Credibility of Civil Society Organizations in CSO-Business Partnerships
A Case Study of Forests of the World

Marianne Due & Mette Pfeiffer Jørgensen
Cand.merc.int (Business & Development Studies)
Supervisor: Janni Thusgaard Pedersen
STU count: 265.368
June 2011
Executive Summary

CSO-business partnerships are being promoted as a way of addressing complex social, humanitarian and development challenges. For CSOs, CSO-business partnerships present an opportunity for resources and influence in a time where the external environment has sparked competition for resources and CSOs are encouraged to increase effectiveness and find alternative sources of funding in for instance CSO-business partnerships.

In spite of the promising outlooks for CSOs engaging in CSO-business partnerships, such partnerships do not come easily or without a cost. CSOs risk jeopardizing organizational credibility. As little empirical research has dealt with the topic of threats to the credibility of CSOs resulting from their engagements in CSO-business partnership, we identified a gap in literature which this thesis contributes to filling by providing an empirically based analysis to answer our research question: How do CSO-business partnerships present a threat to the credibility of civil society organizations? We undertook a case study of the small environmental CSO, Forests of the World, interviewing the internal stakeholders, i.e. people who, in their capacity as members of the executive committee, employees or active volunteers, are part of the informal or formal decision-making processes in Forests of the World. The organization is currently drafting internal guidelines for their future collaborations with companies. In this process the topic of threats to CSO credibility is highly relevant.

To be able to answer the research question we carried out an analysis in three research phases. In the first research phase, we examined our first sub-question: What is CSO credibility? We mapped the attributes assessed to contribute to CSO credibility. As an example the mission, vision and organizational purpose of working on behalf of nature was seen to contribute to CSO credibility. The identified attributes were discussed in relation to theory on legitimacy and accountability where the above example was explained in terms of moral legitimacy. This first research phase provided us with an empirical and theoretical understanding of CSO credibility as perceived by the internal stakeholders which was necessary to be able to unfold and operationalize what is being threatened when we refer to CSO credibility. In the second research phase, a mapping of the threats enabled us to answer the second sub-question: What are the threats to CSO credibility presented by CSO-business partnerships? To give an example, greenwashing was assessed to present such a threat. The identification of threats was necessary to move on to the third and final research phase. In this third
and final research phase, the empirically based findings from the two preceding research phases were combined to enable a discussion answering our overall research question. To continue with the above example, this third research phase discussed how the attribute to CSO credibility of mission, vision and organization purpose (from research phase one) was threatened by the risk of greenwashing (from research phase two). In these discussions, we found that only certain aspects of CSO credibility was threatened when CSOs engage in CSO-business partnerships while other may indeed be strengthened. The implications of the fact that some aspects of CSO credibility was threatened and others were not, was further discussed. Continuing the ongoing example, the theoretical term of moral legitimacy was found to be threatened be greenwashing. By identifying that moral legitimacy was threatened we discussed the implications that moral legitimacy, in comparison to for instance pragmatic legitimacy, was harder to work with strategically. In a discussion of other aspects of CSO credibility, we suggested that it may be questioned to what extent an organization such as Forests of the World can have both a watchdog role and a more collaborative role in relation to businesses. We argued that the different roles that the organization takes on in its relations to companies may be difficult to balance and should therefore be attended to.

Finally, we presented the implications of our research for practice and research. For Forests of the World, we suggest that the mapping of attributes to CSO credibility can be used to spark an internal discussion to clarify which aspects of CSO credibility are considered more important. We argue that this is important as the opinions of these internal stakeholders shape the direction of the CSO. Moreover, in relation to the discussion of opportunities and threats resulting from CSO-business partnerships, it is important to know the priorities if the CSO. We suggest that other CSOs may benefit from the findings and the methods used in this thesis as these can serve as an introduction internal discussion in other CSOs.

The implication of our research to research is as follows. First, we have suggested what CSO credibility is embedded within a specific context and point in time. Having thoroughly described the case organization, findings and methods may be used by other researchers to test findings and develop theories from these. Second, we have provided an empirical case study of threats to CSO credibility which is a topic on which little empirical evidence exist. Similar to the findings in relation to CSO credibility, the findings concerning threats may provide basis and inspiration for further research on the topic.
## Content

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Pages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY</td>
<td></td>
<td>II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>RESEARCH QUESTION</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>STRUCTURE OF MASTER’S THESIS</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>LITERATURE REVIEW</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>CREDIBILITY OF CSOS</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>CSO-BUSINESS PARTNERSHIPS</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>CREDIBILITY IN CSO-BUSINESS PARTNERSHIPS</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>SUMMARY</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>METHODOLOGY</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>RESEARCH PHILOSOPHY</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>RESEARCH APPROACH</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>EMPIRICAL FRAMEWORK</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>ANALYTICAL APPROACH</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>THEORY</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>LEGITIMACY</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>ACCOUNTABILITY</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>THE INTERRELATION BETWEEN LEGITIMACY AND ACCOUNTABILITY</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>CASE DESCRIPTION: FORESTS OF THE WORLD</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>ORGANIZATIONAL PURPOSE, MISSION AND VISION</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>ORGANIZATIONAL ACTIVITIES</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>CSO-BUSINESS PARTNERSHIPS</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>RESEARCH PHASE I: CSO CREDIBILITY</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>PRIMARY DATA ANALYSIS: INTERVIEWS WITH FORESTS OF THE WORLD</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>DISCUSSION: UNDERSTANDING CSO CREDIBILITY</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>RESEARCH PHASE I: CONCLUSION</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>RESEARCH PHASE II: CSO-BUSINESS PARTNERSHIPS AND THREATS TO CSO CREDIBILITY</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>PRIMARY DATA ANALYSIS: INTERVIEWS WITH FORESTS OF THE WORLD</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>PARTNERSHIP STRATEGY</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>RESEARCH PHASE II: CONCLUSION</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>RESEARCH PHASE III: UNDERSTANDING HOW CSO CREDIBILITY IS THREATENED</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.1</td>
<td>COMBINING RESEARCH PHASE ONE AND TWO</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
8.2 Attributes to CSO credibility threatened by CSO-business partnerships .......................................................... 89
8.3 Attributes to CSO credibility not threatened by CSO-business partnerships ......................................................... 91
8.4 Discussion: Understanding the threats to CSO credibility ....................................................................................... 92
8.5 Research Phase III: Conclusion ......................................................................................................................... 98

9 Implications for Research and Practice .................................................................................................................. 100
9.1 Implications for practice ....................................................................................................................................... 100
9.2 Implications for research ...................................................................................................................................... 101

10 Conclusion .......................................................................................................................................................... 104

References .................................................................................................................................................................. 107
Appendices .................................................................................................................................................................. 112

Figures

Figure 1.1 Structure of Thesis ......................................................................................................................................... 4
Figure 5.1 Organizational chart for Forests of the World .............................................................................................. 37
Figure 5.2 Lindenberg’s continuum of CSO-business relations ...................................................................................... 44

Tables

Table 5.1 Key figures for Forests of the World .................................................................................................................. 39
Table 6.1 Categories of attributes to CSO credibility identified by the interviewees of Forests of the World ............... 58
Table 6.2 Table illustrating the categorization of independence, scientific capacity and presence in Latin America .... 64
Table 6.3 Combined theoretical and empirical understanding of CSO credibility .......................................................... 65
Table 7.1 Threats to CSO credibility when engaging in CSO-business partnerships ................................................... 79
Table 8.1 Threats to CSO credibility .................................................................................................................................. 88
1 Introduction

The relationship between the different societal sectors is changing. From being characterized mainly by opposition, collaborations between civil society organizations (CSOs) and the private sector in CSO-business partnerships\(^1\) have increased steadily over the course of the past two decades (Austin 2000a; Crane 2000; Heap 2000; Porter & Kramer 2002; Selsky & Parker 2005; Kolk, van Tulder & Kostwinder 2008; Neergaard, Jensen & Pedersen 2009). Not only has the number of such partnerships increased, the collaborations are also reaching new levels of interconnectedness and complexity as CSOs are becoming more actively involved in shaping policies and affecting commercial partners (Crane 2000; Heap 2000).

CSO-business partnerships are assessed to be a promising way of addressing complex social, humanitarian and development challenges and are being promoted as an alternative solution to global problems (Googins & Rochlin 2000; Heap 2000; Jørgensen 2006; UN Global Compact & Dalberg Global Development Advisors 2007; Kolk, van Tulder & Kostwinder 2008; UN Global Compact 2008a). CSO-business partnerships have economic or non-economic benefits for both parties (Kolk, van Tulder & Kostwinder 2008). On the company side, one of the reasons for collaborating with CSOs is that companies increasingly are trying to position themselves as corporate citizens. Being associated with CSOs and being able to leverage the credibility of the CSO is an important incentive for companies to engage in collaborations with the civil society (Elkington & Fennell 1998).

For CSOs, on the other hand, a changing external environment has made many CSOs collaborate with companies. Government support for the activities of CSOs is reduced significantly as a result of governments’ reduced budgets and size as well as a result of privatizations. At the same time, the demand for social services delivered by CSOs has gone up and the number of CSOs has grown, thus increasing the competition for the limited public finance available. Altogether, these developments imply that CSOs are encouraged to increase effectiveness and find alternative sources of funding.

\(^1\) In this thesis, we define CSO-business partnerships as: “all types of collaborative activities between two or more parties from both the civil and private sector in which some kind of material or immaterial resource is exchanged or shared and where one of the purposes is to create social and/or environmental value”. The definition will be explained in further detail on the basis of our review of the literature in Chapter 2.
Collaborations with the private sector are one such alternative source of funding. Although CSO-business partnerships evidently have benefits and are widely acknowledged as an important part of the solution to the world’s problems, such benefits from partnerships do not come easily or without a cost. Scholars suggest that collaborations between companies and CSOs risk jeopardizing organizational credibility (Waddell & Brown 1997; Hartman & Stafford 1998; Ählström & Sjöström 2005; Jonker & Nijhof 2006).

If the credibility of the CSO is at risk when engaging in CSO-business partnerships, this is a hindrance to the development of CSO-business partnerships because the credibility of the CSO is an important element of these. The credibility of the CSO is important because one of the company incentives for partnerships is to leverage the credibility of the CSO (Yaziji & Doh 2009; Seitanidi 2010). The company is therefore interested in collaborating with CSOs that are considered credible. Thus, without CSO credibility there are fewer incentives for companies to partner with the CSO. However, the fact that partnerships with the private sector present a risk to the credibility of the CSOs makes these cautious in their collaborations with the private sector. In effect, this presents a further challenge to the development of partnerships (Hartman & Stafford 1998; Jonker & Nijhof 2006; Neergaard, Pedersen & Jensen 2009). Thus, threats to the credibility of the CSO are an impediment to the development of CSO-business partnerships and to the efforts of such partnerships to support international development.

### 1.1 Research question

We find it interesting that the credibility of the CSO on one hand is important to CSO-business partnerships for both the private sector and the civil society sector partner, but on the other hand also is at risk when the CSO engages in such partnerships. Because few studies directly investigate threats to CSO credibility when the CSO engages in CSO-business partnerships, we find it necessary to undertake such a study. With this in mind, we aim to undertake an explorative study of the threats to CSO credibility resulting from CSO-business partnerships. The research question we will seek to answer with this thesis is therefore the following:

**How do CSO-business partnerships present a threat to the credibility of civil society organizations?**
To be able to answer this research question we find it necessary to address the following two sub-questions:

1. **What is CSO credibility?**

2. **What are the threats to CSO credibility presented by CSO-business partnerships?**

The sub-questions are derived from our review of the literature on CSO credibility and on CSO-business partnerships and will therefore be presented in further detail in the following chapter.

The research question will be answered based on a case study of the Danish environmental organization Forests of the World\(^2\). Forests of the World is involved in several CSO-business partnerships. They are seeking to increase the engagement in partnerships as these partnerships are considered important to their work. Forests of the World is also an example of a CSO that is concerned about the risk to their credibility when they engage in CSO-business partnerships.

The study will primarily be based on empirical data collected through in-depth semi-structured interviews with employees, volunteers and members of the executive committee of Forests of the World. We refer to these as the internal stakeholders of Forests of the World. By internal stakeholders we mean people who, in their capacity as members of the executive committee, employees or active volunteers, are part of the informal or formal decision-making processes in Forests of the World. A delimitation of our research will therefore be that it will be limited to the perspectives of the internal stakeholders. A focus on other stakeholder groups such as passive members of Forests of the World or the general public could have implied a different choice of method (for example surveys or questionnaires); such studies is beyond the scope of this thesis.

Another delimitation of our research is the focus on the CSO perspective. Organizational credibility is a two-way process in CSO-business partnerships. Both partners are dependent on the credibility of the other, and credibility is therefore important not only to the CSO. Our focus is purely on how CSO-business partnerships affect CSO credibility. Organizational credibility is similarly important to the companies collaborating in CSO-business partnerships. Though being aware that the credibility of the company is also at risk when engaging in CSO-business partnerships, it is beyond the scope of this thesis to examine and discuss how CSO-business partnerships affect and threaten the credibility of the company.

---

\(^2\) It should be noted that the case organization during the course of our research has changed name from Nepenthes to Forests of the World (in Danish: Verdens Skove).
It should be noted that by civil society organizations (CSOs), we use the definition of Carothers (1998a), who suggests that “…civil society is a broader concept, encompassing all the organisations and associations that exist outside the state (including political parties) and the market” (Carothers 1999:19). Bearing this broad understanding of civil society in mind, we use the terms civil society organizations (CSOs) and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs).

1.2 Structure of Master’s Thesis

The figure presents the structure of our thesis. The structure is explained in further detail to the right of the figure.

Chapter 1 through 4 set the scene and introduces our research. In Chapter 1, we have presented the research question we aim to answer. In Chapter 2, we review the current literature on our two key concepts CSO credibility and CSO-business partnerships, and the literature on the relation between the two. We identify gaps within the literature within which we position our research and we suggest sub-questions necessary to answer our research question. Chapter 3 is our methodology as we present the methods applied to answer our research question. Finally, in Chapter 4, we present the theories which will be applied in our analysis. More specifically, we present the concepts of legitimacy and accountability as contributing to credibility.

In Chapter 5, we will present our case organization Forests of the World. The case description will provide a frame for the understanding of the rest of the analysis and discussion.

In the chapters 6 through 8 we will conduct our analysis and discussion to be able to answer the research question. Chapter 6 contains our first research phase in which we will answer our first sub-
question by exploring and mapping what contributes to CSO credibility as perceived by the internal stakeholders. Our second research phase will be placed in Chapter 7, where we answer our second sub-question as we explore and map how the internal stakeholders perceive threats to CSO credibility in CSO-business partnerships. Our third and final research phase is in Chapter 8. Here we combine the findings from the previous research phases and discuss our research question to understand how CSO-business partnerships present a threat to CSO credibility.

In the remaining concluding chapters, we will in Chapter 9 suggest implications from our findings to research as well as our case organization and civil society at large. In our final chapter, Chapter 10, we will conclude on our preceding chapters and answer our research question.
2 Literature Review

In this section, we will present the current state of the literature relevant to the focus of our thesis. Our review of the literature is guided by our research question and we will present literature on each of the key concepts of this thesis: CSO credibility and CSO-business partnerships.

The purpose of the literature review is to review the different perspectives in the literature, define the key concepts of this thesis, to assess why the chosen research topic is important and to identify the knowledge gaps the thesis contributes to filling. The review of the literature will guide us to the sub-questions which will help us answer the research question.

First, we will review the literature on CSO credibility and provide a preliminary understanding of CSO credibility. Moreover, we will explain why credibility is important to CSOs. Subsequently, we will examine the partnership literature to define CSO-business partnerships. Finally, we will review the literature on the risks to CSO credibility when CSOs engage in CSO-business partnerships to identify the knowledge gaps in the partnership literature within which our research is located.

2.1 Credibility of CSOs

In this section, we will review the literature on credibility of CSOs to set the scene and provide us with a preliminary understanding of the concept. Furthermore, it will allow us to understand the importance of credibility to CSOs. Finally, the review of the credibility literature leads us to identify the first sub-question necessary we need to address to be able to answer our research question.

Defining CSO credibility

The main focus of the thesis at hand is the credibility of CSOs when they engage in partnerships with the private sector. This means that this literature review will focus on credibility and on what credibility means to a CSO. According to Brown, “[c]redibility refers to attributes such as trustworthiness and believability in the eyes of other actors” (Brown 2008:2). This definition illustrates that the term is related to other attributes. Credibility is referred to as something an organization can achieve through other concepts. To give and example, CIVICUS\(^3\) (2010) assesses that the principles of legitimacy, transparency and accountability are what is needed “… to increase trust and credibility” (CIVICUS 2010:2). In this way, credibility is related to a number of other

\(^3\) CIVICUS: The World Alliance for Citizen Participation, an international alliance who is “… dedicated to strengthening citizen action and civil society throughout the world.” (www.civicus.org).
concepts such as legitimacy (Scott 1995; Suchman 1995; Lister 2003), accountability (Kumar 1996; Najam 1996a; Edwards & Hulme 1998a), transparency (Vernis & ET AL 2006; CIVICUS 2010) and status and reputation (Deephouse & Suchman 2008). In this way, credibility can be explained through the use of these other concepts. In our review of the literature on various related concepts, we find it appropriate to use Brown (2008), who suggests that credibility is made up of legitimacy and accountability where transparency is an important aspect of demonstrating accountability but not a direct contributor to credibility. Legitimacy and accountability are the terms that have appeared most often in relation to our credibility research. Moreover, several scholars use these two terms as important aspects of explaining the demands that contemporary CSOs need to comply with (Jepson 2005; Bäckstrand 2006; Jagadananda & Brown 2007; Brown 2008; CIVICUS 2010). For these reasons, we have chosen to focus on legitimacy and accountability and to investigate these terms further.

Suchman (1995) suggests a broad definition of legitimacy: “Legitimacy is a generalized perception or assumption that the actions of an entity are desirable, proper, or appropriate within the socially constructed system of norms, values and beliefs and definitions” (Suchman 1995:574). We have chosen Suchman’s definition because it combines strategic approaches to legitimacy grounded in resource dependence perspective (Pfeffer & Salancik 1978; Ashforth & Gibbs 1990) with institutional approaches to legitimacy grounded in institutional theory (DiMaggio & Powell 1983; Scott 1995). In addition, Suchman’s definition is widely used (Lister 2003; Dart 2004; Jepson 2005).

Accountability, on the other hand, can be defined as follows: “Accountability is generally interpreted as the means by which individuals and organisations report to a recognised authority, or authorities, and are held responsible for their actions” (Edwards & Hulme 1998b:9). We have chosen Edwards and Hulme’s definition of accountability, as this view of accountability as a responsibility for performance to stakeholders is used by several scholars (see alsoKumar 1996; Edwards & Hulme 1998b; Slim 2002; Jagadananda & Brown 2007).

Common for legitimacy and accountability, is that CSO actors and their stakeholders have (different) subjective views of accountability and legitimacy of the organizations. Legitimacy can be seen as a relation with an audience, this presents a challenge to organizations because their audiences, or stakeholders, are heterogeneous (Suchman 1995). Different stakeholders of an CSO may have conflicting interests and perceptions of what characterizes a legitimate organization and therefore organizations must decide on “which legitimacy matters” (Lister 2003:184) and how to balance different stakeholders when determining legitimacy(Lister 2003). Different stakeholders
value particular legitimating asset\(^4\) higher than others (Jepson 2005). Regarding accountability, CSOs face multiple accountability\(^5\), as they are accountable to their various groups of stakeholders: upward to donors and regulators; downward to beneficiaries, clients and members; outward to the allies and partners with whom they cooperate; and inward to the staff, mission, board and volunteers. The different accountability claims these groups of people put on the CSO may be conflicting, making it difficult to manage such multiple accountability (Kumar 1996). Thus, due to the subjectivity of legitimacy and accountability, credibility is a highly subjective concept as different stakeholders put different meanings to it. This implies that credibility and the attributes that contribute to credibility are defined by the stakeholders of an organization. CSOs have various stakeholders whose interests and relations to the specific organization are different and may be conflicting (Kumar 1996; Shah & Shah 1998; Lister 2003; Jagadananda & Brown 2007). When CSOs collaborate with businesses, the corporate partners become an increasingly important stakeholder to the CSOs. This can be problematic as CSOs and companies are often seen as opposites concerning issues of development and poverty (Heap 2000) and therefore may lead to conflicting demands and interest from different stakeholders.

Adding to this complexity of defining legitimacy and accountability, these two terms are highly embedded within specific contexts and time. Jepson (2005) suggests that legitimacy and accountability will depend on the role of the CSO, i.e. whether the CSO is working with advocacy, capacity building or service delivery. Moreover, the size of the organization will contribute to defining the legitimacy and accountability requirements of an organization (Jepson 2005; Vernis & ET AL 2006). The bigger the organization, the higher is the need for transparency and to account for operations (Vernis & ET AL 2006). Finally, it should be noted that legitimacy is also defined by the time in which it is assessed; what be considered legitimate or illegitimate today, may be assessed differently at a later point in time (Lister 2003).

**Importance of credibility to the CSO**
The nature of civil society raises potential questions regarding the credibility of CSOs. CSOs mobilize people, resources and loyalty around their social values and commitment to these to enhance the common good (Oliver 1991; Jagadananda & Brown 2007; Brown 2008). Thus, as highlighted by Brown and Jagadananda, this “…reputation as legitimate and accountable stewards of those missions is vital to their ability to recruit staff and allies to their causes” (2007:5). If credibility

---

\(^4\) Legitimating assets: the elements needed for a CSO to be considered legitimate (Jepson 2005).

\(^5\) Multiple accountability: “Multiple accountability arises because of the expectation that an organization is simultaneously accountable to all stakeholders” (Kumar 1996:245).
remains unaddressed, the organization will have difficulties obtaining funds for its activities as well as employees and volunteers to carry them out. Furthermore, neglecting legitimacy and accountability demands will restrain their capabilities to influence other actors in the society (Vernis & ET AL 2006). Brown argues that credibility, in the context of legitimacy and accountability, is important for CSOs because “… it seems clear that as CSOs strengthen their legitimacy and accountability, they enhance their capabilities to challenge or cooperate with other transnational actors” (Brown 2008:28). Finally, often CSOs take up issues on behalf of others. These may be poor people or groups who are otherwise marginalized, for example those who do not have a voice of their own, like the nature or animals. Credibility becomes crucial for CSOs as people trust them to act on the behalf of these groups.

The importance of credibility arises also from external forces of society at large as well as from the other societal sectors. Brown and Jagadananda (2007) find that due to cases of corruption in government agencies and corporate scandals of fraud, a ‘general crisis of governance’ has spilled over into the civil society. Moreover, the ‘wrongdoing’ of some CSOs has spread mistrust to the entire sector (Gibelman & Gelman 2004). Finally, when CSOs increasingly attack the private sector and government agencies, these actors make counterattacks on civil society by raising questions on legitimacy and accountability (Jepson 2005; Brown 2008).

**Legitimacy** is important to CSOs as it “… focuses on the political and social recognition of an organization’s right to exist, to operate for particular purposes in particular locations, and to press claims on others” (Brown & Moore 2001:577). The influence a CSO will be able to exert is partly determined by its legitimacy (Vernis & ET AL 2006). Similarly, the organization’s capacity to advocate their cause depends on legitimacy (Jepson 2005). **Accountability** is important for the credibility of the CSO as it is a means to demonstrate what the organization does, how and why it does it. Transparency is an important means to demonstrate accountability. By involving different stakeholders and their claims in the accountability practices, these will in turn regard the organization as more credible (Edwards & Hulme 1998a).

**First sub-question**
Credibility is a highly complex and subjective term, defined by the stakeholders assessing the credibility of an organization and embedded within context and time. Brown (2008) suggests that credibility is reached through attributes such as legitimacy and accountability, but that these concepts are highly interrelated. As a result, the concept of CSO credibility is difficult to operationalize making it difficult to apply to an empirical setting.
The complexity and subjectivity of the concept of CSO credibility have consequences for our research. To be able to answer our research question and understand how CSO credibility is being threatened in CSO-business partnerships, we find it necessary to explore what the concept of CSO credibility encompasses. Therefore, the first sub-question our research will seek to answer is: **What is CSO credibility?** The subjectivity of the concept of CSO credibility entails that we must confine our answer to the sub-question to our focus of the thesis, our case organization Forests of the World. Thus, we find it necessary to begin our research by exploring what credibility means to these internal stakeholders. Doing so, will allow us to enhance our understanding (theoretically and empirically) of the context of CSO credibility within which the organization engages in CSO-business partnerships.

For now, we suggest that the theoretically frame of CSO credibility can be explained by the concepts: legitimacy and accountability. These two concepts will be presented in further detail in the theory chapter (Chapter 4) and be discussed against our empirical data in research phase one (Chapter 6) and three (Chapter 8).

### 2.2 CSO-business partnerships

In the following, we will present the current knowledge on CSO-business partnerships as well as the trends in the partnership literature. From the review, a definition of partnerships will be inferred. Finally, we will shortly introduce the different partnership forms within the overall definition.

**Trends in literature**

Partnership relations occur between the different sectors of society: the public sector, the private sector and the civil sector. There are different forms of partnerships depending on which sectors are collaborating: Public-Private Partnerships (collaborations between the public and the private sector); Public-CSO partnerships (collaborations between the public and the civil sectors); CSO-Business partnerships (collaborations between CSOs and the private sector); and tripartite partnerships (collaborations between all sectors) (Seitanidi 2010).

The focus of this thesis will be CSO-business partnership. However, it should be noted that the partnership literature does not always make a distinction between the presented forms of partnerships. In this thesis, we will draw on literature that refers specifically to CSO-business partnerships as well as to literature addressing other forms of cross-sector partnerships.

The literature concerning CSO-business partnerships is still relatively young (Crane 2000; Neergaard, Jensen & Pedersen 2009). The literature originates from the literature and empirical studies of
public-private partnerships (PPPs) and strategic alliances between companies (Wymer & Samu 2003; Neergaard, Jensen & Pedersen 2009; Seitanidi 2010). While both PPPs and business-business collaborations are relatively more researched areas, the particular challenges of CSO-business collaborations have been given less attention from researchers and there is much room for further research (Crane 2000). According to Wymer and Samu (2003), generalizations of theories from within-sector collaborations to cross-sector collaborations are inappropriate because businesses and CSOs are fundamentally different organizations.

Most research and literature regarding CSO-business partnerships has focused on the company perspective (Berger, Cunningham & Drumwright 2004; Neergaard, Jensen & Pedersen 2009). In this thesis, we will take a CSO perspective.

Neergaard, Jensen and Pedersen (2009) assess that most partnership literature is normative. Several academics provide suggestions for what impedes and contributes to successful partnerships. However, often these normative prescriptions are suggested without being empirically tested. In this thesis, we will seek to explore, describe and explain a particular aspect of partnerships rather than providing normative suggestions.

Defining CSO-business partnerships

There are various definitions and terms describing the collaborative activities between two or more societal sectors. Such collaborations are referred to as social partnerships (Waddock 1988 in Googins & Rochlin 2000), cross-sector social-oriented partnerships (Selsky & Parker 2005), social alliances (Berger, Cunningham & Drumwright 2004) and intersectoral partnerships (Waddell & Brown 1997). Austin (2000b) uses all of the following to describe the relations: strategic collaboration, cross-sector collaboration, non-profit-business alliances, partnerships, alliances, cross-sector alliances, inter-organizational relationships. He does not have a specific definition for the associational activities, but distinguish different relations of collaboration according to a collaboration continuum (Austin 2000a; Austin 2004; Austin 2007). This will be described briefly later.

The definitions of CSO-business partnerships vary on different parameters. One parameter is the sectors involved in the partnerships, where some scholars refer specifically to collaborations between the civil and the private sector (Wymer & Samu 2003; Berger, Cunningham & Drumwright 2004) while others span all sectors (Waddock 1988 in Googins & Rochlin 2000; Selsky & Parker 2005; UN Global Compact 2008b). The degree of involvement and resources invested in the
collaboration is another parameter which is different in the definitions. Waddock (1988 in Googins & Rochlin 2000), Selsky and Parker (2005), and Seitanidi and Ryan (2007), only refer to partnerships where partners are actively involved and where the contribution to the partnership is more than ‘just’ financial. This means that simple donations from companies to CSOs are not included in their definitions of a partnership. Berger, Cunningham and Drumwright (2004), UN Global Compact (2008a), and Le Ber and Branzei (2010) are less specific about setting ‘minimum requirements’ for the resources invested in the collaboration but rather suggest that the collaboration involves the exchange and sharing of for instance resources, knowledge, and capabilities as well as responsibilities, risks and benefits.

Another area in which the definitions vary is their focus on the social cause. While Selsky and Parker (2005) assess that the partnerships are “…formed explicitly to address social issues and causes” (Selsky & Parker 2005:850). Waddock (1988 in Googins & Rochlin 2000) and Berger, Cunningham and Drumwright (2004), argue that collaborations are, at least partially, addressing a social objective. With his more strategic approach to cross-sector collaboration, Austin does not seem to qualify relationships based on their social outcomes (Seitanidi 2010).

A final parameter that varies from one definition to another is the inclusion of motives for partnering, the drivers for staying in partnerships as well as mechanisms for ensuring ‘win-win’ outcome of the collaboration (Googins & Rochlin 2000). These aspects are included in other definitions, such as Wilson and Charlton’s definition, in which it is suggested that partnerships arise “…to achieve an objective that no single organization could achieve alone…” (Wilson and Charlton 1993 in Googins & Rochlin 2000:131).

In summary, the various definitions of collaborations across the private and civil society sectors emphasize different aspects. Nevertheless, these definitions all find common ground in the fact that the two sectors, when joining core competencies and resources, can create social and/or environmental value to society (Neergaard, Jensen & Pedersen 2009).

In this section, different definitions were examined according to the following parameters: focus on specific sectors; minimum ‘requirements’ to the resources employed in the partnership; focus on the social cause; and focus on the motive for partnering. For the purpose of this thesis, we suggest a definition composed by examining each of these parameters according to the focus of the thesis, as we find that none of the presented definitions appropriate for our research topic. The objective of the thesis is to investigate how CSO credibility is threatened by collaborations between companies
and CSOs. Consequently, our definition of partnerships refers to partnerships between the private sector and the civil sector only. Our definition is broad in the sense that it encompasses all types of collaborative activities. We set no minimum requirements to the amount of resources or degree of involvement of the parties. However, conversations and dialogue is not encompassed in our definition. In our definition, we have chosen to exclude the specific motives for partnering. We question that the motives for partnering are always social, and as it is outside the scope of the thesis to investigate or conclude on why respectively companies and CSOs cooperate, we lead this part out. Instead, we suggest that the creation of social and/or environmental value is just one of the purposes.

In this thesis, we define CSO-business partnerships as “all types of collaborative activities between two or more parties from both the civil and private sector in which some kind of material or immaterial resource is exchanged or shared and where one of the purposes is to create social and/or environmental value”.

We will use the following terms interchangeably: CSO-business partnerships, CSO-business collaboration, cross-sector partnerships, and cross-sector collaborations.

The broad definition of partnerships will allow us to encompass all the different kinds of collaborative arrangements of our case organization, Forests of the World spanning from donations, cause-related marketing partnerships, and to strategic partnerships. In the following section, we will shortly present different typologies of partnerships.

**Partnership typologies**

Above, we defined CSO-business partnerships. In this section, we will shortly introduce the different partnership forms within the overall definition. Several authors seek to describe the variety of relations between a CSO and businesses. Bowen, Newenham-Kahindi and Herremans (2010) suggests that much of the strategy literature deals with different variants of a ‘continuum of community engagement’ along which strategies can be ordered according to the degree of involvement in the collaboration. While the names of the categories in these continuums vary, it is assessed by the scholars that the continuums have similarities, in that they all increase in the level of community engagement. Several of these continuums of community engagement take a business perspective suggesting strategies for how business can work with CSOs (Morsing & Schultz 2006; Pater & Van Lierop 2006; Bowen, Newenham-Kahindi & Herremans 2010). However, Austin, who first presented his continuum of collaboration in 2000, presents a framework aimed at both the CSO
and businesses. Austin’s collaboration continuum (2000a; 2004; 2007) uses the labels ‘philanthropic’,
‘transactional’ and ‘integrative’ to describe the different stages and degrees of engagement which
thereby consists of all collaborative activities, from philanthropy to strategic partnerships (Austin
2000a). The continuum assists in describing the interaction between the CSO and the company as
the characteristics and functions increases from one stage to another. While the philanthropic stage
presents low-involvement partnerships such as corporate donations⁶, partnership relations in the
transactional stage increase in resources and involvement and cause related marketing partnerships⁷
is a partnership form belonging to this stage. Finally, in the integrative stage levels of engagement
and interaction are at their highest. The partnership has a higher strategic value and it becomes
central to the mission of the organizations (Austin 2000a). Strategic partnerships⁸ can be placed in
the integrative stage.

Lindenberg (2001) builds on Austin’s collaboration continuum and argues that CSO-business
relations can be ordered according to a continuum that includes suspicion, interaction, philanthropy,
transactional, and integrative activities. It should be noted that Lindenberg does not discuss CSO-
business partnerships but rather CSO-business relations. Thus, the first two stages of his continuum,
suspicion and interaction, would not fall under our definition of CSO-business partnerships.
Nevertheless, his continuum is still an interesting contribution to understanding the different
relations between the civil society and private sector.

For the purpose of this thesis, the specifics of the typologies are less relevant; however, what is
important is the fact that CSO-business partnerships, as we defined it above, encompass a wide
range of partnership relations that vary in degree of involvement and resources. Some of the
different typologies mentioned above will be used in research phase two and three where the
interviewees have mentioned specific partnership types.

---

⁶ Corporate donations: Monetary or nonmonetary (in kind) contributions to the CSO (Wymer & Samu 2003;
Seitanidi & Ryan 2007).
⁷ Cause related marketing (CRM): Businesses launch marketing activities in which a specific product is
associated with a good cause or a specific CSO. The CSO receives a monetary contribution that is
proportional to the sales of the specific product (Wymer & Samu 2003; Seitanidi & Ryan 2007).
⁸ Strategic partnerships: A more symmetrical collaboration through transfer or sharing of resources (in cash
and in kind) (Seitanidi & Ryan 2007; Neergaard, Jensen & Pedersen 2009).
2.3 Credibility in CSO-business partnerships

In this section, we will combine the abovementioned bodies of literature and review the literature on credibility in CSO-business partnerships. Moreover, the risks to CSO credibility for CSOs engaging in CSO-business partnerships will be reviewed. This will enable us to understand the importance of CSO credibility for CSO-business partnerships and to identify the knowledge gaps within which our research can be placed. In addition, it will help suggest our second sub-question which should be addressed to be able to answer our research question.

In her review of the partnership literature, Seitanidi (2010) suggests six strands of partnership literature⁹, one of which is ‘legal and ethical considerations in partnerships’. This strand of literature is referring to issues of among other things accountability and legitimacy in partnerships (Seitanidi 2010). From her review, it is assessed that this strand has received less attention compared to other aspects of CSO-business partnerships.

CSO credibility is an important element of CSO-business partnerships in a number of ways. First, the credibility of the CSO is important because it is one of the incentives for companies to partner with the CSO. When a company collaborates with a credible CSO, the company gets the opportunity to leverage the credibility of the CSO (Yaziji & Doh 2009; Seitanidi 2010). This implies that without CSO credibility, there are fewer incentives for companies to partner with the CSO. Second, the fact that partnerships present a risk to the credibility of the CSOs collaborating with companies, makes CSOs cautious in their work with private sector partners. This in turn is considered to be a challenge to the development of partnerships (Hartman & Stafford 1998; Jonker & Nijhof 2006; Neergaard, Pedersen & Jensen 2009) which, in the light of the assessed development prospects of CSO-business partnerships, would restrain the potential of CSO-business partnerships. Consequently, CSO credibility is important for both the CSOs and the businesses involved in collaborations. It should be noted that mistakes from either partner can potentially trigger criticism and bad publicity (Austin 2004) potentially damaging the credibility of the other partner. However, the scope of this thesis is limited to focus on how CSOs’ engagements in CSO-business partnerships present a risk to the CSO and the literature on this will be reviewed in the following section.

---

⁹ The six strands are: Nature of partnership; Managerial aspects of partnership; Strategic use of partnership; Legal and ethical considerations in partnerships; Partnership measurements; and Societal implications (Seitanidi 2010:29).
Threats to CSO credibility in CSO-business partnerships

In this section, we will investigate the state of the literature on how CSO credibility may be at stake when CSOs engage in CSO-business collaborations. In our review of the partnership literature, we find that little research has focused directly on the risks related to CSO credibility when CSOs collaborate with businesses. The literature which does mention risks often only does so sporadically and in different context.

As mentioned earlier, much partnership literature examines CSO-business partnerships from a business perspective. The business perspective is also prevailing in the literature concerning CSO credibility and how this is threatening CSOs involved in partnerships. Several scholars mention the risk of the CSOs from a business perspective and present the managerial considerations resulting from these risks (Hartman & Stafford 1997; Nijhof, de Bruijn & Honders 2008). The CSO perspective is presented by Åhlström and Sjöström (2005), who examine case studies of the partnership approaches of ten CSOs active in Sweden. The scholars make it clear that credibility is one of the concerns in regards to business collaborations; however, the issue is not investigated in further detail.

Risks to CSO credibility are often presented in normative articles which are aimed at providing guidelines for how to achieve success in cross-sector alliances (Hartman & Stafford 1997; Hartman & Stafford 1998; Austin 2004) and how to identify precondition for collaboration (Waddell & Brown 1997). Moreover, risks are dealt with in sections concerning the challenges of the partnership (Neergaard, Pedersen & Jensen 2009; Seitanidi & Crane 2009). An example of such normative articles is Hartman and Stafford (1997) who, from a business perspective, assess that it is important for partners in the CSO-business partnership to keep an arm’s length relationship to remain independent and thus, preserve public trust of the CSO. This is seen as key to the success of the alliance.

While some of the literature is based on the experiences from different CSO-business partnerships such as Timberland and City Year, and American Medical Association and Sunbeam Company (Austin 2004), much of the normative prescriptions as well as the literature in general concerning risks to CSO credibility are written with little reference to empirical data. Nijhof de Bruijn and Honders (2008) present a number of risks and how these risks relates to different company motives; however, the findings suggested are based mainly on literature on CSO legitimacy and on limited primary data.
Second sub-question
As can be seen from the above, little literature has as its main focus to investigate and discuss the risks in CSO-business partnerships as seen from the perspective of the CSO. The existing literature on this topic is sporadic and is poorly grounded in theory and empirical data. The issue of how CSO-business partnerships present a risk to the CSO is mentioned mainly in normative articles with other purposes and is rarely explained in much detail. We aim to position our research within this knowledge gap. We will, based on empirical data and taking the CSO’s perspective, thoroughly explore the threats to CSO credibility when the CSO engages in CSO-business partnerships. To be able to answer the research question of how the partnership presents a threat to CSO credibility, we find it necessary to first explore what the specific threats are. Thus, we find it necessary to address a second sub-question, What are the threats to CSO credibility presented by CSO-business partnerships? Addressing this sub-question will allow us to investigate the specific threats to the credibility of the CSO when it engages in collaborations with the private sector. This is a necessary task before we can understand how partnerships are threats to CSO credibility (our overall research question). Again, our analysis is confined within the context we are operating in and the sub-question will therefore be answered based on our empirical data from interviews with the internal stakeholders of Forests of the World.

2.4 Summary
In this literature review we have reviewed current literature on CSO credibility and CSO-business partnerships. First, we learned that CSO credibility is important for a CSO to maintain support however, credibility is a complex term which is often explained by the use of related terms. We chose to focus on legitimacy and accountability. Due to the subjectivity of these terms, different people may put different meanings to them. Based the review of the CSO credibility literature we therefore found it necessary to pose our first sub-question: What is CSO credibility?

Second, we reviewed the literature on CSO-business partnerships. From the review of the literature we constructed our own definition of CSO-business partnerships, as none of the existing definitions were found suitable to our research.

Finally, we reviewed the literature on credibility in CSO-business partnerships overall as well as threats to CSO credibility in such partnerships more specifically. It was found that the existing literature only dealt with this issue sporadically in normative articles. Furthermore, the findings on this issue were often poorly grounded in theory and empirical data. Thus, based on the review of the
literature, we found it necessary to pose our second research question: What are the threats to CSO credibility presented by CSO business partnerships?

In the following chapter, we will present our methodology and how we aim to answer these sub-questions along with our overall research question.
3 Methodology

In this chapter, the method applied to answer our research question will be presented. More specifically, we will present our philosophical considerations, the research approach and strategy, the theoretical and empirical framework, our analytical approach and a discussion of data reliability and validity.

3.1 Research philosophy
Our epistemological and ontological stance will influence the methods we adopt to answer our research question. Epistemology concerns ‘the theory of knowledge’, for instance how knowledge can be studied. It investigates, among other things, the possibilities of knowledge, for instance the status of theory (general theory versus theory as a guide). Epistemology also investigates the structure of knowledge, for instance the relation between the subjective and the objective components of the knowledge situation. Thus, the way we understand knowledge will guide our approach to research. Ontology concerns the ‘theory of being’ and is about how the world and research domain is perceived to be. For instance, whether the world or research object (such as an organization) exists as a reality per se, independently of the context, or whether the world or research object is a conceptual and contextual construct which only exists qua the research (Delanty & Strydom 2003; Fuglsang & Olsen 2003; Pedersen 2005).

We undertake an explorative study of the threats to CSO credibility for CSOs engaging in CSO-business partnerships through a case study of the case organization, Forests of the World. In our review of the literature, we learned how our research field, especially CSO credibility, is highly subjective and dependent on who perceives the concept. Thus, we believe that the research will be limited to the understanding of the research field of our case organization as well as the interpreter.

We believe that knowledge is a social practice, context-specific, and embedded in history and the socio-cultural conditions of the researched and the researcher, i.e. the interviewees of Forests of the World and us as researchers. We find that because knowledge is context-specific, it is difficult to suggest universal laws or generate general theories. We argue that we, as researchers, are neither neutral nor objective, rather our history and experiences affect our understanding of knowledge and the research process. In effect, our data collection, analysis and interpretation will be influenced by
our pre-history and bias because of our socio-economic and cultural background. At times, it may be difficult as researchers to understand exactly how past experiences bias the researched, as the bias can be tacitly embedded in the researcher. However, we cannot detach ourselves from the research we undertake; rather knowledge is social and generated through our interaction with the interviewees.

We study CSO credibility in CSO-business partnerships through interviews with the internal stakeholders of Forests of the World. We believe that when the interviewees discuss for instance CSO credibility, they are indeed referring to something real; however the meanings they put on CSO credibility are interpretations and not objective truth. Thus, our understanding of the research object depends on the interpretations of the interviewees. However, we can only reach the interpretations of the interviewees through interpretations, thus “We interpret subjects that themselves interpret” (Pedersen 2005:143).

Therefore, our epistemological and ontological stance lies more within the interpretative tradition bearing traits of social constructivism as we perceive knowledge to be socially embedded and context-specific. Our epistemological and ontological stance has consequences for the aim of the study. We aim to undertake an explorative study of the threats to CSO credibility for CSOs engaging in CSO-business partnerships. We will seek to understand how the internal stakeholders of Forests of the World perceive this, acknowledging that our pre-history and experiences will influence the study. Our research is contextually, socially and historically embedded. The analysis and discussion as well as choice of theory and data in this thesis should therefore been seen as a product of our past and present experiences. Other researchers could have chosen differently.

### 3.2 Research approach

This section will explain the research approach of this thesis by presenting the purpose, research strategy and research design. Our review of the literature on CSO credibility and partnerships guided us to unexplored areas within these fields. This made us wonder, how CSO-business partnerships actually present a threat to CSO credibility, and thus led us to raise our research question and sub-questions. Consequently, our research is divided into three research phases. We find it necessary to break our research into phases in accordance to our sub-questions. Consequently, research phase one will seek to answer sub-question one, research phase two will answer sub-question two. The analysis and discussion in these two research phases will be combined and discussed in research phase three, through which we will be able to answer our overall research question. Next, we will
present the three research phases. Following this, we will present our overall research design, the case study.

**Research strategy and purpose**

In this section, we will elaborate on our chosen research strategies. In addition to the research strategy in each phase, we will present the purpose of the research. The research strategy varies from phase to phase and will carry elements of both the inductive and deductive research strategy.

**Research phase 1**: In research phase one we find it appropriate to adopt an inductive research strategy due to the highly context dependent character of the concept of credibility and because few empirical studies thoroughly explore the concept of CSO credibility. In this research phase, the purpose is to explore and describe what CSO credibility is to the internal stakeholders of Forests of the World by mapping their perception of CSO credibility. The inductive research strategy is appropriate for this first step as the aim of this research strategy is to “...establish descriptions of characteristics and patterns” (Blaikie 2009:84) from data. By adopting an inductive strategy, we will be able to explore the concept of CSO credibility taking the context of our case organization into consideration. The thesis is undertaken in collaboration with the case organization, thus by exploring CSO credibility as perceived by the internal stakeholders of the organization, this will aid us to inform the organization about what these stakeholders consider to contribute to organizational credibility. While inductive research strategies may seek to develop theory from data, the purpose of the inductive part of this research phase of the thesis is purely to explore and describe CSO credibility in the eyes of the internal stakeholders of Forests of the World. Following the mapping of CSO credibility as perceived by the internal stakeholders, we will discuss how this perception relates to the literature on what contributes to CSO credibility. This discussion of data against theory will inform our understanding of what contributes to CSO credibility, an understanding which transcends the following research phases. Thus, the second section of research phase one will carry elements of the deductive research strategy as theory will inform our understanding of the patterns described in the mapping of the first section. Again, it should be noted that the purpose of this section is not to propose a theory, although this for many scholars is the aim of the deductive research strategy.

**Research phase 2**: Research phase two will apply an inductive research strategy with the purpose to explore and describe the threats to CSO credibility when CSOs engage in CSO-business partnerships. Little empirical evidence addresses the issue of CSO credibility when engaging in CSO-business partnerships, thus we need to describe and explore the threats to CSO credibility before we...
can continue to research phase three. Research phase two will identify and map the threats to CSO credibility. Again, the mapping will be based on the opinions and perceptions of the internal stakeholders of Forests of the World.

Research phase 3: The purpose of this third and final research phase is to explain and understand how CSO-business partnerships present a threat to CSO credibility. Here, our research strategy will carry elements of both the inductive and the deductive. First, we will combine and discuss research phase one with research phase two, i.e. we will discuss which particular aspects of CSO credibility is being threatened when engaging in CSO-business partnerships. This discussion carries elements of an inductive research strategy taking point of departure in our empirical findings. Second, we will discuss the consequences of the threats to these specific aspects of CSO credibility. This will be done based on the literature of CSO credibility and will therefore have elements of a deductive strategy.

The discussions in this research phase based on the previous two research phases will allow us to answer our research question. For many scholars, the aim of the deductive research strategy is to propose a theory to find an explanation for an association between two concepts (Blaikie 2009). Within this context, it should be noted that the aim of our research is not to propose a theory. Due to the highly context dependent character of the field we are studying and to our epistemological stance, proposing a theory would be difficult. Nevertheless, our research can be seen as the first steps toward an understanding of the relation between CSO credibility and CSO-business partnerships.

Research design: the case study
We have chosen to carry out a case study. The case study will both be used as a research design (Yin 2009) and a method for selecting data (Blaikie 2009). We have chosen to use a case organization as the data source for our research. We find this most appropriate to answer our research question. The case study is considered to be appropriate for topics in which a rich understanding of the context of the phenomena studied is needed (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill 2003; Yin 2009). According to Yin, the case study “… investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomena and context are not clearly evident” (Yin 2009:18). This deep understanding of the context is essential when dealing with CSO credibility. In this thesis, the phenomenon to be studied is the threats that CSO-business partnerships present to CSO credibility. The context of this phenomenon is the case organization
and its internal stakeholders. The context is essential because this is what determines what CSO credibility is and how threats to CSO credibility are assessed within this context.

We have chosen to do a single-case study. Due to the complexity and the context-dependent character of the researched field, a thorough multiple case study design is beyond the scope of this thesis. Rather, we have chosen to conduct a single-case study which allows us to acknowledge and examine the complexity and context of the case organization. As previously mentioned, this has implications for the generalisability of our research which we find difficult.

3.3 Theoretical Framework
A central concept of this thesis is CSO credibility. In the following theory chapter, we will elaborate on the two concepts of legitimacy and accountability which contributes to CSO credibility. In this section we will elaborate on how the concepts relate to the research process.

Legitimacy and Accountability
In our review of the literature, it was suggested that legitimacy and accountability contributes to CSO credibility. Thus, these theories and their interrelatedness will be presented in the theory chapter providing us with a preliminary theoretical understanding of what contributes to CSO credibility. This preliminary theoretical understanding will be applied in our first research phase. The first section of research phase one will map the attributes of CSO credibility as perceived by the internal stakeholders of Forests of the World based on our empirical data. The second section of research phase one, will discuss this mapping of CSO credibility against the preliminary theoretical understanding of CSO credibility as consisting of legitimacy and accountability. Doing so, will allow us to critically assess the mapping and ensure a thorough understanding of CSO credibility as understood by the internal stakeholders based on both empirical data and theory. This understanding of CSO credibility will be carried on to research phase three in which the theory on legitimacy and accountability will be used to discuss the threats to CSO credibility for a comprehensive understanding of the aspects of CSO credibility being threatened when the CSO engage in CSO-business partnerships, and the consequences hereof.
3.4 Empirical Framework

In this chapter, we will elaborate on the choices concerning the data used to answer our research question. The research question has served as guidance for the choices we have made in the data collection. Due to the lack of literature on our research topic and the highly context-dependent and subjective nature of the field of research, primary data has been gathered and creates the basis for the thesis. Consequently, the research conducted to answer the research question will largely be based on the primary data collected.

Some secondary data will also be used to explain and understand what is observed from the primary data. The secondary data from Forests of the World is for instance unofficial guidelines for CSO-business partnerships; partnership contracts and agreements with some of their commercial partners; their articles of association; and annual reports. Furthermore, we will use a capacity assessment of Forests of the World made by external consultants at the request of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark. The secondary data will mainly be used in the case description (Chapter 5) or in relation to primary data to triangulate the use of such.

As the main foundation of the research is based in primary data, we will next elaborate on the choice of case organization and different data collection methods.

Choice of case organization

To address the research question, we searched for a CSO which is engaged in CSO-business partnerships. We found it interesting to find a CSO which is engage in different types of collaborations with the private sector, as this may lead to a broader perspective on CSO-business partnerships. Most CSO-business collaborations in Denmark take the form of donations and few development CSOs engage in strategic partnerships (Neergaard, Jensen & Pedersen 2009). The choice of organizations was therefore limited to a few CSOs such as IBIS, Dansk Røde Kors and Forests of the World. Forests of the World was preliminarily chosen for further investigation. The criteria for this preliminary choice were the international scope of its activities and its focus on international socio-economic development. However, the most important criterion for the preliminary choice was the engagements of Forests of the World in different types of CSO-business partnerships ranging from donations to strategic partnerships. Following our preliminary screening of possible organizations, we contacted Forests of the World to investigate their interest in a Master’s thesis collaboration. The general secretary of the organization forwarded our inquiry to André Mildam, project coordinator and consultant on business development processes. We had several initial meetings with André Mildam who also identified areas of study which Forests of the
World would find interesting. Our final decision to use Forests of the World as case organization was based on these open and interesting meetings with the organization. Furthermore, it became evident that using Forests of the World as case organization would grant us access to valuable data for our research.

It should be noted that the case organization during the course of our research has changed name from Nepenthes to Forests of the World (in Danish: Verdens Skove) which means that some of our primary and secondary data as well as our interview guides may refer to the old name, Nepenthes. In cases where the interviewees have used the old name Nepenthes, we will translate the name to Forests of the World when quoting the interviewees directly.

Data collection methods
In this section, we will elaborate on the timing of the data collection as well as the choice of qualitative data collection methods.

We will undertake a cross-sectional study which means that the study is “... confined to the present time” (Blaikie 2009:201). A cross-sectional study is appropriate to “... capture a picture of aspects of social life, including: (...) individual attitudes, values, beliefs and behaviour, social interaction; and aspects of social groups, organizations, institutions and structures” (Blaikie 2009:201-202). The cross-sectional study is appropriate for this thesis since the aim is to investigate and understand the attitudes towards the effect of CSO-business partnerships on CSO credibility at a particular time.

In our data collection we will use qualitative methods as “... qualitative methods are more concerned with producing discursive descriptions and exploring social actors’ meanings and interpretations” (Blaikie 2009:204-205). Since meanings, attitudes and interpretations are essential to our research topic, we find that qualitative methods to a larger extent than quantitative methods will enable us to make a proper investigation of the research topic. The primary data will be collected through semi-structured in-depth interviews. This data collection method and its use will be presented below.

Interviews
We have chosen to conduct semi-structured in-depth interviews. The semi-structured in-depth interview is defined as “... an interview which aims to obtain a description of the interviewee’s lifeworld in preparation for an interpretation of the meaning of the described phenomena” (Kvale 1997:19). We choose to conduct semi-structured interviews as we found these to fit our research issue best due to its more dynamic nature. Furthermore, the research topic is of a character that
requires personal contact which cannot be explored using for instance written questionnaires. A strength and benefit of the semi-structured interview is its ability to provide narratives explaining the context, the nature and the consequences of events. Our interviews contain narratives: partly because we asked the interviewees to exemplify in cases, and partly because interviewees spontaneously used stories to explain their opinions and attitudes. At times, it was easier for the interviewees to express their opinions through narratives, thus we encouraged them to do so.

In the semi-structured interviews, we had themes within which we asked open, specific and closed questions. We chose to adapt the questions to the specific role each interviewee has in the organization and thus the questions varied slightly from interviewee to interviewee.

The interviews were conducted with the internal stakeholders at Forests of the World, with three of the commercial partners of Forests of the World and with two experts within the field of CSOs in Denmark. For an overview of interviewees see Appendix 3.

The purpose of the different interviews is somewhat different; the same is the use of the data collected through the interviews. The interviews with the commercial partners of Forests of the World and the experts within the field of CSOs in Denmark have been conducted to contextualize and expand our knowledge of the field. We found it interesting to interview the commercial partners of Forests of the World to understand how they assess the collaboration with Forests of the World, and the experts within the field to understand how they perceive CSO credibility and the effect of CSO-business partnerships on CSO credibility. Because the focus of the thesis is how the internal stakeholders perceive CSO credibility in relation to CSO-business partnerships, the interviews with the commercial partners and experts will only be used as background for the research. In Appendix 4, 5 and 6, interview guides as well as transcripts and audio files can be found. Because the interviews with the commercial partners as well as experts only serve as background to the research, the remaining of this section and the following section will focus on the interviews with the internal stakeholders of Forests of the World.

Our major source of primary data consists of 13 semi-structured interviews with internal stakeholders in Forests of the World. The purpose of these interviews is to explore the interviewees’ perspective on the research issues, CSO credibility and the threats that engagements in CSO-business partnerships pose to CSO credibility. The data collected through the interviews with the internal stakeholders of Forests of the World will provide the prime empirical foundation of the research.
We have chosen to interview some of the internal stakeholders of Forests of the World. By internal stakeholders we are referring to employees, members of the executive committee\(^\text{10}\), and other active volunteers. The rationale for choosing the internal stakeholders is that the internal stakeholders are the ones influencing and making the decisions in regards to CSO-business partnerships. It is the internal stakeholders that decide the future strategy for the organization’s approach to business collaboration. Their view on how CSO-business partnerships present a threat to CSO credibility is therefore essential to how Forests of the World currently works and will work with commercial partners in the future. Therefore, the ‘criterion’ for inclusion in our definition of internal stakeholders is that the interviewees must be persons who are part of the informal or formal decision-making processes in Forests of the World. In this thesis we define the internal stakeholders of Forests of the World as persons who, in their capacity as members of the executive committee, employees or active volunteers, are part of the informal or formal decision-making processes in Forests of the World.

In this way, we use the term ‘internal stakeholders’ as a delimitation of interviewees rather than a reference to broader issues of stakeholder theory. In our choice of internal stakeholders, we sought to interview a broad range of people in order to enable that as many different opinions would be heard and to ensure reliability and validity of our data. We sent out an interview invitation by email through our contact person in Forests of the World, André Mildam to members of the executive committee, employees and a number of active volunteers\(^\text{11}\). We chose interviewees based on their function in the organization, their geographic location (both in Denmark and in Latin America), and their seniority in the organization. These characteristics can be found in the list of interviewees (Appendix 3). The aim was to get a broad group of internal stakeholders to for us to allow for potential differences in the attitudes towards CSO-business partnerships according to the location or time in the organization. It should be noted that the sample chosen for interviews is not considered to be representative for the population of internal stakeholders and we do not aim to make generalizations from the research.

\(^{10}\) It should be noted that membership of the executive committee is on a voluntary basis. Only the chairperson receives a smaller financial compensation

\(^{11}\) The interview invitation can be obtained upon request.
3.5 Analytical approach

In this section, it will be elaborated how we have processed and analyzed our data. Following a presentation of our data processing method, we will present our data analysis methods.

Data processing

As mentioned, we conducted 13 interviews with internal stakeholders of Forests of the World. Eight interviews were longer interviews (about an hour) and have subsequently been transcribed. Five interviews were of shorter length (about half an hour) and for these interviews we have made summaries. The transcriptions and summaries as well as the audio recordings of all interviews can be found in appendix 5 and 6.12

Some interviews were conducted as telephone interviews using Skype. This was done when the interviewees were situated in locations outside our reach. A disadvantage of this approach, however, is that personal contact is crucial for qualitative data of this kind which is difficult to establish when communication loses important non-verbal behavior such as gestures. Additionally, it is difficult to develop complex questions over the phone. The approach was nevertheless chosen as it was the only solution to gain access to the valuable information these interviewees possessed.

The interviews were conducted in Danish. By doing so, misunderstandings stemming from the use of a foreign language were avoided as well as the potential loss of nuances of meanings the use of a foreign language may entail. These nuances are especially important given the complexity of for instance the concept of credibility. The interviews were recorded for us to be able to focus on the dynamics of the interviews while conducting them. This also facilitates a more accurate analysis and allows us to quote the interviewees directly. When transcribing the interviews, we acknowledged that this in itself is an interpretative process (Kvale 1997). We discussed the method of transcribing to secure the reliability of the data. Ensuring the validity of the transcribed data is a more complex task as “…to transcribe is to translate from an oral language with one set of rules, to a written language with another set of rules” (Kvale 1997:165). This means that the transcription becomes a process of decontextualising the conversations. We dealt with this issue by making our initial analysis of the data immediately after the interview. In this sense, we had important contextual information fresh in mind. Furthermore, we have been aware of the differences between the oral and the written language in our analysis of the data.

12 Please note that to ensure the anonymity of our interviewees, interview transcripts and summaries as well as audio recordings are confidential but can be accessed upon request. They are, however, available for examiner and censor on the enclosed (confidential) CD.
The translations in the thesis are made by us, the researchers; however clear referencing will allow the accuracy of these translations to be checked in the corresponding appendix. When referencing direct quotes from the interviews we will use the following format ([initials of the interviewee] [line number from transcript in Appendix 6]). To give an example, the chairperson Kristian Jørgensen is referenced (Interviewee 7 12-34): in this example 12-34 denotes the corresponding lines in the transcripts from his interview in Appendix 5.

Coding of data
The choice of data analysis methods depends, among other things, on the research strategy. In the analysis of the primary data in research one and two, the research strategy is inductive. In these research phases, the method used to analyze data will be inspired by elements of template analysis. In template analysis, the main means to analyze data is through ‘data categorization’, ‘unitization’ and ‘recognizing relationships and development categories’ (Yin 2009). We are inspired by these means to arrange and code our collected primary data in research phase one and two. It should be noted that the aim of the inductive parts of the thesis is to provide a description of the studied phenomena, rather than developing theory from data.

Data categorization
The purpose of data categorization is to rearrange our data. In research phase one, we will examine the transcribed interviews with the internal stakeholders and search for what has been said about why Forests of the World is a credible organization in the eyes of the internal stakeholders, and how the CSO maintains credibility in its work. Based on such an examination, data will be categorized and provided with a label. In research phase two, a similar examination of data will be conducted in order to identify and categorize the mentioned threats to CSO credibility when engaging in CSO-business partnerships.

The names of the labels are mainly based on the terms used by the interviewees, such as scientific capacity or the voluntary foundation in research phase one. Some labels are, however, also inspired by terms identified in the theory, for instance sustainability and participation in research phase one. An example of how we have categorized the data in the interview transcripts can be found in Appendix 8.
‘Unitizing data’
Following the data categorization, the next step is to attach different parts of the data to the identified categories. We study the interviews for paragraphs and sentences that contain answers, narratives and statements concerning what have been said to contribute to the credibility of Forests of the World (research phase one) as well as what have been said to pose a threat to CSO credibility when the CSO engage in CSO-business partnerships (research phase two).

Recognizing relationships and developing categories
In continuation of the categorization and division of data into these categories, we look for patterns, relations and key themes across the categories. As mentioned by Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2003), the continuous examination of data and the search for themes, patterns and relationship may alter the categories and rearrange data. It is as a result of this activity that we will decide on the categories for the mapping of what contributes to the credibility of Forests of the World in research phase one, as well as for the mapping of threats to CSO credibility in research phase two.

With regards to the labeling and unitizing of data, it should be noted that we, as researchers, have chosen the overall labels for the attributes of CSO credibility in research phase one and the threats identified in research phase two. We have ‘unitized’ data under these overall labels and have thereby chosen the overall label and data unitized under a specific label. This implies that other researchers might have chosen different labels. However, as we provide thorough explanations for each of the labels, we do not see this as a weakness of the analysis.

3.6 Reliability and Validity
Reliability is referring to the “…degree to which data collection method or methods will yield consistent findings, similar observations would be made or conclusions reached by other researchers or there is a transparency in how sense was made from the raw data” (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill 2003:488). As a result of our epistemological stance, our research is embedded within not only the time and context it was undertaken in, but also the historical background and past experiences of the researchers. This implies that other researchers could have collected and interpreted the data differently. However, by including our interview guides, interview transcripts and audio recordings13, other researchers have access to our data and can analyze these taking their own prejudice into consideration. Moreover, by using direct quotations from the interviewees, we ensure that our interpretations of the data are made clear.

13 Please note that to ensure the anonymity of our interviewees, interview transcripts and summaries as well as audio recordings are confidential but can be accessed upon request. They are, however, available for examiner and censor on the enclosed (confidential) CD.
Validity is “[t]he extent to which research findings are really about what they profess to be about” (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill 2003:492). Because of the complexity, subjectivity and context-specific nature of our field of study, we found it necessary to carry out an in-depth single case study and collect the data ourselves directly within our case organization. Thus, we conducted several in-depth semi-structured interviews which allow us to explore the interviewees’ perceptions of a highly subjective and complex topic. Semi-structured interviews allow the topic to be covered from a variety of angles to ensure coherence between what is asked and what is answered. Hence, by conducting this type of interview we will reach a high level of validity. Moreover, in the subsequent analysis of the data, we have had several discussions between the two of us, the researchers. We have constantly questioned our interpretations of the data by moving back and forth between the raw data and the data analysis. This includes double-checking the translations of the direct quotes. Doing so has helped us make sure that meanings were not lost or misinterpreted in the analysis and discussion and that validity was enhanced.

Within this framework, it should be noted and remembered that, the aim of our study is not to propose theories as we find this difficult because our research is confined in a particular time and space.

In this entire chapter, we have presented the chosen method for answering our research question. We have presented our philosophical considerations; our research approach, the theoretical, empirical framework and analytical approach; and in this final section, a discussion of data reliability and validity. In the following, we will elaborate on the main theory used in our deductive parts of this research.
4 Theory

In this section, we will present the theoretical frame which will be applied in our analysis and discussion to answer our research question. In the literature review it was suggested that legitimacy and accountability contribute to CSO credibility. Consequently, the theoretical frame to be presented in this chapter will be a preliminary theoretical understanding of CSO credibility as consisting of legitimacy and accountability. This preliminary theoretical understanding of CSO credibility will be applied to the discussion of our empirical findings in research phase one to enhance the understanding of CSO credibility as assessed by the internal stakeholders.

4.1 Legitimacy

As mentioned in our review of the literature (Chapter 2), Suchman (1995) suggests a broad definition of legitimacy: “Legitimacy is a generalized perception or assumption that the actions of an entity are desirable, proper, or appropriate within the socially constructed system of norms, values and beliefs and definitions” (Suchman 1995:574). Suchman is among the scholars that present legitimacy as a multifaceted concept emphasizing how different forms of legitimacy should be distinguished. He criticizes researchers for using the concept without defining it and presents three different forms of legitimacy to support a more systematic approach. The three forms are pragmatic legitimacy, moral legitimacy, and cognitive legitimacy. Suchman assesses that it is problematic that researchers deal with only a limited part of the phenomenon without paying attention to this. In this thesis, the three forms of legitimacy aid an operationalization of our empirical findings and we find it useful to present these three forms individually as they will be applied later in our research.

Pragmatic legitimacy is based on the self-interest of an organization’s audiences. The organization is perceived as legitimate if the evaluator, such as a government agency, corporation or donor, assesses that an activity of the organization benefits the evaluator (Suchman 1995; Jepson 2005). Thus, pragmatic legitimacy of an organization rests on the following evaluation made by important audiences: “If we get anything out of this, then we consider it legitimate” (Dart 2004:416).

Moral legitimacy rests on judgments about whether an act is the right thing to do. The legitimacy of an organization is based on normative evaluations of moral (Suchman 1995) and “… it is accorded when activities are undertaken as they should be, in reference to broader norms in the sociopolitical environment” (Dart 2004:418).
As opposed to the former types of legitimacy, cognitive legitimacy is not based on evaluation, but rather on cognition and “…the extent to which an organizational form is taken for granted” (Suchman 1995:86). Cognitive legitimacy arises when it is simply unthinkable for things to be otherwise (Dart 2004). Within the same lines, Jepson (2005) assesses that “…most citizens might have a deep-seated need to believe in NGOs because to do otherwise would dismantle the civil structures through which citizens can abrogate their feelings of moral concern and responsibility for issues that are beyond their direct sphere of influence” (Jepson 2005:522). In addition to the taken-for-grantedness and the deep-seated need to believe in CSOs, Scott (1995) draws on the work by Carroll and Hannan (1989), and argues that the number of a given organizational form, the organizational density, can serve as an indicator of whether “… relevant actors regard it as the ‘natural’ way to organize for some purpose” (Scott 1995:85) and thereby the extent to which the organizational form has achieved cognitive legitimacy and has become institutionalized.

4.2 Accountability

Accountability is a means to account for the actions and performance of the organizations through for example audits. As mentioned in the literature review, Edwards and Hulme (1998b) draw attention to this common view of accountability: “[a]ccountability is generally interpreted as the means by which individuals and organisations report to a recognised authority, or authorities, and are held responsible for their actions” (Edwards & Hulme 1998b:9). There are different means to demonstrate accountability such as reporting and social auditing, transparency in this documentation, self-regulation and participation (Kumar 1996; Ebrahim 2003; CIVICUS 2010). Some scholars find that the goal of accountability is learning how to improve the practices of the organization in order to reach the goals, mission and vision more efficiently and effectively (Edwards & Hulme 1998b; Slim 2002).

Many scholars stress that accountability involves interaction: an organization is accountable to their stakeholders. The relations to these stakeholders and the claims the stakeholders put on the organization guide the accountability practices of the organization (Kumar 1996; Shah & Shah 1998; Jagadananda & Brown 2007). Accountability is about balancing these different vested interests (Kumar 1996) and managing the multiple accountability CSOs face. In this process, organizations must remember to ask themselves how, to whom, for what and why the is organization accountable (Kumar 1996; Karim 1996 in Najam 1996a; Edwards & Hulme 1998b).

Again, it is found useful to operationalize the concept into different forms. Kumar (1996) suggests that CSOs face four levels of accountability: fiscal accountability, referring to whether the funds are
spent on their designated targets; legal accountability, whether the activities of the organization meet the terms of provision and regulation; program accountability, referring to the effectiveness of the program; and process accountability, addressing the efficiency of the implementation process.

It is important to acknowledge that different people within the organization prioritize accountability differently. Some are more concerned with fiscal accountability to donors, whereas others are more concerned with program and process accountability (Kumar 1996). All in all, accountability becomes a moral and ethical judgment of the individual and the organization.

4.3 The interrelation between legitimacy and accountability
There is a recognized link between legitimacy and accountability (Jepson 2005). The two concepts are highly interrelated as accountability is a means to become legitimate (Jepson 2005; CIVICUS 2010). The fulfillment of accountability demands can enhance and reinforce legitimacy and a good strategy for responding to legitimacy questions is to create, implement and maintain solid accountability systems.

Of the different forms of legitimacy presented above, both pragmatic and moral legitimacy rests on evaluations of whether an organization is assessed to benefit the evaluator (pragmatic legitimacy) or the organization is judged to do the right thing (moral legitimacy). To be able to make such evaluations, the stakeholders must know of the actions of the organization. Thus, accountability must be demonstrated. In that sense, accountability can become a means through which people can assess and judge the organization, and in effect possibly ascribe legitimacy to the organization.
5 Case Description: Forests of the World

This chapter will present the chosen case organization, Forests of the World. From our review of the literature we learned the importance of context for our study. In our methodology chapter we further explained the importance of context for our research area. Therefore, we find it necessary with an introduction to our case organization, Forests of the World. The case description will center on aspects which we find necessary to understand when we move on to our analysis and discussion. Therefore, this case description will include the organizational purpose, mission and vision to understand the area Forests of the World operates within and their goals within this area. Secondly, we will present the organizational structure to understand what type of organization Forests of the World is. Thirdly, we will present the organization’s activities with particular focus on their advocacy and service delivery activities. This will aid the understanding of the organization’s approach to fulfilling their organizational purpose, mission and vision. Finally, we will briefly present Forests of the World’s engagement in CSO-business partnerships. This chapter should therefore set a frame for the understanding of the rest of the analysis and discussion.

The chapter will be based on material from Forests of the World such as the homepages, interviews, articles of association (Forests of the World 2010), as well as the 2009 capacity assessment of Forests of the World conducted by external consultants at the request of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark (MFA 2009).

5.1 Organizational purpose, mission and vision

Forests of the World is a relatively small environmental and developmental organization founded in 1983. The organization originates in a study group from the biology program at Aarhus University. The articles of association from November 1983 were last amended in 2010 with the change of the name of the organization from Nepenthes to Forests of the World. The articles of association present a description of the organization’s purpose as well as the organizational structure.

14 www.verdensskove.org (in Danish) / www.forestsoftheworld.org (at the time of writing only the ‘About Us’-page is made available in English) / www.nepenthes.dk (at the time of writing, their homepage prior to the change of name is still accessible. It includes selected pages in English) / www.nepenthesprojekter.dk (the homepage of the project department dedicated their development projects in Latin America / natuertours.nepenthes.dk (the homepage of Nepenthes Nature Tours, a sub-division of Forests of the World).
The purpose of the organization is to protect and improve the conditions of the forests all over the world and the people living in them. This is done by for example promoting sustainable use of forests and forest conservation. The mission of Forests of the World as stated on their homepage is:

“**Forests of the World creates possible actions for people who wish to save the forests of the world. We find new ways to give the living forest value to the people through campaigns, consumer information, education, collaboration and concrete work in the rainforest**”.

Within this mission statement, the articles of association present the organizational purpose. The purpose of Forests of the World is threefold:

- **to disseminate knowledge about the forests of the world and highlight the problems emerging from deforestation.**

- **to work for a long term and sustainable organic, social and economic development which contributes to a rational use of the forest and forest conservation.**

- **to support indigenous peoples and other people with a connection to the forests of the world, including to support their cultural identity and right to self-determination.**

It is emphasized that the purpose of Forests of the World should be fulfilled independently of political and financial interests. The different purposes of the organization involve different types of activities, we will return to these further below.

### 5.2 Organizational structure

This section will present the structure of Forests of the World. We find this a necessary task to understand the relations between the different groups of people within the organization, some of which have also been our interviewees. In addition, the organizational structure is an important part of the identity of the organization and may influence how the organization perceives CSO credibility and engagements in CSO-business partnerships.

Forests of the World consists of a general meeting, an executive committee, a secretariat, a project department, a communication department, Nepenthes Nature Tours, the member’s magazine ‘Skov & Folk’ (in English ‘Forest & People’), and the volunteers. The organization aims to maintain a flat organizational structure where both employees and volunteers have equal access to the decision-making processes. Relative to their size Forests of the World has strong roots in the community and a great internal scientific capacity (MFA 2009).

The figure below presents an organizational chart for Forests of the World. Next, we will present the organizational structure and the different departments of the organization.
The articles of association state the organizational structure including the biannual general meeting and the executive committee. In the articles, the biannual general meeting is recognized as the organization’s highest authority. At the general meeting, the executive committee as well as the chairperson and the vice-chairperson are elected. Prior to the general meeting members can suggest proposals for issues to be dealt with at the meeting. Hence, participatory internal decision-making processes are aimed for as by attending the general meeting, electing the executive committee and possibly suggesting proposals the members can voice their opinion and get a say.

The executive committee consists of a chairperson, vice-chairperson, five additional members and five deputy members. As mentioned, these are all elected by the members of the organization at the general meeting. Membership of the executive committee is on a voluntary basis except for the chairperson who receives a smaller compensation. Most members of the executive committee have a longer background as active volunteers in the organization. The executive committee handles the overall management of the organization, and hires and approves people in the project work of the organization. In addition, the executive committee has to approve all engagements in CSO-business partnerships.
A great deal of the organization’s work is undertaken by different ad hoc groups of volunteers. Most volunteers are young students from different academic institutions. The specific interests and competencies they possess give rise to a high scientific capacity in the organization. Because many activities are undertaken by volunteers, the organization is highly dependent on their volunteers to carry out the activities they undertake. Therefore, it is relatively easy to become an active volunteer in the organization\textsuperscript{15} and thereby gain influence on the activities and profile of the organization. At the time of writing, there are about 70 volunteers, however the number varies from year to year. The volunteers are organized in the local divisions of the organization around the country. The volunteers are coordinated by different mailing lists through which knowledge sharing concerning events, opinions, ideas and activities take place. The volunteers are grouped into different working groups according to interests and activities; these are amongst others biodiversity, indigenous peoples, climate change, Danish nature and greenwash.

The secretariat consists of the general secretary, a bookkeeper, a secretary, an accounts officer and a student assistant. The general secretary and the rest of the secretariat undertake the daily administration of the organization and assist the executive committee in their administrative tasks.

The project department consists of three project coordinators and advisors (one of which is located in La Paz, Bolivia), two technical advisors, a representative for Central America (located in the regional office in La Ceiba, Honduras. She is also program coordinator as well as advisor), and an external advisor. The project department manages and coordinates the development projects in Latin America, as well as other activities in Denmark.

The communication department is a relatively new entity consisting of a head of communication, the editor of the member’s magazine, a web editor and a campaign coordinator. The member’s magazine ‘Skov & Folk’ (‘Forests & People’) is published four times a year and distributed to all members. Besides the member’s magazine, the communication department manages the overall communication and the homepage.

Nepenthes Nature Tours (NNT) is a sub-division of Forests of the World. NNT has two employees and one student assistant. Since 1995, NNT has arranged voluntary working holidays in Latin America. They operate on a non-profit basis as the rest of the organization.

\textsuperscript{15} In our meetings with Forests of the World, we were at several occasions encouraged to come with suggestions for future voluntary activities or projects if we identified such
Anyone who accepts the organizational purpose can become a *member* of Forests of the World. Forests of the World has currently around 1,370 members and the membership has been relatively steady during the course of the last five years. Every member pays a membership fee of minimum 300 DKK a year.

The table below presents some key figures for Forests of the World. Forests of the World has seen a small decline in the number of members and employees compared to 2008, yet an increase in active volunteers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2010</th>
<th>2008</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Members</td>
<td>1379</td>
<td>1500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volunteers</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employees</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Forests of the World and MFA 2009

### 5.3 Organizational activities

The organizational purpose guides the activities of Forests of the World. The organization has activities in both Denmark and Latin America and most activities are located within one of their core focus areas: sustainable forest management and sustainable tourism. The nature of the activities spans from policy advocacy and campaigning to active participation in the public debate, and service delivery through development projects. Forests of the World collaborates with many different stakeholders such as other environmental organizations or CSOs (e.g. WWF and FSC, and the association of the 92 Group[^16^]), private sector actors, local actors and authorities in Latin America and in Denmark.

The main income generating activities of Forests of the World are the development projects; however the funds from these activities are earmarked for the administration of the respective projects. Following these funds, the main income is from members and private donations, and the activities of NNT. Finally, Forests of the World receives a contribution from the lottery grant[^17^] and from the sale of books and lectures.

[^16^]: The 92 Group is an association of environmental- and development organizations in Denmark (see [www.92grp.dk](http://www.92grp.dk)).

[^17^]: In Danish: Tipsmidlerne
Yaziji and Doh (2009) differentiate NGOs in relation to who benefits from the NGO activities (self versus others) and the type of activities (service delivery versus policy advocacy). From the organizational purpose of Forests of the World it is apparent that the beneficiaries of the activities of Forests of the World are ‘others’, namely the forests, the people living in them and society at large. Those who contribute to the work of the organization, either financially or through their labor, are not the intended group of beneficiaries. According to Yaziji and Doh, others-benefitting organizations are more value-laden and “[i]n general, the population holds other-benefitting NGOs in high moral regard to the extent that they see the NGOs as selfless workers for the public good” (Yaziji & Doh 2009:7). Hence, we argue that these organizations enjoy greater legitimacy from the general public because they are working for the benefit of others rather than personal gain. The second aspect that differentiates NGOs, as suggested by Yaziji and Doh (2009) is the type of activities of the organization. That is, whether the organization is primarily concerned with service delivery or policy advocacy. Forests of the World can be characterized as a ‘hybrid’ organization as the activities primarily are advocacy, but they also have some service activities. Next we will explain how.

**Advocacy activities**

One of the main activities of Forests of the World is policy advocacy in the Denmark and Latin America. In Latin America, the focus is primarily to put focus on sustainable forest management, FSC\(^{18}\) certification of forests, and promotion of the rights of indigenous peoples. Forests of the World is an active player in the public debate in Denmark through for example articles and participation in public meetings and hearings on topics such as climate, production adaptation to climate change, biodiversity, biofuels and greenwashing.

Yaziji and Doh (2009) further group advocacy activities into two different kinds: watchdogs and social movements. Watchdogs are less ideological radical and generally satisfied with the broader institutions or rules of the game whether these are economic, legislative, political or social. The institutions can be formalized such as regulation, or they may not be formalized as is the case with for instance ‘accepted community standards’. Yaziji and Doh find that, “…the role of watchdog NGOs is not to radically change the system but ensure that the requirements of the system are actually being met by the various other organizations, such as firms and regulatory and legislative

---

\(^{18}\) Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) is a multi-stakeholder organization established to promote the responsible management of the world’s forests, for instance through certification processes in which forests and forest products can receive a FSC label. “The FSC label ensures that the forest products used are from responsibly harvested and verified sources ensuring that the forest products are used from responsibly harvested and verified sources.” See more at [www.fsc.org](http://www.fsc.org)
bodies” (Yaziji & Doh 2009:9). Through watchdog campaigns, NGOs put pressure on targeted companies to comply with the rules of the game. An important characteristic of watchdog campaigns is that they are not meant to change the institutional standards, only enforce them (Yaziji & Doh 2009). Social movements, on the other hand, do not support the broader economic, legislative, political or social systems, but rather try to change or undermine them. A form of campaigns used by social movements are proxy wars: “Proxy wars – a form of ‘social movement’ campaign – are designed to challenge and change the institutional framework, whether in terms of the formal regulatory and legal systems or accepted social norms and values” (Yaziji & Doh 2009:97). In proxy wars, the main purpose of the NGO’s targeting of companies is not that the activities of the company do not live up to certain standards or legislation, but rather exactly because the company complies with existing standards or legislation that the NGO disagrees with. A distinction between watchdog campaigns and proxy wars are therefore that “In watchdog campaigns, the campaign is a form of institutional pressure to conform; in proxy wars, the campaign is a response to the firm’s confirming to the ‘problematic’ institution” (Yaziji & Doh 2009:99). Thus, the goal of watchdog campaigns is to change the firm’s behavior, whereas the goal of proxy wars is to change the institutions or rules of the game.

Forests of the World can be characterized as a CSO with primarily watchdog campaigns, but with some activities resembling proxy wars too. A major role of Forests of the World is to be a watchdog that keeps an eye on the public and private sector and barks if malpractices are observed. One such malpractice is cases where companies try to greenwash their image or products. In 2008, Forests of the World contacted the consumer ombudsman regarding possible greenwash of a Statoil product as the advertisement appeared to be misleading the consumer regarding the environmental gain from a product. The consumer ombudsman instructed Statoil to change the advertisement as the advertisement was indeed found to be against Danish legislation as it misled the consumers. A more recent case is from 2009 where Forests of the World contacted the consumer ombudsman regarding Coca Cola and a bottle they launched prior to COP15 in Copenhagen. The answer from the ombudsman is still pending. In continuation of their watchdog activities, Forests of the World supports the Danish organization DanWatch19.

19 “DanWatch is an independent non-profit media and research center that produces investigative journalism about corporations impact on humans and the environment globally. DanWatch investigates whether companies meet their social responsibility standards when investing, purchasing, trading or producing goods internationally.” (DanWatch 2011).
Another major focus of the campaigning activities is centered on forest products and FSC certification. For several years Forests of the World has guided the consumers on retailers of (non-)FSC certified garden furniture. The homepage [www.tropetre.dk](http://www.tropetre.dk) is dedicated to this campaign. Several retailers are ordered in three different categories according to the percentage of FSC certified garden furniture in their portfolio (0-19%; 20-99%; 100%). In a press release in March this year, Forests of the World made a similar assessment of the Danish kitchen retailers and the use of FSC certified forest products in their products. The result can be found on the homepage. These campaigns appear to be watchdog campaigns at first sight, however, a major goal of both the garden furniture and kitchen campaigns are also to change the rules of the games, thus also bearing traits of proxy wars. Through the campaigns, Forests of the World seek to change both the social and the legislative institutions concerning FSC certification of forest products. They want to inform the consumers and the retailers of the consequences of not using FSC certified forests, in effect changing the public opinion about these products toward a greater demand for FSC certified products. They furthermore, wish to change legislation against the use of illegal timber. Now, little legislation exists on this area, nationally as well as internationally.

Onwards, we will use the label watchdog to characterize the advocacy activities of Forests of the World. There are different reasons behind this choice. First, we have chosen to do so based on the interviews with the internal stakeholders of Forests of the World. In our interviews, we asked the internal stakeholders what they considered the most important role for Forests of the World as a CSO. In this regard, some interviewees mention the role of a watchdog as one of the most important roles of the organization (Interviewee 6; Interviewee 13; Interviewee 2). Second, we find the main focus of the advocacy campaigns towards companies to be more in line with watchdog campaigns than proxy wars: the purpose is to change the actions of the companies more than the existing rules of the game. Finally, we consider Forests of the World to be ‘less ideologically radical’, a characteristic of the watchdog NGO, and rather aiming for constructive solutions to the problems of the world’s forests. Nevertheless, the discussion above concerning campaign activities resembling proxy wars is still important. Thus, we consider Forests of the World to be primarily a watchdog but with some advocacy activities resembling proxy wars and thus a social movement.
Service activities
Some of the activities of Forests of the World can also be characterized as service delivery activities. From 1983 to 1990, Forests of the World ran the successful campaign “Save the Rainforest”: through the organization, people could buy rainforest certificates for the preservation of Costa Rican rainforest. The campaign received a lot of public attention. More than 200,000 Danes bought rainforest certificates, in effect raising almost 8 million DKK for the preservation of 72 square kilometers of rainforest. Forests of the World has recently re-launched the rainforest certificate campaign, now for the benefit of Nicaraguan rainforest. These activities are characterized as service delivery, as the organization becomes a means to which the general public can engage in the preservation and conservation of the rainforest.

Other service delivery activities include Forests of the World’s development projects. The organization has since 1990 carried out Danida financed development projects in Latin America. All projects are carried out by local partners where the role of Forests of the World is more of a coordinating character. In December 2009, Forests of the World gained the status of program organization with Danida/Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark. Benefits of programs rather than projects are among other things improved efficiency and administration as well as greater continuity of the development work of the organization.

In sum, the activities of Forests of the World can be categorized as both service delivery and advocacy. Regarding the advocacy activities, these resemble both watchdog campaigns and proxy wars. The main purposes of the organization transcend all activities, these purposes are is to protect and improve the conditions of the forests of the world and the people living in them.
5.4 CSO-business partnerships
Lindenberg (2001) builds on Austin’s Collaboration Continuum and argues that CSO-business relations can be ordered according to a continuum that includes suspicion, interaction, philanthropy, transactional and integrative activities. The continuum is presented below.

Figure 5.2 Lindenberg’s continuum of CSO-business relations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Suspicion</th>
<th>Interaction</th>
<th>Philanthropy</th>
<th>Transactional</th>
<th>Integrative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>


Forests of the World has relations to the private sector all along the continuum. The previous section explained the advocacy activities of Forests of the World characterized as both watchdog campaigns and proxy wars. These can be characterized as Lindenberg’s suspicion and interaction activities. But Forests of the World also have activities along the three latter more collaborative aspects as presented by Austin. The organization has collaborations with the private sector which can be placed in the different stages of Austin’s collaboration continuum according to different degrees of involvement. Appendix 2 describes the different CSO-business partnerships of the organization.

The internal stakeholders of Forests of the World we have interviewed see many opportunities in the CSO-business collaborations. First of all, they assess that they can reach a greater impact because of this more pragmatic and constructive approach to development and environmental work. One of the main reasons for this greater impact is because companies are considered to be an important part of the solution to create better conditions for the world’s forests (Interviewee 4; Interviewee 3; Interviewee 5; Interviewee 2; Interviewee 12; Interviewee 7). Not collaborating with the companies would be an unrealistic approach to fulfill the mission of the organization (Interviewee 4). However, by engaging in partnerships with the private sector, Forests of the World can reach a greater impact (Interviewee 4). In addition, collaborations can assist Forests of the World to help the companies improve by opening their eyes for new ways to produce, sell and profit from sustainable timber rather than just criticizing them for not complying with the standards set by Forests of the World (Interviewee 12). In that sense, collaborations become an important means to influence the companies they engage in CSO-business partnerships with. Especially, considering the larger companies such as COOP Denmark, being able to influence the companies may lead to greater impact than had it just been the organization alone (Interviewee 2). One interviewee notes that
another benefit from collaborating with the private sector is the liberties it brings about financially. Compared to funds from donors such as Danida, contributions from the private sector have less conditionality and can thus be used more freely and more effective by the CSO (Interviewee 3). When the CSO receives money from more sources, such as donors and the private sector this makes the CSO less dependent on single sources of financial support.

In a Danish context and compared to other environmental organizations in Denmark, Forests of the World can be placed somewhere in between Greenpeace and WWF: unlike Greenpeace, Forests of the World does accept and engage in CSO-business partnerships, although not as many as WWF. Forests of the World has collaborated with companies to varying degrees for many years, and they wish to expand their collaborations with companies. The organization is currently working on developing guidelines for how to work with CSO-business partnerships in order to achieve some degree of systematization in their approach to CSO-business partnerships. The topic of this thesis was chosen in the context of the challenges of the organization when developing these guidelines.

This chapter has presented the chosen case organization, Forests of the World. The chapter set the frame and context within which the rest of the analysis and discussion will take place. With this in mind, the case description centered on aspects we found necessary to understand before moving on the three research phases. Thus, we have described the organizational purpose, mission and vision, the organizational structure, and the activities of the activities including a brief introduction to their CSO-business partnerships. In the following three chapters, we will analyze how the credibility of our case organization, Forests of the World, is being threatened by its engagements in CSO-business partnerships.
6 Research Phase I: CSO Credibility

To understand how CSO-business partnerships present a risk to CSO credibility, we find it necessary to unfold and operationalize the concept of CSO credibility. Therefore, this chapter will address the first sub-question of what is CSO credibility. The question will be answered by mapping the attributes of CSO credibility as perceived by the internal stakeholders of Forests of the World. As mentioned in our methodology, we refer to the internal stakeholder of Forests of the World as the people who, in their capacity as members of the executive committee, employees or active volunteers, are part of the informal or formal decision-making processes of Forests of the World.

The chapter will be divided into two sections and a conclusion. The first section will consist of the primary data analysis of the interviews with Forests of the World. The purpose of the section is to map the attributes of CSO credibility as perceived by the internal stakeholders of the organization to gain insight to their understanding of a highly subjective and complex concept. The second section will discuss this mapping of CSO credibility against the preliminary theoretical understanding of CSO credibility as consisting of legitimacy and accountability derived from the review of the literature. This will allow us to critically assess the mapping. Moreover, it will ensure a thorough understanding of CSO credibility as understood by the internal stakeholders and ensure that the concept is unfolded and operationalized through the application of our theoretical understanding of the term. Finally a conclusion from the previous sections will provide us with a framework of CSO credibility for the following research phases and chapters.

6.1 Primary data analysis: Interviews with Forests of the World

All interviewees were asked to assess the credibility of Forests of the World. In this chapter, we will analyze the primary data from the interviews to get a picture of what contributes to the credibility of Forests of the World seen from the internal stakeholders, namely the executive committee, the employees and the volunteers of the organization. Based on the data from the interviews we will undertake a mapping of the attributes of CSO credibility as perceived by the interviewees. We find it necessary with a mapping of CSO credibility as perceived by the internal stakeholders of Forests of the World because this perception is decisive for their understanding of and attitudes towards CSO-business partnerships. Thus, this chapter will act as an input to the following chapters as these will draw on the understanding of CSO credibility as perceived by the internal stakeholders of Forests of
the World. We have chosen to be inclusive in our identification of CSO attributes, as attributes mentioned by only few interviewees are also included in the mapping. The consequences hereof will be discussed later.

Not surprisingly, all interviewees considered the credibility of Forests of the World to be high. This is our starting point for the mapping of CSO credibility. The high internal credibility manifests itself in a high degree of trust. A volunteer finds it important that she can trust the employees of the organizations (Interviewee 4). The high internal credibility is important for the identity of the organization and consequently, Forests of the World has always been very protective of their image as a CSO with high credibility (Interviewee 6).

The data analysis below will be inspired by template analysis, as already explained in the methodology chapter. By doing so the data will be coded, categorized and unitized according to labels and groupings based to a large extent on the terms used by the interviewees however also to some degree influenced by theory on CSO credibility. Furthermore, when recognizing relationships and developing categories, we have looked for patterns, relations and key terms which to different degrees have altered and made us rearrange the data. From the patterns in the primary data we have grouped the attributes contributing to the credibility of Forests of the World, as perceived by the internal stakeholders, into the following three categories:

1. Credibility based on the characteristics of Forests of the World;
2. Credibility based on the people of Forests of the World;

We have decided on these categories purely based on the patterns found in data in which it was found that all attributes of credibility referred specifically to the characteristics, the people or the activities of the organization. In these categories, the credibility of Forests of the World is based on the characteristics of the organization (such as the size or organizational purpose); the people of the organization (such as the employees and volunteers and their dedication to the cause and scientific capacity); and finally the activities of the organization (such as the creative and constructive solutions they present to problems as well as transparency and participation). The following sections will present our mapping of attributes of CSO credibility structured according to the categories presented above. It should be noted that several of the attributes of CSO credibility relate to and are dependent on each other (for instance is participatory decision-making processes perceived to be
easier in a small organization, see below). We will seek to clarify individually where this is the issue in the presentation of the respective attributes.

Following the mapping of CSO credibility we will discuss how CSO credibility perceived by the interviewed the employees, volunteers and executive committee members of Forests of the World relates to the theory and literature on CSO credibility.

**Credibility based on the characteristics of Forests of the World**
Several attributes of CSO credibility mentioned by the internal stakeholders of Forests of the World were focusing on the characteristics of the organization. For this reason, the ‘characteristics of the organization’ was chosen as an overall category for the following attributes: the organizational structure and the decision-making process; the size of the organization; the mission, vision and organizational purpose; the independence; and the financial structures of the organization.

**Organizational structure and participatory decision-making process**
As described in the case description (Chapter 5), Forests of the World has a relatively flat organizational structure. This flat organizational structure is considered a key to the credibility of the organization. The flat structure with low hierarchy means that the organization avoids taking top-down decisions. Rather, several people are involved in the decision-making process. By doing so, most issues are discussed at length internally across the organization (Interviewee 3; Interviewee 5; Interviewee 12). As one interviewee puts it:

“...According to me, it increases credibility simply because if a single leader is making a decision, it is less reliable that this is the correct decision compared to the reliability of a decision made by six people with experience and knowledge. For this reason, a low hierarchy really increases credibility, I think” (Interviewee 5 44-47).

The same interviewee points to a general problem within CSOs which is that those who possess more knowledge are often those at the bottom of the hierarchy or those located in the field away from where the decisions are made. Often it is the general secretary who makes the decisions, a person who may not have been in the field for several years (Interviewee 5). Arguably, Forests of the World addresses this problem with their low hierarchy structure and by involving several people within the organization for instance through informal online blogs and forums for discussion, where those within the CSO who wish to voice their opinion gets the opportunity to do so.
Size
The interviewees identify how size matters for the credibility of the organization (Interviewee 11; Interviewee 6; Interviewee 7). In a relatively small organization, like Forests of the World, it is easier to have the participatory decision-making processes described above. Additionally, a large organization with hundreds of thousands of members is tied up in the different opinions of the members. A smaller organization finds it easier to hear and acknowledge the different positions or ideas of their members (Interviewee 7). This strengthens the organic decision-making process which the organization aims for.

Two interviewees mention that they consider the credibility of Forests of the World to be high because they know the employees of the organization personally and thus trust the ones who manage and administer the organization (Interviewee 1; Interviewee 8). Arguably, this is easier in a smaller organization with a flat organizational structure like that of Forests of the World.

Mission, vision and organizational purpose
Credibility is considered to be linked to the mission, vision and objectives of the organization (Interviewee 7; Interviewee 13). Several interviewees stress the importance of the fact that the main purpose of Forests of the World’s being is that they talk and act on behalf of others, i.e. nature (Interviewee 7; Interviewee 11; Interviewee 9). The following two quotes from the same interviewee highlight this aspect.

“…nature cannot speak for itself; we have to speak on its behalf. What we do is for nature but basically it is for the sake of mankind too” (Interviewee 11 13-15).

“…I guess it is common ethics. Based on common standards or norms, or whatever you call decent and unselfish behavior. There I think we score high [in credibility], at least” (Interviewee 11 53-55).

The first quote focuses on the fact that nature cannot speak for itself, so Forests of the World will have to do it. The second quote stresses the unselfish behavior of acting on behalf of others.

It is important that the people in the organization have knowledge of the positions and moral values of the organization (Interviewee 13). Within the same lines, an interviewee suggests that one of the reasons for the high credibility of the organization is that there is a firm standpoint behind what the organization says, as he finds that “We say what we believe, and we believe what we say” (Interviewee 11 40). Furthermore, it is stressed by one interviewee that it is important that the organization is consistent in its positions and that people can rely on the CSO to maintain their standpoints. It
would reduce the credibility of the organization, if it becomes ‘trendy’ in its standpoints, that is, if
the organization loses its consistency but rather takes on the positions which are considered to be in
(Interviewee 9).

**Independence**

It is stressed by some interviewees that for an organization to have high credibility it must remain
independent from political and financial interests (Interviewee 11; Interviewee 12; Interviewee 9;
Interviewee 8). An organization loses credibility if it is controlled by the political agenda
(Interviewee 12) and Forests of the World would never consider engaging in collaborations with
political parties (Interviewee 11). This is also emphasized in the articles of association (Forests of the
World 2010). The same article stresses that the organization must remain independent from financial
interest. This is also emphasized by two interviewees. One argues that Forests of the World should
avoid being pushed by the private sector to do or write something. The other states that because the
organization is independent from financial interests, they are not afraid to raise their voice if they
believe something is wrong in the public or private sector (Interviewee 9; Interviewee 8). It should
be noted that Forests of the World does receive some of their financial support from private and
public institutions, however, what is important for these interviewees is that in spite of the funds
received, the organization must remain critical towards the donors. Forests of the World should not
be guided by the wants and needs of the donors.

**Low administrative budget (more money for the cause)**

Several interviewees assess that Forests of the World is running with a relatively low administrative
budget\(^{20}\). It is emphasized by the interviewees that it is important that the organization maintains
this structure based on a low budget for administration so that more of the funds raised can be
channeled to the cause (Interviewee 4; Interviewee 6; Interviewee 8; Interviewee 11; Interviewee 5).

A volunteer explains how she perceives the administrative budget of the organization:

‘...it is a relatively small budget organization, I would say. I don’t think that we spent a lot
of money on things like administration. I mean, I don’t know it, but that is just my own
perception, you know. When we are making a campaign then we have to raise money
from different foundations, because we don’t have them ourselves. So every penny is
turned and looked at twice...’ (Interviewee 4 35-40).

A member of the executive committee notes that it is because they do not want to ‘steal from the
public’ (Interviewee 6). This means that in one of their major campaigns, the rainforest campaign in

---

\(^{20}\) The capacity assessment of Forests of the World supports this point to some degree, as it is assessed that
the organization practise economy (MFA 2009:26).
the 1980s and 1990s, a significantly small percentage of the funds raised went to administration (Interviewee 8). This was because they wanted more funds for the cause; to preserve the rainforest. Nevertheless, a consequence of the low administrative budget in this campaign was that it was primarily driven by volunteers, which in the end made it difficult to control and manage the campaign (Interviewee 6). More money could have been raised in the campaign, but then a higher percentage for administration would have been necessary (Interviewee 8). This suggests that maintaining a low budget for administration does have its implications to the scope and scale of the activities the CSO can undertake, and is a consideration which the CSO should bear in mind.

Credibility based on the people of Forests of the World
Credibility arises not only from the characteristics of the organization. In the examination of our primary data we find that several of the attributes of credibility mentioned by the internal stakeholders of Forests of the World are related to the people within the organization, i.e. the employees, the volunteers and the executive committee. Therefore, we have gathered the following attributes of credibility under the category of ‘credibility based on the people of Forests of the World’: the scientific capacity of the people in organization; the voluntary nature of the organization; and the dedication to the cause of the people in the organization.

Scientific capacity
Ten out of thirteen interviewees stressed the importance of the scientific capacity of the employees, volunteers and executive committee for the credibility of Forests of the World (Interviewee 7; Interviewee 6; Interviewee 12; Interviewee 9; Interviewee 2; Interviewee 10; Interviewee 8; Interviewee 13; Interviewee 5; Interviewee 11). Several of the interviewees as well as others in the organization have an educational background in biology and geography and many years of experience from working within this field. Some interviewees refer to the organization as geeky, but with a positive connotation (Interviewee 6; Interviewee 9). This considerable scientific capacity can trace its roots to the history of the organization as it sprung from a study group from the biology studies in Aarhus (see Chapter 5; Interviewee 7; Interviewee 6). Because the scientific professionalism is embedded historically and throughout the organization, what they say and do is always supported by relevant knowledge and experience (Interviewee 7; Interviewee 6; Interviewee 13; Interviewee 5; Interviewee 10). It gives technical and scientific ballast (Interviewee 9; Interviewee 2), because as put by one interviewee:

“...some of the people in the organization are among the best within their field and again, that is also credibility; simply that the people sitting here have an enormous capacity, right?!” (Interviewee 6 61-63).
Thus, a number of interviewees find it important that the people within the organization have relevant knowledge within the field of operation to be considered as a credible organization (Interviewee 13; Interviewee 5; Interviewee 10). A consequence of the high scientific capacity is the innovative and creative approaches it may yield (Interviewee 8; Interviewee 11). Furthermore, it is considered to be important for the development of the organization as they keep themselves informed about the recent developments within the field and have the capabilities to assess, understand and possibly implement these developments in their work (Interviewee 11; Interviewee 12).

**The voluntary foundation**
A lot of the work undertaken by Forests of the World is done by volunteers who are involved to different degrees and in different aspects of the organizations activities. A member of the executive committee and volunteer notes that when he attends meeting with other CSOs, the representatives from the other organizations are often employees whereas the representatives from Forests of the World are volunteers (Interviewee 6). This voluntary foundation of Forests of the World is by many interviewees emphasized as key to the credibility of the organization (Interviewee 3; Interviewee 6; Interviewee 8). Although Forests of the World also has employees working in different departments and projects, some of the organization’s core activities, such as the work of the executive committee as well as campaigning activities, are primarily run by volunteers.

**Dedication to the cause**
Related to the previous category, one of the main reasons for the importance of the voluntary foundation of Forests of the World, is the dedication to the cause these people represent (Interviewee 1; Interviewee 2; Interviewee 6). According to an interviewee, the people are involved and dedicated to the work of the organization and they spend a lot of time on it (Interviewee 6). These are people, employees as well as volunteers who want to do something good for the benefit of the cause (Interviewee 1). One interviewee finds that:

“...we are to a large degree put together by committed people who have a burning passion for the cause and this shines through in our approach too” (Interviewee 6 38-39).

Previously we learned that the voluntary foundation of the organization was important for the credibility of the organization in the eyes of the internal stakeholders. The voluntary foundation of the organization and dedication to the cause are highly related. Because the organization is voluntary

---

21 In Danish: ildsjæle
based, people are in it for something else than money; they are in it for the cause. Therefore, others do not suspect them to ‘take money from the cookie jar’ (Interviewee 8). People are trusted.

It should be noted that the attribute of dedication to the cause relates to both the volunteers and the employees of the organization. Although the employees per se also are working for a salary and not only the cause, the same employees still highlight the importance of being in it for the cause and not for the money.

**Credibility based on the activities of Forests of the World**

To maintain their credibility, organizations should not only appear to be credible, but also *act* in a manner credible manner (Interviewee 13; Interviewee 4). Thus, the credibility of an organization is also dependent on the activities of the organization. The third and final category of attributes to CSO credibility focus on the activities of the organization and has been decided upon as several of the mentioned attributes to credibility are located within the overall category of ‘activities’. Different aspects of the activities of Forests of the World are highlighted as important within a credibility context. These are for example how the organization work internally and externally; the location of its activities; how the activities and organization are financed; and the communication and documentation of the organizations activities.

**Impact**

The degree to which an organization can fulfill their aim is determining for their credibility: “...*the greater the impact, the greater the credibility*” (Interviewee 13 435-436), as long as the impact reached is within the methodology of the organization (Interviewee 13). The aim of Forests of the World is to create better conditions for the forests of the world and the people living in them. Because Forests of the World has a more narrow focus in their operations compared to other CSOs, it is easier for them to target their work to fulfill their objectives and mission and vision statements (Interviewee 1; Interviewee 2). Thus, they can possibly reach a greater impact and in return greater credibility.

**Sustainability**

Some interviewees highlight the importance of sustainability of the projects of Forests of the World. It is assessed to be important that if and when Forests of the World pulls out of a project, the project can evolve and develop in its own right and by the local community (Interviewee 7; Interviewee 6). Though not mentioned by the interviewees, sustainability is, within a development context, related to impact. The sustainability of projects is assessed to be important for long term impact (Mosley & Eeckhout 2000).
**Constructive solutions**

In addition to sustainable projects, another aspect of the characteristics of the projects and activities of Forests of the World is emphasized as important. This is the fact that Forests of the World presents alternatives and solutions. As we have seen in the description of Forests of the World (Chapter 5) some interviewees find that one of the most important roles of Forests of the World is that of being a watchdog keeping an eye on the public and private sector and barking if something is judged to be wrong (Interviewee 6; Interviewee 13). Nevertheless, it is still considered important for the credibility of the organization that it also presents alternative solutions through constructive dialogue with the private and public sector (Interviewee 7). This also go for their activities in Latin America where an interviewee finds it to be credible that the organization not only says ‘save the forest’ but also engages in dialogue and presents solutions for how to use the forest in a sustainable manner, both for the local population and the foreign companies (Interviewee 7).

**Presence in Latin America**

Several interviewees assess that an important aspect of the organization’s credibility is the fact that Forests of the World has projects, activities and expatriates in the field in Latin America (Interviewee 5; Interviewee 13; Interviewee 4; Interviewee 10). By doing so, Forests of the World avoids, as put by one interviewee, ‘remote control development’ in which an organization takes important decisions on behalf of others 10,000 kilometers away from where the decisions are to be implemented (Interviewee 5; Interviewee 13). An interviewee notes that:

"...personally I think it is less credible if you have never been in a forest, never been out with the poor people, and never worn wellingtons (...) I don't care if you wear high heels or wellingtons in the forests (...) but there is some credibility in being present where it [the activities] takes place" (Interviewee 13 67-72).

Not surprisingly, this aspect of credibility is something especially the interviewees working in the field find important. One of the expatriates has learned that the local partners in Latin America appreciate that Forests of the World take an honest interest in the local conditions and context (Interviewee 13). Knowledge about local conditions and the reality of the local context is important because Forests of the World is working with other people’s future (Interviewee 5). Therefore, it is stressed as an important asset for the credibility of the organization that they, despite of being a growing organization, have maintained the local focus and connectedness. Local connectedness is often lost when hierarchy grows (Interviewee 5).
**Beneficiary participation**

In relation to their activities in Latin America, the importance of collaborating with local partners and by doing so gaining local support for the activities in the South is stressed as an important aspect of the credibility of Forests of the World (Interviewee 11). It is considered important to involve the local partners and beneficiaries in the processes by adopting participatory approaches in the drafting of programs and activities in the South (Interviewee 5; Interviewee 13).

All local activities of Forests of the World in Latin America are carried out by local partners and the role of Forests of the World is therefore more of a coordinating manner. This is assessed to accentuate the importance of involving the locals in the planning process (Interviewee 13). An interviewee has a different take on the topics and states that “…what is important is not that they are involved, but that we are involved in what they do” (Interviewee 5 801, emphasis added), and thus argue not just for participatory approaches in the implementation process, but rather for that the local partners to be the main actor with Forests of the World adopting a more supporting role.

**Communication**

Credibility is assessed to have much to do with communication. The way the organization communicates, what is communicated, and to whom it is communicated can both enhance and decrease the credibility of an organization. One interviewee suggests that an organization may have high credibility, but if it is unable to communicate it externally it may be that nobody knows about it (Interviewee 13). The same interviewee assesses that it is important to CSO credibility to have many supporters and many who believe that the organization is doing the right thing. Therefore, it is important to communicate who the organization is and what the organization is doing to gain public support since this contributes to credibility (Interviewee 13).

Within the same lines, consistency between what the CSO says it will do and what the organization actually does, is emphasized as an important attribute to the credibility of the organization (Interviewee 9). Thus, it is important that the CSO only communicates what it actually does or intends to do: “…what you do is what you say, and what you say is what you do” (Interviewee 13 14). In addition, the importance of keeping word is stressed by some interviewees (Interviewee 1; Interviewee 9).

Previously the scientific capacity of Forests of the World was stressed as an important contributing factor to the credibility of the organization. The scientific capacity transcends the information the organization makes available to the public about their activities. It is mentioned by several interviewees that Forests of the World often wishes to tell the entire truth, and that they feel it is
important that what they say is backed by scientific knowledge (Interviewee 9; Interviewee 4; Interviewee 10). But telling the entire truth runs the risk of disconnecting the public who does not possess the same academic and practical knowledge as the people within the organization (Interviewee 9). Because Forests of the World value transparency and honesty as important for credibility (see below), it becomes a matter of balancing telling the entire scientific truth with doing so in layman terms so that people understand what they say (Interviewee 4; Interviewee 9). Another interviewee suggests, however, that telling the entire and very scientific truth may actually increase organizational credibility in the eyes of some target groups exactly because they do not understand it (Interviewee 2).

**Documentation**

Highly related to communication is the documentation of finding and results. Documentation is by many interviewees emphasized as an important means to prove the credibility of an organization (Interviewee 13; Interviewee 2; Interviewee 9):

"...I believe that documentation and demonstration of results and so on is really important to credibility. I mean, to be able to support your arguments in some way" (Interviewee 2 60-62).

Arguably, documentation of results becomes important for several aspects of the organization’s activities, such as their developmental projects but also when they have a watchdog role and criticize the public and private sector. Hence, the benefits of being able to document results are amongst others that the organization can prove that it is doing the right thing and that this is done in the right manner (Interviewee 13). Another benefit arising from being able to document results is that the organization can learn how to improve and to become more effective and efficient (Interviewee 13).

**Transparency**

As mentioned above, transparency and openness in activities and communication are mentioned as key factors to maintain high credibility (Interviewee 1; Interviewee 9; Interviewee 6). It is important that the people supporting an organization knows where and on what their financial support is used. This also relates to communication above, as one interviewee finds it important that Forests of the World makes all the information available to those who want to take a closer look at the organization (Interviewee 9).

During the research for this thesis, we discussed with Forests of the World their opinion about whether this thesis should be confidential or publicly available. It could be argued that the fact that
Forests of the World emphasizes that this thesis should be available to the public supports their aspiration to be a transparent organization.

**Realistic objectives and targets**

Some interviewees find it to be important that the CSO is realistic in its objectives and activities, and acknowledges what is within and more importantly outside the scope of the organization’s abilities (Interviewee 13). This also includes setting realistic targets that the CSO can meet (Interviewee 1; Interviewee 9) and acknowledging its limitations (Interviewee 9). Within the same lines, the importance of not creating too high expectations is underlined as an important aspect of the credibility of a CSO (Interviewee 13).

**Summary of findings: What contributes to CSO credibility**

This section has presented a mapping of different aspects which contribute to the credibility of Forests of the World as perceived by the internal stakeholders of the organization. We found it necessary to undertake such a mapping to be able to answer our research question regarding how CSO-business partnerships may threaten CSO credibility. We have previously learned that credibility to a very large extent is dependent on subjective views as different people perceive the concept differently. Thus, we found it necessary to understand how our interviewees perceived the credibility of the organization to learn how they perceive threats to CSO credibility.

The table below presents an overview of the findings from the interviews. The method used to label and categorize data was inspired by template analysis. Several attributes of CSO credibility were identified and labeled according to this method and we assigned them into three overall categories which were credibility based on respectively the characteristics, the people, and the activities of Forests of the World. We have made the labels and categories; nevertheless, these are mainly based on the terms and expressions used by the interviewees.
Table 6.1 Categories of attributes to CSO credibility identified by the interviewees of Forests of the World

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category of CSO credibility</th>
<th>Attribute to CSO credibility</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Credibility based on the characteristics of Forests of the World</td>
<td>Organizational structure and participatory decision-making process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Size</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mission, vision and organizational purpose</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Independence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Low administration budget</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Credibility based on the people of Forests of the World</td>
<td>Scientific capacity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The voluntary foundation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dedication to the cause</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Credibility based on the activities of Forests of the World</td>
<td>Impact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sustainability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Constructive solutions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Presence in Latin America</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Participation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Documentation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Transparency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Realistic objectives and targets</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table above points to the complexity of the concept of CSO credibility because so many attributes are mentioned as aspects of credibility. In addition, we have learned that several attributes are interconnected and interrelated, in return adding to the complexity of the concept of CSO credibility. Finally, not all attributes are mentioned by all interviewees, emphasizing the subjective views the concept entails: different people have stressed different aspects. We have chosen to be inclusive in our identification of CSO attributes, as attributes mentioned by only few interviewees are also included in the mapping. Arguably, this may skew the picture as it may appear from the table above that all attributes are equally important. We have, however, made it clear in each aspect and category of CSO credibility who considers this aspect to be contributing to CSO credibility. Though making up for an interesting discussion, it is beyond the scope of this thesis to discuss and make further evaluations as to which attributes are more important. It could be argued that because we have been inclusive in our mapping of CSO credibility, generalizations are difficult to conduct. However, it should be noted that we do not aim to make such generalizations on the basis of the mapping of credibility as perceived and interpreted by the internal stakeholders of Forests of the World to all CSOs. This, we find, would be difficult as our research is contextually, socially and historically embedded.
6.2 Discussion: Understanding CSO credibility

The purpose of this section is to discuss how the attributes contributing to credibility mentioned by the interviewees of Forests of the World above relate to the theory and literature of CSO credibility. This will inform our mapping and categorization of attributes of credibility and enable a critical assessment of our empirical findings. Moreover, it will ensure a deeper understanding of CSO credibility by combining our empirical study with theoretical concepts.

As mentioned in our review of the literature (Chapter 2), few scholars define the concept of credibility when using it, or at best, they understand credibility in terms of other concepts. We will use the concepts of legitimacy and accountability as a theoretical frame for our empirical findings. Credibility as legitimacy and accountability is our initial and preliminary understanding and is based on Brown (2008). To understand legitimacy and accountability it was found useful to break the concepts down into different forms of legitimacy and accountability respectively. Consequently, drawing on the work of Suchman (1995), the different forms of legitimacy are pragmatic legitimacy, moral legitimacy, and cognitive legitimacy. Regarding accountability the different forms, as identified by Kumar (1996), are fiscal accountability, legal accountability, program accountability and process accountability. We have chosen to include the different forms of legitimacy and accountability as presented by Suchman (1995) and Kumar (1996) respectively as these forms help operationalize the concepts.

Next, we will discuss the different attributes of credibility identified by the internal stakeholder of Forests of the World against these forms of legitimacy and accountability. By doing so, the concepts become easier to grasp, and the different forms aid us in our discussion of the relationship between the different attributes contributing to CSO credibility mentioned by the interviewees and the theoretical understanding of what contributes to CSO credibility. We find this a necessary and important step in our analysis to be able to understand what contributes to CSO credibility. From the discussion it should become apparent how inconsistencies between data and theory will enhance our understanding of CSO credibility. Theory will provide a frame for understanding the empirically observed attributes of CSO credibility. This is necessary as the understanding of CSO credibility is determining for the understanding of how CSO-business partnerships affects CSO credibility.
Legitimacy

**Pragmatic legitimacy** is based on the self-interest of an organization’s audience (Suchman 1995). To obtain pragmatic legitimacy is therefore dependent on audiences or stakeholders making evaluations of what the personal consequences of the organization’s activities are for that specific person, thus they make an evaluation of ‘what’s in it for me’. In our examination of the primary data, we find that only one attribute of credibility, *organizational structure and participatory decision-making process*, is related to pragmatic legitimacy. In the literature of pragmatic legitimacy it is argued that by incorporating stakeholders into its policy-making structures and giving them influence, they come to see the organization as legitimate (Suchman 1995). Since the participatory decision-making processes of Forests of the World are deeply rooted in the organization, it can be argued that the internal stakeholders partly assign credibility to the organization because they have access to the decision-making processes.

**Moral legitimacy** is based on normative evaluations as to whether an act is the right thing to do (Suchman 1995). Jepson (2005) identifies legitimating assets which are considered to contribute to the legitimacy of a CSO. For moral legitimacy, the legitimating assets include among others being an independent actor; working for the benefit of third parties, the common good or the marginalized; grounded and relevant knowledge; and wise stewardship of resources. Moral legitimacy relates to several of the attributes to CSO credibility mentioned by the interviewees. These attributes are: the mission, vision and organizational purpose; independence; and the low administrative budget channeling more money for the cause. First of all, the *mission, vision and organizational purpose* of the Forests of the World are to work on behalf of the forests and the people living in them. Working for this marginalized voiceless group is considered a legitimating asset. Second, *independence* from political and financial interests from both the public and private sector is an important aspect of the credibility of Forests of the World as well as a legitimating asset, as it is ‘considered the right thing to be’ for CSOs. Finally, the *low administrative budget* can be considered part of the moral legitimacy of the organization because more funds are channeled to the cause rather than the organization. Morally, the internal stakeholders consider this ‘the right thing to do’.

The final form of legitimacy, to which some of the attributes mentioned by the interviewees can be related, is cognitive legitimacy. **Cognitive legitimacy** refers to a taken-for-grantedness in which legitimacy dynamics is a result of cognition, rather than a result of self-interest (pragmatic legitimacy).
and evaluation (moral legitimacy) (Suchman 1995). The following attributes of CSO credibility mentioned by the interviewees are related to cognitive legitimacy: the voluntary foundation; dedication to the cause; and constructive solutions (watchdog role). The attributes of voluntary foundation and dedication to the cause are highly related. These two aspects of CSO credibility contribute to cognitive legitimacy because they are consistent with the belief that environmental organizations are “…collectives of individuals who exhibit selfless and courageous dedication to a good and moral cause” (Jepson 2005:519). The taken-for-grantedness lies in the way that Forests of the World lives up to the expectations of a CSO. Najam (1996b) refers to civil society as the ‘voluntary association sector’. This sector is characterized by its ‘people power’ and its dedication to ‘actualizing a social vision’ (Najam 1996b). If these aspects are considered to be the characteristics of CSOs, Forests of the World are conforming to these, and thereby gaining legitimacy, partly through their voluntary foundation and the dedication to the cause. Along these lines, it can be argued that the watchdog role of the organization (from the attribute constructive solutions) is contributing to cognitive legitimacy. Though we use the term civil society organization, organizations of the civil society sector is often referred to as nongovernmental or nonprofit organizations because these organizations are seen as a response to state and market failure and therefore as an opposition to these sectors. By being a watchdog, Forests of the World is conforming to this ‘role’ of the CSO and this contributes to cognitive legitimacy. Thus, Forests of the World achieves cognitive legitimacy because of their organizational form and the role they play within the civil society sector.

In sum, several of the attributes of credibility relate to Suchman’s (1995) three forms of legitimacy. In the following, we will discuss if and how the attributes of credibility relate to accountability.

Accountability
Several of the aspects mentioned by the interviewees relate to the concept of accountability, both overall and in the different forms of accountability adapted from Kumar (1996). First of all, the three attributes of communication, documentation and transparency relate to accountability overall. To be able to demonstrate that a CSO meets its accountability demands, the organization needs to document results and actions and communicate these results to their stakeholders, but both of these elements need to be in a transparent manner. Therefore, the three attributes affect the degree to which an organization can demonstrate that it is accountable. Thus, communication, documentation and transparency are methods used to demonstrate accountability overall.

---

22 It should be noted that with the broad definition of CSOs we have adopted in this thesis, CSOs cover a broad range of organizations and not all share the characteristics described by Najam (1996b).
Next, program accountability refers to the effectiveness of a program or project. Three aspects of the activities of the CSO can be related to program accountability, these are impact, sustainability, constructive solutions, and setting realistic objectives and targets. Impact contributes to program accountability as it can be argued that the greater impact, the more effective the program. Second, the fact that the organization has a sharp focus on maintaining sustainability in projects and programs arguably increases the effectiveness of them. Furthermore, the interviewees suggest that Forests of the World takes a constructive approach to their activities and does not just criticize but also present alternative solutions. Arguably, this makes their activities more effective. Finally, when the CSO sets realistic objectives and targets, they will be within reach for the organization, and thus the programs and projects will be considered effective.

Finally, some attributes of the credibility of Forests of the World relates to process accountability. Process accountability refers to the efficiency of the implementation process. Aspects of CSO credibility which increase the efficiency of the implementation process include the organizational structure and participatory decision-making process; the size of the organization; scientific capacity; beneficiary participation in drafting of programs and projects; and presence in Latin America. First, the flat organizational structure with low hierarchy entails that more people take part in the decision-making process and increase internal participation. As already mentioned in our mapping above, maintaining a high degree of internal participation is easier in a small organization. Because more people are heard, their scientific capacity can be included in the preparation and implementation of activities and thus making it more efficient. In addition, the CSO has a strong presence in the field in Latin America with a strong focus on involving their local partners and constituencies in their activities. These participatory approaches with some of their stakeholder can also increase efficiency of programs.

None of the aspects mentioned by the internal stakeholders of Forests of the World relates to neither legal nor fiscal accountability. We will discuss the consequences of this later.

Inconsistencies between data and theory
The analysis above suggests that there is some common ground between what the interviewees have mentioned as attributes of CSO credibility and what the literature on legitimacy and accountability suggests. In this section, we will compare the mapped attributes of CSO credibility (as perceived by the internal stakeholders of Forests of the World) with our preliminary theoretical understanding of CSO credibility (as consisting of legitimacy and accountability). The purpose of this task is to reach a deeper understanding of what contributes to CSO credibility by informing and refining our
empirically found understanding of CSO credibility. In this manner, we use the theoretical concepts of legitimacy and accountability as a framework for our empirically found attributes of CSO credibility. Next, we will discuss the inconsistencies between our empirical findings and theory which will lead to a combined empirically and theoretically based understanding of CSO credibility.

Not all forms of legitimacy were given equal attention by our interviewees: for pragmatic legitimacy, we found that only one attribute of credibility, organizational structure and participatory decision-making process, could be related to this form of legitimacy. It can be argued that regarding pragmatic legitimacy, the interviewees may not be aware of how their personal gains may contribute to CSO credibility and have therefore not mentioned personal gains as an attribute to credibility. Had we had a purely deductive approach we would have been able to formulate our questions to uncover attributes of pragmatic legitimacy. Haven chosen an inductive research strategy for our first research phase, only the later application of the concept of legitimacy made us aware of the difficulty of ‘revealing’ aspects of pragmatic legitimacy from our data. Since the purpose of our research topic is to investigate what the internal stakeholders themselves perceive as contributing to CSO credibility, we do not assess that the lack of data to uncover aspects of pragmatic legitimacy is compromising the results of our research.

Regarding accountability, not all forms have been given attention by the interviewees. This concerns fiscal and legal accountability which by Kumar (1996) is suggested to be two of the four forms of accountability. None of the attributes of credibility mentioned by the interviewees could be related to these two forms of accountability. Fiscal accountability refers to whether funds are spent on their designated targets. It is surprising that none of the internal stakeholders mentioned attributes relating. Legal accountability refers to whether organizational activities meet the terms of provision and regulation in the relevant legislation. Thus, this includes whether the organization abides by the law. It is striking that none of the internal stakeholders mentions this as an important aspect of being a credible organization, because legal accountability of organizations in Denmark usually provides a basis for their existence. Nevertheless, knowing that Forests of the World is recognized as a legal entity meeting the relevant legislation, it may be that the internal stakeholders take this aspect of accountability for granted. It could be argued that, the absence of any mentioning of legal accountability emphasizes that the focus of the internal stakeholders is on the purpose and the actual work of the organization rather on its conformance to legal standards.

The empirically found attributes of CSO credibility were previously grouped under the three categories presented in the first part of research phase one (characteristics, people, and activities).
However, having established connections between the empirically found attributes of CSO credibility and the theoretical concepts of legitimacy and accountability, we have enhanced our understanding of credibility which implies that the original categorization of attributes, into the categories based on characteristics, people, and activities, is now considered inappropriate. As an example, the attributes *size, scientific capacity* and *presence in Latin America* were all mentioned as contributing to process accountability. However, these attributes were previously grouped in all three categories: credibility based on the characteristics, people and activities of Forests of the World respectively (see the table below).

**Table 6.2 Table illustrating the categorization of independence, scientific capacity and presence in Latin America**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category of CSO credibility</th>
<th>Attribute to CSO credibility</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Credibility based on the characteristics of Forests of the World</td>
<td>Organizational structure and participatory decision-making process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>SIZE</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mission, vision and organizational purpose</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Independence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Low administration budget</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Credibility based on the people of Forests of the World</td>
<td><strong>SCIENTIFIC CAPACITY</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The voluntary foundation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dedication to the cause</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Credibility based on the activities of Forests of the World</td>
<td>Impact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sustainability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Constructive solutions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>PRESENCE IN LATIN AMERICA</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Participation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Documentation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Transparency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Realistic objectives and targets</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This implies that attributes to the theoretical concepts, legitimacy and accountability, are found across our original categories, suggesting that alterations may be suitable to enhance our understanding of CSO credibility by combining the empirical data with theoretical concepts. It was previously suggested that the different attributes are highly interrelated which highlights the complexity of CSO credibility. The theoretical concepts of legitimacy and accountability have illustrated how theory can explain the empirically found attributes of CSO credibility. The table below summarizes the discussion above and presents how the different attributes to CSO credibility can be explained in terms of legitimacy and accountability.
Table 6.3 Combined theoretical and empirical understanding of CSO credibility

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theoretical understanding of CSO credibility</th>
<th>Empirical understanding of attributes to CSO credibility</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pragmatic legitimacy</td>
<td>Organizational structure and participatory decision-making process (A)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moral legitimacy</td>
<td>Mission, vision and organizational purpose</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Independence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Low administrative budget</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cognitive legitimacy</td>
<td>The voluntary foundation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dedication to the cause</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Watchdog role (from Constructive solutions A)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accountability</td>
<td>Communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Documentation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Transparency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program accountability</td>
<td>Impact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sustainability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Constructive solutions (B)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Realistic objectives and targets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Process accountability</td>
<td>Organizational structure and participatory decision-making process (B)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Size</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Beneficiary participation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Scientific capacity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Presence in Latin America</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The example from before concerning the attributes of size, scientific capacity and presence in Latin America can now be found within the same category, process accountability. Moreover, it should be noted that using legitimacy and accountability as our theoretical frame for the empirically found attributes of credibility have altered one attribute of credibility, constructive solutions. As we examined the attributes of credibility against the theories of legitimacy and accountability, we found that this attribute should be divided into two attributes: watchdog role and constructive solutions. These two contribute to credibility in different ways, as it was found that the watchdog role contributes to cognitive legitimacy while constructive solutions enhance program accountability. One attribute, organizational structure and participatory decision-making processes, can be found twice in the table as this likewise contributes to credibility in different ways. We have highlighted the attribute that is located two different places with an A and B.

Apart from the above, it should be noted that the different attributes of CSO credibility are not altered as such in our application of theory to data. Rather, the use of theory has altered our understanding of CSO credibility and the way the different attributes contributes to CSO credibility.
6.3 Research Phase I: Conclusion

In the first section of this chapter, we mapped the attributes of CSO credibility as perceived by the internal stakeholders of Forests of the World. The mapping was conducted on the basis of interviews with employees, volunteers and members of the executive committee. Several aspects of CSO credibility were highlighted by the interviewees. These were categorized and ordered into three overall categories contributing to organizational credibility based on respectively the characteristics, the people, and the activities of the organization. The mapping of the three categories and the attributes in these were presented in a table. The second section of the chapter discussed how the mapping of CSO credibility of the first section relates to and can be understood in terms of legitimacy and accountability. By discussing data against theory we were able to find further explanations for the attributes of CSO credibility mentioned by the interviewees. It also became a means to which we could critically discuss the mapping of CSO credibility undertaken in the first section. Some inconsistencies between data and theory were highlighted. On the basis of the inconsistencies highlighted in the discussion of the empirical data and the theoretical concepts, we found the original categorization of attributes to CSO credibility inappropriate. Consequently, the different attributes mentioned by the interviewees were re-grouped according to how the different attributes to CSO credibility could be explained in terms of legitimacy and accountability.

An important implication for our research is that the focus of the thesis at hand is the internal stakeholders of Forests of the World, as we have interviewed employees, volunteers and members of the executive committee. We have mapped, analyzed and discussed CSO credibility as perceived by the internal stakeholders of Forests of the World only. In the course of this discussion, the subjectivity of the area we are operating in was emphasized.

From here onwards, we will use the term CSO credibility as referring to the combined theoretical and empirical understanding found in this research phase. It should be noted that this understanding does not apply to CSOs of all types and sizes, but that this is what credibility means for our case organization. Thus, it is within this contextual understanding that these attributes to CSO credibility may be negatively affected when engaging in CSO-business partnerships. The next chapter, research phase two, will analyze the threats to CSO credibility when engaging in CSO-business partnerships. Research phase three will discuss these threats within our understanding of CSO credibility as found in this chapter.
7 Research Phase II: CSO-business Partnerships and Threats to CSO Credibility

The purpose of this research phase is to explore and describe the threats to CSO credibility for CSOs engaging in CSO-business partnerships in order for us to answer our second sub-question: What are the threats to CSO credibility presented by CSO-business partnerships? We find it necessary to map the threats to CSO credibility before we, in research phase three, can discuss how the threats relate to CSO credibility as perceived by the internal stakeholders of Forests of the World.

The chapter will be divided into two sections and a conclusion. First, we will, based on our primary data, map the threats to CSO credibility as perceived by the internal stakeholders of Forests of the World, in this process we learn that some threats are largely dependent on who the partner company is, what the company's intentions are and how the CSO logo is used in the partnership. These issues will be discussed in the second section. Finally, a conclusion of the two sections will provide a framework for the third research phase.

7.1 Primary data analysis: Interviews with Forests of the World
This section will map the threats to CSO credibility when engaging in CSO-business partnerships as perceived by our interviewees, the internal stakeholders of Forests of the World. We have asked the interviewees to assess how they perceive that CSO credibility would be threatened when engaging in CSO-business partnerships. This section will analyze their answers. As mentioned in the methodology chapter, the analysis will be inspired by the method of template analysis; we have coded, categorized and unitized the data based on the statements of the interviewees. The categories below have been made by us, the researchers, but we have sought to use the terminology and concepts used by the interviewees. However, the categories are also inspired by relevant literature within the field. Some of the threats identified below are of a more overall character referring to partnerships in general whereas others refer to a specific partnership type (see Chapter 2). Where the latter is the case, we will explicitly state it in the mapping. The fact that some threats are mentioned in relation to specific partnership types suggests that threats may vary in degree in different types of partnerships. Though making up for an interesting discussion, it is outside the scope of this thesis to discuss how these may vary.
Next, we will move on to examine the following identified threats: greenwashing; unable to maintain independence and objectivity; being in it for the money; lack of transparency; making compromises; and negative publicity. Finally, we will present a summary of the presented threats.

**Greenwashing**
There is widespread agreement among the interviewees that a risk to CSO credibility in CSO-business partnerships is to contribute to greenwashing\(^{23}\) (Interviewee 3; Interviewee 9; Interviewee 6; Interviewee 8; Interviewee 5; Interviewee 4). The company objectives for partnering with CSOs include the opportunity to leverage CSO credibility (Elkington & Fennell 1998), and to enhance public relations and increase sales (Wymer & Samu 2003). This is a concern to the CSOs because companies may use CSO-business partnerships to enhance a green image, regardless of whether this corresponds with their activities or not. In the following, we will elaborate on the risk of greenwashing; first, analyzing how CSOs risk contributing to greenwashing by appearing to vouch for companies and their products, and second, how CSOs may contribute to greenwashing if the partnership does not lead to changes in company practices.

**Vouching for companies**
An interviewee suggests that seeing a CSO logo in a commercial gives the impression that the CSO is vouching for the company although this is not necessarily the case (Interviewee 3). This effect of vouching for companies may confuse the message that the CSO communicates to their audiences. Forests of the World have an environmental profile and their overall message is that forests are important. CSO-business partnerships may interfere with this message if Forests of the World are associated with companies that do not have an environmental profile (Interviewee 13; Interviewee 2; Interviewee 1; Interviewee 4; Interviewee 5; Interviewee 9; Interviewee 8). Moreover, the effect of appearing to vouch for a company or a product is against the values of Forests of the World and a threat to their credibility if the company does not deserve to be vouched for (Interviewee 6; Interviewee 8). It is assessed that whether or not the company deserves to be vouched for depends on the company’s intentions with the partnership:

\(^{23}\) Greenwashing: “The emergence of the terms ‘greenwash’ and ‘bluewash’ (washing through the reputation of the United Nations) reflect an increasing apprehension that at least some corporations creatively manage their reputations with the public, financial community, and regulators, so as to hide deviance, deflect attributions of fault, obscure the nature of the problem or allegation, reattribute blame, ensure an entity’s reputation and, finally, seek to appear in a leadership position…” (Laufer 2003:255).
“...there are companies which actually have an interest in changing something, and then there are companies which just need your name on the product they are marketing, and that’s it. In the end, it depends a lot on what the company wants” (Interviewee 6 241-244).

The degree to which Forests of the World appear to vouch for the company depends on the different types of CSO-business partnerships. The interviewees distinguish between two types of donations24: ‘pure’ donations and donations with exchange of logo. A member of the executive committee assesses that ‘pure’ donations do not contribute to greenwashing, because the CSO does not vouch for the company when the company cannot use the CSO’s logo:

“You can say that pure donations do not cost as much for the NGO because the company is just donating money, you [the NGO] do not vouch for anything the company is doing, they are simply sending you money. On the other hand, you don’t change anything about the company either...” (Interviewee 6 368-371).

Though assessing that ‘pure’ donations do not threaten CSO credibility, this quote also highlights the paradox of this type of partnership as there is no effect on the company either. It is different with donations with an exchange of logo, these are assessed to present the threat of vouching for the company (Interviewee 12; Interviewee 3; Interviewee 6) if the logo is used too progressively in the advertisement and marketing of a company (Interviewee 11; Interviewee 7). This is one of the main reasons why Forests of the World does not offer ‘golden packages’, as some interviewees call them (Interviewee 7; Interviewee 5), where companies for a certain donation can ‘buy’ the logo of the CSO and use it freely. An interviewee notes:

“... I have something against the concept where you can just buy the ‘golden package’ [i.e. the logo] and use [it] and throw about with the organization’s credibility” (Interviewee 7 345-347).

“... then [you] have no guarantee that your name is used (...) to the benefit of your purpose” (Interviewee 7 378-379).

The use of the CSO’s logo for marketing purposes is an important aspect of cause-related marketing25 partnerships (CRM). The quotes above relate to cases where a CSO appear to vouch for a company. The interviewees suggest that the threat of ‘vouching for’ may also be problematic in relation to a

24 Corporate donations: Monetary or nonmonetary (in kind) contributions to the CSO (Wymer & Samu 2003; Seitanidi & Ryan 2007).

25 Cause related marketing (CRM): Businesses launch marketing activities in which a specific product is associated with a good cause or a specific CSO. The CSO receives a monetary contribution that is proportional to the sales of the specific product. (Wymer & Samu 2003; Seitanidi & Ryan 2007)
specific product which is the case in CRM partnerships (Interviewee 7; Interviewee 8; Interviewee 4; Interviewee 1; Interviewee 11). If the CSO is vouching for the ‘wrong’ products, they may contribute to greenwashing of companies or their products:

“It depends on the product I guess, the way that I see it. I mean, most products, physical products, they have a footprint which they drag along, some kind of influence on the environment, and for us it is all about determining whether we can vouch for it. I mean, whether it is something that damages us in any way, whether it is something that will put our credibility at stake.” (Interviewee 11 451-456).

Thus, CRM collaborations become a threat to CSO credibility if the product delivered does not live up to the high demands of Forests of the World, like organic materials and packaging (Interviewee 6; Interviewee 1). This can be problematic because the CSO has little control of the product the company delivers; nevertheless it still vouches for it with the use of its name and logo (Interviewee 12).

Finally, an interviewee finds that CSOs in strategic partnerships\textsuperscript{26} to a higher degree becomes accountable for its partner company:

“I think that strategic partnerships can be one of the most dangerous [types of partnership] because this is really where an NGO throw in their lot with the company and say, ‘now we’re partners, now we’ll do something together’. This means that the NGO actually becomes accountable for more of what the company does. In those cases you really need to make sure that it is a company that really wants to do something good” (Interviewee 6 356-359).

Thus, the CSO is simply ‘more in bed with the enemy’ in strategic partnerships and may therefore to a greater extent appear to approve of the company which in turn implies that the CSO should be more careful in selecting its partner to avoid the risk of greenwashing (Interviewee 6; Interviewee 9).

From the above, we find that the threat of ‘vouching for’ in different types of partnerships heavily depends on the product and the partner company. Therefore, a screening and assessment of the company (and the product) is considered to be important by several of the internal stakeholders of Forests of the World (Interviewee 7; Interviewee 2; Interviewee 13; Interviewee 9; Interviewee 10; Interviewee 6; Interviewee 9). We will return to discuss how screening and assessments of partners as well as partner choice may be important to the internal stakeholders’ perception of threats later.

\textsuperscript{26}Strategic partnerships: A more symmetrical collaboration through transfer or sharing of resources (in cash and in kind) (Seitanidi & Ryan 2007; Neergaard, Jensen & Pedersen 2009).
No effect on company practices
It is the aim of Forests of the World to influence the partner company they collaborate with and help them improve their practices when needed. Therefore, the interviewees draw attention to the fact that greenwashing becomes a threat to CSO credibility when there is no effect on the company practices of the private sector partner. As an example, one interviewee considers it to be of low credibility:

“...if we collaborate with any kind of company which may support one of our projects, but which does not do anything about how they run their own company” (Interviewee 4 156-157).

Although it is positive that the private sector partner contributes financially to the work of the CSO, the CSO must consider how the rest of the company is doing business and the willingness of the company to change these practices. This is important to avoid companies which simply buy indulgences:

“In a way you [the companies] buy indulgence; you can make a lot of mess and then you send us some money, and then we forget all about it, right?” (Interviewee 6 376-377).

If the CSO collaborates with the wrong commercial partner, there is a risk of raising the profile of companies that should not be profiled (Interviewee 6). By doing so Forests of the World can become “...useful idiots...” (Interviewee 5 447) exploited for marketing purposes by companies and thereby contributing to the aggravation of the world’s problems rather than providing solutions to them (Interviewee 5). Thus, it becomes important for the CSO to investigate and assess whether the commercial partner is actually willing to make the necessary changes (Interviewee 6). We will return to this in the second part of this research phase.

Again, the threat of not having an effect on the company practices is perceived to be different in the different types of partnerships. Above we saw how in relation to ‘pure’ donations, an interviewee assessed that these present the least threat of vouching for the company as the company cannot use the CSO logo. However, this interviewee also highlighted the paradox that while the ‘pure’ donation is seen to have no effect on CSO credibility, this partnership type also has no effect on company practices (see Interviewee 6 368-371 above). The same interviewee discusses the cause-related marketing concept in relation to the partnership Forests of the World has established with Natur-Energi (see Appendix 2):
“And this concept [CRM partnerships] is, in principle, okay because a company is doing something good by sending money, but it just doesn’t change anything on the company side. I mean, the company doesn’t change anything because of this. Now, Natur-Energi is a relatively good company that in many ways focuses on the environment, but other companies which don’t do this, well they don’t change anything as such. They don’t do anything good for the environment” (Interviewee 6 188-193).

With these quotes, it can be suggested that some partnership types, in this case donations and CRM partnerships, present the risk of greenwashing because CSOs in these partnership types are not provided with the opportunity to affect the practices of the partners.

Unable to maintain independence and objectivity
Some interviewees mention that CSOs’ engagements with commercial partners present the threat of being unable to maintain independence and objectivity (Interviewee 3; Interviewee 9; Interviewee 2). This is a relevant threat to Forests of the World. As an example, an interviewee questions the ability of Forests of the World to maintain independence when the organization collaborates with companies while also acts as a watchdog in relation to companies:

“…how do you combine the independent criticism of companies (...) with being a partner for the companies?” (Interviewee 2 265-267).

The interviewee questions the independence of critical studies of companies made by CSOs who also cooperate with companies:

“On the one hand, you would like to have collaborations with some of the companies; on the other hand you go out and make independent studies of these. [The question is] how independent the study actually is, if you also have a collaboration, right?” (Interviewee 2 246-248).

It is assessed by the interviewees that there are different aspects of why a CSO may become unable to maintain independence and objectivity. One aspect is if the organization becomes dependent on the financial contributions from companies. This implies that there is a risk that the CSO will find it difficult to withdraw from the partnership as the organization may already have budgeted with the use of the funds in their activities (Interviewee 3). Another aspect is the danger for the CSO to become self-censoring when engaging in CSO-business partnerships. An interviewee notes:

“You can actually lose credibility if there is a bad company (...) which would like to donate a lot of money to Forests of the World. (...) That could silence us in some way (...).In that case, you would have to consider the donations and who you get the money from, I think. Not least because it would look strange if you got a lot of money (...) from a lumbering company which did not consider the environment at all” (Interviewee 1 115-125).
From the above quote it becomes apparent that the interviewee also assesses that there is a risk of being perceived to be silenced by the collaboration. Another interviewee adds to this discussion:

“...if we accept a million or just 10,000 [DKK] from them [an oil company], then we cannot in a credible manner run a campaign against them when it is needed. Somewhere it will emerge: ‘but you had no problem accepting our money’. (…) In that case, I would say that it will harm the credibility” (Interviewee S 498-505).

The above quotes are mentioned by the interviewees in relation to donations; however, we argue that this is a general threat in all types of partnership. For instance, an interviewee mentions that CSO-business partnerships may imply that the CSO becomes more empathic towards the private sector (Interviewee 10). Arguably, this may in turn lead the CSO to make compromises with the independence and objectivity in partnerships of higher levels of engagement. In this case, it should be noted that partnerships not only make the CSO more empathic towards the private sector, but that partnership relations may also make the private sector more empathic towards the civil society sector. A further discussion of this company perspective, however, lies outside the scope of this thesis which is limited to a focus on the CSO perspective.

**Lack of transparency**

Lack of transparency is mentioned by the interviewees as another threat to CSO credibility in relation to CSO-business partnerships (Interviewee 6; Interviewee 12; Interviewee 1). An interviewee assesses that openness about the engagements with companies is important to CSO credibility to avoid being perceived to vouch for the partner company:

“...what is the most important for us is that we are open about what is going on. If we get a million Danish kroner from a company which is very dirty, well then it’s our duty to make it completely open that it has happened. So in that case, I would make the reservation and say ‘of course, we’re not vouching for the activities of the company, but it’s cool that they have donated money to us’. And then I would make sure that the money is well spent” (Interviewee 6 508-513).

The above quote is mentioned in relation to donations and stresses that it is important to be open about the money the CSO receives from its engagements in CSO-business partnerships. Another interviewee assesses that the threat to transparency is particularly high in strategic partnerships (Interviewee 12). As in the quote above, it is important to be open in these types of partnerships; however, strategic partnerships are assessed to be less transparent with a higher risk of causing suspicion about what is going on between the CSO and the partner company for those not involved (Interviewee 12). Thus, though transparency is important in all partnerships, it is suggested that
some partnership types may present a higher risk because these by nature are more difficult to see through.

**Making compromises**
The interviewees assess that when engaging in CSO-business partnerships, there is a risk of having to make compromises. An interviewee finds that the organization has to compromise with, among other things, organizational values in partnerships (Interviewee 7). The degree of compromise is an ongoing discussion in the organization, and it is mentioned that the engagement in partnerships has led to some compromises with themselves and with what is communicated:

“In relation to our company collaborations (...) it is a huge discussion how far we can go, what we can communicate and so on. But we address it and sometimes we do make small compromises with ourselves. But sometimes you have to compromise on different areas; it has to be functional too (...). And there you have to evaluate if you compromise on the protection of the core values and to discuss what you can win too, and it may be that we are losing a bit tomorrow, but a strategic collaboration can also lead to something much better in the end if we take the dialogue at the right time” (Interviewee 7 64-72).

Thus, it is argued that some compromises are necessary to engage in CSO-business partnerships, but that these compromises have to be evaluated against the opportunities presented by partnerships. Another interviewee supplements this argument of having to make compromises with the use of the CSO’s logo:

“...you have to compromise; sometimes you just have to accept that companies will be using your logo, for example, which they often want to. And it’s a big compromise sometimes that we do not have complete control of what it’s being used for and where it’s sent out, in which context and so on” (Interviewee 6 326-330).

The quote highlights that allowing the company to use the logo is a large compromise for the CSO because, as suggested in the discussion on greenwashing above, the degree to which the CSO appear to vouch for the company depends exactly on the use of logo. It should be noted that the use of the CSO logo by the companies does not necessarily lead to greenwashing; it depends on the company and the product.

In the discussion of greenwashing, it was also suggested that donations and CRM partnerships are less likely to influence the companies. Strategic partnerships are more likely to present this opportunity (Interviewee 13; Interviewee 7; Interviewee 4; Interviewee 1). This implies that CSOs are willing to make compromises to ‘stay in the game’ when the CSO has a chance to make a difference. The quote below illustrates this argument:
“And the problem is that if you, as an NGO, is too difficult, if you make too many demands and if you are afraid to collaborate with companies, well then the companies do not want to work with you and then you will not get to change anything. On the other hand, the less demands you make, the higher the risk that something goes wrong. Therefore, it is a combination of staying attractive as an NGO and at the same time protecting oneself.” (Interviewee 6 208-213).

The quote above highlights the dilemma of strategic partnerships where the CSOs can influence the company but at the same time have to make compromises. Moreover, it suggests that CSOs need to protect themselves when engaging in CSO-business partnership. How Forests of the World seek to protect themselves will be discussed later. In the above, making compromises has been discussed as a conscious act in order to make the collaboration work. However, the increased empathy between the CSO and the partner company, which was mentioned earlier, may also lead to compromises (Interviewee 10).

For the internal stakeholders in Forests of the World it is the degree of compromise that is decisive for whether or not the compromise presents a threat to the organization’s credibility (Interviewee 7). In the ongoing discussions within the organization, especially the executive committee is assessed to be more protective of values and of the organization’s credibility (Interviewee 9). Because the executive committee has the final say in relation to the CSO-business partnerships the organization embarks on, this presents a challenge to the employees when they try to establish new partnerships with businesses. An employee who has felt this directly in her work notes:

“...sometimes it has been difficult to engage in company collaborations because our executive committee to a large degree is the carrier of our values and credibility in their actions. So they may say, ‘well, if it [product or company] isn’t the greenest then we don’t want to [collaborate], and if everything in and surrounding the product isn’t organic and labeled and so on and so forth, and we cannot guarantee that no child labor is used, then we cannot have anything to do with them” (Interviewee 9 78-84).

This quote highlights some of the tensions between the employees and the executive committee. These tensions have let the employees and executive committee to discuss and draft internal guidelines for engaging in collaborations with the purpose so make the process of engaging in partnerships more smooth. The guidelines have yet to be approved by the executive committee. A second draft of the guidelines can be found in Appendix 7.
To be in it for the money

Some interviewees suggest that it may be perceived that CSOs involved in partnerships are in it for the money (Interviewee 8; Interviewee 9; Interviewee 4). This includes partnerships where there is no logical coherence between the message communicated, the company and the CSO (Interviewee 8; Interviewee 4). When there is an obvious mismatch between the company or product and the profile of the CSO it may cause suspicion as to why the CSO would engage in such a partnership (Interviewee 9; Interviewee 8). An interviewee suggests that the mere fact that there is a financial gain in the partnerships may cause suspicion as to whether the CSO is only in it for the money (Interviewee 12). Such perceptions are a threat to CSO credibility as it potentially can harm the image of the CSO.

It should be noted that engaging in partnerships for the money does not necessarily imply that the CSO is not working for the cause. As mentioned above, the executive committee and the employees of Forests of the World are currently working on a set of internal guidelines for their work with CSO-business partnerships. We participated in one of the meetings concerning these guidelines and here the issue of ‘being in it for the money’ was discussed. A member of the executive committee assessed that it was problematic that one of the purposes of CSO-business partnerships in these guidelines was stated to be to finance the work of Forests of the World. Though the discussion as the point of departure did not centre around threats to credibility in CSO-business partnerships, the discussion illustrated that the risk of ‘being in it for the money’ is pertinent, particularly in donations because Forests of the World already receives donations for which it is difficult to argue that the purpose is other than raising money. During the discussion, an employee pointed to the fact that the monetary contributions from partnerships should not necessarily be seen as a bad thing, and that donations by being purely monetary contributions, provide opportunities for the CSO to finance activities that other kinds of partnership relations do not provide. While the financial resources in strategic partnerships may be tied to a specific purpose, as for instance a project abroad, the donation can be used freely by the CSO for instance to support their watchdog campaigning activities which do not generate income themselves. Thus, it can be argued that being in it for the money may not be negative, if the money received are spend to finance the core activities of the CSO. Thus, this discussion of being in it for the money is interesting because it highlights the paradox that CSOs should not be perceived to be in it for the money, but at the same time, finances are naturally accepted as a means to run the activities of Forests of the World.
One thing is to be perceived to be involved in partnerships for the money; another thing is to actually be in it for the money. The fact that Forests of the World is running on a low budget presents that threat to CSO credibility. An interviewee suggests that the financial contribution from the engagement in partnerships is attractive to a CSO with a small budget because it will enable them to increase their core activities (Interviewee 3). However, it can be argued that being in it for the money only presents a threat to CSO credibility (as understood by the internal stakeholders) when the partnership come at the expense of something else.

To give an example one of the interviewees explains a case in which a Danish company contacted Forests of the World to establish a partnership related to an organic production. However, Forests of the World assessed that the company was interested in making this a detached organic production rather than making extensive changes in their production. Thus, the efforts for improvement suggested by the company seemed untrustworthy, and Forests of the World chose not to partner with the company (Interviewee 5). In this case, it is mentioned by the interviewee that he was happy that there was no “…money-grubbing general secretary…” (Interviewee 5 1059) in Forests of the World who decided whether to engage in the partnership, but that several people were involved in making the decision. In the example above, engagement in the proposed partnership would have implied that Forests of the World would have compromised with its values and possibly have vouched for a company which, according to Forests of the World, did not do sufficient to change its practices.

Thus, the risk of being in it for the money is related to several of the other threats to CSO credibility as it can be argued that if the CSO puts money first, there is a higher risk that the CSO will make compromises, possibly contributing to greenwashing and being unable to maintain independence and objectivity. Thus, it can be argued that the risk of being in it for the money manifests itself mainly through other threats.

**Negative publicity**

Negative publicity occurs if there is a negative story about a partnership or a commercial partner, and is mentioned as a threat by several interviewees (Interviewee 11; Interviewee 6; Interviewee 13; Interviewee 9). Missteps can make headlines and front pages in the tabloid magazines, and even if these missteps are about the commercial partner, there is a risk that the image as a credible CSO will be negatively affected (Interviewee 11). This is a concern for Forests of the World because they are very protective of their image as a credible CSO (Interviewee 6; Interviewee 9). Thus, if they
collaborate with companies which are performing poorly or are doing something wrong, they risk damaging their credibility (Interviewee 9). Interviewee 6 gives an example:

“But then they get our environmental label which they can put on their homepage and then they can write ‘we collaborate with Nepenthes or Forests of the World’, and then if something [like a scandal] emerges there is a huge danger that we will get the blame as somebody who does not have control of what we are doing and that we are an unreliable organization” (Interviewee 6 193-196).

The interviewee above suggests that scandals and negative publicity may imply that the CSO is being perceived to have no control of what they are doing. Negative publicity may also arise if there are inconsistencies between what the CSO communicates that it will do and what it actually does. This threat to credibility is mentioned by an interviewee specifically in relation to cause-related marketing partnerships. She finds that cause-related marketing partnerships present a risk to CSO credibility because the marketing of a product may state promises that are difficult to keep or to achieve in practice (Interviewee 1) such as the preservation of an exact acreage of rainforest every time the consumer buys a specific product. If the CSO is unable to actually preserve this exact acreage of rainforest it may lead to negative publicity. In 1990, Forests of the World received negative publicity in relation to the large “Save the Rainforest” campaign (see Case Description in Chapter 5). Buying up the acreages of rainforest took longer than expected and this gave rise to criticism in the press as people during the campaign had bought certificates stating that they preserved little pieces of rainforest. In the end, however, Forests of the World managed to preserve the promised acreages of rainforest. Although this campaign was different from CRM partnerships as it was carried out by Forests of the World alone, the example above still illustrates the possible negative consequences of communicating promises the CSO cannot keep.

Negative publicity is a threat can be related to several of the abovementioned threats. Negative publicity can be caused by several of the abovementioned threats. If, for instance, a CSO contributes to greenwashing by either vouching for a bad company or by engaging in partnership with a commercial partner that does not improve its practices, this may give rise to negative publicity in the form of negative headlines in the tabloid magazines. Likewise, if the CSO is unable to maintain independence, it may lead to self-censorship, which, if discovered, may lead to negative publicity.

This threat is also different from the other threats as it presents a risk to others people’s perception of the credibility of Forests of the World, rather than to the perception of the internal stakeholders. The focus of this thesis is the opinion of the internal stakeholders and their view on what may
threaten CSO credibility. However, most of the internal stakeholders take on the view of external stakeholders, such as the general public, during the interviews and express how CSO-business partnerships may be perceived to present a threat from an external point of view, for instance in cases of negative publicity. The internal stakeholders’ concern about how others perceive the organization emphasizes that the external perceptions of the organization is important to the credibility of Forests of the World, in return emphasizing the importance of avoiding negative publicity to maintain a positive image when engaging in CSO-business partnerships.

**Summary of findings: Threats to CSO credibility in CSO-business partnerships**

Above we have mapped the threats to CSO credibility as perceived by the internal stakeholders of Forests of the World. We found this a necessary task to answer our research question as we need to explore what the threats are before we can discuss how they present a risk to CSO credibility as understood from the first research phase. The mapping was conducted on the basis of interviews with the internal stakeholders of Forests of the World. The primary data was subsequently analyzed using template design. Consequently, in the categorization of the different threats, we have to different degrees relied on terms and vocabulary used by the interviewees. Some categories, such as negative publicity, are also inspired by the literature of the field. Nevertheless, we are the ones who have categorized and grouped the different threats.

The identified threats to CSO credibility when engaging in CSO-business partnerships are summed up in the table below along with brief explanations of the threats.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Table 7.1 Threats to CSO credibility when engaging in CSO-business partnerships</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1. Greenwashing</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- The CSO may appear to vouch for companies and products that do not deserve it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Vouching for companies may confuse the message the CSO wish to communicate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- The CSO may have no effect on company practices of ‘bad’ companies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2. Unable to maintain independence and objectivity</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Financial dependence on companies makes it difficult to withdraw from a partnership.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Engagements with private sector partners may lead to self-censorship.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Collaborating with companies may be perceived to silence the critical voice of the CSO.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- The CSO may become too empathic towards the private sector.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3. **Lack of transparency**
   - The CSO may engage in non-transparent partnerships or activities.
   - Transparency may be difficult to achieve in some partnership types, such as strategic partnerships.
   - Lack of transparency may cause suspicion about the partnership relation.

4. **Making compromises**
   - The CSO may have to make compromises to engage in partnerships and to make partnership relations work.
   - Communication can be one area where the organization has to make compromises.

5. **To be in it for the money**
   - CSOs may be perceived to be in it for the money.
   - The threat manifests itself in other threats such as making compromises; contributing to greenwashing; and being unable to maintain independence and objectivity.

6. **Negative publicity**
   - Negative headlines and front page stories may arise if the partnership or the commercial partner performs poorly or ‘wrong’.
   - Negative publicity may arise if the CSO communicates promises it cannot keep or there are inconsistencies between what it communicates and what it does.

In the analysis above we have been inclusive in our mapping meaning that threats are included although they have only been mentioned by a few interviewees. For each threat, it has been made clear which interviewees identified the particular threat. This approach was chosen to give as broad a picture as possible of what the interviewees considered as threats to CSO credibility in CSO-business partnerships.

The threats to CSO credibility are highly interrelated in the sense that one threat often can be a cause as well as a consequence of another threat. To give an example, if a CSO is making compromises to engage in partnerships or engages in the partnership for the money, there may be a higher risk that the CSO will contribute to greenwashing and is unable to remain independent and objective. The interrelatedness of the threats is expected to be illustrated in our third research phase where we will use the findings from research phase one and two to examine the exact aspects of CSO credibility that are at risk due to the threats identified in this research phase.

**7.2 Partnership strategy**

For some of the threats identified above, it has been argued the threat is related to the partner company and to how the CSO work with private sector partners. Thus, the purpose of this section is
to discuss how different strategic choices in working with companies may have an influence on how the internal stakeholders perceive the threats. We will discuss the partner strategy of Forests of the World, i.e. the partner choice, partner assessment and screening. Subsequently, the resource implications of such assessment processes will be discussed. It should be noted that the internal stakeholders discuss these aspects in terms of specific partnership types. This suggests that threats may vary in degree in the different partnership types. This thesis is limited to discussing threats at an overall level; however, we will use the examples of different partnership types presented by the interviewees for this section to take the discussion on how the partnership strategy has an influence on the perceived threats.

**Partner choice**
The profile and activities of the partner company is important to the potential threats to CSO credibility. Therefore, the CSO must consider what type of companies they wish to collaborate with (Interviewee 2). At the two extremes, the organization can choose between collaborating with ‘the good guys’ or ‘the bad guys’, i.e. those with a social and environmental profile or image, or those without such a profile or even a negative profile. The interviewees find that different types of partnerships present different possibilities for the choice of partner. As an example, some assess that anybody can come with ‘pure’ donations regardless of the social or environmental profile of the company (Interviewee 8; Interviewee 7; Interviewee 2). With regards to the identified threats, this is interesting because, as we found in the risk of greenwashing, donations do not allow the CSO to exercise much influence on the practices of the company. Paradoxically, the partnerships in which CSOs are assessed to have greater potential to influence the partner company, i.e. strategic partnerships, are also the partnerships that are, by some, assessed to only be possible with the ‘good’ guys because the CSO become more accountable for the commercial partner (Interviewee 6; Interviewee 9). Thus, the choice of partner may result in some threats being potentially aggravated, while others alleviated.

**Partner assessment and screening**
The assessment and screening process of potential partner companies are a protective measure for the CSO to examine whether a company belongs to the ‘good’ guys or the ‘bad’ guys and to judge if the CSO will collaborate with a specific company or not. These protective measures are assessed to have an influence on the identified threats. For instance, in relation to the risk of greenwashing, it was suggested that this threat depends on who the partner company is, what the company’s intentions with the partnership are, and how the CSO logo is used in the partnership. Thus, it is suggested that assessing the partner is important for the CSO to protect itself. The risk of vouching for companies that does not deserve it was assessed to heavily depend on the company and, in cases of cause-related
marketing partnerships, on the product. The reason for this was that the CSO logo is used widely in connection with the commercialization of an actual product. These cause-related partnerships are assessed to require a thorough assessment and screening process:

“...I think that the one which is the most difficult to handle for us is if we get a percentage of a product they [the commercial partner] sell [i.e. CRM partnership] (...) that takes a lot of research, you really need to know how that product is produced, right?! (...) And we’re talking all the different chains. Some products may be simple, but you really need to know where it is produced, and how polluting it is, whether child labor have been used, and so on and so forth, right?” (Interviewee 5 528-536).

According to this quote, CSOs in CRM partnerships do not only have to investigate the partner company, but also the entire supply chain of the product in question. This makes the screening and the assessment of the partner extensive and as can be interpreted from the above quote, it is difficult to ever secure that the entire chain is properly managed. This in turn, directs attention to the fact that screening and partner assessment, only to some extent provide protection against the threats identified previously in this research phase.

In relation to the risk of being unable to maintain independence and objectivity, the screening of partners is relevant as well. Two interviewees suggested that donations may lead to self-censorship (Interviewee 1; Interviewee 5). Interestingly, the screening and assessment of partners in this type of partnership is suggested to be rather simple (Interviewee 7; Appendix 7). From this it could be suggested that these risks may be higher due to the simpler screening processes. However, this will not be investigated further in this thesis.

In the above, the focus has been on the assessment and screening of potential partners in the preparation stage of the partnership. But this is only one way for the CSO to assess partners and to protect itself against the identified threats. An interviewee argues that the process of building up partnerships and getting to know the partner serves as an additional protective measure. Above, we learned how CRM partnerships and strategic partnerships are assessed to require that the CSO collaborate with the ‘good’ guys and that a more thorough partner assessment to secure that the partner company is in fact belonging to the ‘good’ guys. However, often partnerships start out as more banal and evolve into something deeper over time suggesting that this process of building up the partnership can serve as an additional, ongoing, assessment of the partner. The interviewee argues that building up a strategic partnership is a long term processes evolving over a longer period of time:
“...I think that such a partnership does not start like a super deep strategic trusting collaboration because it is something that needs to be built up over time and we need to see that there is action behind the nice words, that they are persistent and that it isn’t just something they need to profile themselves. So I think that it will always be a long term process.” (Interviewee 9 344-348).

From the quote, it can be suggested that as strategic partnerships evolve over time this works as a protective measure, diminishing the threats to CSO credibility.

**Internal capacity to collaborate with partners**

Above we learned that the interviewees find the choice, and assessment and screening of partners to be important to avoid some of the threats to CSO credibility. This highlights the fact that CSOs collaborating with companies need internal financial and human resources to carry out such assessments of partners. Some interviewees suggest that Forests of the World may not have sufficient resources to assess their commercial partners (Interviewee 3; Interviewee 5). First of all, the low administrative budget of the organization implies that there is a risk of not having sufficient financial resources to make a proper assessment of companies (Interviewee 3). Second, previously we learned that the scientific capacity of the people working and volunteering in Forests of the World is seen as an important aspect of the high credibility of the organization. However, the fact that the organization mainly consists of biologists and people from natural sciences or the field of development work may present a risk to credibility when engaging in CSO-business partnerships. People working in the development field may be experts within this specific field. However, being involved in CSO-business partnerships requires internal human resources knowledgeable on businesses and capable of making a proper assessment of commercial partners and their ability to make ‘green’ improvement, as well as being capable of constructing partnerships and drawing up contracts. Without such resources there is risk that the CSO will be deceived by the company and will contribute to greenwashing (Interviewee 5; Interviewee 10).

In continuation to the assessment of partners, we argue that the degree to which it is assessed that the CSO has the proper financial and human resources to deal with commercial partners will influence the threats. For instance, *cause-related marketing partnerships* and *strategic partnerships* require human and financial capacity to be dealt with properly, and if it is assessed that Forests of the World does not possess such capacity, the risks may be perceived to be higher in these partnerships.
Discussion
In sum, the purpose of this section was to discuss how the internal stakeholders may perceive threats according to the choice of partners; the assessment of partners; and the internal capacity of the CSO to collaborate with private sector partners. We suggested that these partnership strategies have an influence on the threats to CSO credibility. This implies that the way CSOs screen and choose their partners, as well as their capacity to construct sound partnerships, may have an influence on how ‘comfortable’ the internal stakeholders are with different partnerships and how much the partnerships are assessed to present a threat to CSO credibility. Thus, the assessment of partners and the internal capacity of the CSO are considered to be important to the internal stakeholders of Forests of the World. It is an important step to avoid the threats related to the collaborations with commercial partners.

It can be questioned whether these partnership strategies are in fact relieving the threats identified or if the partner assessments to some degree represents a false security. Although making up for an interesting discussion, it is beyond the scope of this thesis to analyze the relation between perceived and actual security from partner assessments and the internal capacity of the CSO. With this section, we suggest that these different strategies to protect CSO credibility from the threats of CSO-business partnerships appear to influence how the internal stakeholders perceive the threats from partnerships.

The fact that these partnership strategies are important to the threats points to a discussion at a more overall level; how the engagement in CSO-business partnerships may prioritize resources away from the core activities and the organizational purpose of the CSO. If the CSO only has limited funds (for instance due to a low administrative budget), but uses a great portion of their funds on partner assessments and on working with partnerships, this may raise the issue of whether the organization is living up to its purpose. Hence, a potential threat of partner assessments is the prioritization of the resources. An interviewee notes how partnerships with the private sector are demanding for a small CSO such as Forests of the World and if the organization is more effective and efficient as a political organization, partnerships may imply that the organization is not living up to its purpose.
“...for several reasons it [CSO-business partnerships] becomes really time consuming and if we are most effective as a political organization but all our time is spent on screening of companies, we may not fulfill our purpose. Then we start threaten ourselves I think” (Interviewee 7 263-266).

Thus, the interviewee highlights the tradeoff of collaborating with companies and the resource demands this puts on the CSO in regards to partner assessment and managing the partnerships as these resources (human as well as financial) cannot be used in the CSO’s other activities such as policy advocacy.

7.3 Research Phase II: Conclusion

This research phase was divided into two parts. In the first part, we mapped the threats to CSO credibility as perceived by the internal stakeholders of Forests of the World and found the following threats: greenwashing; unable to maintain independence and objectivity; lack of transparency; making compromises; being in it for the money; and negative publicity. These threats were found from our primary data analysis, where the interviews with the internal stakeholders was coded, categorized and unitized the data, inspired by the method of template analysis. Each of the threats were described and elaborated on. In the process of identifying threats, we learned that some of these threats were dependent on for instance the company partner, its intentions with the partnership and on how the CSO logo is used in the partnership. These issues were discussed in the second part of this research phase concerning partnership strategies in which it was briefly discussed how the choice and assessment of partners as well as the internal resources of the CSO to deal with commercial partners may have an influence on how the internal stakeholders perceive the threats to CSO credibility. We suggested that these strategies have an influence on the degree to which a specific partnership relation presents a threat to CSO credibility.

The purpose of research phase two was to explore and describe the threats to CSO credibility for CSOs. In the above, we have analyzed the threats which have enabled us to answer our second sub-question: What are the threats to CSO credibility presented by CSO-business partnerships? In the following final research phase, we will use and combine these findings with the findings of research one to enable us to answer our overall research question.
8 Research Phase III: Understanding How CSO Credibility is Threatened

In the first research phase, we mapped the attributes to CSO credibility as assessed by the internal stakeholders of Forests of the World. In the second research phase, we mapped the threats resulting from engagements in CSO-business partnerships as identified by the internal stakeholders. In this chapter containing our final research phase, we will discuss the empirical findings from the previous two research phases to seek to answer our overall research question: How does the engagement in CSO-business partnerships threaten CSO credibility? By answering the research question, the purpose of the chapter is to explain and understand how CSO-business partnerships present a threat to CSO credibility. The chapter will be divided into four sections and a conclusion. In the first section, we will combine the findings from research phase one and two in a table to give an overview of the threats to CSO credibility. This table will provide a frame for the rest of the chapter where we in section two will discuss the identified attributes of CSO credibility and the identified threats from engagements in CSO-business partnerships. In the third section, we will discuss the attributes which have not been mentioned to be threatened. In the fourth section, we will discuss the how the threats relate to the theoretical understanding of CSO credibility. It will also be discussed what the possible consequences hereof are. Finally, we will present our conclusions to this chapter.

8.1 Combining research phase one and two
In this section, we will discuss how the threats identified in research two relate to CSO credibility as understood from research phase one. Thus, we will combine the findings from our two previous research phases to enhance our understanding of the threats to CSO credibility. First, we will briefly summarize our findings from research phase one. Subsequently, we will hold the threats against this understanding of CSO credibility and present these in a table.

In research phase one, we gained an in-depth understanding of CSO credibility as understood by the internal stakeholders of Forests of the World. This understanding was based on empirical data from our interviews through which we identified a number of attributes contributing to CSO credibility. This empirical understanding was informed by the theoretical concepts of legitimacy (pragmatic, moral and cognitive) and accountability (program and process). A summary of this understanding of
CSO credibility is presented in the first two columns of Table 8.1 on the page 88 (the first two columns of Table 8.1 was first presented and explained at page 65 in research phase one). In research phase two we identified the following six threats to CSO credibility: greenwashing; unable to maintain independence and objectivity; being in it for the money; lack of transparency; making compromises; and negative publicity. In the table below, the threats are presented in the first row (vertically).

By combining the findings from the two research phases in a single table (Table 8.1) we will be able to analyze and discuss which specific attribute of CSO credibility are affected by the different threats. It should be noted that we, as researchers, have combined the findings from the two research phases and that it is our analysis and discussion of the findings from the two previous research phases that is illustrated in the table below. The first column (horizontally) presents the theoretical concepts used to explain our understanding of CSO credibility and the second column presents the attributes of CSO credibility. The following six columns are each dedicated to a threat; the third column presenting greenwashing, the forth column presenting unable to maintain independence and objectivity and so on. In the next section, we will discuss how each of the attributes of CSO credibility is threatened by the different threats. Where we identify a threat to a specific attribute of the CSO, this has been marked with an \( \times \). Some attributes are only threatened indirectly; these have been marked with a grey (grey) and will be discussed later. The table can be read horizontally or vertically. By reading it vertically, each row can be examined to see if an attribute of CSO credibility is being threatened and in that case, which threats will be threatening this specific attribute. To give an example, the attribute independence is threatened by four threats (four \( \times \)'s marked). By looking at the columns for these markings, we find that the threats to independence are unable to maintain independence and objectivity; lack of transparency; making compromises; and being in it for the money. By reading the table horizontally, the table illustrates which attributes of CSO credibility is threatened by a specific threat.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theoretical understanding of CSO credibility</th>
<th>Empirical understanding of attributes to CSO credibility</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pragmatic legitimacy</strong></td>
<td>Organizational structure and participatory decision-making process (A)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moral legitimacy</td>
<td>Mission, vision and organizational purpose</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Independence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Low administrative budget</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cognitive legitimacy</td>
<td>The voluntary foundation (x) (x)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dedication to the cause (x)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Watchdog role (from Constructive solutions A)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accountability</td>
<td>Communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Documentation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Programme accountability</td>
<td>Transparency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Process accountability</td>
<td>Impact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sustainability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Constructive solutions (B)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Realistic objectives and targets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Organizational structure and participatory decision-making process (B)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Size</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Beneficiary participation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Scientific capacity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Presence in Latin America</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Different conclusions can be drawn from the table above. The table illustrates that several threats are each threatening the same attributes of CSO credibility. As an example, the attribute *mission, vision and organizational purpose* is threatened by the following threats: greenwashing; making compromises; and to be in it for the money. This emphasizes the interrelatedness of the threats discussed in research phase two. Moreover, it becomes apparent from the table that not all attributes to CSO credibility, identified in research phase one, are threatened when CSOs engage in CSO-business partnerships, i.e. those attributes not marked by any x. We will now move on to discuss first the attributes of CSO credibility directly being threatened, and second the attributes of CSO credibility that are not threatened or only indirectly threatened.

### 8.2 Attributes to CSO credibility threatened by CSO-business partnerships

From the table it becomes evident that only the following attributes are found to be threatened: mission, vision and organizational purpose; independence; watchdog role; transparency; and communication. In research phase two, it was found that the threats were highly interrelated; this will similarly become apparent in this section.

**Mission, vision and organizational purpose** is threatened by several of the threats. First, *greenwashing* presents a threat to this attribute because the CSO, by partnering with companies, may appear to vouch for companies and thus contribute to the greenwashing of companies. In this way, the CSO may be used against its organizational purpose to greenwash companies that buy indulgence by partnering with CSOs as opposed to changing their practices. If the CSO contributes to greenwashing by vouching for ‘bad’ companies, the CSO will indirectly contribute to aggravating environmental problems, thereby working against its organizational purpose as an environmental organization. Other threats indirectly threaten the mission, vision, and organizational purpose. This is the case for *making compromises* and *being in it for the money*. As mentioned in research phase two, these threats are highly interrelated. If the CSO engages in partnerships for the money there is a risk that this may lead to compromises to ensure the money from the partnership. Thus, being in it for the money presents a risk to mission, vision, and organization purpose if, and only if, this makes the CSO compromise with these.

**Independence** is similarly threatened by several threats. Obviously, the independence of the organization is threatened if the CSO, as a result of its engagement in CSO-business partnerships, become unable to maintain its independence and objectivity. As argued by the interviewees, this is a threat if the CSO find it difficult to withdraw from the partnership as a result of the dependence on the resources from the partner. This threat is related to that of *making compromises* as a CSO who
has difficulties withdrawing from a partnership may be inclined to make compromises in order to make the partnership work. In addition, the risks of *being in it for the money* presents a threat as it can be argued that if the CSO’s main motive for the partnership is to generate income, the independence may be compromised. Finally, the risk of *lack of transparency* presents a threat to the independence of the CSO in a more indirect manner. Arguably, if CSOs are not transparent in their dealings with the private sector, it may raise questions about whether the CSO is in the pocket of the partner company and thereby concerns about the independence and objectivity of the CSO.

The **watchdog role** is also being threatened. As described in the case description (Chapter 5), the activities of a watchdog include campaigns to make companies comply with existing rules and regulations. In the case of Forests of the World, the organization keeps an eye on the companies promoting themselves as green and in cases where it is found that a company is merely green in its marketing, Forests of the World report these to the consumer ombudsman for violation of marketing regulations. As described, Forests of the World is actively fighting greenwashing in its watchdog campaigns towards companies. Therefore, the risk of contributing to *greenwashing* when engaging in CSO-business partnerships is a serious threat to this role. An important characteristic of a watchdog is its independence from political and economic interests. Thus, it becomes clear that the watchdog role of the organization is threatened, if engagements in CSO-business partnerships make the CSO *unable to maintain independence and objectivity*. This is the case for instance if the CSO enact self-censorship as a result of its engagement in CSO-business partnerships and the possible empathy that is likely to occur between the CSO and the private sector partner.

**Communication** was found to be an attribute to CSO credibility in research phase one, and from research phase two, we find that there are several threats to this attribute. First, as part of the threat *greenwashing*, it was mentioned that CSOs may appear to *vouch for bad companies* when they engage in collaboration with these. This can become a threat to the communication of the CSO, because it may confuse the environmental message the CSO wishes to communicate if the company does not have an environmental profile. This may, in turn, threaten the CSO’s image as a credible organization. Second, *lack of transparency* presents a threat to the communication of Forests of the World as a lack of communication can be a hindrance to effective communication. Third, *making compromises* was mentioned to threaten communication because Forests of the World when engaging in partnerships sometimes has to make compromises with its communication. For the partner company, the communication of a partnership is often important because CSO-business partnerships can be a means to enhance public relations and sales (Wymer & Samu 2003). For this
reason, Forests of the World sometimes has to make compromises with how the logo is used in the communication of the partnerships and with how the scientific material of the organization’s work is communicated because this is very heavy and technical and may disconnect potential customers. Finally, negative publicity can threaten the communication of the organization. In case of negative publicity, Forests of the World will find it difficult to get their message across.

**Transparency** was identified as another attribute of CSO credibility from research phase one. The risk of lack of transparency presents a threat to transparency. Without transparency it is difficult, internally as well as externally, to understand what is happening in the organization; who are making the decisions; where the financial contributions come from; and how these are spent. As found previously, transparency in partnerships may be difficult to achieve.

Above, we have analyzed and discussed how the threats identified in research phase two relate to the attributes to CSO credibility identified in research phase one. As was seen from Table 8.1, we find that only the following attributes are threatened: mission, vision and organizational purpose; independence; watchdog role; communication; and transparency. In the following, we will analyze and discuss the attributes that are not considered to be threatened when CSOs engage in CSO-business partnerships.

### 8.3 Attributes to CSO credibility not threatened by CSO-business partnerships

As can be found in Table 8.1, we argue that a number of attributes are not threatened by the CSO’s engagement in CSO-business partnerships. These attributes of CSO credibility are: organizational structure and participatory decision-making process; low administrative budget; impact; the voluntary foundation; dedication to the cause; documentation; sustainability; constructive solutions; realistic objectives and targets; size; beneficiary participation; scientific capacity; and presence in Latin America.

By examining the attributes that are not threatened when CSOs engage in CSO-business partnership, we find certain patterns of what characterizes these ‘remaining’ attributes. First, some of the attributes are related solely to Forests of the World’s development projects in Latin America. This goes for sustainability, beneficiary participation, and presence in Latin America. These attributes relate less to the activities in Denmark, including Forests of the World’s engagements in CSO-business partnerships. Second, other attributes we argue not to be at risk when engaging in CSO-business partnerships are those attributes relating to the human resources in the organization, i.e. the voluntary foundation, dedication to the cause and scientific capacity. These attributes similarly have little relation to the
engagement in CSO-business partnerships. It can be argued though that these three attributes may be indirectly threatened if the CSO loses overall credibility as a result of their engagements in CSO-business partnerships. This would in turn make it difficult to attract and maintain the volunteers and employees essential for the organization. In contrast, it can be argued that some of the attributes of CSO credibility that are not threatened are actually attributes which are supported by the engagement in CSO-business projects. These attributes are impact and constructive solutions. Interestingly, CSO-business partnership actually contributes to these attributes of CSO credibility. Through involvement in CSO-business partnerships the CSO is considered to be able to contribute to making an impact through the finances received and by influencing the company in its practices. This pragmatic and constructive approach to companies is considered important to CSO credibility. We will return to this discussion later.

Other attributes we argue not to be threatened are the following: organizational structure and participatory decision-making processes, low administrative budget, size, and documentation. Arguably, the first three are characteristics that relate to the establishment of Forests of the World and how it is driven and therefore, have little relation to the CSO-business partnerships. Finally, documentation is much related to impact, in the sense that documentation is where the organization demonstrates its results. However, documentation is also related to transparency as it is considered important by the interviewees that the CSO is transparent in its documentation of results. Thus, documentation may be indirectly threatened if transparency is threatened.

8.4 Discussion: Understanding the threats to CSO credibility

Above, we first discussed which attributes of CSO credibility are threatened by CSO-business partnerships and second, which attributes of CSO credibility are not threatened. These discussions were based on the empirical found understanding of CSO credibility from research phase one, i.e. the attributes to CSO credibility. However, the different attributes can each be explained in terms of different aspects of the theoretical understanding of CSO credibility, i.e. the different forms of legitimacy and accountability.

From Table 8.1, we find that the attributes that we argue to be threatened when CSOs engage in CSO-business partnerships can mainly be explained in terms of overall accountability as well as moral and cognitive legitimacy. The attributes which, on the other hand, were not threatened belong mainly to pragmatic legitimacy as well as to program and process accountability. In the following, we will discuss first the ones that are not threatened, and second, we will discuss what it means that it is exactly the abovementioned aspects of CSO credibility that are threatened.
Pragmatic legitimacy, program and process accountability

No threats were assessed to present a risk to pragmatic legitimacy. In this regard it should be noted that in research phase one, pragmatic legitimacy only relates to one attribute of CSO credibility, namely organizational structure and participatory decision-making. The possible reasons hereof have already been discussed and we will not go into further detail with pragmatic legitimacy here.

Program accountability refers to the effectiveness of projects and programs, and process accountability concerns the efficiency of the implementation process. It may be argued that these aspects of credibility have little to do with CSO-business partnerships and that these therefore are not being threatened by the engagement in CSO-business partnership. As mentioned earlier, process accountability relates to the activities in Latin America and to some of the characteristics of the organization as well as to the scientific capacity. Because these attributes are not assessed to be threatened, process accountability is not assessed to be threatened. The reasons hereof have been discussed above.

Some of the attributes, particularly within program accountability, are highly related to the opportunities that partnerships present to the CSO. CSOs have different motivations for engaging in CSO-business partnerships. In the case of Forests of the World, their purpose with CSO-business partnership are amongst others to influence company attitudes within the key areas of Forests of the World; to run campaigns and to promote the key issue of the organization. It can be argued that with these purposes for their engagements in CSO-business partnerships, such partnerships may actually contribute to program accountability. As found from the above, impact and constructive solutions are attributes of CSO credibility that are located within program accountability, and it can be argued that CSO-business partnerships can contribute to these two attributes and thereby also contribute to program accountability. CSO-business partnerships can provide constructive solutions as CSOs, by being involved in partnerships, may influence companies to improve their practices for instance in terms of using FSC certified timber in their supply chain. For Forests of the World, companies are considered part of the solution to solving the problems of forest devastation (Interviewee 7) and it is assessed by an interviewee that greater impact can be reached by influencing the companies:

“...Our projects make up for just a very small part of what it takes to preserve biodiversity and the forests. It makes a much larger change, if you change the way the companies are run” (Interviewee 4 300-302).
And she continues,

“...if it is a large company, they buy much more timber than our project areas will ever influence. It just makes much more of a difference” (Interviewee 4 319-320).

From these quotes, it can be found that the development projects in themselves cannot solve the world’s problems. CSO-business partnerships, and in particular those in close collaboration with companies (such as strategic partnerships), have the potential to make a great impact and thereby enable Forests of the World to fulfill its purpose to a higher degree. Several other interviewees support the fact that strategic partnerships is the partnership relation in which CSO can develop the company more and further (Interviewee 12; Interviewee 1; Interviewee 13). Thus, the opportunities for CSO credibility in terms of impact and constructive solutions are considered important in CSO-business partnerships. Therefore, it can be suggested that CSOs’ engagements in CSO-business partnerships do not threaten program accountability but may instead contribute to program accountability. This implies that the opportunities and threats of CSO-business partnerships should be weighed.

In sum, we have found that pragmatic legitimacy as well as program and process accountability were threatened by CSOs’ engagements in partnerships. Instead, it was found that some of the attributes of particularly program accountability were actually strengthened by the engagement in partnerships. In this way, the benefits and drawbacks of the CSO-business partnerships can be weighed and discussed. Next, we will discuss the potential negative consequences of the risk to accountability overall and to moral and cognitive legitimacy.

**Accountability overall, moral and cognitive legitimacy**

First, the *accountability* of the organization is at risk as it was found that the attributes communication and transparency are threatened. CSOs are accountable for their activities and practices to different stakeholders both upwards, downwards, inwards and outwards. If the organization is not capable of demonstrating accountability as a consequence of for instance unclear communication or lack of transparency, the stakeholders cannot see how and why decision are made, or on what funds have been used. In effect, they may cut back on their support to the CSO. For the organization internally, lack of accountability makes it difficult to learn from past experiences and improve, thus making it more difficult to meet the mission in a better way (Najam 1996a; Edwards & Hulme 1998a; Austin 2000a; Slim 2002). Therefore, accountability is an important aspect of credibility. In this regard, it is important to acknowledge that accountability means different things to different stakeholders and that we, when assessing that accountability is being threatened, keep in mind that the focus of this
thesis is the internal stakeholders. Therefore, we recognize that the accountability claims required by for instance donors, may be different from the accountability claims of the internal stakeholders.

In addition to the above, we have previously learned how accountability is an important means to achieve moral and pragmatic legitimacy (see Chapter 4). To be able to evaluate the actions and work of the CSO, stakeholders (internal and external) need accountability to be demonstrated. Thus, accountability becomes a means to demonstrate ‘what’s in it for me’ (pragmatic legitimacy) as well as to demonstrate whether the organization is doing ‘the right thing’ (moral legitimacy). If, for example, a CSO does not meet its accountability claims, it is difficult to judge whether the actions of the organization are the ‘right thing to do’, and therefore to assign moral legitimacy to the organization. Therefore, inadequate accountability practices can also have an indirect negative effect on both pragmatic and moral legitimacy of the CSO.

Second, moral legitimacy is not only indirectly threatened through poor accountability practices, but also directly threatened when the CSO engages in CSO-business partnerships. From Table 8.1, we found that CSO-business partnerships present a risk to the following two attributes belonging to moral legitimacy: mission, vision and organizational purpose and independence. The fact that CSO-business partnerships present a threat to these two aspects is important because these present the ‘core’ of the organization in the sense that they are part of the Articles of Association of Forests of the World (Forests of the World 2010). As mentioned, diminished moral legitimacy entails that stakeholders (internal and external) evaluate that what the CSO does is not ‘the right thing to do’. In turn, the CSO may find it difficult to mobilize the people, resources and loyalty necessary to support their cause (Suchman 1995).

Third, we found that cognitive legitimacy is being threatened as the attribute watchdog role lies within this concept. In the theory chapter (Chapter 4), we learned that cognitive legitimacy depends not on evaluations but rather on the degree to which an organizational form is taken for granted and the extent to which the CSO conforms to established models and standards. The role of watchdog organizations has traditionally been viewed as distinct and most often in opposition to the private sector. However, the increasing engagement in CSO-business partnerships may challenge this traditional role. In the case description (Chapter 5), we learned that Forests of the World has activities all along Lindenberg’s (2001) continuum of CSO-business relations, from suspicion to interaction through the philanthropic, transactional and integrative stages. While CSO-business partnerships belong to the three latter stages, the two first stages are closely related to that of seeing the private sector as ‘an enemy’ and thereby acting as a watchdog. In this way, Forests of the World
have different roles in their relations with companies. When the engagement in CSO-business partnerships presents a threat to the watchdog role, it may be questioned, whether in fact a CSO can span all of the stages of Lindenberg’s continuum, i.e. if the same CSO can have a more conventional role of being suspicious towards companies while at the same time being a partner with companies in a partnership of the integrative stage. It can be argued that the two extremes of Lindenberg’s continuum, suspicion in the one end and the integrative stage in the other, to a high degree are located within different institutional logics and that it is difficult to work within both at the same time as a result of institutional pluralism. In this regard, it should be noted that the watchdog role in itself can threaten the establishment of CSO-business partnerships as companies may be reluctant to engage in partnerships with a CSO that potentially will criticize them publicly in their capacity as watchdogs. These are consequences a watchdog like Forests of the World should consider when they engage in CSO-business partnerships.

From our discussion, we find that many of the attributes of CSO credibility threatened by the CSO’s engagement in CSO-business partnerships can be explained in terms of moral legitimacy and cognitive legitimacy. The fact that the engagement in CSO-business partnerships threatens particularly these two aspects of legitimacy provides insights into how the organization can and cannot work with credibility. We will shortly present examples of such strategies of how to work with legitimacy to give an impression of what it means to the organization that exactly moral and cognitive legitimacy are potentially threatened.

Legitimacy scholars discuss different strategies for organizations to pursue legitimacy. We have chosen to focus on the strategies of Suchman (1995), for others see for example Oliver (1991) and Ashforth and Gibbs (1990). Suchman (1995) suggests strategies for how to ‘gain’, ‘maintain’ or ‘repair’ respectively pragmatic, moral and cognitive legitimacy. While gaining legitimacy is relevant for organizations that are for instance embarking on new activities, maintaining legitimacy is about fending off challenges to legitimacy such as miscues and external shocks. Repairing legitimacy is mainly about reacting to some kind of crisis. In these strategic terms, it could be argued that Forests of the World are to gain legitimacy in the area of collaborating with businesses, maintain legitimacy while collaborating, and repair legitimacy if they face some of the abovementioned threats. Suchman assesses that strategies to maintain legitimacy are easier than strategies to gain legitimacy, because once established, legitimacy is to some extent taken for granted and therefore it does not take much activity to maintain it. Once lost however, it may be difficult to repair as these strategies often are a reaction to an unforeseen crisis which only becomes apparent after for instance a withdrawal of
resources or support. Because repair strategies happen as a result of a reaction to a crisis rather than proactively, it may be too late to actually repair the legitimacy of the organization. If this is the case, it becomes a matter of re-gaining legitimacy rather than repairing.

In addition, Suchman suggests that the strategies to gain, maintain and repair legitimacy become more difficult as one move from pragmatic legitimacy to moral legitimacy and finally to cognitive legitimacy. For instance, a strategy to gain moral legitimacy is producing concrete outcomes which the stakeholders can assess and evaluate. This strategy is similar to that of gaining pragmatic legitimacy. However, gaining moral legitimacy is more difficult as the moral outcomes that are to be produced must conform to principled ideals, which can be difficult to measure and document. Cognitive legitimacy, on the other hand, is intangible and tacit, and is based on cognition rather than evaluations making it more difficult to gain. Once gained, though, it is more profound and self-sustaining than the other forms of legitimacy. However, if the ‘taken-for-grantedness’ of the (role of the) CSO is damaged it may also be highly difficult to repair.

A strategy to maintain legitimacy mentioned by Suchman is that of ‘protect accomplishment’, which entails “…policing internal operations to prevent miscues” (Suchman 1995:595). Previously, we have discussed how the executive committee and some of the employees of Forests of the World currently are in the process of drafting and discussing internal guidelines for collaborations with the private sector. These are meant both as a means to become more proactive in collaborations but also to guide the practices to avoid missteps and to avoid discrediting the watchdog role of the organization. A draft version of the guidelines can be found in Appendix 7. The guidelines can be seen as an attempt to maintain legitimacy while engaging in collaborations with the private sector as the guidelines ‘police internal operations’. In this regard, Suchman notes that CSOs should be cautious of their activities to try to maintain legitimacy, especially if the organization enjoys cognitive legitimacy because the CSO may ‘over do’ such efforts: “When legitimacy is even partly cognitive in nature, any overt attention – including supportive attention – may have the detrimental side effect of problematizing comprehensibility and disrupting taken-for-grantedness” (Suchman 1995:596). Thus, if the CSO is ‘overdoing it’ and trying too hard to address especially cognitive legitimacy, the organization may risk that people start questioning the taken-for-grantedness of their legitimacy. As mentioned above, the taken-for-grantedness of cognitive legitimacy is difficult to repair once it has been lost.

Regarding Forests of the World, if cognitive legitimacy is highly difficult to repair once lost, even protective measures such as internal guidelines and assessments of partner companies may be of
little help if legitimacy is damaged. This adds to the discussion as to whether a watchdog can and should engage in CSO-business partnerships if doing so means that they risk jeopardizing the cognitive legitimacy they enjoy.

Thus, Suchman (1995) assesses that the identification of what aspects of legitimacy the CSO is facing, is important for how the CSO can deal with it. It is beyond the scope of the thesis to provide detailed strategies for how to deal with the legitimacy challenges, however, this section illustrates the importance of being aware of what aspects of legitimacy is threatened from the CSO’s engagement in CSO-business partnerships to understand how to deal with such challenges.

In relation to Forests of the World, we keep in mind that the strategies are proposed for the organization, i.e. the internal stakeholders, to carry out to achieve legitimacy with the external stakeholders. In this regard, it should be noted that the threats analyzed in this thesis are those perceived by the internal stakeholders and therefore not necessarily what external stakeholders would perceive as threats. However, we argue that practices on how to work with legitimacy are important for the internal stakeholders as well.

8.5 Research Phase III: Conclusion
In this chapter, we have combined the empirical findings from the two previous research phases in a discussion of how CSO-business partnerships present a threat to CSO credibility. The chapter was divided into four sections. In the first section, we combined the findings from research phase one and two in a table to provide an overview of threats to CSO credibility. This table provided a frame for the discussions in the remaining of the chapter. In section two, we discussed the attributes that were threatened by CSO-business partnerships as found from the table. From these discussions it became apparent that only the following attributes of CSO credibility are being threatened when CSOs engage in CSO-business partnerships: mission, vision and organizational purpose, independence, watchdog role, communication; and transparency. In the third section, we discussed the attributes which were not found to be threatened by CSO-business partnerships. For some of these attributes it was suggested, however, that some can be indirectly threatened if the CSO jeopardize its credibility, in effect losing the support of for instance volunteers. In the final section, we discussed how the threats relate to the theoretical understanding of CSO credibility. During the course of the discussion, we learned that only some attributes of CSO credibility are threatened by CSO-business partnerships. The same is the case for the theoretical understanding of CSO credibility where pragmatic legitimacy as well as program and process accountability were found not to be at risk. In a discussion of these, it was found that CSO-business partnerships could indeed present an
opportunity to *program accountability* rather than a threat to this aspect of CSO credibility. Only *accountability* overall as well as *moral* and *cognitive legitimacy* were found to be at risk when CSOs engage in partnerships. The consequences of jeopardizing these aspects of CSO credibility was discussed, and it was among other things questioned to what extent a watchdog can engage in collaborations with the private sector.

The conclusions from this and the former chapters have implications for both our case organization, Forests of the World, and for the civil society sector at large. In addition, the findings have implications for the literature within which we have placed our research. The implications for research and practice will be discussed in the following chapter, before we move on to our final concluding chapter.
9 Implications for Research and Practice

In this section we will present the implications of our findings from our analysis for research and practice. We will first present the implications for Forests of the World and subsequently the implications for research on CSO credibility and CSO-business partnerships.

9.1 Implications for practice

The findings of the thesis at hand have implications for Forests of the World and other CSOs working with the private sector. In the following we will present some of these.

First, we suggest that the mapping of attributes to CSO credibility can be used as an introduction to an internal discussion in Forests of the World about which aspects of credibility are assessed to be more important to the internal stakeholders. In our analysis, we have identified a broad range of attributes that the internal stakeholders assess to contribute the credibility of Forests of the World. The mapping of these attributes was inclusive to provide a broad picture of what CSO credibility meant to the different stakeholders and thus, the mapping provides sound basis for an internal discussion. We argue that it is important to shed light on what exactly the internal stakeholders assess to contribute to CSO credibility because it is the internal stakeholders who shape the direction of the organization, both in relation to CSO-business partnerships as well as in relation to other areas of the organization. Thus, for the internal stakeholders to be aware of their priorities regarding CSO credibility is important in the discussion of for instance how the organization should engage in CSO-business partnerships. As an example, we have found that certain aspects of CSO credibility are considered to be at risk when the organization engages in CSO-business partnerships, while other aspects are either not threatened or may even be strengthened by the engagement with private sector partners. Therefore, we suggest that being aware of the aspects of CSO credibility which are threatened, not threatened or even supported, will contribute to the internal discussion of how to collaborate with the private sector.

Second, we suggest that the different relations between CSOs and businesses, from suspicion to integrative collaboration, presented by Lindenberg’s continuum can be used by Forests of the World to discuss partnership strategies. The focus on threats to particularly cognitive legitimacy raised the question as to whether an organization in a credible manner can be a watchdog as well as a close
collaboration partner, thus, whether an organization can engage in activities all along Lindenberg’s continuum. Forests of the World are currently successfully involved in activities that can be characterized as ranging from suspicion to integrative partnerships, thus playing different roles in their relation to companies. The organization seeks to protect itself in the collaborative activities by using a range of protective measures such as careful choice of partners (only the ‘good’ guys) through partner assessments and screenings as well as drawing up of contracts. This suggests that with activities scattered all along the continuum, partnership strategies must be designed keeping in mind how one role in relation to companies may potentially harm another role.

Forests of the World are in the midst of discussions concerning internal guidelines for working with CSO-business partnerships. However, as suggested by Suchman (1995) too obvious attention to particularly cognitive legitimacy may disrupt the taken-for-grantedness. Thus, in spite of the suggestions on how to be aware of the credibility of the CSO, we also suggest that Forests of the World should be careful not to ‘over do’ their efforts to guard credibility in CSO-business partnerships.

The above implications to Forests of the World can serve as inspiration for other CSOs working in the field of CSO-business partnerships. As the thesis includes a thorough description of the case organization, Forests of the World, other CSOs can use the findings of the thesis to assess the common traits and dissimilarities with Forests of the World. The thesis can therefore serve as a point of departure for similar discussions in other civil society organizations. Moreover, organizations that find no common traits with Forests of the World or that may wish to examine credibility from the perspective of other stakeholders may use our methods to conduct similar research to investigate what contributes to their credibility.

### 9.2 Implications for research

We will now move on to present some of the implications of our findings to research on CSO credibility and CSO-business partnerships.

As found in our review of the literature, *credibility* is a highly complex and subjective term. It is assessed by stakeholders and embedded within context and time. With this thesis, we have explored and explained attributes of CSO credibility based on empirical data to enhance an understanding of a very complex term. We have gained an understanding of CSO credibility as understood by the internal stakeholders of Forests of the World. Throughout the thesis we have emphasized the complexity of the concept of credibility, and that the understanding of CSO credibility is limited to
Forests of the World in a specific point in time. However, by having thoroughly described the case organization, the scene is set for other researchers to investigate CSO credibility either by using our methods or by using our findings to compare, test and develop theories from.

By changing the context of this research, i.e. the case organization and the interviewees, different conclusions may be reached as to what CSO credibility is. However, further research may also provide suggestions for generalizations. To give an example, it could be investigated whether the internal stakeholders in other small, voluntary-based, developmental or environmental CSOs share some of the same attributes to CSO credibility as Forests of the World. Thus, further research taking point of departure for instance in the traits of Forests of the World could be used to investigate the common traits and differences in the understanding of CSO credibility for other CSOs with similar characteristics.

Above, we have presented some of the implications of this thesis to research on CSO credibility. Now we will move on to present the implications to the research and literature concerning CSO-business partnerships. In our review of the literature on CSO-business partnerships, we found that current partnership literature has focused on the company perspective (Berger, Cunningham & Drumwright 2004; Neergaard, Jensen & Pedersen 2009); that the partnership literature is often normative; and that these normative prescriptions are often poorly founded in empirical data (Neergaard, Jensen & Pedersen 2009). In this thesis, we have explored, described and explained, how CSO credibility may be threatened when a CSO engages in partnerships with private sector partners. As found from our review of the literature, this is a topic for which little empirical evidence exists and therefore, the thesis contributes with empirical based research on the topic from a CSO perspective. In our analysis, we have identified the threats to CSO credibility. This has enabled an enhanced understanding of what the internal stakeholders of Forests of the World assess as threats to credibility and which aspects of CSO credibility are threatened. As stated above, CSO credibility is highly context-specific, and may be difficult to generalize from. However, taking our choice of case and choice of interviewees into account, we find that our identification of threats and our discussion on how certain aspects of CSO credibility is threatened can contribute to literature and possibly form basis for further research. For instance, researchers can use our methods in other CSOs bearing some of the same traits as our case organization to discuss whether similarities can suggest a theory on how CSO-business partnership present threats to CSO credibility.
In this chapter we have presented some of the implications of our findings for Forests of the World and civil society at large as well as for research. In the following and final chapter we will present our conclusions.
10 Conclusion

In this thesis, we have undertaken an explorative study of threats to CSO credibility when CSOs engage in CSO-business partnerships with the aim to answer our research question:

*How do CSO-business partnerships present a threat to the credibility of civil society organizations?*

To answer the research question we undertook a case study of the small environmental CSO, Forests of the World. Conducting a case study was chosen as our research design because this approach allowed for a thorough understanding of the context in which our studied phenomenon was embedded. We found this appropriate due to the complex and subjective nature of our research question. Empirical data was gathered through in-depth semi-structured interviews with some of the internal stakeholder of Forests of the World, more specifically employees, volunteers and members of the executive committee. A description of the case organization provided a frame for the subsequent analysis and discussion.

Based on knowledge gaps identified through a review of the literature on both CSO credibility and CSO-business partnerships, we found it necessary to address two sub-questions to be able to answer the research question.

The first sub-question to be addressed was *What is CSO credibility?* Little empirical evidence addresses this issue, thus in the first research phase we inductively explored the concept of CSO credibility as perceived by the internal stakeholders of Forests of the World based on semi-structured interviews conducted with members of this stakeholder group. It was found necessary to unfold and operationalize the concept of CSO credibility to be able to answer our research question, i.e. in order to understand how CSO credibility is being threatened we must first know what CSO credibility is. Thus, in research phase one we thoroughly mapped the attributes to CSO credibility identified from our interviews by coding the collected data, and analyzing it using template analysis. A summary of the mapped attributes can be found in
Table 6.1 at page 58. The empirically based mapping of CSO credibility was subsequently discussed against a preliminary theoretical understanding of CSO credibility as consisting of accountability and legitimacy derived from the review of the literature. This allowed us to inform our empirical understanding of CSO credibility and to find further explanations for the attributes to CSO credibility. On the basis of inconsistencies between data and theory, the different attributes mentioned by the interviewees were re-grouped according to how the different attributes to CSO credibility could be explained in terms of legitimacy and accountability. It was found that the identified attributes of CSO credibility could be explained in terms of pragmatic, moral and cognitive legitimacy as well as process and program accountability. Following this research phase, our understanding of the concept of CSO credibility was referring to the combined theoretical and empirical understanding found in this research phase summarized in Table 6.3 at page 65.

The second sub-question we found necessary to address in order to answer our overall research question was What are the threats to CSO credibility presented by CSO business partnerships? Again, the sub-question was identified on the basis of our review of the literature in which we found that the existing literature only dealt with this issue sporadically and in normative articles poorly grounded in empirical data. However, to be able to discuss how the threats are threats to CSO credibility, we need first to explore what indeed the threats are. Thus, the second sub-question was addressed in research phase two, where we inductively explored threats to CSO credibility by mapping the threats as perceived by the internal stakeholders of Forests of the World. We found the following threats to CSO credibility when the CSO engage in CSO-business partnerships: greenwashing, unable to maintain independence and objectivity, lack of transparency, making compromises, being in it for the money, and negative publicity. These threats were presented in Table 7.1 at page 79. In the process of identifying threats, we learned that some of these threats were dependent
on for instance the company partner, its intentions with the partnership and on how the CSO logo is used in the partnership. These were discussed in the second part of this research phase.

Having now explored both what CSO credibility is and what the threats from CSO-business partnerships are, as perceived by the internal stakeholders of Forests of the World, the third and final research phase sat forth to discuss the two preceding research phases to explain and understand how CSO credibility is threatened by CSO-business partnerships and which particular aspects of CSO credibility is at risk when the CSO engages in CSO-business partnerships. We combined the findings from research phase one and two in a table to provide an overview of the threats to CSO credibility, see Table 8.1 at page 88. The table provided a frame for the discussions in the remaining of the chapter. On the basis of these discussions and the two preceding chapters, we suggest that only some attributes to CSO credibility are at risk when the CSOs engage in CSO-business partnerships. These were *mission, vision and organizational purpose, independence, watchdog role, transparency, and communication*. Consequently, only some aspects of the theoretical understanding of CSO credibility are threatened when the CSO engages in partnerships while others are not threatened. *Pragmatic legitimacy* as well as *program and process accountability* were found not to be at risk. These were discussed and it was found that CSO-business partnerships could actually strengthen program accountability rather than threatening this aspect of CSO credibility. The following aspects of CSO credibility where on the other hand threatened: *accountability, moral legitimacy and cognitive legitimacy*. The fact that it is these aspects of CSO credibility which are threatened by CSO-business partnerships has consequences for the CSO. We suggested that it may be questioned to what extent a watchdog like Forests of the World can engage in collaborations with actors from the private sector which also constantly criticizes companies if doing so risks jeopardizing the cognitive legitimacy the CSO enjoys. The taken-for-grantedness of cognitive legitimacy can be difficult to repair once damaged and even trying to maintain this type of legitimacy may risk jeopardizing it if it is overdone.

In our final chapter, we discussed the implications of our research for practice and research and suggested that both our case organization, Forests of the World and the civil society sector at large, as well as other researchers could draw on our findings for further discussions and research on both what contributes to CSO credibility, and how CSO credibility is threatened by CSO-business partnerships.
References


Carothers, T. 1999, "Civil Society: Think Again", Foreign Policy, no. 117, pp. 18-29.


Waddell, S. & Brown, I.D. 1997, Fostering intersectoral partnering: a guide to promoting cooperation among government, business, and civil society actors, Institute for development research (IDR), Boston, MA.


Appendices

APPENDIX 1: Executive Summary ii

APPENDIX 2: List of Forests of the World’s partnership engagements 113

APPENDIX 3: List of interviewees 116

APPENDIX 4: Example of interview guides 118

APPENDIX 5: Transcripts and summaries of interviews 128

APPENDIX 6: Audio recordings of interviews 128

APPENDIX 7: Draft version of Forests of the World’s guidelines for business collaborations 128

APPENDIX 8: Example of how we have categorized data 128

The following appendices are included on the enclosed CD:

APPENDIX 5: Transcripts and summaries of interviews
APPENDIX 6: Audio recordings of interviews
APPENDIX 7: Draft version of Forests of the World’s guidelines for business collaborations
APPENDIX 8: Example of how we have categorized data

Please note that the appendices on the enclosed CD are confidential.
APPENDIX 2: List of Forests of the World’s partnership engagements

This appendix will present the partnerships of Forests of the World. The appendix is based on interviews and meetings with Forests of the World as well as relevant homepages and public available information. On the homepage of Forests of the World, some CSO-business partnerships are only mentioned by name (http://verdensskove.org/tak). It should be noted that the list should not be considered exhaustive encompassing all collaborations with the private sector. From the interviews and meetings it became apparent that few if any has a clear overview of all collaborations with the private sector. Below is a list of the collaborations which have been mentioned and confirmed by several people in the organization.

Advance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Partnership type:</th>
<th>Corporate volunteering</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Partnership description:</td>
<td>The advertisement agency Advance provides aid and sparring for free in relation to campaigns and the communication of Forests of the World. Specifically in relation to the launch of the change of name from Nepenthes to Forests of the World, Advance helped Forests of the World with the new logo and the following campaign.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relevant sources:</td>
<td><a href="http://www.advance.dk/">http://www.advance.dk/</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

FDB and Coop

| Duration: | 2003-2011 |
| Partnership type: | Strategic partnership |
| Partnership description: | FDB finances one of Forests of the World’s major development projects in Honduras (the same project is also Danida-financed). In addition, FDB supports the FSC certification of local Honduran producers in the COATLAHL cooperative, education and social projects in the local villages. Coop takes part in the design of the FSC certified forest products, such as carving boards, which Coop purchases from COATLAHL to sell in the stores of Coop all over the country. The partnership between Forests of the World, FDB and Coop is often used by Danida as a ‘showcase’ demonstrating the ‘good example’ of collaborations between the private and civil society sector (UM 2009). |
| Partnership development: | The partnership has evolved over time. In the start up only FDB and Forests of the World collaborated around smaller projects but later Coop was contacted and came on board creating this three-legged partnership constellation. |
| Numbers: | During the course of the years, FDB has transferred approx. DKK 2.5 mill. The role of Coop is that of a purchaser directly with the local partner, thus there is no money as such between Coop and Forests of the World. |
| Relevant sources: | http://www.fdb.dk/fdb/ansvarlighed/miljoe/projektermiljoe/fscprojekti |
### Interresearch

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Duration:</th>
<th>Since 2003</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Partnership type:</td>
<td>Cause-Related Marketing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partnership description:</td>
<td>Interresearch is an opinion research institute carrying out online surveys for Danish and international companies. Interresearch donates DDK 1.00 to charity every time a respondent completes a questionnaire. Forests of the World is one of the organizations receiving this money. Each respondent decides which organization the DKK 1.00 will be donated to.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relevant sources:</td>
<td><a href="http://www.interresearch.dk/">http://www.interresearch.dk/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><a href="http://www.nepenthes.dk/index.php?id=1347">http://www.nepenthes.dk/index.php?id=1347</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Merkur Cooperative Bank

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Partnership type:</th>
<th>Cause-Related Marketing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Partnership description:</td>
<td>‘Forests of the World Nature Account’ is a savings account that customers can choose among other banking products in Merkur Cooperative Bank. While the money is deposited on this account, they will be invested in social, cultural and sustainable projects only. Merkur makes a yearly contribution to Forests of the World on 1.5% of the average deposit on the accounts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Numbers:</td>
<td>In 2010 Forests of the World has an outstanding account against Merkur to DKK 55,176</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relevant sources:</td>
<td><a href="https://www.merkur.dk/Privat/Merkursklimaprodukter/Klima/Klimakonto/">https://www.merkur.dk/Privat/Merkursklimaprodukter/Klima/Klimakonto/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><a href="http://verdensskove.org/media/201">http://verdensskove.org/media/201</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Natur-Energi

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Duration:</th>
<th>Summer 2010 – January 2013, 2.5 year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Partnership type:</td>
<td>Cause-Related Marketing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partnership description:</td>
<td>Natur-Energi has, in cooperation with Forests of the World, developed the product Elskov, an energy product for which electricity consumers donate 1.5 øre to Forests of the World for every kWh they use. Through the partnership Forests of the World receives finances and exposure.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partnership development:</td>
<td>The collaboration was initiated when Natur-Energi contacted Forests of the World in the beginning of 2010. They were looking for a partner to this project.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Numbers:</td>
<td>Forests of the World has been guaranteed DDK 100,000 per year, but</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
with the current amount of customers buying the product, it is expected to have contributed with DDK 500,000 when the project ends in January 2013. The money goes to Forests of the World projects in Honduras.

Relevant sources: [http://www.natur-energi.dk/side/elkov-bevarer-regnskoven](http://www.natur-energi.dk/side/elkov-bevarer-regnskoven)
[http://www.elskoven.dk/](http://www.elskoven.dk/)

**Pussy Galore, Strassen, and Café Bopa**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Duration:</th>
<th>Since 2007 and ongoing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Partnership type:</td>
<td>Cause-related Marketing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partnership description:</td>
<td>The cafés Pussy Galore, Strassen and Bopa donate money to Forests of the World. Every time a customer buys tap water, the cafés donate DKK 5.00 to Forests of the World.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Numbers:</td>
<td>In 2010, DKK 58,270 was transferred to Forests of the World</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
[http://verdensskove.org/media/201](http://verdensskove.org/media/201) |
APPENDIX 3: List of interviewees

The tables below present our interviewees including the time and location of the interview.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Function</th>
<th>Time in organization</th>
<th>Time of interview</th>
<th>Geographic location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Berit Rechnagel (BR)</td>
<td>Central American representative, program</td>
<td>Volunteer since 1997, employee since 2006</td>
<td>February 23, 2011 18:00-19:00</td>
<td>La Ceiba, Honduras (Skype)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jan Kunstmann (JK)</td>
<td>Member of the executive committee</td>
<td>Volunteer since 2000</td>
<td>March 22, 2011 19:30-20:00</td>
<td>Odense (Skype)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jørgen Muldtofte (JM)</td>
<td>Deputy member of the executive committee</td>
<td>Volunteer since 1993</td>
<td>February 23, 2011 8:00-9:00</td>
<td>Frederiksberg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jørgen Riis Pedersen (JRP)</td>
<td>Project coordinator and advisor</td>
<td>Employee since 2007</td>
<td>March 22, 2011 11:00-12:00</td>
<td>Copenhagen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karin Elisabeth Lind (KEL)</td>
<td>General secretary</td>
<td>Employee since 2007</td>
<td>February 24, 2011 11:00-12:00</td>
<td>Copenhagen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karsten Thomsen (KT)</td>
<td>Volunteer</td>
<td>Volunteer since the start up in 1983</td>
<td>March 10, 2011 12:00-13:00</td>
<td>Hjortshøj (Skype)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kristian Jørgensen (KJ)</td>
<td>Chairperson</td>
<td>Volunteer since 2005</td>
<td>February 23, 2011 13:00-14:00</td>
<td>Copenhagen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Martin Futtrup (MF)</td>
<td>Member of the executive committee</td>
<td>Volunteer since 2004</td>
<td>March 2, 2011 9:00-10:00</td>
<td>Copenhagen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nikolaj Bro Moseholm (NBM)</td>
<td>Project coordinator and advisor</td>
<td>Employee since 2005</td>
<td>February 25, 2011 13:00-14:15</td>
<td>La Paz, Bolivia (Skype)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rebecca Bolt Ettlinger (RBE)</td>
<td>Volunteer</td>
<td>Volunteer since 2005</td>
<td>March 2, 2011 17:00-17.30</td>
<td>Copenhagen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Søren Kanstrup (SK)</td>
<td>Member of the executive committee</td>
<td>Volunteer since 2001</td>
<td>March 14, 2011 11:00-12:00</td>
<td>Aarhus (Skype)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tim Whyte (TW)</td>
<td>Head of communication</td>
<td>Employee since 2010</td>
<td>March 14, 2011 9:00-10:00</td>
<td>Copenhagen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tina Hvidsteen (TH)</td>
<td>Deputy member of the executive committee</td>
<td>Volunteer since 2011</td>
<td>March 2, 2011 10:00-11:00</td>
<td>Copenhagen</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
By internal stakeholders we are referring to employees, members of the executive committee\textsuperscript{27}, and other active volunteers. The internal stakeholders were chosen because these are the ones influencing and making the decisions in regards to CSO-business partnerships. It is the internal stakeholders that decide the future strategy for the organization’s approach to business collaboration. In our choice of internal stakeholders, we sought to interview a broad range of people in order to enable that as many different opinions would be heard and to ensure reliability and validity of our data.

\textbf{Table 2 List of interviewees: Commercial partners of Forests of the World}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Company</th>
<th>Time of interview</th>
<th>Geographic location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lars Dørge (LD)</td>
<td>Coop</td>
<td>April 17, 2011, 10:00-11:00</td>
<td>Albertslund</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mikkel Brandrup (MB)</td>
<td>Natur-Energi</td>
<td>April 5, 2011, 17:00-18:00</td>
<td>Copenhagen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Signe Freese (SF)</td>
<td>FDB</td>
<td>April 4, 2011, 13:00-14:00</td>
<td>Albertslund</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The three commercial partners were chosen because the collaborations between these partners and Forests of the World are of different types and of the more developed partnerships.

\textbf{Table 3 List of interviewees: Experts with the field of CSOs}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Time of interview</th>
<th>Geographic location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nicolai Houe (NH)</td>
<td>Projektrådgivningen</td>
<td>January 28, 2011, 9:30-10:30</td>
<td>Copenhagen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robert Hinnerskov (RH)</td>
<td>ISOBRO</td>
<td>February 1, 2011, 10:00-11:00</td>
<td>Hvidovre</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The two experts within the field were chosen as representatives for the two organizations they represent. These organizations have several member organizations from the civil society; therefore, they were assessed to have profound experiences within the field of CSO work.

\textsuperscript{27} It should be noted that membership of the executive committee is on a voluntary basis. Only the chairperson receives a smaller financial compensation
APPENDIX 4: Example of interview guides

Below are examples of the interview guides used in relation to the interviews with the internal stakeholders of Forests of the World, the collaboration partners of Forests of the World, and the experts within the field. For each group of interviews, first an example of the original Danish version is presented. Second, a translation of this interview guide to English is presented.

Example of interview guide used in the interviews with the internal stakeholders of Forests of the World

Original Danish version

Kort indledning/introduktion ved Marianne og Mette:

- Kort introduktion til specialet
- Gøre det klart for interviewpersonen at vi er interesseret i hans/hendes personlige holdninger (og derfor ikke en eventuel holdning hos organisationen)
- Gøre det klart at det interviewpersonen siger, vil blive behandlet fortroligt med mindre andet senere vil blive aftalt med interviewpersonen
- Spørge om vi må optage interviewet

1. Kort introduktion af interviewpersonen / interview personens baggrund
   1.1. Navn
   1.2. Afdeling/Funktion hos Nepenthes
   1.3. Tid hos Nepenthes
   1.4. Uddannelse
   1.5. Tidligere erhverv/jobs (nuværende ved frivillige)

2. Nepenthes og troværdighed
   Formål: At finde svar på hvad interviewpersonen forbinder med troværdighed.

   2.1. Synes du at Nepenthes er en troværdig organisation?

      Hvis JA:
      2.1.1. Hvorfor er Nepenthes troværdig?
      2.1.2. Hvad gør den til en troværdig organisation?
      2.1.3. Hvordan arbejder Nepenthes troværdigt?
      2.1.4. Kan du give et eksempel?

      Hvis NEJ:
      2.1.5. Hvorfor er Nepenthes ikke troværdig?
      2.1.6. Hvad ville i dine øjne gøre Nepenthes utroværdig?
      2.1.7. Kan du give et eksempel?

   2.2. Hvad betyder det for dig at Nepenthes er en troværdig/utroværdig organisation?
2.3. Hvad mener du det betyder for organisationens arbejde og virke?
2.4. Hvad mener du er Nepenthes’ vigtigste rolle som organisation?

3. Virksomhedssamarbejde og troværdighed

Formål: At identificere hvad der udgør en risiko for CSOers troværdighed, når disse samarbejder med virksomheder.


3.1. Hvad er din holdning til at Nepenthes samarbejder med virksomheder?
3.2. Mener du at Nepenthes kan indgå i samarbejder med alle virksomheder?
   3.2.1. Hvorfor/hvorfor ikke?
   3.2.2. På hvilke præmisser?
3.3. Hvordan anser du at Nepenthes' troværdighed bliver påvirket af de virksomhedssamarbejder Nepenthes indgår i (på nuværende tidspunkt)? Bliver den forbedret eller truet, eller er der ingen ændring?

Hvis FORBEDRET/STYRKET:
   3.3.1. Hvorfor tror du Nepenthes troværdighed bliver FORBEDRET/STYRKET ved at indgå i samarbejder?
   3.3.2. Hvilke muligheder udgør disse samarbejder for Nepenthes?
   3.3.3. Hvordan bliver troværdigheden styrket? Kan du give eksempler?
   3.3.4. Vil virksomheds samarbejder altid styrke organisationens troværdighed?
   Hvis ikke, i hvilke tilfælde vil samarbejder vær en trussel?

Hvis TRUET:
   3.3.5. Hvorfor tror du Nepenthes troværdighed bliver TRUET ved at indgå i samarbejde?
   3.3.6. Hvilke risici udgør disse samarbejder for Nepenthes troværdighed?
   3.3.7. Hvordan bliver troværdigheden truet? Kan du give eksempler?
   3.3.8. Vil virksomheds samarbejde altid true organisationens troværdighed?
   Hvis ikke, i hvilke tilfælde vil samarbejder være en styrke?

Hvis UÆNDRET:
   3.3.9. Kan du forestille dig tilfælde hvor virksomhedssamarbejder vil styrke organisationens troværdighed? Hvilke?
   3.3.10. Kan du forestille dig tilfælde hvor virksomhedssamarbejder vil true organisationens troværdighed? Hvilke?

Hvis den generelle holdning (ud fra ovenstående spørgsmål) er at Nepenthes i én eller anden grad bør indgå i samarbejder med virksomheder, vil vi fortsætte med følgende spørgsmål:

3.4. Hvis vi nu antager at Nepenthes gerne vil arbejde mere sammen med virksomheder, hvilke overvejelser synes du organisationen bør gøre sig?
4. Samarbejdstyper og troværdighed

**Formål:** At undersøge om nogle former for samarbejde med virksomheder i højere grad end andre kan true CSOens troværdighed.

Samarbejdstyper: Virksomhedssamarbejder findes i forskellige typer, disse kan inddeles i forhold til graden af involvering af parterne og hvor mange ressourcer der ligges i samarbejdet. Eksempelvis donationer, cause-related marketing, eller mere dybdegående partnerskaber.

4.1. Mener du at der er der nogle typer af samarbejde der udgør en større styrke eller trussel for Nepenthes' troværdighed end andre?
   4.1.1. Hvorfor?
   4.1.2. Hvordan?

**Kun til bestyrelsen, KEL, BR og NBM:**

5. Nepenthes interessenter

**Formål:** At identificere Nepenthes’ interessenter og deres vigtighed i forhold til organisationens arbejde.

5.1. Hvem er Nepenthes interessenter?
   5.1.1. Hvordan vil du rangere disse i vigtighed (i forhold til Nepenthes’ mission og vision)?
   5.1.2. Hvordan indgår disse interessenter i Nepenthes’ arbejde?

**Kun til BR og NBM:**

5.2. Hvis vi ser på jeres projekt med COATLHAL, hvilken relation har henholdsvis kooperativet og beneficiaries til Nepenthes?
5.3. Hvordan inddrages de i Nepenthes’ arbejde?

Tak for din tid.

Vil sætte pris på at spørgsmål ikke diskuteres over frokost indtil vi har gennemført alle interviews.
**Translated into English**

**Brief introduction by Marianne and Mette:**

- Short introduction to our Master’s thesis
- Make it clear that we are interested in his/her personal opinions (and not the attitudes of the organization)
- Make it clear that what the interviewee says will be treated with confidentiality unless anything else is agreed upon with the interviewee
- Ask if we can record the interview

1. **Brief introduction of the interviewee and the interviewee’s background**
   1.1. Name
   1.2. Department/Function at Nepenthes
   1.3. Time at Nepenthes
   1.4. Education
   1.5. Previous jobs (current for the volunteers)

2. **Nepenthes and credibility**
   **Purpose:** To understand what the interviewee understand by credibility.

   2.1. Do you think that Nepenthes is a credible organization?

   If YES:
   
   2.1.1. Why is Nepenthes credible?
   2.1.2. What makes it a credible organization?
   2.1.3. How does Nepenthes work in a credible manner?
   2.1.4. Can you give examples?

   If NO:
   
   2.1.5. Why is Nepenthes not credible?
   2.1.6. What could in your eyes make Nepenthes non-credible/unreliable?
   2.1.7. Can you give examples?

2.2. What does it mean to you that Nepenthes is a credible/unreliable organization?
2.3. What do you think it means for the organization’s work and activities?
2.4. What do you think is the most important role of Nepenthes?

3. **Business collaborations and credibility**
   **Purpose:** to identify the risks to the credibility of the CSO when collaborating with companies.

   Business collaboration: collaborations between a company and a CSO where there is an exchange of resources between the parties. The resources can be material or immaterial, like money, human resources, competencies, logo, and reputation. Examples of business collaborations are donations, cause-related marketing, and strategic partnerships.
3.1. What is your opinion about Nepenthes collaborating with businesses?

3.2. Do you think that Nepenthes can engage in collaborations with all companies?
   3.2.1. Why/why not?
   3.2.2. On what conditions?

3.3. How do you perceive the credibility of Nepenthes to be affected by engaging in business collaborations (currently)? Is it improved or threatened, or is there no change?

If IMPROVED/STRENGTHENED:
   3.3.1. Why do you believe that Nepenthes’ credibility is IMPROVED/STRENGTHENED by collaborations with companies?
   3.3.2. Which opportunities do these collaborations present to Nepenthes?
   3.3.3. How is credibility strengthened? Can you give examples?
   3.3.4. Do business collaborations always strengthen the credibility of the organization? If not, can you think of incidents where collaborations could be a threat?

If THREATENED:
   3.3.5. Why do you believe that Nepenthes’ credibility is THREATENED by collaborations with companies?
   3.3.6. Which risks do these collaborations present to Nepenthes?
   3.3.7. How is credibility threatened? Can you give examples?
   3.3.8. Do business collaborations always threaten the credibility of the organization? If not, can you think of incidents where collaborations could be a strength?

If UNCHANGED:
   3.3.9. Can you think of incidents where business collaborations can strengthen an organization’s credibility? Which?
   3.3.10. Can you think of incidents where business collaborations can threaten an organization’s credibility? Which?

If the attitude toward business collaborations (from the above questions) is that Nepenthes should/could engage in collaborations with companies, we will continue with the next question:

3.4. If we assume that Nepenthes wants to collaborate more with companies, which considerations do you think that the organization should do?

4. Different types of collaborations and credibility
   Purpose: To investigate if some types of collaborations with companies to a larger degree than others can threaten the credibility of the CSO.
Types of collaborations: Business collaborations exist in various forms; these can be divided according to the degree of involvement of the partners and how many resources are put in the collaboration. For example donations, cause-related marketing or more strategic partnerships.

4.1. Do you think that there are some types of partnerships which present a larger strength or threat for the credibility of Nepenthes compared to the others?
   4.1.1. Why?
   4.1.2. How?

Only for the executive committee, KEL, BR and NBM

5. Nepenthes’ stakeholders
   Purpose: to identify Nepenthes’ stakeholders and their importance to the work of the organization.

   5.1. Who are Nepenthes’ stakeholders?
   5.1.1. How will you rank these according to the importance (to Nepenthes’ mission and vision)?
   5.1.2. How are they included in the work of Nepenthes?

Only for BR and NBM:

   5.2. If we look at your project with COATLAHL, what is your relation to the cooperative and the beneficiaries, respectively?
   5.3. How are they included in the work of Nepenthes?

Thank you for your time.

We will appreciate if you do not discuss the interview over lunch until we have carried out all the interviews.
Example of interview guide used in the interviews with the collaboration partners of Forests of the World

Original Danish version

Kort indledning/introduktion ved Marianne og Mette:
- Kort introduktion til specialet
- Gør det klart at det interviewpersonen siger, vil blive behandlet fortroligt med mindre andet senere vil blive aftalt med interviewpersonen
- Spørge om vi må optage interviewet

Kort introduktion af interviewpersonen / interview personens baggrund
1. Navn
2. Afdeling/Funktion hos virksomheden
3. Tid hos virksomheden

[Firmanavn]’s samarbejde med Nepenthes
4. Hvordan startede partnerskabet med Nepenthes?
   a. Var det på baggrund af en henvendelse Nepenthes eller omvendt?
   b. Hvorfor valgte I Nepenthes frem for andre organisationer?
   c. Hvordan oplevede I opstarten af samarbejdet?
   d. Hvordan forløb det?
5. Hvordan foregår arbejdet?
   a. Hvem laver hvad?
   b. Hvordan er relationen (kontraktmæssigt, overførsel af midler)?
   c. Samarbejder [firmanavn] og Nepenthes om kommunikationen omkring partnerskabet?
6. Nepenthes -> [firmaavn]
   a. Hvordan oplever i kommunikationen fra Nepenthes?
   b. Kunne I ønske at denne kommunikation var anderledes?
7. Hvordan er det at arbejde sammen med Nepenthes?
8. Er der ting, I mener, kunne forbedres?

Nepenthes troværdighed
9. Ser I Nepenthes som troværdige?
   a. Hvorfor/hvorfor ikke?
10. Hvad er det der gør Nepenthes troværdig/utroværdige?
11. Var Nepenthes’ troværdighed medbestemmende for jeres valg (ved opstarten)?
12. Er Nepenthes troværdighed blevet ændret siden i indgik i samarbejde med dem?

Sammenligning med andre af [firmaavn]’s samarbejder
1. Hvordan er dette samarbejde sammenligne med jeres andre samarbejder?
Translated into English

Brief introduction by Marianne and Mette:
- Short introduction to our Master’s thesis
- Make it clear that what the interviewee says will be treated with confidentiality unless anything else is agreed upon with the interviewee
- Ask if we can record the interview

Brief introduction of the interviewee and the interviewee’s background

1. Name
2. Department/Function at the company
3. Time at the company

[Company name]’s collaboration with Nepenthes

4. How did the collaboration with Nepenthes start?
   a. Was it due to an inquiry from Nepenthes or the other way around?
   b. Why did you choose Nepenthes over other organization?
   c. How did you experience the start-up?
   d. How did it proceed?
5. How does the work take place?
   a. Who does what?
   b. How is the relation (contract-based, exchange of resources)?
   c. Do [company name] and Nepenthes collaborate on the communication of the collaboration?
6. Nepenthes -> [company name]
   a. How do you perceive the communication from Nepenthes?
   b. Do you want the communication to be different?
7. How is it to collaborate with Nepenthes?
8. Are there things which could be improved?

Nepenthes’ credibility

9. Do you perceive Nepenthes as a credible organization?
   a. Why/why no?
10. What makes Nepenthes a credible/unreliable organization?
11. Was the credibility of Nepenthes determining for your choice (in the start-up)?
12. Has the credibility of Nepenthes changed since you started your collaboration?

Comparisons with other of [company name]’s collaborations

13. How is this collaboration compared to your other collaborations?
Example of interview guide used in the interviews with experts

Original Danish version

Kort indledning/introduktion ved Marianne og Mette:

- Kort introduktion til specialet
- Gøre det klart at det interviewpersonen siger, vil blive behandlet fortroligt med mindre andet senere vil blive aftalt med interviewpersonen
- Spørge om vi må optage interviewet

Kort introduktion af interviewpersonen / interview personens baggrund

1. Navn
2. Funktion hos organisationen
3. Tid hos organisationen
4. Baggrund i CSO-feltet

Del 1: CSO troværdighed

Formål: At identificere hvad CSO troværdighed er og hvad der bidrager eller modarbejder CSOens troværdighed.

5. Hvad bidrager til at en CSO er troværdig?
6. Hvilke termer forbinder du med CSO troværdighed?
7. Hvad kan bidrage til øget troværdighed hos en organisation?
8. Hvad kan bidrage til svækket troværdighed hos en organisation?
9. Har Projektrådgivningen/ISOBRO nogle ‘værktøjer’ og anbefalinger for hvordan CSOer kan arbejde med ovenstående? Hvilke?

Del 2: CSO troværdighed og CSO-virksomheds samarbejde

Baggrund: Danske CSOer samarbejder i stigende grad med virksomheder for at opnå deres mål.

Formål: At undersøge om og i så fald hvordan CSOers troværdighed påvirkes, når disse indgår i samarbejde med virksomheder f.eks. via donationer, cause-related marketing.

10. Hvad er din holdning til CSO der samarbejder med virksomheder?
11. Mener du at virksomhedspartnerskaber kan styrke en CSOs troværdighed? I så fald hvordan?
12. Mener du at virksomhedspartnerskaber kan true en CSOs troværdighed? I så fald hvordan?
13. Hvilke råd og retningslinjer giver i jeres medlemsorganisationer som enten arbejder med eller gerne vil arbejde med virksomheder?
**Translated into English**

**Brief introduction by Marianne and Mette:**

- Short introduction to our Master’s thesis
- Make it clear that what the interviewee says will be treated with confidentiality unless anything else is agreed upon with the interviewee
- Ask if we can record the interview

**Brief introduction of the interviewee and the interviewee’s background**

1. Name
2. Function at the organization
3. Time at the organization
4. Background in the CSO field

**Part 1: CSO credibility**

**Purpose:** To identify what CSO credibility is and what contributes to or opposes the credibility of the CSO.

5. What contributes to CSO credibility?
6. Which terms do you connect with CSO credibility?
7. What contributes to higher credibility of an organization?
8. What contributes to a damaged credibility of an organization?
9. Does Projektrådgivningen/ISOBRO have 'tools’ and recommendations for how CSO scan work on the abovementioned? Which?

**Part 2: CSO credibility and CSO-business collaborations**

**Background:** Increasingly more Danish CSOs collaborate with companies to reach their targets.

**Purpose:** To investigate if, and in that case how, CSO credibility is affected when the CSO engage in collaborations with companies, e.g. in donations, cause-related marketing.

10. What is your attitude to CSOs collaborating with companies?
11. Do you think that business collaborations can strengthen the credibility of the CSO? In that case, how?
12. Do you think that business collaborations can threaten the credibility of the CSO? In that case, how?
13. Which advices and guidelines would you give your member organizations that either collaborates with or want to collaborate with companies?
APPENDIX 5: Transcripts and summaries of interviews

The transcripts and summaries can be found on the enclosed CD.

Please note that transcripts and summaries are confidential.

APPENDIX 6: Audio recordings of interviews

Audio recordings can be found on the enclosed CD.

Please note that the audio recordings are confidential.

APPENDIX 7: Draft version of Forests of the World’s guidelines for business collaborations

Draft version of Forests of the World’s guidelines for business collaborations can be found on the enclosed CD.

Please note that the guidelines are confidential.

APPENDIX 8: Example of how we have categorized data

On the enclosed CD you will find a two-page example of how we have categorized data.

Please note that because our interviews were conducted in Danish and our transcripts therefore are in Danish, this example of how we have categorized data will also be in Danish.

In addition, please note that the appendix in confidential.