example, dialogue (Utting, 2002; Cheyns & Riisgaard, 2014) and non-hierarchical decision-making processes (Cheyns & Riisgaard, 2014). By neutralising asymmetries (Cheyns & Riisgaard, 2014) imitating democracy models (Cheyns & Riisgaard, 2014; Ponte et al., 2011) and negotiating standards (Ponte & Cheyns, 2013) also marginalised actors are included (Ponte, 2014; Pattberg, 2006). Thereby, a voice is given to all (Cheyns & Riisgaard, 2014; Ponte, 2014) resulting in a heterogenic group (Dentoni & Peterson, 2011) and through equal standing, all relevant stakeholders are able to participate (Ponte, 2014). As mentioned before, all of this is done without enforcement through governmental mechanisms (Mena & Palazzo, 2012; Ponte et al., 2011). As MSIs are private governance mechanisms (Mena & Palazzo, 2012; Pattberg, 2006), they operate by drawing up soft law regulation, which are non-binding (Mena & Palazzo, 2012; Cheyns & Riisgaard, 2014; Bernstein & Cashore, 2007) as MSIs do not have policy-making abilities (Bernstein & Cashore, 2007). However, since participation is voluntary (Mena & Palazzo, 2012; Cheyns & Riisgaard, 2014; Ponte & Cheyns, 2013, Cheyns 2014), once committed to an MSI, members are expected to comply with the set rules (Mena & Palazzo, 2012) so MSIs also establish consequences for not complying (Bernstein & Cashore, 2007). Nevertheless, firms are also animated to participate in formulating the rules (Utting, 2002; Schouten & Glasbergen, 2012) as these are “revisable and negotiable” (Ponte & Cheyns, 2013, p. 3). Gilbert and Rasche (2008), moreover, point out that one should consider the multidimensionality of this circumstance, as MSIs provide norms on a macro-level, which then need to be implemented in the firms and participating organisations on a micro-level. Often MSIs give guidance to simplify this process as well as they build the platform to gather different stakeholders to develop solutions together.

In summary, MSIs negotiate and develop a regulatory framework and often a standard or certification. Together they develop goals, a decision-making model and a process for the achievement of their standard. MSI are nested in normative approaches about their compliance to a deliberative democracy model, which is supposed to neutralise asymmetries. This organisational structure is their main legitimacy claim. They are seen as the most legitimate private rule-maker. Given this account, MSIs

aim to set a standard in an industry, and its members are all working towards building an institution legitimate enough to be able to define this standard for the whole industry.

In this paper, the focal point lies on the internal interactions between members. Specifically, we will study the conditions for members to bring forward suggestions affecting the institutionalisation in one particular MSI, RSPO. The section below provides an introduction to the organisation, with its MSI characteristics highlighted and divided into three sections formation, structure and operations.

## 2.5 Case: The MSI RSPO

### 2.5.1 Formation

RSPO is a global, not-for-profit MSI based in Switzerland, which aims to deal with the potentially negative environmental and social impacts of the production of palm oil (Djama et al., 2011). They define themselves as “a non-profit association that unites stakeholders from seven sectors of the palm oil industry to develop and implement global standards for sustainable palm oil” (RSPO, 2015, p. 2). In accordance with its MSI-design, it intends to do this “through co-operation within the supply chain and open dialogue between its stakeholders” (RSPO, 2015, p. 2). It is a voluntary business-to-business initiative, aiming for wide uptake in the mainstream market (Djama et al., 2011).

For years, NGOs had been raising awareness and directing criticism towards the industry regarding the negative impacts of production of palm oil. The main points of criticism included the production’s destruction of Southeast Asian primary forest, eradication of biodiversity, the destruction of the habitats of orangutans and other endangered species, and the expropriation of land and abuse of human rights by plantation firms of communities living closely to palm oil plantations (Djama et al., 2011). This criticism led to the foundation of RSPO, to respond to this both existing as well as anticipated environmental and social challenge (Roloff, 2008; Mena & Palazzo, 2012). The initiative was launched by the environmental NGO World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) in 2001, which sparked an initial informal cooperation between WWF, the processor Aarhus United Ltd, the retailer cooperative Migros, the growers cooperative Malaysian Palm Oil Association (MPOA) and the manufacturer Unilever (RSPO,

2017b). In 2003, the first gathering of 40 stakeholders was held in Malaysia where they agreed on to develop and follow a joint declaration for the implementation and promotion of a sustainability standard for palm oil production (Djama et al, 2011). One year later, in 2004, upon the formal establishment of the RSPO under Swiss law, the first GA was held. The RSPO established its headquarters in Zurich and a secretariat in Malaysia. A satellite office was additionally established in Indonesia in 2006 (RSPO, 2017b). Today, RSPO certifies 21% of the global production of palm oil (RSPO, 2017b).

### 2.5.2 Structure

The RSPO is structured in accordance with several of the earlier stated characteristic components of an MSI. The RSPO has four membership categories: ordinary, affiliate, supply chain associate and honorary (RSPO, 2015). Out of these, only ordinary members have voting rights in the GA. The other groups either are direct stakeholders involved or interested in the palm oil supply chain, such as governmental institutions or academics, or are directly involved in the supply chain but use less than 500 metric tonnes of palm oil annually. They can also be individuals enjoying honorary membership by the RSPO due to the contribution to the organisation (RSPO, 2015). Only ordinary members and affiliate members are committed to complying with the code of conduct by being a member of the RSPO.

Ordinary members are furthermore divided into seven stakeholder groups according to their position in the value chain. The seven categories are Oil Palm Growers, Palm Oil Processors and/or Traders, Consumer Goods Manufacturers, Retailers, Environmental/Nature Conservation Organisations (NGOs), Social/Development Organisations (NGOs) and Banks and Investors (RSPO, 2015). Oil Palm Growers are hereby further divided into the three geographical regions of 'Indonesia', 'Malaysia' and 'Rest of the World', as well as the social dimension of 'Smallholder Group managers' (0-2000 hectares) and 'Small Growers' (less than 500 hectares) (RSPO, 2015; Djama et al., 2011).

The organisational structure of the RSPO is comprised of the Board of Governors ('BoG', or also referred to as 'the board'), previously called the Executive Board, including a CEO, a treasurer and supporting staff which falls under the group of secretariat (RSPO, 2015). Furthermore, the RSPO has a

president as head of the organisation who is elected by the BoG. The board consists of maximum 16 members, with two members representing each stakeholder group, except in the case of the growers, where four representatives are elected to account for the subcategories within this group. Thus, there is one representative for 'Malaysia', 'Indonesia', 'Rest of the World', and 'Smallholders' respectively. The BoG is directly elected by the GA. Each term of office is two years, and re-election is possible. As a consequence, several of the current board members positions have been held by the same member organisation since the RSPO's inception (RSPO, 2009).

Besides the board and the secretariat, RSPO's operations are carried out by working groups and tasks forces. They do work that has been put on the agenda in the annual GAs. Every ordinary member can participate in the working groups. However, as pointed out several times by representatives of the board, resources are necessary for this which need to be covered by the member organisation (RSPO, 2009). For instance, this is the reason why Jan Kees Vis from Unilever was the president of the RSPO for the first 12 years, as Unilever continuously was able to afford this contribution (RSPO, 2009).

### 2.5.3 Operations

Moreover, RSPO enacts several of the above-mentioned MSI features through its operations. Regarding its decision-making procedures, RSPO complies with the MSI characteristic of a strong focus on consensus-based decision making (RSPO, 2015). Therefore, all working groups and the like are based on consensus-seeking mentalities. The one exception to the consensus approach is in the annual GA, where voting is the decision-making tool. All main decisions are taken in the GA, where all ordinary and affiliate members are allowed to participate (Djama et al., 2011). Before the GA, members have the opportunity to submit resolutions to the agenda, that will be addressed and voted on during the meeting. Resolutions are approved or rejected based on simple majority (RSPO, 2015).

The vision and guiding-star of RSPO reads "RSPO will transform markets to make sustainable palm oil the norm" (RSPO, 2017b). The roundtable's mission, further, is expressed in four statements (RSPO, 2017b):

- 1) Advance the production, procurement, finance and use of sustainable palm oil products;
- 2) Develop, implement, verify, assure and periodically review credible global standards for the entire supply chain of sustainable palm oil;
- 3) Monitor and evaluate the economic, environmental and social impacts of the uptake of sustainable palm oil in the market; and
- 4) Engage and commit all stakeholders throughout the supply chain, including governments and consumers.

A common feature for standard setting sustainability initiatives is working to reach the organisation's mission and vision through third-party certification (Djama et al., 2011). So is the case for RSPO. By compliance with the by RSPO developed Principles and Criteria (P&C), the producing and processing members can, in RSPO's definition, assure to be conducting "legal, economically viable, environmentally appropriate and socially beneficial management and operations" in their palm oil production (RSPO, 2013a, p. 2). When these P&Cs are applied in production, the producer is qualified for the CSPO certification. Additional certification systems exist for the stakeholders operating downstream from the growers and crushers in the supply chain (RSPO, 2017c). The supply chain certification system is divided into four categories, depending on their level of rigidity and, thus, also, cost: 'Identity Preserved', 'Segregated', 'Mass Balance' and 'Book & Claim'. The rationale for this certification system is the clarification for consumers whether the products they are using contain unsustainably produced palm oil.

By this overview of RSPO's formation, structure and operations, we can conclude that RSPO is a full-fledged example of a multi-stakeholder initiative, in accordance with the characteristics distinguished by scholars.

#### 2.5.4 Critique on RSPO

Based on all the above, the RSPO initiative is usually presented as a successful example of the multi-stakeholder approach and sustainability certification as its outcome (Djama et al., 2011). The MSI has

within few years managed to establish all components of a regulation cycle, from defining the standards to monitoring the compliance with them. Furthermore, RSPO is constantly growing in terms of members, which is a measurable sign of success. However, Djama and colleagues argue in 2011 that a final proof of RSPO's success is the lack of competitors, which "exemplifies the successful institutionalization of a certification scheme" (2011, p. 193). Nevertheless, in recent years, two initiatives similar to RSPO have emerged: The Indonesian Sustainable Palm Oil (ISPO), a national policy for sustainability in the palm oil plantations founded by the Indonesian government in 2011 (Zoological Society of London (ZSL), 2017), and the Malaysian Sustainable Palm Oil (MSPO), an industry-driven certification scheme that came into effect in the beginning of 2015 (ZSL, 2017).

Furthermore, several points of critique have emerged regarding RSPO in particular, and the MSI format in general. Critique is formulated both from the public and from academia. As accounted for in the above section on MSI characteristics, MSI's base their legitimacy on their capacity to ensure the balanced participation and representation of all categories and stakeholders through inclusive and participatory processes, using dialogue and expressing a desire for consensus. Its main strength lies in the authority to speak on behalf of a large number of voices, encompassing a wide range of actors of the spectra of stakeholders (Cheyns, 2011). Despite the claim to enact these processes, MSIs are criticised for asymmetric power relations at work, due to unequal resources and competencies of the different stakeholders. For example, criticism has been raised regarding how positions tend to be distributed between the global North and South, where northern organisations tend to get in the positions of governance (Reinicke & Deng, 2000). Cheyns with colleagues have in a series of papers critically investigated participation in MSI's, looking at among other things, three major aspects: First, they highlighted "... the main paradoxes of MSIs related to their willingness to be "inclusive" and at the same time their exclusionary or "closure" effects due in part to interactions with existing political economic contexts and embedded power inequalities..." (Cheyns & Risgaard, 2014, p. 409). Second, it was criticised "how the strategic engagement targeted by the MSIs disrupts the qualification tests for the common good and results in the exclusion of participants, in particular local and smallholder communities

who wish to debate principles of justice” (Cheyns, 2011, p. 212). Third, further criticism focused on “how forms of knowledge and language norms linked to strategic and functional engagement exclude those people affected locally through their personal attachments” (Cheyns, 2011, p. 212) and specifically highlighting how “minority voices” are not being heard in the multi-stakeholder organisation (Cheyns, 2014).

Besides academic critique, the public disapproval is often channelled and presented through NGO’s, who can be members or non-members of the RSPO. One recurrent theme regards the risk of the RSPO-certification becoming a label of ‘greenwashing’, as not all actors agree with that the definition of sustainability promoted by RSPO is sustainable. Additional criticism regards that RSPO members do not in practice behave in accordance with the principles, criteria and code of conduct that the certification entails. A recent example of this criticism is the environmental NGO PanEco, who, in 2016, lost faith in the RSPO and left the multistakeholder cooperation (Jacobson, 2016). PanEco sees several flaws in the RSPO: First, they claim that RSPO is failing to reign in a very troubled industry; second, both members and administration let the organisation “be weakened by the day” (Jacobson, 2016); third, RSPO is interfering with freedom of speech by prohibiting its members from advocating a reduce in overall palm oil consumption as a more sustainable solution than the use of certified palm oil, and last, that RSPO is showing a too low level of action by not reacting forcefully enough to member actions not compliant with the standards. This type of external criticism that regards the compliance with the standard is indeed interesting, but will not be further investigated in this study.

Instead, this paper follows up on criticism that has been more prevalent in the academic realm and targets the processes going on within the decision-making body of the RSPO. Several academic studies have been investigating MSI’s, using RSPO as a case study to suggest gaps for development (e.g. Ponte & Cheyns, 2013; Ruyschaert & Salles, 2016; Jespersen, Kruuse, Bøgestrand and Gallemore, forthcoming; Silva-Castañeda, 2012).

To sum up, we have in this chapter presented how the modern academic discussion of social responsibility started in the 1960s with Bowen researching managers’ perception of responsibilities. Over

time, first scholars and then also practitioners accepted that social responsibility has a positive economic return in the long run. We point out that because of an increase in pressures towards companies, the business case for CSR emerged bringing the financial aspect of economic success together with social responsibilities that were accounted to firms. Due to withdrawing governments and the drastic technological development, NGOs gain more power to mobilise the masses and thereby increasing the pressure on corporations further. Initial resistance was turned into companies approaching NGOs to work together first in public-private partnerships and more recently in MSIs. We highlight that their unusual organisational form of bringing all stakeholder groups to the same table is an important feature in their claim for legitimacy. We concluded the chapter by introducing one particular MSI of interest, the case of this paper, the RSPO. We looked at its formation, structure, operations as well as some criticism towards the organisation, in relation to the identified MSI characteristics.



### 3. Literature review

*In this chapter, we explain how we analyse the RSPO's internal structure. We look at whether its members aim for institutional change and development or rather aim for stability and maintenance, as well as how these internal dynamics are affected by external events. Beckert (1999) looks at three components when analysing institutional change: institutional entrepreneurs, managers and uncertainty. Applying his Dynamic Model of Interests and Institutions, including the variable of context-shaping events, will help us to analyse the efforts to shape the institution the RSPO. Before presenting this theoretical framework, we start by giving a brief historical introduction to previous research in the field of MSIs followed by an overview of the emergence of institutional theory. This includes looking at its historical advancement, institutions, institutionalisation and institutional work, and subsequently, institutional entrepreneurship. This overview shows the tensions in agency and context that are marking the institutional theory discussion, which we address by juxtaposing institutional workers and institutional entrepreneurs.*

#### 3.1 Previous research on MSIs

As MSIs in their contemporary definitions are considered a young type of organisation, also research on this structure has been limited (de Bakker, Rasche & Ponte, forthcoming). Most studies on MSIs have contributed to the literature in regards to the salient aspects of MSIs, however, as de Bakker and colleagues point out, the cross-disciplinary scholarly literature is still missing. The authors call for a cross-fertilising of insights from different scholarly disciplines, which we respond to by combining two of their suggested approaches in our research on MSIs, 'Emergence' and 'Collective Action'. This will be elaborated on below.

The authors also state that research on MSIs so far has focused on three main issues, the *input* into the emergence of MSIs (see e.g. Mena & Palazzo, 2012; Schouten & Glasbergen 2012; Cheyns, 2014; Ponte & Cheyns, 2013), the *institutionalisation* of MSIs (see e.g. Pattberg, 2006; Ponte 2014) and the *impact* of initiatives on sustainability and public regulation (see e.g. Pattberg, 2006). In the following,

in order to describe these three fields better, we will briefly present examples of findings from previous researches of each field. In this paper, we are interested in the ‘input into the emergence’ of MSIs, as we study deliberate input of actors to develop and change the organisation, and ‘institutionalisation’ of MSIs, particularly, institutional emergence and diffusion and change in one specific MSI.

First, the literature on the input into the emergence of MSIs emphasises the legitimacy of MSIs. Mena and Palazzo (2012), for instance, studied input legitimacy of MSIs by looking at the soft-law regulations that MSIs put forward. Input legitimacy is looking at “to what extent regulations are perceived as justified or credible” (Mena & Palazzo, 2012). Schouten, Leroy and Glasbergen (2012) focus on the democratic processes within MSIs, such as consensus-seeking, to look at the inclusiveness of stakeholders in the decision-making process. Cheyns (2014) also studied this topic and pointed out the lack of inclusiveness when studying the RSPO.

Second, regarding institutionalisation of MSIs, de Bakker and colleagues have identified three main research streams: institutional emergence, diffusion and change in individual MSIs and enduring coexistence. Institutional emergence looks at why MSIs exist. For instance, Bartley looks at the field level and sees that for an MSI to emerge two elements are necessary: “interested actors within the market (i.e., some segment of firms, ... ) and entrepreneurial actors in the organizational field (typically in government or NGOs) that adopt the project, organize firms, and mobilize broader bases of support” (2007, p. 339). He thus argues that it is the interplay between these parties that is necessary for the formation of an MSI that includes certification as a form of governance.

Diffusion and change literature looks at how the processes of MSIs are mainstreamed which can lead to market creation and the change of behaviour of powerful actors (de Bakker et al., forthcoming). Pattberg (2006), for instance, found that the certification of the MSI the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) was mostly adopted by players in the global North, as it was easiest for them to implement the required standard. Other authors focus on isomorphic aspects, such as Djama et al. (2011) who point out that the structure and initial organisational foundation of RSPO were based on the FSC. Moreover, Hospes (2014) has looked into the diffusion of practices in a field regarding national standards compared

to global standards such as the RSPO. He found that the global standards do serve as models for the “general design of new national standards ... [which] have imitated the ‘Principles & Criteria’ methodology of the two roundtables and their multi-dimensional approach to define sustainable cropping” (Hospes, 2014, p. 434). However, the national standards differ when it comes to normative aspects such as expanding production through deforestation or using other high conservation spaces.

This also relates directly to the third stream of the institutionalisation literature of MSIs, which deals with the dynamics of competition and cooperation that construct the enduring co-presence of MSIs. Ponte (2014) actually points out three forms of competition that hinder institutionalisation in this field. He sees standards competing over three elements: suppliers that meet the requirements for certification; retailers that buy the certified product and the support that is gained from NGOs; and other civil society groups aiming for legitimacy. As this paper does not have a field-level focus, the presence of and competition with other certifying bodies is not discussed further.

Third, the last major issue addressed in scholarly works is the impact these MSIs achieve in regards to sustainability and public regulation. As already delimited in the previously chapter, this study does not focus on implementation and impact.

We see institutionalisation as an ongoing process (Meyer & Rowan, 1977). As MSIs are a rather young kind of organisational format and given the challenges that RSPO is facing while having reached a market share of 21% of global palm oil during its eleven years of existence (accounted for in the previous chapter), we do not consider RSPO institutionalised. Therefore, we take aspects of the ‘input into the emergence’ of MSIs into account, by studying intentional actions to change and develop institutions. For this paper, we are particularly interested in the concept of institutional entrepreneurship, however, different to Bartley (2007), we will look at this at an organisational level rather than the field perspective. The process of institutionalisation will be elaborated further below.

Moreover, de Bakker et al. (forthcoming) propose a framework for future research on MSIs with four possible approaches: *Design*, *Emergence*, *Collective Action* and *Collective Framing*. However, as already mentioned, they stress that particularly cross-disciplinary studies are lacking in the field.

Therefore, in this paper, we will look at both the Emergence and the Collective Action approach. Emergence looks at the individual organisations, and focuses on the processes that create organisations initially. Furthermore, it also focuses on the "role of systemic power" (de Bakker et al., forthcoming) within MSIs. We will take this approach when studying internal dynamics of a GA and its agenda setting. This will show whether a change in these emerging institutions is determined by characteristics of specific actors, or whether it is events external to the actor that enables driving change forward. While keeping the perspective of the actor, we see how this actor works with others actors to achieve his or her goals, and hence, look at it from a Collective Action approach. The Collective Action approach analyses the interaction of different actors within a field. This approach focuses on the collaboration and, or, competition between the actors in a field. In this paper, we see the RSPO as an institution and not a field, nevertheless, we see that actors collaborate with each other and compete for resources, which is why we still believe this approach is applicable to our study.

To look into how this process of collective action is driven forward, we use Beckert's (1999) model, as it proposes that institutional entrepreneurs change institutions by creating uncertainty. Before we explain the model and explain how it fits our research objective, we will give a historical background to institutional theory to understand from where it emerged and how this led to the theory of institutional entrepreneurship.

### 3.2 Historical background of institutional theory

The way institutional theory has been applied to explain phenomena in organisational behaviour has evolved over time (Greenwood et al., 2008, Hirsch, 2008, Scott, 2001, Hinings & Tolbert, 2008). The systematisation of the literature focusing on institutions and their interactions with society started during the 19th and 20th century (Scott, 2004). The focus by various scholars on organisational structure within society in the form of bureaucracies is described as "debate about the merits and demerits of bureaucracy" (Klagge, 1997, p. 63). Hinings and Tolbert (2008) also observe these tensions and base them on the difference between the normative, ideational explanations and interest-driven, materialist behaviour

explanations. Scott traces the beginnings of institutional theory to four streams (Hinings & Tolbert, 2008). The first important scholar is Spencer, who is claimed to be “the single most famous European intellectual in the closing decades of the 19th century” by Eriksen and Nielsen (2001, p. 37). He talked about how social systems consist of various subsystems, whereby each of these “subsystem[s] and its institutionalized structures serve distinctive functions for society as a whole” (Hinings and Tolbert, 2008, p. 474). Furthermore, Spencer also pointed out that these structures were formed through processes of competition and exchanges between individuals who negotiated contracts to rationally pursue their own self-interests. In contrast, Durkheim shortly after argued that it depends much more on “purely ideational, normative forces that serve the constraints on individuals’ behavior” (Hinings & Tolbert, 2008, p. 475). He, furthermore, contrast himself with Spencer as he sees trust, which is, for instance, built through social consciousness and sense of belonging, as a necessary component in society in order to enter into societal contracts.

The other two streams pointed out by Scott are represented by the two scholars Karl Marx and Max Weber. Marx distinguished himself from the others as he paid attention to the “forces that led to major transformations in societies” (Hinings & Tolbert, 2008, p. 475). He thereby looked at how people in society with the same interest would eventually collectively act, which then led to conflicts between social classes. Interestingly, Marx acknowledged that other forces can shape action, too. However, he saw these forces originating in the material capabilities and economic interests of the dominant class. In contrast to this focus on social classes and their relations, Weber rather saw the determining factor of social action lying in prioritising ideas and cultural forces (Hinings & Tolbert, 2008). Thus, he sees the two ideational and material forces in balance while being “independent though intertwined phenomena” (Hinings & Tolbert, 2008, p. 476). Particularly, his “analysis of the nature of rational-legal authority and its critical role in the operation of contemporary organizations” made Weber the “guiding genius” (Scott, 2001, p. 13) for many scholars of institutional theory that followed, such as Tolbert and Zucker, Jennings and Zhou, DiMaggio and Powell, Palmer.

Moreover, Weber coined the term ‘the iron cage’ to depict the institutions of rationalisation that increased in, particularly, Western capital societies. The iron cage refers to how individuals are being trapped by these institutions in systems that are purely developed for efficiency (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Klagge, 1997; Hinings & Tolbert, 2008; Ashworth, Boyne & Delbridge, 2007). He meant that bureaucracy, the utmost manifestation of rationality, was so efficient in terms of controlling people, that its establishment would be irreversible once completed (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). Weber further argued that organisations are pressured by this ‘iron cage of rationality’ and other competitive forces in society, leading to “similarities in structure and action” between organisations (Boxenbaum & Jonsson, 2008, p. 79). Furthermore, institutional theory, at this time, what is now considered ‘old’ institutional theory, focused on the rational actor as the agent shaping institutions (Boxenbaum & Battilana, 2004; Hinings & Tolbert, 2008). At the time, individuals were seen as “constantly engaged in calculations of the costs and benefits of different action choices and that behavior reflects such utility-maximising calculations” (Tolbert & Zucker, 1996, p. 176).

Only in the late 1970’s, the institutional theory started deviating from its initial focus on formal institutions, towards a new type of institutional perspective. Up until just after the Second World War, the scholars of institutional theory had focused mainly on political, formal institutions in the not-for-profit and government sectors (Greenwood et al., 2008). The division between this type of ‘old’ institutionalism and the academic direction called ‘neo-institutionalism’ occurred during the year between 1977 and 1983, when the ‘new’ institutionalism became interested in the institutional context, rather than the agent, and established the conceptual foundations of modern organisational institutionalism (see e.g. Zucker, 1977; Meyer & Rowan, 1977; 1983; DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Tolbert & Zucker, 1983; Meyer & Scott, 1983).

### 3.3 Neo-institutional theory

In the late 1970s, organisations were mostly seen as actors behaving as agents who respond to circumstances of the situation. John Meyer and Brian Rowan’s paper from 1977, ‘Institutionalised

organisations: Formal Structure as Myth and Ceremony' provided a revolutionising way of analysing institutions (Greenwood et al., 2008). This paper followed Weber in such that the authors shared Weber's interest in studying how bureaucracies in modern society are rationalised and diffused (Greenwood et al., 2008). They emphasise how this rationalisation and diffusion stems from two conditions: On the one hand, the "complexity of networks of social organisation and exchange", and on the other, "the institutional context" (Meyer & Rowan, 1977, p. 346). This latter condition was the main innovation in the paper, as this institutional context suggests that so-called 'rationalised myths' are spread as social understandings in society, which defines what it means to be rational, and that organisations are influenced by them.

As the institutional context provides the norms for what is perceived as rational, organisations conform with it to appear legitimate and in accordance with the general social understanding (Greenwood et al., 2008). Therefore, as Tolbert and Zucker point out, an important aspect is that new institutionalism replaces the emphasis on efficiency with legitimacy to explain organisations' survival and success (Thornton & Ocasio, 2008). Thus, organisations seem to act rationally in order to prevent social censure, increase their probability to secure resources they need, reduce demands for external accountability and improve their chances of survival (Greenwood et al., 2008). This strive for legitimacy can lead to a paradox, as conforming with the rationalised myths in the institutional context might conflict with the requirements of technical efficiency (Meyer & Rowan, 1977; Zucker, 1987). Hence, "when adaptations to institutional pressures contradict internal efficiency needs, organisations sometimes claim to adapt when they in reality do not" (Boxenbaum & Jonsson, 2008, p. 78).

The process, where organisations concede to institutional pressure only superficially and take up new structures without necessarily realising the related practices, is called decoupling (Boxenbaum & Jonsson, 2008). The conflict between institutional pressure and internal efficiency tends to lead to a decoupling of the symbolic practices adopted from the rationalised myths, from the technical core practices that the organisation is built around. In other words, organisations decouple action from structure and only pretend to concede institutional pressures. Observations of this tendency are abundant,

particularly, in the area of CSR, which we have already discussed in the Background chapter. As CSR measures can be difficult to prove to be directly related to profits, companies often communicated their good intentions but did not act on it (Delmas & Burbano, 2011). In a company context, this is notoriously known as ‘greenwashing’. To give an example of decoupling within an MSI, the FSC, supposedly provides equal participation across all its membership categories through its governing structures, however, in reality, these practices are rarely enacted (de Bakker et al., forthcoming).

Besides, DiMaggio and Powell argue that the reason why bureaucratisation remained strong in organisations is not mainly because of its efficiency or powerfulness as claimed by Weber but rather because “bureaucratisation and other forms of organisational change occur as the result of processes that make organisations more similar without necessarily making them more efficient” (1983, p. 147). These process alignments due to conforming to institutional rules are labelled isomorphism (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Meyer & Rowan, 1977; 1983). The account for these processes explains, among other phenomena, why the MSI structure has become such a proliferated organisational format among groups that want to achieve external legitimacy for their cause (Djama et al., 2011). For instance, the RSPO inspired several national standards for palm oil production and thereby, relevant practices were diffused. However, the model was not entirely copied as at times, for instance, large-scale producers and plantation expansions were favoured in the national standard (Hospes, 2014). Yet, isomorphism looks more at the institutional contexts on a broad perspective, thus, why MSIs are similar to each other.

Following the focus on context as rational myths, Scandinavian institutionalism emerged bringing actors and interests back into the field of institutional theory. Particularly in Scandinavia, scholars started to question how these myths emerged, thus, how these “institutional elements came to be produced and diffused” (Sahlin & Wedlin, 2008, p. 218). Focusing on organisational practices, scholars observed increasingly that actors convinced “each other to change their opinions, beliefs, and ways of acting - and not by mistake” (Czarniawska, 2008, p. 772). Thus, new ideas were not something only based on context but could also be constructed by individuals and then be “actively transferred and translated in a context of other ideas, actors, traditions and institutions (Sahlin & Wedlin, 2008, p. 218). Thus, contrarily to



Meyer and Rowan's argument that organisations passively respond to the circumstances, Scandinavian institutionalism added actors and interests to the discourse. Here, decoupling is also seen as "an act of interpretation" (Boxenbaum & Jonsson, 2008, p. 93) where both context as well as institutional factors shape these interpretations. Also outside Scandinavia, scholars realised this "interest-driven, and conflictual behavior" (DiMaggio as cited in Greenwood et al., 2008, p. 13 ). Most famous is DiMaggio's paper in 1988 where he criticises that institutional theory could not explain fundamental change and therefore, wondered "Who has the power to legitimate a novel form? Who are the 'institutional entrepreneurs'?" (Greenwood et al., 2008, p. 13).

Other scholars have linked old institutionalism and neo-institutionalism through the concept of institutional logics, as it acknowledges both individuals and context. Institutional logics is defined as "socially constructed historical patterns of material practices, assumptions, values, beliefs, and rules by which individuals produce and reproduce their material subsistence, organize time and space, and provide meaning to their social reality" (Thornton & Ocasio, 1999, p. 804). Institutional logic is, therefore, the bridge between the rational actor of 'old' institutionalism and the idea of institutional practices being socially constructed, through "mindless behaviour in response to cultural rationalization" (Thornton & Ocasio, 2008, p. 100), as advocated by neo-institutionalists. So, institutional logics take the institutional context as well as the individual into consideration, by being regulators for behaviour, as well as, spaces where opportunities for agency and change are provided. Important to highlight here is the linking of cognition with institutional agency and rule structures with socially constructed institutional practices (Thornton & Ocasio, 2008). Thus, institutional logics constitute the framework for how actors behave in organisations.

As such a framework, institutional logics help understanding change in institutions. Institutional logics will reshape throughout history and are variant to social and economic structural changes. At a chosen point in time, the institutional logics are so self-evident to actors that they are rarely and never entirely articulated (Boxenbaum & Battilana, 2004). Because of this, institutional logics are in general perceived to be objective truths to the actors embedded by them. Thus, the actors rarely question their

status or even their existence, which makes institutional logics resistant to change. This normative aspect is an inevitable characteristic of institutions (Meyer & Rowan, 1977). However, Alford and Friedland observed that individuals or organisations are most likely to be part of a society with conflicting institutional logics. They saw this “incompatibility of logics” (Greenwood et al., 2008, p. 21) as the enabler of opportunities for change. As actors are in touch with several institutions at the same time, at certain occasions, the logics of the respective institutions will conflict with each other and provoke actions of change. Thus, institutional logics emerged as an explanation for institutional change (Greenwood et al. 2008).

Even though institutional logics are important in the explanation of institutional change, most research on institutional logics has been carried out on the organisational field level (Zilber, 2013). Furthermore, little is known so far about how institutional logics happen on the ground in day-to-day experiences and behaviours of actors. While we find this interesting and relevant, it is beyond the scope of this study to include it fully. We will accept the concept as we look at taken-for-granted rules, however, in this paper we will not focus on it specifically.

Another central concept stemming from neo-institutional theory is the ‘organisational field’ (Wooten & Hoffman, 2008). Scott defines the field as “a community of organizations that partakes of a common meaning system and whose participants interact more frequently and fatefully with one another than with actors outside the field (Scott, 1995: 56)” (Wooten & Hoffman, 2008, p. 131). Traditionally, based on the notion of isomorphism, the assumption about fields was that organisations or actors within a field have similar characteristics as they belong to same institutional field (Wooten & Hoffman, 2008). Wooten and Hoffman relate this back to the need to gain legitimacy (2008). By incorporating elements from the environment, organisations are seen as legitimate and thus increase their chance of survival. As all organisations in a field feed from the same elements, eventually, they become homogeneous in culture, structure and output (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983).

However, more recently, the literature has focused more on the relational processes within a field. Scholars have considered fields also when different field constituents with varying purposes and without

necessarily a common denominator such as technologies or industry made sure there were some commonality of interests (see e.g. Wooten & Hoffman, 2008). Consequently, fields became more dynamic and struggles between its members had to be considered. Scholars have then started to focus on "interaction patterns and power balances" (Wooten & Hoffman, 2008, p. 134) among the field members (e.g. see Greenwood & Hinings, 1996). Fields must, therefore, rather be seen as relational spaces where actors have the opportunity to engage themselves with other actors. Seo and Creed explain change in fields as the outcome of members needing "to reconcile contradictory institutional arrangements" (Wooten & Hoffman, 2008, p. 135), which is the purpose of MSIs.

While we see RSPO as part of two fields, in this paper, we analyse the RSPO as an emerging institution. First, they are part of the field that consists of the palm oil sector, and second, we are seeing MSIs forming an organisational field on their own. By this we mean, the various MSIs existing already form a field as they are all brought together by their common and simultaneously unique structure while maintaining their own purposes and defending their own interests. For instance, we can see that MSIs, in general, have the aim to bring different stakeholder groups together to find a solution every party can respect. Also, their mission to enhance sustainable practices is aligned, however, while the RSPO focuses on the sustainable production of palm oil, other MSIs pay attention to e.g. forestry, the fishing industry or general fair trade of products. Furthermore, we see that MSIs adopt best practices from each other, and their structures are based on each other. For instance, the RSPO is based on the structure of the FSC (Djama et al., 2011). To place RSPO within these two fields is important in this study, as the evolution of RSPO impacts both the palm oil sector and the field of MSIs. If RSPO makes progress in its institutionalisation process and gains a bigger market share, the respective fields will adapt to this emergence through isomorphic transformation. This underpins our work when we focus on RSPO internally as an emerging institution in this study.

### 3.4 Institutions

Scholarly definitions of institutions portray them as taken-for-granted, enduring rules of life in society. Interestingly, despite the importance of Meyer and Rowan's paper to the field, it contains no clear definition of what an institution is. However, they did refer to Berger and Luckmann's definition of institutional rules as "classifications built into society as reciprocated typifications or interpretations" (Meyer & Rowan, 1977, p. 341). We understand this as agreements that are implicitly present in society, and that instead of being outspoken, are rendered through behaviours and expressions of its common understanding. These institutional rules can be held up by the force of law or public opinion as well as be taken for granted. Institutions inevitably involve normative obligations but often enter into social life primarily as facts which must be taken into account by actors. Lawrence and Suddaby define an institution as "enduring elements in social life - institutions - that have a profound effect on the thoughts, feelings and behaviour of individual and collective actors" (2006, p. 216). Barley and Tolbert define institutions as "shared rules and typifications that identify categories of social actors and their appropriate activities or relations" (1997, p. 96).

Moreover, Barley and Tolbert (1997) highlight the importance of the history of an institution. They point out that there is a variation in how much normative power institutions have over behavioural patterns and practices. The variations depend on how long of a history the institution has, and how well the institution is accepted by stakeholders. Institutions with short history, have a weaker influence over actions and are more likely to be disrupted, than institutions with a longer history. Thus, the habitual component of an institution becomes stronger over time. Similarly, Berger and Luckmann advanced the concept of reciprocal typifications: "Reciprocal typifications of action are built up in the course of a shared history. They cannot be created instantaneously. Institutions always have a history, of which they are the products. It is impossible to understand an institution adequately without an understanding of the historical process in which it was produced" (1967, p. 54).

In this paper, we accept the definition of institutions by Greenwood et al. (2008). In their account of the development of organisational institutionalism, Greenwood et al. understand the term 'institution'

in general to refer to “more-or-less taken for granted repetitive social behaviour that is underpinned by normative systems and cognitive understandings that give meaning and social exchange and thus enable self-reproducing social order” (2008, p. 4). Having defined an institution, we acknowledge the age of an institution, as brought up by Barley and Tolbert (1997) as salient. Hence, the time an institution has existed has an impact on its legitimacy for its stakeholders, implying that younger institutions can easier be disrupted and changed than institutions with a long historical existence.

We see that the emerging institution RSPO is facing challenges in its institutionalisation process. Outlined as one of the MSI characteristics, RSPO expects all members to comply with the rules set within the organisation even though these are not enforced by law. Furthermore, as RSPO is also a standard, it has an impact on how its members are acting. With its Code of Conduct, rules and norms for behaviour are set. As we see with the complaint system or, for instance, the recent case when a member was suspended due to non-compliance (RSPO, 2016), not all members are complying with all the rules, thus, the rules are not taken for granted yet. The historical component is important for RSPO, as it is a young organisation. With only 13 years of age and continuous growth, managing the organisation becomes increasingly difficult due to the MSI approach. As members have different interests and reasons to be in the organisation, it is difficult to get everyone to agree to certain standards and rules. Moreover, with more members, it is also increasingly difficult to track behaviour and to keep an overview. Based on the various critiques that exists on RSPO (mentioned in the Background chapter), we can see that not all its ambitions are put into practices yet, thus, RSPO still needs to build its influence on its stakeholders further. Also in the palm oil market, even though RSPO has 21% market share, we do not consider this to be enough to be the norm within the industry. With an increasing age, however, RSPO can reach a self-reproducing social order and thus become institutionalised.

### 3.5 Institutional work and institutionalisation

Institutionalisation describes the process of how institutions emerge and establish. Meyer and Rowan define institutionalisation as “the process by which social processes, obligations, or actualities come to

take on a rulelike status in social thought and action” (1977, p. 341). However, scholars do not agree on one definition. According to Selznick, to institutionalise “is to infuse with value beyond the technical requirements of the task at hand” (1957, p. 17). Yet, Berger and Luckmann describe it as “institutionalisation occurs whenever there is a reciprocal typification of habitualized actions by types of actors” (1967, p. 54).

In addition, some scholars also argued that this is not a linear process but institutions can also transform and deinstitutionalise. Oliver defined deinstitutionalisation as “the delegitimation of an established organisational practice or procedure as a result of organisational challenges to or the failure of organisations to reproduce previously legitimated or taken for granted organisational actions” (1992, p. 564). The process of institutionalisation can take place so that institutions can emerge both unintentionally, as well as deliberately. Furthermore, institutions can develop and change over time.

The intentional action to develop, maintain and, potentially, dismantle institutions is called institutional work among scholars. Lawrence and Suddaby define institutional work as “the purposive action of individuals and organisations aimed at creating, maintaining and disrupting institutions” (2006, p. 215). This definition is broad and includes all types of deliberate actions for institutionalisation, however, the theory of institutional work was developed to encompass the unobtrusive, day-to-day activities aimed at shaping institutions in particular (Lawrence et al., 2011). Lawrence and colleagues saw that focus had to a too large extent revolved around the notion of grand action and impressive, successful, changes, while missing from these accounts of individual agency and institutions were

... the myriad, day-to-day equivocal instances of agency that, although aimed at affecting the institutional order, represent a complex *mélange* of forms of agency— successful and not, simultaneously radical and conservative, strategic and emotional, full of compromises, and rife with unintended consequences (2011, p. 53).

As the history of the emergence of the MSI structure has shown in Chapter 2, MSIs are deliberately constructed organisations, aiming to be a norm-setting institution in a field (Pattberg, 2006; Utting, 2002). This means MSIs are shaped by the daily actions of the individual organisations that are its members.

An important feature of this concept, that distinguishes institutional work from any institutionalisation process defined above, regards the word ‘work’. According to Lawrence et al., work in connection with institutions requires two components: intentionality and effort (2011). The authors draw on the definition of intentionality as a conscious, strategic and future-oriented reshaping of social institutions, but also acknowledge that intentionality might look like a habit, as actors orient around the recall, selection and application of more or less taken-for-granted rules. The other component, effort, is important in defining the frames for what type of actions constitute institutional work. ‘Effort’ is defined as “a conscious exertion of power” (Merriam-Webster, 2017a) and “physical or mental activity needed to achieve something” (Cambridge dictionary, 2017). In an organisational context, we understand this as implying a cost, for instance, the giving up of resources. Because of the emphasis on achievement, the concept of work implies a connection between effort and a specific goal (Lawrence et al., 2011), which is in comparison not entailed by the regular process of institutionalisation. Based on these definitions, we identify all members of the RSPO as institutional workers. The intentionality and effort in their work might be of varying degree and scope, nevertheless, they all meet the minimum requirement by doing the effort of paying the membership fee which is required in order to be a member (RSPO, 2015).

Institutional work is concerned with micro-level practices and encompasses all sorts of intentions and efforts to change institutions, including institutional entrepreneurship. It “emphasizes the ongoing labour that takes place on the ground, and dedicated to creating, maintaining, and changing institutions” and is concerned with “the micro-level foundations of institutions” (Zilber, 2013, p. 85; p. 89). One of the key elements of institutional work is the “effort to capture both agency and structure, and their interrelations” (Zilber, 2013, p. 86). Besides, as previously mentioned, institutional work is based on effort and intentionality, which is why we identify all RSPO members as institutional workers. The concept of institutional work emerged as a defence of the more low-key types of deliberate and communal effort put into the building of institutions, as a response to the many accounts of grand, successful change, such as cases of institutional entrepreneurship (Lawrence et al., 2011). Having defined institutional

workers in this section, we will in the following look closer at the concept of institutional entrepreneurship.

### 3.6 Institutional entrepreneurship

Institutional entrepreneurship addresses institutional change by reintroducing agency into the analysis of institutions. That institutions change is not disputable. The question is how, and why they do so (Boxenbaum & Battilana, 2004). In order to find an answer to this, the concept of the institutional entrepreneur was introduced by DiMaggio in 1988. He argued that, “new institutions arise when organized actors with sufficient resources (institutional entrepreneurs) see in them an opportunity to realize interests that they value highly” (as cited in Hardy & Maguire, 2008, p. 198). When the concept emerged in the 1990’s, it became an almost synonymous term with institutional change (Greenwood et al., 2008). Later institutional scholars describe entrepreneurship as “activities of actors who have an interest in particular institutional arrangements and who leverage resources to create new institutions or to transform existing ones” (Maguire et al., 2004, p. 657), and as institutional entrepreneurs “actors to whom the responsibility for new or changed institutions is attributed” (Hardy & Maguire, 2008, p. 198). Worth emphasising is that change can also imply the disruption or destruction of institutions (Garud, Hardy & Maguire, 2007). The concept of institutional entrepreneurship as part of institutional work has, thus, brought the emphasis back to the role of the agent compared to the focus on institutional context, and has thereby served to bridge the ‘old’ and ‘new’ institutional scholars (Hardy & Maguire, 2008). Furthermore, institutional entrepreneurship can take place both at an individual level and at an organisational level (Hardy & Maguire, 2008). In this paper, it will be regarded on the latter in which the institutional entrepreneur is a member organisation of the RSPO.

Agency refers to the engaged actions by an actor. Boxenbaum and Battilana define agency as “the actors’ engagement (in the social world), which, through the interplay of habit, imagination, and judgment, both reproduces and transforms the environment’s structures” (2004, p. 6). Agency, hereby, unfolds around complexity and conflict notions (Beckert, 1999). As already mentioned when introducing



institutional logics before, rather, than being coherent, institutional rules can be in conflict with each other and at times even contradictory. Thereby, they do no longer provide consistent guidelines for actors' behaviour. In institutional entrepreneurship theory, the organisations appear as the independent variable, rather than the dependent, in the processes of institutional change, hence, the organisations themselves are seen as actors (Greenwood et al., 2008). Thus, one of the key differences between institutional work and institutional entrepreneurship is the former's focus on the collective action rather than individuals defending their own interests and agenda, which is in focus in institutional entrepreneurship theory. Institutional work accepts compromises and unintended consequences whereas institutional entrepreneurship has an interest in a particular institutional arrangement.

The main issue with the concept of institutional entrepreneurship is the contradiction between how an actor who is encompassed by an institution, manages to see possible ways to change the taken-for-granted rules that the institutional logics inherent to the institution implies (Boxenbaum & Battilana, 2004). In their review of studies made on institutional entrepreneurship, Hardy and Maguire (2008) show that institutional entrepreneurs can act both from central positions in a field, as well as in the fringes. Depending on the actors' positions, they are encompassed by two different paradoxes: The embedded, central actors, on the one hand, are likely to have the resources and, or, the power to force a change through in the field, but are less likely to envision new practices or have the motivation to change the status quo. For the peripheral actors, on the other hand, it is less questionable how they come up with ideas for change. The paradox instead relates to how these actors, who are generally less advantaged by the prevailing arrangements, get other members in the field to adopt their game-changing ideas. In this paper, we will focus on actors in all positions in the RSPO, and how they get their ideas through, meaning how they get other players to support their cause. We find it interesting to look at this in an MSI, as one of their reasons for existence and goals is to have inclusive approaches and 'hear all voices' no matter whether they are at the centre or the periphery of the field.

Throughout time, theories suggesting both endogenous (e.g. Leblebici, Salancik, Copay & King, 1991; Boxenbaum & Battilana, 2004) as well as exogenous (e.g. Meyer, 1982; Clemens & Cook, 1999)

driving factors for institutional change have been presented (Greenwood et al., 2008). The exogenous account for institutional change contradicted the previous imagery of institutional settings as highly stable and characterised by conformity, by instead characterising the institutional context by contestations, struggles and, to some extent, the result of power relations (Greenwood et al. 2008). The notion of institutional entrepreneurship is claimed to be an endogenous explanation of institutional change (Boxenbaum & Battilana, 2004). What has been less accounted for, however, is if exogenous factors determine whether institutional entrepreneurs are allowed to act.

The aim of our paper is to test if endogenous or exogenous explanations to institutional change account better for institutional entrepreneurship, and thus examine whether all institutional workers are potential institutional entrepreneurs, just waiting for their number to come up. By ‘endogenous’ we mean “internal cause or origin” (Oxford University Press, 2017), and by ‘exogenous’ we refer to any event or action that originates from outside of an actor (Wooten & Hoffman, 2008). By ‘number to come up’ we mean if exogenous factors create advantageous conditions for institutional entrepreneurship for a specific actor, such as the occurrence of external events, certain structural positions of actors, and favourable chance (Battilana and Boxenbaum, 2004). If our findings show that it is dependent on characteristics inherent to an institutional entrepreneur, then the RSPO as an MSI is failing to enact several of the virtues of inclusiveness, such as neutralising asymmetries (Cheyns & Riisgaard, 2014), which suggests major implications for its legitimacy. In the next section, as theoretical framework, we apply the model by Beckert (1999) to address this question, with an extended elaboration of endogenous and exogenous factors.

### 3.7 Theoretical Framework

In our research, we look both at why specific actors are able to transform institutions, as well as how processes in the surrounding environment can facilitate institutional entrepreneurship. Whereas there are two strands of institutional theory trying to explain where the initiative for change comes from, Hardy and Maguire (2008) have also pointed out that there are two different narratives for how to look at

institutional entrepreneurship. The majority of the literature studying the concept focuses on an actor-centric account, and how specific actors are able to transform fields, and why they do so. In this study, an actor is defined as any member organisation of RSPO. This is relevant to us as we put a particular focus and emphasis on the narratives of a small sample from the already relatively small group of members who have sponsored resolutions in the GA. However, we deviate from this approach by acknowledging that while some might benefit from these actions, others might be disadvantaged, which is rarely taken into account in this perspective (Hardy & Maguire, 2008). The second narrative is process-centric, and focuses on the processes and struggles that surround institutional entrepreneurship. This later narrative seeks to account the success, and failure, of institutional entrepreneurs to the position they occupy in a field, and how stimulating events can enable their possibilities to carry out institutional entrepreneurship (Hardy & Maguire, 2008). In this paper, we will take a combination of the actor-centric and the process-centric approach. By using both narratives, we are able to understand how the position of an actor assists the progress of becoming an institutional entrepreneur as well as “the collective, incremental and multi-level elements of institutional entrepreneurship as a process, including its unintended consequences” (Hardy & Maguire, 2008, p. 198). By using both approaches we acknowledge that we are not exploring all the features of either perspective, which could then appear as a shallow application of the two. For instance, we do not pay particular attention to the positions an actor holds in the institution which is commonly brought forward in the actor-centric perspective (Hardy & Maguire, 2008). Neither do we take the problematic side of the studied institutional entrepreneurship into account, by for instance hearing the voices of members who have not sponsored, which is an approach often attributed to process-centric accounts. However, as such considerations also are subject to delimiting our study and as we are interested in both the actor’s cognitive abilities as well as the context, one is embedded in, a combination of the two narratives fits our study.

### 3.7.1 Beckert's Dynamic Model of Interests and Institutions

We apply Beckert's Dynamic Model of Interest and Institutions and the variables he identifies as accounting for institutional change and stability, with an additional variable to account for influences from events. Beckert's model is based on the notion of underestimated significance of agency and interest in institutional theory (1999). He asks: "If organizational structures and strategies are shaped by institutional environments, what is the role of 'strategic choice ... in organizations?" (Beckert, 1999, p. 778). He acknowledges that a common idea is "that change is caused primarily by exogenous shocks to which organizations adapt", but stresses that agency and interest is left out in this assumption (Beckert, 1999, p. 780). Therefore, he developed a dynamic model that takes the institutions, strategic agency, and the necessity for reduction of uncertainty in social life into account to analyse processes of institutional change. He argues that "institutional rules and strategic agency can be conceptualized as two coordination mechanisms that destabilize each other, but nevertheless, remain interdependent" (Beckert, 1999, p. 779).

Ironically, institutions play two roles simultaneously here. On the one hand, they are "providing the necessary basis for strategic agency in complex systems" and, on the other hand, they provide "a basis from which better options can be foreseen, arising partly from the violation of institutional practices" (Beckert, 1999, p. 779). Beckert says, "The dynamic character of the proposed model opens up the question of which variables account for the stability of institutionalized structures" (1999, p. 790). The identification of these variables is needed to be able to understand the relationship between institutional pressures and organisational behaviour, which is what Beckert accounts for in his model (see Figure 1).

Furthermore, the model help explaining why some collective actors comply with institutional standards while others can resist the pressure and therefore can act as institutional entrepreneurs. As we are studying a case of an emerging institution in a new organisational format, we want to take a step back and include also the aspect of 'environments' that Beckert is criticising with his model. In order to test if sudden events and their immediate aftermaths have an impact on the conditions for institutional entrepreneurs in an MSI, we picture the potential impact of events as entering between 'Institutions' and

‘Entrepreneur’ in the model. We have marked this by adding ‘Events’ within a box with a broken line in Figure 1.

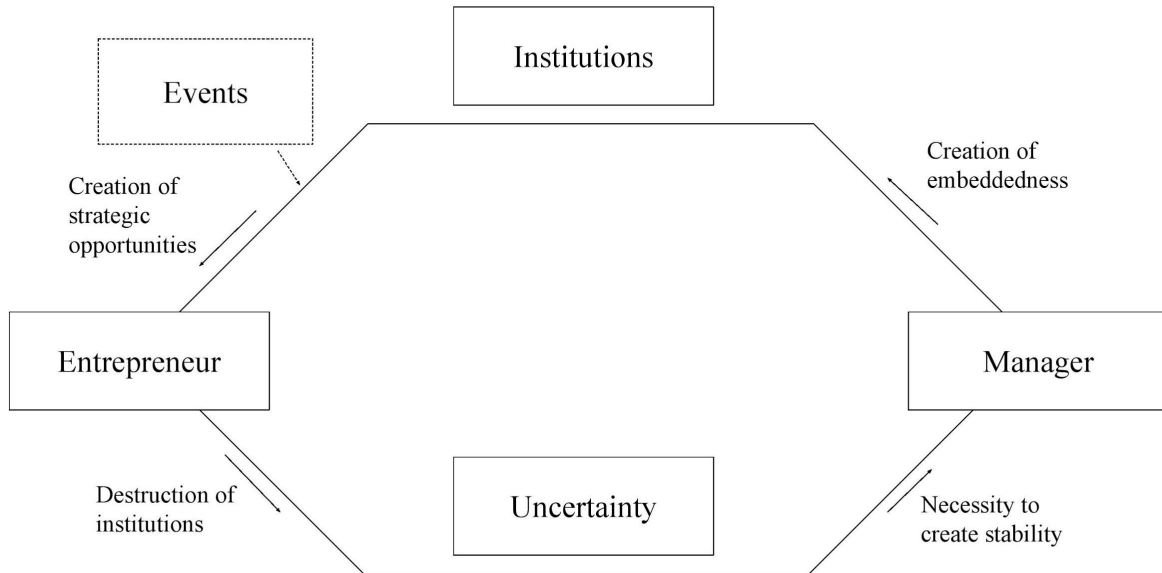


Figure 1: Beckert's Dynamic Model of Interests and Institutions, modified.

#### 3.7.1.1 Actors in the model

The institutional entrepreneur in Beckert's model is based on Schumpeter's definition, who differentiates between action-types, thinkers, and the majority. Beckert (1999) looks at institutional entrepreneurship from a Schumpeterian perspective; thus the entrepreneur is seen as an action-type. The ability to think of new combinations of goods "encompasses the nature and content of development" (Schumpeter, 2002, p. 412). Though before the time of institutional entrepreneurship, Schumpeter (2002) differentiated people on the basis of their inherent characteristics of having the ability to think of new combinations, which only few can do. Not everyone has the ability, and the majority of people want to do their tasks in the way known to them. Some, even if they have an idea or a new way of carrying out a task, "lack the moral courage to try" (Schumpeter, 2002, p. 413). These ones, we call 'thinkers'. A small group of people, however, perceive new combinations and ideas and have "enough freshness from the daily routine,

allowing them to pursue some of those ideas and give them concrete form” (Schumpeter, 2002, p. 413). What is differentiating this group is the people who think of the ideas and the ones who act on them. Only the ones acting, the ones that “scorns the hedonic equilibrium and faces risk without timidity” (Schumpeter, 2002, p. 413) will actually bring change and development to the static state maintained by the masses. This group, is called the ‘action-type’. Although portraying the agent as pretty heroic, this explanation can, in one way, clarify why some actors are institutional entrepreneurs, while others stick to taken-for-granted rules.

Hardy and Maguire (2008) point out that institutional entrepreneurship can take place on two levels, the individual and the organisational level. As Schumpeter looks at institutional entrepreneurship as an ability one has inherently, it is important to highlight that we see this applying to individuals. However, as we are looking at an organisation which consist of many different individuals, in order for organisations to gain this ability of the action-type they can hire the people that show this ability.

In addition, we also see a close link to institutional work here. While institutional work mainly looks at the small, gradual changes, institutional entrepreneurship and Beckert look at the bigger changes that change institutions. Nevertheless, in Schumpeter’s thinker type, meaning the actor who can think of new ideas and combinations but does not act on it, we see institutional workers that show less intention and effort. As we have already mentioned, we identify all members as institutional workers as they show a bit of intention and effort by joining the organisation and paying the membership fee. We also identify them as Schumpeter’s thinker-type as they can see the new idea of RSPO as positive but they do not necessarily act on it any further than joining the organisation.

In his model, Beckert differentiates between two kinds of groups, the one who sticks to routines, managers, and the action-type, ‘entrepreneurs’. Entrepreneurs reflect on “established practices” (Beckert, 1999, p. 786) and act on them despite the “adaptive pressure of his/her social surrounding” (Schumpeter 1991, cited in Beckert 1999, p. 786). As named by Schumpeter as ‘creative destruction’, this is the “simultaneously destructive and constructive consequences of innovations” (Beckert, 1999, p. 786). While it destroys traditional practices and taken-for-granted rules, this process provides new alternatives

for action at the same time. The entrepreneur will act when she perceives it to be profitable. On the contrary, the managers “act on the basis of routines” (Beckert, 1999, p. 786). The only way through which they change behaviour is through impacts “of institutional forces or exogenous shocks” (Beckert, 1999, p. 786). And even these shocks are reacted on through “adaptation” (Beckert, 1999, p. 786).

This reluctance towards uncertainty makes the managers resist change to a great extent. Beckert argues that entrepreneurs will only act and use the means necessary if the behaviour of other actors can be foreseen and therefore, a successful outcome is easier to predict. In order to build these expectations, uncertainty must be reduced as actions are more institutionalised. When the entrepreneurs can predict other actors’ behaviour, it helps them in taking decisions for their own actions. Yet, all creative destruction by entrepreneurs first leads to a higher level of uncertainty in the institutional context. Beckert defines uncertainty as “situations in which intentionally rational actors cannot deduce strategies from their preference rankings because the complexity of the situation and the informational constraints do not allow them to assign probabilities to the possible consequences of choices” (Beckert, 1999, p. 779). This will then automatically be counter-acted on by the managers’ need for certainty, but “only re-institutionalisation through processes of adaptation leads to the re-embedding of social practices and with it to the reduction of uncertainty” (Beckert, 1999, p. 788). In this paper, we, therefore, see the managers as being the ones acting out resistance to change.

In addition, Beckert includes the dimensions of power and legitimacy as an alternative to institutional rules as a stabilising factor. He points out that “if there is social stability in early stages of institutionalisation, it can be assumed that this is due more to the exercise of power, than it is based on institutional rules” (Beckert, 1999, p. 787). This is interesting because it shows that the rules established by the institution are less important than the power of the managers over the institutionalisation process. This power can depend on resources, such as “finance, knowledge or social networks” (Beckert, 1999, p. 792). Beckert argues that the change of institutional structures and processes will only prevail when either the actors with the power do not have the necessary means available to prevent the disruption or when they choose not to use the means available to them. Means are hereby defined as “all-sanctioning

mechanisms which effectively keep the entrepreneur and possible followers from destroying institutionalised structures” (Beckert, 1999, p. 792). Power can, therefore, intervene in the micro-politics of the institutional structure. By being able to block disruptions it functions as a stabilising factor. Similarly, power can also be used by stakeholders in the environment for the enforcement of institutional rules, as well as, the entrepreneurs in order to empower their disruptions. Furthermore, Beckert argues, that besides habits and routines, there is another fact that stabilises institutions: legitimacy. As mentioned in the background chapter, the strive for legitimacy is a core characteristic of MSIs. Thus, both legitimacy and power are important stabilising factors, impacting institutions.

Analysing the RSPO and its members with this model enables us to look at both the individual member organisations that are acting on their own trying to bring their interests forward and the RSPO as MSI as striving for institutionalisation. While Beckert divides the roles of entrepreneurs and managers to different actors in a context, we are inspired by Hargrave and Van de Ven (2006) to see that these roles might not be as static as indicated by Beckert. As RSPO is still a young organisation, we are inspired by Hargrave and Van de Ven’s collective action model which states that new institutions are formed “through the political behaviour of many actors who play diverse and partisan roles in the organisational field or network that emerges” (2006, p. 868).

Therefore, in this paper, we see the ‘manager’ in Beckert’s model as merely analytical. We are investigating an emerging institution, where no specific managers are established yet, due to institutions becoming stronger over time. Consequently, also the resistance to change increases with time and normative power is established, which is possessed by the manager-type (Beckert, 1999). Hence, initially, the manager position changes among members depending on the issue. However, everyone who proposes resolutions is an institutional entrepreneur, which means they are suggesting change that, if successful, make them responsible for new or changed institutions in the emerging institution of the RSPO (Hardy & Maguire, 2008). Having said that, we also see that MSIs are uncertain due to the nature of the organisation. As all stakeholders are coming together to promote their interests, it becomes difficult to predict next steps and positions. The closest to a manager we can currently see in the RSPO, is the board,



which tries to stabilise this uncertain group of actors through institutionalised rules. Nevertheless, this role is not yet institutionalised which is why the role can potentially also be taken over by other actors in the field according to Hargrave and Van de Ven (2006).

In the following two sections, we will expand Beckert's model by incorporating analytical frames for characteristics and external events respectively. This enables us to investigate to what extent the entrepreneur's characteristics and the context of the action influence the possibility to perform institutional entrepreneurship.

### 3.7.2 Characteristics

One theory that this paper is testing is whether institutional entrepreneurship depends on characteristics inherent to certain actors. However, we want to look at the emergence of action by institutional entrepreneurs on a broader level. Therefore, in this paper, we investigate whether the possibility to initiate institutional change depends on inherent characteristics of actors in an institution, which distinguishes the institutional entrepreneur from other actors in the institution. These inherent characteristics refer to properties such as special qualities and abilities, that allow the institutional entrepreneur to envision and promote new institutional orders and arrangements (Hardy & Maguire, 2008). When attributing the capacity of institutional entrepreneurship to characteristics of the agent, regardless if it is an individual or an organisation, it is important to keep in mind that "actors, interests, goals and strategies are institutionally, culturally and historically shaped" (Hardy & Maguire, 2008, p. 200).

Throughout the years, the scholarly field came up with various causes for how institutional entrepreneurs successfully change institutions, namely resources, rationales and relations (Greenwood et al., 2008). First, Resources commonly refers to a stock or supply of assets that can be drawn on by an organisation or individual to function effectively. DiMaggio introduced the perspective of resource-mobilisation as the main cause for institutional entrepreneurs to drive change initiatives. He argues that only actors that direct the right resources have the power to change institutions and influence the institutional design (Beckert, 1999). As mentioned above, Beckert defines resources as "finance,

knowledge or social networks” (Beckert, 1999, p. 792). A wide range of resources has been suggested as necessary to drive change by several scholars, such as material, cultural and discursive resources (Hardy & Maguire, 2008). However, Hardy and Maguire suggest that this drive does not only depend on one actor’s own resources but, more importantly, “entrepreneurship involves a degree of dependency on other actors and resources” (2008, p. 207). Thus, the strategies used by entrepreneurs are based on an exchange mechanism, whether these are based on positive incentives of exchange or negative ones of threats.

Second, Rationales are the reasons actors bring forward to communicate to other actors why they should support or at least not resist the proposed change. Benford and Snow (2000) argue, from a discursive intervention perspective, that it depends on the way the proposed changes are framed in order to “generate collective action” (Hardy & Maguire, 2008, p. 208). A frame of collective action is a “coherent interpretive structure” (Hardy & Maguire, 2008, p. 208) with three functions, namely punctuation, elaboration and motivation. Punctuation refers to problem identification and evaluating it as important; elaboration specifies who or what is accountable for the problem and what is needed to correct this and motivation relates to other actors’ participation in the change. Thus, institutional entrepreneurs have the skills to mobilise others to change institutions (Creed, Scully & Austin, 2002). Utilising these different frames, institutional entrepreneurs can enhance their ability to bring forward institutional changes successfully.

Third, Relations refers to connection and interaction among actors. As institutional entrepreneurs try to change institutions which encompass several actors, it is easy to understand that the possibility to change does not only depend on the individual actor but also on other actors. Therefore, resources and rationales are often means to build relations, to establish new connections with other actors such as coalitions, alliances or collaborations (Hardy & Maguire, 2008). In order to be able to form these connections, institutional entrepreneurs need specific social and political skills and “the ability to induce cooperation in others” (Fligstein, 2001, p. 105).

Clearly, scholars have various endogenous explanations to the underlying reasons for how actors carry out institutional entrepreneurship which we will apply as analytical frame in this study. In this

paper, we, therefore, set out to determine whether these characteristics are actually driving factors for proposing change and what are the necessary characteristics for successfully diffusing ideas of change. Furthermore, we will investigate to what extent the environmental contexts enable the actor to promote institutional change. Hence, we will also look at the influence of events, as, according to various scholars, exogenous factors are the deciding cause for institutional change (see e.g. Meyer, 1982; Clemens & Cook, 1999).

### 3.7.3 Events

Organisations are often surprised by events in their environment (Meyer, 1982). Events are in the literature also called shocks, triggering events, disruptive events or jolts (Hardy & Maguire, 2008). That change in institutions is caused by exogenous jolts, such as political, regulatory, and technological changes, was the common scholarly assumption in the 1980s and 1990s (Greenwood et al., 2008; Greenwood and Hinings, 1996). Meyer explains that “environmental jolts [are] transient perturbations whose occurrences are difficult to foresee and whose impacts on organizations are disruptive and potentially inimical” (1982, p. 515). Clemens and Cook further describe jolts as “smacking into stable institutional arrangements and causing indeterminacy” (1999, p. 447). Traditionally, the institutional theory literature “looks to the source of action as existing exogenous to the actor” (Wooten & Hoffman, 2008, p. 130). This is the general idea of the relation between event and actor that we apply in this paper, and thus, events can originate from any organisational level outside the actor to count as exogenous.

There are several accounts for the effects of these shocks and how they can be analysed. Rao, Monin and Durand (2003) argue that shocks can create mutability and play out previously suppressed tensions against each other, which creates opportunities for actors within the shocked field to critique the existing orthodoxy and promote change (Rao et al., 2003). According to Meyer (1982), these jolts also reveal how environments are adapted to by organisations. Hardy and Maguire highlight that even mature and structured fields in crisis, which is created by an exogenous event, can be conducive environments for institutional entrepreneurship. From this account, we draw the conclusion, which is affirmed by Hardy

and Maguire, that also an emerging institution, that is not yet mature and stable, can be subject to these different kinds of stimuli, which will have an impact on its future development (2008). According to Greenwood and Suddaby (2006), jolts can come in four different forms: Social upheaval, technological disruptions, competitive discontinuities and regulatory change. Hoffman considers how disruptive events can sharply end institutional inertia, and exemplifies the multiple forms events can come in by referring to Hannigan's three types: Milestones, catastrophes, and legal/administrative happenings (1999). Events can lead to new forms of debates and change social arrangements (Hoffman, 1999). This can be key when looking at competitive advantage and organisational survival, as only the organisations that are able to cope with these changing contextual pressures will succeed (Greenwood & Hinings, 1996).

Meyer, Gaba and Colwell's (2005) categorization of non-linear changes defines our limitation of studied changes. In their study on organisation fields, they came up with three kinds of changes: jolts, step functions and oscillation (Meyer et al., 2005). Jolts are temporal disruptions of a field which unsettle actors within an organisation and then decrease again. Second, step functions are seen as changes which pass through fields leaving permanent changes behind such as competition structures, habitable niches or boundaries of markets and industries. Third, oscillation is defined as the "recurring cycles of field-level expansion and contraction, passing through periods of discontinuity near the zenith and nadir of each cycle" (Meyer et al., 2005, p. 457). As opposed to the second and third type of change, jolts are unsettling disruptions creating uncertainty, which is the type of change studied in this paper, rather than focusing incremental changes or recurring cycles. We acknowledge that these distinctions of changes are hard to separate in practice, as we see that jolts might create turbulence that leads to step functions in the long run, and that changes coming from oscillation might be confused with the effects of a jolt. In this study, we have limited ourselves to focus on jolts or events, and the effect they have on the conditions for institutional entrepreneurship. However, events are interesting only partly because of what happens in the moment of their occurrence, but also because of their aftermaths, as these create the context that institutional entrepreneurs operate in. Therefore, we are also acknowledging the step function kind of

change, but have limited our analysis to only study the nearest future after the occurrence of an event. This is elaborated in the Methodology chapter.

The above definitions provide the analytical frame for identifying the role exogenous factors play in institutional entrepreneurship within the RSPO. This, together with the review of endogenous explanations to institutional change and Beckert's Dynamic Model of Interest and Institutions, constitutes the theoretical framework of this paper. The next chapter will explain how the research process has been carried out.

#### 3.7.4 Critiques and limits of the model

Beckert gives a great value to the power of uncertainty. As MSIs are young and thus not fully established institutions, the factor of uncertainty is so omnipresent that it likely has a lesser effect than in fully established institutions. Moreover, Beckert's model is based on individuals within institutions. However, in this study, we are using Beckert's model in an organisation, looking at other organisations within the umbrella organisation, RSPO, as actors. Certain attributes that an institutional entrepreneur has according to Schumpeter (2002), are human attributes, such as the ability to think of new combinations, which only few can do, and not everyone has the ability to, as mentioned above. This may be the case for individuals, but does not apply seamlessly to organisations. An organisation does not have brains or learning capacity of its own, but is merely the people it is constituted of. Nevertheless, we believe Schumpeter contributes to our analysis of the characteristics of an entrepreneur as it still provides a valuable analytical framework for our level of analysis. In addition, we see that this does not affect the main aspects of the model which are the dynamics within the field between institutional entrepreneurs and managers, which is why we still find it applicable to our study.

Furthermore, Beckert does not take into consideration the context and how this is affecting the institutional entrepreneur. Therefore, in this study, we added this aspect in order to study the phenomenon whether institutional entrepreneurs or the external context have a bigger impact on the GA in the RSPO.

## 4. Methodology

*This chapter describes how we have considered the key elements of business research: research philosophy, research methodology and research methods (Easterby-Smith, Jackson and Thorpe, 2015). Our research is grounded in a relativist ontology and a constructionist epistemology. We have conducted a case study on RSPO, using an abductive approach and qualitative method. The main data sources come from textual data and interviews. Upon collection, we analysed the data using thematic analysis as well as a pattern matching technique.*

### 4.1 Research Philosophy

There are several philosophically distinguished ways to define what is real and existing, and several ways to inquire into the nature of the world through different theories of knowledge (Easterby-Smith et al., 2015). These central philosophical debates are called ‘ontology’ and ‘epistemology’ respectively. The awareness of these disagreements about reality is crucial, not only when conducting research, but also, for instance, when discussing how to commonly define ‘sustainability’ in an MSI, where the different actors can see their particular economic and political concerns as bound up with a particular outcome of such a discussion (Easterby-Smith et al., 2015). For us, as researchers, the awareness of our own ontological and epistemological stance helps us understand our own reflexive role in research, and that our findings that we present in this study has limitations when viewed from another perspective. This awareness provides us with more clarity and prepares us so that we can make a stronger contribution to the field we are investigating (Easterby-Smith et al., 2015).

One of the first decisions in our research process was to study the organisation and emerging institution RSPO. An organisation is a human-made construction, with no additional or greater goals or objectives in itself than the ones brought in and negotiated between the people who are members of the organisation (Watson, 2006). To study the processes that take place within one defined case, the RSPO, we have thus followed social science tradition as we are interested in the behaviour of people rather than inanimate objects (Easterby-Smith et al., 2015). Given this focus on mechanisms inherent to a socially

constructed organisation, we chose to conduct this study grounded in a relativist ontology and a normal constructionist epistemology. These stances are developed below.

#### 4.1.1 Ontology

In relativist ontology, it is accepted that inequalities such as structural discrimination because of cultural origins or unequal access to resources are defined and experienced variously by different actors, as all interpreters will be coloured by their own origins, contexts and references (Easterby-Smith et al., 2015). As relativists, we assume that different observers will have different viewpoints, which is suitable when investigating an environment with such diverse actors as an MSI. We, thus, acknowledge that there is no single reality that can be discovered, but there are several perspectives that can be real to different actors.

One important outcome of taking a philosophical stance in research, is the acknowledgement of the perspectives we then do not adopt. For instance, taking departure in a weak realist ontology, such as internal or critical realism, would have been interesting when looking into an MSI that is aiming to address a social and environmental challenge. The RSPO in itself might be socially constructed by stakeholders to palm oil production, but, the consequences of palm oil production on nearby communities and on the environment are real. Even though it appears hard for actors to agree on what these concepts of the consequences mean, or how they should be measured, the disagreements do not change the reality of these consequences (Easterby-Smith et al., 2015). This disagreement of the reality of the consequences of palm oil production is, of course, present and impossible to disregard when studying any aspects of the RSPO. Thus, we acknowledge that our study could have benefited well from being grounded in the structured ontology of a critical realist research approach, which tolerates an eclectic approach to methods and furthermore, tends to be critical to the status quo (Easterby-Smith et al., 2015). However, by using a realist point of view, and thus acknowledging that one single truth exists, even though it might be described in various ways, we would risk to give one narrative of reality the preferential right of interpretation. As different stakeholders have different interests, and an MSI's reason to exist is based on

these tensions, a relativist approach where several realities are acknowledged is beneficial for our research. As our study is limited to focusing on the internal mechanisms of the members that constitute the organisation of the RSPO, we are rather interested in the different realities perceived by these members.

#### 4.1.2 Epistemology

From a social constructionist point of view, many aspects of social reality are determined by people, rather than by external and ‘objective’ factors (Easterby-Smith et al., 2015). That implies that within this theory of knowledge, we as researchers value the meanings and different constructions that people place upon their experiences, and appreciate these different experiences as accounts for reality, rather than looking for external causes to explain studied phenomena. To avoid confusion, we do in one part of our study look at external events as a possible impacting factor of the phenomena of institutional entrepreneurship in the GA but we account for their effects through narratives produced by humans. However, despite the fact that great importance in the creation of knowledge is given to the individual within this ‘normal’ constructionist epistemological approach, this approach does acknowledge the existence of independent, objective knowledge, as opposed to the ‘strong’ constructionist (Easterby-Smith et al., 2015). In addition, as a big part of our dataset regarding events and the impact it has on the sponsoring members comes from qualitative interviews with individuals, the constructionist approach is suitable.

A strong constructionist epistemology would have been useful to explain the aspects of cultural differences and power structures within the RSPO. However, given the dataset we have, with highly censored meeting minutes and interviews taking place at one point in time instead of over time, we could not rely enough on the language and discourse expressed by this textual data to conduct a satisfactory analysis based in this theory of knowledge. Furthermore, by acknowledging the existence of independent knowledge, we include some of the appealing traits of the realist ontology explained above, as the consequences of the actions within the RSPO are real, regardless of what is perceived by the members we have interviewed.



It is relevant to our study to acknowledge that the distinction between the different philosophical approaches to research is analytical, and tend to intermingle in practice (Easterby-Smith et al., 2015). Many researchers deliberately combine methods from both positivist and constructionist traditions, aiming to find deeper insights than when sticking to one tradition. In our initial look at the meeting minutes which led up to defining our problem statement, we made use of quantitative method, commonly applied in positivist research. We believe that the objective account for the numbers provided by this textual data set can give another, also valuable, account for reality, than what is inferred subjectively through perception and reflection of text written by a human hand in the meeting minutes and our qualitative interviews. We see this quantitative overview as another perspective informing our triangulation process, which is also recognised within constructionist epistemology (Easterby-Smith et al., 2015). Given our clearly defined socially constructed object of study, we have mainly remained within the social scientist tradition and made use of a qualitative method.

## 4.2 The research design

The research design shows how we have organised the research activities and the choices we have made, in the way we judged as most suitable to achieve the research aim.

### 4.2.1 The case study approach

Case studies are the preferred method to use when the researcher does not have much control over events, and the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon, especially when “the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident” (Yin, 2003, p. 7). This type of study is called an ‘explanatory case study’. In addition, a case study can have an exploratory component, which is applicable when answering “what” questions. In this case study, we explain to what extent characteristics and context impact participation in the GA, thus researching the entangled area of phenomenon and context, as well as explore what characteristics and contextual-creating events these are.

Furthermore, a case study is preferred when studying contemporary events but where behaviour cannot be controlled and manipulated (Yin, 2003). A case study thus allows for the dealing with both historical sources of data, such as documentation and archival data, as well as contemporary sources, such as interviews and observations. By having a case study approach, we can allow ourselves to take into consideration both the historical data we retrieve from the meeting minutes of the GA, as well as the narratives produced by interview respondents to find answers to our questions stemming from the initial review of meeting minutes. In this search, we have been inspired by Eisenhardt as she suggests an eclectic approach in methodology when conducting case study research and draws on both positivist and constructionist traditions (Easterby-Smith et al., 2015). We are testing two theories to see which one accounts better to explain the phenomenon under study, which is closer to a positivist end, while we conduct research on only one case, which is acceptable in constructionist philosophy. However, we differ from Eisenhardt in this sense, as she suggests multiple cases for investigation in order to generate theory (Eisenhardt, 1989).

The case method is considered relevant to this study as we look at one organisation, partly over time (Easterby-Smith et al., 2015). We found the organisational format of MSIs that is becoming increasingly popular to be an interesting focus for our study. The RSPO is an interesting unit of analysis of this kind, because of the relevance of the commodity the RSPO is regulating described in the Introduction chapter. As our study is limited to testing theory primarily in the setting of the GA, the GA is a subsidiary unit of analysis in our research (Easterby-Smith et al., 2015).

This study is also an instrumental case study as classified by Stake (Easterby-Smith et al., 2015), since we are investigating processes in an MSI that is considered a success of its kind that many other MSIs look at (Djama et al., 2011). From a theoretical perspective, our findings can thus be analytically generalised to other studies investigating the evolutions of MSIs as institutions, as we provide theoretical propositions that can be tested in other environments (Yin, 2003). From an empirical perspective, our findings from this case provide local knowledge of high relevance to RSPO, and thus to the vast part of the palm oil industry that is being impacted by its actions and decisions (Easterby-Smith et al., 2015).

Furthermore, given that the MSI format is a relatively new form of organisation where theories developed in other organisational contexts might not apply, and given that RSPO is one of the most successful cases of MSIs, we can develop some general propositions from our research regarding institutional entrepreneurship in emerging institutions that can be generalised to other MSIs (Easterby-Smith et al., 2015).

#### 4.2.2 Abductive approach

Our dataset is comprised from two sources: The meeting minutes from the GAs of RSPO from 2004-2015, and interviews with representatives from different membership categories. In the following sections, our research process is described in detail.

The common analytical distinctions between how inference of results is done is through either induction or deduction. Induction implies that theory is the outcome of the research and generalizable inferences are drawn out of observation (Bryman and Bell, 2011). Deduction, on its part, implies developing a hypothesis from theory that later is tested on the data. We use an abductive method, i.e. a combination of the two, where we have screened theories alongside with the collection of data. We entered the first round of analysis of the meeting minutes with an inductive approach, which helped us familiarise ourselves with the history of the resolutions proposed in the RSPO. This exploration of data guided us in finding an interesting research problem and, subsequently, indicated which strands of literature to frame our study within by letting the theory emerge from the data in this initial phase (Easterby-Smith et al., 2015). We then approached our research question deductively by letting our chosen theoretical framework guide us in constructing a relevant interview guide for our qualitatively collected data.

#### 4.2.3 Textual data analysis

The meeting minute dataset comprises published meeting minutes from all RSPO's ordinary and extraordinary GAs since the first meeting in 2004 until 2015 (13 documents in total). We began our research process by taking point of departure in the meeting minutes, to familiarise ourselves with the case

organisation as well as to explore potential interesting phenomena. We coded the meeting minutes in three rounds of coding, and compiled the data in two tables (See Appendix A and B). Appendix A contains the data of which member organisation has sponsored which resolution, and Appendix B contains coded data of the content of the resolutions.

In the first round, we started with three tentative themes - Monitoring & Scaling, Carbon Environment, and Human Rights - that we tested on the content of the resolutions as it appeared in the meeting minutes. We read them through at the same time and place, and discussed the themes that the resolutions regarded. After the first round, six themes in total had emerged. Furthermore, we coded the resolutions to whether they regarded outcome or input of the RSPO, whether the resolution was approved or rejected, and whether the resolution was suggesting a change that would imply simplification or stringency of the standard (See Appendix B). Not all of these variables have been taken into account in this study, but it guided us in order to identify an interesting phenomenon. Subsequently, approximately one month later, we, the two researchers, did a second round of coding, this time individually, testing the codes separately. During the third and last round of coding, we discussed our individually coded data and merged our codes to a final list. We found that all resolutions treated one or more of the following nine subjects: Local Society (LS), Monitoring (M), Scaling (S), Carbon Environment (CE), Environment (E), Branding (B), Organisational Structure (OS), Procedural (P), and Smallholder (SH). For clarity; we differentiate between Environment and Carbon Environment, as we initially thought the focus within the RSPO lies on Carbon Environment due to issues such as peatlands and greenhouse gases. However, our research has shown that other environmental aspects such as more general biodiversity are addressed as well, which is why we added this category of environment in our second round of coding. For further explanation of the definitions, see Appendix B and Appendix H.

Out of our two tables, we created a graphical overview over which topics resolutions have regarded at certain points in time (see Appendix C). Subsequently, we grouped all the members that have ever sponsored a resolution in the GA in accordance with their corresponding membership category, to get an overview over how active the different membership categories have been in proposing resolutions

at the different GAs. This structure gave us a good overview over which members, and membership categories, who have been dominant in proposing resolutions at the GA over time. It also made us wonder, how come only 63 member organisations have ever sponsored a resolution in the RSPO, who in April 2017 constitute out of 3334 members (RSPO, 2017b). At a closer look, it turns out 30 of the members who have sponsored, sponsored more than a single time, and 33, only once. From this, we decided to narrow down our research and focus on what had enabled the members who actually have sponsored, to sponsor. We appreciate the strength of this rather quantitative method to provide this wide coverage of an objective reality but also recognise that this overview does not help us understand the underlying processes for the outcome (Easterby-Smith et al., 2015). We, thus, developed a theoretical framework that could help us investigate this phenomenon further.

#### 4.2.4 Theoretical framing

As appropriate for any case study research design, we decided to set up a theoretical framework before proceeding with the case study (Yin, 2003). Despite our initial exploration of the data from the meeting minutes, we preferred a deductive approach from this point on, in order to let the theoretical framework help us define the appropriate research design and data collection method. Based on the assumption that all members of RSPO are institutional workers, contributing to at least the maintenance and potentially the development of the emergent institution RSPO, we turned to the institutional theory literature. We chose to apply the model by Beckert (1999) described in the previous chapter, as this model encompasses the notion of how institutions can be altered, disrupted and developed by institutional entrepreneurship. Meanwhile, the model is compatible with regard to the effect external factors can have on institutional entrepreneurs' possibility to act. We can thus look at how they stimulate the entrepreneur herself, as well as how they impact the managers who are in the position to resist or allow for institutional change. From this model the idea rose to test if institutional entrepreneurship, i.e. the sponsoring of resolutions, is enabled by context or inherent characteristics. We extensively developed Beckert's model further by incorporating a theoretical framework of characteristics of institutional entrepreneurs, and a literature

review over context shaping disruptive events. Once the theoretical framework was set, we started planning interviews, in order to get a unique insight into this phenomenon.

In addition, to identify events important enough to possibly have the impact looked after, we turned to previous case studies made on RSPO (i.e. Ruyschaert & Salles, 2016; Jespersen et al., forthcoming) and developed a tentative list of 12 events, to be compared to events listed by the respondents in a triangulation process of defining important events in the history of RSPO.

#### 4.2.5 Interviews

Our choice to conduct interviews was guided by the need to understand the reasoning and process leading up to sponsoring resolutions in the GA. We acknowledge that the findings from our investigation of the meeting minutes comes from a highly censored dataset that does not tell us much about the underlying processes of the resolutions. We needed to get vivid and rich narratives from several perspectives to understand how the representatives of the different membership organisations perceive the sponsoring process and what possibilities and obstacles they meet, to be able to infer which of the theories accounts better for their experience.

As we wanted to cover the global dimension of RSPO, we judged remote interviewing with representatives of member organisations to be the only feasible option for collecting this type of data. Face-to-face interviewing would have provided more immediate contextualisation and depth to the responses which could have provided richer narratives (Easterby-Smith et al., 2015). However, as our aim was to collect data regarding a fairly straightforward, professional issue, rather than personal topics, and given that our preferred respondents are spread out all over the world, we judged remote interviewing to be appropriate for our data collection process.

In selecting interviewees, we distinguished between members who have sponsored resolutions frequently, and members who have sponsored resolutions irregularly. Hereby, we could look further into what made them sponsor resolutions at the particular point, and why had they not tried, or not succeeded,

earlier. We had the following five assumptions in mind when selecting member organisations to approach for interview:

1) An actor that has brought a resolution to the GA agenda, is considered an institutional entrepreneur. Regardless if the resolutions were approved or not, the actors getting the resolutions to the agenda have been successful in proposing change. This assumption turned out to be slightly misjudged, which is elaborated on in the Discussion chapter.

2) We see the RSPO as a formal label without its own will and that the membership organisations constituting the decision making bodies in RSPO are the relevant actors, who have negotiated anything RSPO presents in advance. Therefore, we are only interested in interviewing representatives from member organisations, and not someone responding in their role as representative of the RSPO e.g. a member of the board.

3) The membership categories “banks” and “processors” are not active enough in the GA and appear to have less at stake in the production, and are therefore not included in our sample of interviewees.

4) To understand the global dimension of RSPO, we defined a representative sample of interviewees to be one interview per four resolutions sponsored per membership category.

5) The year the member organisation joined the RSPO will have an impact on whether we can identify characteristics or events as being crucial to their opportunity to table a resolution.

Based on these assumptions and corresponding information, we identified a proportionate sample of interesting respondents consisting of four (4) growers, two (2) social NGOs (sNGO), four (4) retailers, three (3) environmental NGOs (eNGO), and one (1) manufacturer. The objective to schedule interviews with 16 representatives from sponsoring member organisations proved hard to reach, however. In coordination with another research team investigating a similar topic, we joined efforts to get access to respondents. We developed a short introductory text to our research, including an appealing rationale for how the respondents’ answers benefit the RSPO’s development. Through our supervisor, we got access to several individuals representing RSPO members, who wanted to contribute to our research. All interviews

took place in March and April 2017 and lasted between 45 minutes to one hour. Within the frame of this paper, we managed to conduct interviews with one (1) grower, one (1) processor with grower commitments, two (2) sNGOs, one (1) retailer, two (2) eNGOs and zero (0) manufacturers. As an organisation, one can only be part of one membership category in the RSPO officially (RSPO, 2015). Since the processor also grows palm oil, we presume that they have similar interests as other growers toward the organisation and therefore count them as growers in this paper.

In order to get a consistent line of inquiry to facilitate the comparison of answers, we created an interview guide to guide our conversations (Easterby-Smith et al., 2015; Yin, 2003). The interview questions were of an open-ended nature to provide the possibility to collect rich narratives and follow up on interesting threads. Taking point of departure in the theoretical framework and the phenomenon we want to investigate, we carefully drafted our interview guide having this in mind. The interview guide was later merged together with the other research team, as we judged our research to be similar enough to do so, in order to benefit from the synergy effects of both teams approaching the same respondents and conducting the interviews together (See Appendix D). The guide includes an opening section of informed consent, where we explained the purpose of the research as well as asked for consent from the respondents to record and transcribe the interviewees. Important to highlight also is that the interview guide included a request to the respondents to “... list three (03) events that have been important turning points in RSPO’s history” and elaborate on why these were considered to be turning points. All interviews were conducted remotely over skype or telephone. They were recorded with sound but no picture, and were later transcribed to support the authors in the analysis phase. The transcripts are included in Appendix E.

### 4.3 Data analysis

Given our two different types of datasets, we have applied two different methods in order to make sense of the data: Thematic analysis and pattern matching.



#### 4.3.1 Thematic analysis

The transcripts from the interviews were coded from a partly pre-existing structure, in accordance with our abductive method. As we looked into the data searching for the prevalence of components from the theory, we summarised the theoretical framework under the codes “characteristics”, “events” and “managers”, and coded the interview transcripts around these three themes. From this, new themes emerged that explained *what* kind of characteristics and events the theoretical definitions mean in practice to the respondents. Each of the researchers coded all interviews and, subsequently, we discussed and aligned any discrepancies in the codes. The findings in the next chapter are structured by these codes. In order to triangulate the findings regarding how characteristics were used, we went back to the meeting minutes to see if we could find any resemblance between the narratives from the respondents and the meeting minutes regarding the entrepreneurial actions.

#### 4.3.2 Pattern matching

To see the impact events have on the possibility to perform institutional entrepreneurship, we identified important events in the history of RSPO and compared them against the data of topic-coded resolutions, inspired by pattern matching technique (Yin, 2003). We began by identifying events from the literature (See Appendix F). Then, we plotted all events mentioned by the respondents into another table. We highlighted events that were mentioned by more than one respondent. Second, we compared the respondents’ event list to our previously developed list of potentially important events, based on previous case studies on RSPO. From this, we developed a categorisation for the events:

- First-level events: Identified by both researchers and respondents, and mentioned by several respondents
- Second-level events: Identified by both a respondent and the researchers
- Third-level events: Identified by several respondents
- Fourth-level events: Identified only by one respondent, or only by the researchers

This process was important in order for us to get an overview over the perceptions of turning points among our respondents. However, we evaluate none of these events as more important than another, as

we are interested in the respondents' narratives of how events influence their possibilities to participate in the GA. Therefore, we kept all events, identified by respondents as well as researchers, in one table (See Appendix G). Subsequently, we coded the events according to the same codes previously used to code the resolutions (see Appendix B), based on the description of the events from the respondents and/or the literature.

Finally, we compared the coded list of events to the data showing which topics have been brought onto the GA agenda through resolutions over time. Calling the event a turning point, as done in the interview guide, implies that the development of the emerging institution RSPO changes path, and turns in a new direction. While intriguing, it is hard to measure within the scope of this study (it can be done with a longer time frame, see e.g. Hardy & Maguire, 2010). Within the unit of analysis of the GAs, we limited our comparison between the year the event happened (year 0), the year before (year -1) and the year after (year 1), to see to what extent the events were followed by resolutions with the same topic. If there is an increase of the same topic as the event in the resolutions proposed in year 0 and year 1, we draw the conclusion that the institutional entrepreneur who proposed these resolutions is benefiting from the event. We marked those events that are resolution proposals in themselves and kept this bias in mind in our analysis.

#### 4.4 Criteria for quality in research design

We have tested our research design against construct validity, internal validity, external validity and reliability. In accordance with Yin (2003), we have applied these suggested case study tactics to test our design, described below. We believe our research can benefit from these tactics coming from a positivist tradition, as when working with multiple sources of data in defining the events we acknowledge objective facts. In order to encompass our belief that there can be more than one reality, we have also considered Lincoln and Guba's criteria of 'trustworthiness', including the concepts of credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability (Bryman & Bell, 2011). These concepts were developed as an opposition to Yin's constructs, as their creators claimed that the latter presuppose that one can arrive at a

single and absolute picture of social reality. Strong resemblance exists between the two sets of criteria however.

#### 4.4.1 Construct Validity

Construct validity means to establish “correct operational measures for the concepts being studied” (Yin, 2003, p. 34). This should be done through using multiple sources of evidence, establishing chain of evidence and having key informants review draft case study reports (Yin, 2003). As our overall aim is to explain to what extent characteristics and events respectively matters for the conditions to do institutional entrepreneurship, we have focused our research on the setting of the GA, and the sponsoring of resolutions that takes place in this plenum.

We have made use of the triangulation technique to gather multiple perspectives on the imbalance in representation in the RSPO GA in order to give an answer to our research question (Easterby-Smith et al., 2015). We have used both primary and secondary data, gathered by predominantly qualitative techniques, with a minor quantitative component. Our several sources of data are archival documentation, previous academic case studies and interviews. The respondents of the interviews, furthermore, were carefully selected to represent a wide range of membership categories within the RSPO, to retrieve as diverse perspectives as possible, and to avoid too much reliance on one single perspective or source of evidence (Yin, 2003). We acknowledge that we have been able to fulfil the requirements for triangulation to a larger extent in our data collection for events, as we, in addition to the theoretical framework, developed a list of potentially impacting events prior to the interviews that we could cross check with the respondents’ answers. For characteristics, we triangulated our findings towards the narratives given in the meeting minutes, however, not all characteristics could be identified in this way. Therefore, we rely to a larger extent on the interviews in this case.

Regarding establishing chain of evidence, we have considered appropriate methods such as references, inclusion of appendices and the application of the methods described in this chapter, to allow for any reader of this study to follow the derivation of evidence we have made throughout the study (Yin, 2003).

When looking for correlations between the events and the sponsored resolutions, we acknowledge some weaknesses in the conclusions we can infer. First, we cannot make any causal claims, as we cannot with our method test the actual relationship between the event and the resolution. Second, we look at an event coded with specific topics, and see if the same topics increases in on the agenda in year 0 and year 1. This means that two different events coded the same way (i.e. M, S) the same year will in our interpretation be the same and we will attribute them the same influence on the GA agenda. This could have been avoided if we would have known more about the content of the resolutions. We could have taken into account what the resolutions were about by retrieving and reading them, to inform our conclusion, if it is reasonable to believe these events had an effect. However, just looking at the resolutions and meeting minutes would not have been enough, as we cannot trust that we can see the process that led up to the resolution in the resolution itself, nor in the meeting minutes. We would have had to ask the sponsors of these resolutions about the relation between event and resolution in an interview. We could have chosen to only rely on the events identified by us researchers and correlated our events before interviewing, and could thus have included these questions in the interview guide. However, we chose to give priority on collecting data regarding events from the interviews in order to triangulate our events, as we did not want to rely solely on the two scholarly articles that provided us with the events we identified. In hindsight, we acknowledge that the processes could have been flipped around.

In accordance with Yin (2003), we gave all the respondents the opportunity to comment on their own transcripts if they wanted, in order to target the reviewing criteria. We judged this to be a sufficient substitute to sending out drafts of the reports before submission.

#### 4.4.2 Internal Validity and Credibility

Internal validity refers to verification of the correctness of the conclusions made regarding causal relationships. This is an important test to the research design when conducting an explanatory case study, which is highly relevant to this study as we are looking for patterns, but not aiming to determine the causality between participation in the GA and characteristics and context respectively. We have, in order

to establish the internal validity, addressed rival explanations to institutional entrepreneurship in the GA and made use of a pattern matching technique when applicable (Yin, 2003).

The credibility criterion correspond to the criteria of internal validity, but recognises that multiple accounts exists of social reality. This criterion imply that it is the feasibility or credibility of the account that will determine if it is acceptable to others (Bryman & Bell, 2011). This can, according to Bryman and Bell be achieved through ensuring that the research is carried out in accordance with good practice, and through respondent validation. The way we have dealt with both these issues are accounted for in the previous section of ‘construct validity’.

#### 4.4.3 External Validity and Transferability

External validity is tested to define the generalisability of a case study (Yin, 2003). By studying the conditions for institutional entrepreneurship in the most prominent MSI of today and given that MSIs are highly similarly structured and resembling each other (Djama et al., 2011), this study provides an important account for how characteristics and context enable institutional entrepreneurship, which can be generalised to other organisations of this type.

However, the fact that our interview-based dataset stems from a significantly smaller sample of respondents than originally planned has major implications on the external validity of this study. In the cases where we only have one respondent per membership category, we cannot make any generalisations within the membership category as we do not have any answers to compare to each other. This also impacts the possibility to generalise our findings to other MSIs negatively.

The criterion of transferability is less concerned with broad generalisation than external validity, and appreciates qualitative findings that provide contextual uniqueness and significance of the studied phenomena to a larger extent (Bryman & Bell, 2011). To cover this, the criterion suggest the production of ‘thick descriptions’, which is rich accounts of the details of a culture. Through our interviews we have met this criteria, however, as just mentioned, a bigger sample of respondents would inarguably have provided a yet ‘thicker’ description of the processes within the RSPO.

#### 4.4.4 Reliability and Dependability

In terms of reliability, we have developed a theoretical framework based on previous literature, accounted for above. Our study breaks new grounds in the testing of whether the rivalling explanations characteristics or events are the main enablers for institutional entrepreneurship within an MSI. Thus, we state in detail throughout the study, and in this chapter in particular, how the research has proceeded, so that our research design could be applied again and reach the same findings and conclusions (Yin, 2003). We have kept explicit records of our development throughout the process, and gathered all sources and data in an internet based folder. We have been careful in defining all our codes and methodological choices, to make the steps of our research process evident to any potential external observer. However, due to the iterative process implied in our abductive approach, as well as the thematic analysis, we could not guarantee that codes would appear 100% similar if another pair of researchers would have followed our structure, as realities become negotiated and knowledge is created through the interaction between the researchers and the participants. With our constructionist approach, we judge this potential discrepancy not to be a problem.

The criterion for dependability also encourages an explicit documentation of all phases of the research process, and suggest an 'auditing' approach (Bryman & Bell, 2011). This implies that peers should act as audits throughout the research process and particularly in the end, to monitor that proper procedures are being used. We have had our supervisor and an additional associate professor reviewing our work throughout the process, which to some extent is an auditing function, however, not at the detailed level as suggested.

#### 4.4.5 Confirmability

In terms of confirmability, we are striving for an objective account, nevertheless acknowledging that this is impossible to achieve in completion, and aim to be transparent about where our personal values might have impacted the process. As described in this chapter, we have followed suggested research methods. Furthermore, as previously stated, the different chapters have been reviewed during the research process

by our supervisor, thus enacting the role of the auditor to test confirmability, as suggested by Bryman and Bell (2011).

## 4.5 Critique of methodology

Yin (2003) argues that a study is more potent in terms of analytical generalisation if the same research design is applied to two or more cases. We can see the validity in this argument, for the same reasons as a bigger sample of respondents would have informed our possibilities to generalise our findings. However, due to the limited scope of this paper we studied one single case, and encourage future researcher to adopt this research design onto other cases of MSIs.

We acknowledge that interviews as data collection method can be subject to biases, inaccuracies due to poor recall, poor articulation and reflexivity (Yin, 2003). We have tried to mitigate these risks by selecting respondents from a wide range of interviewees, as well as using archival documentation and scholarly work on the RSPO as additional sources of evidence. In hindsight, we also discovered that we could have defined certain concepts, such as 'events' better in our interviews, to get more coherent and more easily comparable answers. In this regard, structured interviews could have provided us a better data set in terms of comparability. However, that would have been at the expense of the possibility of elaboration of interesting topics that appear during the interview.

In this chapter, we have outlined how the research process has been carried out. In the following chapter, we will present the analysis of our findings according to the themes of the thematic analysis and the matching of the events and resolutions, as presented in this method chapter.

## 5. Findings

*To study why only 0.02 % of RSPOs members have proposed resolutions to the GA, we look into two aspects: On the one hand, how characteristics of member organisations and, on the other hand, how the contemporary context influence the conditions for institutional entrepreneurship in the RSPO. We start by introducing our findings for the characteristics needed to propose resolutions. These results are structured according to the theory introduced in Chapter 2. Thus, first we list the results for characteristics related to resources, second we present the results in regards to rationales and third regarding relations, based on Greenwood and colleagues' classification (2008). Subsequently, we present results relating to the importance of contemporary context to participate in the GA through resolutions. Here we present an analysis of events that have been important turning points in the history of RSPO. Last, Beckert pointed out two roles that are salient in the change process of an organisation, institutional entrepreneurs and managers. As we at an early stage defined all actors who have sponsored a resolution in the GA as institutional entrepreneurs, we, as our last point, present our results identifying the manager role in the RSPO.*

### 5.1 Clarifications

To facilitate reading of this chapter, we start with a few clarifications. We refer to all respondents by the organisations they are representing. Several of the respondents have experience from RSPO from previous positions at other organisations, which will be included in these findings undifferentiated. Furthermore, the respondent narrating one of the eNGO's perspectives had left the NGO by the time of the interview. However, as this eNGO left RSPO

Respondent	Medium	Date
Grower A	Personal communication	March 29, 2017
Grower B	Personal communication	April 14, 2017
Retailer A	Personal communication	April 10, 2017
sNGO A	Personal communication	March 31, 2017
sNGO B	Personal communication	March 28, 2017
eNGO A	Personal communication	April 3, 2017
eNGO B	Personal communication	April 5, 2017

Table 1: Reference details to interview respondents



shortly after the respondent stopped their commitment with the organisation, we are presenting their responses as representative for the (former) member organisation.

All quotations that are not stated otherwise, come from personal communication with the representatives of the organisation. To facilitate the reading of the chapter, the correct citations are summarised in Table 1, and will not be entered in the running text.

## 5.2 Characteristics

### 5.2.1 Resources

Based on Greenwood et al.'s definition of characteristics (2008), we differentiate between five kinds of resources which have emerged from the data: skills, finance, time, ability to acknowledge dependence of the organisation on other actors, and geographical scope. We present these findings below.

*Skills.* A key skill mentioned several times in the interviews is persistence. eNGO B explains, “we were really keen to see a new system and to be involved with that, and we were pushing, pushing, pushing”. sNGO A further elaborates what they call a ‘critical friend approach’. He says this means, that “sometimes we push in a friendly way, and sometimes we push in a more aggressive way”. eNGO A stresses that persistence is crucial for achieving any results in the RSPO: “...either you enter the game and you try and make a difference, or you leave it”.

Moreover, an important skill for institutional entrepreneurs is flexibility. Compared to other MSIs, the lead-in time for resolutions in the RSPO is shorter and flexibility to turn things around is salient. eNGO B points out,

my experience with the RSPO has been much more, like, we need to turn this around quite quickly. And it's a much shorter timeframe ... So, if you don't have the resources to respond to stuff or, just, it doesn't work with your timeline cause you're working on other things, then that can be difficult.

*Finance.* To little surprise, financial resources are important. These do not only enable members to fulfil their objectives and work as close to their interests as possible. Sometimes, money is also needed

to campaign for a resolution. For instance, in preparation for the proposal of a resolution to protect a certain land area, eNGO A organised a workshop to discuss the topic. They had to invest for this activity, as they explain, “It was quite of a surprise, like more than one hundred person in the room. We had booked it, it was a bit costly for us because it cost more than 1000 ... dollar just to do it” (eNGO A).

Thus, financial resources are another important characteristic for institutional entrepreneurs.

Another example of what limited financial resource can imply comes from eNGO B:

... the one who tables the resolution is then usually the one – and I’m not saying this is a bad thing – but is usually the organisation that then makes sure it’s delivered and will be quite involved in that. So, kind of capacity-wise, you really have to think carefully about what your priorities are and what as an organisation [is] your best place to address... We’ve sort of thought quite carefully about how we prioritise the issue and how we make sure we have the capacity to help deliver it.

eNGO A elaborates on how they learnt the hard way that financial resources were needed to see resolutions being implemented, after it was passed:

[The Board of Governors] don’t really have means, they didn’t put their needs either then, basically, they were happy to have a resolution like that, with the NGO for them but that was not happy for us. ... RSPO didn’t do anything to improve it. And why didn’t they do anything to improve it, because they never put in a budget for it and for the secretariat is only know that is proof where they put their money... They put their money on creating new agencies to promote them but they don’t put to really start on the business, you know. Then... after that, then we didn’t really put energy.

*Time.* Another identified resource is time. This resource is salient, on the one hand, for internal processes such as “vetting and brainstorming processes” (eNGO B). On the other hand, for external purposes, time is needed to create external tumult. Particularly, NGOs need this resource a lot as they are investing time in market and industry researches that are then summarised in reports. sNGO A has a campaign investigating and exposing brands, eNGO A wrote a report on the situation of a certain land

area, and eNGO B regularly carries out an initiative where they assess upstream companies in the palm oil supply chain. While these resources are used internally, they often lead to external tumult as explained by sNGO A, eNGO A and eNGO B.

*Ability to acknowledge dependence.* As outlined by Hardy and Maguire (2008), many institutional entrepreneurs are dependent on others regarding resources and certain actors have the ability to acknowledge this and act on it. We see an example for this in the RSPO when sNGO A was approached by other actors to take a lead on a resolution: “We’ll help! We’ll give you input, we’ll co-sponsor it, but would you mind taking the lead?” (sNGO A). Thus, the other actors recognised that they in this case needed sNGO A to pass the resolution. Others also use it strategically to get access to resources, such as authority on the board, for example, as eNGO A explains: “... then we talked to [a social NGO] ... who has authority on the board of the RSPO” (eNGO A).

However, it is not necessarily enough to work together with members from one member group; success is also dependent on cross-functional reach. Thus, it is salient to get other stakeholders from different categories to co-sponsor resolutions in order to improve the chance of a resolution making it onto the GA’s agenda. This idea is aligned across membership groups. Grower B says, “If you have a resolution that you want to get passed, you need to get as many people to back you, to make sure it is ... successful, you have to get a lot of people to back you, and therefore you need to spend the time to talk to people, to explain your resolution”. Grower A agrees, “when we propose a resolution, we try to involve other membership categories before even we submit a proposal. So, it will give us a higher chance to craft a proposal which is more rounded and more comprehensive”. sNGO A elaborates,

So going there, bringing resolutions to the GA, is merely a way to get confirmation through a different type of decision making... For decisions, even general assembly decisions, to be implemented, you need buy in from other stakeholder groups to actually implement better practices, beneficial to those social groups. (sNGO A)

Thus, we can see that institutional entrepreneurs in the RSPO recognise that they rely on the other members and have found strategies to deal with this dependency.

*Geographical scope.* To find this support across geographical regions is a particular challenge for member organisations, which makes geographical origin an important characteristic in the context of RSPO. As GAs are generally taking place in Southeast Asia, this means structural challenges for members coming from other regions, particularly the Americas and Eastern Europe. Retailer A explains,

It's very difficult to get the quality time to do the pre-alignment ... Because a lot of that is quite soft communication skills, you need to actually sit down with people and talk it through. It can be quite difficult to both get the time and to create the right context for discussion and explanation over the phone (Retailer A).

Due to these difficulties, they stress that strong personal networks are essential. This we will come back to when presenting the findings for relational characteristics.

### 5.2.2 Rationales

Benford and Snow (2000) argue that whether or not a proposed change is accepted depends on its framing, i.e., how actors bring the reasons forward to why the change should be supported or at least not resisted (Hardy & Maguire, 2008). They call this Rationales. Thus, this framing should create collective action by providing an interpretive, coherent structure. They differentiate between punctuation, elaboration and motivation. We will use these three functions to structure our presentation of the findings for rationales.

*Punctuation.* Punctuation deals with the identification of the problem as well as evaluating it as important. For instance, one respondent explains how they identified a problem by recognising a gap in the greenhouse gas agendas as they were “vague” (eNGO A). The importance of recognising gaps is also pointed out by sNGO B. A grower, also mentions, “we realised that, actually, on the ground, there are a lot of practical challenges for smallholders to comply with the RSPO standards” (Grower A). sNGO A further highlights that the effort to identify the problem is a mind-set for them, as they are thinking of their participation in the RSPO in terms of “Where are the opportunities?”. Besides, identification does not necessarily mean also presenting a solution. sNGO B, for example, proposed a resolution to present

the problem but leaving it open how to solve it: “we purposely left it very open of what the solution would need to be, although we had our own ideas about it ... We didn’t want to impose a solution, we just wanted that resolution to signal a problem”. They had identified that, rather than further improving the certification as it was, a comprehensive strategy was necessary. Similarly, when eNGO B proposed a resolution in a GA together with two other members from the same category, they had thought about possible qualitative measurements but had not yet come up with quantitative solutions (RSPO, 2012).

*Elaboration.* Elaboration indicates accountability of the problem and also what is necessary to solve it. This correction of the problem can be carried out in various ways. For instance, sNGO A remembered the situation where both growers and manufacturers wanted to increase the certified palm oil in the market but neither wanted to do the first step, and thought: “Hold on, you guys both want to move, we definitely want to move, how do we break this stalemate, or how can we speed this up?”. And we developed a resolution...”.

In this process of accountability identification, however, it is not about attacking any member personally as pointed out by eNGO A, but rather about how appropriate the resolution is framed, as explained by Grower B. Also eNGO A has made this experience as they rephrased their resolution on protecting a certain land area from addressing greenhouse gases to the broader field of climate change. They furthermore included local communities and local development, as otherwise “it would be a mistake” (eNGO A). Thus, the proposing organisation needs to show that they have “taken into account the potential concerns of the full range of the membership categories” (eNGO B). This, we can, for example, see in the GA meeting minutes when Zoological Society of London’s resolution on time bound plans was presented by WWF International, as they address most stakeholder categories (growers, traders and processors, consumer goods manufacturers and retailers) and requires all of them to submit an appropriate strategy for the respective category “to produce, to trade, to process, purchase and use 100% CSPO ... by GA9” (RSPO, 2012, p. 30).

Moreover, different types of language differences can also be causing problems requiring efforts to solve. For example, sNGO A highlights the need for translating information to technocracy for

businesses: “I’ve also found that dealing with the private sector, it helps a lot if you can translate fundamental, sort of rights based, human rights issues and concerns, and moral and ethical topics, in to technocracy”. Thus, the way a resolution is written is salient as eNGO A agrees:

You know for example, the resolution that was after us from [another eNGO] on [another land area] was not necessarily well prepared, there was not all this process that we did, but it still it went through. It went through very well. Why? One reason: British person writing it.

The importance of this ability to make other actors understand the problem, we also identified when Retailer A shared their story where they were lacking it:

Whereas 2014 the resolution was one which was very specific to, and material to, retail supply chains. It didn't have a broad applicability and, if I am really honest, it wasn't very well understood by many of the individuals who have to vote on resolutions, partly because it was so specific. To be honest, growers actually have very little idea about supply chains beyond the refinery point, the kind of first major processing lets say ... if I was to put forward a resolution of that shape again in the future, i.e. one which is quite specific and requires on a [degree] of context understanding, [I would] do an awful lot more pre-alignment with voting constituents, because actually, the ability, one's ability to explain and describe a very specific context within the podium space at the General Assembly is very very limited.

In conclusion, as sNGO B states, “once you have a good case, you get them to support you”. We will elaborate on how to mobilise support now.

*Motivation.* Motivation relates to institutional entrepreneurs mobilising other actors to participate in the change (Hardy & Maguire, 2008). sNGO A mentioned that it is necessary in order to be supported by other members, to understand their interests and how to align the interests of the different stakeholder groups. They explain,

I’ve indicated that for decisions, even general assembly decisions, to be implemented, you need buy in from other stakeholder groups to actually implement better practices, beneficial to those social groups. And therefore these multi-stakeholder processes are crucial to get an understanding

of the business interests, and how business interests and social and environmental interests align (sNGO A).

Such an accomplished buy-in, can, for example, be seen when looking at the resolution “Oxfam international resolution add to the Code of Conduct that member specify their commitment through the annual communication of progress” from the fifth GA. Not only did Oxfam have Kulim, IOI and WWF International co-sponsoring the resolution, but, in addition, they also had nine other organisations supporting their case, namely “MPOA, FELDA, NBPOL, MIGROS, Unilever, Cadbury, Rabo, HSBC and Intertec representing British retailers” (RSPO, 2008, p. 9).

Members that are planning on proposing a resolution, let it go through an informal review process before. This usually involves “a lot of discussion and ... networking needs to be done” (Grower B). This review process is carried out by communicating the idea to other members, and also works as an indicator for the potential success of the resolution. eNGO B, for instance, points out how they use this process to foresee the outcome of a potential resolution: “I think that whole idea of kind of socialising the idea of resolutions amongst members and seeing what kind of support it would get [determines whether a resolution makes it to the agenda or not]”. Going through all the meeting minutes with all the resolutions shows that all resolutions that eNGO B has proposed has been approved (see Appendix B). Thus, we can see that letting ideas for resolutions being reviewed by other members, can increase the chance of getting a resolution approved.

An important factor mentioned by several respondents is to make other members and organisations understand the problem and its relevance. As Grower B states, the other organisations need to “truly understand what is the agenda, or what is it that you’re proposing”. They further elaborate,

if you really want your resolution to be successful, ... you need to spend the time to talk to people, to explain your resolution. It is not about networking, it is about making people understand what you want to propose (Grower B).

Thus, members need to show to others the relevance of the resolution, i.e., either the relevance to everyone, or, if that is not the case, then why the resolution is relevant to the proposing organisation. A

common way to show the relevance is by framing it in a way that is addressing all members rather than certain stakeholder categories. eNGO B points out that when they proposed a resolution for improved monitoring, they were careful not to point fingers at one specific membership category. They clarify,

We need that resolution to be framed so that it is addressing all members and not disproportionately addressing the growers and saying ... they – just the growers – need to do this, the whole point of the [suggested monitoring process] being that it's for reporting by all members (eNGO B).

This we can see, for instance, when a member proposes the resolution 'Transparency in plantation concession boundaries' and the call for action is addressing not only the growers but also "RSPO's commitment to transparency ... the high level of media, public and NGOs scrutiny of the RSPO and its members operations" (RSPO, 2013b, p. 11). sNGO A concurs with this by stating, "the voting system and the membership composition is such that you'll never get a majority by formulating a resolution from a single category position imposing it on another category". Instead proposals need to be "balanced" (sNGO A). As mentioned before, sNGO A proposed a resolution with support from a broad range of member organisations. They managed to motivated the members so that sNGO A themselves did not see themselves as the driving force: "we even took like a third party position, clearly from the interest to make the transformation go quicker, but almost mediating between different interests" (sNGO A).

To conclude the part on rationales, it is not enough to just impose a resolution and with that proposing a new rule, but involving other members and showing them how it relates to their interests is key. In other words, as sNGO A puts it:

[The palm oil industry] is a huge sector determined by international trade dynamics, and therefore simply putting a rule is not necessarily gonna lead to the desired effect, unless it is well embedded, well linked to existing business practices or to gradual change in business models.

We will now present findings related to relations.



### 5.2.3 Relations

Relations look at the connections between institutional entrepreneurs and other actors in forms of collaborations, coalitions or, in the case of resolutions, also co-sponsoring (Hardy & Maguire, 2008; Fligstein, 2001). As already touched upon in resources, often other actors are necessary in order to propose a resolution. The first two functions, resources and rationales, are often means to build the third function, relations. In relations, we identified two groups, internal relations amongst member organisations and external relations with actors outside the RSPO. We will first look at internal relations.

*Internal relations.* Relations can be played out in various forms. sNGO A points out that they make use of different strategies, describing it as a “mix of interventions”: “Sometimes we're more diplomatic and behind the scenes, and advocating, and finding allies, and so on.” The use of collaboration in the membership can also be seen in the amount of resolutions that are co-sponsored. Retailer A describes their participation in the RSPO in the following way:

We only use a couple of thousand tons of palm oil every year so our volume is very very low. Our influence from a volume perspective is very low. We see our best way of driving change within the palm oil landscape is through collaboration. So we would not tend to take unilateral action on anything. It is very unlikely we would see anything as being urgent unless we felt that it was and had good support amongst our peers, particularly, other retailers but also potentially consumer goods ... and general brand and manufacturing sector.

Grower B also stresses the point of finding back up: “If you have a resolution that you want to get passed, you need to get as many people to back you, to make sure it is”. sNGO B also stresses this point: “once we've identified a case we also ask other people in other regions whether they're also facing the same problem, and then together we put the resolution together”.

As discussed earlier, resolutions that take up several stakeholder groups' interests, have a better chance of getting support. Some members point it out as “one of the beauties of RSPO” (Grower B) and highlight the importance of “truly embracing the MSI approach” (sNGO A). Also Grower B referred to it

as the “fundamental reason RSPO is being set up ... the best way [to promote your ideas and interests in RSPO] I think is to be involved with a lot of stakeholders”. This ‘MSI approach’, we also identify in the aforementioned situation where sNGO A proposed their resolution about the monitoring process. Here, sNGO A was approached to lead the case: “You guys, you should be the first ones to promote a more proactive smallholder inclusion in our systems” and they saw themselves in a good position to comply with this role: “we were in the best position to connect the dots”. Thus, we can see that having the right connections is a beneficial characteristic. From another point of view, Retailer A tells that since it can be hard due to geographical scope to spread the message of the resolution in advance of the GA:

... a lot will depend on how strong your personal networks are. I have to be honest, in [the year Retailer A sponsored a resolution] mine were very weak... and that is why we agreed to withdraw [the resolution] because we recognised that it was misjudged.

In several interviews, it was also pointed out that the GA is a special platform as it is based on voting instead of consensus. sNGO B explains how this changes the approach: “It all comes down to voting, so it's more of maybe lobbying”. Thus, these coalitions also have a strategic component to it. On the positive side, actors use it to build other coalitions. For instance, after drafting a resolution, eNGO B first approached other NGO members to see who would support them and afterward they “also approached people who we sort of engage with quite a lot through the RSPO”. Thus, in the end their resolution was proposed by eNGO B, two other eNGOs and two growers. This link between NGOs is also pointed out by sNGO B. They work more with other social NGOs, but depending on the topic, it is good if other membership categories understand “your course” as that will lead to them supporting the resolution with their votes (sNGO B). eNGO A also approached sNGO A with their rephrased resolution on protection of a certain land area as they saw that sNGO A was not only sitting on the board but also interested in social issues relatable to the particular area, namely local communities and local development.

However, one should choose collaboration partners wisely. Several interviewees pointed out that the way a member is perceived is important for how its proposals are looked upon. For instance, sNGO A

explains, “It could be the same sort of message, but its origins can make a difference in its credibility or in other seeing it as a call with a hidden agenda, informed by who’s the messenger”. Thus, image of the proposing organisation is salient. The composition of the coalition matters as it impacts the perception of the resolution: “The sender and the combination of senders, already make people look at it differently, with more trust, or less trust, if you like” (sNGO A). Grower A also emphasises the need for broad collaboration, as well as the importance of a convincing coalition composition and say their first criteria when considering co-sponsoring a resolution is always to “look at who are the proponents of the resolution. Is it multi-stakeholder?”.

*External relations.* Member organisations can have connections to various external stakeholders. eNGO A, for example, used international journals in order to further their agenda on the land area resolution. Furthermore, for the same resolution, they also invited a senator from the region concerned to the RSPO roundtable to explain the local reality. sNGO A, furthermore, mentions, “the interplay between ... outsider NGOs and insider NGOs”. For example, they work together with other organisations, which are not members, who can then publish “a critical report and then everybody sort of gets into panic ... and then ... insider NGO members actually have even a better position in the negotiation because there is this external pressure” (sNGO A).

In summary, we have found data to all three groups of characteristics: resources, rationale and relations. For resources, we differentiated between five kinds of resources: skills, finance, time, ability to acknowledge dependence of the organisation on other actors, and geographical scope. In rationales, we distinguished between three aspects: punctuation, elaboration and motivation. Regarding relations, we have found differences between internal and external relations. We find that the resource Ability to acknowledge dependence of the organisations on other actors, the rationale Motivation and Relations are specifically interesting. The ability to acknowledge dependence and Relations are very closely linked, as they both target collective action, and are often enacted through Motivation. We will come back to this in the discussion. We will now present the analysis of the findings of the events.

## 5.3 Events

In the following, we look at contexts created by events, and how they impact the agenda in the GAs. This has been carried out in two steps. First, we have analysed the meeting minutes of the RSPO's GAs and coded all resolutions according to nine topics: Local Society, Environment, Carbon Environment, Smallholders, Scaling, Monitoring, Procedural, Organisational Structure and Branding. Second, we have matched the identified events with the occurrence of topics in sponsored resolutions throughout the existence of RSPO. We end this section by looking at how context influences the conditions for institutional entrepreneurs according to the respondents.

### 5.3.1 Occurrence of topics in resolutions

As mentioned, we identified nine codes as topics for resolutions in the GA. These topics are Local Society, Environment, Carbon Environment, Smallholders, Scaling, Monitoring, Procedural, Organisational Structure and Branding. Our analysis is summarised in Figure 2. For definitions of the codes, as well as a more detailed outline of our analysis, see Appendix H. In the following, we present the key findings from this analysis. Figure 2 can also be found in Appendix C, for better readability.

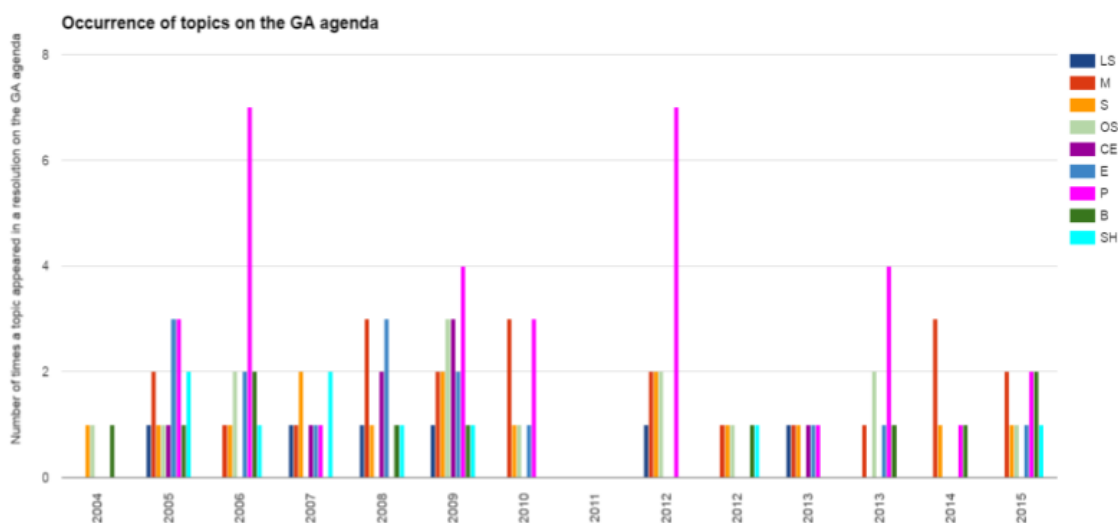


Figure 2: Overview of the analysis of all resolutions between 2004 and 2015

Some initial clarifications of Figure 2: In 2011, no GA was held as quorum was not met. Instead, two GA's were held during 2012. In 2013, an extraordinary GA was held at a separate occasion to the ordinary. In total, 80 resolutions were proposed in the 13 GAs that our dataset encompasses.

The topics appear unevenly throughout the existence of RSPO. Procedural was by far the topic addressed the most with 34 resolutions, whereas Local Society, the least addressed topic, was the focus of a resolution only six times in the same period. Furthermore, we see an interesting phenomenon with regard to Environment, Carbon Environment and Smallholders. These resolutions have been mentioned 15, 8 and 9 times throughout the time of existence of the RSPO, however, interestingly, all these topics have been mentioned much more in the beginning, than in later years. Environment was mentioned 11 times until 2009 but only four times thereafter; Carbon Environment was mentioned six times until 2009 and only twice afterwards, and Smallholders were addressed seven times until 2009 and as well only twice in the period afterwards. Thus, we see that these topics closely related to direct impacts on the ground (and, as a consequence, with direct impact on sustainability), are particularly often brought up in the early years of the organisation. This is reflected in a greater diversity of topics on the agenda, before 2009. In the later years, the topics related to the work 'on the ground' drop, which reflects that a relative majority of the resolutions after 2009 are focusing on Monitoring, Procedural, and Organisational Structure.

Branding is an interesting case in itself, as it shows an interesting curve: It is mentioned 11 times in total; four times the first three years (2004 to 2006) and again four times in the last three years (2013 to 2015), while it was mentioned only three times in total in the years in between.

As we have now seen a general overview of the individual topics identified in the GAs of the RSPO, we will compare these to the events we have identified to see how often an event is followed by a resolution on the same topic.

### 5.3.2 Pattern matching

We combine our identified events with the occurrence of topics in resolutions, to identify any potential patterns. As accounted for in the Methodology chapter, we have identified 20 events as potential turning points throughout the existence of RSPO. An overview of the events can be found in Appendix G. In Appendix I, we show our analysis where we seek to find patterns between the occurrence of the events and the occurrence of resolutions regarding related topics on the GA agendas, and aim to establish whether events have an influence.

In Figure 3 we have provided an overview of all the identified according to the time they took place. We have marked the events in blue that were not followed by resolutions.

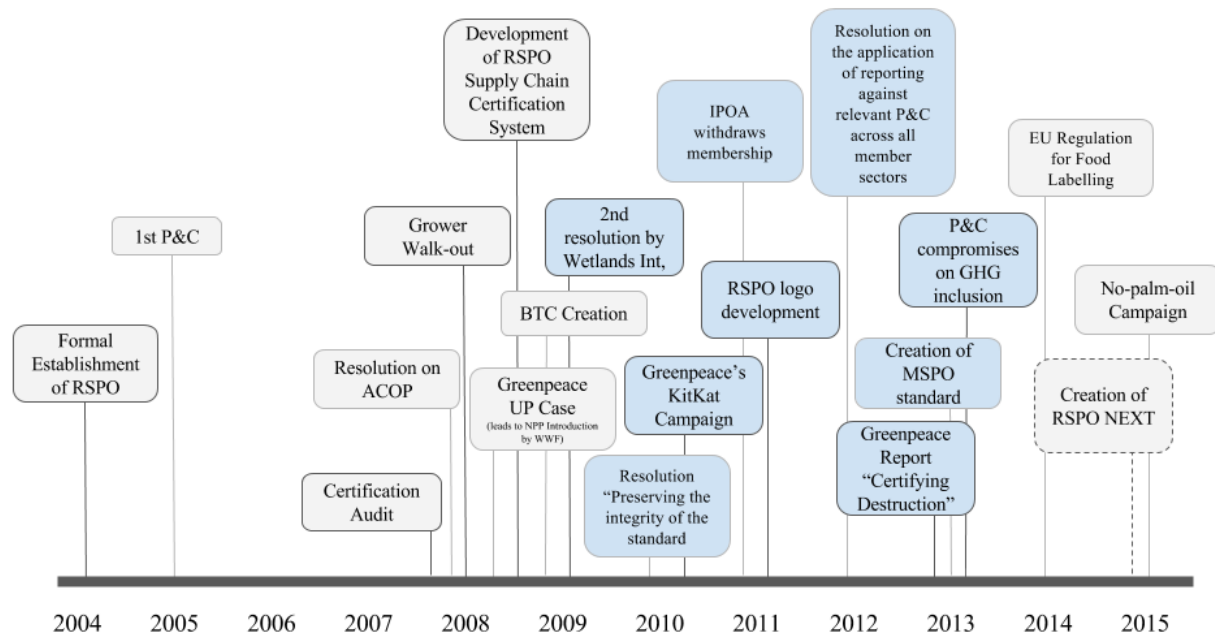


Figure 3: Overview of all events analysed between 2004 and 2015

In total, we found ten events to have been followed by resolutions, and nine were not. For one (RSPO NEXT), we were missing data for the following year to analyse it according to our method. Interestingly, the first eight events were followed by resolutions. Then followed nine events between 2009

and 2013 that were not followed by resolutions, while the last two events (in 2014 and 2015) were yet again followed by resolutions.

Furthermore, we have categorised the events into four levels, according to by whom and how many times they were mentioned. From these 20 events, we have categorised one event as first-level (mentioned by several respondents and the literature), two events as second-level (mentioned both by a respondent and in the literature), four events as third-level (mentioned by several respondents) and 13 events as fourth-level (mentioned by either a respondent or in the literature). Especially interesting is the high amount of level 4 events, as that shows that events might have an impact on isolated members, but only few events impact a bigger group of members. Moreover, there does not seem to be a difference regarding which level the event was categorised as with regards to following resolutions. Hence, if several respondents and scholars mention an event, this does not necessarily mean that this event was followed by a resolution. Of course, our view is narrow and we do not know whether the event influenced other decision making bodies in the RSPO such as working groups and the RSPO board. In the following section, we will now take a closer look at how the respondents talk about context and how it may affect the conditions for institutional entrepreneurship.

### 5.3.3 Perception of influence of context

As an event might influence the conditions for institutional entrepreneurs to act beyond the very occasion of its occurrence, we include a section here encompassing narratives that can be related to the immediate context created by events. Several of the respondents named “timing” as crucial for the success of a resolution. eNGO A affirms that: “It does not depend at all, whether the organisation is big or small, it depends really about the timing”. Retailer A states that timing is absolutely critical for sponsoring resolutions, but that there lies a challenge in that the different stakeholder groups will have different perspectives on how critical the different issues are, and thus different ideas on how urgent it is to address them. eNGO B noticed how a lot of both internal and external attention had been put on RSPO for not having the right smallholder strategy in place, which then became a hot topic and a resolution was passed

to deal with the issue. sNGO B does not explicitly acknowledge that the context is important, but emphasises that the success of a resolutions depends on the issue at stake, and affirms that it does not depend on characteristics: “It has to do with the issue and not the company or the NGO behind it. The issue at stake” (sNGO B). We find these narratives interesting as there lies an ambiguity in the concept of ‘timing’, and we will in the next chapter discuss whether timing can be attributed to context or, in fact, to characteristics.

To summarise, in this section we have first analysed the resolutions from the meeting minutes regarding the topics addressed, in order to then compare this data with the events that we have identified from literature and respondents. For the initial analysis, we have looked at each of the nine topics (Local Society, Environment, Carbon Environment, Smallholders, Scaling, Monitoring, Procedural, Organisational Structure and Branding) individually. An interesting pattern was identified which splits the resolutions with regards to topics into two groups, before and after 2009/10. We saw that the majority of the resolutions ever proposed on Environment, Carbon Environment and Smallholders were mainly brought up before 2009, which shows that the agenda was more diverse these years. Branding is a particular case as it was mostly mentioned in the first three years as well as the last three. In the comparison of resolutions proposed and events identified, we see that the first eight events were followed by resolutions, as well as the last two. The nine events between 2009 and 2013, however, were not. Finally, we looked at the context and saw that timing was stressed by several respondents as important in regards to proposing resolutions. Having analysed characteristics and events, an analysis of potential resistance to change will follow in the next section.

## 5.4 Managers

The Managers is one of the actors in Beckert’s Dynamic Model of Institutions and Interests (1999). Beckert describes the manager as the role that can hinder institutional change. As outlined before, managers only change their behaviour as the consequence of an exogenous shock, which will lead them to adapt to the new context. We see that more than one actor can be a manager in the same institutional



context according to Beckert's description of a manager. Therefore, we set out to identify the managers in the institutional context of the RSPO. In the following, we outline the findings from the data of the interviews that fit with Beckert's depiction.

Beckert (1999) describes the manager in his model as acting based on routines and striving for institutional stability by reducing uncertainty. We have identified this behaviour, for instance, in the example previously mentioned, where sNGO A took the lead on the resolution as both, manufacturers and growers "did not want to stick their necks out" (sNGO A). As the market uptake was uncertain both actors waited for the other to do the first move as they were not willing to risk the uncertain outcome. As Grower B points out in the GA when presenting the resolution "For the growers and producers to continue to inspire their organizations forward, they must know the demand, expected amounts and the arrivals of RSPO CSPO," and further "Now, the growers and producers are asking for help from those in the market place" (both RSPO, 2008, p. 9).

Managers also have the tendency to resist change. One example of this was referred to by sNGO A: "there is always a little bit of resistance from producers to implement far reaching and somewhat costly measures, there is resistance from buyers to pay extra because externalities have gotten internalized into the product". This unwillingness to act and change the routines, was also referred to by eNGO A. When they proposed their resolution for protection of a specific land area, an older board member and representative of the banking sector talked to them and the eNGO A respondent remembered the situation: "Because [a bank] was at that time the one providing most of the credit to [an Indonesian grower] that was depending on charities. And therefore, [the bank went to see me and discuss bilaterally 'oh yes, you are going to improve, you are right'. It was not true but it's ok" (eNGO A). In fact, eNGO A had two resolutions regarding the specific land area, as they realised that no implementation had been accomplished after the passing of the first resolution. eNGO A stated, "they really should put their word together and to do something to act and that refer to the idea of fallow land and the fact that we have the impression that the industry really didn't really do something".

According to Beckert (1999), managers usually also have resources in order to hinder the proposed changes by institutional entrepreneurs. Thus, when change is successfully proposed and carried out this means that the managers either did not use the resources available to them, or they did not have the necessary resources available. In the RSPO, the respondents observed a change over time. Specifically, eNGO A clarifies on how this change then also affected their possibilities to have an impact:

After 2008/2009 ... you have the RSPO that is becoming very organised and very strict and with a kind of management discourse. Therefore, there is less and less opportunities to have impact even though you want to put a resolution.

They elaborate by mentioning that due to RSPO's growth, RSPO is able to "impose to everybody this managerial view and that's the way it has to be forward and therefore, of course, it worked very well for all these big companies ... because it is basically like this that they function" (eNGO A). Thus, the RSPO adjusted more and more to the interests of the bigger stakeholders and the way they function, while not keeping in mind that smaller organisations and, particularly, the smallholders might have problems adjusting to this approach. Retailer A explains this shift when remembering the growers walking out of the GA in 2008 as this "forced RSPO to really focus on what its *modus operandi* is and what its stakeholder engagement strategy was and how to work on getting better at reconciling some of these tensions". Nevertheless, as Grower B stresses, these big companies, also have a lot more at stake. As the GA is based on voting and every member has one vote, the vote of a big company where the changes are more significant has the same value as the vote of a "small company that just joined RSPO for the purpose of being in the membership".

These small "companies" or actors, we identify as what Schumpeter considers the second type, or the 'thinker': Actors that, on the one hand, are able to see new combinations and have ideas, as these organisations became members of the RSPO, but that lack the "courage to act" (Schumpeter, 2002, p. 413) as they do not actively participate through resolutions in the GA. By not acting but still being a member, signals that the member agrees with the actions and statements of the organisation. For eNGO A, this is a crucial aspect as the notion of not having an impact was a reason "last year to leave the

organisation” (eNGO A). As they could not see how they can have an impact, they did not just want to agree with the actions happening and thus, decided to leave the organisation as the first NGO who left the RSPO (Jacobson, 2016). We see a potential example of the thinker-approach in the statement made by Retailer A above. One reason for a member to not act could be on the one hand their low use of palm oil, and on the other hand mainly an interest in the legitimacy of the standard. We will go more in depth with this in the discussion.

Even though the RSPO board is not really an agent in itself, the above narratives of managerial behaviour in accordance with Beckert (1999), can be attributed to RSPO board and secretariat. One other stakeholder group was mentioned by several respondents with regard to resistance to change: the growers. eNGO A has experienced this first hand when they proposed their second resolution on a certain land area. Even though the resolution passed, the voting was approved by 29%, rejected by 23% and abstained from by 47%. eNGO A explained the outcome as “basically everybody voted for but all the growers voted against. It was so clear. It was so clear. They were complaining”. A participant in the GA in 2008 and of the discussion of the resolution also addressed this asking the growers to “mollify [the] somewhat confrontational atmosphere with recognition that a compromise and solution can be found” (RSPO, 2008).

Similar push-backs from the growers can also be seen in the review of the P&C in 2013. Whereas civil society and the market saw a need for the RSPO “to be sufficiently aspirational” (Retailer A), the growers did not perceive it as a critical issue as they have a “different perspective of urgency” (Retailer A), but rather that RSPO was “sufficiently strong with the proposal it stood” (Retailer A). In the final version of the P&C, some members believed that there were “just too many compromises around the greenhouse gas elements of RSPO” (Retailer A) and defines the P&C process that led up to the extraordinary GA in 2013 as “incredible catalytical in redefining what we needed to get out of sustainable palm oil for it to meet market and civil society needs” (Retailer A). However, a representative of a grower, phrased their view on the issue differently: “We agree that the supply chain certification is

complicated, and we agree that we need to boost the market, and we need to simplify the process. However, we need to do it in the right manner” (RSPO, 2014, p. 7).

Also eNGO B has mentioned that the majority of the opposition is from the growers. However, they justify the growers’ behaviour due to their location in the value chain:

... not simply because they want to push back because they don’t want to do it. I think more because they feel that what they have been doing to date isn’t recognised or incentivised or rewarded ... So, I think, in that way, anything which seems like it’s going to make the standard harder to implement, there’s a real push back.

As eNGO B sees a lot of discussion around the uptake of certified palm oil, they understand that the growers need to be incentivised by the market through uptake to implement more stringent standards. Coming back to eNGO A’s resolution, the growers also started to raise their voice by asking questions such as: “Has RSPO descended to nit-picking?” (RSPO, 2008, p. 17). The growers disliked that eNGO A proposed resolutions on very specific topics, as they did not see the GA as a space for specific matters based on one’s own interest, but rather a space for decision coming out “at the end of a long negotiation process” (eNGO A). We also observe this in the meeting minutes of the GA in 2010, where a representative of Sime Darby, a grower, complains, “For the last two years the mannerism in the way we look at the standards are not really clear, there is no clear formal agreed process. This is the way we normally do it, we discuss” (RSPO, 2010, p. 8). The year following the eNGO A’s resolution, another NGO proposed a resolution similarly specific. This spurred the growers to fight back by proposing a resolution themselves, regarding which topics that can actually be brought up at the GA (RSPO, 2010). Thus, here the growers actually enact institutional entrepreneurship through the proposing of resolutions, to show resistance.

Nevertheless, eNGO A also points out that it is difficult for the growers to get their interests through. Despite having rights, resources and being powerful, their interest usually go “against the mainstream” (eNGO A). We can verify this by our data as we see that out of the 16 resolutions that have been rejected in the history of RSPO, a grower was involved in 11 of them. In total, throughout the

history of RSPO, growers sponsored or co-sponsored 31 resolutions of which only 12 were adopted. Compared to the overall ratio of 60% of all resolutions being adopted, we can see that indeed the growers have difficulties in promoting their interests. Therefore, eNGO A points out that it is rather about “who is controlling what”. From their point of view, the GA is controlled by “the retailers and the producers of goods and services” (eNGO A).

It appears that the RSPO board has a certain power over the agenda in the GA. However, also the general membership seems to show certain tendencies to unwillingness to change and the growers are in a special role due to their position in the value chain. sNGO A summarises it in the following way:

... in the roundtable is a little bit this game of, “who’s the boss?” or do we acknowledge, nobody is? If you see what I mean. So that is in very simple terms. In practice, are the buyers determining the rules? Are the producers determining the rules? Are the NGO’s determining the rules? There is a constant, let’s say, struggle for power. And in practice, all instances where one of the stakeholders takes or is given too much power, or takes too much power, the solutions turn out to be least effective.

In summary, in this section, we looked at managers as introduced in Beckert’s model and identified both the RSPO board and the growers as managers. We acknowledge that the board itself is the outcome of the struggles between members and rather symbolises a complex of approaches taken by RSPO that has evolved over time, than being its own actor. We have determined situations where these managers hinder institutional change and have seen how they act based on routines and to stabilise in order to reduce uncertainty. Furthermore, the data presented situations showing how managers can hinder changes proposed by institutional entrepreneurs. Therefore, we can confirm our initial interpretation made in the Literature Review chapter that Beckert’s manager position is not static in an emerging institution but can change depending on the issue. This shows that an actor can be an institutional entrepreneur while also being a manager based on the perspective taken. We observe that in an emerging institution, in order to achieve stability, big changes might be necessary, which, consequently, means that the resisting actor becomes an institutional entrepreneur. We identify this as a peculiar case for emerging institutions as the

organisation's history is not yet long enough to have normative power over its members to have appropriate activities defined. We find this intriguing, however, as it does not help us in answering our research questions, we will not elaborate on the matter further.

As we have reached the end of this chapter, we will now move on to discussing the key findings presented above.

## 6. Discussion

*In this chapter, we discuss our key findings that we derive from our analysis of the meeting minutes of all the RSPO's GAs, the conducted interviews and the identified events. We identify three potential explanations to our problem statement, presented throughout the paper. We begin by reflecting on initial assumptions that we based our research on, where we find that one explanation to the problem statement is alternative spaces where actors promote change agendas. Subsequently, we continue by answering our two research questions determining that characteristics influence conditions for institutional entrepreneurship to a large extent while seeing indications that events also do at certain periods in time, and at other periods, they do not. These findings give a second explanation to the problem statement, as potentially not all actors have the characteristics needed. By linking the findings of our two research questions together, we show that during the periods where events do not have an influence, institutional entrepreneurs appear to enact features of institutional workers to drive their agendas. Finally, we identify two interesting developments in the membership. While the first one is too early to draw any conclusions from, the second one provides a third explanation to our problem statement, indicating that while one group of members are interested in defining the content of the standard through e.g. resolutions, others are mainly interested in being associated with its legitimacy.*

### 6.1 Reflection on initial assumptions

After having identified the problem statement early in this research process, we defined the act of sponsoring a resolution as institutional entrepreneurship. While this definition still holds, throughout the research process, we became aware that it is not the process of submitting a resolution to the GA agenda that is potentially requiring specific characteristics or the advantageous consequences of an event. Once an actor has decided to act on an idea, submitting a resolution to the RSPO agenda is a simple formality for which procedures are explicitly stated in the statutes (RSPO, 2015). In our study, we have confirmed this with respondents who have been through the process. Instead, we have found that the interesting tensions appear in the two following steps: On the one hand, the voting on passing the resolution, and on

the other hand, the implementation of the proposed change if the resolution is passed, which by no means should be taken for granted as an automatic consequence. However, we also found that members are generally not submitting a resolution that they do not count on getting passed, and thus ‘self-censor’ themselves in this regard. Because of this common understanding among the respondents, we conclude that our initial assumption is not wrong in practice.

Additionally, throughout the research, we learnt that an approved resolution in the GA does not imply implementation of the change. Based on Schumpeter (2002), we see an institutional entrepreneur as someone who can envision change and act on it. Yet, the findings show that just submitting a resolution does not necessarily mean the change is completed. To successfully change the institution, resolutions also need to be approved and implemented. Particularly, the implementation is important to stress, as a passed resolution does not automatically mean implementation, as, for instance, criticised by eNGO A. Interestingly enough, we see that the process of implementation of a passed resolution is differently understood by members. While eNGO A thought it was enough to get a resolution approved in order to achieve a change, sNGO A points out that the GA is just a platform for confirmation, and eNGO B stresses that the actual change needs to be carried out by the member who is proposing it. This finding has implications for MSIs and their aim to neutralise asymmetries, especially in terms of avoiding frustration and of resource allocation strategies. The implementation of changes needs resources and there are differing expectations among members where these resources should come from. To align such expectations can help preventing tensions in the organisation, while a resource allocation system can balance the chances for approved resolutions to be implemented, regardless of its original sponsor.

Consequently, we see that while the GA is an important platform for changes, it is often only a formality that is taken care of in this space. All respondents have also mentioned other important working areas of the RSPOs such as working groups, the secretariat and the board. This indicates that not all the changes that take place in the RSPO are actually endorsed by the GA. Therefore, we conclude that the GA is not the only place where decisions are made and changes can be proposed. These other consensus-based fora could be interesting spaces of study for researchers interested in how change happens in



institutions.

To sum up these initial reflections, to get a resolution approved by the GA does not mean an automatic implementation and a guaranteed change, which make actors also use other bodies of the MSI to drive their agendas. Thus, this contains a first explanation for why the participation is unbalanced in the GA, as members use other channels to defend their interests rather than the formal process of resolutions in the GA. In the following section, we will discuss our findings that answer the research questions and come back to additional explanations to the research problem in the end of this chapter.

## 6.2 Characteristics influence the conditions for institutional entrepreneurship

In our findings, we identify that the respondents are most concerned with stressing ‘rationale’ through framing, and in particular by addressing the motivational part of making other actors buy into the change proposed. Thus, framing the resolution so a broad spectrum of membership categories not only understand the relevance of the topic but also actively support the cause (i.e. vote) is key to success. As labelled by Retailer A, this preparatory work to ensure a common understanding of the purpose and the importance amongst voters before the GA is called ‘pre-alignment’. We understand pre-alignment as the work to make voters understand what the resolution is about and through that reach the broad support needed to make a resolution pass. Thus, it closely follows the consecutive functions of the rationales: punctuation, elaboration and motivation (Hardy & Maguire, 2008). In the pre-alignment work, many of the characteristics are used, such as ability to acknowledge the dependence on other actors, relations, persistence, finances, time and geographical scope, but also other aspects such as language and timing. We will now discuss in more detail how the various characteristics are used by members.

First, the ability to acknowledge the dependence on other actors is a characteristic that plays an important role for the institutional entrepreneur. Grower A, for instance, emphasises the need for broad collaboration and says their first criteria is always to make sure that a broad range of members is sponsoring the resolution. This is interesting as, consequently, it is not only the number of members that support a resolution that is salient in the vote but also the range of membership categories that it spans

over. We can also observe this in an example: when sNGO A was approached by another NGO, but instead of agreeing to co-sponsoring, sNGO A gave the other NGO the advice to look for supporters from other membership categories rather than additionally one NGO. Interesting to point out in relation to this, is that we see no evidence in the data that the support from any specific membership category is more important than another, but rather that a diversity of membership categories is covered. Thus, we cannot identify any perceived difference in status between the different members.

Second, both eNGO A and B name persistence, financial resources and time as important resources when proposing a resolution. eNGO A narrates how these resources were needed to inform the constituencies of the content of their resolution on land protection and ensure their understanding. As eNGO A's promotion was carried out in several steps, the time aspect is important. eNGO B points out how relatively quickly RSPO moves when trying to respond to issues that come up, which can then affect those members who cannot compensate lack of time with other resources, such as finance.

Third, to be able to overcome geographical distances is another salient characteristic. Retailer A highlights the challenges of pre-alignment in regards to geographical scope due to the geographical spread of member organisations and the relative inefficiency of trying to align understanding over phone. Thus, members that are present at strategic places across the globe or have the skills to bridge geographical differences, for instance, by being able to pre-align over the phone in advance, have an advantage.

Fourth, the aspect of time has also been brought up by the respondent in regards to timing, as it can support the institutional entrepreneur in its agenda. A look into the dictionary shows that timing can be defined as "The date or time when something happens or is planned to happen" (MacMillan Dictionary, 2017) as well as "The ability to select the precise moment for doing something for optimum effect" (Merriam-Webster, 2017b). This, we see as a characteristic that depends on the agency of an actor, namely, the ability to act when the context is favourable and the desired effects would be maximised. An example of this from our data is explained by eNGO A, when another NGO used the aftermath of eNGO A's proposal of a resolution to propose a resolution on a similar topic at the next GA. This definition nicely encompasses Beckert's idea of an institutional entrepreneur as only likely to act when a successful

outcome is easy to predict (1999). Hence, in this regard, we see that events, i.e. ‘when something happens’, can create the contextual conditions that make the institutional entrepreneur foresee the behaviours of other actors and a successful outcome. Yet, the ability to do so is a characteristic inherent to the actor. We come back to this point later when we discuss the second definition of timing in connection to events.

Fifth, the last characteristic, language, contains two aspects, the technical language and the quality of the usage of English. The issue of language appears in the findings as a characteristic to address understanding, both in terms of technical language connected to specific industries, as well as language connected to ethnic groups. sNGO A mentions how it is important to be able to translate rationales between different sectors, so that, for instance, the moral and ethical topics that appeal to an NGO can be phrased in technocratic terms for businesses, so it becomes understandable in their terms. With regard to what we commonly refer to as just ‘language’, i.e. language that is spoken by a cultural or ethnic group of people, the way the resolution is written does also have an impact. eNGO A mentions a case of an advantage due to the author being able to make use of native British English. This reveals an importance of characteristics such as geographical origin and resources. According to eNGOa, a member with origins in a native Anglo-Saxon speaking region would automatically be benefitted to get resolutions through. Alternatively, members with the financial resources to hire people with great English skills, or with cross-sectoral knowledge and experience in several instances of the supply chain for that matter, are also benefitted in terms of getting resolutions through. This identified complex of problems regarding language relates to other accounts brought up regarding language barriers limiting the participation in the GA (i.e. Cheyns, 2011). For an MSI with a global scope and with the distinct aim to combine more than just two stakeholders, these findings can be potentially disturbing. In order to, in practice, enact the MSI virtues of inclusiveness through dialogue (Utting, 2002) and ensure a voice is given to all (Cheyns & Riisgaard, 2014) to neutralise asymmetries (Pattberg, 2007), global MSIs with aspirations on legitimacy need to counteract these inequalities.

As we have just discussed, certain characteristics are important to make other members understand one's cause in order to get support. We want to linger in the certain aspect of collaboration, as we have noticed that characteristics related to this topic are particularly used in the process of making a resolution successful.

### 6.2.1 Collaboration

Collaboration is an important component in gaining the highlighted broad support to get the resolution through. We see the topic recurrent, specifically through the resource Ability to acknowledge dependence on others, the rationale Motivation, and Relations. In regards to collaboration, respondents mentioned particularly networks and co-sponsoring.

Interestingly, the importance of networks appears in contradictory narratives. On the one hand, Grower B clearly states that "it is not about networking, it is about making people understand what you want to propose". At the same time, Retailer A confesses that one reason why they were unsuccessful in getting their resolution passed, was due to weak personal networks, as they claim such networks could make up for the lack of other resources to help out pre-alignment, such as time and geographical proximity. However, involving actors from other stakeholder categories at an early stage as part of the pre-alignment can also facilitate the understanding when spreading the resolution to the main body of voters. As emphasised by Grower A, an outside perspective can help formulate a resolution that is more rounded and comprehensive. Here, co-signatories can play an important role.

A difference in effort put into the pre-alignment of a co-sponsored resolution appears, however, regarding whether a member has been the driving force behind a resolution, or whether the member has signed a resolution elaborated and promoted by another stakeholder. In the selection of respondents to this study, we were aware of, but did not take into consideration, whether the respondent had sponsored resolutions alone, were leading a resolution sponsored by several actors, or simply co-signed a resolution written by another actor. Despite this gradual scale of effort put into promoting the resolution, we can draw the conclusion that co-sponsoring is less arduous than sponsoring alone or being the lead on a co-

sponsoring. Additionally, we assume that the ones who co-sponsor only as an act of support do not put the same effort in as the ones who want to drive their own agenda and do pre-alignment of their resolution to find the support, either from co-sponsors or voters. However, the mere appearance of the co-sponsors name on the document might contribute to reducing the pre-alignment efforts needed. A resolution can thus be the outcome of, on the one hand, the efforts of pre-alignment of one driven institutional entrepreneur but could also be the result of collaborative efforts of several, co-sponsoring institutional workers. We will come back to the aspect of collaboration later when we discuss the link between institutional entrepreneurs and features of institutional work.

To conclude, we see that characteristics of an actor influence the possibilities to do institutional entrepreneurship to a large extent. The characteristics ‘ability to acknowledge the dependence on other actors’, ‘relations’, ‘persistence’, ‘finances’, ‘time’ and ‘geographical scope’ and the steps in Rationale are all salient when it comes to proposing resolutions in the GA, as well as the aspects of language and timing. An important way to gain support is to collaborate with other members in order to work together on the framing of a resolution, and through that be able to make the topic relevant to a broader range of members. The skills to build networks or find collaboration possibilities can be an advantage for organisations to participate in the GA. Our data show that the mentioned characteristics are necessary to succeed in this endeavour. As a consequence, members who do not have these characteristics are challenged by overcoming this lack, which leads to a second explanation to the unbalanced representation in the GA. As one of the MSI characteristics is neutralising asymmetries and to give a voice to all, which are foundation stones in the legitimacy claim of MSIs, RSPO, as well as other MSIs, need to be aware of the need to balance and mitigate this difference in characteristics within its membership. We will now discuss to what extent events have an influence on conditions for institutional entrepreneurship.

### 6.3 Events have an influence on conditions for institutional entrepreneurship at times

Besides characteristics, we have also looked at whether events have an influence on the possibility for actors to propose resolutions to the agenda of the RSPO's GA. We will first discuss these findings, and then elaborate on how timing can influence the conditions for institutional entrepreneurship in the RSPO when it comes to events.

Analysing the events, we found a pattern between the timing of the events and when they are followed by resolutions. We see in our analysis that 50% of the identified events are followed by a resolution on the same topic. We cannot claim that the increase of resolution topic in our graph exclusively depends on the occurrence of the event, due to the lack of statistical methods to confirm such correlations. What we find interesting, however, is that these occurrences are clustered into two periods in the lifetime of RSPO. Between 2004 and 2009, all events are followed by a resolution on the same topic. From 2009 up until 2013, no such patterns can be identified. Then again from 2014, the topics of the event and the topics of the resolutions match. One of the events in 2015, the last year included in our data set, is the creation of RSPO NEXT, which effects remain to be seen. We will come back to this in the next section.

In regards to how events can influence the conditions for institutional entrepreneurship, we see that events can support an institutional entrepreneur in its agenda by saving resources necessary for the pre-alignment. Further, if actors in an institution are affected by an event, it is because the event addresses a topic relevant to them. As already mentioned, several of the respondents highlight the need to make a broad range of actors understand, which can be done through the use of resources, rationale and relations. However, the events can get several actors on the same page, saving the sponsor this work, as long as the consequences of the event affect a big enough crowd of voters. We see an interesting connection between the need for pre-alignment and the potential effect of events, which connects to the different "perspectives of urgency" that was touched on by Retailer A. Nevertheless, for an event to align the different perspectives of urgency, it must be "unsettling" (Meyer et al., 2005) or "shocking" (Rao et al., 2003)

enough to many different actors to affect an enough broad range of actors. Thus, what events can do for institutional entrepreneurs is to save the entrepreneur the need for characteristics mentioned to do pre-alignment.

Besides, the second definition of timing shows that everyone can benefit from events, as it regards the randomness of its occurrence and thus brings consequences that can benefit a random actor's agenda. As discussed before, timing has been brought up several times by respondents. eNGO A, Retailer A and sNGO B pointed out that timing is more important than characteristics. To make sense of this, we look at the second definition of timing, previously outlined in this chapter, which states that timing is "the date or time when something happens or is planned to happen" (MacMillan Dictionary, 2017). In contrast to the definition that determines timing as an ability, this definition has a dimension of randomness to it. As a consequence, here, it is less about the abilities of an institutional entrepreneur, and more about that the consequences the events trigger are beneficial to one's case or agenda. Events could, thus, be creators of such random and unexpected circumstances.

In addition, we find that events can arise either as external jolts or by being created by institutional entrepreneurs. First, events can be, as typically referred to by neo-institutionalists, external jolts that happened unexpectedly to the actors (Meyer, 1982; Hardy & Maguire, 2008; Rao et al., 2003). In this case, all members would have to handle this new situation simultaneously. It might have an impact of different strength and scope, varying between actors in an institution or a field. What we aim to see in this study, is whether these kinds of events can account for institutional entrepreneurs' possibilities to act. This would mean that also actors who have not yet proposed can enact institutional entrepreneurship if their 'number comes up'. As previously defined, by 'number to come up' we mean 'if exogenous factors create advantageous conditions for institutional entrepreneurship for a specific actor, such as the occurrence of external events, certain structural positions of actors and favourable chance (Battilana & Boxenbaum, 2004)'. In our data, we can see that events were followed by resolutions in half of all cases. This could mean that when events influence conditions, institutional workers, who are benefitted by the aftermaths of the specific event, could be able to promote an agenda through a resolution. However, this

study is limited and does not look into what institutional workers need to take advantage of this condition. We see the exploration of this potential link as a great opportunity for further research.

Interestingly, however, a broad impact across members is seldom due to the diversity of interests represented in the RSPO. As Appendix G shows, only three times did two different respondents identify the same event as turning points for the RSPO (event-level 3 or 1) and four times did the events predicted by the researchers correspond to an event mentioned by a respondent. We see this as an indication that turning points might not be as drastic as assumed, but rather ambiguous. We interpret this as that what is perceived as important or ‘urgent’ in the RSPO differs to such an extent, that members do not perceive the same events as equally influential, and do not experience their consequences the same way. This is logical given the essence of an MSI of bringing a wide spectrum of stakeholders together, with their different standpoints and interests. However, it also shows that the aforementioned possible pre-alignment that events can have is unlikely to happen to cover a wide range of actors, due to the wide variety of interests within an MSI.

Furthermore, we see that institutional entrepreneurs intentionally utilise external relations to create the tumult themselves. As accounted for under ‘external relations’, respondents spend time and effort on creating external tumult, by making use of outside actors to put external pressure. Such external pressure can appear as an event to other members of the RSPO who are affected by it. Thus, several of them are using the creation of events as a strategy to conduct institutional entrepreneurship. Therefore, in theory, actions of institutional entrepreneurship and events could be the same action. However, these events would have to be identified by other actors as turning points for the RSPO, whereas in our data, we only see the actors who proposed the resolutions also being the ones who identify the preceding event as a turning point.

To conclude, we can summarise this discussion about events as that there are two accounts for how events can influence the conditions of institutional entrepreneurship, that we can call ‘action’ and ‘randomness’. With regard to ‘action’, as explained in the previous section about characteristics, institutional entrepreneurs need certain abilities to be able to deal with events when they occur. Another scenario



where entrepreneurial characteristics are necessary regarding events is when institutional entrepreneurs create the events themselves to increase external pressure. This ‘action’-account describes how institutional entrepreneurs yet intentionally use events to drive their agenda. ‘Randomness’, on its part, regards benefiting from the consequences that were triggered by the event with no active engagement necessary. Here, events can influence the GA agenda as a catalyst for pre-alignment and thereby benefit whoever, whose number comes up in its aftermath. The ‘randomness’ account, therefore, encompasses our inquiry, to see if these events can enable anyone to sponsor a resolution. We see that events, in theory, can help with pre-alignment for a sponsor, which can then empower members, i.e. the institutional workers, who do not have the characteristics needed, to become institutional entrepreneurs. However, this requires that the event is broad enough that it causes ‘urgency’ to a wide span of membership categories. This, we have not seen proof of in our analysis. Thus, we can see indications for, but cannot conclude, that events influence the conditions for institutional entrepreneurship. As stated in the Introduction chapter of this paper, we encourage a study including the perspectives of actors who yet have not proposed. This can help to detect their realities and reveal potential obstacles, in particular, with regards to the impact of events, that could be of interests for MSIs to address, to increase the participation in their highest decision-making bodies.

Having answered our two research questions, we see in these findings a potential link between institutional entrepreneurs and the characteristics of institutional work, as mentioned initially in this section. In half of the identified cases, resolutions coded with the same topic follow upon an event the same or previous year, during two different periods in time (before 2009 and after 2014). According to the methods and definitions applied in this study, this means that during these periods, institutional workers could be institutional entrepreneurs if their numbers came up. From this, we can see indications that during some periods of instability, the RSPO is affected by events, which widens the possibilities for more actors to conduct institutional entrepreneurship. During the period between 2009 until 2013, no pattern between events and resolutions are distinguished, which indicates that RSPO was stable enough not to be influenced. This leads us to unpack the relationship between institutional entrepreneurs and

institutional work, as we see that institutional entrepreneurs adopt features from institutional work to drive their agendas in times of stability.

#### 6.4 Institutional entrepreneurs in periods of stability and instability

When we look at RSPO over time, we see that both characteristics and events have an influence on the conditions for institutional entrepreneurship in the GA of RSPO. In this, we found an interesting phenomenon linking institutional entrepreneurship to institutional work, namely, that during the period of relative stability, institutional entrepreneurs adapt characteristics of institutional work to promote their agenda. In the following, we elaborate how the influence of characteristics and events on the participation in the GA link together.

As presented in the previous section, we have identified two periods of instability and a period of stability in the lifespan of RSPO by the pattern-matching analysis of events and resolutions. A tentative explanation for the shift between the first period of instability and stability is given by eNGO A. They point out, that somewhere around 2008, the internal dynamics inside the RSPO shifted. While all ideas were welcomed in the initial phase of the organisation, they tell that this new ‘management discourse’ made it more difficult for actors to propose changes through resolutions. Interestingly, this indication of a shift towards a management discourse happens at the same time as we see that events are not followed by resolutions for a longer period of time. We can see a correlation between these happenings and the resistance to change by managers, which Beckert emphasise as an important aspect of his model (1999).

In relation to eNGO A’s notion of difficulty to propose change, we see in our findings that all events identified until 2009 were followed by resolutions. When comparing this to our data from the meeting minutes, we see that between 2005 and 2009, most resolutions sponsored were addressing the topics of Environment, Carbon Environment and Smallholders, which we see as topics that relate to the direct actions of sustainability. For all three of these categories, the majority of the total amount of resolutions on these topics were sponsored in this period. In the more recent time, the focus shifted to

other topics such as Monitoring, Procedural, Organisational Structure and Branding. These topics do fit more into a management discourse.

In 2008, the accumulated tensions in the RSPO, come to a climax when the growers walk out of the GA in protest. The growers were affronted by several resolutions, such as the resolution on the land area by eNGO A, and claimed that the GA should not be misused by members to promote their own, specific agendas, but rather that all decisions should be the outcome of long negotiation processes through consensus-seeking approaches. These tensions culminated in the infamous walk-out.

Here, one can see the growers as managers, especially after the passing of the “Preserving integrity of the standard” resolution in 2010, which confirms eNGO A’s perception of RSPO becoming stricter. As Retailer A pointed out, “[the walk-out] forced RSPO to really focus on what its modus operandi is and what its stakeholder engagement strategy was and how to work on getting better at reconciling some of these tensions”. This strengthens our notion that following the walk-out, which took place in 2008, came a period of stability.

#### 6.4.1 The tamed entrepreneur

In regards to eNGO A’s testimony that it has become more difficult to get change through resolutions, which is supported by the decrease of resolutions in Environment, Carbon Environment and Smallholders on the GA agenda, we see that institutional entrepreneurs adapt to this through characteristics of institutional workers. Looking at the characteristics outlined above as necessary for a successful proposal, we see that most characteristics are found in relation to strategies such as collaboration, pre-alignment, making other members understand the relevance of the issue at hand, and acknowledging one’s own dependence on other actors. We see in these characteristics a strong resemblance with what Lawrence and colleagues outline as institutional work, defined as a, “... myriad, day-to-day equivocal instances of agency that, although aimed at affecting the institutional order, represent a complex *mélange* of forms of agency—successful and not, simultaneously radical and conservative, strategic and emotional, full of compromises, and rife with unintended consequences” (2011, p. 53). In other words, in institutional work,

the focus lies on the collective action and compromises rather than driving one's own agenda individually. We can see an example for this in our findings, when sNGO A positions themselves as the third party even though they are the driver of the resolution. They mastered the skill of motivating others to support their change to the extent that a wide range of actors supports the resolution from all membership categories. Also based on the other respondent's descriptions, we observe that institutional entrepreneurs to a large extent use characteristics that are usually more attributed to institutional work rather than institutional entrepreneurs. Instead of heroic actions, we, thus, see a tamed entrepreneur doing institutional work in order to be successful in driving their agenda. All in all, it seems that to be successful in the period of stability, institutional entrepreneurs have to use their characteristics to commit to the collective, mundane activities of institutional work.

#### 6.4.2 A new period of instability?

Compared to 2008/09, we see a similar pattern emerging again in 2013/14. While in 2009, events stopped being followed by resolutions, we see that since 2014, events are followed by a resolution again. What this means, future will tell. However already now we can see two interesting developments in the membership which we can relate to a potential new turning point that took place in 2013.

The first development, we see as a split in the group of members advancing the agenda of the RSPO (i.e. the institutional entrepreneurs). Members of this group have a stake in the standard either as they want to move it towards a specific definition of sustainability (e.g. NGOs) and/or as they are directly affected by its definition in practice (e.g. growers). Thus, as they have a stake in the mission of RSPO, we see them as the mission-driven ones. As we know from the interviews, the adoption of the new P&C in 2013 was highly contested. Some members saw the need for more ambitious actions and guidelines and did not see this fulfilled in the final version of the new P&C: "all in all, there was just too many compromises around the greenhouse gas elements of RSPO of the last Principles and Criteria review" (Retailer A). Thus, we see that the P&C review was not fulfilling the needs of all stakeholder of the mission-driven group, but only the needs of the ones that saw the standard as sufficient to maintain the

legitimacy of the RSPO. As a consequence, in order to fulfil also the more demanding group's needs, the voluntary standard of RSPO NEXT was developed and introduced. This shows that compromises can lead to unintended consequences, as suggested by Lawrence et al. (2011), which in the case of RSPO NEXT has led to a development potentially contradicting the consensus-seeking ambition typical for MSIs.

The second development, we see as a split within the general growing membership of the RSPO between institutional entrepreneurs and legitimacy-seeking members. We observe that resolutions in branding increase between 2014 and 2015. In regards to this increase, we detect a possible emergent classification of members within the growing body of members, which also provides a potential explanation to the low percentage of members participating through resolutions in the GA. On the one hand, there are the members we know as institutional entrepreneurs. On the other hand, we see evidence in our data for a group of members that do the minimum effort of institutional work (i.e., in this study, paying the membership fee), to gain the legitimacy of the RSPO. These can be identified as the 'thinker', based on Schumpeter's non-action type. Retailer A explains that due to their low volume in uptake of palm oil they see that their influence over the GA is lower, and also that they perceive less urgency than other members. By this they mean, they cannot imagine any topic being urgent enough for them to act on alone, and would only do the effort if they are sure to gain support from their peers, especially other retailers but also from the "general brand and manufacturing sector" (Retailer A). By less urgency, they refer to that they are not impacted in their core business the same way as other stakeholders involved in the RSPO. This case highlights the business case both for certifying MSIs and for the B2C companies that are members of them. It shows, that with a growing body of members and with an increasing uptake of the certified product, there are members who at most are interested in maintaining the institution, but that are not interested in what the standard consists of, as long as it is perceived as legitimate. These could, then, for instance be retailers who are interested in putting a sustainable production mark on their products, as it gives them legitimacy towards consumers. They trust the NGO's and others involved in the GA and other bodies to make the standard remain legitimate among consumers. What the legitimacy is based on, for example, how sustainability is defined, which is negotiated and decided in the GA and

through other fora is not of interest to these actors, as long as the certification is perceived as legitimate to all actors (and potentially consumers in particular). However, the retailers choosing to be members of the MSI give legitimacy to the MSI. Hence, these legitimacy processes feed into each other. Therefore, the third and last reason for the unbalanced participation in the RSPO can be the varying motivations for the members to be part of RSPO. A member that only wants the stamp does not have much incentive to put resources into actively participating in the GA, as their core activities do not stand or fall with what the content of the standard implies, only the way it is perceived. A member such as an NGO, however, who wants to promote their cause and bring the RSPO closer to its sustainability goal, has a stake in engaging in the dynamics of the agenda.

To conclude this section, by linking our findings regarding characteristics and events together, we see that RSPO has had a period of stability in which institutional entrepreneurs adopt characteristics of institutional work in their actions. Furthermore, we have identified another potential period of instability in the RSPO, starting in 2013. We cannot draw any conclusions regarding this new period yet, but we identify two types of emerging splits in the membership. First, among the mission-driven members, we see that the process and outcome of negotiating the P&C that were passed in 2013, led to that part of the membership were satisfied, where another part wanted to move beyond and create RSPO NEXT. The second split is shown between members who are committed to the definition and content of the standard, and the members who are mainly interested in enjoying the legitimacy the standard is associated with. These diverse interests in the content of the RSPO standard, provides a third explanation to the low participation in the GA. Thus, we see that motivation for joining the RSPO is key to understand the action or non-action of its members.

## 7. Conclusion

*We want to conclude this paper by stating our five key findings.*

First, we have found that characteristics do to a large extent influence the conditions to conduct institutional entrepreneurship in the GA. Meanwhile, we see indications that events also can influence, but, as it seems, only at certain periods of time.

Second, we have identified a pattern of when events are followed by resolutions, and when not. As we see indications that the emerging institution RSPO is sensitive to the impact of events at some periods and some not, we call these periods of stability and periods of instability. During the period of instability, we see that events are followed by resolutions and our findings indicate that institutional entrepreneurs had an easier time proposing change through resolutions. During this time, institutional workers could potentially benefit from the conditions created by the events if their specific numbers come up. However, our study does not have the scope needed to investigate what institutional workers need in order to exploit this advantageous moment. During periods of stability, however, we see no indication that resolutions follow events.

Third, in periods of relative stability, we see that institutional entrepreneurs seem to use characteristics that are usually attributed to institutional work in order to continue to promote their agendas and get changes through. We visualise this as the entrepreneurs being tamed by the circumstances to continue proposing their changes. It remains to be seen whether this is adapted to without reflection, or if it is done strategically. This finding can partially explain our problem statement given that only in certain periods external events can enable all actors inside the institution to act. Meanwhile, characteristics are explaining the possibility to act regardless of the time. Therefore, members, who do not have the characteristics necessary to promote their agendas might struggle at certain periods in time, which can explain the low participation in the GA.

Fourth, an additional explanation to the unbalanced participation in the GA is because the GA of an MSI is not the only body where change takes place. We have learned that other organisational

structural elements such as working groups and board participation are also strategies members like to use, which can explain why the GA is ‘unused’.

Fifth, the motivation for actors to become member is key to explain participation in the GA. Some members core activities are directly related to what is implied by the standard in terms of sustainable practices. Other members are mainly interested in the standard because of the legitimacy it gives to their products, regardless of what this implies in practice. These stakeholders are less likely to engage in defining the standard. With a growing body of members that comes with an increased legitimacy of the standard, it is likely that RSPO will see more of this type of members in the future.

## 7.1 Practical implications

Our study has been inspired by the apparent unbalanced participation in the GA of the RSPO. Since MSIs have the aim to include all actors, only 0.02% of the members actively participating seems like a failure in the MSI pursuing their aim to include all members and to give a voice to all. We identify this as a threat to their legitimacy, which is risking their trajectory towards becoming the institutionalised norm in the industry. Our findings that characteristics influence the conditions for institutional entrepreneurship significantly have implications for the legitimacy claim of the RSPO. If it, to a large extent, depends on characteristics inherent to the actor, whether a member can get a resolution to the GA agenda, the RSPO is not achieving their aim to make all voices heard and neutralise asymmetries. This is an alarming factor that other MSIs, basing their legitimacy on similar claims, should be aware of as well.

Furthermore, we identify a possible split path in the RSPO’s future as the membership might divide between members who are committed to developing the content of the standard, and actors who are members as part of their business case, to enjoy the benefits of being associated with a legitimate certification for sustainability. While a growing member base of the latter means a reciprocal feeding of legitimacy between these downstream actors and the RSPO, the RSPO should be aware that these members are likely to support the standard as long as it is perceived as legitimate, but are unlikely to



contribute to its development. Also other MSIs, which have developed a legitimate certification for sustainability, need to consider this aspect for their own operations.

## 7.2 Theoretical implications

In the following paragraphs, we want to mention various implications our findings have on theory. On a more general level, we add to institutional theory by applying previously developed institutional theories to the case of a new organisational format, to test these theories in this new, structural context. Additionally, we contribute to the literature by combining the two approaches of Emergence and Collective Action as explained by de Bakker et al. (forthcoming) as this enables us to look at the institutionalisation of the RSPO as an ongoing process of a young association as well as the dynamic relationships between the members.

Furthermore, we find that events can have an influence, as we see that events in 50% of the cases are followed by actions of institutional entrepreneurship, i.e. the proposing of resolutions. This indicates that events can influence the conditions of institutional entrepreneurship. Thus, endogenous characteristics are potentially not the only explanation to institutional entrepreneurship. However, it is outside the scope of this study to investigate what it takes for an institutional worker to act when the conditions are favourable. If further research confirms our finding that events have an influence, as suggested in the periods of instability, this questions the focus in institutional entrepreneurship theory on the inherent characteristics of the institutional entrepreneur as main reasons for change.

By linking these two findings together, we present an interesting narrative of how the institutional entrepreneur acknowledges that she cannot act alone, rolls up the sleeves and joins the institutional workers through collective action to drive her agenda. It might be an act of collective spirit; it might be as a wolf in sheep's clothing. Regardless, we propose that the institutional entrepreneur is tamed to do institutional work, when the emerging institution is in a stable period.

### 7.3 Limitations and further research

During our research, we have come across several limitations to our approach as well as other fascinating aspects in the field of our study. As it was not possible for us to look further into these due to the scope of this study, we will list them here as future research opportunities.

One of the main limitations lies in our dataset of the meeting minutes from the GA. As already stated before, this is a highly censored set of data as it is already interpreted once by the minute taker. Furthermore, the minutes have not been taken in like manner over the years. Throughout the research process, it has become clear that they do not always truthfully reflect who has been sponsoring the resolutions. Therefore, it would have been more reliable to look at the resolutions directly, both in terms of knowing who has sponsored each resolution and in terms of more correctly coding them according to the topics they treat. Answers from our respondents, however, show that access to the resolutions is difficult and also only accessible for members. Thus, further research should ensure access to all the data in order to have a complete picture of the resolutions.

Furthermore, we have only conducted interviews with member organisations that have proposed resolutions, since our focus laid on understanding what leads to this action. Of course, in further research, it would be interesting to talk to member organisations that have not proposed, in other words who have not yet carried out any actions of institutional entrepreneurship. In addition, due to our new understanding of success (i.e., passing a resolution and the change actually being implemented), also members that have tried but whose proposal was rejected would be intriguing to include in this further research. Particularly, the growers build an interesting case here, due to their important position in the value chain and their role as both manager and institutional entrepreneurs.

We see the need for an extended and slightly differently designed study to encompass the power of events. As mentioned in the conclusion, we cannot claim with any certainty that the increase of a resolution topic in our graph depends on the occurrence of the event. In order to correct this, we see the need for an extended study, going on during a longer period of time and involving the possibilities to cross-check our identified correlations with interviewees. We encourage other methods, such as

triangulation between more interview occasions, resolutions and external sources describing the event, (e.g. media) to confirm our found correlations (Easterby-Smith et al., 2015).

Another aspect we learned during the research process is that while the GA might be the highest decision making body, it is not the only one where the institution is developed, maintained and dismantled. Especially, when looking at institutional work, other organisational elements such as working groups, the board and the secretariat are attractive research objects. With this approach, it is then also possible to research whether our results from this study are valid in a consensus-seeking body compared to the GA, which is based on voting. This would also enable the research to gain a more holistic perspective on how change takes place in the RSPO and thus, in an MSI in general. Such point of view is further valuable as it shows a better picture of the effect of, for instance, events that we were not able to detect with our narrow perspective. For example, our analysis gave that Greenpeace Kit Kat Campaign was not an impactful event. However, we only looked at its effect in regards to resolutions. We do not know whether it had any effect, for instance, on the mind-set of the membership meaning that members now change their behaviour, besides voting, in order to avoid such an event from happening again.

In regards to events, we were, furthermore, not able to look at interrelatedness between events. Thus, for example, the two events, 'Certification audit' and 'Oxfam resolution on ACOP' took place in the same year and were coded with the same topics. While this looks like a flaw in our research, our interviews have shown that these two events are actually related. However, we consider this a strike of luck to have found this relation in this case, as we did not have any verification in place that was testing for correlation between events. Future research should keep this possibility of correlation in mind.

Last, as pointed out several times throughout the paper, we recommend further research on the characteristics and abilities of institutional workers to become institutional entrepreneurs. As our research indicates, particularly in periods of instability, external events can balance out the difference in characteristics between institutional entrepreneurs and institutional workers. Further research to confirm this hypothesis, that comes out of our research, could contribute to a great extent to the understanding of institutional change processes.

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## 9. Appendices

Overview of Appendices.....	132
Appendix A: Resolutions according to sponsor.....	133
Appendix B: Resolutions according to topic.....	136
B.1: Definitions of topics and other codes.....	136
B.2: Resolutions coded by topic.....	138
Appendix C: Occurrence of topics on the GA agenda.....	145
Appendix D: Interview Guide.....	146
Appendix E: Interview Transcripts.....	148
E.1 Oxfam (sNGO).....	148
E.2 Solidaridad (sNGO).....	159
E.3 PanEco (eNGO).....	169
E.4 Zoological Society of London (eNGO).....	179
E.5 Marks & Spencer (Retailer A).....	194
E.6 Olam (Grower).....	204
E.7 IOI (Grower).....	214
Appendix F: Events found in the literature.....	224
Appendix G: Merged events from researchers and respondents.....	228
Appendix H: Occurrence analysis of resolutions.....	230
Appendix I: Pattern analysis of events and resolutions.....	232

## Appendix A: Resolutions according to sponsor

<b>Name of the organisation</b>	<b>Membership category (year of joining)</b>	<b>Total # of resolutions sponsored</b>	<b>Resolutions sponsored</b>
AarhusKarlshamn (AAK)	Processor and/or Trader (2004)	1	GA EX 1.5a
Agro Indomas	Grower (Unclear when left, probably around 2014/2015)	2	GA 9.6b, GA 9.6c
Agropalma	Grower (2004)	2	GA 9.6d, GA 10.6g
Aldi	Retailers (2011)	1	GA EX 1.5a
Asda now Wal-Mart	Retailer (2006)	1	GA EX 1.5a
Bakrie Sumatera Plantations	Grower (2007)	2	GA 9.6b, GA 9.6c
Boots UK	Retailers (2006)	1	GA EX 1.5a
Borneo Orangutan Survival (BOS) Foundation	eNGO (2012)	1	GA 2.8.3
Both ENDS	sNGO (2005)	1	GA EX 1.5a
Bumitama	Grower (2007)	2	GA 9.6b, GA 9.6c
Carrefour	Retailer (2006)	2	GA 9.6d, GA EX 1.5a
Coles	Retailers (2010)	1	GA EX 1.5a
Conservation International	eNGOs (2008)	2	GA 8.6m, GA EX 1.5a
Coop Switzerland	Retailers (2004)	1	GA EX 1.5a
Delhaize Group	Retailers (2007)	1	GA EX 1.5a
Fauna & Flora International (FFI)	eNGOs (2007)	1	GA 8.6m
Federal Land Development Agency (Felda)	Grower	2	GA 7.6f, GA EX 1.5a
Federation of Migros Cooperatives	Retailers (2004)	2	GA 2.8.1, GA EX 1.5a
Forest Peoples Programme	sNGO (2013)	1	GA12.6h
GAPKI (Indonesian Palm Oil Producers Association)	Grower † 2011	8	GA 6.0, GA 6.0.0, GA 6.2, GA 6.3, GA 7.6d, GA 7.6e, GA 7.6f, GA 7.6g

GEC (Global Environmental Centre)	eNGOs (2004)	1	GA 9.6d
Global Environment Centre	eNGO (2004)	1	GA 2.8.3
HSBC	Banks and Investors (2004)	2	GA 8.6l, GA EX 1.5a
Indonesian (INA) Grower Caucus	Grower	1	GA EX 1.5a
International Finance Corporation (IFC)	Banks and Investors (2005)	1	GA 3.9.2
IOI	Processor and/or Trader (2004)	2	GA 5.3 (2), GA EX 1.5a
IOPRI		2	GA 6.2, GA 6.3
Kraft Foods	Manufacturer (2007)	1	GA EX 1.5a
Kulim	Grower (2004)	1	GA 5.3 (2)
LINKS	sNGO (2012)	1	GA 10.6f
Malaysian Palm Oil Association (MPOA)	Grower (2004)	25	GA 3.9.3, GA 3.9.4, GA 4.7, GA 6.0, GA 6.0.0, GA 6.1a, GA 6.1b, GA 6.1c, GA 6.1d, GA 6.2, GA 6.3, GA 7.6d, GA 7.6e, GA 7.6f, GA 7.6g, GA 8.6f, GA 8.6g, GA 8.6h, GA 8.6i, GA 8.6j, GA 8.6k, GA 8.6l, GA 9.6b, GA 9.6c, GA EX 1.5a
Marks and Spencer	Retailers (2006)	2	GA EX 1.5a, GA 11.6c
New Britain Palm Oil Ltd. (NBPOL)	Growers (2004)	6	GA 2.8.1, GA 5.3 (3), GA 9.6c, GA 9.6d, GA 10.6g, GA EX 1.5a
Olam International Ltd.	Grower (2011)	1	GA 9.6d
Oxfam International	sNGO (2004)	4	GA 5.3 (2), GA 9.6d, GA EX 1.5a, GA 12.6f
PanEco	eNGO † 2016	2	GA 3.9.1, GA 5.3 (4)
Pesticide Action Network Asia-Pacific (Pan-Ap)	sNGO	2	GA 8.6n, GA 10.6f
Platinum Nanochem Sdn Bhd	Processors and/or Traders † 2016	1	GA 9.6d
Rabobank International	Bank and Investor (2004)	1	GA EX 1.5a
Reinier de Man	n.a. (not involved since 2003)	1	GA 1.5
REWE Group	Retailers (2011)	1	GA 11.6e
Royal Ahold NV	Retailers (2007)	2	GA EX 1.5a, GA 11.6c

Royal Dutch Shell	Processor and/ or Traders (2007)	1	GA 9.6d
Sainsbury	Retailers (2006)	1	GA EX 1.5a
Saraya Co Ltd.	Manufacturer (2005)	1	GA 2.8.2
Sawit Watch	sNGO (2004)	5	GA 2.8.1, GA 8.6d, GA 8.6e, GA 9.6d, GA 10.6f
SIAT	Grower (2004)	1	GA 8.6l
Sime Darby	Grower or Processor and/or Trader (2004 or 2007)	3	GA 10.6e, GA 9.6b, GA 9.6c
Solidaridad	sNGO (2008)	1	GA 9.6d
Sumatra Orang Utan Society (SOS)	eNGOs (2009)	3	GA 6.4, GA 7.6h, GA 10.6g
Tesco	Retailers (2006)	1	GA EX 1.5a
The Body Shop International	Retailer (2004)	2	GA 2.8.1, GA EX 1.5a
The co-operative group	Retailers (2005)	1	GA EX 1.5a
Unilever	Manufacturer (2004)	4	GA 8.6d, GA 8.6e, GA EX 1.5a, GA 11.6f
Visimas or Musimat (maybe Musim Mat?) PT Musim Mas	Grower (2004)	3	GA 8.6l, GA 9.6b, GA 9.6c
Waitrose	Retailers (2006)	1	GA EX 1.5a
Wetlands International (Sarala)	eNGO (2007)	2	GA 5.3 (1), GA 6.5
World Resources Institute	eNGOs (2012)	1	GA 10.6g
WWF International	eNGOs (2008)	3	GA 5.3 (2), GA 5.3 (3), GA EX 1.5a
WWF Switzerland	eNGOs (2004)	2	GA 2.8.1, GA 3.9.5
Yayasan Setara	sNGO (2010)	1	GA 10.6f
Zoological Society of London	eNGOs (2011)	4	GA 8.6m, GA 9.6d, GA 10.6g, GA 12.6g
n.a.		30	GA 1.4, GA 2.3, GA 2.4, GA 2.5, GA 2.6, GA 2.7, GA 3.6, GA 3.7, GA 3.10.1, GA 3.10.2, GA 3.10.3, GA 4.4, GA 4.5, GA 4.6, GA 7.6b, GA 7.6c, GA 8.6b, GA 8.6c, GA 10.6b, GA 10.6c, GA 10.6d, GA EX1.5b, GA 11.6b, GA 11.6d, GA 12.6b, GA 12.6c, GA.12.6d, GA 12.6e



## Appendix B: Resolutions according to topic

### B. 1 Definitions of topics and other codes

<b>Term</b>	<b>Explanation</b>
n.a.	No information available, e.g. the sponsor of the resolution was not clearly stated
<b>Outcome/input</b>	
Outcome	Everything where the intention is to change something in the output of the RSPO. i.e., output means the external action (everything that has a direct effect on external bodies, as well as incl. RSPO members and the earth) taken by RSPO, and the results achieved by this action
Input	Everything that only affects members and the RSPO organisation alone
<b>Stringency/ simplification</b>	
Stringency	All decisions that lead to strengthening the standard meaning it is the best for sustainability, including alternative costs so taking into consideration the current situation as point of departure for measurement
Simplification	Decisions that lower the requirements to comply with the standard
Procedural	Reports on the administrative activities as well as formal processes of RSPO (as in action is taken)
Organisational structure	Everything that affects the organisational chart and membership categories (static) but not the standard directly
<b>Approved/ rejected</b>	
Approved	Resolution is adopted
Rejected	Resolution is denied
Withdrawn (bd)	Resolution was removed before the discussion of this resolution
Withdrawn (ad)	Resolution was removed after the discussion of this resolution

<b>Topics</b>	
Local Society (LS)	Everything that regards people and communities in immediate relation to production
Monitoring (M)	Everything that deals with carrying out surveillance of RSPO members' actions
Scaling (S)	Everything that affects the long-term sustainability/ viability and growth of RSPO directly or indirectly (including demand for CSPO)
Carbon environment (CE)*	Everything that has to do with greenhouse gases
Environment (E)*	Everything that regards environment excluding greenhouse gases
Branding (B)	Everything that regards the image of RSPO externally
Organisational Structure (OS)	Everything that affects the organisational chart and membership categories (static) but not the standard directly
Procedural (P)	Everything which reports on the administrative activities as well as formal processes of RSPO (as in action is taken)
Smallholder (SH)	Everything that mentions smallholders

\*For clarity; we differentiate between Environment and Carbon Environment, as we initially thought the focus within the RSPO lies on Carbon Environment due to issues such as the peatlands. However, our research has shown that other environmental aspects such as more general biodiversity are addressed as well, which is why we added this category of environment in our second round of coding.

## B. 2 Resolutions coded by topic

# of resolution	Title	Year	outcome/input	stringency/simplification	approved / rejected	Topic (LS, M, S, OS, CE, E, P, B)	Proposed by
GA 1.4	To elect the first Executive Board of RSPO	2004	input	stringency	approved	OS	n.a.
GA 1.5	Stimulating the demand for sustainable palm oil	2004	outcome	OS	rejected	S, B	Reiner de Man
GA2.3	To adopt article on Honorary membership category	2005	input	procedural	approved	P	n.a.
GA2.4	To adopt the RSPO Principles & Criteria for Sustainable Palm Oil Production	2005	input	stringency	approved	LS, M, S, CE, E, SH	n.a.
GA 2.5	To develop a Verification Working Group to work on the process for verification of the P&C	2005	input	stringency	approved	M	n.a.
GA 2.6	To discuss a 'Draft Code of Conduct' for RSPO Members (i.e. 'rest of the supply chain')	2005	input	stringency	withdrawn (bd)	B, P	n.a.
GA 2.7	To adopt Article on membership fees, subscriptions, collection & defaulting	2005	input	stringency	approved	P	n.a.
GA 2.8.1	The need for a taskforce on smallholders' proposal	2005	input	stringency	approved	SH, OS	Sawit Watch, Migros, New Britain Palm Oil Ltd, The Body Shop International and WWF Switzerland
GA 2.8.2	Minimum riverine buffer zone for oil palm plantings	2005	outcome	stringency	rejected	E	Saraya Co Ltd
GA 2.8.3	Ban on oil palm plantings on steep slopes	2005	outcome	stringency	rejected	E	Borneo Orangutan Survival (BOS) Foundation & Global Environment Centre
GA3.6	Adopt the members' Code of Conduct	2006	input	stringency	approved	P, B, M	n.a.

GA3.7	To adopt a new Financial Protocol for RSPO (approval of auditor)	2006	input	stringency	approved	P	n.a.
GA3.8	To adopt RSPO verification protocol	2006	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
GA3.9.1	Appeal to RSPO to adopt patronage of pilot study	2006	outcome	stringency	approved	E, B	PanEco
GA3.9.2	Technical Committee on Biodiversity	2006	input	stringency	approved	E, OS	International Finance Corporation
GA3.9.3	Buyers/consumers to pay for auditing, certification and verification of claims by RSPO certified producers	2006	outcome	simplification	rejected	P	MPOA
GA3.9.4	Restructuring RSPO membership subscription for smaller players & smallholders	2006	input	simplification	withdrawn (ad)	SH, P, S	MPOA
GA3.9.5	Staggered terms of EB members	2006	input	stringency	approved	P	WWF Switzerland
GA3.10.1	Grievance procedure	2006	input	stringency	withdrawn (bd)	P	n.a.
GA 3.10.2	New membership category: Honorary Membership	2006	input	OS	approved	OS	n.a.
GA 3.10.3	RSPO Vision and Mission	2006	input	stringency	approved	P	n.a.
GA 4.6	To adopt the RSPO Principles & Criteria - 2007 revised edition	2007	outcome	stringency	approved	LS, E, CE, S, M, SH	n.a.
GA 4.7	To adopt the proposal for EURO500 Ordinary Membership subscription fees for palm oil producers/growers of up to 499 ha in size	2007	input	simplification	approved	S, SH, P	MPOA
GA 5.3 (1)	Wetland international "A moratorium on palm oil from tropical peatlands"	2008	outcome	stringency	withdrawn (bd)	CE, E	Wetlands International
GA 5.3 (2)	Oxfam international resolution add to the Code of Conduct that member specify their commitment through the annual communication of progress	2008	input	stringency	approved	M	Oxfam International, IOI Group, Kulim, Sawit Watch, WWF International
GA 5.3	WWF International Procedure to assure	2008	outcome	stringency	approved	M, E,	WWF International, NBPOL

(3)	Compliance with RSPO P&C concerning New Plantings					SH, S, B	
GA 5.3 (4)	PanEco on Tripa Forest.	2008	outcome	stringency	approved	CE, E, LS, M	PanEco
GA 6..0	GHG criteria	2009	outcome	stringency	withdrawn (bd)	CE	MPOA, GAPKI
GA 6.0.0.	New plantings	2009	outcome		withdrawn (bd)	E	MPOA, GAPKI
GA 6.1a	Make RSPO develop a mechanism to ensure that CSPO/CSPKO that is produced by producer members are purchased and utilized by RSPO non-producer member	2009	input	simplification	approved	S, M	MPOA, GAPKI
GA 6.1b	That RPSO require RSPO members not directly involved in the trade e.g. NGOs, banks & investors to commit to actively support and promote CSPO	2009	outcome	stringency	rejected	CE, S, B	MPOA, GAPKI
GA 6.1c	That RSPO commission a working group to establish a system to share the cost of certification for smallholders	2009	input	simplification	approved	SH, P, OS	MPOA, GAPKI
GA 6.1d	That RSPO commission a working group to establish a system to share the costs of certification and verification of new plantings currently borne solely by growers	2009	input	simplification	approved	P, OS	MPOA, GAPKI
GA 6.2	That RSPO establish a Protocol for Development, Review and Amendment of RPSO Standards, Guidelines and Procedures	2009	input	simplification	rejected	M, P	MPOA, GAPKI, IOPRI
GA 6.3	That RSPO adopt new procedures respecting the Rotation and Duration of Presidency of RSPO	2009	input	stringency	rejected	P	MPOA, GAPKI, IOPRI
GA 6.4	That RSPO impose a moratorium on land clearance in the Bukit Tigapuluh Ecosystem	2009	outcome	stringency	approved	E, LS	Sumatran Orangutan Society
GA 6.5	That RSPO establish a working group to provide recommendations on how to deal	2009	outcome	stringency	approved	CE, OS	Wetlands International

	with existing plantations on peatlands						
GA 7.6b	To require 28 days notice for submission of member's GA resolutions	2010	input	procedural	approved	P	n.a.
GA 7.6c	To reduce the requirements for a quorum in the RSPO's statutes and bylaws to thirty five per cent of the ordinary membership	2010	input	simplification	withdrawn (bd)	P	n.a.
GA 7.6d	Preserving integrity of the standard	2010	input	simplification	approved	P	MPOA, GAPKI
GA 7.6e	Ensuring Balance between Producers and Non-Producer Stakeholders	2010	input	stringency	approved	OS	MPOA, GAPKI
GA 7.6f	Postponement of the Implementation and Review of New Planting Procedure (NPP)	2010	outcome	simplification	withdrawn (bd)	M, E	MPOA, GAPKI, FELDA
GA 7.6g	Market support for Sustainable Palm oil production	2010	input	stringency	approved	M, S	GAPKI, MPOA
GA 7.6h	HCV in non-primary forests	2010	outcome	stringency	approved	E, M	Sumatran Orangutan Society
GA 8.6b	New vision and mission statements for the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil	2012	input	stringency	approved	P	n.a.
GA 8.6c	To amend statutes on items related to the RSPO General Assembly and Extraordinary General Assembly	2012	input	simplification	approved	P	n.a.
GA 8.6d	Proposal to amend statutes on items related to the RSPO General Assembly (Title-1)	2012	input	stringency	rejected	P	Unilever and Sawit Watch
GA 8.6e	Proposal to amend statutes on items related to the RSPO General Assembly (Title-2)	2012	input	stringency	withdrawn (ad)	P	Unilever and Sawit Watch
GA 8.6f	Protecting multistakeholder representation at the General Assembly	2012	input	stringency	rejected	P	MPOA (+ indonesian growers)
GA 8.6g	Direct voting for the President of RSPO by the membership & limitation to maximum of two term of presidency	2012	input	stringency	rejected	P	MPOA
GA 8.6h	Enhancing the institutional governance of RSPO	2012	input	procedural	rejected	OS	MPOA

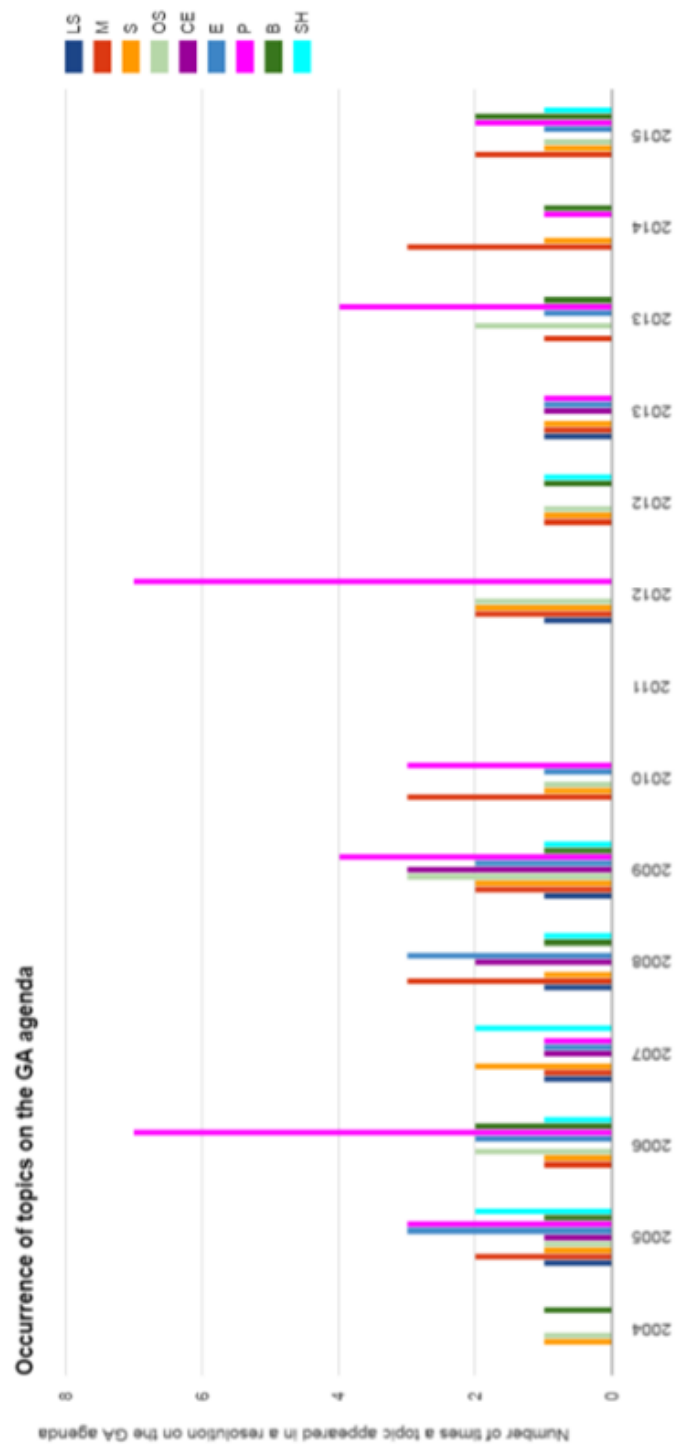
GA 8.6i	Protecting multistakeholder representation in RSPO	2012	input	procedural	withdrawn (bd)	P	MPOA
GA 8.6j	Moratorium on RSPO certification	2012	outcome	simplification	rejected	S	MPOA
GA 8.6k	No RSPO support for offset mechanism	2012	outcome	stringency	withdrawn (bd)	S	MPOA
GA 8.6l	Creation of new category of ordinary membership for 'transnational companies and organisations'	2012	input	OS	rejected	OS	MPOA, VISIMAS, HSBC and SIAT
GA 8.6m	Request for all RSPO ordinary members to submit time bound plans	2012	input	stringency	approved	M	Zoological Society of London, Conservation International and Flora & Fauna International
GA 8.6n	Elimination in the use of Paraquat and adoption of integrated weed management	2012	outcome	stringency	rejected	LS, M	PAN-AP
GA 9.6b	Proposed amendments to the Article 6.1 of the RSPO by-laws and Article 9 of the RSPO statutes regarding the composition of Executive Boards	2012	input	OS	rejected	OS, SH	Malaysian Palm Oil Association and Indonesian Growers including the co-signatory of Musim Mas, Agro Indomas, Bakrie Sumatera Plantations, Bumitama and Mina Mas (Sime Darby Group)
GA 9.6c	Proposal for RSPO to prioritize concrete steps to address the current low demand for CSPO and to accelerate uptake to ensure continued credibility and sustainability of the RSPO	2012	outcome	stringency	approved	S, B	MPOA, NBPOL, INA Growers' caucus as co-signatory representing INA Growers including Musim Mas, Agro Indomas, Bakrie Sumatera Plantations, Bumitama and Mina Mas (Sime Darby Group)
GA 9.6d	The application of and reporting against relevant Principles and Criteria across all member sectors	2012	input	stringency	approved	M	Agropalma, Carrefour, GEC, NBPOL, Olam International Limited, Oxfam, Platinum Nanochem Sdn Bhd, Sawit Watch, Shell, Solidaridad, Zoological Society of London.
GA EX.5a	Adoption of the RSPO Principles & Criteria (P&C) for Sustainable Palm Oil Production	2013	input	stringency	approved	M, LS, CE, E, S	Indonesian Grower Caucus, MPOA, New Britain Palm Oil, FELDA,

	2013						Unilever, Kraft Foods, AarhusKarlshamn, IOI, Carrefour, Robobank, HSBC, WWF International, Conservation International, Oxfam International, Both Ends, Aldi, Asda; Boots UK; Coles; Coop Switzerland; Delhaize Group; Federation of Migros Cooperatives; Marks & Spencer; Royal Ahold; Sainsbury; Tesco; The Body Shop International; The Co-operative Group; and Waitrose
GA EX5b	Proposed amendments to article 11 of the RSPO statutes and article 12 of the RSPO statutes to allow for electronic voting at RSPO ordinary assembly and extraordinary assembly	2013	input	procedural	withdrawn (bd)	P	n.a.
GA 10.6b	Resolution to regularise the RSPO Statutes by amending and merging the current Statutes and By-Laws	2013	input	procedural	approved	OS, P	n.a.
GA 10.6c	Proposed amendment to the RSPO Statutes to allow for Electronic voting	2013	input	procedural	approved	P	n.a.
Ga 10.6d	Proposed amendment to the RSPO Statutes to allow for Electronic voting (title 2)	2013	input	procedural	withdrawn (bd)	P	n.a.
GA 10.6e	Proposed amendment to the RSPO Code of Conduct	2013	outcome	stringency	rejected	B	Sime Darby
GA 10.6f	Guaranteeing fairness, transparency & impartiality in the RSPO Complaints System	2013	outcome	stringency	approved	OS, P	Sawit Watch, LINKS, PAN-AP, Yayasan Setara
GA 10.6g	Transparency in plantation concession boundaries	2013	input	stringency	approved	M, E	Sumatran Orangutan Society, the World Resources Institute, Agropalma, New Britain Palm Oil and the Zoological Society of London
GA11.6b	Resolution to amend the RSPO Statutes and Code of Conduct	2014	input	procedural	approved	P	n.a.



GA11.6c	Resolution to enable market uptake of physical RSPO certified sustainable palm oil	2014	outcome	simplification	withdrawn (ad)	M, S	Royal Ahold NV, Marks and Spencer
GA11.6d	Resolution to promote wider use of the RSPO trademark	2014	outcome	simplification/stringency	withdrawn	B	n.a.
GA11.6e	Changing reporting period of ACOP and definition of clear reporting rules	2014	input	stringency	approved	M	Rewe Group
GA11.6f	Declaration of mills	2014	input	stringency	approved	M	Unilever
GA12.6b	Resolution to amend the RSPO statutes	2015	input	procedural	approved	P	n.a.
GA12.6c	Resolution to amend the RSPO Code of Conduct	2015	outcome	stringency	approved	B	n.a.
GA12.6d	Revision of the Code of Conduct	2015	input	procedural	approved	P, OS	n.a.
Ga12.6e	Proposed amendment to RSPO Statutes	2015	input	procedural	approved	P	n.a.
GA12.6f	Resolution for a comprehensive smallholder strategy	2015	input	stringency	approved	S, SH	Oxfam
GA12.6g	Resolution to improve the Annual communication of Progress ("ACOP") reporting process	2015	input	stringency	approved	M	Zoological Society of London
GA12.6h	Ensuring quality, oversight and credibility of RSPO assessments	2015	input	stringency	approved	M, B, E	Forest Peoples Programme

## Appendix C: Occurrence of topics on the GA agenda



## Appendix D: Interview Guide

### **Brief introduction to the study:**

This interview is conducted to inform two studies. Our studies explore the internal activities of RSPO as a multi-stakeholder initiative, focusing on which actors and strategies drive the key debates and the work leading to resolutions being tabled. In particular, we are focusing on the debates and resolutions concerning smallholder inclusion, human rights, greenhouse gas emissions and zero deforestation and how these have evolved over time. We are also interested in learning more about the influence of external factors on the mission and activities of RSPO, focusing especially on the emergence of competing standards such as ISPO and MSPO. We believe these are some key issues to investigate, as the degree of balance in stakeholder participation and resulting strategies in promoting different agendas also holds some importance to the perceived legitimacy of RSPO as an MSI.

The questions in this study will therefore focus on your role in furthering these debates and in tabling resolutions at the General Assembly. They will especially revolve around which strategies you and your organisation employ in pushing certain agendas in RSPO and which types of work you undertake in the process of creating and tabling a resolution at the General Assembly.

In bullets:

- We are exploring how actors within RSPO employ different strategies to drive key debates and table resolutions, as well as we look at how external factors drive the agendas within RSPO.
- The questions in this interview therefore focuses on the strategies employed by you and your organisation in furthering your agendas and tabling resolutions at the General Assembly.
- Your participation in this study is voluntary, and you may withdraw at any time. The interviews will be recorded and transcribed. If you wish, you can receive a transcript of this interview.
- We expect the interview to last approximately an hour.

### **Introduction:**

- 1) For the record, do you give consent to be interviewed and recorded?
- 2) Please define your current/previous role/s within the RSPO.
- 3) In your opinion, what is the purpose of RSPO? Do you think it has changed since its inception?
- 4) What is the best way to promote your ideas and interests in RSPO?

### **RSPO as MSI:**

- 5) How does RSPO balance the differing interests of its members? Are there any ways you think it could perform better in this respect?

### **Agenda promotion:**

- 6) The first resolution [name of the organisation] sponsored is [title and year of the resolution the organisation sponsored]. Please explain to us the history about how it emerged and what type of work you did to get it there.  
[Space for other resolutions [name of the organisation] sponsored]
- 7) Have you been successful in proposing all resolutions that you wanted to propose? Why/why not? Has this changed over time? Please elaborate.
  - a) What does it depend on, whether a resolution makes it to the agenda or not?

- i) In your perception, are there certain organisational characteristics that contribute to successfully bringing resolutions to the General Assembly agenda?
- ii) Is there a relation between the content of resolutions and the time you proposed it at?

*Switch of interviewer - app. 30 minutes*

- 8) How do you work to promote the [social/smallholder/GHG/HCV-biodiversity] agenda? Has it changed over time and if so, why?
- 9) Based on meeting minutes from the General Assembly and Board of Governors, we have identified four strategies that are often employed when furthering the smallholder agenda: 1) organisations represent smallholder interests within the RSPO, 2) education of smallholders in the skills and knowledge necessary to obtain RSPO certification, 3) re-defining membership rules to enable the participation of smallholders in the RSPO, and 4) diverting financial resources towards smallholders. Do you recognise these as important to your work on smallholders in RSPO? If yes, would you elaborate?
- 10) Do you think RSPO's definition of sustainability is changing, and (if so) how?

#### **Membership collaboration/tension**

- 11) From which group or membership category do you receive the most support/meet the most opposition in your work to promote your agenda, specifically in terms of your [social/smallholder/GHG/HCV-biodiversity] agenda(s)? Has this changed over time?
  - a) We see that many resolutions are sponsored by several members. You also co-sponsored a resolution in [Year]. When and why do you decide to co-sponsor?

#### **Wrap up**

- 12) Can you please list three (03) events that have been important turning points in RSPO's history? Why were these turning points?
  - a) How (if at all) do you think the emergence of other sustainability standards in the palm oil industry (such as ISPO and MSPO) have affected RSPO's ways of working?
- 13) Do you have any final questions or comments? Are there any questions you think we should be asking that we are not?

## Appendix E: Interview Transcripts

### Appendix E.1: Oxfam (sNGO)

**Interviewer 1:** Just so that we have it also on the recording, do you give your consent to the recording of the interview?

**Oxfam:** Yes, that is all right.

**Interviewer 1:** Then, now that we have the formal stuff handled, could you maybe describe a little bit your current role or your previous roles that you have within the RSPO? So, how you work with the organisation?

**Oxfam:** Yeah. So I'm representing one of the social NGO's in the RSPO board and in a couple of the working groups. There are ten or so such NGO members, and I represent that group together with another social NGO representative in the RSPO board of governors. And I've been representing there since quite a while. Oxfam has been a board member since 2004, and I've been alternate board member and substantive since the beginning. And myself and Oxfam colleagues, both Oxfam Indonesia as well as International Oxfam representatives, have been taking part in the various working groups and task forces working on specific issues such as human rights, smallholders, the whole establishment and review of Principles and Criteria, the complaints panel, etc.

**Interviewer 1:** Ok, that's very interesting. We'll come back to that later. In your opinion, what is the purpose of the RSPO and do you think this has changed since the inception of the organisation?

**Oxfam:** Well, yes. It is changing, or maybe it's not [laughs]. It's maybe rather the way the organisation works in achieving that, and as Oxfam... We've engaged with the RSPO since such a long time because we believe that it is an important vehicle in transforming the sector, the palm oil sector, to sustainable practices. Not the only game in town, there are other ways of influencing that sector transformation but the RSPO is clearly the most prominent one. The RSPO mission to transform the sector, to transform the market so that sustainability becomes the norm, I think has been there for six years or eight years or something, quite a number of years. The way that the interventions by the RSPO have been designed to achieve that mission and vision have been focusing a lot on certification, next to a few other activities including complaints handling. I think increasingly the RSPO is coming to realise that certification has limitations, and smallholders are a particular target group that face those limitations. So in that sense the purpose of the organisation is shifting a little bit, because of the focus it is putting on that specific tool called certification, next to other tools. So, yeah, maybe that's a bit of a long answer to the question but you're asking the question at a quite crucial moment at which the RSPO is redefining its theory of change, and that helps to make a couple of the assumption explicit. And this is one of those, and I think as Oxfam, we're one of the organisations really pushing to do so and to really look at achieving social and environmental impact positively rather than sort of just verifying current practices and certifying these. Which is one way of getting there, but definitely not the single and silver bullet.

**Interviewer 1:** So what would you say then is your best way to promote your ideas and interests in the RSPO? Because you say that it is just not about the certification.

**Oxfam:** Yeah. So again, the official answer there is that the mission is to have a multistakeholder process and multistakeholder engagement to arrive at solutions and verifications of better practices. And that's where clearly certification does fit in. But where... you could do certification just as a technical

instrument, without any multistakeholder engagement, so I think the strength of the roundtable is literally in the name “roundtable”. It is literally a gathering of different stakeholders, working with the same end goal in mind from their specific perspectives, and stakeholder interest, but combining these. And therefore... You know that multi-stakeholder process is really what is crucial for the roundtable success, and maybe that also sort of puts the general assembly, and the resolutions at the general assembly which is part of your question, into a context. The general assembly is the only moment in the year that the organisation is using voting as a means to take decisions, whereas all the other processes are really based on consensus decision making.

**Interviewer 1:** Ok.

**Oxfam:** So going there, bringing resolutions to the GA, is merely a way to get confirmation through a different type of decision making, about things that the organisation should be working on in the following year, or sometimes years, multiple. It is a way of agenda setting for the organisation, but of course a decision by the broad membership through voting, does not necessarily guarantee that what's voted upon is reality the next day.

**Interviewer 1:** So voting is one way, what would you see is the best way for Oxfam to promote the ideas and interest, for their interests, so for example local communities, smallholders etc?

**Oxfam:** Yeah. So, I guess with the previous answer I've indicated that for decisions, even general assembly decisions, to be implemented, you need buy in from other stakeholder groups to actually implement better practices, beneficial to those social groups. And therefore these multi-stakeholder processes are crucial to get an understanding of the business interests, and how business interests and social and environmental interests align, and where maybe there are some carrots and some sticks to make sure that they are more broadly adopted. We as Oxfam we really believe that in this specific context that engagement is crucial. It is a huge sector determined by international trade dynamics, and therefore simply putting a rule is not necessarily gonna lead to the desired effect, unless it is well embedded, well linked to existing business practices or to gradual change in business models rather than imposing a rule that goes against... let's say the economic interest dynamics.

**Interviewer 1:** OK. You mention a lot that it is very much this consensus building, you need to find engagement, so how do you think that the RSPO is balancing these different interests? Is there anything they could perform, maybe, better in?

**Oxfam:** Well, again, truly embracing the MSI approach is key and the typical pressure between the stakeholders in the sector and therefore also in the roundtable is a little bit this game of, “who's the boss?” or do we acknowledge, nobody is? If you see what I mean. So that is in very simple terms. In practice, are the buyers determining the rules? Are the producers determining the rules? Are the NGO's determining the rules? There is a constant, let's say, struggle for power. And in practice, all instances where one of the stakeholders takes or is given too much power, or takes too much power, the solutions turn out to be least effective.

**Interviewer 1:** Ok. Coming back a little bit to the resolutions. When looking at the resolutions that you've sponsored, we saw that you sponsored some already in 2008, then in 2012, 13, and the last one in 15, about the smallholders. Can you maybe explain to us a little bit in general, how does the history, like how does it emerge, like what kind of work do you do when you propose a resolution?

**Oxfam:** There are different ways of arriving at a resolution but I guess your question is what, in my experience, is the best way for a successful resolution.

**Interviewer 1:** Yeah.

**Oxfam:** I'll go into the specifics of the three resolutions and you'll have to remind what they are about exactly. There are three, but I'll say more generally first that we've seen in the past resolutions by individual stakeholder categories, we want the GA to impose a rule for producers to do XY and Z. And usually those type of resolutions came from for example environmental NGOs. Or, we propose that buyers from now on, must do A, B and C, coming from the producers actually demanding something from the market through a resolution. Now, the voting system and the membership composition is such that you'll never get a majority by formulating a resolution from a single category position imposing it on another category. That is simplifying it, but just to illustrate that there is a wrong way of doing it, just before explaining the right way of doing it. Or at least in my experience I've seen the most successful resolutions go through, because they were addressing the interests of different stakeholder groups within a balanced proposal. And still, of course on an issue, that was not properly handed thus far, and the resolution making sure it got tabled and therefore got officially on the agenda and the smallholders strategy resolution 2015 is a good example of that.

But maybe before going there, I'll give you another example which illustrates even more clearly... I don't think it's one of the other two that you mentioned but I think the first resolution that Oxfam submitted basically was built on the observation that we had established principles and criteria so we had basically defined what is sustainable and what is not sustainable. How do we verify that? So the initial certification audit had been done, and there was certified oil available, becoming available on the market. And we saw the effect that the first buyers were hesitant to commit to buying large volumes because they said, well, it's only just starting, we don't want to stick our neck out first, because if we commit to big buying volumes, we're paying the price for that. There is this scarcity, so it is going to be expensive. And the producers on the other side said, well you know, we can produce and certify more, but there is an investment, and there are costs to certification, and we will not certify big volumes until we see that the market is buying big volumes. So actually the two important stakeholder groups of producers and buyers were sort of sitting on the fence, each on their side, saying "if you move, then I'll move". So as Oxfam we were seeing that, and said, "Hold on, you guys both want to move, we definitely want to move, how do we break this stalemate, or how can we speed this up?". And we developed a resolution which in simple terms came down to we propose that you publicly share your commitment for the coming year in terms of your buying and producing volumes. So we proposed what has since been called the "annual communications of progress" in which you report "what have you done last year?" and "what are your plans for the next?" so if you then add up all these plans for the next year, you can predict more clearly where the market is going and where the production volume is going, and you have a better informed decision making and therefore you have a quicker decision making and a quicker change. And since it addressed the needs of those two other stakeholder groups sitting on their respective fences, it got majority support and it helped to move beyond this sort of hesitation phase. So just using that example as an illustration... I mean, we even took like a third party position, clearly from the interest to make the transformation go quicker, but almost mediating between different interests.

And we've seen the same with the smallholder strategy resolution, that is one of the three cases you proposed, where we got different signals from different actors in the market saying "Hmm, hold on, we're doing this certification, but is it providing smallholders with better livelihood perspectives? Is it really benefiting smallholders or is it maybe that we're doing this for the bigger producers and just mitigating the negative impacts of the possible exclusion even of small producers? And that sort concern was emerging, and various stakeholders looked at us in Oxfam, and said "You guys, you should be the first ones to promote a more proactive smallholder inclusion in our systems, rather than preventing exclusion, if you see the difference. And frankly - and that is nice about these types of interviews, that I'll give you a little look into the kitchen of how did we cook up this resolution - I would not have written that resolution if I had not received those signals from different players that there was a need to get this on the table to get this formally acknowledged and addressed. We could have done this differently but there seemed to be this emerging concern and we were in the best position to connect the dots and come up

with a proposal where we basically asked RSPO to start reviewing how it is addressing the needs of smallholders and how to build that in more structurally and more proactively than before.

**Interviewer 1:** When you now for example explain the first resolution and now the smallholder one... The first one you co-sponsored, so there were some growers in there that co-sponsored the resolution, whereas the one about the smallholders in 2015, there was just Oxfam sponsoring it alone.

**Oxfam:** No, no.

**Interviewer 1:** Is there a specific reason for that?

**Oxfam:** No actually both those resolution were led by Oxfam, and co-sponsored by other stakeholders.

**Interviewer 1:** Ah ok. Then that might be something that is not written down in the minutes...

**Oxfam:** Well then what you should do is to go back to the formal resolution text, and that will specify the co-sponsors.

**Interviewer 1:** Ah ok, great. We will do that.

**Oxfam:** They are all on the website, so you can quite easily retrieve them.

**Interviewer 1:** Yeah. Great. Then, we saw that, as Oxfam sponsored several resolutions, has that then been all the resolutions that you've tried to table, or have there been other resolutions that you actually wanted to propose but you couldn't, or maybe, I don't know, something happened on the way?

**Oxfam:** [Laughs] I'll get there, but let me first clarify another point for you. So, there are a couple of board of governor decisions, or rather proposals for decisions. There are a couple of things that the board can prepare but that the general assembly officially needs to approve. So they are within the mandate of the board to prepare, but for the GA to confirm. The most clear example for that is the review of the P&C's. So what happens in practice is that, maybe rather a formality, that what has been prepared in the board is then proposed to the GA and then you see the resolutions where almost a full range of board members is co-sponsoring the resolution. So that is actually a board's resolution to the GA. It looks the same as a members resolution to the GA, but you see that the origin is different.

**Interviewer 1:** Yeah ok, so for example for the adoption of the P&C in 2013, is that what happened? Cause that was a lot of different organisations sponsoring it.

**Oxfam:** Yes exactly. Those are actually the board members. But the board is not in the position to... It does not have the mandate to bring something to the GA, like that, that's done by members. So the members in the board then say "Ok we've agreed this", as a board, "but then as individual members then we'll go through the formality", let's call it like that. So that is important to understand that, where the mandate of the board begins and ends. But the ones that you are more interesting in are those that come up from individual members or from groups of members, like the smallholders strategy and the other two.

**Interviewer 1:** Yeah exactly, and as Oxfam as an organisation for example when you have the plan of proposing something.

**Oxfam:** Yeah, so basically, and that is why I started with those two examples because they illustrate best, you want something to be achieved, and at least you want it to get officially on the agenda, and then the GA scenario is a possible option. But of course you can also get things on the agenda in a different way,



you can release a report, or you can run a public campaign, you know. There are different ways to make sure that an issue is coming on to the agenda. Or you can collaborate with another organisation that issues a critical report and then everybody sort of gets into panic, and then you can sometimes see that there is an interplay between so called outsider NGO's and insider NGO's. You know Greenpeace, or Rainforest Action Network, they raise an issue, they are not RSPO members but they are seen by members as influential so they wanna act on it and they see RSPO as a way to address that, and then WWF and Oxfam and other insider NGO members actually have even a better position in the negotiation because there is this external pressure. So there is always this interplay between stakeholder groups. Just telling you that to illustrate that sometimes the GA provides the right forum, but in many other cases not. So maybe to reflecting the question, the real answer is, if you really need a formal, broad membership confirmation that something needs to be done, then you go the GA route.

You're asking me if we have considered resolutions and not submitted them, or withdrawn them. I don't think I remember of an example of that happening, but the question is interesting. It could indeed have happened. For example, and it is more theoretically, but it is illustrating how we've been considering this, for example if what we wanted to call for in a resolution was already adopted before the general assembly even took place, triggered by another event, or a resolution and we've seen examples of that in the past where we've been consulted like "Would you want to sign on to this resolution?" and I've said "well I'm not so sure, I'd like to support you, but my advice would be, instead of getting even more NGO's to sign on, can you get a retailer or a bank, or a prominent brand manufacturer to sign on? That will increase your chances of getting your resolutions adopted, much more than having Oxfam and WWF and Conservation International, and you know... All sorts of NGO signing on." In line with what I said earlier, an all NGO resolution, is less likely to be adopted.

**Interviewer 1:** So besides, I mean of course it helps if you have different stakeholders onboard, but is there any other... I don't know, does it depend on who sponsors the resolution or, is it what you said before, external pressure, what other characteristics are there besides the more stakeholder groups are involved the better, in order to make a resolution successful?

**Oxfam:** Yeah well, comparing to parliament, and I guess your parliament and ours in the Netherlands have the same similarities in that... You sometimes have these proposals brought forward in parliament that get supported by a broad coalition of political parties, but it depends which political party brings it forward. It could be the same sort of message, but its origins can make a difference in its credibility or in other seeing it as a call with a hidden agenda, informed by who's the messenger. So I think the same applies in the RSPO general assembly. It depends on which brand company or which grower is signing on to your resolution. We've had quite a number of resolutions brought forward by the Indonesian growers and the Malaysian growers, but without any grower from the rest of the world and the smaller producing countries, and that automatically raises suspicion. Is this just a coalition between the two biggest producer countries? Well, the proposal might be very relevant and important. The sender and the combination of senders, already make people look at it differently, with more trust, or less trust, if you like.

**Interviewer 1:** That's indeed very interesting. OK, thank you very much for your answers. Interviewer 2 now has a few more questions for you.

**Oxfam:** Okay.

**Interviewer 2:** Hi [respondent's name], I'll shift a little bit away from the resolutions that AC has been focusing a lot on. And I would like to ask you generally, how do you as a person and you in Oxfam, work to promote the smallholder as well as the human rights agenda in the RSPO?

**Oxfam:** Wow, yeah that's a very broad question. But you're asking for the how, isn't it?

**Interviewer 2:** Yes, and whether it has changed over time as well. So, the different methods so to say.

**Oxfam:** Yeah, yeah, yeah. I'll start answering that on smallholder issues because that is maybe most illustrative. And attached to what I said before maybe, that we're shifting the attention in RSPO a little bit and as Oxfam we've been pushing for that shift among others through that resolution. We came into RSPO knowing that the sector needed big changes and that we needed to define criteria that largely applied but also, with the experience from other sectors and other certification schemes, that certification is not always helpful for small producers, in many many cases actually, it promotes those that are going well already, and excludes those that cannot meet the high level of requirement. So we acknowledge the need to establish the standard and certification etc, but also, tried to at least mitigate the negative impact it could have on those huge numbers of smallholders in the sector. So in hindsight you can say that the most achievable strategy at that point in time was preventing exclusion. Now, years have gone by, and facts have proven that the involvement of smallholders in the RSPO systems is not as high as its involvement in the sector globally. So in a way, you could say that the prevention of exclusion has not worked effectively, or has not worked to the extent needed. And Oxfam of course has been signaling that throughout the years a couple of times, but we're only reaching now a stage where there is like significant acknowledgement and support for moving from the prevention of exclusion to the promotion of inclusion and that is reflected in that resolution calling for a comprehensive strategy rather than further fine tuning the certification. No, we said -and that's actually the outcome of this resolution one and a half year later. There is a strategy to be finalised and confirmed, but there is a strategy that now looks at the not just better certification but also what happens before certification, and what happens beyond certification, so I call that the triple B. Before, better and beyond. And that is a quick summary to explain, what happened after that resolution. And reflecting on that I think that is a nice outcome of what we called for, we purposely left it very open of what the solution would need to be, although we had our own ideas about it, as Oxfam and as co-sponsors of the resolution. We didn't want to impose a solution, we just wanted that resolution to signal a problem. And to signal a need for taking a step back, and looking at, "what are we doing here? Are we doing the right thing? And are we doing what we're doing in the right way?" But first of all, "Are we still doing the right thing?" No, we could be doing more than just one thing, and we should acknowledge that there are more tools in the box that we could be and should be applying. There is this saying which goes, "if the only tool that you have is a hammer, you start seeing everything as a nail". And in the case of RSPO there has been a lot of focus on that single tool called certification. And therefore we try to hammer everything, we try to fix everything, with nails, instead of at looking at additional intervention strategies. Now that for the smallholders is changing, and there are more tools available in the box, or at least the acknowledgement of the need to apply more tools from the possible toolbox.

**Interviewer 2:** So it seems like what you're saying is that you in Oxfam really try to represent smallholder interests and the whole smallholder agenda within the RSPO, as well as try to redefine a little bit how the RSPO actually works with this agenda.

**Oxfam:** Yeah.

**Interviewer 2:** But we have browsed through the meeting minutes from the BoG and the GA and also some of the working groups, and we thought we can identify that both Oxfam but also RSPO as a whole work a lot with educating of smallholders in the skills that they need to live up to the standards, and also in diverting some financials resources towards supporting them. Do you recognize these as important tools?

**Oxfam:** ...There was a long silence before he answered [laughs]... Ehm, yes and and no. I think, and you are not to blame for that, but if you look at the minutes only, you see like this sort of official and sort of technocratic output from the processes. I guess from what I've told you so far, I'm not telling you a secret

now if I'm saying that a lot of what we're doing in terms of influencing the RSPO and influencing the sector is done more unofficially, behind the scenes, more lobby and advocacy based, than through technocratic tools. These of course play a role, and if you look at official documents and websites and so, you see a lot of it translated into technical guidances and to financial mechanisms and it all looks like a machine. But, uhm, how to put it... You see the machine, but you don't see the design process that has let to the machine. And frankly, I've also found that dealing with the private sector, it helps a lot if you can translate fundamental, sort of rights based, human rights issues and concerns, and moral and ethical topics, in to technocracy. Because that is, you know, what they can deal with in the private sector. If you translate high level principles into something that looks like a tool, then it is much easier to apply than when you have to be ethical. What does that mean?

**Interviewer 2:** Yeah.

**Oxfam:** You get the point?

**Interviewer 2:** Yeah I think so. It has to make sense to business I guess, for them to really be able to work with it.

**Oxfam:** Yeah and of course not to undermine any of the sort of tools or the financial mechanisms that have been established... the resulting tools, they're fine, but if your conclusion is that Oxfam's role has to been to establish those, well that is then only a part of the picture.

**Interviewer 2:** Ok, I see. And now that you're speaking of human rights, that is also something I wanted to talk to you about. And again as you mention, we've look a lot on the meeting minutes, but for some of the people we talk with, they also agree with that a lot of the work takes place behind the stage, which is also why it is so great to talk to you and confirm or see if some of our conclusions are not right. So, in terms of human rights, you talked a little bit about translating principles into tools for certain players, in a sense of educating them maybe in how to handle this.

**Oxfam:** Yeah, true.

**Interviewer 2:** We see that we identify that the creation of the human rights working group in the past years might also enable the human rights debate, and really shift focus towards that. And also monitoring and sanctioning members through the complaints mechanisms which you talked about in the beginning of our conversation. And then also, we've noticed, especially in the talk that has been about HCV, that at some point someone pointed out that we should also look at the social HCV and not just the environmental. Do you recognize these things that this is something that has been done in the RSPO?

**Oxfam:** Yeah. So you're listing a number of observations and conclusions and I think you're right on all of them. Maybe the most clear example, illustrating also my last point is the guidance on "free prior and informed consent", FPIC. That is typically translating a principle of, you know the right to say yes or no to the development on your land, into technical tools, education members of how to apply that high level principle, and how to do that in practice and how to look at respecting the rights and respecting the people that of course have the human rights. On HCVs, it is probably the same, and there is another dynamic that comes into the picture. It is, whether we like it or not, but we have noticed that often as social NGOs, the story of dealing with environment is slightly more technical than how to deal with people. I sometimes say jokingly: "The trees they don't talk back when you decide about them, but the people they do! And they have different opinions!" You can quite easily say that all the trees they have the same interest, while people don't.

That is simplifying things, but it illustrates that the dealing with people is more complicated than dealing with environmental issues, and you can deal to a large extent with environmental issues by

tackling them technically. At least that is what you would think, but then again we know, you know, climate change and deforestation and so, also have very very clear economic approaches that determine how they go. And the fires and the haze problem, conserving high carbon stocks and conserving ecosystem functions cannot be done without looking at the factors that leads to the not so desired practices. Why do people burn their land? Why do people kill orangutans? Why do people cut trees? Why do... Yeah, I can go on for long. Why do people grab other people's land? Questions simply asked, but difficult to answer unless you go really into what drives people to take these decisions. What are their survival mode or what are their profit making motives, what systems are fair and which systems are corrupt? So there is a lot that goes on in play behind that, and therefore you see in practice that often it is easier to address the environmental and technical side of things first and then say "hold on, but if we're doing this, people might be affected? What is the social side of this anyway? And if we've saved all the trees, mind you, there might be people who actually don't want these trees at all or who want to protect yet another tree because it represent their great grandfather. And then the tree is not just there for its ecological value, but for it actually has a very strong cultural value because the community considers the tree, the graves of their ancestors for example. But, like I said, whether you like it or not, we as social NGO's have encountered that quite often, that the social perspectives come second. But, at least, you know, our environmental NGO friends they clear the way for us and then we can follow on quite quickly.

**Interviewer 2:** It is good to see that you're doing such hard work to further the debate. Just a little bit about... Because obviously we've read something about the complaints mechanism and the complaints panel which you mentioned earlier in the RSPO. So we have, I guess you can say a crude question, but just out of interest, out of curiosity of your opinion, do you think that the RSPO should be the Palm Oil Police in a sense, in terms of both environmental and social well being?

**Oxfam:** Good crude question. And a one that has been asked before. Of course the answer can be quite crude and I could say "Yes!". Of course, if we set up a system called RSPO, rules that we've all developed together, you know, the least we should do is to enforce those rules and be very strict about them and so on. So that is the "Yes"-side of the answer. The "Maybe not" side of the answer is, we must be cautious in the mandate that we actually give ourselves. So you know, we can walk into the streets of Copenhagen and say: "From today on, we are the police of this street" but, hold on, who gave you that authority?

**Interviewer 2:** Yeah, yeah.

**Oxfam:** So that is something to be cautious about. And of course, the even more important consideration is that if you are very very on strict rules, and applying those rules, without consideration of know "Why did you kill your husband?" "Well, he was beating me.".... There is always a more complicated story behind, and in the case of palm oil, do we want as RSPO, to have a small number of members who all meet a very high standard, and then be happy about the few well-performing ones? Or do we want a true sector transformation in which we can say, "We've also taken our neighbour onboard in at the end of the day, involved a large majority of the sector to start operating sustainably, and sustainable palm oil has become the norm, not just the nicely polished certified exception"? So if the goal of the organisation is the sector, as in mainstreaming sustainability in the sector, and it is, than you should also be realistic about applying carrots and sticks. And that means you sometimes also have to be a little bit cautious in being too harsh on members. So if you can, you know, punish a member fairly, saying, you know "we put you in the corner of the classroom for five minutes and you think of what you have been doing, and then you come back and then you start apologizing and then you start cleaning the mess that you have made", we'd been more effective than saying "You've been dismissed from school".

**Interviewer 2:** Yeah, absolutely. So it is a balance, really, it sounds like.

**Oxfam:** Yes. And then I go back to the first question, which is “YES!”. I think in the past we’ve been too soft. And I say “we”, as RSPO. But as Oxfam I can clearly say, we’ve not been successful in assuring the most stringent application of rules and need it, without saying that... and this is the “maybe no” part of the question... without being unrealistic or unproductive or ineffective.

**Interviewer 2:** I see. This is all very interesting what you’re saying, and I would like to in a sense tie what we’ve just talked about together with some of the points we talked about when we asked you some questions about resolutions and co-sponsoring. Because we’re wondering if there is a specific group or membership category that Oxfam receives a lot support from or even meet a lot of opposition from in the work you do to promote both the smallholder agenda and the human rights aspect?

**Oxfam:** That is a difficult one.

**Interviewer 2:** you’re allowed to think about it for a bit if you want!

**Oxfam:** Yeah, look... If all what we wanted was achieved smoothly, we would not be sitting there for so long. We would have moved on long time ago, because it was accepted and done and fine and improved and we would move on and focus on soy or cocoa or.. Anyway, we could have... But we haven’t. So apparently what we want to achieve has not been achieved yet, or in full, or as quick as we impatiently would have wanted. I think that the big challenge is not so much that within the RSPO there is a lot of resistance, although of course there is always a little bit of resistance from producers to implement far reaching and somewhat costly measures, there is resistance from buyers to pay extra because externalities have gotten internalized into the product and therefore also into the cost of the product, so we continue to push, both on the market side as well as on the production side. And sometimes we push in a friendly way, and sometimes we push in a more aggressive way, and sometimes there is the “Oxfam behind the brands”-campaign which is more aggressive style of publicly ranking companies on a scale in the food and beverage sector of who is performing better or worse than others. And that we do to create dynamics and what we call a race to the top. And while talking about that, that is a typical example of doing things more in the public sphere and also mobilizing consumers or the general public in support of that.

Sometimes we’re more diplomatic and behind the scenes, and advocating, and finding allies, and so on. It is always a mix of interventions, and therefore, you know I hesitate to answering your question a little bit because yeah, probably in a way if we would look at this always from the perspective of “Where is the resistance?”, I would become quite pessimistic. And I’m more inclined to think in terms of “Where are the opportunities?”, where do we align well, and we’ll come back again to the most illustrative third resolution: If retailers call me up and say: “[respondent’s name], there is this issue with the smallholders, we really think something needs to be done but we are hesitant to put something forward, but can we suggest you do that? We’ll help! We’ll give you input, we’ll co-sponsor it, but would you mind taking the lead?” And yeah, that is a beautiful moment, isn’t it? They acknowledge that we are seen as being able to lead on that topic and represent it well. And you know the game is played in such a way that the result is guaranteed almost before going to the voting.

**Interviewer 2:** so it sounds like it really changes a lot who supports you or who are opposed to you, or who wants you to mediate something?

**Oxfam:** Yeah. And call me naive, and this is going back to my very first point, but I try to at least at the personal level be friendly with everybody. We may have tough fights, but we some times in Oxfam call this the “critical friend approach”. If you go out drinking with us on a Friday night, we may come up with some tough questions about your performance or your behaviour or your ethics or your moral and you may even at some point in the bar dislike the fact that we asked the question, but the next morning you’ll think “Oh, he had a point. He made me think.”. It can also be going to the bar and talk rubbish, you know.

So that is why we apply this term “Critical friend”, we bring it friendly, we bring it constructive, but we don’t hesitate to bring up the critical issues.

**Interviewer 2:** That sounds like a good strategy, I think. To wrap up a little bit [respondent’s name], can you think of three specific events that have been important turning points in the history of RSPO? And you’re also allowed to take some thinking time for this one. It’s a difficult question!

**Oxfam:** It is a really... Wow, yeah... And then I have to explain all the events?

**Interviewer 2:** Well you can just explain why you thought they were important.

**Oxfam:** I’ll be a little bit selfish: The one event I’ve told you already: The Oxfam resolution that I explained about the annual communication of progress, where the various parties were sitting on the fence, I think that was a beautiful moment, especially from our perspective of playing our role cleverly. And for speeding up the second transformation, that was a good moment. So that is a positive example.

We’ve also had a few crisis moment in the RSPO, and there is also this approach of “never waste a good crisis”, so we’ve had a couple of fights which have also been turned into opportunities... What is the best example? There are a couple of those moments of course... Without going into too much detail, we had the infamous Indonesian grower walk out in one of the general assemblies, where the Indonesian producers very clearly stated “We feel that higher standards are imposed upon us, and we feel we have not been properly heard and our interests have not been properly taken into account”. And that was an important moment of empowerment of Indonesian producers who’ve always been a little bit sidelined, so I guess that is a crucial moment.

So you ask me to mention three. Maybe, and now I go back very far, the establishment of the Roundtable, the few organisations, well before my time, that came to realising that “we’ve got a problem that is so big, and none of us can solve it on our own, so we better do it together”. And that created the roundtable.

**Interviewer 2:** Yes, indeed. Do you think that the emergence of the other sustainability standards on the palm industry, such as the national ones, ISPO and MSPO, have affected the RSPO, at all?

**Oxfam:** Yes, of course they have. I think initially those were seen as competitors, and I think crucially important was the realisation that, and that maybe fits in that description of before certification, better certification and beyond certification, that part of the sector cannot be reached by the RSPO, and its high level goals, and that stepwise approach does help the sector at large, and the transformation of it. So, I think the general acknowledgement now is that these systems can be complementary. That can still mean there is some friction, but there is a healthy tension between them.

**Interviewer 2:** Do you think that the ISPO and the MSPO will keep become redundant in the future?

**Oxfam:** No I don’t think they will. I think they will also move up their level of requirement, but there will always be in any sector a diverse crowd of early adopters and late adopters and early followers, late followers, laggards... You will always have that playing field in which you have different speeds, different starting points... So a multitude of approaches and multiple tools will always be needed if you talk about entire sectors to change.

**Interviewer 2:** Yeah, alright. Wow, thank you so much for all your input, very valuable! We’re at the end of our questioning line. Do you have any other questions or comments for us, or is there anything you’d like to tell us that we haven’t asked you about?

**Oxfam:** Well, I guess you probably have many more questions and we could talk a lot longer, but I have to go, and maybe you also have to go, so I'm glad I've been helpful and that I've possibly have triggered some thoughts and some insights. So I look forward to the results of your research, I'm quite keen to see the overall results, at some point. If you run into specific short questions that you want to shoot at me through email, don't hesitate to do so. If you want me to check conclusions that you derive from the transcripts, you know where to find me, and also, don't forget to share your final reports, because that will also help me understand what you have picked up from other important conversations. I hope multistakeholder process works there as well.

**Interviewer 2:** [Laughs] We will see.

**Oxfam:** Let's hope so. Good luck with the further follow-up, nice to talk to you.

**Interviewer 2 & Interviewer 1:** Bye bye.

## Appendix E.2: Solidaridad (sNGO)

**Interviewer 1:** We would like to record and transcribe the interviews, is that okay with you?

**Solidaridad:** Yeah that's fine with me.

**Interviewer 1:** Alright, thank you very much. And you can ask us for a transcript of the interview if you like.

**Solidaridad:** Okay.

**Interviewer 1:** Okay, and I'll hand the word to my colleague Interviewer 2.

**Interviewer 2:** Yes. Let's just - we're just gonna double check that the recording is up and running. It's good, great. So just then for the record: Do you give your consent to be interviewed and recorded?

**Solidaridad:** Yes.

**Interviewer 2:** Thank you. So could you please define your current and also previous roles within the RSPO?

**Solidaridad:** Well I work with Solidaridad West Africa, I'm based in Ghana. And I sometimes participate in the Smallholder Working Group meetings in Malaysia. But for the last two years I have not participated physically. But I do send my comments, if any, or discussions during those meetings.

**Interviewer 2:** Okay, great. And also just so we have that, you are the oil palm manager of West Africa for Solidaridad, right?

**Solidaridad:** Yes.

**Interviewer 2:** Great. So how would you say that the RSPO balances the different interests of its members and are there any ways you think they could perform this, do this better?

**Solidaridad:** Well I'll say that normally RSPO communicates with members through their website. Normally, information includes issues for public consultations at the website and then in some cases emails are sent to members to be aware of maybe consultation issues at our website, then you visit and you contribute towards the discussion. So normally that's how RSPO communicates with their members. In some of the countries we have task forces. So RSPO also sends mails to the Secretariats of their task forces and then members are informed of activities going on. And then during the RSPO conferences, before RSPO, any RT, issues are circulated, and especially through the RSPO website, for people to bring their ideas, their comments. This is how RSPO really communicates with its members.

**Interviewer 2:** And that's also the way they balance the interest then of the members, that's through this structure that you just described.

**Solidaridad:** Yes. If members really have issues, they can officially send a mail to the RSPO Secretariat to the right people, those [inaudible 4:28, sounds like 'who have'] membership there, so you have



Greenhouse Gas Working Committee, so depending on the issue, you can send an email to the right people at the Secretariat for consideration.

**Interviewer 2:** Great, interesting. So now we want to talk a little bit about how you, from Solidaridad, how you promote your agenda, and we know that Solidaridad has sponsored one resolution so far in the history of the RSPO and it's on the General Assembly number nine in 2012, and it was called 'The Application of and Reporting against Relevant Principles and Criteria across all Member Sectors'. So if you would please explain to us the history of how that resolution came up and how it emerged and what kind of work you did to get it onto the General Assembly agenda.

**Solidaridad:** Which resolution are you - the one that was done last year?

**Interviewer 2:** It was in 2012. We've seen in the meeting minutes that you were co-sponsoring, or co-signatories, of a resolution on, that regarded the application of and reporting against relevant principles and criteria across all member sectors.

**Solidaridad:** 2012?

**Interviewer 2:** Yes.

**Solidaridad:** I am not aware of that one.

**Interviewer 2:** Okay.

**Solidaridad:** But what we do is, because, Solidaridad has offices in Africa, Latin America. We have Solidaridad representation on some of the RSPO taskforces. So what we do is we collect comments from each region. And then our representative on the RSPO Board, or on the RSPO Committee, will then officially send mail to, or not a mail but an official letter to the RSPO Secretariat about our stand. Because we normally work with smallholders. We work a lot with smallholder farmings. Very few plantations. So if there are issues about the RSPO P&C, that's what really affects smallholders, then we come out to officially report to RSPO that 'yes, we are working with the smallholders on the ground, and we believe that with this you're... with the P&C, if it's, the way it stands, if nothing is done about it then it will end up marginalising smallholder farmings'. And most of the time, the RSPO P&C takes into considerations happenings in Indonesia or let's say Southeast Asia without the African context. So we in Africa, based on the situation on the ground, we also tell our colleagues in the Netherlands, who really deal directly with the RSPO Secretariat. We send our comments, present issues to them. And then they can send official letters to the Secretariat.

**Interviewer 2:** Okay. So you're very involved in the task force work it sounds like?

**Solidaridad:** Yes, on the smallholder. But in Ghana I serve as a Secretariat to the National Interpretation Task Force. So anytime the RSPO P&C is reviewed, or is revised, I have to get industry people together for us to also revise the national interpretation.

**Interviewer 2:** And how would you, for Solidaridad how useful would you say the promotion of resolution is for you to get your agenda through?

**Solidaridad:** For us we see it as very, very important. If we don't send such resolutions, then some of the RSPO P&Cs would be, I mean, would stay as it is, and then our people would not be able to go through the RSPO certification. So for example last year, we sent a resolution on the new planting procedures for smallholders. We have to really act [for it] to be suspended because the NPP for smallholders, the procedures were not so clear. So we said, you know, 'if we allow it to go as it stands, then our smallholders will not be able to go through the RSPO certification, they'll be marginalised'. So then we have to really let the RSPO know, based on our experience on the ground with smallholder farmers. So for us, resolutions are really, really important, because if you don't really act fast, and it's accepted as the [inaudible 9:30] reason then it's difficult for you to repress it. So for us it's really important. You have issues, once you have a case then we have to really put it across and get support from other RSPO members to get it done.

**Interviewer 2:** So you proposed one last year and then we have seen this in 2012, how come Solidaridad hasn't proposed more earlier during the existence of RSPO?

**Solidaridad:** Well I can't - that one is difficult for me, because I joined Solidaridad only in 2010, I got involved in RSPO activities 2010-2011. So, maybe there were no issues, and we started getting actively involved in RSPO activities in Ghana around, in 2012, let me say 2012, as part of our oil palm program. Because earlier we didn't have funding to really be on the ground, work with people, go through the P&C. Yes, we supported the national interpretation process, but the actual implementation on the ground we were really not involved. But we've always got to be involved, we realised that 'no, there are issues we need to look at, or else we will not be able to comply, I mean, actors and the NGOs will not be able to comply with the standard'. So you know, until you start implementing the RSPO standard, you may not see the challenges on the ground, for it to be amended. Maybe we didn't start earlier because we started the certification process late, so that's why earlier we didn't maybe send any resolution or any complaints.

**Interviewer 2:** Ah, okay. So, would you say then that the ones, when you've tried to, have you been successful in proposing all the resolutions that you wanted to propose? And if so, why or why not? And has this changed over time, from as long as you've been in the organisation?

**Solidaridad:** Please come again, I didn't really get your question well.

**Interviewer 2:** So the question is, I think it's just a clarification from what you said earlier, but if you - so every time RSPO, sorry, Solidaridad wants to propose a resolution, you have been able to do so? Or have there been any obstacles in order to propose resolutions to the General Assembly agenda?

**Solidaridad:** Normally it's not only Solidaridad, because we do get other people on board with us, it's not only us working with smallholders or working in the sector. So what we do is, once we've identified a case we also ask other people in other regions whether they're also facing the same problem, and then together we put the resolution together.

**Interviewer 2:** Okay...

**Solidaridad:** [interrupts Interviewer 2] If we are alone, we won't get enough support, but we need the support of all other RSPO members, other environmental NGOs, social NGOs, growers themselves. So we look at the issue, the issues affecting the most people. Then we believe that we have a case, and then we can rally other people to really send a resolution to RSPO.

**Interviewer 2:** That's interesting. So then would you say that - because we've noticed that some resolutions are sponsored only by one organisation, and sometimes the ones we've seen from Solidaridad they're co-sponsored with large groups. Would you say that - what does it depend on whether a resolution makes it to the agenda or not? Is it because of their organisational characteristics of the member that is proposing, or is it more a matter of the content of the resolutions and the time, like the year you propose it at?

**Solidaridad:** I think normally it has to do with the issue at stake. Because for example the last year one on NPP [inaudible 13:55] is affecting all smallholders. And since we have smallholders in Southeast Asia, Latin America, Africa, everywhere, we could just get a lot of people to really agree with us because it was going to affect most people. So the whole thing has to do with the issue at stake. Because some point to have negative impact in other areas, then you get people to support you. But if it's just going to offend only few people, minorities, already Africa is part of the Rest of the World, we are [inaudible 14:28]. But I'm sure if it had been only an African issue, maybe we wouldn't have had a lot of people supporting this whole NPP procedure for smallholders. As the cause is going to affect all smallholders wherever they are located, that's how come we got even the growers to support us. So it has to do with the issue and not the company or the NGO behind it. The issue at stake.

**Interviewer 2:** Okay, great, thanks.

**Interviewer 1:** [respondent's name], I would like to ask you a little bit more about the types of work that you do, since you at Solidaridad work a lot with smallholders in the smallholder working group and also, it seems, with the more social agenda in the RSPO. You've already talked a little bit about it, but could you maybe tell me something else about how you work to promote the smallholders and the social agenda in your organisation?

**Solidaridad:** So as part of promoting sustainable oil palm production, we have an oil palm program that we are implementing in Ghana, Nigeria, and Cote d'Ivoire. Our ultimate is to integrate smallholders into the sustainable supply chain. So for us to do that we are going to be using RSPO certification. And for us to be able to get certified, we really need to comply with all the principles and criteria related to smallholders. So if the smallholder document is too cumbersome, you cannot go through the certification process, then we need to really let RSPO know that there are a few issues that must be resolved in the P&C that will Africa to go through the certification process. When you look at the RSPO smallholder document, that is the certification, group certification document for independent smallholders, they're talking about a minimum size of 500 hectares for a smallholder. My country, Ghana, 500 hectares you have a large plantation. We are working with smallholders with very, very small acreages. One hectare, two hectares, three hectares, five hectares. So you realise that some of the things that they are asking for do not really apply. So normally we bring in the African context for them to understand that if you are doing it this way, it won't work for African farmers. So we try and really influence, not influence, but we try to make sure that the standard that comes out for smallholders will really apply in the African context as well. Not only in Southeast Asia. So when we're implementing smallholder, varying smallholder farmers in Africa towards RSPO certification. And a lot of the lessons we have learnt feeds back into the review of the smallholder document. Currently we are still fighting over land titles. You know, you go to the document and the document is asking for land titles for, I meant the farmer should have a land title. If you come to my country, Ghana, having a land title can take you more than ten years. And you have farmers that are not farming on their own lands, but they have leased the land. So there's no way they can get land title. Already, that issue has to be resolved. In our national interpretation, we are saying that if you have a user right, that should be accepted by the certification body. So we are still discussing with RSPO Secretariat, that must be accepted, they shouldn't limit in the, at the discretion of the certification body. No. Now the certification body will state 'I want to see land title', and they are coming - they are

not coming from Africa, they are coming from Indonesia, Malaysia. So maybe Indonesia, Malaysia getting a land title, it's easy. But in my country, Ghana, here it's not easy. So in during review of such documents, you bring this on board, and then you ask that 'if you make this land title, already smallholder farmers in Africa are out. So then make it land titles or user rights, and then smallholders in Africa are covered.' So these are some of the things that we bring on board, the African context. Because most of the time, those, the consultants that bring, that develop principles and criteria have no, they've never been to Africa, so they don't know what happens in Africa. Everything is based on Indonesia, Malaysia.

**Interviewer 1:** Do you know if there are some of the similar issues in Latin America? Are you aware of?

**Solidaridad:** Yeah, so our office in Latin America also brings on board what happens in Latin America. And will try to make the standard applicable wherever you are and not only in Indonesia and Malaysia.

**Interviewer 1:** So it sounds like you, like Solidaridad, advocate a lot for smallholder rights, and that you really try to, in a sense, re-define how RSPO have their rules for example in terms of land right, or land titles.

**Solidaridad:** Yes. So we provide input into the developments of the smallholder document. We will bring aboard the Latin American context, the African context.

**Interviewer 1:** How big a role does it play to Solidaridad to work to educate smallholders in how to live up to the P&C criteria, and maybe also to divert some financial resources towards supporting them in living up to the criteria?

**Solidaridad:** You know, RSPO has a smallholder support fund. So we normally access that funding to support smallholder activities in Africa. So for us we have the RSPO smallholder support fund projects in Ghana, Cote d'Ivoire and Nigeria. So that's funding available that you can access. You have to send your proposal and then you access the funding to support the smallholders. And normally anytime RSPO comes out with a new smallholder document, we pilot it in Africa to make sure that this is workable. In the groups we are working with.

**Interviewer 1:** Is it - do you use the smallholder support fund a lot?

**Solidaridad:** The RSPO Smallholder Support Fund, the RSSF.

**Interviewer 1:** Yeah, but have you been supported by them a lot, have you made a lot of applications?

**Solidaridad:** Yeah, we have a project in Ghana that we started in 2012 and then we have a project in Nigeria as well, still Solidaridad, and then recently Cote d'Ivoire. So we've received funding from the RSSF to support smallholders, to integrate smallholders into the sustainable supply chain. And it's something to all countries, once you have a good proposal, you can always access the fund.

**Interviewer 1:** And how about educating the smallholders, is that something that Solidaridad does, trying to help them?

**Solidaridad:** Yes. So as part of the funding from the RSSF. Awareness creation is part of it. Training them in the relevant P&C, preferably, all that is required as part of the projects.

**Interviewer 1:** Okay, I see. And then I would like to ask you if you think that in the time that you have been in the RSPO, or with the knowledge that you have of RSPO in general, do you think that the way they define and work with sustainability has changed?

**Solidaridad:** Well, I don't think it has changed but I still think they're asking for, they're making it more stringent so that - to close all the loopholes, so that people will not take advantage of the system and then produce unsustainably. So I'm seeing it to be - RSPO certi - I mean, RSPO is asking for more transparency, pushing for more sustainability, activities on the ground.

**Interviewer 1:** How about the social aspect of sustainability, human rights or labour rights?

**Solidaridad:** Yeah so for labour rights - in fact, everything that's really in the standard. When you look at the standard it says, it talks so much about the labour rights. If you really, really, really want to be RSPO certified then you have no option than to comply with the rules or to meet the criteria and practices where it's talking about employees, the communities, so you have to do the free, prior, informed consent. For me, I have seen RSPO as a good tool. Because even the smallholders we are working with in Ghana here, for some of them they have, their land have been sold to big time - to a big plantation. And because of RSPO, you know, the smallholders are aware that the plantation cannot really sack them from the land, or they cannot really cut down their trees. They know that if anything, they'll have to sit down with them, they'll have to negotiate. So that alone has [inaudible 24:45, sounds like 'given'] us a way. The plantation is also aware that they cannot just one day get up and cut down all the trees, you may have to really talk to the people, talk to the smallholders. So RSPO is really serving as a check on a lot of things that people would have done without consultation. So for me it's really, really important. It has come at the appropriate time, and we really have to push for everybody going through the certification process. Just make the criterias as simple as possible so that people can go through them.

**Interviewer 1:** And do you think that, in the time you've been in the RSPO, do you feel like other members, other NGOs or growers or retailers, have emphasised this stakeholder engagement, or this free, prior, and informed consent more?

**Solidaridad:** As far as I'm concerned, in my country, it's been/being done. I don't know what really happens in other areas. Yes. But I'll say that in areas where you develop as a conglomerate, for example in Liberia, you know, there's no way you can come up with new planting without free, prior, and informed consent. Because there are NGOs there that will immediately report you to the RSPO Secretariat. So that means, the RSPO standard is putting people on their toes. And then the right things are being done. But I don't know what happens in other countries. But Ghana, yes, we are doing it in Nigeria, Cote d'Ivoire. Following the standard.

**Interviewer 1:** We talked a little bit about, earlier, about how different members need to support each other when tabling resolutions. So I'm wondering, is there a certain stakeholder or a certain membership group, which you get a lot of support from in your work?

**Solidaridad:** Well, as social NGOs, we really work with other social NGOs. But as stated earlier, everything depends on the issue at stake. So whatever issues that you have, if it's good, it really affects a lot of people, then whether they are growers, or if they are environmental NGOs then they understand your course, they really support you in the voting.

**Interviewer 1:** How about in terms of opposition, is it the same or are there some groups that you meet more opposition from?

**Solidaridad:** No, well, for us what we normally do is to get... if it... you look at the issue at stake, which other NGOs you'll really need to support you in this, your cause, so then you start engaging them. So once you have a good case, you get them to support you.

**Interviewer 1:** Okay. Do you think there are any membership categories in the RSPO that has more influence than others, in general?

**Solidaridad:** I don't think so, because we can have a proportion on the Board and the membership - once you are a member, you'll have a voting right. Everybody has just one vote. So I don't see that kind of...any group being more powerful than others. It all comes down to voting - so it's more of maybe lobbying. If you have a - like I said, if you really have a good cause, you definitely have - you can easily convince people that 'this is my case'. This is how my case is going to affect my smallholders or - I mean that's be the effect. For one we'll see that to have negative impact, you get their support for your solutions.

**Interviewer 2:** So you say that once you have a good cause or a good case, then it's not a problem. Could you define what defines a good cause?

**Solidaridad:** Well if you have a good case, so for us the NPP procedures for smallholders. You are saying that every smallholder, irrespective of the size, should go through the NPP procedures, which includes GIS [Geographic Information System, ed.] mapping, land use change analysis, social impact - social environmental impact assessment. So if you are saying that irrespective of the size, if I'm doing new planting - so you have a smallholder in Africa who is just going to do one acre. You expect the one, that one farmer to go through this process? No! That is really not feasible, it's so costly. So I say that we need it transformed. So definitely when you discuss this with all other members, they'll understand you that 'how do I expect a smallholder farmer and a plantation to do the same thing when they are expanding?' So it's like 'If I'm expanding by 100 ha. And I'm also expanding by one acre, and you expect us to do the same things?' No! Definitely you can get people to support that, no this will not work in terms of the money involved and other activities after that, that have to be done. So with you coming up with all the issues that will affect or I mean the impact of the standard or whatever it is that RSPO is coming up with, the impact on smallholders. Definitely when people read into it they'll see the sense in what you are saying, you get them to really support that, 'no this will not work, it has to be reviewed'. That's how we go about these things.

**Interviewer 2:** Okay, thanks.

[Connection lost 30:55]

[Connection regained, new recording]

**Interviewer 1:** I'm sorry we lost the sound, sorry about that.

**Solidaridad:** Well that's okay.

**Interviewer 1:** So we were wondering if you could list a few of the events that you think have been very important in the history of the RSPO, or that have changed the way that RSPO is working?

[long silence]

**Interviewer 2:** And this can be both internal and external things.

**Solidaridad:** For me, I don't know what appears as RSPO Secretariat internally, but what I can say is now we are seeing them coming up with more simplified documents for smallholders, for smallholder use. Now, in developing - coming up with standards, you know we have the Smallholder Working Group is really consulted. We have different Working Groups. And most of the time what is done is - they do things without consultation with the Smallholder Working Group. So everything is done without having smallholders in mind. But now this one is changing because the Smallholder Working Group is pushing for members to be on various Working Groups to be able to push forward the agenda of smallholders. So now you see more simplified versions of what the plantations, what the big guys are supposed to do. You have simplified versions for what the smallholders will have to do. So that's what I can say that now we have simplified versions for smallholders.

**Interviewer 1:** Do you think - I'm not sure if you can answer this question - but do you think that the emergence of other sustainability standards, such as the ISPO or the MSPO, have affected the way that Solidaridad works or the way that the RSPO works?

**Solidaridad:** No for us we are still working with the RSPO standard. But what we do is that if there's a national standard, and the farmers we are working with will really have to meet that standard. Then you support them to go through that standard. So in the case of ISPO, the one that's in Indonesia, the Solidaridad office in Indonesia will have to work with their smallholders to also go through that kind of, the standard. Plus the RSPO standard being the international one. So we don't really have problems, no. For us, you know, certification is really, really market-driven. So if - as part of our work, we always want our farmers, we want to see improvements in their livelihoods and incomes. Well if the market wants ISPO - what the market wants, that's what we have to work with. We know that the RSPO is the global one, that's the [inaudible 3:22] so working with all standards.

**Interviewer 1:** So what you're saying is that the market prefers the RSPO to a lot of the other standards?  
[Note: I think I misheard her when she said ISPO]

**Solidaridad:** Yes, well for us in Ghana here the RSPO is what the market is asking for. We don't even have any other standard.

**Interviewer 1:** Do you know if it's the same in Indonesia or Malaysia?

**Solidaridad:** I have no idea.

**Interviewer 1:** Okay.

**Solidaridad:** My colleagues there would know. But they know of the ISPO, the Indonesia one. So they are looking at jurisdictional approach. But it's definitely, if you are working with farmers and you want to improve market access, you also have to support them in the ISPO plus the RSPO.

**Interviewer 1:** Yeah. And talking about the RSPO more in general, it seems to be a quite - like you're also talking about now - it seems to be a quite successful standard and the market is taking it up well, at least the companies. Why do you think the RSPO is so successful?

**Solidaridad:** Well maybe for now, we don't have other sustainability standards globally. I don't think we have come to a success. The RSPO is the most suitable global standard for oil palm. And we have a lot of

financial institutions also asking for RSPO certification before they give out financing. Because everybody is thinking about deforestation and once you're RSPO certified, you know you have not really abused primary forest for your production. So it's because others relevant to the [inaudible 5:18] also demanding that. And that's why maybe I'll say that RSPO has been successful.

**Interviewer 1:** Yeah. Do you think that there's something that the RSPO could improve in years to come?

**Solidaridad:** Yeah I'll want to see that. See, for now, the market is not really able to consume all the certified palm oil. So we're not really getting high premiums. So what they need for smallholders [inaudible 5:50] here in Africa that 'whether I'm RSPO certified or not, I can still sell my fruits or still sell my CPO'. So what we want to see is we want to push for 100% certified CPO by 2020. And then we're also talking about RSPO NEXT. Well we look at RSPO NEXT, what goes into it. We have a lot of smallholder farmers producing 60% of FFU requirements in their various countries. Yet, nobody's pushing the big guys to support them. We want to see RSPO asking 'if you want to move from RSPO to RSPO NEXT, then at least one of the criteria should be to support at least 500 smallholder farmers to go through RSPO certification'. Then you carry everybody along. Or else, a time will come when the big guys will be on their own, they'll decide not to work with the smallholder farmers. Because they are not RSPO certified.

**Interviewer 1:** Ah okay, I see. So do the smallholders in Ghana and West Africa, would they like to be RSPO NEXT certified if they got the support?

**Solidaridad:** No, what I'm saying is that we have the big companies going for RSPO NEXT. And that means you are above RSPO certification, you have obtained the certification, you want to go to the next level. But the next level there's also principles and criteria. I want to see, or we'll want to see, as one of the criteria that the company should have supported smallholder farmers to go through RSPO certification as one of the criteria. That will push them to support smallholders. Because for now, we don't see a lot of plantations supporting smallholders to go through RSPO certification. So if we don't make conscious effort to get them to support them, they will not mind them.

**Interviewer 1:** Okay, I see.

**Solidaridad:** Want everybody to produce sustainably? Then we need the support from everybody to integrate the smallholders. Because the smallholders in Africa cannot work with certification without [inaudible 8:16-8:17, sounds like 'the standard's' or 'sustaining'] support.

**Interviewer 1:** Is this something that you are discussing with the Secretariat?

**Solidaridad:** Well, I remember two years ago at the RSPO Conference I made a suggestion that if every big companies should adopt two or three groups in their personal areas, support them to go through RSPO certification, then the next five-ten years, we'll see all smallholders practicing sustainable, or implementing sustainable practices.

**Interviewer 1:** Okay, I see. That's very interesting. And do you think overall that the purpose of RSPO has changed, with RSPO NEXT and everything happening, for as long as you have been there?

**Solidaridad:** Well, I don't think it's changed. That is, if you want to move to RSPO NEXT then you have to make zero deforestation commitments. So it's making more, adding more to it. That go beyond what



they're doing now, do something extra to save the forest [inaudible 9:29]. So it's trying to get people to do the right thing, sustainably.

**Interviewer 1:** And is the main focus still on the environment?

**Solidaridad:** Yes. So on zero deforestation, saving the environment. All of the rare, threatened species, saving them.

**Interviewer 1:** Okay, I see. Alright [respondent's name], thank you so much for all your answers. Do you have any other questions or comments or anything that we have not been asking that we should have asked you?

**Solidaridad:** No, because I don't know exactly what you're going to use this information for.

**Interviewer 1:** We're using it for [interrupted by [respondent's name]]

**Solidaridad:** If after going through the responses you realize that you still need additional information, you can send me a mail, then I can supply you that information.

**Interviewer 2:** Thanks, that's very nice.

**Interviewer 1:** We appreciate that very much. And you are of course also welcome to email us back if you have any questions or comments or anything.

**Solidaridad:** Okay.

**Interviewer 1:** Thank you so much [respondent's name] for taking the time, it was really nice to talk to you. We got a lot of very good information. It was very interesting.

**Solidaridad:** You're welcome.

**Interviewer 1:** Have a lovely day.

**Solidaridad:** You too. Bye.

**Interviewer 1 & Interviewer 2:** Thank you. Bye.

### Appendix E.3: PanEco (eNGO)

**Interviewer 1:** Then we have your consent to be interviewed and record. Thank you for that. So I wonder, we know that, actually, you are not involved in PanEco anymore, are you?

**PanEco:** No, not at all. I left them in December 2011, and then I did my PhD in social rules of biodiversity loss, PhD trying to understand why we have all these international frameworks and why is not applied in the ground and there are different chapters and one is on the RSPO, which is in French.

**Interviewer 1:** Ok, so I think what we are interested in now is, we have also seen in the meeting minutes and so on, that you've been representing PanEco for the RSPO, so if you have the possibility to kind of recall what that was like and so on. That is kind of the perspective, we would like to take in this interview if possible.

**PanEco:** Exactly. Of course.

**Interviewer 1:** So, when you were involved representing PanEco, could you please define the role you had within RPSO?

**PanEco:** Well, you know, you have to understand, that RSPO at the start. RSPO is born 2004, then 2006 is quite Swiss and English led. And what happened is that from 2006, PanEco, who is also a Swiss-based organisation, like WWF that was basically, pushing the RSPO said "Oh that will be a nice way forward to really work with the private sector". That basically since 2006, PanEco is basically a board member eh not a board member but is a member, is one of the first NGO being a member in the RSPO. And then my, at that time, I met the president Regina Frey and I told her, "well, you know, that may be a good tool, that you need to take care the way it is used. We need to drive our agenda not their agenda, which may be complicated". And then she said, "ok, then you will be the one dealing with that", because in the past, I worked at UNEP, United National Environment Programme, and we were doing all this issue [with me 05:13] at the backdoor trying to understand [inaudible 05:16] process, what to do and how we can work, how we can influence the debate. Then, basically, when I was in PanEco, more the activist, I could understand, maybe, all this work, all this big organisation, even though it was just an organisation in the making. Then what happened in RSPO, very soon in 2006 already, PanEco, with my ex-president, she drafted and put forward a resolution. And the resolution was to develop fallow land. And the resolution passed in fact. That's why...

**Interviewer 1:** Yeah, is that the one on Tripa forest?

**PanEco:** No, that's why you need to understand the whole context. In 2006, you already passed a resolution, that was passed. The resolution you can find it back, it is quite difficult to get it back but it exists in the proceeding. And the resolution was developing fallow land and the idea was to develop palm oil on degraded land or palm oil on land that nobody really wanted. And it was really interesting, because at that time, as RSPO was a kind of young organisation, they were quite open minded about whatever type of development we need to do. The idea was to stop deforestation and to develop palm oil in other ways. And it was good. That's why it was quite well-received even though nobody after really [funded 06:56]. But then we discussed and we worked with different organisations, and especially the Biodiversity Agriculture Communities Programme from the International Finance Corporation. And then it took like three years and therefore after they financed us, to develop these schemes to develop fallow land on degraded land to develop then for palm oil. We developed that with smallholders between 2009 and 2012 with the big company called Socfindo with and ICRAF because of their knowledge and with BACP programme of the IFC. But then, from that time we, our goal was to show that was possible to develop this fallow land and to maybe influence the RSPO on something. But it didn't really quite

happen. Nobody, you know, the WWF puts a small note even a small document trying to show that it is important to develop fallow land. Then we have also World Research Institute that developed this project POTICO which is about cartographing mapping out the fallow land. And, but all of this got no interest really from the industry and no interest, basically, from the RSPO it was just led aside. Then what happened is that, for PanEco, what we wanted to do is to stop, of course, the deforestation, especially because its low land is for the rodents. And as we could not really have a lot of success in proposing alternative developments, then in 2008, we developed this new proposal. The new proposal which, the one you are talking about, the PanEco proposal on the Tripa peat swamp stopping deforestation. But then, you can see already the wording of the resolution, that already PanEco is quite not very happy, the way RSPO has developed, because you already put in the wording itself, that, you know, they really should put their word together and to do something to act and that refer to the idea of fallow land and the fact that we have the impression that the industry really didn't really do something but was still developing as an organisation as the RSPO. Then therefore, we developed this new resolution. But to tell you the truth, the resolution was carried out by my president. And my president said "well that's a good idea, you are going to defend yourself, [respondent's name], in front of everybody". So I said "ok, ok, fine but the issue there is we need to do clever and to work cleverly to make it happen". To have the resolution to go pass was not really obvious, why? Because already at that time environmental NGOs were like 3, 4 persons of the overall agenda, overall RSPO member. Then I say "well we need to, if you want to have that resolution passed, we need to get the right information and we need also to build basically the whole agenda to make it happen". And therefore, we did quite a number of things. The first thing, we did is that we had a new report, we made the [brand new report 10:47] on the Tripa values. Showing the value of Tripa and then on the area, that was threatened by palm oil for local communities, for climate change and then we...and for rodents. But the idea was just to change. Instead of telling us, basically, an environmental NGO that is important for rodents, we just left out, basically, the rodents, we just put more forward the issue of greenhouse gases, climate change and the issue of local committee, local development. And then that was the first thing we did. We did a very thorough report. The second things, we did is that we spreaded and we tried to get some actors supporting us. And therefore we went to see directly to people in the board, especially Oxfam, because Oxfam was interested in social issue. Then we discussed a lot with Johan Verburg and we invited him even to Tripa to see the situation and also, basically, also to help, to ask him to see if Oxfam could support for the fallow land which was the previous idea and therefore, after we discussed also at lengths with Greenpeace, Greenpeace Indonesia, Greenpeace UK. And then we talked to Sawit Watch and therefore we...who has authority on the board of the RSPO and from there we had quite a consistent network like six, seven different organisations. And then we just went to the press also, to show the destructions of the RSPO, and it went in the Independent and we invited, in fact, international journals especially from the Independent, but also from the American Journal they also did something. And after that, already before the RSPO started, the General Assembly, then some older board members, who are really knowing that there was something happening and that there was this resolution that was getting quite serious. And therefore, in the board itself, some people happened to be involved and especially Rabobank was involved. Because Rabobank was at that time the one providing most of the credit to Astra Agro Lestari that was depending on charities. And therefore, Rabobank went to see me and discuss bilaterally "oh yes, you are going to improve, you are right". It was not true but it's ok. It's ok, I understand it is not your fault, but the resolution has to go through anyway. We are pass it [or we not pass it 13:55] but now, you know that is a serious issue and then basically, you will need to address it. We don't attack anybody personally. We know that there are different actors involved. And they need to do something. And the third, and the fourth things we did. I say four because first is the report, second is the collusion of NGO local and international. Third is the journalist. And the fourth is in fact just before proposing the resolution, we also invited the senator. One of the senators in that region that we know Annan. Because he is in... I don't know if you know the legislative system in Indonesia, but...

**Interviewer 1:** Not really unfortunately.

**PanEco:** There is some parliamentary and are elected directly with the people and others through the political party. Then basically the one directly elected by the people, they are more linked to the region and area. Therefore, for province Aceh, there were four, and therefore, we invited one of them to [inaudible 15:10]. And then before the resolution, we organised a workshop. We invited everybody and we did a video presentation and then after we did a small discussion. But in the discussion, I stayed very quiet because I want that is the people really discussing and not myself questioning an area and therefore, it was really...with a translator discussing with very big room. It was quite of a surprise, like more than one hundred person in the room. We had booking, it was a bit costly for us because it cost more than 1000 euro eh dollar just to do it. To organise it and then the following day or even it was the afternoon. I don't remember, if it was the afternoon or just the following day, then it was the resolution that was just put forward. And when it was the resolution at the General Assembly itself, you know, it went quite fine, quite surprisingly, and in fact, different people, including the then Unilever president, went to tell me that "oh yes, [respondent's name], I voted for you, you know, you have to know that and that's you" ... and then I said "ok that's fine". You have to understand when somebody like this votes, it means he has already also like 15 50 [corrects himself but 15 makes more sense 16:41] person voting. Why? Because you can vote by proxy in the RSPO. So if you have these people on board voting and supporting and then you have quite quickly a number of people. But at the voting itself, I don't remember exactly the real casting but I remember very well that basically everybody voted for but all the growers voted against. It was so clear. It was so clear. They were complaining.

**Interviewer 1:** Oh, really?

**PanEco:** Yes, of course, it was so clear, all the growers, especially Malaysian, Indonesian, one or two tried to, because they were foreigner, basically, and tried to discuss a bit "oh yeah, it's not that bad", but basically you can see. It was quite interesting, the total divide. Therefore, I don't remember it was something like 60:40 or 70:50. It was not that big difference but the fact that all the growers were simply against. It was a quite simple situation.

**Interviewer 1:** Yeah, that's really interesting actually. Shall I... Is that something, when you propose resolutions and so on and maybe something you have seen in general, would you say that there are certain groups or membership categories that PanEco then received more support from and also more opposition from when you promote resolutions like this or your agenda, specifically in terms of biodiversity and high conservation value and smallholder agendas?

**PanEco:** Well, you know, is not because of that, why it was turned against is just because the resolution dealing. As I said, we presented the issue not by biodiversity, that would be a mistake. We took the presentation because of local communities, because of climate change. Why it has been turned down? Because in fact, for the first time RSPO was putting the Tripa basically as the high conservation value therefore, the local... the growers were threatened that basically that they were just impeded to expand it. It was not really about biodiversity as such, it was just the fact that this type of resolution just prevented to expand and, therefore, at that time, especially the main concern and that's a bit changed now, but the main concern of the growers was to try to get rights on lands and therefore to expand. Then, the...in 2008, 2009 the goal was really to expand. And to expand was to get rights. To get the rights, you need to have more concessions, not necessarily even to implement them, but to have rights to expand. Therefore at that time when I made some calculations, there were a lot of these big guys, you know, like in the case of Astra Agro Lestari, of course, but also the others had a lot of land bank. Land bank means the still have lot of palm oil that was not yet developed, but they want it to develop in the future, you see.

**Interviewer 1:** Yeah, okay, but...so you have proposed those two resolutions that we can see, or three, in the RSPO and that was fairly early. Have you been successful in proposing all resolutions that you wanted to propose? I mean, it is obvious that you prepared very very much and like worked a lot with

corporations and so on and tried to get voters on board. But have you tried to do this and have you failed at some point and why and why not, if so?

**PanEco:** No, our resolution passed. We took two resolutions, they passed. The problem, of course, is the implementation of this resolution. Then, you know, you have to discuss why after we didn't do much more. After 2008/2009, you know, you have the RSPO that is becoming very organised and very strict and with a kind of management discourse. Therefore, there is less and less opportunities to have impact even though you want to put a resolution. You can put resolutions but the fact is, do they have an impact? And there is two things to say about that. The first thing is that all resolutions on Tripa also triggered the interest of another organisation. You know, SOS also the year after, made also a resolution on the Tigapuluh which basically was the continuation of our resolution and why? Because Tigapuluh is a reintroduction site of the rodents and is exactly where we were reintroducing the place. Basically, is SOS who did it but we were very close and we just let them to do and we didn't really [encore 19:14] on that but then this resolution also passed and it went through. But then after the resolution, first PanEco with Tripa, second Tigapuluh Ecosystem, then really, the growers complained that it was a total misuse of the General Assembly to put forward specific resolution when of course the RSPO, is a multistakeholder forum. And basically is not the idea to have then specific resolutions to get a specific agenda, but in fact the idea for them is that the resolution should come at the end of a long negotiation process. Like for example, is the case of the review of the Principle & Criteria, you know. That's one thing, second, while we were not really then, very happy about that, about what is following because you know, after, for the follow up, okay, it's a high conservation value, ok fine, then we discussed with in that case Astra Agro Lestari "oh yeah, but is so bilateral, is not tangible", from there no much process. We asked some person from the Board of Governors, that's called Executive Board at that time. Is [Shiuan 20:50] from Sawit Watch. He came to Tripa to assess the situation and said "yes it's true there is some problems". And then after he went back like no it's, you know, then there is no, RSPO was not very consistent. They don't really have [needs or means 21:06], they didn't put their needs either then, basically, they were happy to have a resolution like that, with the NGO for them but that was not happy for us. What you want is a reform of the sector, improvement of the situation and you know that it's true is quite difficult to demonstrate the link between the different actors in Tripa and the different actors with RSPO but they are and there are quite a number. But it takes time because it's about the traders, it's about the refiners and then it is a bit out of our reach. And therefore, we are in this kind of grey zone. People are "ah yeah, you don't know". Then as we don't know, we cannot demonstrate, we cannot demonstrate, they don't do anything. Yeah but it is not our role to find out the relationship between RSPO trader and the Tripa grower. It's a bit hard for an NGO to demonstrate it, but, of course, the one who are in the world of trade knows it, then basically you have all this grey area which is quite painful and the RSPO didn't do anything to improve it. And why didn't they do anything to improve it, because they never put in a budget for it and for the secretariat is only know that is proof where they put their money. They put their money on [odd treach 22:25], they put their money on creating new agencies to promote them but they don't put to really start on the business, you know. Then it's a bit of a, that's how we, that's why after that, then we didn't really put energy. And therefore, as we didn't put energy, at one point my, and I left, and my president say "what's the policy? What we should do?", and I said to her "honestly, either you enter the game and you try to make a difference or you leave it". Because the problem is that if you are following as a member and paying your fee without doing anything on it, you are just considering participating and agreeing with all what is happening. Then they decided last year to leave the organisation.

**Interviewer 1:** Yeah, yeah, of course. But that's interesting when you talk about with this like resources and how that takes, because that can be so varying between the different type of members that are within the RSPO. So like, in your general perception, do you see that whether like, in order for, as a member organisation, to get a resolution to the agenda or not, would you say that is more a matter of organisational characteristics such as resources or you know whatever that can be? Or is it more a matter of the content of the resolution and the time it's presented at, you know, what kind of...what is hot topics

so to say. So is it more depending on the characteristics of the organisation or more the content in relation to the time it was proposed at?

**PanEco:** You know, it depends on what you are talking about. If you are talking about just passing the resolution itself, you can see the history, because, I study themselves, you know, all these resolution or after they are there. It does not depend at all, whether the organisation is big or small, it depends really about the timing, I mean the organisation and also the way it's written. You know for example, the resolution that was after us from SOS on Tigapuluh was not necessarily well prepared, there was not all this process that we did, but it still it went through. It went through very well. Why? One reason, yeah, British person writing it. She knows exactly our agenda, she knows how to link it to the broader issue in the RSPO. And it went fine. Why it went fine? Because, you have to understand who is who and then a resolution like Tigapuluh or other, it doesn't harm ever the one who are controlling the resolution and the one who is controlling the General Assembly. The ones who are controlling the General Assembly is the retailers and the producer of goods and services. But not therefore, they even like this resolution. Why? Because it feels good. It is true the industry needs to improve and therefore they feel good because it is good for in the evening. When they leave, they can sit with their children that "yes, it's true, through my work, I went to pass a resolution it's going to save the rodents". It's very good, you know, then they are happy and I mean it's not a problem, you have to understand it is really then the timing and the way it is framed and not at all a lot of resources.

**Interviewer 1:** Ok that's great, that's really interesting

**PanEco:** But that is, when you want to have this type of resolution that is going through. If, for example, you put the opposite...no grower that tried to get a resolution through. That is different ball game, why? Because they are in minority and if it is a resolution to do something that's for them will be easier for them, for example, to expand their membership in the board or to be able to plant on peat, is peat and shallow, you know, why not, you know? They have also the right to but no, actually they will be turned down, you know, whatever powerful they are, because it goes against the mainstream you know. And therefore, even there you have different resolutions whether they are turned on is, what is interesting for you, for example, is not the resolutions that went through but the resolutions that were turning down. The resolutions from the growers are turned down. Even though they put a lot of effort on that. They organise, they make sure they are all there. I mean, they have a lot of resources, they have a lot of money then you know, that is more who is controlling what, you know.

**Interviewer 1:** Yeah, no that's really interesting to follow as well. Thank you, thank you so much for those super elaborated and interesting answers.

**Interviewer 2:** So, [respondent's name], I would like to learn a bit more about PanEco's work within the RSPO focusing on certain agendas and it seems to us that your work or PanEco's work within the RSPO has been very focused on promoting the biodiversity, high conservation value agenda and also the smallholder agenda. Do you agree with this?

**PanEco:** Yes, and also the greenhouse gases but the point is that about this two agenda is why we are a bit more on this agenda is because it was, you know, kind of vague, you know, those agendas. Then we look a bit more there, but it's just because there were not many other players. It's a bit...because, for example, we are also very interested in greenhouse gases. That we follow very closely. But we know that Wetlands International were doing that very well, then we just discuss with them every two months and it's enough. We don't need to be there. It is not because we are not there physically that we don't follow, you know, if you just go towards what we wanted, it's ok.

**Interviewer 2:** So, you saw it as your tasks to kind of fill the voids?

**PanEco:** For biodiversity, of course, it's basically the roots of our organisation was to protect the rodents after smallholders it's also true, because it's also the history of our organisation. And Regina Frey, she always thought that the only way we are going to save and do changes by local development and by involving smallholders or community. Then basically, if we don't do that, we are going nowhere. Therefore she has this vision, and that was, I totally agree with, that we need to combine biodiversity, conservation and local communities, support or development.

**Interviewer 2:** That's really, that's really interesting that you say that, because we've been looking through the meeting minutes of the RSPO. And we found that a lot of the work that's been eh when the work on local communities began to emerge in this kind of more social focus within the RSPO, it was kind of being framed from the high conservation value agenda, so there was a lot of focus on biodiversity and HCV and then at one point the organisation began to focus more also on the social parts of the HCV, the number 4,5 and 6, if I remember correctly.

**PanEco:** Sure.

**Interviewer 2:** Yeah, do you recognised that as a change that's been happening and a way of framing the social agenda?

**PanEco:** Not so very as clearly as you. What I remember well and why it was high conservation value is just because it's framed initially by WWF. You know, you have to understand that everything comes from the FSC, FSC was developed in '96 and then from there they tried to apply to other roundtables and the first one was then the high conservation value, for instance. And then in 2007, I even participated to the roundtable on high conservation value forest for the RSPO. It was organised by WWF and then Daemeter and all their friends and I can tell you, the focus was really "oh wow you are conservation, how can we be fine" and they were so environmentalist that it was so dizzying for me, because they end up thinking that the whole Indonesia is basically high conservation value. Therefore, for the definition of it, if we define it too clearly then it should be a way for palm oil plantations to develop on the one we didn't have developed. And no, it was then very very indeed environmentally biodiversity-framed. And therefore, already in 2006, they say well, "what you are going to talk really about it". And therefore at that time, there was this IFC that even passed the resolution, I think in RSPO on telling, you know, "ok, what are we talking about?" and that's why they developed the biodiversity technical committee, BTC. Then after involved to a biodiversity and working group and that's one angle. But then after you have this group more led by Peoples Forest Programme. That say "oh well, no, we need to really consider also humankind inside and therefore, with Sawit Watch, they partner and they really tried to open up a little bit to local communities and social issues. It is a bit like this that things happened. But for us, PanEco, honestly, we didn't have that much capacity and also not that much interest in the RSPO and then, basically, we followed the biodiversity. We were like "ui ui ui ui" we are not very impressed what they were doing but they were fine doing it and then we participated [not more than a 33:10] meeting a year when it was next to the RSPO otherwise we don't really participate and then after we discussed one or two times with different people with Forest Peoples Programme. But Forest Peoples Programme is very clear. They are very organised and their partners are local partners, Sawit Watch especially. And therefore, they drive their agenda then on that direction.

**Interviewer 2:** Ok.

**PanEco:** But you have to understand, on that moment at the same time there was the specific issue related to the smallholders each different places. And there the smallholders became of a nutshell and became just basically a small issue that nobody really cared ever, but you look at it nicely. "Oh yeah, it is true, we need to do something" and there were these kind of smallholder working groups that...where Sawit Watch

was trying to work with others. And basically it was, instead of making a difference, that group became simply isolated. Therefore, they were simply at the end, nobody really cared about it, it was quite terrible, you know. I think it was really the main issue and nobody cared. I mean, it was interesting to see this development between 2006 and 2010, when you can see what is pushed forward, what is fallow land, and also fallow land nobody cared and then the other one was smallholders and nobody cared and that was interesting to see that in fact, in 2004/2005, when the RSPO is developed and you really had all these ideas together and suddenly, they dried up and only the ideas focusing on the big players and really developing their lands in the best manner remained. Which is kind of this management way of working. But there are other issues that were as much important like the fallow land. Then, which means developing another manner or the smallholders just simply died out. After they came back like two or three years ago. But you can see they didn't go back with the smallholders, they went back with big social NGOs from the Netherlands, that tried to do something. But it is not at all anymore the same player as before.

**Interviewer 2:** Ok, now, I'd like to talk a bit more smallholders that you mentioned. Because we went through the meeting minutes, as I told you before, and we think we found some strategies that are quite often employed by RSPO members to try to push the agenda or pull the agenda a bit more in direction to inclusion of the smallholders. And I would like to read these four strategies to you and see if you can maybe recognise them and if you have some comments. So the first one we've identified is that organisations really tried to lobby and to represent smallholder interests within the RSPO. And the second one is that RSPO does some education of smallholders in order to give them the skills and the knowledge that is necessary to obtain certification. Then number three is trying to redefine the membership rules of RSPO in order to actually enable the participation of smallholders and the final one is trying to divert some financial resources towards them.

**PanEco:** Yes.

**Interviewer 2:** Do you recognise these as strategies that are employed by members of the RSPO to try to include smallholders a bit more to further that agenda?

**PanEco:** Ok, let's go one item by one time.

**Interviewer 2:** Alright, we will do that.

**PanEco:** And then I reply to what happened.

**Interviewer 2:** Great, so the first one, that there are some organisations within the RSPO that kind of speak on behalf of smallholders. So, they represent the smallholder interests within the RSPO.

**PanEco:** Sure, but you know, imagine what you said.

**Interviewer 2:** Yes.

**PanEco:** Imagine what you said, you know what, you know, it's terrible, you know. They organise network in Indonesia and Malaysia, you know. Of course, there is Sawit Watch that is the most organised, then there is, also there is Campesinos. There is also trade unions on local level. Then you know, why international? I don't get it. I understand that these organisations directly tried to improve and it's true that these organisations at the beginning 2004/2005 tried to. But along the way, they give up, why? Because it was impossible to make an impact. Then what happened is that other NGO, especially from the ex-colonies, especially Dutch are now telling "we are supporting the smallholders for them to participate". But, you know, I don't like that at all, because I think it is totally twisted because you need to



understand why it has never happened that it was a proper process. You are now more than 13 years after that the process started. Why there is not a proper mechanism to include smallholders organised that exist in Malaysia. And why we still need to have international organisation especially from social networks in Dutch ex-colonies that need to explain to the others, “oh, we are going to facilitate you”. I think that’s exactly the point. And why? If, because, if the RSPO was very serious, it would have happened. Now what is happening is that, we have all the basis of these organisations that try to support, a non-inclusive support. You understand? All these organisations are trying to do something, it’s a good reason not to do something, because we are still in the process of doing it. You understand?

**Interviewer 2:** I see. I think that is a very valid critique, but then on the other hand, you know, you are also trying to set up a fund, right, for smallholder certification?

**PanEco:** Yeah, no, but let’s go one point by a point and I have all the replies for all your parts.

**Interviewer 2:** Ok, so next one, you educate smallholders in the skills and knowledge that is necessary in order to obtain certification by the RSPO.

**PanEco:** That is very interesting also. You know that also means that basically RSPO has now grown in a certain level to impose to everybody this managerial view and that’s the way it has to be forward and therefore, of course, it worked very well for all these big companies, growers, big growers or [inaudible 40:13] firm because it is basically like this that they function. They function through the improvement of their management system and when they try to avoid for health or environment or security reasons their project. That basically is the way capitalism works. Yeah? That’s bitter. Then the issue is that now what is happening is that, instead of thinking differently, we try to incorporate those actors that have totally different skills that are not at all managers in, as the last drops, as the last way in our system when in fact, the main problem is where Indonesia or Malaysia...the main problem was at the beginning that’s why the RSPO was even designed for it. That the state has totally left out the smallholders, [that the big firms kills 41:07] and therefore one of the key issue would have been to redevelop cooperative independent organisation to really have a balanced power and be able to have part of the incomes and be and to process the oil. But instead now, we just add the smallholders to be organising themselves to be the last drop. And why the last drop? Because in the system for palm oil, they never basically control the mill and you have to control the mill. Then you, basically, you have a system where you just ask “please my little farmer, be the last [planting 41:46] and crop correctly and then we are going to take your badge of food and then process it and make goods”. And therefore they will never really improve their...but it is like this that RSPO has been framing. Ok, third.

**Interviewer 2:** Wow, [respondent’s name], number 3. Redefining membership rules to enable participation of the smallholders. So you say, for example, smallholders, they don’t have so much money, we can lower the fee a bit for them.

**PanEco:** Yes sure, but already been...that’s why I am a bit joking. This has already been discussed since 2006, I think in 2007 and 2008, it was already a decision. Then of course, I think it has been really be...sorry it has already always been very shocking that basically they have to pay when others they just don’t have it 2000 euros a year, and of course when you are Nestle is not the same. Just eh...I don’t think that it has even to be stated “oh we are doing something”, it is just normal. I mean it is normal everywhere that you just put member fee according to the size and the weight of the organisation. Then, you know, indeed, yes, it is a practice. But I am surprised that you consider that even as something good and that can be done or will done because it has been already discussed and implemented, and I am sure it should simply be done it’s not something that people should be even proud of it. But ok, next, third.

**Interviewer 2:** It’s good with the critical perspective, [respondent’s name].

**PanEco:** When you see what I saw from inside and after, it would be....the worst thing is the discrepancy between all these meetings and reality in the ground. You know, one of the key issue for PanEco is that we are basically based on the ground, you know, I was going to there only after visiting the situation, taking picture, and that's my problem. It's the RSPO, for me, is a quite outrouted system, and therefore, I know that we can have very nice idea but reality is a bit more complex. But ok, anyway, let's...tell me the fourth one.

**Interviewer 2:** The final one. I think you also answered that a bit already. But it's about diverting some financial resources towards smallholders, so for instance setting up this fund.

**PanEco:** No, that's a good point. That's why I [waited 44:29] for that one, because on that one, well very good. No no, but very good, you divert money, you know, if the money, ok, the money that in our case is just to get certified and just to be part of the system, you know. But if there is money to really support, why not? You know, it's like, I don't like air trafficking of gasoline, you know, air pollution, but if there is air tax, you know, you can do something, you know, I am not at all against taxing. I think it is a good system, if you redirect it correctly and [use the taxes a lot 45:13] is correct. And there comes the problem, because you know honestly, it is a bit of a farce. Because, I think it is one dollar a ton and you can see the whole money you get in a year you can, basically, certify the, maybe, 5000 smallholders. Make your calculation. I did it two years ago, and I tell you that very bluntly, because I discussed at that time, 2014, because of course we had our smallholders and you know, I went to see them because I participated also in 2014 at the RSPO on behalf of PanEco. I was hired there as a consultant and I defend them and I went to see the one where at that time and the smallholders, it was Petra, I don't know her name, she is a Dutch nationality and she was working for Sime Darby, I think, and then the other one from Solidaridad. And then what happens, I told them "oh you know this, can we get certified? But then she told "oh [there is a whole 46:24] a process" and then she told me "yeah, but honestly, to tell you the truth, [respondent's name], with the money we have, we can do ten projects a year". She said "Yeah", "it is ridiculous", I say, "it is ridiculous", "yeah you are right, it is ridiculous, but it is like this, it is the way it has been set up" And therefore, for me, this fund is nice but it is always this idea to feel good. It is not to reform the system, it's only "oh we did something there" but without touching the core. What is the core? That is the problem. But the core, the problem is that palm oil production is very cheap compared other seeds, other oil. The cost of production is around 300 euros eh 300 dollars a ton and therefore, if it is 5500 and you get some good income and, of course, the other cost of production worldwide of the other oil is a bit higher and therefore, anything that touched that problem is the problem. And that's why, you understand, after a while, they all take the certification market where they pay two or three, at the best, dollar a ton. Now it's changing, they go towards segregation, but it was not the case and even the segregation, even full segregation is maybe [50 47:58] dollars, it is still not a lot, it becomes a lot if you cut maybe 10% increase..and that's why, you have to understand, that's why the whole game there is money. The only thing that concerns is the costs and not to change the business and therefore, what is about improving the business, getting more efficient. It's ok. What is really have additional costs is not ok.

**Interviewer 2:** It is very interesting, [respondent's name], I would love to talk a lot more with you about this. It is so great to get a more critical perspective, I must say. We are almost out of time but I have a final question for you. If you can list, quickly, three events you think have been some important turning points somehow in the history of the RSPO.

**PanEco:** Three events?

**Interviewer 2:** Yes, three events of some kind, internal or external, that you think were important to RSPO.

**PanEco:** I think the first, well, it was withdrawn, it didn't work, but then the next one was ok. The second resolution by Wetlands International on greenhouse gases. That made a big difference, because from there, after that they had to change seriously the whole pattern and to consider really greenhouse gases. It happened in 2010, I think, that was a big change after, only after they started to have this assessment, RSPO+ and whatever. But you know that changed. The other was the kat. Kitkat against, Kitkat campaign against, and Nestle by Greenpeace, why? Because since then people said "oh, it's ok, we are going to improve, we are going to improve" Everybody was like this. And then Greenpeace attacked really Kitkat [inaudible 50:07] and what happens is that the beginning they denied, they denied for three, four months. But in fact what had forgotten at that time...Nestle is that the world has changed. Now it was very easy to get access to all map that are digital satellite, they probably, they totally miss that only after three, four months they discovered that will never work. And therefore, they changed and said "yes, we are going to change. We need to improve our supply chain" And they say "ok we are going to cooperate" and that was a big drama and a big change because from there all the other big brands said "uh uh, we are going to be caught". And in fact, they did, the different NGOs attacked then all the other brands, but at the same time all the other brands very quickly reacted, telling "ok, yes, we are going to improve our supply chain". And then came the issue of transparency of the whole supply chain. That is the second main thing, I think. And for a third one, we have done such a big boo, maybe one or so, would be the 2014 regulation by the European Union for food labeling that is compulsory and, therefore, the RSPO was very worried at that time they could lose all their market. Because, basically the different suppliers, the different actors, different consumers in Europe, don't want to hear about palm oil, especially in the food chain. Therefore, they were very worried. And therefore, they, at that time, re-attacked by creating all this European bureaus and this big branding and therefore, you can see this RSPO create all this big branding things. Including the one where you are going, your boss going. That was a new way just to stop this [haemorrhage 52:28]. Because there is [demoraky 52:20], in reality, in Europe, there is less and less palm oil used for the food, more now for biofuel but not for food. I think that is three things have been are quite [inaudible 52:34].

**Interviewer 2:** Very good. You are a fast thinker and a fast talker, [respondent's name]. Thank you so much for your view on this. We have reached, we don't have any more time with you and we've reached the end, luckily, of our interview guide. Do you have any questions for us, maybe? Or do you have any comments? Or something you think we should have asked you that we haven't, that you'd like to tell us?

**PanEco:** No it's a bit difficult. You know, myself, I am writing some papers, if one day you want to write a paper with me, I will be quite happy, but you know, I know, it's your paper too then, but you know. Go...

**Interviewer 2:** Thank you for that offer.

**PanEco:** The same thing, as a good researcher, be critical!

**Interviewer 2:** We will. We got a lot of critical from you also to put in our paper, so thank you very much for that and we will definitely keep your offer in mind.

**PanEco:** Ok, thank you so much.

**Interviewer 2:** Alright, bye bye [respondent's name]. Thank you. Have a nice day.

**Interviewer 1:** Thank you a lot.

**PanEco:** Bye.

#### Appendix E.4: Zoological Society of London (ZSL) (eNGO)

**Interviewer 1:** Then we go. So, now, I just started a recording. So, for the record, do you give your consent to be interviewed and recorded?

**ZSL:** Yes. Yes, I do.

**Interviewer 1:** Great. So, [respondent's name], could you please define your current and/or previous roles within the RSPO?

**ZSL:** Sure. Sure. So, Zoological Society of London has been a member for some years. I think – this might not be exactly accurate – but I think it's since about 2008, so about sort of eight or nine years now. And we currently are a representative on the Board of Governors. So, we're an alternative representative for the eNGO category, so for the environmental NGOs. And we're an alternate to the World Resources Institute who are one of the substantive eNGO representatives alongside WWF. And we also sit on the Biodiversity and HCV Working Group, which meets – I think – roughly every quarter to discuss issues that are more related to our work here at Zoological Society of London. So, about how can we strengthen the RSPO standard for biodiversity conservation and particularly focusing on HCV issues. We've been involved in other groups in the past. There was something called, I think it was the Innovation Lab or the Innovation Task Force, which was sort of looking at a number of areas where the RSPO was innovating, for example with jurisdictional approaches. But that group sort of was never really formalised, so it was just sort of a discussion area we were involved in for a while. So, really it's the Board and the BHCV Working Group that are our kind of main points of engagement with the RSPO.

**Interviewer 1:** Yeah, okay. And what would you say is the best way as an organisation to promote your ideas and interests in RSPO?

**ZSL:** I think from my experience – and I don't know whether this reflects what others think – but I think the Secretariat and the RSPO has a, you know, quite an immense job, you know, working with a huge variety of members from growers all the way to retailers and the whole NGO sector as well. And they do have to deal, obviously, as any kind of multi-stakeholder standard and roundtable and certification scheme work, with a huge amount of processes. And so, that often means that engaging as a member can be quite, to be honest, can be quite difficult because the capacity the capacity of the Secretariat to respond to individual member requests isn't necessarily there when they're dealing with all of these other issues. So, I think, to really engage with the RSPO, you have to be incredibly... You sort of have to be just incredibly proactive, I think. I hope, in, you know, in a few years – and it's definitely improving – but I hope the systems will improve to bring that engagement more. And things like the GA are obviously are really good at that sort of... You know, the main opportunity for members to bring their sort of issues and propose solutions. But I think just the general involvement and if you've got ideas that you want to see the RSPO discuss or if you have concerns or if you want to help with something in particular, it's very... you have to be incredibly proactive, and it takes – I guess, particularly for the NGOs, but you could argue for all of the company members as well – it's often not a defined part of people's job description, so it can kind of limit how involved they can be because it's all sort of voluntary. And your organisation pays you to do that part of your role, it's sort of an extra bit. So, I think that can also be a challenge for people engaging. I'm not sure if that really answered your question?

**Interviewer 1:** Yeah, it does. That's interesting. And when you say you really have to be proactive, can you give more detailed example of what that could mean?

**ZSL:** Yeah. So, I mean, proactive might even be the wrong word because I think you can be... there have definitely been examples where we felt proactive in wanting to address something. So, for example, one

of the resolutions that we proposed in November 2015 around improving the whole ACOP procedure process, that had a much earlier timeline, and we were really keen to see a new system and to be involved with that, and we were pushing, pushing, pushing. But it wasn't a priority at that point because there was a lot of other things going on within RSPO related to, for example, the IOI case that came about at that time. So, there can often be these huge things which mean that other things that are aiming to improve the system might be de-prioritised. And so, the delivery of that resolution got delayed, and we then had to chase again. So, you have to be quite persistent unless it's something that... you know, if there's a really obvious case where there's like an immediate thing that the RSPO and its members need to do to protect its credibility or something, you're more likely to get a quick response. But if it's sort of a general improvement area, like for example the ACOP system, which is obviously so important, but that doesn't become as much a priority for the Secretariat to address, so it may get kind of pushed back and get delayed, so we have to continue pounding [laughs] to get progress on things like that.

**Interviewer 1:** Yeah, because, yeah... I see... We looked over the meeting minutes, and we could see that Zoological Society of London had throughout... According to the website, it says you joined in 2011, but I also know that the...

**ZSL:** Ah, 2011!

**Interviewer 1:** It's also possible that the website is wrong, cause it's been before.

**ZSL:** No, that probably is right. I think we might have been involved, I guess, informally before that. I joined ZSL in 2015, so I'm quite new compared to that time frame. Sorry...

**Interviewer 1:** No, no, that's great. Cause it's interesting because you've been fairly active since you joined, and you sponsored four resolutions according to the minutes, I would say, in total. I was gonna ask you about the first one, but if you joined personally in 2015, maybe you could elaborate a bit more about the history of how that resolution to improve the Annual Communication Of Progress reporting process. Like, how it emerges and what type of work you did to get it onto the floor?

**ZSL:** Yeah, sure. So, that resolution came out of some research that we do at ZSL on an initiative that we run called SPOTT, which is basically an assessment platform of companies – upstream companies – in the palm oil supply chain. So, we look at what they're reporting overall in terms of how transparent they are and what they commit to, and then how they report progress in those areas. And it's basically a tool for investors – primarily investors – but also other stakeholders to look at how companies are, like, managing environmental risks and what they should be engaging those companies on. So, you know, if they're lacking in certain areas, should they have a policy, which an investor can encourage them to have? And through that research, we looked at transparency around reporting of just a whole number of areas that are reported in the ACOP report. So, landbank was a huge part of it, so we look at how much companies disclose on the areas that they're managing, and what those areas are used for. And also, we look at things like whether they have a time-bound plan in place and whether they've ever missed targets and that's something that we sort of regularly assess through our work on SPOTT, on this initiative. And we were finding that there was a lot of inconsistencies between what companies were reporting in their ACOP report versus in their sustainability report or in their annual report. Or we were finding that they might be reporting a time-bound plan in their ACOP that... I think, there were some that we initially were looking at... this was some time ago, but members who may have been members for, you know, five years never certified a single area and had a time-bound plan for sort of, as far away as, I think the most ridiculous one we found was for 2056. And these things weren't being picked up on by RSPO, which is partly to do with that sort of capacity issue that they didn't have a system a) to kind of encourage better reporting and to give really clear definitions and guidance on, you know, these... when we ask you to report on your landbank, this is what we mean. When we ask you to report on certified area, that should

include both planted and conservation areas and sort of the whole estate, whereas a lot of companies might be reporting to 'sum planted', and it wasn't clear whether that was right or not. But also there was a lack of guidance on okay, if you're gonna report a time-bound plan, how it needs to be sufficiently ambitious, and if it's not, then the RSPO needs to pick up and respond to it. So, it kind of... the whole idea for that resolution came about from that research and our finding these discrepancies and this lack of, I guess, a lack of follow-up on what was being reported. And at the same time, you know, a big goal of the RSPO and what they're doing is obviously to be able to track their progress and their impact, and we were sort of thinking that if they weren't able to assess based on what companies and members were reporting to them, you know, a baseline of where they are now and where they wanted to go, how on earth could they assess their progress. So, it was sort of to address these different problems that we approached... we drafted a resolution based on kind of what we'd been finding, and then we approached the NGO membership first of all to see who would be willing to support it, but then we also approached people who we sort of engage with quite a lot through the RSPO. So, other companies who we knew would be particularly supportive of better transparency and who had been demonstrating that that was something they wanted to do themselves, whereas other – I forget know who co-signed it – but we had quite a kind of cross-section of members. So, didn't just have NGOs, we had companies as well, which can be... is quite important in showing that it's a resolution that has taken into account the potential concerns of the full range of the membership categories. So, we circulated it to others as well to see if they would support it, and they did. And then that was sort of 'all as ever' in quite, like, a rushed timeframe. But yeah, that's sort of the process for getting a resolution ready and then co-signed, and then you submit to RSPO.

**Interviewer 1:** Yeah, okay. And according to you... I mean, since you're fairly new in the organisation, but maybe you know a bit about how this process has been going on before. Would you say that Zoological Society of London, like, have been successful in proposing all the resolutions that you want to propose? Or why not, if so?

**ZSL:** Yeah, I think so. I mean, as you say, cause I wasn't here, I can't answer kind of concretely. But based on my experience from the last two GAs, we will think about some ideas and things which we might want to propose, and then we have like an internal kind of vetting and brainstorming processes. So, it's actually, do we want to address that via a resolution or is that something actually that we just want to be, you know, communicating to the people that we work with and pushing it that way? And I think – my feeling is on it – that we never, we don't wanna, you know, put forward a resolution for everything that we think needs addressing because ultimately... First of all, you're usually the one... the one who tables the resolution is then usually the one – and I'm not saying this is a bad thing – but is usually the organisation that then makes sure it's delivered and will be quite involved in that. So, kind of capacity-wise, you really have to think carefully about what your priorities are and what as an organisation your best place to address. So, I think, on that basis, we haven't – certainly while I've been here – we haven't proposed other resolutions that then haven't got support and so, we've decided not to table. We've sort of thought quite carefully about how we prioritise the issue and how we make sure we have the capacity to help deliver it. I think there have been examples where we've said actually we're quite interested in discussing something, where we think other people might be interested, that they tend to get – that's sort of more in the brainstorming stages – and they will tend to get kind of whittled down quite early and then become things that we just sort of generally discuss with other members just through our other engagement.

**Interviewer 1:** And that's really interesting to hearing that about the capacity and so. Because one thing we're interested in is to hear whether, like, what you think it depends on whether then resolutions can make it to the agenda or not. Is it more, like, a matter of certain organisational characteristics that contribute to the successfully bringing it there, or is it more a matter of – which I maybe would relate this

capacity to that you just talked about – or is it more a matter of, like, the content of the resolution and the time you propose it at?

**ZSL:** Yeah, I think it's a probable mixture of all three. So, I think that whole idea of kind of socialising the idea of resolutions amongst members and seeing what kind of support it would get and... For example with the ACOP resolution, we came up with that purely from our research on growers and on member companies with a production base, and when we started discussing it with some people whom we wanted to co-sign it, they were like, you know, pointed out to us – quite rightly – that we can't. We need that resolution to be framed so that it is addressing all members and not disproportionately addressing the growers and saying, you know, they – just the growers – need to do this, the whole point of the ACOP process being that it's for reporting by all members. So, we were quite careful then to frame it so that it was across membership categories. And yes, we had come up with it because of our focus on growers in the research but, actually, there are aspects of all members' reporting that can be improved. So, I think that sort of whole approach of socialising it and getting member feedback before is really important, and that can be a big part of why a resolution isn't successful. I think, you're right, the capacity point is really important, both as an organisation – are we able to address this if it gets delivered? – but also having the capacity to then do that original, you know, tabling a resolution. And, I think, to compare it to FSC – which I'm not personally involved in; it's my colleagues who represent us on FSC – they have their GA every two years, and... I think that's right. I feel like I'm gonna be getting you all sorts of wrong information [laughs].

**Interviewer 1:** [Laughs] That's all right.

**ZSL:** I think they have their GA every two years. And their lead-in time for resolutions, which they refer to as motions, is much longer, whereas my experience with the RSPO has been much more, like, we need to turn this around quite quickly. And it's a much shorter timeframe. And I don't really know why that is. I don't know whether that's because the FSC has been going longer, or what the main difference is. I know they definitely have an issue where they get a lot of motions tabled, and they actually want to limit the number, because it's just too many. And I don't think the RSPO has that same problem, currently. But I think that capacity issue certainly comes into play for RSPO because we've often had to turn things around very quickly. So, if you don't have the resources to respond to stuff or, just, it doesn't work with your timeline cause you're working on other things, then that can be difficult. I can't remember the third thing you said now...

**Interviewer 1:** Yeah, so there is... Whether you see there is a relation – like, in order to get resolutions to the agenda – if there is a relation between the content of the resolution and the time you propose it at. So, like, depending on the... Well, what's being talked about in the media, or if there's certain events going on, or...

**ZSL:** Yeah, I think there are definitely trends of what is... yeah, of what is a key topic, which RSPO and the whole membership is aware of that needs addressing. And that means, obviously, it's very likely then to be tabled as a resolution but also to get passed. So, I think an example of that would be... there was a resolution, I think it was 2015 as well... I think... to develop a comprehensive smallholder strategy, and that came about, and it was actually the time that the... you know, there had been a lot of attention on RSPO for not having the right systems in place to include smallholders, so that was a huge barrier for smallholders becoming certified. And there had been a lot about that in the media and also sort of discussions amongst members. And so, this resolution was tabled sort of that year, and it has been a real focus of the RSPO since because it's such a critical thing for the RSPO's success.

**Interviewer 1:** Yeah. Great, thanks a lot! And now, Interviewer 2 has some questions for you also.

**Interviewer 2:** I'll take over from here, [respondent's name]. I'd like to talk a bit more about your work in driving the biodiversity and high conservation value agenda. So, you said before that you're part of the working group on biodiversity and high conservation value. Could you elaborate a bit on the work that you've been doing, both inside and outside this working group?

**ZSL:** Yeah, sure. So, most of the work that ZSL has done on HCV... I guess the more developed stuff actually started before I joined, and that was one of ZSL's huge focuses – sort of outside of the palm oil space – was around how do you better monitor protected areas. So, we focused a lot on national parks and protected areas where there would be huge problems around encroachment and poaching and illegal activities. And there was recognition that the protected area managers weren't using the same systems, the same monitoring systems, to inform their adaptive management. And that was limiting the... kind of the utility of that data. So, every protected area manager was using a different system and reporting it in different ways, and it was therefore very difficult to see global trends around protected area management. And through that work, a consortium of NGOs came together to develop a system called SMART, which is this Spatial Monitoring And Reporting Tool, which is essentially a database. It's sort of downloadable software that protected area managers can use, and when they go on foot patrols, they can log specific threats and identify based on kind of GPS waypoint data where something has occurred, and then they can adapt their monitoring accordingly. And it was found to be really successful to deter poaching and to improve protected area management. And what ZSL then did with that system in the context of RSPO was to say: How about we apply the same system to the monitoring and management of high conservation value areas that palm oil companies are identifying and setting aside? So, again, a recognition of a gap and saying well, there are these criteria in the Principles and Criteria that say you need to have a management and monitoring plan for your HCV area, you need to have a monitoring system, both under 5.2 and 7.3, for ex..., say, for new plantings and for existing areas. But there was no kind of standard system or endorsed system to allow those criteria to be fulfilled. So, companies were using different systems and, again, monitoring and reporting systems work in different ways. So, what ZSL did was adapt this SMART system that they'd used in... had been used by a consortium of NGOs for protected areas to the oil palm context. And it was through our work with the BHCV Working Group that that system then was endorsed by the RSPO and by the BHCV Working Group. And that has kind of been our main outcome. And the main reason for our involvement in BHCV is around pushing for the uptake of these more robust systems for monitoring. Unfortunately, and you know, this would be where we would like to see it go in the future, those systems aren't mandatory as part of the Principles and Criteria. They're just sort of recommended, and companies can use, you know, different systems. But, you know, it's a good step; it's a step in the right direction. And so, right now on the BHCV Working Group – so, we will attend those meetings quarterly – and a big focus of – well that continues to be a focus – a big focus in recent years has been around the compensation mechanism and that. So, the BHCV also formed the compensation task force to develop the remediation and compensation procedures guidance and documents that companies would have to fulfil to remedy past clearance of areas without prior HCV assessment. So, that's also been a big focus of what we've been involved in over the last few years. Yeah, I guess the sort of other thing we're working on right now is a project that is funded by RSPO and it sort of fits within the BHCV agenda and the BHCV project streams, I guess. We're working on a project to identify what are, like, what are the challenges still to effective HCV monitoring and management, what's working really well in specific places, and can we try and sort of learn from to implement elsewhere, and what are the remaining challenges. Because there is this real understanding still that, actually, you know, of all the things companies are required to do to be certified, setting aside an area and making sure not only is the assessment of high value, but actually that area remains there and doesn't kind of continually become degraded is still a huge problem. So, we've been involved in a project to sort of almost do like a stock-take of where we are with challenges to HCV monitoring and management and what can we do going forward to make sure that these systems are actually effective. Sorry, that was a lot of information in one go!



**Interviewer 2:** Yeah, no, it's great! So, you started off by saying that what you just described is some of the more developed stuff that you've been doing. Does this mean that your work has changed over time?

**ZSL:** Yeah, I would say so. I mean, I think... Yeah, definitely. I think also, you know, not only is our work... our work is changing to respond to the changing context. So, I think when we first started – or when ZSL first started – creating monitoring systems for companies to use on HCV areas, that was all very new and, you know, a lot of the companies didn't have monitoring systems, and RSPO on the whole was quite new. And I think now that we're much later on... I think that we first developed that system for the oil palm context in 2012. You know, we're five years later, and there has been huge advances in how not only the companies monitor their own areas... So there are examples of where, for example, concession managers are using drones to manage their conservation areas and that obviously really changes the context in which we're working in. We have to think about how we fit within that and how we support things like that.

**Interviewer 2:** Yeah, I see. But you're still, then, you're still very much focusing and have always been focusing on this monitoring aspect?

**ZSL:** Yeah, monitoring for adaptive management. Monitoring to show impact and to show these interventions through the RSPO are successful, and then to inform improved management. As an organisation that is sort of a big part of ZSL's institutional knowledge, I guess. And then, separately, you know, we do a lot of work on human-wildlife conflict and other sort of anti-poaching aspects, which can similarly be very much applied within the, you know, the palm oil company context.

**Interviewer 2:** Mm. But it's not... Is it correctly understood then that it's not so much monitoring of the members, which is maybe more a part of this complaints mechanisms, but it's more the...

**ZSL:** Yeah, I guess there are two aspects. So, the monitoring systems that we produce or try to work with companies to produce are around monitoring impacts and informing adaptive management and kind of biodiversity on the ground, you know, limiting deforestation on the ground. And then the work that we do as our sort of broader part of our business and biodiversity program here in London is around monitoring palm oil companies as a whole. So, this initiative that I mentioned called SPOTT, which monitors companies and how they're progressing and how transparent they are, that does have quite a big focus on RSPO members because many of the, you know, the... you know, the bigger companies – the Wilmars, the Golden Agri Resources, all those companies – they are RSPO members, but we do also have some companies that we monitor who aren't RSPO members, as well. So, of the 50 that we monitor right now on our platform, 40 are members, and 10 aren't members. So, yeah, there are sort of two aspects of monitoring work.

**Interviewer 2:** Okay, I see... Very cool, very interesting. So, we've been looking a bit through the meeting minutes of the Biodiversity and HCV Working Group. And we think that we have identified three strategies that are employed to kind of further this agenda. And I'd like to read them to you, and I'd like to get your response and see if you can recognise any of these strategies and if you agree that they are important. And maybe you can elaborate on them. So, I think, we'll go through them one by one?

**ZSL:** Sure, sounds good.

**Interviewer 2:** Good. So, the first one is that you focus a lot on education of certification bodies and capacity building of HCV assessors. Do you recognise that?

**ZSL:** Yeah, I think I do. I mean, I guess a big part of... yeah, a huge gap in RSPO's... not success, maybe that's being... Yeah, I guess a huge part of the implementation gap when it comes to... is the

standard achieving what it sets out to achieve isn't so much the Principles and Criteria that are in place; it's are there systems in place to mean that those P&Cs are complied with in the manner that they are intended to be complied with? And I think a huge part of that is a poor quality in auditing and in the HCV assessments themselves. So, HCV Resource Network are also on the BHCV Working Group and I imagine you might talk to as well, you know, have created this whole assessor licensing scheme to really address the... to make sure that the quality of those assessments is high. And I think that therefore has also then been a really big focus of the group because we're aware, you know for RSPO and for the individual working groups, even if you can make all these recommendations and things that you would like to see happen, but there's no way any of those things are gonna be achieved at scale if there aren't enough consultants, organisations, members – whoever they are who are meant to be implementing – with the skills to implement them well. So I think, yeah, I would agree with that.

**Interviewer 2:** Great. So, the second one is a bit what we talked about before – this complaints mechanism – that you are actually sanctioning members for doing land clearing without having conducted a prior HCV assessment.

**ZSL:** Yes, yes, yeah see that's the remediation and compensation procedures which where, have been a huge focus over the last - I'm not sure when they started negotiating this and trying to come up with it, but it's been at least I think six years, maybe longer. And this was the full idea of how do you keep the credibility of the standard whilst not excluding...

[connection lost 30:44]

[connection regained 31:12]

**Interviewer 2:** Hi [respondent's name], can you hear us?

**ZSL:** Hi, sorry, it cut out.

**Interviewer 2:** Yeah, you just fell out.

**ZSL:** Yes, I don't know what happened. Should I just carry on?

**Interviewer 2:** Yes, please, you were talking about the credibility of the standard.

**ZSL:** Yes, okay, so there was a recognition that a lot of clearance of... a lot of land clearance had taken place without HCV assessments, but also that sometimes there was a legitimate reason because obviously, you know, ideally it would have never happened but there were definitely issues around, you know, availability of assessors or the NPP - for the first two years, the NPP hadn't been established, so you couldn't implement the NPP system, the actual system wasn't in place yet. So the remediation and compensation procedures were a way to continue to engage members and to allow for continued certification, whilst requiring those members to actually compensate for past issues. But it was sort of quite a proactive approach from RSPO, I think. I mean, admittedly, it was because there had been a lot of clearance when there absolutely shouldn't have been, but I think that some other certification schemes do have a similar requirement so you can't clear land beyond your estate and you must compensate but they then haven't created a similar system to actually allow the companies to compensate. So, this was really complicated process by thinking of there are so many issues that you have to address around what happens if you for example acquire a company that cleared land after the cut-off date of 2005 but that company wasn't a member yet. So really, it was non-compliant but it wasn't a member, so even at voluntary it wasn't meant to be complying. But if as a member you then acquire it, you have to compensate for that. And how much do you compensate and how does that work? And then questions

around how do you compensate in terms of should it be like for like in terms of area? And what if there is no area left to compensate because to do so would require, you know, land that communities are now using? So, is it acceptable to compensate with a consolation project in Kalimantan for clearance that happened in South Sumatra, for example? So, all these quite sort of thorny complicated issues that had to be discussed and that was a huge focus for the Compensation Task Force, which was sort of under the Working Group.

**Interviewer 2:** Okay. I can imagine that the, as you say, there were a lot of different and strong opinions on these...

**ZSL:** Yeah, absolutely. Absolutely! No, it is incredibly interesting and, I think, a real example of how it's a very difficult thing also. I think, also when you've been discussing something in a group for so long, and there are obviously periods for public consultation and you're communicating the outcomes of discussions and there are minutes and all these things but I think, ultimately, when you then get to the point where you've created something that's ready to go to, like, final public consultation and that is gonna be socialised with the members to then require companies to actually implement this, it's very hard to capture all of the nuances of the discussion and how you get to the ultimate outcome. And there were certainly examples, which sounds crazy, but within those discussions where we'd have a discussion come up with what we thought was a good solution, and then it might get raised again, you know, six months later. And then we'll go 'Oh, you know, we thought we discussed this. We came up with this', but just kind of capturing all of the reasons why you go in a certain direction and come up with the ultimate product is... yeah, it's very hard to do, I think, really comprehensively.

**Interviewer 2:** Mh. So, the final strategy, [respondent's name], that I'd like to get your input on is that we've seen some efforts on the part of RSPO to try and lobby the Indonesian government in order to make it illegal to plant palm oil on HCV areas, since this HCV concept is not really recognised under Indonesian law.

**ZSL:** Yeah, I mean, I think the RSPO and the Secretariat is always sort of understandably, I guess, but does always have to be incredibly careful about it, how it approaches its engagement with all governments, and I guess particularly with the Malaysian and Indonesian governments because, you know, its Secretariat is headquartered in Malaysia and for both the palm oil industry is such a huge part of the country's economy and it's such an important industry. So, I think, they are careful about that engagement. And I think sometimes members can maybe get frustrated because it could be seen as overly cautious about that, but I don't really know which side of that I fall on, to be honest because sometimes I think that it can be frustrating that there is a lack of progress and you can think 'why aren't they being more forceful?' But then actually you can totally understand in terms of the politics of it why they can't be when they're a kind of competing national standards, and there's always a real rhetoric against, you know, global standards and there is sort of a real want to, I guess, regain that and sort of focus on the ISPO and MSPO instead of RSPO. But, I think, at the same time it's fully recognised that for a lot of cases, the RSPO's success hinges on, like, they have to engage the government. You have to address how do you... For example with the smallholder aspect in ensuring the RSPO isn't just excluding smallholders that the sort of best way to - or one of the approaches to go about doing that - is through government engagement and looking at sort of extension services within a government context to smallholders and not trying to reinvent the wheel and do that separately purely from the RSPO but actually kind of saying 'okay, how can we support existing or what could be government mechanisms to improve the situation. Or for the example that you gave with HCV: One of the biggest barriers for companies is that they - or at least one of the, it sounds very cynical but we never know what the, like, real challenges for companies versus what some may use to say 'well, this is impossible to implement', and it's probably a mixture of both, to be honest. I'm sure some cases companies are genuinely have that as a challenges, and in other cases the company is just citing the challenge to say 'Oh, we can't implement'. But the HCV example is

sort of the perfect example of that, and it's still not legal to set aside area that is being licensed for cultivation. So, I mean, they have to engage the company on that. I don't think, there is no avoiding that on an issue like that.

**Interviewer 2:** Mh... And you're talking also about lobbying the government in relation to smallholders?

**ZSL:** Ehm, I don't think so much lobbying the government in relation to smallholders, but rather engaging and collaborating with the government to come up with solutions to make sure that things like RSPO or other sustainability requirements don't exclude smallholders. And so, I think it's sort of more about engagement rather than lobbying.

**Interviewer 2:** I see. And does that go for the HCV concept as well, or would you see that as more kind of direct lobbying and advocacy?

**ZSL:** Yeah, I think, as I said with the RSPO's relationship with the governments and sort of the sensitivities around that – and there isn't any real sort of evidence of this comment – but I imagine that the best approach is for the RSPO to take on this sort of engagement role and to show, for example, that they can help with like access to international markets and support for, like, Indonesian systems, for example by leveraging the power of their downstream company members, and that the actual lobbying angle is left is, sort of, it's better to come from with any of the Indonesian NGOs because there is this rhetoric around, you know, obviously around sovereignty and it not being just all externally driven.

**Interviewer 2:** Yeah. Yeah, yeah, yeah, I get that. Do you then... Do some of the – I don't know if you know this at all, but – does the RSPO then sometimes maybe get some Indonesian NGOs to do the lobbying for them? We could see in the meeting minutes that...

**ZSL:** I don't know. They might do it, but I really don't know, to be honest. Yeah, I don't even know how many Indonesian members they have. And actually, to be honest, I guess sort of quite a frustrating example from the NGO side and admittedly speaking as a London-based NGO, but for the resolution around transparency in concession boundaries, which is being so... the progress is being so limited due to government responses to that and, you know, all this push-back on the fact that it's supposedly illegal to share – there's been no clarity on whether it is legal or illegal to share – maps of concession sites, and there was definitely an example within the RSPO where it felt like there was quite a lot of – not from the RSPO necessarily, but for other members and other sort of company members – saying, you know, NGOs need to lobby the government to make sure this isn't the case. And I think Greenpeace has certainly been doing that in Indonesia with some success. But I also don't – whilst it's definitely an option and certainly, you know, can be a really good approach – I also don't think, sort of having said that, the RSPO shouldn't lobby, and I don't really think they should. I don't think that it's members and it can rely solely on NGOs lobbying the government. Because I think some of those NGOs also have similar sensitivities and, you know, they are operating in countries as well and maybe engaging the government on other aspects. So, you know, everybody has to juggle the same sensitivities. Yeah, I'm not sure that answers any questions...

**Interviewer 2:** Yeah, it definitely does. It is a very sensitive topic, and it's great to get your input on. I would like to also talk a very little bit about your work on peatland protection because I know that's something you also work with in Zoological Society of London. And in the RSPO, this also relates to emission reductions, right?

**ZSL:** Yeah.

**Interviewer 2:** So, I know that you're not on the Greenhouse Gas or Emissions Reductions Working Groups, but maybe you know something about the kind of work that they do to further these debates on greenhouse gas and emissions reductions?

**ZSL:** Yeah, so as you said we're not on that working group, but I think that the sort of peatland issue is a real example, as you said, of something which is obviously such a huge part of media attention on palm oil, and it's just such a huge focus for the RSPO it's obviously a real priority and then with forest fires and peatland drainage and the GHG emissions associated with it, it has become much more of a priority. And RSPO NEXT sort of in part aims to address the shortfalls in the Principles and Criteria when it came to requirements around peatland management. It's definitely not something that I've... I haven't been hugely involved in, so I really can give much detail on that. I guess be it just another sort of from ZLS side, something we're working on in that context is we do a lot of work in South Sumatra where we've been working for a long time on Sumatran tiger conservation, and I think with palm oil companies there since about 2001. And obviously that's a hugely important peatland land scape, and so, we're doing a lot of work with companies actually outside of the palm oil sector, with APP (Asian Pulp and Paper) but mostly via our project partners. So, we're working with an organisation called Deltares which is a Dutch organisation working on peatland mapping and peatland management. So, we would sort of do most of that specific peatland work through other organisations. This is not really our area of expertise.

**Interviewer 2:** Mh. Could I read three strategies to you, [respondent's name], and then...

**ZSL:** Yes.

**Interviewer 2:** ...maybe you can recognise them as something you've seen being used and maybe not? Okay, so first up is the development and education in tools to measure carbon footprints. That has been a focus in the RSPO.

**ZSL:** Yeah, I think I would agree with that. Again, it's not something that I've been directly involved in, but with things like PalmGHG... Yeah, it has been a big focus.

**Interviewer 2:** Great. The next one – you talked a bit about it in another context – highlighting the relationship between the credibility between the RSPO and then, in this case, to incorporate GHG considerations.

**ZSL:** What, sort of linking the need to incorporate GHG consideration to its credibility.

**Interviewer 2:** Yeah, so kind of... Yeah, exactly.

**ZSL:** Yeah, I guess so. It's not... Hm, that's interesting. It's not something... I guess, yeah, I mean I guess it is particularly when it comes to emissions from land use change and peatland, as the RSPO, you know, needs to be able to demonstrate having an impact in those areas because that is such a huge concern of downstream companies. Yeah.

**Interviewer 2:** Great. Final one: to redefine the standard to also incorporate GHG considerations.

**ZSL:** Yeah, I think it will be interesting to see what happens in this round of the P&C review.

**Interviewer 2:** Yeah, it's ongoing, right?

**ZSL:** Yeah, exactly. It's just kind of really kicking off now, and I'm sure that will be a big priority of a lot of NGOs and, you know, others working on the P&C review. Yeah, it's sort of not really my area. Just from like a personal point of view, I think... I guess, yeah, it's just not my...

**Interviewer 2:** No, but that's great to...

**ZSL:** ...interest area. So, it's sort of interesting to think about what, like, what are the most practical tools to address, like, deforestation at the smallholder level that also allow for quite complex measurement of GHG emissions or reductions against the baseline. And I think, whilst it's obviously critical so that you know that what you're doing is actually having the right impact, I think it's important that those... it can't become so overly obligated and technical that actually it's exclusive and un-implementable anyway. It's sort of what's the line between, like, scientific rigour and making something accessible.

**Interviewer 2:** Yeah, definitely. Talking about all these changes, [respondent's name], do you think that RSPO's definition of sustainability in itself is changing?

**ZSL:** Hm, that's a really good question [laughs]. I don't know if they have a definition. Do they have a definition of sustainability?

**Interviewer 2:** Hm, well, that's also a good question. I think some people think of it in terms of the Principles and Criteria, right? How do they define what is sustainable palm oil?

**ZSL:** Yeah, I think from my perspective I've definitely noticed in the last year more recognition from the RSPO itself as to its overall mission and its position not just as a certification scheme but as a multi-stakeholder, like, roundtable. So, they've talked a lot about what things can they do beyond certification when it comes to issues to do with like including smallholders, for example. And so I think, I guess, maybe it was sort of my assumption, but when I first became involved in RSPO, I saw it purely as a certification scheme, and in that way I think I have the same assumption as you that they define sustainability of production via compliance with the Principles and Criteria, that if their overall mission is to make sustainable palm oil kind of the norm across the industry and saying 'well, certification isn't the only way that we can achieve that', it would suggest that their definition of sustainability is actually different as well. And I think that whole area is quite an interesting thing, because I think, I imagine that the perceptions of different members around what RSPO is and what it is trying to do and how it is going to achieve that, I think there is probably huge variation in that. I think there's sort of a lot of assumptions about... where some people would say 'look, it's a certification scheme, it needs to focus purely on the credibility of the standard, and it doesn't then matter if it isn't certifying loads and loads of companies'. Whereas others would say 'well, actually, no, it's mission is around making sustainable palm oil the norm, it's a roundtable not just a certification scheme, and how is it gonna do that?' So, I think that whole area is very interesting 'cause I think there's very different perspectives on what it is and how it should do it.

**Interviewer 2:** Going back a little bit then to your... to the Biodiversity-HCV agenda, can you tell us a bit about the membership collaboration or maybe tensions that you see in this regard? So, maybe tell us from which group or membership category that you receive the most support or meet the most opposition from in your work to promote this agenda.

**ZSL:** I think inevitably most of the opposition from – in all areas, not just in the biodiversity aspect – is from the growers, but not simply because they want to push back because they don't want to do it. I think more because they feel that what they have been doing to date isn't recognised or incentivised or rewarded because there's often this whole discussion around lack of market uptake and premiums for sustainable palm oil and the incentives just not being there. So, I think, in that way, anything which seems

like it's going to make the standard harder to implement, there's a real push back. And because, you know, ultimately, if you're the upstream company, if you're the producer, you're the one who has to change your practices and change what you're doing. Whereas if you're a downstream company and you're a member, admittedly, there are huge challenges and barriers to sourcing sustainable palm oil, particularly derivatives, that is certified when they may not be available. But ultimately it's about, you know, changing supply chains and purchasing decisions, not about actually, you know, hiring more people to manage your HCVs or developing a monitoring system or paying for a monitoring system or all these things. So, I think, sort of purely because of that, inevitably we do get quite a lot of pushback from the growers. But I think that having said that, certainly a lot of the members that we work with on the working group, because they tend to be the members that are the most engaged and the companies sort of most proactively involved in the RSPO, and they therefore also have, you know, quite extensive dedicated sustainability teams and sustainability team members who are purely focused on biodiversity, and they are probably, or at least on sort of, you know, forest conservation and the issues associated with biodiversity, they are often from a conservation background, so it's not like you're speaking another language. You kind of both understand what you're trying to do and what the challenges are and then the pushback comes from like 'okay, that may not be feasible from the company perspective'. So, I think on the whole, there's support for the intentions and understanding of kind of what best practice would look like, and then the pushback comes in a seeming lack of understanding from others outside of companies as to what's actually possible, and how much that might cost, and if they think they're adequately rewarded for all of those things.

**Interviewer 2:** Yeah, okay. Thank you, [respondent's name]! We are about to wrap up, but we have a final question for you, which may be a bit hard.

**ZSL:** Okay... [Laughs]

**Interviewer 2:** [Laughs] So, you can think about it for a little bit, if you want. We would very much like to hear you list three events that you think have been important turning points in RSPO's history.

**ZSL:** Oh, wow!

**Interviewer 2:** Yeah. And explain to us why you think these were turning points. And yeah, you can take a moment to think about it but, you know, there's no right or wrong answer here. We'd just like to get your perspective on some important historical moments.

**ZSL:** Hm... Let me think... I think whilst I actually wasn't there, I think the GA where the map resolution was passed was quite a historical moment because it was, I think, it was initially expected that there would be a lot of opposition to that, and the fact that it was passed, you know, with a majority, ultimately to be delivered regardless of the challenges there had been in delivering it since then, I think that's a pretty historical moment. I think in more recent years, it's around the real – you know, we talked sort of about lobbying government versus engaging government and how that works – I think the, whilst it's not a specific event, it's sort of a number of events that have led to it but the kind of emergence of these landscape approaches, whilst they're still incredibly theoretical and hard to actually sort of categorise as to like what does this actually mean, how is this gonna work for RSPO, but I think the fact that RSPO has been involved in pushing for landscape approaches and then is now piloting jurisdictional certification to look at how do you actually make a whole area more sustainable, I think, sort of with the Sabah jurisdictional pilot in South Sumatra, and now even, I think, was it Ecuador that said they would like to be the first country – I think it's Ecuador. Those are kind of huge opportunities for engaging with the government and for not just addressing the kind of subset of members who might be already engaged but actually looking at 'okay, so how do you bring everybody in this area up to a minimum standard', and I think that's incredibly important and quite exciting. I guess other, like, historical... these are much

newer, but I think, anything around legislation and whilst it's not the most important in terms of, sort of, coverage of the proportion of the palm oil market... But I think sort of recent pushes for legislation in Europe around not wanting palm oil in certain products or pushback on imports of palm oil, whether it has to do with health or environment, I think those do present... not necessarily big threats to the industry because the industry, you know, most of the palm oil is sold to China and India or domestically within Indonesia anyway, but I think just in terms of the knock-on effect that that kind of pushback can have in actually making the national industries and national standards even more focused on maintaining sovereignty and not being influenced externally and wanting to have a really strong domestic market, I think that kind of pushback on palm oil from European countries could have quite a sort of knock-on effect on how the industry responds to external pressure, generally. Whether that's from RSPO or from other markets. And I think that's something that really needs to be managed, and I don't really know how that's, like, what the solution is, but I just think it's an interesting outcome of that... of those... sort of... of that... whatever you call it. Sorry, my brain is giving up...

**Interviewer 2:** [Laughs] We're almost done! Hang in there!

**ZSL:** No, just it will be interesting to see how that affects pushback on RSPO and on other initiatives.

**Interviewer 2:** Yeah, definitely! Thank you so much for that input.

**ZSL:** Yeah, no, it's fun just to get to talk. I'm sorry if I spoke too much.

**Interviewer 2:** Yeah, no, not at all. Final short question, [respondent's name]. Because when we think about important turning points – or when I think about it – I think about also the emergence of these other sustainability standards in the palm oil industry, like the ISPO and the MSPO, which you also mentioned earlier. And I'm wondering if you think that the emergence of these have affected RSPO's way of working in any way?

**ZSL:** Yeah, well, I think they certainly have to be aware of these standards and if at all possible, it can't be seen as ISPO or RSPO or MSPO or RSPO has to be, like, how do you... how do you look at how these standards align. How can, for example, ISPO be the mechanism that can bring the whole industry up to a minimum standard and maybe be moving towards RSPO certification, or is there a way that RSPO can help strengthen ISPO so that it is inclusive of smallholders, and then the RSPO doesn't have to create its own system to do that. So, I think, it has to change the way they work. Otherwise, I think, there will be a lot of pushback on RSPO, and the outcome will be that maybe RSPO becomes this very niche thing, solely for kind of exports to the US and Europe, but will never ever be able to – unless, you know, India and China become very engaged and require RSPO, which at this stage isn't likely but may happen. Yeah, so I think it has to change the way they work. I'm not entirely sure how, yet. So, yeah.

**Interviewer 2:** No, but it sounds like a very collaborative way of working.

**ZSL:** Yeah, I hope so. I think there's a recognition that that's the way to do it. That's certainly what's the RSPO has indicated. Whether that will be kind of reciprocated, I don't know, but I hope so.

**Interviewer 2:** Okay, great. Thank you so much for all your answers, [respondent's name]! Do you have any question for us, or do you have any comments? Or maybe you think that there are some questions that we should be asking that we're not? Anything you'd like to say?

**ZSL:** No, I think all your questions are really good. It sounds like you know way more about RSPO than I do. I think it will be really interesting to know what you're planning on doing with the outcomes of the



research, and whether you have shared the fact that you're doing this research with the RSPO, and if they've had any response yet?

**Interviewer 1:** So, we... You know Kristjan Jespersen?

**ZSL:** Yes.

**Interviewer 1:** Yes. So, he will be presenting at the European Roundtable in June, and this material... I mean, it obviously informs our master theses, and we will also... we're aiming to publish scholarly articles on it, but it will also be included in the report that he will base his presentation on, as far as I know.

**ZSL:** Great.

**Interviewer 1:** Yeah, and also another girl in our team is interviewing all the Secretariat, I think representatives from there. So, I couldn't tell you exactly how, like, how officially RSPO knows about the research that we're doing, but they're involved on certain levels.

**ZSL:** Yeah. Yeah, yeah, yeah. Okay, cool. No, it's just that I think that you will find your findings will be really interesting. You know, it sounds like you have an avenue to get those findings back to the RSPO, which is great. So yeah, no, I look forward to seeing what comes out of them. And we'll be at the RSPO – I will actually have left ZSL by then, I'm moving on – but my team will still be here, and we have a reception here at ZSL at the zoo on the Tuesday, so if you let me know who will be attending – I don't know if any of you will be as well as Kristjan – but, you know, we'd be really happy to invite you along. So, do let me know when you'll be in town, and I can make sure that you get an invite.

**Interviewer 1:** That's great. Thanks!

**Interviewer 2:** Thank you, that's really nice!

**Interviewer 1:** Well, yeah, we'll make sure. Obviously, we're happy to share this as much as possible. So, that's great. We'll stay in touch about that.

**ZSL:** Also, just one quick question, and you might have covered this already, but is... So, obviously it's recorded, and I'm totally happy with that. Will you be using, like, assigning comments to specific people, or will it be anonymous? And I think I may be happy either way, I'm just worried if I said anything that's very against RSPO [laughs].

**Interviewer 1:** No, for sure, and just so you know also, if you want to read the transcript before we use it, you're very... we can for sure send you a copy. And you can, you know, correct it and so on. I think we're both aiming to talk about the organisations in terms of membership categories.

**ZSL:** Yes, yes, yes, yes. Yeah, that's fine.

**Interviewer 2:** Yeah, and we're aiming to talk a bit... Yeah, membership categories and the kind of working groups that you're participating in.

**ZSL:** Okay, that's fine. I'm happy with that. I'll be interested to see it, but don't... Yeah, not to worry if I sort of haven't got back... I'm happy for you to use what we've discussed.

**Interviewer 1:** But we will send you a transcript as soon as possible after the interview then, so you can give an overview.

**ZSL:** Yeah, okay. Thank you. And good luck with your next interviews and with writing it all up!

**Interviewer 1 and Interviewer 2:** Thanks!

**ZSL:** Yeah, I'll look out for your results.

**Interviewer 1:** Great. Thanks a lot for taking the time!

**ZSL:** All right then. Have a good day!

**Interviewer 1 and Interviewer 2:** You, too! Bye!

**ZSL:** Bye!

## Appendix E.5: Marks & Spencer (Retailer)

**Interviewer 1:** Is it ok if we record it?

**Marks & Spencer:** Yes, it is.

**Interviewer 1:** Ok, that's great. So, then to start with, please define your current role within the RSPO, like you as a representative of Marks and Spencer.

**Marks & Spencer:** Yes, I sit on the Board of Governors of the RSPO as one of two main representatives of the retail sector.

**Interviewer 1:** Ok, great, and then, when you, as we said, we are interested in the different agendas that the organisations are driving, so when you, how would you say does RSPO balance these different interests of its members. So are there ways that you think they could perform better?

**Marks & Spencer:** Yes, I do. I think they could perform much better. But actually, undergoing a [serious 0:57] change of review process at the moment within RSPO and I believe that will be very helpful in realigning the vision, the purpose of RSPO across the different stakeholder groups.

**Interviewer 1:** Ok, and then and that helps, like how would you say in...real-life terms, so to say, how does that help to balance the different interests?

**Marks & Spencer:** Because it defines what the RSPO objective is, which has actually become, I think, a little hazy over the years. If you look at the kind of strategy worked on by RSPO, it talks about its objective being, and I can't remember the exact words but anything, market transformation of palm oil...but there's been very little review, of whether the current system and approaches and general methodology and strategy all by RSPO is fit to achieve that. And I think that, exactly as you say, I think, the different actors and stakeholders within and associated with RSPO, do have different expectations and I think that's beginning to cause some problems in helping the secretariat to understand what their delivery roles is.

**Interviewer 1:** Ok, great. Now, let's move a bit more to Marks and Spencer. We see that Marks and Spencer has proposed or sponsored two resolutions. One is in 2013, the adoption of the P&C, which passed and then also again in 2014, you co-sponsored a resolution together with Royal Ahold about the enabling market uptake of physical RSPO certified sustainable palm oil, and, but this one was withdrawn after the discussion. So could you maybe explain to us a little bit of how these resolutions emerged and what kind of work did you do in order to have them get onto the General Assembly as well as then like, why would you say that, for example, the second one, you had to withdraw it?

**Marks & Spencer:** Yeah, well the first one was a very broad, general resolution of which we were one of many signatories of what I recall. And it is an issue which is absolutely fundamental to the success of RSPO's Principles and Criteria. Actually I would argue they're one of the reasons why RSPO has faced so many challenges since that date in 2013 is because, really, the Principles and Criteria were never where they needed to be at that time. But it was surely the P&C voting and so voting for the P&C was a better of a done deal and the vast majority of the [late 04:03] work had been done in advance so that all the kind of participants had a pretty good idea of, the actually...I mean, this is actually a kind of failure of the top of my head as well because I wasn't at that roundtable 2013, so ehm, I do think I was, I am trying to think, I don't remember. I don't think I was there, 2013. I think, 2014 is the first one that I attended. Whereas 2014 the resolution was one which was very specific to and material to retail supply chains. It didn't have a broad applicability and, if I am really honest, it wasn't very well understood by many of the individuals

who have to vote on resolutions, partly because it was so specific. To be honest, growers actually have very little idea about supply chains beyond the refinery point, the kind of first major processing lets say. And one of my very specific learnings of that experience was to make sure that, if I was to put forward a resolution of that shape again in the future, i.e. one which is quite specific and requires on a [degree 05:28] of context understanding to do an awful lot more pre-alignment with voting constituents, because actually, the ability, one's ability to explain and describe a very specific context within the podium space at the General Assembly is very very limited. Is a very ineffective way of dealing with complexity and actually you know I would have done it completely different if I had known in advance what I knew after having undergone the experience.

**Interviewer 1:** So you say that the 2014 was the first General Assembly you ever attended?

**Marks & Spencer:** I attended one in about 2008 and then I attend one again in 2014 and every one since then, I believe. But yes, I haven't been at one for a long time in between.

**Interviewer 1:** ok, when you say p-alignment or what...I am not sure I understood it correctly. Or pre-alignment?

**Marks & Spencer:** Pre-alignment

**Interviewer 1:** Ah pre-alignment, ok.

**Marks & Spencer:** Yeah so making sure people are, have a chance to have discussions and explanations in advance of the presentation.

**Interviewer 1:** Hm yeah, that makes sense, ok. So what do you think that it depends on whether a resolution actually makes it to the agenda or not, is that about the characteristics of the organisation that is proposing it or is it rather the relation to between the content of the resolution and the timing you propose it?

**Marks & Spencer:** I think ehm...I think it's a combination of both these factors. I think timing is absolutely critical but the challenge we have is that different stakeholder groups will have different perspectives of urgency and related to timing and the failure to achieve a decent P&C very much neglected that that the market felt and civil society probably felt that was a very critical issue to be sufficiently aspirational with the RSPO standard but as the producers felt that wasn't such a critical issue, that RSPO was sufficiently strong with the proposal as it stood. And I think the next two years of campaigning was good evidence of, as I said, this slightly distorted perceptions of urgency and critical nature of issues. I think, it depends, there is so many factors. It depends on...so [the art is that 08:21] the resolutions, the voting, primarily, takes place in Southeast Asia. So, there is some real structural challenges there because it is actually quite difficult to, if you are in eastern Europe, in particular, or the Americas you see, you know anywhere other than Southeast Asia actually. It's very difficult to get the quality time to do the pre-alignment that I just described. Because a lot of that is quite soft communication skills, you need to actually sit down with people and talk it through. It can be quite difficult to both get the time and to create the right context for discussion and explanation over the phone. And it depends who it is, if you know the people well, that's very different. But [in the main 09:07], we don't know...there aren't any cross-relationships between the people in the room and the European constituents who have to come over and present resolutions. So that's actually really difficult to do in practice so a lot will depend on how strong your personal networks are. I have to be honest, in 2014 mine were very weak. And I would say the same for Ahold, which is partly why we misjudged that and that's why we agreed to withdraw it because we recognised that it was misjudged. And there's no way that we were going to get it through with the approach that we had taken. So it's a bit of a rumble. But it's kind of

lot of different factors of time and place and people and logistics that all combine to determine whether your resolution will be successful or fail.

**Interviewer 1:** Ok, is that also the reason why Marks and Spencer has not put any resolutions forward, before? I mean the organisation has been a member since 2006 but then the first resolution co-sponsored was in 2013, so is that also because of the network? Or is there another reason?

**Marks & Spencer:** No, as a general rule, we wouldn't see ourselves as being primary drivers of resolutions within RSPO. I mean if you were like...I mean to be fair, I have only been with Marks and Spencer since 2011 so it's quite difficult to explain the reasoning before that point but in the main, we operate very collectively within the palm oil space. We only use a couple of thousand tons of palm oil every year so our volume is very very low. Our influence from a volume perspective is very low. We see our best way of driving change within the palm oil landscape is through collaboration. So we would not tend to take unilateral action on anything. It is very unlikely we would see anything as being urgent unless we felt that it was and had good support amongst our peers, particularly, other retailers but also potentially consumer goods for the of members and general brand and manufacturing sector.

**Interviewer 1:** Ok great, thank you very much.

**Marks & Spencer:** Cool.

**Interviewer 2:** So [respondent's name], I'll take over from here. My name is Interviewer 2 and the thesis that I'm working on is focusing a bit more on how actors within the RSPO work to further certain agendas. So, we have identified four central debates within the RSPO and those are the biodiversity and HCV agenda, the emissions-reductions agenda, the smallholders agenda, and finally, the human rights agenda. And of course, I'd like to talk to you about each and everyone of them but I know that we are under time constraints, so if you had to choose just one of these, which one are you most deeply engaged with and would like to talk about?...I can read them to you again if you want.

**Marks & Spencer:** No, no, I noted them down. I'm looking at it, I mean, in all honesty, I wouldn't say that I had a particular agenda which was stronger than all the rest. I think the challenge is balancing all of these agendas in a way that is pragmatic, for the, particularly, the stakeholders who have to deliver which is either producers on the ground or the supply chain and market through the manufacturing process. You know, absolutely undeniably but much much more responsibility and therefore, budget on producers. So we do need to acknowledge the challenges around producers and that includes smallholders. You know, you know, how do you treat them, to be honest, is one of the greatest challenges that we are not going to get everything we want, you know. The RSPO is not a system into which everyone can dip their hand and come out with the prize that they want. The reality is that what we have to do is, we have to figure out what are the optimum outcomes across all of these areas to deliver the best net-benefit on palm oil. I mean, I guess, biodiversity and HCV, really, I mean, I don't, actually I cannot separate biodiversity and HCV from emissions and climate change. The two are different impacts of the same challenge which is land use change so actually, I don't think they are separable they are entirely part of the same agenda. I don't think anyone is going to say "oh that's why we can lose biodiversity as long as climate change has progressed and mitigated better. I just don't think that's a credible argument on any level, so immediately I would say, I would say that's the originating focus of the RSPO would be biodiversity and HCV then followed by emissions and climate change. I think the human rights agenda is one which has developed much more recently. There has always been a human rights element to RSPO and standard but previously that focused more on FPIC and communities and what goes on in plantations to some extent. But a quite rudimentary level, whereas... you know, since the emergence of things like the human rights act and other similar legislation on a global stage, they were actually starting to look for much more structural approaches to tackle human rights issues. And that has led to human rights becoming, starting to gain, I

would say profile rather than equivalence, with the land use change issues. I think human rights is seen as a much more critical issue by the market than it is by the production countries. I think they start to get the biodiversity and climate change impact, but I don't think they've quite got the human rights relevance and the critical nature of that from a market perspective. So I guess in that way, you would face it differently. Smallholders, I see as being quite a different challenge because the reality is, we could deliver RSPO without smallholders and it would stay niche and it will only reflect best practice, good standard within palm oil production. And it would have very little material impact on land use change and climate change in general. You know, I just, you know it will have, it will allow companies who buy RSPO to talk about how good they are because they are doing the right thing but in terms of the actual impact on the ground it will not be material unless the smallholder challenges are phased into. So the challenge of smallholders, I would describe as being more as one of an enabling [environment 16:59] so it's the how do we achieve good biodiversity protection, good emissions reduction and potentially, but to a lesser extent, better human rights protection. We can only achieve that at scale by being inclusive of smallholders and I don't think that we have a good enough strategy on that at the moment, but that's my kind of general feeling. Did that makes sense or do you have any questions?

**Interviewer 2:** Yes, it does, absolutely. And we are very well aware, it's a very good point you are making that this division between different agendas is somewhat an artificial one because it's one organisation that is working with all these different elements.

**Marks & Spencer:** Yeah.

**Interviewer 2:** Still, you mention the human rights agenda and you said that biodiversity and HCV was maybe something that the RSPO was focusing more on from the beginning and then this human rights agenda has kind of emerged and we've seen...

**Marks & Spencer:** Yeah, it's grown. It's grown in scope and in prominence.

**Interviewer 2:** Yeah, and we've seen some efforts to, we've been looking through your meeting minutes and we saw a lot of them, and we saw that there were some efforts to bringing in the human rights agenda through the HCV debate, so kind of focusing on the social side of the HCVs, 4, 5 and 6, I believe, instead of only the first three which are very much related to the environment. Is that something you recognise a way of kind of bringing human rights even more into the RSPO?

**Marks & Spencer:** I think it is a very cumbersome way to approach it, to be honest. I think that the...given the existing rigour of HCV assessment or, to be honest with you, potentially I should say the lack of rigour, because it is so challenging and so complex. I think that to try and bundle more human rights, more social aspects into it, would be really problematic. And again I think that the human rights issues are quite, I mean, I've got to be cautious of how I present this. Let's just say, there are many specific human rights dimensions within Southeast Asia and palm oil specifically, for example, the forced labour challenge. Now I am not going to say there is no forced labour anywhere else, obviously there is, but I think there is a recognised peak issue there within Southeast Asia and palm oil. Now, HCV as a methodology and a model that has to apply to lots of different geographies and agricultural and forestry developments. So, I think, I just think it would just be awful [and 20:16] cumbersome not the best way to develop thinking around human rights protection.

**Interviewer 2:** Just to understand exactly what you are saying [respondent's name], are you saying that this is something that has not happened within the RSPO? Or are you saying that it has happened but it's not maybe the way that you would have gone around it?

**Marks & Spencer:** I am not an expert of all things that have happened in RSPO to be honest but to my knowledge I thought that I had [gotten 20:45] conservation levels rather than anything more specific and to be honest, RSPO doesn't own the HCV methodology so I don't see how RSPO could change that.

**Interviewer 2:** No, maybe, I didn't express myself clearly enough. What I meant was that, you know, the HCV methodology, it has the different kind of HCVs. To my knowledge, there are six and the first three, they are focused on the environment, and the last three are more focused on the social side you could say.

**Marks & Spencer:** But yes, kind of social and cultural.

**Interviewer 2:** Yeah exactly. And I think in the beginning of the RSPO, a lot of focus was placed on the first three and then it was not until later that, I think in a resolution, someone said "oh but let's also look at the last three". So it's not a change of the HCV methodology but it's more a broadened focus.

**Marks & Spencer:** No, but I mean, certainly, the HCV methodology should be applied as one of the prerequisites to certification and obligation of certification to maintain HCVs and again I have got to be a bit cautious here, because I really don't know the details or, you know, I am not an auditor and it is not my typical space at that level of detail but my impression is that the HCV methodology has tended to focus more on social in a more community and cultural kind of way making sure rights are protected in the broadest sense. But that tends to be rights to water, rights to land, rights to areas of a cultural significance, things like that. And I might be wrong here, so, you know, please, if I'm mistaken then accept...I might be wrong.

**Interviewer 2:** No you're right.

**Marks & Spencer:** The human rights agenda that we are seeing at the moment has got a particular focus on forced labour. And that I am not sure, how that would fit within an HCV context at all. It doesn't feel though, it would be a natural fit.

**Interviewer 2:** Ok, great, that's great to get that input. You also talked about the greenhouse gas agenda as very connected to the biodiversity and HCV agenda but having emerged a little bit later on. So, I just want to ask you, if you could recognise that there have been some efforts when this emissions reductions agenda emerged in the RSPO. It was very important for the RSPO to incorporate GHG considerations in order to maintain its credibility.

**Marks & Spencer:** Yeah.

**Interviewer 2:** Yeah? And that it was something...

**Marks & Spencer:** Sorry was that a question here?

**Interviewer 2:** Yeah, so then, I am asking if you can recognise that as something that was being highlighted?

**Marks & Spencer:** Oh absolutely. Yes, yes.

**Interviewer 2:** Yeah?

**Marks & Spencer:** Definitely. I mean there has always been a greenhouse gas element to the standard. I mean, there are some obligations, but the obligations did not fight enough in terms of the last Principles and Criteria review. They didn't give sufficient coverage to peat, they didn't give sufficient recognition to

high carbon stock forests and wasn't sufficient obligation on transparency or calculating and reporting of mitigation actions. So all in all, there was just too many compromises around the greenhouse gas elements of RSPO of the last Principles and Criteria review.

**Interviewer 2:** Ok great, so [respondent's name], going back a little bit to the purpose of the RSPO and its definition of sustainability. You talked a bit in the beginning about this, you said that RSPO's strategy has been a bit hazy. So, do you think that RSPO's definition of sustainability is also changing maybe?

**Marks & Spencer:** Hm, ahh is it changing? I mean, the challenge, of course, sustainability is not an absolute and it never will be. We don't achieve sustainability, you become more sustainable. It is just that it is far far too cumbersome and complicated to kind of, every time you use the word sustainable to have to give a kind of qualification around that. But it is, I think everyone who is a sustainability practitioner recognises that what we are looking for is optimum best practice that recognises that need for our continued supply of agricultural, for example, in this context, agricultural materials while still having sufficient balancing conservation of landscapes and still recognising the human rights of individuals within the production area, I mean just to, [and I put it down as reasons 26:04]. I don't think anyone within RSPO would argue over that generic description of RSPO that is, but it's generically aspiring to do. I think that, the way it becomes more complicated is that, or what does that mean in practice? And that's where, you know, you have to make absolute definitions of what is in, what is out. To what extent does something need to be achieved, measured, demonstrated? And that really contains an enormous degree of complexity and you never gonna get everyone agreeing on that at all. For being an universal agreement as I said, the word that I am using very carefully is optimum, which means the best outcome with a minimum negative feeling by any particular individual who is affected by the decisions. I think the real tension of what we are going through just now is what is the model that we need to have that is sufficient enough to achieve the scale that is needed to have an impact on the ground and that's where this smallholder question becomes very relevant.

**Interviewer 2:** Yeah, that's what you talked a bit about.

**Marks & Spencer:** You know, actually, is a co-created standard going to be sufficient, a co-created standard that almost inevitably excludes, probably, 99% of smallholders and is that what we need? Is that what we want? Is that the answer? I don't think there is an easy answer to that and I don't think that there is going to be a universal view, I think you know yourself, that that will be, you have very different perceptions and conclusions by the different stakeholders within RSPO.

**Interviewer 2:** So, we are almost through. We have a final question for you and it's a hard one, Marks & Spencer, so you are allowed to take a moment to think. We would like you to list three events that have been important turning points in RSPO's history if you can and tell us why you think these were turning points.

**Marks & Spencer:** Interesting.

**Interviewer 2:** We think so.

**Marks & Spencer:** Right, just doing a bit of mental scrabbling here...

**Interviewer 2:** Take your time.

**Marks & Spencer:** And remember I have had quite a variable degree of engagement with RSPO. So I haven't been that close to it for quite a long times. And then, I was close to it in kind of 2007/8 and then in a kind of [lesser 28:44] 2010 to 2013/14 and then very involved since 2014. So these may not be



necessarily the most accurate but the three that spring to mind. The first one goes back to, and as I said, I, genuinely, I am sure that other people have come up with things that are more material and more accurate than mine but it is just to give some flavour. The first goes back to, I was actually at Sainsbury's, so I wasn't with Marks and Spencer. I was at Sainsbury's when I first dealt with palm oil and that was in the kind of 2006 to 2008/9 period. And when I was at Sainsbury's, I, basically, Sainsbury's bought the very first ever certified badge of palm oil. So we were very much kind of in a leadership position at that time. Now the challenge that we had was that RSPO had been created as a scheme without market fees. So it had no labeling, no logo, no identity that we could use on products to promote this first mover advantage. So that led to basically Sainsbury's developing their own identity at the time. Which is a really simple one, it just states sustainable palm oil and a little teardrop-state-shape. And that was used on all our biscuits at the time which is where that first certified badge of palm oil went to. It went to biscuit manufacturers and that was maintained, they continually used RSPO certified palm oil and all these biscuits from that point onward. Now what was interesting was though that, that led to RSPO developing a logo and developing a brand identity that can be used on products. And I think somewhere...I am trying to think of the term, somewhere, the agenda got a little kind of confused and conflated. And what happened? I have very particular views about the role of labeling and in my view labeling is a very strong asset when, under particular situation, under a particular context. First of all, here people are first-to-market, so you got something that no one else has and you want to shout about it, then a label or a logo can be highly valuable. That is exacerbated or that benefit is enhanced if the topic at hand is also one which has, for example, a lot of campaigns or media presence, so it has a topicality associated with it. So if these conditions are right then the label has a great deal of value. However, actually, I don't see that value being maintained at that level beyond that transition period. So what happens is that that label value declines in that market place as people become familiar with it, as other competitors offer the same solution so lots of products end up with, for example, RSPO logo and, there is a general perception that either the issue has been dealt with or potentially that is, you know, with RSPO you could even say that the brand value declined as it was seen to be less relevant, there is lots of different context there. The problem is that RSPO now has looked on that initial demand for a label and kind of gone, "oh [goodness 32:50] right" so a label, a logo is the way for us to drive market penetration and if you look at the RSPO communication strategy a lot of it is around you know, things like they got an app that allows you to search for what products carry the logo. And everything is about the logo and I'll be brutally honest here, our market in the UK is enormously frustrated by this because many of our companies are up at, you know, kind of 95%+ coverage of RSPO, perhaps some are even 100% and that is given no recognition within the app, so unless you actually label every single product, many of whom, I mean 80% of the products are over a range that use palm oil, use it at less than 2% of the product formulation. So immediately, you know, you are kind of like, why would you possibly put a label on something that is a tiny component. So that's created a bit of a particular tension and a direction within RSPO that I don't entirely support. So I think that was a very early kind of turning point in terms of is it a market facing solution or is it a business-to-business supply chain assurance system and I think too much weight is now placed on the first of these and not enough weight is placed on the second. Ok, any questions on that? Did that all make sense?

**Interviewer 2:** It made perfect sense.

**Marks & Spencer:** Right, the second one then is in relation to an event that took place at, I think, it was the 2008 General Assembly and that was when the Indonesian growers constituency basically all walked out of the General Assembly or in mass. It was obviously strategically planned to maximise impact. And that was very, in all honesty, I actually can't remember specifically what the issue was that they were objecting to. But it, it was brinkmanship. So it was one very important constituency trying to leverage influence over all the other constituency by being a bit dramatic, in all honesty. But what it did was, I think, and again, I really wasn't that involved subsequent to this so I happen to speculate slightly, but I think what that did was, it forced RSPO to really focus on what its modus operandi is and what its

stakeholder engagement strategy was and how to work on getting better at reconciling some of these tensions. Because again, that really gets to the heart of it, if we can't get RSPO to work within mainstream production within Indonesia. But really we [are not going to 36:05] achieve very much, quite frankly. We are only going to be getting the thumbs up to the good. And I think that event was quite pivotal and not [reappraisal 36:17] process. And then, the third one, I would say, would be the, as been talked about earlier, the compromises that were made to get the Principles and Criteria signed of in 2013. Which because they were unacceptable to, in effect, civil society more than anyone else, the civil society and the market really because we knew that if we couldn't get support from civil society, then, you know, certification really wasn't worth anything. But that led to all the zero-deforestation campaigning that then took place over 2013 and 2014 and beyond that then led to the development of the HCS standard that led to the zero-deforestation commitments not only by the market companies but by many of, you know, it's something like 80% of global trade and palm oil has gotten zero-deforestation commitments, that led on the traceability programmes. Then, actually, it was incredibly catalytical in redefining what we needed to get out of sustainable palm oil for it to meet market and civil society needs. Yey, there they are, there's three. Of the top of my head and I am sure if I were up in thought for another week and did some research, I would come up with different ones. I think the one that I would see is by far the strongest would be that last one around the P&C and the other two are very much from my particular context and, I suspect that, others would come up with much stronger ones and the last one you'll probably find very universal support for.

**Interviewer 2:** Yeah, yes, but very interesting to hear your point of view [respondent's name], we really appreciate that. I think it's interesting that you haven't mentioned and all the other respondents, actually, haven't mentioned something that I think would be a huge turning point, namely the emergence of other sustainability standards in the palm oil industry like the ISPO and the MSPO. Do you think that they have at all changed the RSPO's way of working?

**Marks & Spencer:** Not enough yet, no, I don't think they have. I hope that they will in the future, to be honest.

**Interviewer 2:** Ok, in what way?

**Marks & Spencer:** And it's very much in my agenda that we have a much more inclusive strategy as our model of change that actually looks at what is the role of ISPO and MSPO and potentially other schemes as well, even though these are really not very material at the moment, you know, and I should, I mean, my kind of [loose passion 39:07] about RSPO, I would love to see it being more of a platform for change within palm oil. That has a broad range of strategies of which one is the [gold standard 39:20] Principle and Criteria and the others are, you know, where does RSPO fit into that, where do government relationships fit into, where do landscaping jurisdiction solutions fit into all of this kind of wider strategy that is facilitated and enabled by RSPO. So I think it's a very good point but I don't think it has been a sufficient enough trigger yet, although I do hope it will be in the future.

**Interviewer 2:** Yeah, I know you have been working a little bit together with the ISPO to kind of see where the standards differ and that one of the....

**Marks & Spencer:** Yes, and I have, to be honest, I am have been working probably more, a better way of describing it, I've been working alongside the UNDP Green Commodity Programmes and their Indonesian national action plan which is about to be launched and trying to understand and identify how that fits with RSPO as part of this, as I said, wider model of change.

**Interviewer 2:** Yeah. ...[respondent's name] can you hear us?

**Marks & Spencer:** Yes.

**Interviewer 2:** It's been quiet so quickly. Yeah, ok, one final question, [respondent's name], just in relation to this, the ISPO and I know that HCV, which you talked about before, is not really recognised in Indonesia. Has the RSPO done any kind of lobbying efforts or collaboration efforts with the ISPO or the Indonesian government to make it illegal to plant palm oil on HCV areas? Do you know?

**Marks & Spencer:** I would imagine so but I have not been associated with that so I really don't know. But it'd seem unlikely that that hasn't at least been conversations about that. I would see it more as a conversational than a specific lobbying perspective. But, I mean, it's a good point and it's certainly something that, I mean, to be honest, I would rather that it was dealt with institutionally and that actually there was good protection of HCV land within Indonesian law and the ISPO reflected that rather than trying to shoehorn the end via ISPO way that wouldn't necessarily have quite the same scale of impact as it would be achieved through Indonesian law. Indonesian law is unlikely to kind of adopt HCV in the way that it's cut and it's structured but if it could get some kind of regulation that had an equivalence or that brought an equivalence to HCV even if it just looked at the biodiversity aspects and [the environmental 42:19] you see that the first three aspects and then other elements could be added on through standards whether that's ISPO or RSPO that potentially that may be more achievable in the short term, I think, the socio-cultural aspects may take a little bit more resolving through Indonesian law given the cultural complexity that it is. But I mean the environmental aspect should be the priority there. So yeah.

**Interviewer 2:** Ok, great. [respondent's name], thank you so much. We have taken up too much of your time. Do you have any questions or comments for us now?

**Marks & Spencer:** No I guess, not a question really. I presume that you will be doing a write up or a summary of these conversations and then you will be able to share these?

**Interviewer 2:** Would you like the transcription of this interview?

**Marks & Spencer:** Not as much that, no, I am more thinking of the summary of the collection of interviews, a kind of broader analysis.

**Interviewer 2:** Well,...

**Interviewer 1:** We can probably, I mean we can see what we can send you from our final report.

**Marks & Spencer:** Yeah.

**Interviewer 1:** I mean it's master theses so they are around 100 pages but there has to be some kind of summary of it in the beginning which is then like half a page so then you can decide yourself...

**Interviewer 2:** Oh yeah, it could be interesting, we would be happy to share that with you

**Marks & Spencer:** Yes, certainly, even just because it's good. I might not get a chance to read everyone in full...

**Interviewer 1:** Yes, that is completely understandable.

**Marks & Spencer:** It's more to understand what research is evolving and emerging and to have that available should there be any particular usefulness for it.

**Interviewer 2:** Yes of course, we will be happy to share and as Interviewer 1 said there will be a kind of executive summary in the beginning. If you think that's helpful.

**Marks & Spencer:** Yeah that's always helpful.

**Interviewer 2:** Are there any questions [respondent's name], you think that we should have been asking you that we are not. Anything that you would like to say?

**Marks & Spencer:** No, I am quite happy with that. Actually, I kind of need to get going. Thank you.

**Interviewer 2:** Is it ok if we contact you again, if we have any short follow up questions.

**Marks & Spencer:** Yeah if it's just quickly, yeah

**Interviewer 2:** Alright. Thank you so much for your time, [respondent's name]. It was great talking to you.

**Marks & Spencer:** Pleasure, thank you.

**Interviewer 1:** Thank you.

**Marks & Spencer:** Bye

**Interviewer 2:** Bye

## Appendix E.6: Olam (Grower)

**Interviewer 1:** Just for the record then, do you give your consent to be interviewed and recorded?

**Olam:** Yup.

**Interviewer 1:** Okay, perfect. Great. So, to introduce yourself a little bit, please define your current and previous roles within the RSPO, as we saw that you worked in different positions.

**Olam:** Within RSPO or my current role with Olam International?

**Interviewer 1:** Both. I mean, we're interested in both roles.

**Olam:** Okay, so maybe I'll just start to introduce my current role. Right now, I'm the sustainability manager for Olam. And then, Olam is part of RSPO member, so we do have upstream plantations operating in Africa – central Africa, Gabon. And since 2011, Olam has joined RSPO as a grower member. So, my role in Olam right now is to assist the company to achieve RSPO certification according to their time-bound plan. And also to ensure their sustainability commitment is, well, according to the industry trend. And my previous role: Before I joined Olam, I was working with RSPO. And at that moment, I started with the biodiversity and HCV portfolio, managing on all the relevant compliance requirements related to biodiversity and HCV. And after that, I was promoted to be the Head of Impacts. So, Head of Impacts is a new unit under RSPO at that time, which is looking at two major components. The first component is more on the research study: to study what are the real impacts that RSPO has made on the ground from all these members who has achieved certification. What are the differences from those conventional plantations or conventional supply chain players? And the second part of this impact is to actually provide a feedback loop into the management of RSPO system through various channels. One of the channels are actually RSPO's complaints system. RSPO do have a complaints system, and at that moment, I think, if we look at the complaints that we receive, there is certain key topics that we were able to evaluate and analyse and provide improvement recommendations into the RSPO system. So, that was my previous role with RSPO.

**Interviewer 1:** Okay, great. That sounds like you have a lot of experience. So, in your opinion, what is the purpose of the RSPO? And do you think it has changed since its inception?

**Olam:** I think RSPO has grown a lot. We know that RSPO was initiated by four initial members of RSPO – Aarhus, Unilever, WWF – during 2011 right after the haze period in 1997. At that time, I think the organisations are looking into a solution on how can we actually continue with the palm oil production and consumption without really destroying the environment. So, I think that was the first concept of RSPO. However, now RSPO has turned to 15 years old, and I think the whole organisation goal has changed and become broader. So, now I think for RSPO and for us – for myself as well – I think RSPO has a very critical role to ensure that sustainable palm oil production will be the norm, will be the trend for the future of the palm oil industry. So, it's all beginning from an issue which is fire – forest fire, haze – and then slowly emerge and evolve, become an influence to the whole palm oil industry.

**Interviewer 1:** I mean, now in your role as representing Olam in RSPO... I mean, as a grower, you're very affected by this. How can you promote your ideas and interests in the RSPO?

**Olam:** Very good questions. But first of all, I think we have to clarify the Olam participation in RSPO. Because we are not only a grower, we are also involved in the supply chain as well. So, upstream plantation is part of our business, but we do have some refineries based in the UK, based in Africa, and we do have trading business that focus on palm oil as well. So, I think in terms of how we influence

RSPO and actually plant our ideas into the whole RSPO debate, I would say that Olam is very much involved at various levels of the RSPO Roundtable. So, we are the alternate board members representing “Rest of the World” for Africa region. And the board actually is looking at the governance of the whole RSPO. We are also actually involved in various working groups, especially for those subjects that would be our key concerns. For example, emission reduction – when we talk about GHG – and also other working groups, such as Biodiversity Working Group, which talks about no deforestation or avoid deforestation. So, I would say that from our involvement at various levels, we would be able to influence RSPO in the decision-making process.

**Interviewer 1:** Okay. That sound really interesting. So, I mean, RSPO doesn’t only have one kind of organisation. You say also that Olam is part of different, so to say, stakeholder groups. How do you think the RSPO balances these different interests of its members, and are there any ways that you think it could perform better in this respect?

**Olam:** [Laughs] Yeah, when I was in RSPO, there was always complaints coming from members saying that RSPO always side [with] the growers too much. Or, on the other hand, the other party would say that RSPO is siding [with] the NGOs too much. So, I think it’s a very thin balance for RSPO to achieve this kind of multi-stakeholder initiative. However, all these decisions is based on consensus and always coming from the working group levels or task force levels and going up to the Standing Committee and to the board later. So, I would say that RSPO is trying to maintain that kind of involvement from various stakeholders. They always ensure that the stakeholders’ involvement covers all membership categories. So, if the members are claiming, like... Actually, for us, Olam, we would say that RSPO has already tried their best to involve all the stakeholder groups.

**Interviewer 1:** Okay. As we said beforehand also, we are also interested in the resolution that Olam proposed. And we see, I mean, Olam only joined in 2011, but then in 2012 they already co-sponsored their first resolution on the application of and reporting against relevant P&C across of all member sectors. Please explain to us the history about how this emerged and what type of work you did to get it there. So, what did you do in order to get the resolution onto the floor of the General Assembly agenda?

**Olam:** I might not be able to give you the institutional knowledge about the history on how they established this resolution because that was before I joined Olam when I was with RSPO. But this resolution, as I mentioned in the e-mail, RSPO has changed a lot due to... Maybe not only because of this resolution but also the call for members to report on the similar principles during the ACOP period (Annual Communication Of Progress) and the change of the members’ Code of Conduct, where I think currently not only grower members but supply chain, down-stream players are also playing similar. They also have a similar responsibility to report on relevant P&C criteria (Principles and Criteria) in the annual progress. And also, on the other hand, you might know that RSPO NEXT was endorsed last year. And in this very new standard, it actually clearly specifies that commensurate effort from the down-stream players is the key of the success of this standard. So, besides the grower members who comment to additional criteria, the supply chain members are also requested to ensure the commitments on the uptake and ensure the commitments on the greenhouse gas emission reduction and all the other relevant criteria. So, I would say that the resolution posted five years ago, now it has already been integrated as part of the RSPO system.

**Interviewer 1:** Okay. So, what we could see until 2015, that was the only resolution that Olam was proposing until now. Were you ever involved on Olam’s side in proposing a resolution?

**Olam:** Yes. In fact, last year, we proposed a resolution related to smallholders. That was related to the smallholders, the revised New Planting Procedures, where we requested... I mean, RSPO requested all the smallholders to also comply with the New Planting Procedures. And we realised that, actually, on the

ground, there are a lot of practical challenges for smallholders to comply with the RSPO standards. And without looking to the comprehensive challenges faced by the smallholders, it is going to be a failure. And we can expect three years later, we will be notified that a lot of smallholders they are not complying with the New Planting Procedures. And we can already foresee that kind of an outcome. So, I think last year, together with other social NGOs and also companies, we proposed a resolution to re-look into the smallholder strategy.

**Interviewer 1:** Okay. And was that the only resolution you wanted to propose, or have you been successful in proposing all the resolutions that you wanted to propose?

**Olam:** That was the resolution that we proposed, the only resolution that we proposed. And it was passed at the GA last year.

**Interviewer 1:** Okay. I can see that you work a lot also in Board of Governors and working groups. So, do you see that resolutions are then a good way to promote your interests as Olam?

**Olam:** Actually, it is a good way to inform the wider members on the concern of all these critical decisions at the GA itself. Because GA is one of the platforms that we can actually touch base with thousands of members, either through the electronic platform or through the physical meetings. However, that is not the only platform that we can actually propose changes to the RSPO system. In fact, I think it is more routine and more effective that we involve – as RSPO members – we involve in the working groups that talk a lot about the technical challenges and also propose some improvements and also involvement in the board. I feel like all these platforms are equally important. GA is only once a year and other platforms like the Board of Governors and working groups, they are meeting more frequently to look into the progress of RSPO a bit closer. So, I would say that... Yeah, good to propose a resolution on critical change during the GA, and that it could actually communicate widely to all the members. However, it think the continuous involvement in the various working groups and Board of Governors is equally important.

**Interviewer 1:** Okay. So, just as a last question in regards to the resolution: What does it depend on, whether a resolution makes it to the agenda or not? Or whether you propose it? Is that certain characteristics or is that the context of what is happening at the moment?

**Olam:** Well, when we propose a resolution, we try to involve other membership categories before even we submit a proposal. So, it will give us a higher chance to craft a proposal which is more rounded and more comprehensive. So, the first criteria that we always look into – whether we are going to support a resolution or not – is to look at who are the proponents of the resolution. Is it multi-stakeholders? And then, if that topic actually has been addressed by the RSPO internally or not. If it's really an issue that we need to bring up to the GA, yes, then we would definitely like to be part of the resolution proponents. And when you ask about what resolution can be accepted or not accepted, I think at the backend RSPO Secretariat is tasked to look into the resolutions submission. And whatever resolution has been submitted before the deadline, by default we will accept the resolution. However, if there is a legal check, if the resolution is actually against our statutes or is against the law, then the RSPO Secretariat might be able to communicate to the proponent and say that this resolution is not able to bring forward to the GA.

**Interviewer 1:** Okay, so the legal check is happening, and otherwise it's, like topic-wise, it's free to whomever proposes.

**Olam:** Correct.

**Interviewer 1:** Great. Thank you.

**Interviewer 2:** So, [respondent's name], I'm gonna take over from here. My name is Interviewer 2, and I'd like to talk a bit more to you about your work as a member of the Biodiversity and HCV Working Group and as a member of the Greenhouse Gas Working Group. So, could you tell me a bit more about the work that you do to promote the greenhouse gas agenda and the biodiversity-HCV agenda, and if this work has changed over time?

**Olam:** Yes, in fact, I think, let's start with the Emissions Reduction Working Group. There was a history behind this working group because when the first 2005 Principles and Criteria was published, the working group was formed to support on two items: one is on the GHG reduction, the other one is on the peat land protection. So, at that time, I think the working group was named as GHG Emission Working Group 1 and Working Group 2, and they have a sub-group of Peat Land Working Group. So, at that time, I think the major outcome of the group is to actually... First, they produce some very clear guidelines to all the RSPO grower members on peat avoidance and also study the GHG emission related to oil palm planting on peat. And they do have also published some papers to look into where exactly are oil palm plantations that are established on forest. So, they have conducted some kind of land-use change analysis across Malaysia, Indonesia, and Papua New Guinea as well to look into land-use change. And since 2013, when we have the new revised P&C, there are new criteria introduced into the RSPO standard. So, as you know, the whole 7.8 is a new criteria that talks about emission reduction, including avoidance of high carbon-stock area or prioritise planting on low carbon-stock area. So, then I think a Emission Reduction Working Group was formed to support members to achieve this requirement. And our involvement started from 2013 when we had the revised P&C, and then after that we involved directly into the Emission Reduction Working Group. So far, for the working group itself – not only from our end – but the working group has actually developed RSPO Calculator that can be used by RSPO members to report on their GHG emission for existing plantings and also for new plantings. So, the new plantings should aim to lower the emissions. And for us, I think, based on our experience, it is achievable. In fact, based on the calculation, we are able to produce a carbon-neutral oil, climate-friendly new plantings, based on various guidance provided by the RSPO working group, Emission Reduction Working Group. So, I would say that the major component led by the Emission Reduction Working Group is, first of all, new plantings should be lower emissions, and they have developed very useful tools – the Carbon Assessment Tool, RSPO GHG Calculator – and also helping the members to monitor their emission reduction. But moving forward, I think the group right now is focused more on the smallholders' inclusiveness. So, how can smallholders apply this tool for the expansion area.

**Interviewer 2:** That was a really great and comprehensive explanation, [respondent's name]. Thank you for that. Can you tell us a bit more now about the work that you do in the biodiversity and high conservation value agenda?

**Olam:** Yeah, that is even more interesting [laughs]. Because I was directly involved at the Secretariat at that time as their Biodiversity Manager, facilitate the working group, and then join Olam and return back to the working group as a member of the working group.

**Interviewer 2:** Yeah, so you've seen it from more sides.

**Olam:** Yeah, both sides – seen from both sides, involved both sides. Correct.

**Interviewer 2:** That's great.

**Olam:** So, I think earlier on, the Biodiversity Working Group, they had a sub task force, which is called Compensation Task Force. I think it's very famous. You've probably heard about that. They look into those areas developed after 2005 without HCV assessment. And I think after long previous discussion, the



group has come up with a certain protocol on how to deal with this kind of situation. And it is a very, very novel concept, even if we look at other certifications, like the FSC, or other standards that has a cut-off date. I think, right now, they're looking at this concept to also replicate this concept into their certification standard as well. So, Compensation Task Force has completed their task to come up with a protocol to deal with the HCV non-compliance issue after 2005, and now I think the monitoring of the projects is done by Biodiversity Working Group. So, that is one part of the major tasks by the Biodiversity Working Group members. In addition to the compensation projects, I think the working group right now is also focused on... First one, same to Emission Reduction Working Group, is about smallholders: How can smallholders apply all these RSPO biodiversity and HCV requirements with a simplified methodology but without compromising the RSPO standard. So, smallholders, that is one. And the second part, I think is to also look into other biodiversity and HCV related criteria within the standard. For example, the Biodiversity Working Group is currently looking into riparian protection and restoration and giving some clear guidance to the members on what exactly a certified company should do with regards to the riparian protection.

**Interviewer 2:** Okay. That sounds great. So, we've been looking through your meeting minutes, [respondent's name]. And for the Greenhouse Gas agenda, we've identified some strategies that we think you employ quite often in trying to further this greenhouse gas emission agenda. So, there are three strategies we have found. And the first is that you develop and you educate in tools to measure carbon footprints. The second one is that you try to highlight the relationship between the credibility of the RSPO and then that you incorporate greenhouse gas emission considerations. And the final one is that you try to redefine the standards to incorporate greenhouse gas considerations. Can you recognise these three strategies as important in your work, and can you elaborate a little bit maybe?

**Olam:** Yeah, I think all these are very critical strategies. For example, the first one: Just now, when we discussed about the Emissions Reductions Working Group, that is one of the key outputs related to the criteria 5.6 and 7.8, where I think a standardised measurement tool must be given to the members, so all of us can report based on the same framework. So, it has been developed, and it is very useful to also educate the members on what are the key elements in plantation set-up that can impact our GHG emissions. So, now we actually know that if you have conversion of planting on peat, that would be a major emission source. If we have any land-use change, land-use change would be also a major source. And the other part would be the POME, the palm oil mill effluent - that would be another third source of major emission for the GHG. So, I think the first strategy is very critical for all the RSPO members. In terms of the credibility and related to the GHG emission, I think that is also important because there are some compliance by the European market customers, and we actually knew that, for example, some competitive standards, such as ISCC, they are also looking into this aspect, and that it is very important for RSPO to also consider GHG as part of the standard itself. So, I think earlier on, RSPO is trying to come out with a separate standard that can actually fulfil the biofuel products requirements, and RSPO RED was created solely for this purpose, yeah, about GHG credibility.

**Interviewer 2:** Great, thank you. Moving on to the HCV and biodiversity agenda then, we have also identified some strategies that you use. And so, the first one is educating certification bodies and doing capacity building of HCV assessors. And the second one is that you sanction members for land clearing without prior HCV assessment – this Compensation Task Force that you were talking about before. And then, finally, we've seen some efforts to try to lobby the Indonesian government or universities that have influence in certain ministries in order to make it illegal in Indonesia to plant oil palm on HCV areas.

**Olam:** [Laughs] Yeah, okay. So, I would like to elaborate a little. I'm quite surprised that you are aware about that HCV conflict issue under the Indonesian law as well. But let's talk about the CB and HCV assessors. Three years ago, I think RSPO has the responsibility to approve to actually evaluate the performance of the HCV assessors and the certification body capacity to conduct their audits against the

HCV standard on the ground. But I think RSPO has made a good move by making it independently monitor through a credible organisation. So, nowadays, I think all the HCV assessments must be conducted by the HCV Resource Network licensed assessors. And all the reports will be published on the HCV Resource Network. And for the high-risk areas, based on the HCV Resource Network definition, they would also request the HCV report to be peer reviewed. So, it could ensure that the quality of the reports is very very top notch, yeah? If you recall earlier on when I talked about those complaints submitted to RSPO, majority of the complaints, we can say that this are related to the quality of the HCV assessment as well. Because if the quality is bad, and it reflects to the operation, and later it will lead to issues on the ground, so I think it all begins with the good quality of the HCV assessments. And we rest assure right now that HCV Resource Network licensed assessors are monitored by the credible organisation. And in terms of the certification body, I'm not sure whether you are aware the RSPO has engaged with ASI (Accreditation Standard International).

**Interviewer 2:** Yes.

**Olam:** Yes. So, they have engaged ASI to monitor the performance of CBs, and CBs are actually bound to compliance check and also witness check by this independent body. And all these quality performance evaluation reports are also published on the website, on the ASI website. And any under-performing certification body will be suspended by ASI. So, I think the major quality issue that arises from CB and HCV assessors, we can say that it has been resolved at this moment, and we are just hoping that more and more CB and assessors can actually reach to the standard set by ASI or HCV Resource Network. Yeah. And you talk about the second strategy on sanction of non-HCV compliance. Yes, I think that is a very critical role of RSPO, but the awareness of RSPO members on HCV compliance is, I would say, is the highest at this moment. You can see from the latest impacts report, the HCV area has increased 9 per cent again year-to-year comparison, where we look at the impacts of the RSPO.

**Interviewer 2:** That's very impressive.

**Olam:** Yeah. I think, today, RSPO members are very much aware about their responsibility to take care of HCV, however...

**Interviewer 2:** Sorry for interrupting. Do you think that this sanctioning mechanism has something to do with that?

**Olam:** The sanctioning mechanism has actually not a lot of growers at that time, yeah. But not only about this compensation but also other sanctions that comes from NPP non-compliance. Because there was other announcement made by RSPO that the membership will be suspended if you do not comply to the NPP, and part of the NPP is about HCV as well. And when compensation procedure was announced, all the members are required to declare their liability if they have cleared any HCV, so that would also allow RSPO to communicate a clear message to the members, saying that if you are not going to comply with the HCV, that would be the punishment, that would be the sanction that you can't escape. Otherwise, you won't be able to get a certification. So, it is clearly a very huge impact to the production, for the producers. And when we talk about the sanction... Just now, I would like to mention that some of the government, the regional government has not supported the HCV protection. So, you bring up the issue of Indonesia: I think they do have a conflicting legal requirement for the growers to develop within their izin lokasin [location permission ed.], within their land permit. And it actually creates some issues for the growers to protect the HCV and set that aside as a non-plantable area, so it would be considered as a non-productive area by the government. But I think one of the task forces formed by the BHCV Working Group has looked into this method. It is very much related to the district government and how they interpret the regulations. There are some regulations that clearly specify the need for the growers to protect the forest zone within their concession as well, but somehow there are also other competing laws.

So, RSPO has tried to also look into this method on a wider horizon by looking at the jurisdictional certification. So, with this approach, we are able to engage with the government directly, and then get the government involved into the process, understand the RSPO, and try to resolve any kind of conflicting legal requirement that is not supporting the RSPO standard. So far, I see positive feedbacks from Central Kalimantan, see positive feedbacks from the Sumatran regional government as well, and these two regions are the major palm oil producer regions as well.

**Interviewer 2:** Okay. So, you engage with the government on a very local level, you say. But RSPO has also collaborated a bit with ISPO on HCV and Free, Prior and Informed Consent. Is that right?

**Olam:** Yeah, correct. RSPO has conducted a study together with ISPO to make a comparison on the standards: where exactly are the similarities and where are the differences. But I think the study concluded that, actually, the requirements are very much aligned. Except that ISPO focus a lot on the legal requirements, where they have no legal requirements saying that, okay, you have to protect HCV. I think that is one difference from RSPO: RSPO is above legal requirements, so members are required to act above the legal requirement.

**Interviewer 2:** Okay, great. Now, we are talking a lot about biodiversity and greenhouse gas and these different stages and the different work that you have been doing. Do you think that RSPO's definition of sustainability is changing or has changed?

**Olam:** Yeah, it is definitely changing all the time [laughs]. Yeah, yeah. How we define sustainability is based on RSPO standards, and then the standards are changed from 2005 to 2013, and then now, RSPO just announced their P&C review period again. So, I think the standard will again change by 2018. So, it is progressive target, then and it will get more and more. I mean, it is a multi-stakeholders process, so we will need to hear the opinion from the downstream side: what would be the expectation of sustainable palm oil? And then the producers will try to also adapt and try to communicate on what can be achieved or what cannot be achieved.

**Interviewer 2:** Yeah, I'm guessing it's a difficult balance between flexibility and then pragmatism, somehow.

**Olam:** Yeah, if you have chance to get yourself an invitation to the RSPO P&C review process, I think that would be a very interesting eye-opening opportunity.

**Interviewer 2:** Okay, we will look into that.

**Olam:** Yeah, write to RSPO, they just started the process and they will allow the observers or experts from various parties to get involved as well.

**Interviewer 2:** Alright, thank you for that tip. We'll definitely have to look into that. It sounds very interesting. Can you tell us, [respondent's name], which group or membership category maybe do you receive the most support from or maybe meet the most opposition to in relation to promoting the agendas on biodiversity and greenhouse gas? Are there certain groups that are more willing to help push that agenda, or are there certain groups that are trying to push the agenda in another way maybe?

**Olam:** Well, all these standards, when we speak about the GHG or the biodiversity, is written for the grower's category. So, I think the major membership category that receives the impacts is actually the grower category. But we also receive support from the downstream supply chain players, who are also currently involved in the working group, and also they are trying to match with the recent change of the requirement where about they have to also report to the RSPO on their performance in terms of

greenhouse gas, yeah. But the real impacts, because it is based on the nature of the standard, the standard is written for the growers. So, hence, the growers will receive... they will need to put on more efforts to actually comply with the standards. And the downstream players, the best thing they can do is to actually show by uptaking the certified oil. I think that will be the clear message to the downstream players that what they are doing is correct, and they are supported. So, that is how it works.

**Interviewer 2:** Okay. [respondent's name], can you list three events that have been important turning points somehow in RSPO's history and tell us why these were turning points? You are allowed to take a minute to think about it – it's a tough question, coming up with three events. But we would be very interested to hear, in your perception, where there were some turning points in RSPO.

**Olam:** Okay, maybe I will start with the first which I think should be the NPP introduction in 2010. So, that is really a very interesting procedure introduced by RSPO to the production side, whereby all the new plantings should undergo the 30 days' consultation. So, it gives chance to any stakeholders to be aware of the upcoming development and even, of course, to the development based on the RSPO standards. So, I don't think this is implemented by any other commodity certification standard. So, it has a huge impact by increasing the transparency, the first thing, and also to get the stakeholders involved before the development. Because you understand that once oil palm is planted, then whatever values are lost will be permanent. So, I think putting consultation prior to the operation happened, it is a very critical moment for RSPO, yeah, where it was in 2010. The second event that maybe I would like to mention would be the... I want to say compensation, but compensation again is very much on addressing the issue. So, maybe I'll leave compensation, since we have already talked about that. But RSPO NEXT could be something interesting to discuss as well. Yeah, after we finalised the 2010 P&C, there are a lot of voices from other stakeholders groups saying that the standards are not stringent enough. Hence, they call for a different level of RSPO standards, which is RSPO NEXT. And to me, I think it is a double-sided sword. Why I would say that: I think those stakeholders are also involved in the P&C review process, and P&C review process is a consensus process. So, when the standard has been finalised, certain stakeholders are not satisfied and coming out with this kind of request could be quite detrimental, yeah, detrimental to the RSPO. Because we would like to see that the whole P&C review process, which is the most critical stakeholder's consultation under the RSPO, can get agreement, can get consensus from all members from all the groups. And it was endorsed at the GA, discussed by the multi-stakeholders, but again, objected by certain stakeholders groups, and it leads to the formation of RSPO NEXT. So, I think this element, the second event (RSPO NEXT), is starting really like a major movement, yeah, I will say, for RSPO.

**Interviewer 2:** Can I just follow up on one thing, [respondent's name], real quick? Because you said in relation to RSPO NEXT that some members might not be so happy with it. Could you just elaborate: Which members do you mean?

**Olam:** Well, you can actually still follow back to those articles related to our RSPO P&C revision 2013. There are stakeholders from environmental NGOs or the consumer goods manufacturers, saying that the standards are not according to the expectation. And they also signed these... issued some statement after the P&C review. So, all this, I think, article published online as well.

**Interviewer 2:** Okay, I see. Thank you. And do you have a final turning point in mind?

**Olam:** Well, I would say that right now... the last one would be the no palm oil campaign. And it becomes more and more like a situation where I think RSPO should have control over the messaging and the campaign in those markets. I would not say that it has come to clear closure, but somehow knowing that the members, RSPO members, who are also active in certain markets, and they have made some no palm oil claims... It's really giving a wrong message to the production side, yeah? So, as I said, the best message that the downstream suppliers can give to the producers is through the uptake of CSPO. Instead

of uptaking the CSPO – we know it's about 50% – instead of increasing the uptake, we are hurt by the message of no palm oil claims. So, I think this will be the third event, which I think RSPO should look more from the communication side.

**Interviewer 2:** Yeah, okay. Great. When we think of turning points, we also think of maybe this emergence of some other sustainability standards within the palm oil industry, like the ISPO and the MSPO. Do you think that the emergence of these standards have affected the way that RSPO works in any way?

**Olam:** I would not say that, actually, they affect the way how RSPO works. But it is a positive sign that I would like to highlight because ISPO and MSPO has legal compliance, and they make it a mandatory standard for all the producers in their countries to achieve it. So, basically, I would say that both standards can raise the floor of sustainability compliance and also encourage more upstream producers to go for higher standards. Once they have really reached to the baseline, they can actually easily go to a higher standard, international standard of RSPO.

**Interviewer 2:** That's great. So, it sounds like you see them more as, actually, helping you reach your goal than as competitors.

**Olam:** Yeah. Yup, yup. Exactly.

**Interviewer 2:** Great. Good. Well, we are through with our questions for you, [respondent's name]. Do you have any questions for us, or do you have any other comments? Are there some questions, maybe, you think that we should be asking you that we haven't asked?

**Olam:** [Laughs] No, but I would like to ask your team whether you have opportunity to speak to RSPO directly?

**Interviewer 2:** No, not as of yet.

**Olam:** Ah, okay. And also not intended to?

**Interviewer 2:** We would like to, but it's a little difficult to schedule an interview.

**Olam:** Ah, okay. Let me know if I can help in any way.

**Interviewer 2:** Thank you.

**Olam:** I think two key person that you can speak to would be the co-chairs of RSPO board. So, both of them, I think they can give you very good point of view on where is RSPO heading to.

**Interviewer 2:** Okay, that would be really great. [respondent's name], thank you so much for that. We might hold you to that.

**Olam:** No, not a problem.

**Interviewer 1:** I mean, besides this, is there... Like, if we have any other questions that maybe come up later in the process, is it okay if we contact you again? Just for some follow-up questions or clarifications.

**Olam:** Yeah, not a problem. Just that... Let you all aware that I'm taking my maternity leave starting from 1<sup>st</sup> of April. So, I will be contactable via e-mail, my colleague will have to support in case if I'm away for too long.

**Interviewer 2:** Well, good that we caught you!

**Olam:** [Laughs] Yeah, just nice, the timing.

**Interviewer 1:** Yeah, thank you very much for talking to us. And congratulations!

**Olam:** Thank you, thank you.

**Interviewer 2:** Thank you for a really great interview, [respondent's name].

**Olam:** Okay, thanks.

**Interviewer 1:** Thanks.

**Interviewer 2:** Have a nice day!

**Olam:** Bye, everyone! Bye!

## Appendix E.7: IOI (Grower)

Please note: Before we started the interview and the audio recording, we discussed the procedure of recording and transcribing the interview, sharing our interview notes, and writing up our report using the information from the interview. To make [respondent's name] feel comfortable about the process, we promised her that we would send her the transcript as well as our report before sharing the data with anyone else. She would then have the chance of evaluating if any misunderstandings had been made, and whether it would be appropriate for her name and IOI's name to be in our report and for the data to be shared for other purposes.

**Interviewer 1:** Just to start with, could you please define your current or previous roles within the RSPO? I mean you already mentioned that you're in the board of governors, but can you just elaborate a little bit?

**IOI:** So, me personally, or... IOI?

**Interviewer 1:** You personally, but also IOI.

**IOI:** Ok. Well, previously I was, in my previous company, I was on the Trade and Traceability Working Committee. I was, you know, cross-partner representing my previous company as a member, but primarily at IOI... IOI has a seat at the board of governors, and I am the alternate person who sits on the board of governors. Usually there are two persons, and there is a first one and an alternate one, so I am one of the alternates.

**Interviewer 1:** Ok.

**IOI:** And IOI is involved in several working groups, not specifically me, but other colleagues of mine. So, I think.... And IOI as you know is one of the founding members of RSPO.

**Interviewer 1:** Yeah, we know that. Ok. Then, could you maybe also, in your opinion, what is the purpose of the RSPO? Do you think that this has changed since its inception, as you said you were also there, like IOI has been a founding member?

**IOI:** No, I think... In terms of the RSPO and when it was first formed, it is to address a lot of misconceptions about palm oil. It's also about addressing the social and environmental issues associated with palm oil, and I think that's one reason why you have of course then the palm plantations being involved in it and also NGO's, and the purpose is obviously to address the issues that is seen in planting or in planting palm oil. So the social and the environmental issues I think are forefront in doing this, and I think it is also to develop a sort of a credible global standard, you know and, and since this is about sustainability and about sustainable palm oil, and I think that's how you develop the principles and criteria, and I think that is still the fundamental purpose of RSPO. And I think having stakeholders not just on the plantation side but also social societies, civil societies, but also investment, investors, anchors, customers. This is really important because the role of palm oil in our manufacturing is quite prevalent, it is all over. It's in our soaps, in our shampoos, in our foods... So it is important that all the stakeholder are there, and I think that is one of the purposes that RSPO has been, you know, set up.

**Interviewer 1:** Ok, great. So what do you say is then, because there is different groups and different stakeholders in the RSPO, so what would you say is the best way to promote your ideas and interests in the RSPO?

**IOI:** So, I mean, looking at the fundamental reason RSPO is being set up, so basically I think there is... the best way I think is to be involved with a lot of stakeholders. Stakeholders are very much... and by stakeholders I mean here the general public. Because most of the time those people who are in the sector itself understands palm oil. It's the general public who does not, who has a very different conception of

what palm is all about, and that creates a lot of negative feedback, a lot of negative publicity about what palm oil is all about. So I think that the best way to promote is to make sure that there is a lot of interaction with the general public, because the general public also drives the agendas of the civil society and it also drives the way our manufacturers perceive sustainability in palm oil, and it also drives the plantation who actually cultivate palm oil... So, I think that's the best way to promote, so a lot of interaction, a lot of information, to the general public about what is palm oil and sustainable palm oil. Why is it that palm oil is an oil that is utilized most all over the world? That is really important, because the perception especially in Europe is that palm oil is bad, when if you're looking in terms of environmental usage, in terms of land use change, you find that palm oil is far more efficient so for example in one hectare of land, palm can oil can very much yield oil up to about four to five tonnes depending on an average of about three to four, but if you manage your plantations sustainably and well, it can go up to four or five tonnes per hectare. Then you compare to other vegetable oil, like soy beans, which produce about less than a tonne, probably around 700 or 800 litres, you look at sunflower seed which is probably around sun flowers... or around 400 litres. All other oil do not produce efficiently. And if you're looking at the use of the vegetable oil to feed the world, this is the best way to do it because it reduces issues of deforestation, it also, you know, reduces the issue of even, you know, how you cultivate palm oil. So I think this sort of perception is not well understood, because everybody is saying "Let's use an alternative oil", but if you're talking about sustainability, then that is not sustainable. You know, you won't be able to feed the growing population. So, I think this sort of information needs to be with the public. And then, the whole narrative will change, because all I can see right now is a lot of attack. I think it is very true that it has to be sustainably cultivated and I think the RSPO is doing a good job, however, of course there are some flaws that I see in RSPO. Namely maybe the way they have done their assurance, the quality assurance aspect, the certification aspect, needs to be strengthened to ensure that the public are comfortable that the companies that have been certified are actually sustainably growing... are actually growing sustainable palm oil.

**Interviewer 1:** Ok. So it's interesting that you say that the certification should be strengthened, because we heard, or I mean we read, also on the RSPO website that actually IOI had some issues in regards to the certification, that there was a suspension from the certification of IOI in 2016.

**IOI:** Well, that is on a different issue. That is from a different aspect. It is not about the certification itself, so I don't know how much you are well versed with that issue, that you know IOI have about 80% of our palm oil planted in Malaysia. The areas that we have issues with at that point that we got suspended was in Indonesia, and in Indonesia we are very new to it, we have about... maybe less than 20% of our plantation is in Indonesia. And that is basically in Tapan in Kalimantan. And the issue that we got was due to you know, the regulations that was changing at that point in Indonesia, and you know, and the fact that we are not well versed with it, and so... that part was one of them. The other part was that we had accidentally cleared a land that had peat in it, and because in Malaysia we have not much exposure to peat, the way we rehabilitated it, it was not, you know, up to par. We had reported this to RSPO prior to all this, when we first accidentally cleared it we had already reported it to RSPO but of course the way... you know, because we were not well versed with it, when it comes to peat management we were not very well versed because in Indonesia and especially in Kalimantan there are quite a lot of peat areas, and that was one of the reasons why we got suspended. So it had nothing to do with the certification process. What I was talking about in terms of the certification process is to ensure that when a company is certified, has been certified by RSPO, then the customers or stakeholders should be comfortable to take that as certified.

**Interviewer 1:** That is very interesting. On a more internal level, so within the RSPO, how do you think the RSPO balances the different interests of the members? Do you think that there are any ways that they can actually perform better in this respect? So, internally within the RSPO.



**IOI:** Well, I think, you know, this is a very complex question. It is not like 'yes' or 'no', or 'maybe'. It's about looking at what drives RSPO, ok? Obviously it's about the cultivation of palm oil, sustainably. And looking at that, you have to look at the stakeholders that are involved in this. Of course, you have the plantations. They are the one's who actually need to do that. And then you have the receiver, which is usually the customers of the consumer goods. And then, in between you have the manufacturers, and then you also... You know, the manufacturers utilizes the palm oil, and the product is then passed down to the final stakeholder, which is the consumers. And then you have the civil societies who are there to ensure that we do follow the sustainable standards and, you know, sort of the conscience of the whole RSPO. And then you have the bankers and investors who are of course invested in the companies that are involved in palm oil cultivation and its usage. So I would say that, when it comes to certain activities, commensurate efforts needs to be taken into consideration. And I think this is not very well balanced in RSPO. Sometimes the demands that are being placed to the plantations has to be borne by the plantation, and it should be if its sustainability... to meet the sustainable to demands, but it is important that sustainability is a shared effort, a shared cost. And this is not so prevalent in the way RSPO manages its mandate. I was in downstream so I understand as much as upstream. So, you know I was in an oil chemical company so that point it was in downstream, and then right now at IOI I am in upstream, so I could understand both aspects, and I think this is one of the issues that I think is creating a lot of dissatisfaction in a lot of the members. Because for example the NGOs might feel that, you know, not enough effort is being done, because you know, there are some things that they want to get done, but the members might not agree, either upstream or downstream. And then the upstream in terms of the plantations feel that they are doing all the work, and yet... And all the [inaudible 15:24, sounds like 'pet'] is on the plantations, and also the fact that even without the work done by sustainability... you know the public always view palm oil negatively and the consumer goods and those people that are downstream are feeling the pressure from the NGO's, and they themselves also feel that there is also another focus on... And yet they realise that utilising palm oil as part of the ingredients actually benefit the consumer. So, you know, it's a very delicate balance that RSPO is doing, because you have all the stakeholders, all having their own grievances. And that's why I think it is all about everybody agreeing to everybody. So, and I think to an extent it is very difficult because we believe in everybody agreeing or if there is an objection, as long as it is not a sustained objection, then the vote goes through. But I think that in a sense makes everybody important. So, make everybody happy and unhappy at the same time, because nobody actually gets their own way, it is a compromise that everybody goes through.

**Interviewer 1:** Yeah, that makes sense. You mentioned a voting, so let's move a little bit more on the agenda promotion that also IOI does, because we looked into the resolutions that IOI sponsored at the general assembly, and we found that the first resolution you sponsored was in 2008, it was the Oxfam International resolution about the communication of progress by all members, so it's the code of conduct that members specify their commitment through the annual communication of progress. Could you maybe explain to us a little bit how this emerged and what type of work did you do, or like how were you involved in that resolution?

**IOI:** Ok, I can't say that, because I actually just joined IOI last year. So I have actually not that kind of background to RSPO.

**Interviewer 1:** Ok, so then I assume... Because IOI has also sponsored a resolution in 2013, but if you only joined last year... Maybe on a general level, because you were involved also for longer in the RSPO if I understand it correctly, not with IOI but with another player?

**IOI:** Yeah.

**Interviewer 1:** Yeah, so maybe on a general level, what would you say is important in order to actually be successful in proposing a resolution or proposing your idea, what is essential there? Is it depending on the organisation that proposes, or is it more timing issue?

**IOI:** Oh [laughs]. You know, when you want to sponsor any kind of legislation, any kind of agenda, you need to make sure that you've got backing of as many people as you like, so there is usually a lot of discussion and, you know, networking needs to be done, so that people truly understands what is the agenda, or what is it that you're proposing. Because you have to understand that the audience, the stakeholders are from very different backgrounds. People from the plantation side do not understand the issues that are faced by the downstream. And the downstream thinks that it is easy to run a plantation, that it is easy to do all the adoptions, and some might think that they don't even realise what is being done, so if you really want to have a successful resolution, you need to make sure that you get the backing of a lot of the stakeholders. Because it cannot come from just one sector of stakeholders and that is one of the beauties of RSPO, the fact that you cannot just get a resolution through by having one sector of the stakeholders supporting you, it needs to be more than that. And I think the consensus type of voting is good, however, at the AGM it is not about consensus, it is about majority. And that in that sense then, you know, the voice of each huge corporation is only one, and the voice of the small, you know little mammas and papas who is a member of RSPO, have the same voice. And to that extent there might be some issues related to that which I see because sometimes there are a lot more at stake for a company that has a big, you know, role in it, than for a small company that just joined RSPO for the purpose of being in the membership. So then there is no equality in terms of the impact that a resolution has. So for example if you have a resolution that would affect a company that has...you know, as opposed to a smaller company that has no effect on the resolution and just vote with no real thought behind it. And that is why it is important for the resolution to be fully understood, for all the stakeholders in order for the resolution to be passed in a manner that I think would be effective for RSPO as a whole.

**Interviewer 1:** Yeah, so you mentioned that in order for a resolution to be successful, to make the resolution understandable, you have to be good at networking. So in that sense, the organisations that are the best at networking are the ones who gets most of their interests on the agenda.

**IOI:** No, I think what is important is this: If you have a resolution that you want to get passed, you need to get as many people to back you, to make sure it is, and therefore, and this is important, and therefore you cannot have a resolution and have people voting on it if they don't understand it, so if you really want your resolution to be successful, you have to get a lot of people to back you, and therefore you need to spend the time to talk to people, to explain your resolution. It is not about networking, it is about making people understand what you want to propose.

**Interviewer 1:** Ok. How much would you say that the context at the point in time is important? I mean one thing is to make other people understand your own interests and ideas, but do you think that it also matters what is the current discourse, maybe what is the public talking about, does that also matter?

**IOI:** Yes, of course. It has to be relevant. It has to be relevant to just not you, but to everyone else. And even if it is not relevant to everyone else, they must understand why it is relevant to you. So if it is relevant during the context or time that you're presenting the resolution, obviously it's gonna go through. If you find that the resolution that you are proposing is not relevant at that point of time, sometimes it shouldn't be tabled, because at that point maybe it is not appropriate, you know. So, it is always about timing, it is always about the appropriateness of your proposal. That goes without saying.

**Interviewer 1:** Yeah, ok, that is very interesting. Thank you very much for your elaborated answers.

**Interviewer 2:** [respondent's name], you are speaking with Interviewer 2 now. I'm just going to take over from Interviewer 1 and ask you a little more about the issues that you work with in IOI and in RSPO. And you mentioned peat earlier, which was one of the issues you encountered in Indonesia. And we see on IOI's website that you are quite concerned with issues of peatland protection and deforestation and greenhouse gas emissions. So I was wondering, is this something - I mean, do you work to promote the greenhouse gas or the emissions reduction agenda in the RSPO as well?

**IOI:** I think we are not the only ones working on it. One of the things that we find with greenhouse gas, because of the fact that we do export our palm oil and the biofuel to Europe, for example, we are also certified under a different certification, ISCC [International Sustainability & Carbon Certification, ed.]. So, the regulations require us to be quite - there is a measure of calculation for the greenhouse gas. And one of the things that we do want to promote is that palm oil is considered green. Why? Because of the fact that palm is a tree. While it is a tree, it is a sink. A carbon sink. So the idea of deforestation on a brownfield, in other words replacing one plantation - so for example you have rubber plantations and you replace rubber plantations, to say, with a palm oil plantation - there shouldn't be this issue of change in a greenhouse gas as it's carbon sink, because both of them are trees. And it's different if you, and instead if you used to plant corn, for example, and you replace it with palm. That should be a plus rather than a negative. You know, that sort of thing. So in that sense then, it's very important for us to go for greenhouse gas, it's important for us to be involved in any regulation, because in terms of utilisation of the palm fruit, we have two different oils that you can get. You can get oils that address different composition and use for different parts, and then you can also use the oil for food. So when people talk about palm oil, there is a technical oil, which you use for your detergents, your soap, for your shampoos, that is palm kernel oil. And then you have CPO, or palm oil, mostly used for food, like your margarines, in bread, in some of your other pastries and that sort of things, confectionaries and everything grease. So because of that you're talking about how much, how palm oil helps in reduction of greenhouse gas. Therefore, this is a very important aspect that we do want to promote.

**Interviewer 2:** So could you tell me a little bit more about how IOI works with promoting the greenhouse gas agenda in a way, and how you work to have an influence on the regulations in RSPO?

**IOI:** Well, we are involved with for example ISCC. We are in their working groups, because we are working about methane reduction. And, as well as I can capture, we are of course involved in any working group in RSPO as well, related to greenhouse gas. So that's how we work within the system.

**Interviewer 2:** Yeah. I'm asking because we have looked through a lot of the meeting minutes from the RSPO Board of Governors and the different working groups, including the one on greenhouse gases or emissions reductions. And we have identified three strategies that we think - it seems like they are used a lot when furthering the greenhouse gas agenda. So I was wondering if I could just tell you the three strategies and then you could maybe comment on whether you think that is relevant.

**IOI:** Okay.

**Interviewer 2:** So what we have identified is that one, the development of the tools to measure carbon footprints and the education in how to use these is important. And two, that some members might highlight the relationship between RSPO's credibility and the incorporation of greenhouse gas considerations. And the third strategy is that the RSPO's standards are re-defined over time to better incorporate greenhouse gas considerations. Does that sound familiar to you?

**IOI:** Yeah the last one for example, that is from RSPO NEXT I think you are referring to. Which we are also committed to undertake. Because under RSPO NEXT, greenhouse gas - methods related to greenhouse gas are further highlighted. You know the indicators that we have to follow to meet the requirements are higher than RSPO. So now the first one, I'm not quite sure I understand. Can you maybe read it back to me, the first one?

**Interviewer 2:** Yes. So the first one was that one strategy used is to develop tools to measure carbon footprints and to educate stakeholders in how to use these tools. So we were thinking for example of the greenhouse gas calculator.

**IOI:** Yes, I think that's a very important strategy, because there was a [inaudible 32:03, sounds like 'people'] being presented to us in one of the RSPO meetings, in which they said that in terms of greenhouse gas and how efficient palm oil is - and they compared it with soy bean and I was very very surprised to see that they are of even, they are the same. And then I found out that one of the reasons why it became the same is because of the fact that they assume, when they are looking at indicators for palm oil calculation, it is always on a greenfield. While that's not the case for soy bean. And you have to understand that if you look at the calculation for greenhouse gas contribution, first and foremost, soybean is a bush. It is an annual plant. Every year, you have to harvest and replant. So there is no carbon sink. That's one thing. Second, more importantly, when you look at land use change, as I told you, one hectare and how much oil you get and how much oil you get from one hectare of palm oil. And of course the fact that palm oil is a tree, and therefore it is a carbon sink. So, I was very surprised. And this is why that calculation, that tool, kit for calculation of greenhouse gas for palm oil is extremely important, and it's extremely important to educate the public. Why in terms of greenhouse gas. And how does palm oil actually contribute to reducing greenhouse gas.

**Interviewer 2:** Okay, I see, that's interesting.

**IOI:** And the second one was, come again? [Laughing]

**Interviewer 2:** [Laughing] Sorry. The second one was that we noted in some of the debates that some stakeholders would highlight the relationship between the credibility of the RSPO and the RSPO standard and the incorporation of greenhouse gas considerations.

[Long silence]

**Interviewer 2:** So maybe it relates to, you spoke about how the certification needs to be credible and how people must acknowledge that if it's certified, it's green.

**IOI:** Yes. That's exactly it. Palm oil is being - oil palms are being cultivated all over the world. And we have found out that if you actually cultivate them sustainably, the yield is actually better.

**Interviewer 2:** Oh wow.

**IOI:** But in order to introduce it, it is also expensive. It's like, you know how they say, usually if you are rich, it is easier to get richer. When you're poor it's more difficult to get rich.

**Interviewer 2:** Yes.

**IOI:** So it's the same thing here. Usually, if you want plantings of palm oil sustainably, you have to start correctly. And when you do that, your rewards are higher. And that's why, what we are doing right now all over the palm oil sector, is to actually encourage every single new farmers to also do it in a sustainable way, because that's the best. If you start it right, it's easier than if you start it wrong and then try to correct it. So for example if you start planting on - if you start deforestation, I mean burning - burning, as we have found out, is not exactly the best way to do things well, so that's one of the things that you do. For example if you use seedlings that produces high-yielding oil, that of course costs money, but that's sustainable because that's about land use change and that's about yielding high crops, I mean, high-yielding crops. Do yeah, definitely.

**Interviewer 2:** Okay, that sounds good.

**IOI:** So certification would be very important because it gives assurance to our public that, yes, you want to buy palm oil, you buy certified sustainable palm oil. And right now, there's a lot of certified sustainable palm oil, but there's no uptake. So a lot of time, this is what makes the plantation site upset.

Because the request is ‘please plant sustainable palm oil’, but people don’t care whether they buy sustainable palm oil or they buy palm oil. And that’s very very apparent. Even from the European market, because a lot of the manufacturers will not buy sustainable palm oil if they can get away with buying just palm oil.

**Interviewer 2:** And do you think that from the consumer side that also has to do with - do you think that has to do with knowledge of sustainable palm oil or the suspicion that sustainable palm oil is not actually sustainable?

**IOI:** No I think it’s about knowledge, understanding that there’s a difference between sustainable palm oil and palm oil. A lot of the stories that they have shown, they were done by smallholders, people who are not following the sustainable palm oil P&C, you know RSPO’s P&C, principle and criteria, where it’s very specific that you are not allowed to do burning. So there’s a group of plantations or planters or even smallholders who does not subscribe to sustainable palm oil. However, we who produce it sustainably are painted with the same brush. Because consumers, or the public, does not realise the difference between planting sustainable palm oil based on RSPO P&C and those who do not. And this is also where you have civil society not making the differentiation. And thus presenting this information to the public, and then the public does not realise the difference between sustainable palm oil and palm oil. All they hear is palm oil. And because of that, it is bad.

**Interviewer 2:** Mmm, yeah. That’s the impression we get as well. I’ll move on a little bit, because we saw that you are also a member of the Human Rights Working Group, is that correct?

**IOI:** Yes, we are.

**Interviewer 2:** Would you elaborate a little bit on the work that you and IOI are doing in furthering the human rights agenda in the RSPO?

**IOI:** Well, okay, so [inaudible, sounds like ‘regardless’ or ‘regards to’ or ‘regardful of’, 39:44] of the RSPO, IOI as a corporation, we came out recently, in ‘12, to stress our sustainable palm oil policy about human rights. And we are committed to not having forced labour, gender discrimination. All the principles of human rights. And in that sense, we have also been working with civil society to try and address some of the issues we are facing. Because these are not just what IOI is facing, it is faced by the sectors, industrial sectors, not just the palm oil plantation, it’s also faced in manufacturing, it’s faced in any agricultural sector. Because if you employ foreign workers, if you employ workers to work in your plantation or in your farm, you will be faced with the same thing. So to ensure that, for example, there’s no motion of forced labour, where we have workers coming in and they have to pay an enormous amount to just come into our country to work. And this is a thing that is faced in the construction industry. I think it’s very common, that’s one of the things that’s highlighted in, for example, in Dubai when they were going for the Olympics. If you recall, the issues that have been faced on the construction. So we have already made that commitment to ensure that where human rights is a concern, this is going to be adhered to according to the ILO standard, according to the standard stated in the RSPO. So this is our commitment and we have been working with a labour consultant to look into our labour operations, our operations associated with labour. We are also working with, as I said, civil society to address this and to look at it from a different perspective.

**Interviewer 2:** I see. We also, as we did with greenhouse gases, we also went through the meeting minutes of the Human Rights Working Group and the Board of Governors meeting minutes, to try to figure out how the RSPO works with human rights. And again we defined a few strategies. Maybe we should take them one by one this time, is that easier?

**IOI:** Yeah! Because I kind of forgot. I think it’s early in the morning for you, but I’ve had a full day.

**Interviewer 2:** Yes, that's very understandable. The first one that we identified, and that's related to high conservation value actually, that at some point the focus was shifted from more environmental HCVs to more social HCVs. Does that sound correct to you?

**IOI:** Yeah. Yes that's right.

**Interviewer 2:** Do you think that was a good lever, in a sense, to promote human rights more in RSPO?

**IOI:** Yeah, obviously, I think one of the things that is very important to realise is this: Plantation is like a microcosm, like a small village. If you look at a big plantation. In terms of a big plantation, for example like IOI, we have for example schools that we provide for our foreign workers with children. Because there are foreign workers. They might have issues going to the national schools, because they are foreign workers, they have kids, and the kids might not have - it's difficult for them to attend national schools. So we, within our plantation, together with NGOs set up schools for the children. And this is important because I think that if we don't, then the kids get to work the whole day instead of being educated. So in this sense we also understand that, yeah kids can help out with the parents, but not at the expense of their education. So having a school is really important. So therefore, we need to address this. For example we are also looking at some of our female workers who are pregnant, and our foreign workers. When they go to our local hospital, they have to pay a very substantial fee, because they are not local. We thought about having for example midwives to address that aspect. I mean these sort of things are very important because one of the things we also found out is that we need to keep our workers happy. We have a very, a big dependence on the workers to ensure that the plantation is run, because it is labour intensive. So to me, this is a given. It is actually more of an issue to have workers come in and then leave mid-season, it makes it difficult for us to be fully productive and efficient. So I think this part - this is part of what sustainability is all about. If you keep your workers happy, you get a better yield out of it. The issue of... This is something that IOI has to understand. The three Ps are extremely important. There's people, there's planet, and there's profit. And all of this are all intertwined. Sustainability is very expensive, it requires profit. But profit is ploughed into the people, people are happy, the planet is happy - and you get more profit. So to us, having this - and I think it's more difficult to address the people part than actually the environment. Because environment actually we are in control. People, it's more difficult to control people, because sometimes they do things that hurt the environment. So if you control the people, then you control the environment. You control the people and the environment, you get the profit.

**Interviewer 2:** That makes sense, it's like the three legs of a chair, right? It needs to balance.

**IOI:** Exactly, it's like balancing the three components. Everybody says - I know a lot of civil society thinks that if a corporation makes lots of profit, there's something wrong with it. To me, what is wrong is if the profit is not used to be ploughed back in order for you to make it be sustainable. You cannot keep on taking without giving. I'm a chemist. I'm not sure whether you know about the La Chatelier Principle? It's an equation of balance, equilibrium.  $A + B \rightleftharpoons \text{product C and D}$ . So every time there's more C and D, the product, then you deplete - then you won't have anymore, it goes low enough, then there won't be anymore C and D because there's no more A and B being produced.

**Interviewer 2:** I see. That's a good mathematical way of putting it. Time is flying, so let's move on to the second strategy we have identified. And maybe that's easier because we see that there's a lot of educating going on, like educating RSPO members in how to respect human rights while also respecting the planet in a way. What do you say to that one?

**IOI:** Yeah. There are a lot of problems when you have plantations. You can see that very clearly in Malaysia and also Indonesia. It helps to increase the livelihood of the people. A plantation provides work, jobs. That's a plus that a lot of people forget. The reason why Malaysia and Indonesia was able to emerge a lot - especially Malaysia, Malaysia has started a lot longer, earlier than Indonesia - the livelihood of the

people increased tremendously. That's what plantation does. It provides work, it provides livelihood. And because it is labour intensive, it helps everybody around it. So consequently not only the plantation, you have the mills, you have the refinery, and with the mills and the refineries you have to use technology. The contribution to the economy, the GDP, of a country is manifold. And this is something that a lot of, unfortunately a lot of people forget. So it's not just about community, it's not just about the plantation coming in and taking over the land, but bearing in mind that before the people are living at poverty level. Because of plantations, because of palm oil, they have increased their livelihood, their livelihood is better. I see it so much, because I went to some of the new plantations in Indonesia, and it was very eye-opening to see, because in Malaysia it's not, of course the poverty level is not as bad as Indonesia. So I went to Kalimantan, it was interesting to see that before we came in and do the plantation and had made roads and everything, if they want to get any kind of groceries it took them three hours to go by boat. Because of our presence, and we have roads, it took them one hour. That's just infrastructure. But bear in mind that we also hire them to work in the plantation, we also provide schools for them, we also provide water, drinking project because before, they couldn't drill because they were close to the sea, so every time they drilled, they got saltwater into their water table, and of course they can't use it. We come in, we have the equipment to drill really deep, about 180 meters. We were able to get water for them, fresh water. It's that sort of thing. So it's not always about negative... there are a lot of times I think it's also about greed. Once a plantation comes in, then everybody comes in and starts claiming 'this is my land, this is your land, this is not', you know. It all happens. Obviously that happens. But RSPO has also put in place what we call [inaudible 53:04, sounds like 'active'] forces - free, prior, informed consent that we are introducing to ensure that the rights of the community are also taken care of.

**Interviewer 2:** That actually links well to the next strategy that I wanted to ask you about, is whether monitoring and sanctioning members through the complaints mechanism kind of enforces the respect for human rights.

**IOI:** Sanctions always does that. You know, I always believe also that there are two sides to an issue. And I think this is one of the flaws of RSPO. I feel that RSPO should, if there's a complaint being brought up, that they should go down to the ground and investigate. Rather than hear from the complainant and then issue the sanctions. It's just like in a court of law. If somebody has been accused of something, you don't presume that they are guilty. You always presumed innocent. And then proven guilty. But the way RSPO does is that, because they don't go down to the ground to go and investigate first, ensure that the complaint is valid, then come back to both the complainant and the one who perpetuated, then it doesn't work that well. That aspect is flawed.

**Interviewer 2:** I see, that's interesting.

**IOI:** And the other thing is that a lot of the panels, the complaint panels, are not well versed sometimes, and yet they are the ones who's making the decision. Now, the problem is that the people who are well versed will have conflict of interest. So it's kind of difficult there. So the only other option is for them to get extras outside, who's not directly interested. It's not that straight-forward answer.

**Interviewer 2:** Sounds like it. Thank you though. We only have a few questions left and then we'll let you go.

**IOI:** Yeah it's already past and I really need to go.

**Interviewer 2:** Yeah. Do you have time for just two very brief questions?

**IOI:** Okay.

**Interviewer 2:** Okay, thank you. From which group or membership category do you think that IOI receives the most support or meets the most opposition in the work you do in RSPO?

**IOI:** Oh it depends on the issue. Kind of difficult.

**Interviewer 2:** Okay. That makes sense to what you said earlier as well. The final question [respondent's name], and it's a little bit difficult but I know you don't have a lot of time, but if possible can you list three events that have been important turning points in the history of RSPO?

**IOI:** I think it's kind of difficult because I've been involved with RSPO but I'm sure there are lots of events in RSPO. And I'm not sure whether this should be from an IOI perspective, my perspective, or an RSPO perspective, so maybe that might not be an appropriate question for me, because I'm not sure from which perspective you're going to be asking me.

**Interviewer 2:** We're looking for your perspective.

**IOI:** You know, previously I was from a downstream, now I'm from an upstream. If you're looking at my own experience, I think... Maybe it's not an easy question for me to answer because of the short time, I have to think about it.

**Interviewer 2:** Yeah. Would it be something that - could we send you the question via email? And then if you had any time to consider it then you could get back to us. Is that a possibility?

**IOI:** Sure.

**Interviewer 2:** Okay, that would be great. I'm sorry for keeping you so long [respondent's name], but you told us so many interesting things.

**IOI:** That's okay.

**Interviewer 2:** Do you have have any final questions or comments before we wrap up?

**IOI:** No, I mean, I just - you have to understand that my perspective is an overall perspective. I'm not specifically looking at plantations or downstream or NGOs, but this is my experience working with all the stakeholders. But I would appreciate, as I said earlier, if you would share with me the transcript as well as the report. And please respect my wishes if I do need it to be anonymous or if I need it to be removed.

**Interviewer 2:** Yes, of course, that is absolutely no problem. Whatever you feel comfortable with.

**IOI:** Thank you very much, I appreciate that.

**Interviewer 2:** But we'll send you the transcript as soon as it's done.

**IOI:** Okay, great. Alright. So I better go, and I'll look forward to your email.

**Interviewer 2:** Thank you so much for your time [respondent's name], and have a good evening.



## Appendix F: Events found in the literature

Internal/ External	Event	Year	Description	Code
Internal	The formal establishment of RSPO	2004	<p>“Formally established in 2004, the RSPO is an important response to these concerns and remains the most iconic sustainability certification system in the palm oil industry, certifying about 17% of global production as of 2016 (Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil, 2016a)” (Jespersen, Kruuse, Bøgestrand &amp; Gallemore, forthcoming, p. 3)</p> <p>“(RSPO) was formally established in April 2004, with a Statement of Intent (SoI) signed by 47 organizations, led by a collaborative effort between the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) and a variety of private actors in the palm oil sector (RSPO, 2016a)” (Jespersen et al., forthcoming, p. 5)</p>	LS, E, OS, P
Internal	The first P&C	2005	<p>“By 2005, RSPO members had developed initial Principles and Criteria (P&amp;C; RSPO, 2013c), setting out the standards for Certified Sustainable Palm Oil (CSPO)” (Jespersen et al., forthcoming, p. 5)</p>	M
Internal	BTC creation	2009	<p>“RSPO Biodiversity and Technical Committee (BTC) was created in 2009. ... this committee had significant scientific gaps on tropical biology.” (Ruysschaert &amp; Salles, 2016, p. 77)</p> <p>“... This temporary committee was institutionalised as BHCV WG. This working group now aims “to provide strategic and technical support” to the RSPO (RSPO 2015f;1), underlining the lasting nature of knowledge gaps. It has met 25 times between April 2009 and January 2015.” (Ruysschaert &amp; Salles, 2016, p. 77)</p>	E, OS
Internal	Development of SCCS	2008-2009	<p>“Further additions to RSPO came in 2008 and 2009, when the RSPO Supply Chain Certification Systems (SCCS), which guarantee to the end-user that the product in question has been produced in a sustainable manner, were adopted (RSPO, 2016a)” (Jespersen et al., forthcoming, p. 5)</p>	M
External	Against deforestation	2013	<p>“...Greenpeace report Certifying Destruction explains why companies need to go</p>	CE, E

			beyond RSPO commitment (Greenpeace 2013).” (Ruysschaert & Salles, 2016, p.80) The report was published September 3, 2013 (Greenpeace, 2013).	
External	Greenpeace Planting Procedures	2008	<p>“Greenpeace made a public case against the Malaysian grower United Plantation, who had breached the rules to implement the RSPO guidance document. In response to the case, WWF put forward a resolution on new planting procedures at the GA 2008.” (Ruysschaert &amp; Salles, 2016, p. 80)</p> <p>“With this resolution, opponent NGOs have had access to far more information on the RSPO growers. Accordingly, they were able to file many more cases against RSPO growers. As of April 2015, 50 cases had been brought to the RSPO (RSPO 2015c). The rising number of cases were new opportunities for the collaborative NGOs, especially Oxfam/Novib and Sawit Watch. They could influence the RSPO in order to set up a formal grievance system open to members and non-members” (Ruysschaert &amp; Salles, 2016, p.80)</p>	LS, E, CE
Internal	Growers in GA: Preserving integrity of the standards by not proposing outside the topics covered by the P&C	2010	<p>“Growers successfully put forward the decision ‘Preserving the Integrity of the Standard Setting Process in RSPO’ at the 2010 GA. This decision forbids opportunistic NGOs to put forward decisions that support their particular agenda. In addition, the RSPO created the codes of conduct, one for all their members and the other for the BHCV WG members that limit opportunistic strategies (RSPO 2015 d,e).” (Ruysschaert &amp; Salles, 2016 p.80)</p>	P, M
External	Creation of the MSPO standard	2013	<p>“From some growers’ perspectives, NGO campaigns amount to neo-colonialism. One, for example, was quoted in 2011, rhetorically asking “Why tie our hands and legs so tightly? But that’s what the world wants” (qtd. In Ng, 2011). As the Malaysian Sustainable Palm Oil standard was launched in 2013, the Director-General of the Malaysian Palm Oil Board characterized the RSPO as creating “an unhealthy monopolistic situation” (Thean, 2013c). An article in Malaysia’s New Straits Times in 2014, reflects a common sentiment that, “skillful in communication and blackballing tactics, these activists harass oil palm planters into submitting to the standards and criteria that they dictate” (Ching, 2014)”. (Jespersen et al., forthcoming, p. 10).</p>	B,S
External	Social media campaign “KitKat Killer”	2010	<p>“Opponent NGOs mobilise considerable resources to influence the RSPO to their advantage. First, they can mobilise (scientific) expertise, by investigating and</p>	CE, E

			establishing evidence against prominent growers who breach RSPO rules (for example, Wilmar, Golden-Agri Resources). Second, with their close relationship to the media and the public, they are able to undertake aggressive campaigning targeting key RSPO members using a wide range of media tools, for example, the video Nestlé Killer... “ (Ruysschaert & Salles, 2016 p.80)	
Internal	IPOA withdraws from RSPO	2011	“In 2011, the Indonesian Palm Oil Association withdrew from the RSPO, claiming the organization was too cozy with environmental groups (Vanguard, 2011).” (Jespersen et al., forthcoming, p. 10)	E
Internal	The attempt to include GHG in P&C	2009	“Adding GHG requirements, however, was not easy. In 2009, the criteria proposed by the first Greenhouse Gas Working Group were contested even by industry leaders like Sime Darby (qtd. in Ng, 2009b) and was reported to have “almost led to a walkout” by growers (Damodaran, 2009). The RSPO itself issued a press release asserting that “if a decision was forced either way too soon, RSPO could implode” (qtd. in Hardy, 2009), and inclusion of the criteria in the P&C was deferred to the following year (Ng, 2010), while the second Greenhouse Gas Working Group hammered out agreement (Hardy, 2009; RSPO, 2016f). With the proposed GHG rule made voluntary, both the Malaysian and Indonesian Palm Oil Associations dropped their objections (New Straits Times, 2009). Finally, in April, 2013, new P&C including GHG criteria were debated and, ultimately, adopted at an extraordinary meeting of the RSPO membership. In the run-up to the conference, the RSPO’s secretary-general called on the membership to “address this issue now within the RSPO rather than wait for policies (shaped without consultation) to be imposed on the industry in the near future” (qtd. in New Straits Times, 2013).” (Jespersen et al., forthcoming, p. 16).	CE, M
Internal	The creation of RSPO NEXT	2015	“This demand for third-party verification led, in late 2015, to RSPO NEXT, a commitment to exceed the RSPO P&C, requiring zero deforestation, zero use of fire for clearing, and zero planting on peat, as well as reductions in GHG emissions and the commitment to uphold human rights and transparency (RSPO, 2015b). RSPO NEXT’s voluntary nature meant it could be developed without the political contestation characterizing the GHG criteria, but it nevertheless has garnered critics concerned with the risk of creating a “two-tiered” market.” (Jespersen et al., forthcoming, p. 17)	CE, E, LS, M



## Appendix G: Merged events from researchers and respondents

	Year	Event	Respondent	Researchers	Codes
1	2004	Formal establishment of RSPO	X (3)	x	LS, E, OS, P
2	2005	First Principles & Criteria		x	M
3	2008	Indonesian grower walk-out	X (2)		P
4	2008	Certification audit	x		S, M
5	2008	Oxfam resolution on ACOP	x		M, S
6	2008	<b>Greenpeace UP case (leads to NPP introduction by WWF)</b>	<b>x</b>	<b>x</b>	<b>LS, E, CE, M</b>
7	2008/9	Development of Supply Chain Certification System		x	M
8	2009	BTC creation		x	E, OS
9	2009	Second resolution by Wetlands Int.	x		CE
10	2010	Growers in GA: preserving the integrity of the standard		x	P, M
11	2010	<b>Greenpeace Kit Kat Campaign</b>	<b>x</b>	<b>x</b>	<b>CE, E, M, B</b>
12	2011	IPOA withdraws membership		x	E
13	2011	RSPO logo development	x		B
14	2012	Resolution on the application of an reporting against relevant P&C across all member sectors	x		M
15	2013	<b>Greenpeace releases report “Certifying Destruction”</b>		<b>x</b>	<b>CE, E</b>
16	2013	<b>Creation of MSPO standard</b>		<b>x</b>	<b>B, S</b>
17	2013	P&C compromises on GHG inclusion	x	x	CE, M, E
18	2014	<b>EU regulation for food labeling</b>	<b>X (2)</b>		<b>M, B, S, E</b>
19	2015	Creation of RSPO NEXT	x	x	CE, E, LS, M, P
20	2015	<b>No-palm-oil campaign</b>	<b>x</b>		<b>B, S</b>

Agenda:

(3): this event has been mentioned by three (3) different respondents

**Written in bold:** external event

**Grey** = Event identified by both researchers and respondents

## Appendix H: Occurrence analysis of resolutions

### Local Society

Local Society regards people and communities in immediate relation to production. Local Society is steadily brought up throughout the history of the RSPO. In total six resolutions at six different GAs were proposed that addressed Local Society. Thus, we do not see any particular peak in the development over time.

### Environment

Environment regards environment excluding greenhouse gases. Resolutions treating Environment has been proposed 15 times in total. The years with the most resolutions on the topic were 2005 and 2008 (three each time respectively). While addressed in a resolution 12 times between 2005 and 2010, this topic was only brought up three times in total between 2013 and 2015. Thus, we see that it played a bigger role in the beginning of the existence of the organisation than in recent years.

### Carbon Environment

Carbon Environment regards greenhouse gases. This topic was brought up eight times over the entire period of the 13 years that our research covers. The peak year was 2009 with three resolutions covering the topic in one GA. Overall, six of the eight proposals took place between 2007 and 2009. It was addressed once before this period and then again in 2013.

### Smallholders

Smallholders regards the mentioning of smallholders. The topic smallholders was addressed nine times in total. The peak years were 2005 and 2007 when it was addressed twice in the same GA. Also here, it is interesting, that seven of the total nine resolutions covering the topic were proposed between 2005 and 2009. It was then again referred to in 2009 and 2015.

### Scaling

Scaling regards what affects the long-term sustainability/viability and growth of RSPO directly or indirectly, including demand for CSPO. Resolutions addressing Scaling were proposed 15 times in the 13 years of studied data. The peak was in 2012 when there were three resolutions addressing this topic. Interesting for this topic is that it was mentioned in every GA except in the ordinary GA in 2013.

## Monitoring

Monitoring regards carrying out surveillance of RSPO members' actions. In total, there have been 22 resolutions addressing the topic of Monitoring. Except in the first GA in 2004, Monitoring has been brought up in every GA at least once. The peaks are the years 2008, 2010, 2014 where it has been brought up three times at each of these occasions.

## Procedural

Procedural regards the administrative activities as well as formal processes of RSPO, as in action taken. The topic Procedural has been addressed 34 times in total. It is thereby the topic addressed the most in all the resolutions. Two years stand out, where Procedural was referred to seven times in the same GA in 2006 and the first GA in 2012, respectively. It was brought up in all GAs but 2005, 2008 and the first GA in 2012.

## Organisational Structure

Organisational Structure regards effects on the organisational chart and membership categories, as in static, but not the standard directly. Organisational Structure was a topic in 14 resolutions in total. It was addressed in the highest number of resolutions in 2009, where three resolutions addressed it. Besides, it has been mentioned in all GAs except the GAs taking place in 2007, 2008, the extraordinary GA in 2013 and 2014.

## Branding

Branding regards the image of RSPO externally. In the period of the research data, 11 resolutions included an aspect of Branding. It was brought up in two resolutions in 2006 and two in 2015 and besides this, it was only addressed once per GA. In 2007, 2010, the first GA in 2012 and the extraordinary assembly in 2013, the topic was not addressed. Interestingly, we see that Brandings was mentioned four times in the first three GAs and again four times in the last three (2013-2015), however, between the years 2007 and 2013a, it was only mentioned three times in total.



## Appendix I: Pattern analysis of events and resolutions

In the following table, we will present an overview of the analysis of all the events compared to the resolutions. We limited our analysis to the previous (Year -1) and following year (Year 1) in relation to when the event took place (Year 0). If there is an increase of the same topic as the event in the resolutions proposed in year 0 and year 1, we draw the conclusion that the institutional entrepreneur who proposed these resolutions is benefiting from the event. An event marked with an asterix (\*) is a resolution in itself. The topic that the resolution was coded as also has an asterix to see which numbers are including the resolution in their count.

Event	Year 0	Level	Code	Year -1	Year 0	Year 1	Influence
Formal establishment of RSPO	2004	1	LS	n.a.	0	1	Yes
			E	n.a.	0	3	
			P	n.a.	0	3	
			OS	n.a.	1	1	
<p>The first event is the birth of RSPO. It goes without saying that due to this event, all the other resolutions, no matter what topic, have emerged. However, we have coded this event based on how it was phrased in the literature as well as by the respondents. Therefore, we allocated the codes Local Society, Environment, Organisational Structure and Procedural to this event. In the first year, we can see that it starts slowly with one resolution on Organisational Structure. However, we can see a steep increase, both, for Environment and Procedural as three resolutions tackling these topics were proposed the next year (2006). Furthermore, Local Society and Organisational Structure also both had one resolution. Therefore, we conclude that this event has been followed by resolutions of the same topic.</p>							

First Principles & Criteria*	2005	4	M	0	2*	1	Yes
As the event was one of the two resolutions in Year 0, we do not see an increase but a steadiness of one event per GA. However, as this is the first resolution on Monitoring, we consider it important as it regards a standard.							
Indonesian grower walk-out	2008	3	P	1	0	4	Yes
During the GA, where the event took place, no procedural resolutions were proposed, however, in the following year four were proposed. Curious about this peak, we looked at the data of the following year and found that all the resolutions regarding a procedural issue were proposed by growers. Therefore, we conclude that this event has been followed by a resolution of the same topic.							
Certification audit	2008	4	S	2	1	2	Yes
			M	1	3	2	
In regards to Scaling, we do not see an increase as Scaling has at least one resolution in every GA. In Monitoring, we see an increase in the same year but then it decreases again in the following year. Therefore, we conclude that this event has been followed by a resolution of the same topic.							
Oxfam resolution on ACOP*	2008	4	S	2	1*	2	Yes
			M	1	3*	2	
In regards to Scaling, we do not see that this event was followed by resolutions addressing Scaling as Scaling has at least one resolution in every GA. For Monitoring, we do see an increase in the GA immediately after the event in the same year. However, then it decreases again in the following year. Nevertheless, we conclude that this event has been followed by a resolution of the same topic.							
Greenpeace UP case (leads to NPP introduction by WWF)*	2008	2	LS	1	1	1	Yes
			E	1	3*	2	

			CE	1	2	3		
			M	1	3*	2		
<p>We identified this event both in the literature as well as it was mentioned by the respondents. However, the literature named a report by Greenpeace whereas the respondents remembered more the proposal of the resolution on NPP by WWF International. As the literature linked these two events, we have also merged them here. Thus, the event took place before the GA but also led to a resolution which is included in the amounts as indicated.</p> <p>We see that the proposals on the topic of Local Societies stayed stable over time. Environment, however, peaked in the year of the event with three proposals about the topic. This decreased in the next year but still two resolutions were proposed on Environment. Carbon Environment has a steady increase over the years, we see that it has already one more mentioning than in the previous year, and this trend then continued. Therefore, we see that the event was followed by resolutions on both the Environmental and Carbon Environmental topic in the agenda of the GA. In addition, we also see an increase in Monitoring in Year 0. Overall, we conclude that this event has been followed by resolutions of the same topic.</p>								
Development of Supply Chain Certification System	2008/9	4	M	1	3	2	3	Yes
<p>As the literature was unclear about when the event actually took place, in our analysis we took all years from 2008 to 2010 into consideration, starting with 2007 as Year -1. We see an immediate increase in resolutions proposed on the topic of Monitoring as well as an increase in the long term. Therefore, we conclude that this event has been followed by a resolution of the same topic.</p>								
BTC creation*	2009	4	E	3	2*	1	Yes	
			OS	0	3*	1		
<p>We see that after the BTC (Biodiversity Technical Committee) was created, the amount of resolutions on</p>								

the topic of Environment actually decreases. This could be an indicator for other members thinking that the topic is taken care of and, therefore, no immediate actions are required. Yet, we do see an increase in proposals for Organisational Structure. This could be because the creation of the BTC Committee inspired to more organisational restructurings. Thus, we conclude that this event has been followed by a resolution on the same topic.

2nd resolution by Wetlands Int.*	2009	4	CE	2	3*	0	No
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As the event was one of the resolutions in 2009, we do not see any influence on the topics proposed as the following year no resolution was sponsored on this topic.

Growers in GA: preserving the integrity of the standard*	2010	4	M	2	3*	n.a.	No
			P	4	3*	n.a.	

In Monitoring, we do not see an influence, as it is pretty stable over the years on two resolutions. Furthermore, the GA in 2011 did not take place, as quorum was not met. This could be seen as an indicator that not enough members found any topics, thus including Monitoring and Procedural, to be urgent enough to participate in the GA.

Greenpeace Kit Kat Campaign	2010	2	E	2	1	n.a.	No
			CE	3	0	n.a.	
			M	2	3	n.a.	
			B	1	0	n.a.	

While we see a slight increase in Monitoring in the same year as the event took place, the other topics all decreased. As the GA in 2011 did not take place, we identify that there was a general lack of interest. Therefore, we conclude that this event has not been followed by any resolution of the same topic.

IPOA withdraws membership	2011	4	E	1	n.a.	0	No	
This event is coded as Environment due to the description of it in the literature. However, we see that the event is not followed by a resolution on this topic. None of the respondents mentioned it as important turning point for the RSPO.								
RSPO logo development	2011	4	B	0	n.a.	0	1	No
As there is no particular change in resolutions proposed addressing the topic of Branding, we do not see an influence on the agenda of the GA by this event.								
Resolution on the application of an reporting against relevant P&C across all member sectors*	2012	4	M	n.a.	2*	1	No	
As there were two GAs in 2012, we count them each as one year. As the event is a resolution in the first GA of 2012, where there are two resolutions on this topic in total, we do not see any effect to the year after. Therefore, we conclude that this event has not been followed by any resolution of the same topic.								
Greenpeace releases report “Certifying Destruction”	2013	4	E	1	1	0	No	
			CE	1	0	0		
Greenpeace’s report was released in September 2013, thus, between the first (Extraordinary GA) and second GA in that year. However, we do not see an increase in resolutions proposed or in the following year. Therefore, we conclude that this event has not been followed by any resolution of the same topic.								
Creation of MSPO standard	2013	4	S	1	1	0	1	No
			B	1	0	1	1	
In regards to Scaling, we do not see that more resolutions are proposed. It is rather the opposite as the second GA in 2013 is the only GA where no resolution on Scaling was proposed throughout the existence of RSPO. The mentioning of Branding took place the first time in the second GA of 2012 since 2009.								

From the second GA in 2013 onwards, we see a steady increase of the topic being brought up.							
P&C compromises on GHG inclusion*	2013	2	E	0	1*	1	No
			CE	0	1*	0	
			M	1	1*	1	
As this event is the resolution that addresses the three topics in the Extraordinary GA, we do not see any meaningful impact on any of the topics. Therefore, we conclude that this event has not been followed by any resolution of the same topic.							
EU regulation for food labeling	2014	3	E	1	0	1	Yes
			S	0	1	1	
			M	1	3	2	
			B	1	1	2	
In regards to the topic of environment, we do not see a change on the resolutions proposed after the event. As Scaling is back to its steady one resolution per GA, we do not see any difference here either. However, Monitoring is interesting as there is an increase in the same year as the event and also the following year there is still two resolutions proposed addressing Monitoring. Furthermore, Branding, we also see a slight increase in the following year after the event takes place. Therefore, we conclude that this event has been followed by resolutions of the same topic.							
Creation of RSPO NEXT	2015	2	E	0	1	n.a.	n.a.
			CE	1	2	n.a.	
			LS	0	0	n.a.	
			M	3	2	n.a.	

			P	1	2	n.a.	
<p>While both, literature and a respondent, list this event, the literature mentions it as taking place in 2015, whereas the respondents state that it was passed as a resolution in the GA in 2016. Comparing the previous year to the 2015, we see an increase by one for Environment, Carbon Environment and Procedural, only Monitoring is decreasing and local society is stable. Nevertheless, due to the missing data for when the event has taken place exactly and the meeting minutes which are not part of our data set, the overall effect of this event remains to be seen.</p>							
No-palm-oil campaign	2015	4	S	1	1	n.a.	Yes
			B	1	2	n.a.	
<p>We assume that the campaign took place before the GA in 2015, which is likely as the GA only takes place in November. We do not see any difference and thus neither a following resolution in Scaling, however, in Branding we see an increase, which we see as meaningful as branding is only mentioned in two resolutions in the same GA twice over the period of eleven years that the research data covers. Therefore, we conclude that this event has been followed by a resolution of the same topic.</p>							