Contested legitimacy

The shrimp sustainability case in Sweden

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Abstract

The world faces a plethora of serious challenges. The current SARS-CoV-2 Pandemic, Australian bushfires of 2019–2020 and rapid decline in global fish stocks are just a few of numerous recent events which highlight the necessity and urgency of a reconceptualization of the relationship between economic systems, society and the natural world – and the norms that underpin these relationships. While supranational frameworks such as the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals offer a viable 'to do list' in the direction of this reconceptualization, the willingness of various actors to work towards this end is mixed. Central to motivating diverse actors with oft-conflicting interests towards a future which is realistic about the carrying capacity of the planet seems to be understanding the role of business and markets as both the cause of – but also solution to – many of these interconnected wicked problems. Pivotal to this is understanding is gaining clearer insights into how and why organizations change their behaviour. This study considers one such mechanism: challenges to legitimacy.

The aim of this study was to describe how organizational legitimacy is contested. This was done by exploring actor relations in the Swedish shrimp industry and analysing how debates around sustainability manifested through to one actor contesting the legitimacy of another. Thirty-five hours of interviews were conducted with senior managers from key actors in the Swedish shrimp and broader seafood industry between 2016 and 2019, including retailers, fishing companies, eco-label and certification schemes, environmental NGOs and seafood consumers.

This study found that contests to legitimacy happen when actors (in this instance, NGOs) adopt the role of norm entrepreneur and use a strategy (in this case, shame-based campaigns) to uproot old norms and stabilize new ones by contesting the social license to operate (SLO) of corporations, and re-establish new ideas of what should constitute legitimacy. This study makes four specific contributions to existing literature and practice surrounding sustainability, legitimacy and SLO. Firstly, it presents a well-documented case of NGOs launching a successful legitimacy challenge and achieving new operating norms within corporations, a specific industry and the broader society of a country; norms which have remained in place for almost a decade. This is a rather rare and infrequent occurrence in a literature full of examples of NGOs lobbying corporations but often with very limited and slowly-progressing success, or success which is short-lived. Secondly, it considers the capture, exploration and extrapolation of the ramifications of the unusual and relatively under-documented phenomenon of a peculiar response to a legitimacy challenge: corporations 'hedging' their own internal strategy decisions on the artefacts produced by secondary actors – or in some cases outsourcing the strategy decision completely. The third contribution of this study is in showing that impacts of shaming against corporations exist on two distinct levels: the immediate impacts, and the long-term impacts. This is explored through a detailed and longitudinal example of a shame-based campaign in practice – one that was able to, in an efficient and effective manner, uproot an existing social norm and replace it with a new one, and translate this through to permanent changes to the SLO required for corporations to be considered legitimate. Finally, this study contributes by showing the important and presently under-appreciated role played by artefacts such as lists, guides and rankings in the establishment of legitimacy and subsequent contests to this legitimacy.

Keywords: legitimacy, contest, actor, social license, seafood, shrimp, sustainability.

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Laurence Wainwright, April 2020

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Acronyms

ASC	Aquaculture Stewardship Council
CSR	corporate social responsibility
FSC	Forest Stewardship Council
GSSM	global sustainable seafood movement
MSC	Marine Stewardship Council
NGO	non-governmental organization
SDG	sustainable development goals
SFI	Sustainable Forestry Initiative
SLO	social license to operate
SSNC	The Swedish Society for Nature Conservation (The *Naturskyddsforeningen* in Swedish)
UN	United Nations
WWF	World Wide Fund for Nature

Prelude

We're not a political organization, but we're using political methods and we try to influence politics, but we don't have a party politics. We have a sort of, we try to take the voice of the one who is not at the table when decisions are made. So, who gets to decide [what is sustainable]? Well, we would like to get to decide, but usually, it's always a compromise. We always want to get further and then have… what society ends up is a bit below what we aim for. We know also that 10 years later, we usually get where we want. We're trying to push society always to move in that direction, which isn't the same thing as always being who decides.

<div align="right">A respondent from an NGO (interview recording, 2019)</div>

They made a lot of noise in the media. They really, really - I mean more or less they just forced us to take away the shrimp. They have a lot of influence. And especially when they are doing a campaign. So that could be Greenpeace, Naturskyddsforeningen, and WWF. In Sweden now, with this consumer guide, they are having a big influence. Sometimes they think it's their role to be like that and that's why we definitely want to have their list automatically. Sometimes we actually disagree on what [is sustainable] when we have the exact same information.

<div align="right">A respondent from a Swedish retailer (interview recording, 2017)</div>

1. Introduction

1.1 Overview

Shrimp are an important part of Swedish culture, and one cannot go far in Sweden without finding a shrimp sandwich on a menu (*räksmörgås*), or seeing people partake in a shrimp binging session (*räkfrossa*) at a park or beach. So great is the love of shrimp[1] in Sweden that each year hundreds of people partake in the annual shrimp peeling championship, held in the town of Strömstad. The current record stands at 22 shrimp peeled in one minute and four seconds. In 2013, the welcome banner at the airport of Sweden's second largest city – Gothenburg – famously proclaimed 'Welcome to the town of the shrimp!' (Otero & Baumann, 2016, p. 3).

Each year, the average Swede eats around of 4.5 kilograms of shrimp (UN FAO, 2018), with Sweden and the other Scandinavian countries representing the second-highest shrimp consumption figures in the world, surpassed only by North America. While shrimp are much loved in Sweden, they have been the source of much controversy due to the perceived and actual social and environmental harms arising from their capture and cultivation, and have come to be emblematic of the wider sustainability debate. In the words of the chief executive officer (CEO) of a fishing company who was interviewed in this study, "The shrimp has been in Sweden some kind of symbol for bad cultivation." (interview recording, 2017). This controversy centred around significant disagreement between actors in the industry in terms of what constitutes 'sustainability' – and in turn what actions and actors are legitimate or illegitimate.

The context for this complexity is exacerbated by the acknowledged understanding from previous studies that, while there is indeed best-available science informing fishing and aquaculture, "Sustainability, in the context of seafood, is both complex and imperfectly measurable… and open to interpretation" (Roheim et al., 2018, p. 392). This means that getting multiple actors with of-conflicting interests on the same page is difficult, because often actors will interpret sustainability in the manner that best suits their interests. There is indeed significant "complexity around

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[1] Throughout this study, the word 'shrimp' is used to refer to any species of shrimp or prawn in the *Dendrobranchiata* and *Pleocyemata* sub-orders, which are commercially fished or farmed in saltwater or freshwater. The scope of this study does not consider lobster or larger crayfish in the *Decapoda* order, which are also popular seafood items in Sweden.

sustainability issues", due in-large to the "tensions between different actors" (Baumann & Otero, 2016, p. 3). Moreover, sustainability has in some cases become synonymous with questions of social licence, legitimacy and even overall right to exist.

So far has this controversy gone in Sweden that each year since 2011, a designated day (7 April) highlights the social and environmental harms of eating tropical shrimp. Known as 'Anti-Scampi' Day, this initiative was started by a Swedish non-governmental organization (NGO) – The Swedish Society for Nature Conservation (SSNC), one of several such organizations which have played a prominent role in creating awareness of the sustainability issues pertaining to shrimp fishing and farming – and in doing so rising to a prominent (and in the opinions of some actors, controlling) position in determining the norms of the shrimp industry in Sweden.

The shrimp debate comes at a time when more than a third of the world's fish and shrimp stocks are fished beyond ecological capacity (UN FAO, 2018). Unsustainable fishing constitutes one of the 17 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDG): 'Life Below Water'. A constant challenge in terms of sustainability[2] in the fishing industry has been the truly global nature of the industry – that is, the fact that fishing and aquaculture take place in regions of the world which often have significant differences in terms of norms and practices, and legislation and enforcement (Gulbrandsen, 2010; Oosterveer & Spaargaren, 2011). Seafood production and the associated problems of unsustainable fishing and farming can be classified as meeting the criteria of a 'wicked problem' (Jentoft & Chuenpagdeeb, 2009; Rittel & Webber, 1973). The extraction of natural resources at unsustainable levels is also a classic tale of self-interest, gradually (and often unintentionally) leading to the depletion of the very resource on which they rely: Wijen & Chiroleu-Assouline (2019, p. 98) assert that "seafood catch and processing" suffers significantly from the "tragedy of the commons" problem (Hardin, 1968).

At initial glance, the capture or importation, labelling and sale of shrimp in Sweden appears to be a relatively normal value chain, whereby consumer demand and

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[2] No definition of 'sustainability', 'sustainable' or other terms of similar usage (such as 'responsible') is used in this study. This is done intentionally, as under legitimacy theory such terms do not have per se fixed meanings but rather alter in occurrence with changing societal norms. This choice is further informed by Roheim et al.'s (2018) argument that in the fishing and seafood industry in particular, the definition of 'sustainability' and its associated usage is often subject to significant differences in interpretation by different actors – despite the fact that there is generally agreed upon understanding of what constitutes the best-available science in terms of fishing and aquaculture.

available supply dictates what is sold. Look beneath the surface, however, and one will find that gaining access to the Swedish shrimp industry and maintaining this access across time requires making significant concessions and compromises in order to gain legitimacy in the eyes of to the dominant actors in the market. This legitimacy – or lack thereof – centres around fundamental questions as to what constitutes sustainability, what information should be used to make such decisions, and who should get to decide this. Despite having access to the same 'best available science' on shrimp fishing and farming (primarily the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea Stock Data Base, and UN FAO State of World Fisheries and Aquaculture Report and associated guidelines on best practices of shrimp aquaculture) and in general agreeing on the accuracy of this data, many of the actors in the Swedish shrimp sector have arrived at and continue to arrive at wildly different conclusions as to what is 'sustainable' and what is not. This has led to some actors (such as NGOs) launching contests to the social licence to operate (SLO) and in turn contesting the overall legitimacy of other actors (such as corporations).

These disagreements consider questions such as:
- What volume of shrimp can be taken from the ocean each year whilst not jeopardizing the future survival of a particular stock?
- What species of shrimp should be consumed and what species should not be?
- What methods of capture and farming are acceptable?
- What level of social and environmental harm is tolerable in countries in the Global South partaking in shrimp farming?
- What levels of bycatch are tolerable?
- What role should guides, rankings and lists have in shaping decisions around what is sustainable/unsustainable, and what methodological approaches are acceptable and unacceptable in creating the data for these guides?
- Which certification schemes constitute 'sustainability' and which do not?
- Is there a place for philosophy, world view, opinion and emotion in the formulation of an organization's interpretation of environmental sustainability, and if so, what weighting should this be given in comparison to the best available science?

This thesis focused on the arrangement of 'actors' – defined in this study as a participant in an action or process – in the value chain of shrimp production in Sweden. Specific consideration was given to the relationship between primary producers and distributors and secondary and peripheral industry actors – primarily

non-governmental organizations (NGOs) – in the Swedish shrimp industry between 2008 and 2018, and how information pertaining to shrimp was used by different actors in order to shape and support their interpretation of sustainability, and in turn contest the interpretations of other actors and challenge their legitimacy. The ecology, science and sustainability issues pertaining to the four most commonly available shrimp species in Sweden were examined extensively: the Northern Shrimp (*Pandalus borealis*) – a species native to the North Sea and caught in large quantities by Swedish fishing companies; the Spencer Gulf King Prawn (*Melicertus latisulcatus*) – a wild caught species from Australia which has become common in Sweden in recent years; and, two species of shrimp which are commonly farmed in Asia and South America and imported to Sweden for sale in supermarkets and use in restaurants – the Whiteleg Shrimp (*Litopenaeus vannamei*), and the Giant Tiger Shrimp (*Penaeus monodon*) (see Appendix for details of each shrimp).

Analysis of the industry was carried out through an approach loosely inspired by 'controversy mapping' (Otero & Baumann, 2016; Baumann & Otero, 2016; Venturini, 2010), describing the dynamics between actors in the Swedish shrimp industry in the past 11 years, and centring on the key events, such NGOs publishing lists that deem certain species of shrimp and methods of capture to be unsustainable. These artefacts, including certification schemes, lists, and guides, are analysed in terms of how they affect and are affected by contestation as actors attempt to classify and sort things out. In turn they create implications for norms – standards or patterns of behaviour – within individual organizations, across hierarchal relations within the industry and across Swedish society more broadly.

Thirty-five hours of semi-structured interviews were conducted with senior managers representing the key actors in the Swedish shrimp industry, including primary producers (Swedish fishing companies and seafood importers), distributors (retail outlets and restaurants), eco-label and certification schemes, environmental NGOs and seafood consumers. Interview transcripts were organized using thematic analysis. The interpretation of transcripts was aided by the use of secondary data including media content, and annual and sustainability reports of key actors. Empirical material was explained with the assistance of theoretical frameworks and concepts from a variety of different literatures, including legitimacy and social licence to operate (SLO), secondary actor/stakeholder influence on firms, and fisheries and seafood sustainability. Specifically, the main theoretical framework utilized in this study is legitimacy theory (Guthrie & Parker, 1989; Suchman, 1995; O'Donovan,

2002). In terms of the operationalization of a conceptual framework to assist in explaining the data, this is achieved by drawing inspiration from four smaller, specific conceptual frameworks which fall under the broad umbrella of legitimacy theory, in order to create a unique conceptual framework ideal to explore and analyse the data.

At this point it is important to clarify the theoretical underpinnings of a number of the key terms used in this study. They are as follows:

Legitimacy:

The generalized perception or assumption that the actions of an entity are desirable, proper, or appropriate within some socially constructed system of norms, values, beliefs, and definitions.

(Suchman, 1995)

Social licence to operate (SLO):

Concerning corporate use of public natural resources, social licence to operate considers whether an organization has the on-going acceptance or approval from society to do something, or to even to exist.

(Adapted from Parsons, Lacey & Moffat, 2014 and Cullen-Knox et al., 2017)

Contesting:

The competitive interplay between actors with one another and social norms to achieve a desired goal, which may include using tactics such as questioning the legitimacy of another actor's right to peruse a course of action or right to exist.

(Author designed, inspiration drawn from Ayling, 2017; Black, 2008)

Hierarchy:

The order of two or more actors in relation to one another in terms of their status, authority or ability to achieve their desired interests ahead of the interests of other actor(s).

(Author designed, inspiration drawn from Fine, 2019)

1.2 A brief background to the seafood and fishing industry

It is becoming increasingly irrelevant to consider the issue of fisheries management and associated unsustainable seafood production and consumption on a country-to-country level, due to the highly global and complex nature of many of these supply chains (Iiles 2007; Humphrey et al., 2013; Bailey et al., 2016). How well a country manages its *own* fishery resources can mean little if these countries consume large quantities of seafood sourced from other parts of the world (Bailey et al., 2016; Roheim et al., 2018). Many highly developed countries, such as Sweden, are net-importers of seafood (perhaps surprisingly, Sweden imports around 80% of its seafood – much of which often comes from countries in the Global South). Thus, in recent years the direction of the fisheries management literature has shifted towards increasing emphasis on studying seafood within global supply chains. Existing literature has acknowledged that that the fragmented and complex nature of seafood supply chains creates major difficulties in terms of achieving salience of social and environmentally sustainable practices (Mol, 2013).

Over the past 50 years, forces of globalization have created a situation where supply chains of goods typically span multiple countries, with resource extraction, production, distribution, sale and consumption often taking place in different geographical locations (Meixell & Gargeya, 2005; Baldwin, 2013). Like many food products, seafood has been a part of this trend, and there is increasing disconnect and complexity involved in getting a seafood product from point of capture/farming to the place of end consumption. Increasingly, consumers are becoming 'detached' from food value chains, and see only the end-result – which in the case of shrimp is a neat packet of peeled shrimp in the freezer aisle of the supermarket (Duffy, Fearne & Healing, 2005). Kumar and Deepthi (2006, p. 923) note that for anyone other than a seasoned fisher, seeing shrimp and other marine creatures flap around in the sorting tray gasping for air is a confronting and somewhat emotional experience.

This disconnect has created a range of social, environmental and economic problems. What makes seafood of particular importance compared to other global supply chain contexts is twofold: the significance of the industry in terms of its economic importance and source of food, and the rapid rate at which fish stocks are in decline (Bailey et al., 2016). Daily, fish provides more than 3 billion people with their major source of protein. More than 65 million people are directly employed in the primary capture and farming of fish, and indirectly, in various capacities along the value chain, fisheries and aquaculture assure the livelihoods of an additional 760 million

(10–12% of the world's population). Globally, 33% of wild-caught marine fish and invertebrate (including shrimp) stocks are being harvested at biologically unsustainable levels. Sixty percent are considered to be 'fully exploited', meaning that there is no room to increase catch-rates. Just 7% of fisheries are considered to be 'underexploited' (United Nations FAO, 2018). The economic cost of mismanagement of global fisheries has been estimated to be in excess of USD $50 billion annually (Blomquist, Bartolino & Waldo, 2015; World Bank, 2009). Global per-capita consumption of seafood per annum has risen from an average of 9 kilograms in 1960 to 21 kilograms in 2015. (United Nations FAO, 2018). In 2016, more than half of all seafood eaten globally was produced by farming (United Nations FAO, 2018). While fish farming offers some benefits over wild caught fish in terms of sustainability, 'aquaculture' as it is known is no silver bullet, and is fraught with its own unique set of social and environmental challenges (Broughton & Walker, 2010).

A prominent trend in the fishing and seafood industry which started in the 1990s and has since become widespread (especially in Northern European markets) has been the phenomenon of primary producers adopting voluntary social and environmental standards in the form of certification schemes and third-party assurance systems, resulting in the generation of so called "eco-labels". A particular species, location and fishing or farming method is assessed by a third-party (such as the Marine Stewardship Council), and ongoing compliance to a set of standards plus a financial payment to the third-party enables fishing companies to feature these labels on their products. Wijen and Chiroleu-Assouline (2019, p. 98) define these self-regulatory standards as existing to "certify that products in a variety of sectors… contribute to more environmentally "responsible" or "sustainable" business practices", and note that the increasing prominence of these market-based tools has enabled many producers to charge a price premium for their product.

Oosterveer (2010) notes that the development of eco-labels and certification schemes for seafood has come about largely due to forces of globalization, which has created large physical distances between the places where fish is caught and where it is consumed, resulting in the need for a degree of tractability and assurance. The first well-known label to appear was the 'Dolphin Safe Tuna' logo, which was introduced in 1990 to assure consumers that attempts were made to minimize dolphin bycatch during the capture of tuna (Oosterveer, 2010, p. 1). Whilst not a seafood eco-label per se, the Swedish scheme KRAV was founded in 1985, and features seafood products heavily. The Marine Stewardship Council (MSC), now the largest certification scheme for wild caught seafood, was launched in 1997. The Aquaculture Stewardship

Council (ASC), now the largest scheme for farmed seafood, came into existence in 2010.

As well as specific certification schemes, there exist a number of NGO-developed lists and guides which make suggestions to consumers as to which seafood should be eaten and which should be avoided. These lists assess the overall sustainability of a fish or shrimp species, including judgements on methods and locations of capture. They tend to constitute judgement of other certification schemes rather than providing one themselves. These lists often refer to certifications such as, Aquaculture Stewardship Council (ASC), Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) and KRAV. In Sweden, the three largest of such of these lists are the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) Sweden Consumer Fish Guide, and the Greenpeace Red List Fish. Another scheme of sorts, which falls between a list and a certification scheme, is the Swedish Society for Nature Conservation's (SSNC's) *Bra Miljöval* (Good Environmental Choice) label. (See Appendix for coverage of these certification schemes and lists, including the methodologies used.)

It is important at this early stage to clarify that by the time relations between actors in an industry take place regarding the nuances of shrimp sustainability issues, much has already been pre-defined. It is not the focus nor intent of this study to offer coverage pertaining governance, legislative and regulatory aspects of fishing and seafood production. As a member of the European Union, Sweden is subject to the requirements of the Common Fisheries Policy and other frameworks and legislation. At a national level, Sweden also has various laws which govern the commercial and recreational capture of fish and shrimp in inland, coastal and deep-sea waters. This is managed through Swedish Government policy, which is transcended through to public agencies such as the Swedish Agency for Marine and Water Management, one of the actors interviewed in this study. This study looks at what is left after all of this has happened, and focuses on the territory which is still 'up for grabs' after legislators in both Brussels and Stockholm have dictated their parameters. While it is indeed the case that in time social norms achieved through pressure on corporations may eventuate into changes in law, the formulation of legislation is beyond the scope of this study, which is interested in understanding how actors contest one another's legitimacy on matters pertaining to sustainability.

1.3 A brief introduction to shrimp and Sweden

Shrimp carry with them a significant set of sustainability issues which are prevalent in their capture and farming – issues which voices in the fisheries management literature have proposed are more severe than those associated with many other commonly consumed types of seafood (Boopendranath et al., 2008). Shrimp have been said to symbolize much of what is wrong with global fisheries management, and the broader relationship of humans with marine life (Folke et al., 1998). Trawling for wild shrimp typically involves an unusually high ratio of bycatch (Brewer et al., 2006). What this means is that for every kilogram of shrimp caught, there will typically be between two to eight kilograms of bycatch (non-target species) – a ratio considerably higher than for most other species marine life commonly caught by humans. The primary species of shrimp caught in Swedish waters – *Pandalus borealis* – do not reach sexual maturity until after two or three years, meaning that populations are highly susceptible to overfishing if too many juveniles are caught before they have had a chance to reproduce (Wieland, 2004). The farming of shrimp around the world is associated with a range of environmental and social problems (Galappaththi & Berkes, 2015; Páez-Osuna, 2001), such as: clear cutting of ecologically important mangrove forests to make farming pens; instances of usage of banned chemicals such endosulfan, which are harmful to human health (Dorts et al., 2009; Farzanfar, 2006); contamination of nearby ecosystems from fertilizer runoff; and cases of child labour and below-living wages (Lebel et al., 2002). Greenpeace International claims that "In Bangladesh alone, there have been an estimated 150 murders linked to aquaculture disputes (Greenpeace Seafood Red List, 2017, p. 1). There is general agreement as to what constitutes the best-available science in terms of shrimp capture and farming. Danish-headquartered International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES) – the oldest intergovernmental scientific organization in the world – is considered to produce the highest quality and most accurate data on stock levels of wild caught shrimp. This is used by the European Commission to develop Total Allowable Catch figures, which enforce what Swedish fishing boats can and cannot do. In terms of the science for farmed shrimp, UN FAO guidelines on sustainable shrimp farming including the 'International Principles for Responsible Shrimp Farming', 'Best Practices in Shrimp Aquaculture' and related documents are, roughly speaking, held up as the best-available science.

In Sweden, a highly-developed country of 10 million people with a 2018 GDP per capita of USD $54,500, widely varied export and import base, and high levels of consumer awareness around social and environmental issues, the past decade has

seen extensive change in the seafood industry – especially the sub-category of the shrimp sector. The industry was subject to similar trends in seafood 'fashion' as most other developed nations until 2010, when the Swedish-branch of environmental organization Greenpeace International 'red listed' all species of farmed tropical shrimp, including *Litopenaeus vannamei* and *Penaeus monodon*, which represented the second and third (respectively) most consumed shrimp globally, and amongst the most commonly purchased frozen shrimp in Swedish supermarkets (second only to the native *Pandalus borealis*). With pressure mounting on supermarkets to remove the products, the critical change in the sector came through the actions of the SSNC – the *Naturskyddsforeningen* in Swedish – in 2011. This year marked a pivotal year in terms of the shrimp debate in Sweden. The SSNC launched a massive campaign against farmed tropical shrimp, which had the effect of fundamentally and irreversibly changing the landscape of the sector and the hierarchical relationship between actors. Having previously been concerned primarily with farmed tropical shrimp, in 2013 Swedish NGOs began asking questions around the sustainability of wild caught cold-water shrimp, especially *Pandalus borealis* caught in the waters off Sweden (especially the waters off Gothenburg). In February 2014, the WWF gave *Pandalus borealis* a red-light rating on its annual consumer fish guide, the WWF Sweden's Consumer Fish Guide (*Fiskguiden* – WWF's *Konsumentguide för mer miljövänliga köp av fisk och skaldjur*), which resulted in significant media coverage and intense debate. In November 2014, the IECS increased the Total Allowable Catch, nearly doubling it from 6,000 tonnes in 2014 to 10,900 tonnes for 2015 (ICES, 2017). This decision was seen as undermining the credibility of the WWFs red-lighting decision, and some actors associated with the Swedish shrimp industry began asking questions as to how the WWF and other NGOs used scientific data to inform their interpretation and practices of sustainability. The events between 2010 and 2013 resulted a situation where, as of 2020, the prevailing interpretation of sustainability seafood industry in Sweden and the sub-sector of the shrimp industry is heavily (or in the opinion of some respondents, entirely) shaped by the guides, lists, and eco-labels produced by three NGOs: the SSNC, WWF Sweden, and Greenpeace Sweden. Intertwined with these guides has been the rise to prominence of eco-labels and certification schemes such as the MSC, ASC and KRAV, which play a prominent role in the Swedish seafood industry. Increasingly in Sweden it is becoming rarer to find products which do not feature one or more of these labels – especially in the case of shrimp sold in supermarkets.

Recent studies on shrimp in Sweden, such as Otero and Baumann's (2016) 'controversy mapping' of the 'red listing' of the Swedish West Coast Shrimp

(*Pandalus borealis*), suggested that "A large part of the disagreement centres on the question of legitimacy in terms of one actor's call to stop consumption of shrimp from a particular stock." (Otero and Baumann, 2016, p. 56). There are major methodological questions at play around the use of science in informing the definitions of what constitutes 'sustainable', which are operationalized through the influential consumer seafood guides and lists produced by environmental NGOs in Sweden.

As well as different interpretations and enactments as to what constitutes sustainability in terms of shrimp, there also exist many paradoxes, controversies and tensions between actors in the Swedish seafood industry. For example, the case of one species of shrimp being 'red listed' by the WWF, while simultaneously being endorsed so long as it carries an eco-label. This situation created a "… paradoxical combination of ecolabel and red light" (Otero and Baumann, 2016, p. 56), which resulted in both confusion and strong opinions amongst many actors in the sector. Many of the respondents interviewed in this study – especially Swedish fishing companies and retail outlets – felt as though environmental NGOs had a disproportionally loud and influential voice in the debate, resulting in them needing to concede to all demands in order to sell shrimp. These voices also felt that NGOs had ignored the science, such as the WWF guide in 2014 deeming *Pandalus borealis* as red listed despite the European Commission increasing the Total Allowable Catch. On the other hand, spokespeople for the environmental NGOs, along with seafood consumers and several respondents from marine science research institutes felt that there was an urgent and pressing need to ensure the long-term survival of shrimp, and that this could only be achieved through major changes as to what sustainability means and the associated contests to what the social licence for operating in the industry should be.

The shrimp sector in Sweden has undergone radical changes in the past decade – changes which have seen the operating parameters of the sector determined primarily by the wishes of NGOs. This phenomenon is interesting and worthwhile to study as it has implications which extend well beyond the shrimp industry and well beyond Sweden, and may serve as an important case study of how control over the prevailing interpretation of sustainability in the Swedish shrimp industry was essentially taken away from corporations by NGOs launching a sudden and effective contest to the social licence to operate, and subsequent legitimacy of the producers and sellers of seafood products. This matters because as arguably the dominant induction in society, business seems to be the cause of – but also solution to – many

of the complex social and environmental challenges facing the planet. As such, it is important to gauge a clear understanding of how and why they change behaviour. One angle of this which has received limited coverage in existing social science literature is understanding how contests to organizational legitimacy happen.

1.4 Research question

The aim of this study is to answer the question: *How is legitimacy contested?*

This is done by exploring actor relations in the Swedish shrimp industry over an 11-year period from 2008 to 2018, focusing on debates and controversies surrounding the sustainability of shrimp. While coverage is given to all actors in the value chain, the primary focus is on NGO-corporation relations.

1.5 Overview of structure, and notes for reader

This text is set out in a fairly standard manner. Chapter Two, Theory, starts with a summary of key literatures pertaining to the study, including both general literatures such as sustainability, as well as more detailed ones – such as NGO influence on firms. The second part of Chapter Two describes the theoretical framework and conceptual framework used in the study: three concepts based in legitimacy theory. Chapter Three outlines the Methodology which was undertaken in the collection and analysis of data. The organized empirical material is presented in Chapter Four, Results. Chapter Five, How legitimacy is contested, provides analysis and discussion of empirical material, with the assistance of the conceptual framework. Chapter Six, Conclusion and contributions, concludes the study and proposes some suggestions for future research. The Appendix follows, with the Reference list and Index at the end of the thesis.

Notes: Should the reader require detailed knowledge on any aspect of specific scientific, technical and/or methodological information relating to fishing, seafood, or shrimp, their attention is directed to the Appendix of this text, which provides coverage of information, namely: the biology of the four species of shrimp, the details of the MSC, ASC and KRAV and the methodology underpinning each, and the details of each of the lists, guides and ranking schemes produced by the Swedish NGOs and the methodology underpinning each. It may be of some interest to the reader to spend 10 minutes skimming over this information before commencing reading Chapter 4.

2. Theory

2.1 Literature review

How is organizational legitimacy contested? In order to answer this question, we must first acknowledge the voices in the social science literature which have previously grappled with aspects of this enquiry, and map out the territory covered (and not covered) by these authors. The natural starting place for such a review is the sustainability and corporate social responsibility literature, which is of central importance to this study for two key reasons: firstly, it is the contextual domain around which the shrimp case was focused (that is, debates around what constitutes sustainability). Secondly, there is a trend in the literature for increasing crossover, overlap and even interchangeability between phrases such as responsible, sustainable, legitimate and social licence (Gehman, Lefsrund & Fast, 2017; Deegan, 2019). Once this is done we must then review the specific literature pertaining to the contributions which this study claims to make.

2.1.1 Sustainability and corporate social responsibility

The corporate social responsibility (CSR) and sustainability literature (and their closely related counterpart, stakeholder theory) have long struggled with ambiguity surrounding precise definitions of concepts (Dahlsrud, 2008; Frederick, 1994; Paul, 2008). Pedersen (2006, p. 139) argues that there has never been and will most likely never be a clear definition of CSR or sustainability, and that they will "mean different things to different people at different times." Banerjee (2010) argues that the formulation of what constitutes responsible behaviour by an organization is intrinsically inseparable from the need of the organization to "advance their agendas… and promote their interests" (Banerjee, 2010 in Gond et al., 2016, p. 4).

Much of this definition debate has been conducted at a metaphysical level: that is, debating the moral question of what obligations (if any) does the firm owe to groups and individuals that affect and are affected by its decision-making processes, and who these stakeholders might be (Freeman, 1984; Mitchell, Agle & Wood, 1997; van Marrewijk, 2003).

In terms of legitimacy, firms engage in CSR activities to "compensate for historic corporate social irresponsibility or to build goodwill to draw on in the event of

corporate negligence, or in other words provide a margin of protection from the threat of losing a SLO." (Cullen-Knox et al., 2017, p. 70).

Levy, Reinecke and Manning (2016) used the context of the global coffee industry to show how the "dynamics of moves and accommodations between challengers and corporate actors shape the practice and meaning of 'sustainable' coffee" (Levy, Reinecke & Manning, 2016, p. 364). In the case of shrimp, there is broad consensus that International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES) stock data for wild caught shrimp, and UN FAO guidelines on sustainable shrimp farming represent the 'best available science' on shrimp fishing and farming, respectively. However, there are still considerable challenges in the seafood and fishing sector – including shrimp – in terms of sustainability being challenging to define and properly encapsulate – even with access to high quality data. Roheim et al., (2018) argue that this is especially significant in the case of seafood, noting how "sustainability criteria are imperfectly measured" and are "open to interpretation" (Roheim et al., 2018, p. 392). This creates challenges in terms of "the ability of NGOs to coordinate the evolution and future of the sustainable seafood market" (Roheim et al., 2018, p. 392).

Haward, Jabour and McDonald (2013, p. 25) described the case of the Abel Tasman 'Super Trawler' in Australia in 2012, where the best-available science on fish stocks showed that the proposed capture of fish by the vessel was perfectly sustainable in the sense that it would not deplete fish stocks below replacement levels, but emotive arguments fuelled by photos of dolphin bycatch 'won'.

Unequal levels of ability to influence between actors have been widely acknowledged in the organizational theory literature as being a key determinant of 'who gets what' in any sort of contestation, both in terms of individuals contesting for themselves, and on behalf of another actor (such as a manager contesting on behalf of an organization with a manager representing another organization) (Bacharach & Lawler, 1981; Kim, Pinkley & Fragale, 2005; Pfeffer, 2010). Baumann and Arvidsson (2020, p. 53) describe the "presence of multiple and sometimes conflicting interests across actors in a production and consumption system."

Kim et al., (2005, p. 799) note that "the greater one's" own power or influence relative to another, the more "resources one should be able to claim." The significance of sustainability and CSR in the organizational theory literature in the past two decades has been increasing emphasis placed on how such concepts are defined and the underlying processes which determine what exactly is deemed to be 'sustainable' or

'responsible' behaviour (Banerjee, 2010). In order to achieve the level of social and environmental responsibility that is required to ensure the longevity and prosperity of the seafood industry and global fish stocks, there must be a degree of commonality and "consistency of action" between actors in interpreting and practicing substantiality (Alvarez, Young & Woolley, 2018, p. 4).

Another distinct sub-theme of the sustainability and CSR literature – one which crosses over into the supply chain management space – is that of sustainable supply chain management and associated pressure for firm transparency, and eco-labels, certification, tractability and assurance schemes. This literature has become especially prominent in the context of an increasingly interconnected and globalized world, where the resource extraction manufacturing, sale, and end-consumer use of products and services often take place in separate geographical regions – regions with often significantly differing levels of economic and social development (Meixell & Gargeya, 2005; Baldwin, 2013). Zyglidopoulos and Fleming (2011) propose that so complex and removed have many of these global supply chains become, that it has allowed for a situation where the "consequences of MNC actions" (multinational corporation) are "not to be traceable back to their original causes" (Zyglidopoulos & Fleming, 2011, p. 695, in Egels-Zandén & Hansson, 2016).

Alongside the broader trend of increasing societal pressure on firms leading to higher levels of social and environmental responsibility has been the expectation for firms to know the finer details of the people and places involved in their supply chains and to disclose this information to secondary stakeholders (Doorey, 2011), partake in voluntary environmental standards (Vogel, 2008) and to act decisively in cases where there are breeches of legal and ethical boundaries (Mol, 2013, p. 154). Mol notes that:

> Throughout the years, transparency has matured from a marginal phenomenon, into the heart of modern society… the rise of transparency on the public and political agendas is not an accident or fad…transparency will remain a key topic in global value chains and will further develop as it piggy-backs on wider social developments.

The availability of supply chain information has in part enabled a reduction of the gap in information asymmetry between stakeholders and the firm (Martinez and Crowther, 2008). The interplay between the benefits of transparency in supply chain for both the consumer and the firm was considered in Egels-Zanden and Hansson (2016, p. 377), who found "that consumers do not leverage transparency but that transparency improves consumer willingness to buy." Egels-Zanden, Hulthén and

Wulff (2015) described how management faces a number of distinct trade-offs when trying to create a transparent supply chain, and has to choose between two distinct approaches: compliance – where the firm uses the threat of cutting off a supplier from their supply chain as a way of making them improve conditions and "treat transparency as end in itself" (Egels-Zanden, Hulthén & Wulff, 2015, p. 103), or cooperation – where the firm seeks to "understand the network context of their suppliers and to involve suppliers" in creating greater transparency and improving social and environmental outcomes (Egels-Zanden, Hulthén & Wulff, 2015, p. 103). The highly complex nature of the fishing and seafood industry – especially in terms of the gap between sourcing and end-consumption – has created unique challenges for the achievement of supply chain transparency within the sector (Bailey, Bush, Miller & Kochen, 2016; Denham, Howiesona, Solah & Biswas, 2015).

The rise to prominence of expectations on firms to know where their goods and services come from, how the people producing them were treated and paid and the environmental impacts of the creation of the product has led to the development of numerous eco-labels, certification, tractability and assurance schemes. Olson, Clay and da Silva (2015) described how this has especially been the case for food, with "consumer movements directed toward food systems" – especially seafood – becoming "increasingly prevalent" (Olson, Clay & da Silva, 2015, p. 476).

A trend in managing sustainability in supply chains which started in the 1990s and has since become prominent has been the phenomenon of firms adopting voluntary social and environmental standards, achieved through the use of certification schemes and third-party assurance systems resulting in the generation of so called "eco-labels". Wijen and Chiroleu-Assouline (2019, p. 98) define these self-regulatory standards as existing to "certify that products in a variety of sectors, ranging from coffee growing to garment manufacturing, contribute to more environmentally 'responsible' or 'sustainable' business practices". The process of certification itself can be defined in numerous ways, but a definition in the literature which is emblematic of many others is of certification as being "the "(voluntary) assessment and approval by an (accredited) party on an (accredited) standard" (Meuwissen et al., 2003, p. 172, in Gawron & Theuvsen, 2009).

In the seafood industry, early schemes such as 'Dolphin Safe Tuna' – introduced in 1990 – offered (sometimes dubious) assurance to consumers that dolphin bycatch was minimized in the capture of tuna brands featuring that label. Teisl, Roe and Hicks

(2001) conducted a case study of Dolphin Safe and "showed how market-based evidence that consumers can respond to eco-labels." (Teisl, Roe & Hicks, 2001, p. 355). Such 'market-based' approaches, according to Roheim et al., (2018, p. 392) "largely resulted from non-governmental organizations' (NGO) frustration with the perceived inability of fisheries regulators globally to mitigate overfishing." The Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) – now the largest certification scheme for wild caught seafood – was launched in 1997. The Aquaculture Stewardship Council (ASC) – now the largest scheme for farmed seafood – came into existence in 2010 in a partnership between the WWF and the Dutch Sustainable Trade Initiative. Extensive coverage of the ASC, MSC and other seafood eco-labels and schemes is covered throughout this thesis, but briefly here from a literature review perspective it is important to touch on the latest trends in the literature regarding these eco-labels.

Recent studies such as Roheim et al., (2018) suggest that "many of the concerns that led to the seafood movement remain unresolved, especially in developing countries, and are now exacerbated by new climate-related threats to the world's ocean resources." This paper (and several others like it) suggest that market-based systems such as eco-labels in their current form may not be strong enough to bring about the necessary level of change needed to ensure the long-term survival of the world's marine and freshwater ecosystems, and that further strengthening of legislation – amongst other measures – may be needed to aid market-based solutions such as eco-labels. Roheim et al., (2018, p. 395) point to a "shift in the roles that extra transactional actors, including both NGOs and governments, play in markets demanding credence attributes". However, despite all this, there still is a gap in the literature in terms of clear descriptions of the process by which sustainability is debated by actors in an industry, and how this process interplays with broader notions of societal norms and the granting of legitimacy to the actions of a firm. This is one of several such areas of literature which this study builds on and extends.

Fishing and seafood governance and regulation is a complex beast, and as earlier mentioned falls outside of the scope of this study. Nonetheless, it is important to briefly acknowledge voices such as Kalfagianni and Pattberg (2013), which acknowledge the complexity of the undertaking of managing fisheries resources, given the cross-border aspects of oceans and competing interests of different actors Studies such as Jokikokko and Jutila (2005) suggest that, if implemented correctly and appropriately enforced, fishing regulation can have significantly positive impacts on

the long-term survival of particular species and particular waterways. This appears to be especially the case for regulation targeted at spawning and breeding metrics.

Now that we have given coverage to the broader aspects of the sustainability and CSR literature (as well as touching on some aspects of the seafood and fisheries literature), we must now consider what has been said already about how contests to organizational legitimacy occur.

2.1.2 NGO pressure on corporations

Within the broader sustainability, CSR and stakeholder literature exists a niche category, focusing on secondary stakeholder and actor influence on corporations.

This literature considers four key questions. The first of these, roughly speaking, is: *What strategies and tactics do NGOs and other secondary stakeholders use to influence corporations?* van Huijstee and Glasbergen (2010, p. 591) considered how different NGO strategies "simultaneously target the same corporation on the same issue" (of social/environmental sustainability/responsibility). Their study provided detailed descriptions of three previously under-studied dimensions of this question, being "the different types of influence of contrasting strategies; the interplay between contrasting strategies; and the dynamic relation between firm–stakeholder resource dependence relationship and NGO influence strategy." (Huijstee & Glasbergen, 2010, p. 591). Den Hond and De Bakker's (2007) Institutionalization, Deinstitutionalization and Legitimacy, and Typology of Tactics model considered how social and environmental activism-oriented NGOs seek to challenge and influence firms, finding that "ideological differences among activist groups motivate them to choose different influence tactics to motivate their claims". On the related-yet-broader question of stakeholder influence tactics on firms (which includes NGOs but also other secondary stakeholders), Frooman (1999) described how stakeholder tactics will vary depending on their relationship with the firm in terms of varying levels of dependence/interdependence. Following on this was Frooman and Murrell's (2005) study which found that "Both structural and demographic variables can act as determinist of strategy choice." (Frooman & Murrell, 2005, p. 3).

In the context of the fishing and seafood industry, secondary actor pressure typically takes the form of environmentally-oriented NGOs achieving to influence the actions of primary producers (businesses involved in the capture or farming of fish and shrimp) and distributors (usually grocery stores and restaurants), with campaigns

being one of the main tactics used (Deighan & Jenkins, 2015). NGOs have been especially important in contexts where "management by the state and by the industry itself has not been sufficient" (Deighan & Jenkins, 2015, p. 476). NGO-developed lists, guides, codes of conduct, rankings, and sustainable fishing-oriented campaigns have in the past three decades become a prominent part of the seafood industry globally (Roheim, 2009). The earliest NGO-led guide described in the literature is the Monterey Bay Aquarium (MBA) Seafood Watch wallet card, and was documented as one of the first prominent instances of NGOs creating a sustainability ranking as a means of indirectly influencing firm behaviour by attempting to change consumer purchasing habits (Roheim et al., 2018).

At a halfway point between the question of strategies and tactics and the broader notion of what do firm and NGO relationships look like, papers such as Zietsma and Winn (2008) describe the orientation of these relationships in the case of scandals and conflicts. Zietsma and Winn (2008, p. 68) found that four approaches were used by secondary stakeholders – namely, "issue raising, issue suppressing, positioning, and solution seeking."

The second question of this literature is around the theme of *what do NGO and corporation relationships look like?* It was Vogel (1978) who first formally documented in the management and organization literature the influence of NGOs on firms. Since then, the literature has grown large, and branched off to focus on specific and nuanced details pertaining to the corporation–NGO relationship.

On the question of corporation–NGO relations in terms of CSR and sustainability, Kourula and Hamle (2008) suggest that these relations vary considerably in terms of their strength and status, ranging from less involved models such as sponsorship through to active working partnerships. Holmes and Moir's (2007) study on the possible positive correlation between NGO-firm closeness and firm innovation found that this link had perhaps been overstated. Ählström (2010) found that civil society organizations (including NGOs) present to the firm a "challenging discourse" around particular social and environmental issues, a discourse which ultimately seeks to "change the dominant corporate discourse" (Ählström, 2010, p. 70).

Eesley and Lenox (2006) draw on Mitchell, Agle and Wood's (1997) work on stakeholder salience in order to consider firm responses to secondary stakeholder actions, concluding that there are inseparable ties in power, legitimacy and urgency

between secondary stakeholders and the firm itself and as such these phenomena cannot be viewed in isolation and must always be considered in terms of relationships.

Recent studies on this question of secondary stakeholder and firm relations, such as Sulkowski, Edwards and Freeman (2018), argue that cooperation between secondary stakeholders and firms do not have to be zero sum games but can be 'win-win' scenarios where cooperation can create shared, sustainable value that benefits both parties. Sulkowski, Edwards and Freeman (2018, p. 31) described how a recent trend involved firms being proactive and actively seeking out and initiating relations with secondary stakeholders, "possibly even starting, propagating, or leveraging movements – to affect positive change" leading to "sustainable value." The notion of dialogue and conversation is explored by Burchell and Cook (2013, p. 505), who describe how "experiences of dialogue are strategically transforming interactions between businesses and NGOs." Inauen and Schoeneborn (2014) describe how social media platforms such as Twitter and Facebook have allowed the firm-NGO relationship to take on a new dimension – especially in terms of the speed and frequency at which dialogue and debate can occur.

The third major question in the corporation-NGO literature has been around the relationship and interplay between social norms, NGOs and firms. Den Hond and De Bakker (2007) published one of the early papers which identified that the social movement literature and management and organization literature had been quite separate in their exploration of similar questions. Overlap and crossovers of these two areas was explored in their paper, and King (2008) then offered a social-movement theory-based model to analyse the interplay between the firm and its secondary stakeholders – including the broader public and society. King (2008, p. 23) frames social movement theory (SMT) around "the conditions under which collective action by outsiders to dominant societal institutions emerge and facilitate access to those institutions, allowing outsiders to potentially affect social and political change", and proposes that SMT is necessary in "understanding stakeholder collection action and influence". Brown (2014) considered the NGO/SMT link with an exploration of the North Indian state of Punjab – finding that "identity and structure are negotiated and constructed" at a midpoint between the wishes of the broader public and the NGOs conducting activism on behalf of a specific cause (Brown, 2014, p. 66).

While in the 1970s and 1980s social movement activism was primarily targeted at firms and governments on *national* issues, Finger and Princen (2013) describe how the forces of globalization – as well as prominent scandals of the 1990s such as sweat shop labour – has led to a situation where NGOs now often peruse larger goals on an international level. According to Finger and Princen (2013, p. 62) "This change in focus, along with the institutionalization of the green movement, reflects the emergence of international environmental NGOs", who often mobilize public support in order to start and progress social movements. Recently, the NGO/corporation relations sub-literature has considered the role of social media – especially Facebook and Twitter – as important contextual mediums in terms of applying pressure to firms to bring about social and environmental changes demanded by society and NGOs. Gomez-Carrasco and Michelon (2017, p. 855) attempted to quantify this impact in terms of influence on firm stock price, finding that "Twitter activism of key stakeholders has a significant impact on investors' decisions". More broadly, the concept of 'hashtag activism' is explored in the context of the recent #Metoo movement to show how social media can facilitate large-scale and sudden social movements and amplify the voice of the public in order to indirectly apply pressure on firms (Xiong, Cho & Boatwright, 2019). The significance of the 'incremental outcomes' of social movements were described in Gupta (2009), who found that small victories or losses by NGOs in a broader social movement – while seemingly insignificant – had more significant consequences in terms of reshuffling the arrangement of dynamics between actors.

The fourth and final question – which is worthy of its own section given its centrality to this study – is consideration of how NGO activism manifests as a contest to legitimacy, and how successful this is at changing behaviours and norms.

The success of NGO contests to corporation legitimacy

A contest to legitimacy happens when an actor (an individual or organization, either internal or external, but usually the latter of each) uses publicly oriented tactics to call into question the specific actions of an organization or industry and/or raise questions about its right to exist (Waldron, Navis & Fisher, 2013). Contests to legitimacy, according to Ayling (2017, p. 351), centre primarily on matters of "perception and social constructions". They usually, according to Waldron, Navis and Fisher (2013, p. 397), manifest against larger companies, usually seeing NGOs "contesting the practices of the more prominent firms in focal industries." There has been an increasing emphasis in the past two decades on understanding how legitimacy is both established and contested, given the increasing prominence that private (as

opposed to governmental) actors such as NGOs and corporations play in both creating, and solving, the various social and environmental challenges facing the planet (Bernstein & Cashore, 2007; Cashore, 2002). Recent contributors have noted that "There are surprisingly few scholarly accounts that treat the interactions between corporations and NGOS as contests over legitimacy" (Ayling, 2017, p. 349), suggesting a need to provide compelling empirical material framing NGO pressure as contesting of legitimacy. Voices such as Lenox & Eesley (2009) consider how NGOs select corporations to target and how these corporations responded. Their study found that the success of NGO campaigns, and in turn their contestation of overall firm legitimacy, was varied, and depended on a range of variables around the configuration of the size, resources and threat of punishment of both the firm and the NGO(s) involved:

> We propose that the more polluting a firm, the greater the operational loss to the firm from complying with activist demands, and thus the lower the likelihood the firm complies to the activist demand. We propose that the greater a targeted firm's reserves of capital, the greater the ability of the firm to fight activist actions, thus raising the marginal cost of the activist of delivering harm, decreasing the likelihood the firm will be targeted, and decreasing the harm threatened by the activist.
>
> Lenox & Eesley (2009, pp. 69-70)

The majority of the literature covering NGO-corporation interactions seems to show "mixed or partial success" in NGOs achieving their goals (Sasser, Prakash, Cashore, & Auld, 2006, p. 28), or "incremental outcomes" (Gupta, 2009, p. 417). Some studies, such as Spar & La Mure (2003, p.94) have found that while the momentum is perhaps shifting, there is still great variation across different domains:

> NGOs are increasingly focussing their powers of persuasion on firms and that firms, in turn, have become increasingly responsive. This responsiveness, however, is not consistent across either industries or individual firms.

Ingram, Yue, & Rao (2010) found that activist success against large corporations (in their study, stopping Wal-Mart from launching in new cities in the U.S) was becoming somewhat more successful in the first decade of the 21st century compared to the last of the 20th - especially in cases when large public support was rallied to get behind a cause. This finding of the combination of public support with NGO campaign efforts was echoed in Tracey et al., (2013). Their study of the 'Super Trawler' fishing vessel in Australia found that NGOs rallying public sentiment (and turning this into potential political harm to the government in office) was the defining

factor which lead to the large fishing corporation being denied the social and then legal licence to operate in Australia.

The other angle of approaching this question of 'how successful are NGO challenges against corporations' is considering the customer-end. Contributions such as Baron (2011) find that a corporation is more likely to concede to NGO pressure if it feels that consumers may value the credence attributes to which it is making a compromise. For example, questions around the social, environmental and ethical matters within the supply chain of a product. In the domain of seafood and fishing, Blomquist, Bartolino, & Waldo (2015) present evidence that consumers in Sweden are willing to pay a price-premium for a product certified with a scheme such as MSC. NGOs in the seafood space often spend a considerable portion of their time on pressuring corporations to adopt certain certification schemes, or abide by particular lists (Roheim et al., 2018), and as such this seems to be an (albeit indirect) way that NGOs contest corporation behaviour.

Other studies, such as Waldron, Navis and Fisher (2013), found that while there are indeed examples where NGOs have achieved modest to moderate levels of success in their attempts to alter corporation behaviour, there exist great differences between how effective campaigning is between corporations, industries and countries. Often, lasting and permanent change is rare. Things seems to return to status quo or base line levels once the legitimacy challenge has passed or died down (Waldron, Navis and Fisher, 2013).

Black 2008 (p. 144) notes that "Sociological debates on legitimacy ask an empirical question: when is an actor regarded as legitimate, and why?", and as such 'answering' such a question should be done using empirical evidence. This matters because, as arguably the dominant institution in society, business plays an important role in both a cause of – and solution to – many of the most serious social and environmental challenges facing our planet. Therefore, it is important that we have empirical material highlighting cases where organizational behaviour has been changed, not just in the immediate term but in the longer term also. There are few prominent examples in the literature of instances where pressure has been applied to corporations in an industry and has achieved a substantial and *lasting* change in behaviour. This lack of prominent examples is alluded to in studies including Spar & La Mure (2003), Sasser et al. (2006), and Lenox & Eesley (2009).

Shame-based campaigning

A specific method of contesting legitimacy is the use of shame-based campaigning, which draws on "shared social meaning and on norms about permissible and impermissible behavior" (Skeel, 2001, p. 1811), in an attempt to alter the behaviour of an organization, or in some cases to push for it to cease to exist. At the onset, it is important to state that some of what has been written on the topic of shaming in the management and organization literature does not use the *specific* language of shaming or shame-based campaigning, but instead *implies* that shaming was a central part of the campaign efforts due to the instigation that the target of the campaign was reputation. Waldron, Navis and Fisher (2013, p. 397), for example, describe how most research on external actor pressure on firms has focused on the phenomena of how these actors "target firms by using publicity oriented tactics to erode those firms' reputations, consequently damaging key stakeholder relationships and fiscal performance".

The concept of 'politics beyond state' – that is, looking at political economy interactions at a firm rather than state-centric level of analysis (Wapner, 1996) co-evolved alongside the sustainability and CSR literature, and paved the way for the growing popularly of shame as an activism tactic.

Early studies in the management and organizational literature focusing on shame (such as Sasser et al., 2006, and Schurman, 2004) considered the way in which activist groups such as NGOs use shame-based tactics against large corporations by targeting reputation towards the end of having them change to a more sustainable or responsible supplier. While the language of shaming is used in these early papers, the emphasis seems to be more on the reputational side, rather than looking directly at how and why shaming manifests. Studies looking at shaming specifically seems to have come into the corporation-external actor/stakeholder vernacular more recently, perhaps alongside the rise to prominence in social media, which has allowed shaming to take place at previously unseen speeds and scales (Fine, 2019). Haufler (2015, p. 199) found that shaming can indeed lead to change in organizational behaviours, but cautioned that "The degree to which shame functions to change behavior varies widely across firms and sectors." The use of 'name and shame' tactics by secondary stakeholders – especially NGOs – to pressure firms into improving the social and environmental aspects of their supply chain is considered in studies such as Bartley (2007). Bloomfield (2014, p. 263) considered how market based shaming against corporations can be a powerful mechanism in the pursuit of social and environmental goals; especially in terms of the role they play in "terms of challenging

unwanted industry activities by circumventing the state institutions that facilitate their imposition".

Taebi and Safari's (2017) study on the effectiveness and legitimacy of shaming as strategy against anthropogenic-induced climate change found that shaming can be effective (especially when the corporation operates in a business-to-consumer rather than business-to-business or state-to-state domain), but that shaming carries with it several "ethical pitfalls", which have the possibility of existing at the end of both the shamer and the shamee (Taebi & Safari, p. 2017). In congruency with the SOL literature, the authors propose that shaming often exists in contextual domains related to matters pertaining to the natural environment, due to the fact that "most people acknowledge that corporations have special obligations when it comes to protecting the environment." (Taebi & Safari, p. 1299, 2017).

Moreover, the authors claim that there are "prominent examples in the literature, in which shaming has influenced corporation's behavior, in issues associated with CSR and environmental management" (Taebi & Safari, 2017, p. 1303) and that the success of these examples is driven largely by the involvement (either direct or indirect involvement) of the consumer. None of these examples are cited in the paper, and while a search of the literature does indeed highlight some anecdotal cases, there appear to be no outstanding documented examples in the literature. And of the ones that do exist, shaming is merely analysed in terms of its immediate, short-term impacts. There appears to be a notably less coverage regarding the longer-term impacts of shaming on corporations. Nor does existing shaming literature offer much in the way of how shaming shapes the broader arrangement of relations between actors in a value chain. This is acknowledged by voices in the literature, with statements such as "Future empirical research needs to explore the effectiveness of shaming strategies in different business relationships." (Taebi & Safari, 2017, p. 1303).

In regards to specific literature on contests to legitimacy which consider shaming, there have been several which infer shaming, but no not refer to it explicitly. Black (2008) considered the interplay between legitimacy and accountability in polycentric regulatory environments. A key finding was the way in which the "institutional embeddedness" (Black, 2008, p. 157) within regulatory environments could serve as either shield to legitimacy contest or an effective avenue to launch a contest. Ayling (2017) considered legitimacy contests in the energy industry (specifically, fossil fuels) and described the complexity of such challenges due to the audiences involved and the to and fro between the contester and contested. It is now necessary for us to

consider what has been said already about how corporations respond to legitimacy contests.

How do corporations respond to legitimacy contests?

The effects of such a contest to legitimacy can range on a spectrum, extending from being a minor inconvenience which is ignored through to a full-blown crisis which threatens the entire existence of a corporation or industry (Black, 2008; Waldron, Navis & Fisher, 2013). Corporations respond in a range of ways when contests to legitimacy are launched, depending on the configuration of a number of variables (Spar & La Mure 2003). These variables include: who is launching the contest and the threat level in which the corporation views that actor; transaction costs; the nature of the subject matter relating to the legitimacy contest; the size, industry and operating environment of the corporation itself; relevant laws and regulation; potential for punishment or reward; and, the interests and opinions of the company's managers and owners (Spar & La Mure, 2003; Lenox & Eesley, 2009; Waldron, Navis & Fisher, 2013). Spar and La Mure (2003) pondered on the question of *what accounts for the variation in how firms respond to activist pressure?*, finding that 'when the costs of compliance are low or the benefits high, firms are more likely to concede [to the wishes of NGOs] (Spar & La Mure, 2003, p.95).

According to Black (2008), the response of the corporation to the contest will depend on the nature of the legitimacy challenge in terms of its pragmatic, moral or cognitive implications. What is meant by this is how organizations respond to legitimacy contests will depend on the nature of who is bringing the challenge, the nature of the topic of the debate and how the organization perceives itself. Spar and La Mure (2003, p.94) describe the variations in responses in the following terms:

> Some firms respond more vigorously to activist attacks than others; some work with the activists, others against them. Part of this variation may be explained by a slight twist on standard models of profit maximization: when the costs of compliance are low or the benefits high, firms are more likely to concede.

Under Suchman (1995), the managing of organizational legitimacy roughly speaking involves building it, maintaining it and repairing it in the event that it is lost or challenged. When a contest to legitimacy does occur, there are three main responses according to Black (2008, p. 146), who builds on Suchman's initial idea:

> … attempting to conform to legitimacy claims that are made on them; they can seek to manipulate them; or they can selectively conform to claims from among their environments.

Lenox & Eesley (2009) framed the particular topic of grievance and its relevance to the corporation's main business activity being an especially important factor in determining corporation response to NGO pressure. The closer that the NGO contest to a field which may undermine the overall operating viability of the corporation, the more strongly it would fight back and the less likely it would be to concede ground to NGO pressure (Lenox & Eesley, 2009). This argument has been empirically shown in several cases in Australia, such as the mining tax (Bell & Hindmore, 2014) and the foreign-owned fishing 'Super Trawler' (Tracey et al.,2013).

Ingram, Yue, & Rao (2010) found that what was of more concern to corporations than solely NGO pressure was pressure which tapped into public sentiment and actively involved members of the public in campaign efforts.

Size and visibility also play an important role in determining how a corporation will respond to NGO pressure which manifest as a contest to legitimacy (King & Soule 2007; Lenox & Eesley, 2009; Ingram, Yue, & Rao, 2010). Large, visible targets were easier for NGOs and activist groups to *identity* and *target*, but harder to influence due to the fact that corporations could respond more effectively. Bell & Hindmore (2014) considered the response of large corporations in the Australian mining sector to a proposed super-profits resource rent tax. They found that the huge size of corporations meant that they could respond with massive campaigns against NGOs (and even against the Australian Government), and ultimately were successful in maintaining the status quo of no tax. Lenox & Eesley's (2009, p.70) findings are salient with the aforementioned points on size:

> Finally, we propose the larger, more visible, and more polluting a firm, the greater the incremental utility to the activist of gaining compliance, and thus the greater the likelihood the firm will be targeted and the greater the harm threatened by the activist.

Directly interrelated to the consideration of how a corporation responds to a legitimacy challenge is the concept of social license to operate (SLO). Gehman, Lefsrund and Fast (2017) propose that the terms 'legitimacy' and 'SLO' have become increasingly similar, to the point of interchangeability. For this study, the terms will be used closely but also distinctly (see Chapter 1, Introduction for definitions of key terms, including SLO). Given the focus of this study on the natural resources sector (for example, shrimp), it is assumed that all actors operating in the industry must be in possession of an SLO (Cullen-Knox et al., 2017; Kelly, Pecl & Fleming, 2017). Therefore, any contest to legitimacy that centres on any social and/or environmental aspects of shrimp farming and capture by definition simultaneously calls into

question both SLO and legitimacy. To be more precise however, we will work on the theoretical assumption in this study that SLO is necessary for legitimacy to exist, and if it is revoked then legitimacy is also revoked, which may create an existential crisis in terms of the future viability of an organization.

When legitimacy is contested, corporations in some industries may unite together against a perceived common enemy (such as an NGO running a campaign) and decide on a collective course of action which responds to the activists claims sufficiently to maintain SLO but does not go far enough as to concede to all of their wishes. Sasser et al. (2006) describe an interesting case, where corporations in the forestry sector in the United States perceived that the contest by various actors could have implications for their standing in the eyes of the broader public (that is, SLO) so decided to create their own industry-based standard, rather than adopt the certification scheme the activists had been striving for:

> Advocacy has limited success in modifying the behaviour of targeted actors: in the U.S., forestry firms have resisted joining the NGO-sponsored Forest Stewardship Council (FSC), preferring instead an industry-sponsored private authority regime, the Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI).

> (Sasser et al., 2006, p. 2)

Such a 'half-way' type response seems to be emblematic of how many corporations and industries respond to NGO legitimacy and SLO contests: by making a few concessions, but ultimately standing their ground.

In summary, we know that corporations respond to legitimacy contests in a number of different ways, based on multiple different variables. What we know less about are the specifics and nuances of how and why these responses happen. One such area is consideration as to the role of artefacts.

The role of artefacts in legitimacy
The question of how individuals and organizations alike attempt to classify, categorize and 'sort things out' is a prominent topic throughout various streams of the social science literature. Papers from the legitimacy theory space such as Suchman (2003) frame the contract as a social artefact, and touch upon its role in establishing legitimacy. Ahmad and Sulaiman (2004) frame environmental disclosures as sometimes manifesting as artefacts, especially when the report follows a pre-defined format or incorporates an external framework or initiative. More recent contributions (such as Niu et al., 2019, and Mendoza & Clemen, 2013) describe the notion of

corporations being aware of external actors creating lists and guides which categorize them, but fail to consider the implications of this occurrence. There seems to be a need to extend the understanding of the role that artefacts play in both establishing and contesting organizational legitimacy – especially lists and guides produced by external actors. And also the role of ranking systems which use consumer-friendly modes of communication such as traffic light colours.

This gap is identified in Bartlett, Pallas and Frostenson's (2013) appropriately titled book chapter 'Reputation and Legitimacy: Accreditation and Rankings to Assess Organizations'. The authors make the case that accreditation and ranking systems play an important and presently-under-appreciated role in the establishment of legitimacy, given the manner through which they "provide the mechanism for comparing organizations and assessing their relative value" (Bartlett, Pallas and Frostenson, 2013, p. 530). The authors conclude the chapter by pointing to the need for further research in this space, suggesting potential for "interesting and important future studies" pertaining to the role that artefacts play in shaping legitimacy "across multiple levels of analysis", stressing that:

> Given the emphasis in industry on the importance of reputation, and the claims by the public relations industry in particular in regard to reputation management, there are significant opportunities for the academic research to further inform this area of organizational life.
>
> (Bartlett, Pallas and Frostenson, 2013, p. 530)

A considerable amount of what has been written about the relationship between organizational legitimacy and the use of artefacts comes from the institutional theory literature. According to Bartlett et al., this is inevitable given the crossovers and closeness between the two approaches. Sauder and Espeland (2009, p. 63) frame the use of artefacts as a means of establishing legitimacy as follows:

> To secure legitimacy and conform to general expectations, organizations may develop symbolic responses to environmental pressures without disrupting core technical activities.

One of these "symbolic responses" is the use of artefacts such as lists, guides and rankings as a means of signalling reputation, compliance to environmental pressures and incorporation of norms in organizational identity and behaviour.

What seems to be far less clear in the literature is the role that artefacts play in *contests* to legitimacy, and also what role they might have in affecting the longevity of the impacts of a contest.

The seafood and fishing literature has itself briefly considered the role of artefacts affect and are affected by actor interactions within a specific industry – especially the recent phenomena of certification schemes which can allow for the charging price premium. Sutton (1997, in Roheim et al., 2018, p. 392) frames the overall strategy of the so-called global sustainable seafood movement (GSSM) as being based on a "theory of change", which "proposed a demand-driven approach to biological and ecological improvements in seafood production systems." Roheim and Sutinen (2006) describes the main approaches of the GSSM as being oriented around creating demand for sustainable seafood through the use of certification schemes and seafood guides, lists and rankings.

To conclude, there seems to be a need to better account for the role of artefacts in both establishing and contesting organizational legitimacy.

Now that we have reviewed existing literature surrounding contests to legitimacy, it is necessary to outline the conceptual framework that will be most useful for analysing the collected empirical material.

2.2 Theoretical framework

This study uses the context of shrimp sustainability in Sweden between 2008 and 2018 in order to answer the question *how is legitimacy contested?* The selection of the theoretical framework was made on the basis of choosing a coherent and organized body of work that would best assist in analysing the collected empirical data in relation to this question, and from this seeking to make a theoretical contribution.

The primary theoretical framework used in this study is therefore legitimacy theory (Guthrie & Parker, 1989; Suchman, 1995; O'Donovan, 2002). It is used to assist in the explanation of the data by both acting as an explanatory force itself, as well as serving as a theoretical anchor for the three specific operationalizable concepts which form the theoretical framework. Three specific concepts directly associated with and congruent to the central foundations of legitimacy theory form the conceptual framework of this study: social license, norm entrepreneurs, and shaming. Each has been chosen based both on their congruency to the theoretical assumptions of legitimacy theory, and usefulness in their ability to explain empirical material (both

individually, but also when packaged together). Social license has long been established as an operable concept of legitimacy theory (Boutiler & Thomson, 2011), one that offers a practical and working framework through which to consider whether the actions of an organization fall within the bounds of societal norms. So embedded is social license within the literature that recent contributions such as Gehman, Lefsrund and Fast (2017) have even suggested that the terms 'legitimate' and 'social license' have now become somewhat synonymous with one another. While the idea of a norm entrepreneur has its origins from within the sociology of law literature (Sunstein, 1996), applications and offshoots have stemmed to multiple disciplines, including management and organization. Within this literature, norm entrepreneurship is increasingly being applied to questions around the interplay between firm legitimacy, social values and corporate social responsibility – especially in terms of how the actions of individuals and organizations can progress and solidify a new norm to which firms must conform if they wish to retain their legitimacy (Sendlhofer, 2019; Flohr, Rieth & Schwindenhammer, 2010; Sjöström, 2010). The literature around shaming has its own unique place. Shame itself stems back to an ancient evolutionary biologic mechanism designed to punish oneself or another, and was first clearly described (at least in terms of its possible evolutionary role) by biologist Charles Darwin (1872). Increasingly, shame has been studied in terms of its role as mechanism through which to ask questions around the legitimacy of the actions taken or stance conveyed by an organization or individual(s) within the organization, and in some cases use shaming tactics as a driver of change (Friman, 2015). This has become especially prevalent in the period of 2005 – 2020, where rapid advancements in technology have meant that shaming of firm practices can take place through social media in a highly coordinated, timely manner (Fine, 2019).

Each of these three concepts offers a unique yet coherent lens through which to analyse empirical material and draw out novel insights which may enable a new theoretical contribution to progress our understanding of legitimacy. Packaged together as a practical, working framework from within legitimacy theory, the concepts seem to meet Boxenbaum and Rouleau's (2011, p. 274) criteria of being wide enough to "capture a broad range of empirical situations" but also "precise enough… to test propositions and hypothesis". It is not the aim of this conceptual framework (nor any such framework in the management and organization literature) to provide a "final and truthful mapping of underlying practices" (Styhre, 2013, p. 40); rather, it instead serves to act as a "heuristic for navigating territories" (Styhre, 2013, p. 40). In general terms, the framework of this study fits Eisenhart's (1991, p. 205)

interpretation of a theoretical framework as "a structure that guides research by relying on a formal theory … constructed by using an established, coherent explanation of certain phenomena and relationships", as well as Grant and Osanloo (2014, p. 16) need for a conceptual framework to offer a "logical structure of connected concepts that help provide a picture or visual display of how ideas in a study relate to one another within the theoretical framework."

Legitimacy theory

Legitimacy theory (Guthrie and Parker, 1989; Suchman, 1995; O'Donovan, 2002) is a framework that considers how the behaviours of an organization are judged by society, and whether these behaviors are deemed to fall into the realm of what society considers acceptable. It works on the basis that an organization must maintain a certain level of acceptability in order to maintain relevance and existence, and this requires it to be seen to be perceived in the eyes of external actors as "operating in conformance with community expectations (Deegan, 2019, p. 2315). Legitimacy is a "resource… on which the organization is dependent for survival and is conferred on the organization by society" (Deegan, 2019, p. 2315).

Considered by sections of the academy to be an independent theory in its own right and by other parts to constitute a part of other theories (such as institutional theory) (Parsons, Lacey & Moffat, 2014), legitimacy theory is "based on the idea that in order to continue operating successfully, corporations must act within the bounds of what society seems as socially acceptable behavior" (O'Donovan, 2002, p. 344). Legitimacy theory has distinct connections and crossovers with the CSR and sustainability literature, something which recent voices such as Deegan (2019) argue will help achieve greater disclosure of social and environmental information.

Parsons, Lacey and Moffat, (2014, p. 84) suggest that at the heart of what constitutes legitimacy is the idea: "… that corporations need a license not only from regulators, but also from society." In an instrumental sense the theory considers how legitimacy is "… gained, maintained, or lost" (O'Donovan, 2002, p. 344) and strategies that management can use to manage this. Suchman (1995, p. 575) notes that "Legitimacy [is] an operational resource... that organizations extract – often competitively – from their cultural environments and that they employ in pursuit of their goals". Acting in a socially and environmentally responsible manner can "… endow the organization with a perceived legitimacy among external observers who may otherwise constrain or frustrate organizational activities" (Parsons, Lacey & Moffat,

2014, p. 84). In a normative sense, legitimacy theory deals with many of the same philosophical questions of the sustainability and CSR literature, such as to whom does the corporation owe obligations, and what are those obligations. Amongst the most commonly cited interpretations of legitimacy is Suchman's (1995, p. 574) definition:

> a generalized perception or assumption that the actions of an entity are desirable, proper, or appropriate within some socially constructed system of norms, values, beliefs, and definitions.

Suchman (1995) describes three main forms of legitimacy. Moral legitimacy, as the name suggests, is generated when organizational goals are "seen as morally appropriate" (Black, 2008, in Ayling, 2017, p. 352). Pragmatic legitimacy deals with questions around the "instrumental value" of the organization to stakeholders (Ayling, 2017, p. 352). Cognitive legitimacy is about situations where there is a "taken-for-grantedness" or degree of inevitability about the existence of an organization due to it engaging in an activity which is socially useful (Suchman, 1995, p. 575).

Legitimacy theory has its roots in the idea of organizational legitimacy (Maurer, 1971; Dowling and Pfeffer, 1975; Weber, 1978). Dowling and Pfeffer (1975, p. 122) proposed that organizations will seek to "… establish congruence" between their activities and those of "… the larger social system of which they are a part". According to Dowling and Pfeffer (1975, p. 122) "… an organization's legitimacy is threatened when there exists between the entity and its social system "a disparity, actual or potential." Dowling and Pfeffer (1975, p. 125) argue that "Since organizational survival is enhanced by legitimacy, legitimacy can be viewed as a resource which a given focal organization attempts to obtain and which, occasionally, competing organizations may attempt to deny." Closely connected to legitimacy theory is the concept of resource dependence theory (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978). Resource dependence theory considers how "organizations are controlled by an external source to the extent they depend on that source for a large proportion of input or output" (Pfeffer & Salanick, 1978, p. 271). While not directly utilized in this in this study, resource dependence theory is a framework which is used indirectly to inform the overall framing of legitimacy theory as it is used in this study.

Both Gray (2002) and O'Donovan (2002) suggest that legitimacy theory is similar to and has significant overlaps with both stakeholder theory and accountability theory, as all three pose similar questions around the corporation, the groups and individuals who it affects and is affected by, and the notion of a social contract between the two, as well as what information should be reported (O'Donovan, 2002, p. 345). Beddewela and Fairbrass (2016) argue that the increasing trend for organizations to report CSR-related metrics has come about in response to changing societal norms to which organizations must conform in order to appear legitimate in the eyes of its stakeholders (Dowling & Pfeffer, 1975; O'Donovan, 2002). In terms of CSR, recent applications of legitimacy theory have been in terms of seeking to understand how "the power attached to CSR activities is derived from the political legitimacy granted" to organizations within specific institutional contexts (Moon et al., 2010 in Gond & Nyberg, 2017, p. 1132). Recent contributions, such as Ayling's (2017) study of the divestment movement against the fossil fuel industry in Australia, frame legitimacy as being 'contestable'.

As a process, legitimation of an organization overall or of its specific behaviour in a particular instance occurs when an organization "justifies to a peer or subordinate system its right to exist." (Maurer, 1971, p. 361 in Dowling & Pfeffer, 1975, p. 123). In terms of assessing whether an organization has legitimacy, the simplest of ways is to see the willingness of people to engage with that company. This may be an employee working for an organization, an investor buying shares, a company buying a product or an NGO forming a partnership. An organization can be said to have a high degree of legitimacy when it possesses "largely unquestioned freedom to peruse its activities." An organization can be said to have a low level of legitimacy when it its activities face a high degree of scrutiny from its stakeholders and society-at-large. The legitimacy theory literature has come to fruition over a 40-year period which has, amongst other things, been characterized by a massive increase in the role of NGOs in holding companies to account, a phenomenon first recognized by Vogel (1978). Despite this, there have been "surprisingly few scholarly accounts" in the literature dealing with firm-NGO interactions in terms of being framed around legitimacy.

The legitimacy (or lack thereof) of an organization cannot be seen in isolation; rather, it can only be examined within the context of a particular set of societal norms and values (Dowling and Pfeffer, 1975, p. 124). Since legitimacy is an intangible, fluid social contract as opposed to a somewhat static regulatory framework, organizations must learn how to effectively manage perceptions of their legitimacy so as to stay

relevant to the societal norms in which they operate. It is about a fit between an organization's own values, and the values of the society in which it operates.

Norm entrepreneurs

'Norm entrepreneur' was first coined by Sunstein (1996, p. 909), who defined the concept as being about "people being interested in changing social norms". Sunstein's concept is built on the assumption that "existing social conditions are often more fragile than might be supposed", and describes how the actions of norm entrepreneurs (who can either be individuals or groups of individuals – that is, organizations) can lead to three outcomes. The first outcome is that an attempt to change the norm can fail and the remaining norms will stay in place. The second outcome is what Sunstein calls 'norm bandwagons', where efforts by one or more actors lead to initially small shifts, which grow increasingly larger as more people pile on the bandwagon. This may eventually lead to a 'norm cascade', which is characterized by "rapid shifts in norms" (Sunstein, 1996, p. 909). Once a new norm is in place, it is possible that legal frameworks and regulation will be altered accordingly. As applied to debates around the legitimacy, sustainability and/or social responsibility of the actions of organizations, recent contributions such as Sendlhofer (2019, p. 1), and Sjöström (2010, p. 177) have framed the term as being about actors seeking to shape new norms and standards of "appropriateness", while simultaneously "persuading" others to join the movement. Becker's (1963) notion of the 'moral entrepreneur' has many distinct crossovers to norm entrepreneur, and the terms are often used interchangeably. For example, Felner's (2012) study of human rights NGOs uses the term 'moral' instead of 'norm', yet still follows the basic principles of Sunstein's framework. Fine (1996, p. 1159) describes the term 'reputational entrepreneurship', a related yet different concept which considers actors who "attempt to control the memory of historical figures through motivation, narrative facility and institutional placement." This concept could indeed be useful in explaining empirical material relating to how external actors could attempt to alter reputational perceptions of a firm in order to bring about their desired change, but perhaps deviates too far into the 'history wars' debate to be relevant for this component of the conceptual framework.

Norm entrepreneurs has been chosen as a conceptual tool to form part of the theoretical framework due to its usefulness in explaining how and why social norms come to be and change and dissolve over time – especially in terms of the interplay between firms, consumers, and civil society organizations. This is congruent with

recent studies which have applied the norm entrepreneur concept to matters of corporate social responsibility and framed the term as being about any actor who seeks to "influence corporate behaviour" (Sjöström, 2010, p. 170).

The assumption made in Sunstein (1996) about the fragility of social norms is a central tenant of legitimacy theory: that what constitutes legitimate behaviour by a firm can change dramatically across the space-time continuum and is not in any way shape or form fixed, and as such organizations are subject to situations where the legitimacy of one of their actions may be contested, or in some cases their entire existence may be contested. This is becoming especially true in the context of rapid technological change, which is allowing public debates around social and environmental issues to take place through social media at speeds with which many organizations are unable to keep up. In Sweden, for example, many smaller fishing and seafood firms which not only closely abide by all relevant national and supra-national laws (as well as enact voluntary standards) have had their legitimacy to operate contested by NGOs, who have played the role of norm entrepreneurs by shifting the norms of what constitutes 'sustainable' shrimp.

As such, this concept will prove useful for explaining empirical material where respondents from NGOs openly question the legitimacy of seafood producers and retailers (and vice versa). It is a particularly good fit for a study based in Sweden, due to previous literature such as Ingebritsen (2002), which have classified the Scandinavian countries themselves as being norm entrepreneurs. The usefulness of the concept will be further enhanced by its synergistic relationship with social license. Early literature in social license, such as O'Donovan (2002), seeks to ask questions around the congruence between corporate activities and society's expectations of said activities. The proactive identification by firms of either actual or striving-to-be norm entrepreneurs can add to the social license model by allowing for a degree of strategizing so as to map out what the norm shifts might be and plan a response.

Moreover, the concept of the norm entrepreneur applied to empirical material which features one of the very early (and effective) large scale social media campaigns (that is, the 2011 Anti-Scampi campaign) may allow for the formulation of a greater understanding regarding the contesting of legitimacy through virtual mediums.

Shaming

The concept of shame (and associated usages such as shaming) has been considered notoriously difficult to define precisely due to the large number of contextual

domains in which it is used (Friman, 2015; Peters et al., 2014). The American Psychological Association defines shame as "a highly unpleasant self-conscious emotion arising from the sense of there being something dishonourable, immodest, or indecorous in one's own conduct or circumstances." (APA, 2019). In the management and organization literature, shame has typically been studied in terms of its role a tactic through which one actor tries to influence the behaviour of another by tarnishing their reputation in order to progress towards a strategic goal (Friman, 2015). When used against an organization, shame can be employed to target individual people or groups of people associated with the organization (such as a specific manager, owners/shareholders, board directors and so forth), or in many cases the shaming can be less-specific and target the entire organization itself, or even an entire industry or sector (Skeel, 2001). Shaming of organizations typically features several key characteristics: "elicit moral disapproval… drawing on shared social meaning and on norms about permissible and impermissible behavior" (Skeel 2001, p. 1811); "change industry practices by targeting the reputational value of individual firms (Bloomfield, 2014, p. 263); "draws on soft law… aims to institutionalize a social norm without exerting legally-binding force" (Taebi & Safari, 2017, p. 1296). Fine (2019) notes that the literature on shame blurs with and is to a degree inseparable with that on scandals, reputation, status, moral hazards, callout-culture, lobbyism, and moral panic.

Shaming can be done by anyone, against anyone, and through a variety of different mediums, but typically has a degree of coordination to it. While there is no 'typical' shaming situation, one of the most commonly documented cases seems to be an NGO with social or environmental goals employing shame against a large for-profit business (Kaprus, 2018). The shaming can be in regards to a specific decision taken by an organization, or in some cases the shaming can be used to question the very legitimacy of the organization's right to exist (Friman, 2015). The overall effectiveness of shaming as a tactic is unclear, with many examples of success as well as many cases of failure. Haufler (2015, p. 199) notes that "The degree to which shame functions to change behaviour varies widely across firms and sectors." Shaming has been argued to have a very low cost to the party instigating the shame (Skeel, 2001), thus improving its attractiveness as a tool for bringing about change.

The period of 2005 to 2020 saw shaming tactics, which were traditionally done using television, radio and print media, employed via a new medium: social media. Technologies such as Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat, Instagram, and YouTube allow

for shaming to take place at unprecedented speeds, with national boarders posing no barriers (Kaprus, 2018). Hashtag activism, clicktivism and similar terms describe a phenomenon where armchair critics can join a campaign simply by pressing the 'Like' button. According to Kaprus (2018, p. 125), social media technologies can be "powerful in the hands of environmental organizations that know how to utilize them properly". While a structured and coordinated shaming-based campaign against a company is often started by an NGO, it usually achieves its intended purpose due to large numbers of individuals (many of whom may have had no previous involvement with the NGO) joining the movement. This is often necessary due to the fact that there often exists a "discrepancy between the resources available to environmental activists and the scope of their ambitions" (Bloomfield, 2014, p. 263).

The first way that shaming is used in this study is in terms of assisting in the explanation of empirical material relating to the use of tactics by NGOs on consumers, producers and retailers. Viewing data through the concept of shaming allows for the identification of shaming practice, and subsequent analysis of the potential role that shame plays as a medium for contesting legitimacy. Specifically, shaming will be used to view the contesting of legitimacy between actors in the Swedish shrimp industry at pivotal moments of controversy where the legitimacy of several actors and actions are called into question. Focus will be on understanding the possible role of shame in destabilizing and/or revoking the legitimacy of an actor, as well as consideration of what role shame plays in solidifying new norms and shaping the arrangement of actor dynamics post-controversy.

The second use of the concept of shaming in this study is pertaining to empirical material which refers to artefacts and objects – primarily lists, guides and certification schemes, and ask questions around who has the legitimacy to decide such lists and to use shaming to enforce them. The significant interplay between artefacts and shame is brought about due to the extent to which lists and guides project reputation. Reputation, proposes Fine (2019, p. 248), often takes the "form of a ranking, list, or hierarchy that permits the human desire for evaluative comparisons." Suchman, whose 1995 definition of legitimacy theory is usually cited as being the 'first', described in his 2003 paper how social artefacts such as contracts are vital aspects of achieving and maintaining legitimacy. In the seafood industry, it is becoming increasingly common for all producers and retailers to pass through several opinion corridors, or bottlenecks, in the form of artefacts. In the case of Sweden, this usually

takes the form of seafood producers firstly being socially (but not legally) obligated to go through a third-party certification assessment to have their seafood legitimized (MSC, ASC and KRAV are the main such schemes in Sweden). Following this, a second obligatory passage point must be passed through: meeting the acceptance of the NGO-produced guides and lists. These artefacts have considerable power over both producers and sellers of seafood. They have been deemed obligatory because in most cases in Sweden, having anything less than a 'Green' rating means not only a loss of access to sell ones product in a retail store, but shaming through orange and red ratings. Louche, Gond and Ventresca (2005, p. 148) note that "Little is known about the processes through which they (CSOs/NGOs) have acquired their legitimacy, that is, their 'right-to-rate' corporations." Thus, it seems a worthwhile pursuit to use the concept of shaming to assist in explaining empirical material related to artefacts, and in doing so possibly seek new and novel insights into the relationship between third-party shaming and firm legitimacy.

Social license to operate
Perhaps the most prominent and operationalizable conceptual framework to emerge from the realm of legitimacy theory is that of social license, or social license to operate (SLO) (Boutiler & Thomson, 2011; Joyce & Thomson, 2000; Parker et al., 2008;) as it is sometimes referred to. 'Social license' essentially refers to whether an organization has "… on-going acceptance or approval" (Parsons, Lacey & Moffat, 2014, p. 84) from society to do something, or even to exist. It is the idea that corporations need a license not only from regulators, but also from "… society and local communities, and this 'license' can be gained by "fitting in and adapting to the prevailing social norms" (Parsons, Lacey and Moffat, 2014, p. 84). What makes social licence unique is that it is "usually concerning corporate use of public natural resources" (Cullen-Knox et al., 2017, p. 70). O'Donovan (2002, p. 347) describes how there must be "congruence between corporate activity and society expectations of the corporation … based on social values and norms" for social license to be present. For management, "the significance of a social license may derive from the capacity of stakeholders to impose costs on companies." (Parsons, Lacey & Moffat, 2014, p. 84). The legitimacy of an organization and its possession or non-possession of a social license can often come to a head and manifest quite suddenly around a particular issue or situation.

An actor having SLO is based not on them fulfilling legal requirements (this is assumed in most cases). Rather, it is based upon the degree to which an organization and its activities meet the expectations of local communities and society at large. The

SLO literature proposes that it is "generally understood that to gain a SLO a corporation engages in voluntary activities beyond what is legally required". (Cullen-Knox et al., 2017, p. 70). While an organization may commence an activity that is perfectly legal in a regulatory sense, the activity may fail as it is unable to gather the necessary support from its stakeholders, such as funding from banks, or sales from customers. Or it may face such a high level of opposition from the public or NGOs that proceeding with the activity would be extremely detrimental to its reputation, or the company's very existence would be unprofitable and reputationally harmful to those who worked in it. These stakeholders can be said to have imposed a cost on the company for failing to have the necessary social license. Parsons, Lacey and Moffat (2014, p. 84) note that the concept of social license "… encapsulates notions such as demands and expectations, legitimacy, credibility… and informed consent. Perhaps most fundamentally… it suggests that stakeholders many threaten a company's legitimacy to operate through boycotts, picketing, or legal challenges" The social license differs from its counterpart in laws and regulations. The social license is "… intangible and unwritten, and cannot be granted by any formal civil, political or legal authorities." Much like the very idea of power, a social license (or lack thereof) can be hard to define, but easy to see.

Haward, Jabour and McDonald (2013) carried out the first major study to apply the conceptual framework of social license specifically to actor-relations within the fishing industry. Their study explored the case of a foreign-owned fishing company which sought permission to conduct fishing operations in Australian waters. The Australian Fisheries Management Authority (AFMA), an independent Federal body which assesses the sustainability of fish stocks and methods, initially granted permission for the vessel to trawl for small pelagic fish. However, a number of environmental NGOs, including Greenpeace and the WWF, deemed that the 'factory trawler' vessel would be catching fish at unsustainable levels, as well as with unacceptably high levels of dolphin bycatch. A large 'Stop the Supertrawler' campaign was run by the NGOs, which quickly gained massive public support. The government, soon facing an election, realized that the issue was going to be politically costly, so intervened and passed legislation to overturn the decision made by AFMA. The company was banned from fishing in Australian waters. Haward, Jabour and McDonald (2013) illustrated that while Able Tasman had legal backing to conduct its operations, it did not have the necessary legitimacy in the eyes of the environmental NGOs and the public, meaning that it lacked a 'social license'.

Recent studies of social license applied to the fishing and seafood industry have considered questions such as the role of environmental NGOs using SOL as a mechanism through which to achieve "governance via persuasion" (Murphy-Gregory, 2018); social license as applied to marine ecosystem management (Kelly, Pecl & Fleming, 2017); and the role of social license in achieving marine governance (Cullen-Knox et al., 2017).

Using social license carries with it several implications. Firstly, it goes somewhat against the grain of the fisheries management literature, which has traditionally argued that regulation and legal frameworks are the key to achieving sustainable levels and methods of fishing and associated seafood consumption. Although this has changed in recent years, driven mainly by the success of market-based solutions such as labelling schemes, the literature is still of the perspective that the development and enforcement of legislation is the primary solution to effective fisheries management. Social license as a concept claims that a social license may in fact be a "… prerequisite for a legal license" (Parsons, Lacey and Moffat, 2014, p. 84). Secondly, social license works on the tacit assumption that organizations partaking in sustainability and CSR activities are driven by self-interest and the need to survive, rather than some sort of higher altruism. The final major theoretical implication of using the concept of social license is that the corporation no longer has the same degree of dominance as it once did, and is arguably at the mercy of external stakeholders more so than any point in history. Parsons, Lacey and Moffat (2014, p. 8) suggest that the concept of social license, along with associated concepts such as CSR and sustainability have in the past 30 years "shifted the balance of decision-making power from corporations to stakeholders". Haward, Jabour and McDonald (2013, p. 25) note that this is particularly prominent for the case of fisheries management, as illustrated in the case of the 2012 super trawler dilemma in Australia:

> The *Abel Tasman* controversy highlighted the emerging role of social license in decision making: the political storm that engulfed the fishers, scientists, decision makers and their management… may well foreshadow increased public scrutiny of Australian fisheries.

After understanding the theoretical implications of using social license in this study, it is necessary to consider how the concept will be operationalized – that is, how it will actually be used to help answer the central research question of the thesis. Firstly, social license will be drawn upon in order to derive what are some of the social values within Swedish society to which an organization must conform in order to gain

legitimacy. Since the possession of a social license depends on "... alignment between an organization's values... and wider social-cultural values" (Parsons, Lacey & Moffat, 2014, p. 85), determining whether an organization possesses a social license requires analysis of what are the deeper, tacit espoused values within Swedish society, both in a broad sense but also in a narrow sense in relation to the natural environment, fishing, and seafood. It will allow the ascertaining of what are the societal norms and values in Sweden in relation to fishing and seafood that a player in the industry must conform to in order to gain a social license, how these have changed over time, and how recent pivotal events driven by NGOs such as the Anti-Scampi campaign might have shifted these values.

Secondly, social license will be used to attempt to understand relations between actors in the Swedish shrimp industry, both in a general sense but also in the context of two specific events which called into question the social license of actors in the industry. Parsons, Lacey and Moffat (2014, p. 83) argue that the new-found requirement for an organization to hold a social license "... represents a shift in power relations". In a similar way to Haward, Jabour and McDonald's (2013) study of actors negotiating in the Australian fishing industry, social license will be used in this study in order to attempt to make sense of how controversies around shrimp sustainability lead to major changes in the legitimacy hierarchy of the seafood industry. Finally, SLO can be used to analyse another critical part of the research question: how actors arrive at their interpretation as to what constitutes 'sustainability' in terms of shrimp capture and farming, and translate that through to a judgement of the overall legitimacy of another actor. SLO will be used to consider the way that actors use information and translate this through to decisions about sustainability, and the idea that while a decision may be environmentally sustainable from a scientific sense, it can still be banned because of social license issues. This is a critical element of the study, as actors in the industry work off essentially the same information, yet many have arrived at widely different conclusions as to what is sustainable and what is not. SLO can be used to explain why it is that some industries have a much greater need for a social license compared to others (such as the case of mining which is pointed to in Parsons, Lacey and Moffat, 2014). Upon analysis of results, we could use social license to hypothesize claims such as that the more 'emotive' the industry, the greater the need for a social license, as emotion and politics can overpower logic and science. This also has distinct crossovers to the concept of shame. Signs of this have already been seen in studies such as Haward, Jabour and McDonald (2013, p. 25), where the science showed that the capture of fish

was perfectly sustainable in the sense that it would not deplete fish stocks below replacement levels, but emotive arguments fuelled by photos of dolphin bycatch 'won':

> In addition to foreshadowing a broadening base of stakeholder interests in Australian fisheries, the debate over the Abel Tasman challenged the current science-based input into decision making. While the Australian partnership model of management is well regarded internationally, the controversy over the SPF revealed limitations in this approach. On the one hand the sequence of events could be seen as a classic science-policy gap, with science being found wanting in an environment conducive to political pressure. Alternatively, it could be argued as a classic case of democracy at work: the power of the public voice to articulate concern over the direction of public policy, albeit within a particular political climate and with political actors receptive to such concerns.

To summarize, three specific concepts directly associated with and congruent to the central foundations of legitimacy theory form the conceptual framework of this study: social license, norm entrepreneurs, and shaming. Each has been chosen based both on their congruency to the theoretical assumptions of legitimacy theory, usefulness in their ability to explain empirical material (both individually, but also when packaged together). They have also been chosen on their assistance in addressing gaps in previous literature around how contests to organizational legitimacy happen, how organizations respond to these contests, and the role of artefacts.

Now that the literature has been reviewed and chosen conceptual framework explained, we must outline the methodological steps involved in conducting the study.

3. Methodology

3.1 Overview

An inductive qualitative approach utilizing semi-structured interviews with key personnel from major actors in the Swedish seafood industry and associated shrimp sector was the major source of data collection in this study. Interview transcripts, along with secondary data including media content, annual and sustainability reports of key actors and shrimp product information were coded, organized and thematised under an inductive thematic analysis approach, loosely following the six steps of thematic analysis described in Braun and Clarke (2006). Key themes and sub-themes were extracted from the empirical data and explored drawing on five theoretical concepts under the broader umbrella of legitimacy theory in order to attempt to 'answer' the focal research question of the study. Analysis of the Swedish seafood industry and shrimp sector was carried out through a hybrid approach combining a case study approach with 'controversy mapping' (Otero & Baumann, 2016; Venturini, 2010) in order to describe the dynamics and hierarchical arrangement between actors in the Swedish shrimp industry in the past 11 years – centring on the key events, such NGOs publishing lists that deem certain species of shrimp and methods of capture to be unsustainable.

The methodological approach of this study was oriented around the need to find the most effective way of studying the process of how 'what constitutes sustainability' is determined between actors in an industry and what information is used to inform this interpretation (and why this information is used), and then how these interpretations subsequently lead through to contests to social licence and legitimacy. An inductive approach, which allowed for the study's design to be driven and changed by the ongoing findings of the data – where minimal preconceived notions or categories are used, best took the form of semi-structured interviews coupled together with thematic analysis. A key focus was on how actors in a particular domain make use of scientific information (secondary material such as scientific reports), in terms of translating information into a broad interpretation and then into practical decisions, and the extent to which conformity to the wishes of prominent actors in the industry shaped these decisions. The ecology, science and sustainability issues pertaining to the four most commonly available shrimp species in Sweden were extensively examined from multiple perspectives – including tracing the

journey of the shrimp from farm/boat to the end-consumer, and mapping out the actors implicated in this journey and seeking to describe how their interpretation of sustainability affected and was affected by the shrimp. This included methodological approaches such as observing consumers in the freezer aisle of supermarkets and speaking with them, studying shrimp product availability across Sweden and the aspects of each product in terms of packaging, price and labels, and seeking to identify the gaps between stated positions during interviews by representatives of actors versus the actual actions of the actor in reality. Silverman (2016, p. 5) suggests that if we want to understand behaviour and interaction, it is not enough to "ask questions. We must also observe the routines and practices of actors".

Sweden was chosen as the principal focus of this study for the primary reason that it exemplifies the stereotypical profile of a highly developed country which manages its own fishery resources well (UN FAO, 2018), but is a net-importer of seafood from complex global supply chains which are fraught with social and environmental challenges. With 80% of its seafood originating from aboard, in 2016 Sweden was the world's ninth largest receiver of foreign seafood products (UN FAO, 2016). Sweden is noted as a market with significant awareness of and demand for certified seafood products, with consumers perceiving personal health benefits as well as a broader altruistic desire to act in an environmentally responsible manner (Blomquist, Bartolino & Waldo, 2015). And perhaps above all else, Sweden is a country with a long history of progressive environmental movements (McCormick, 1991; Mol, 2000). For these reasons, it is a suitable domain in which to attempt to understand how power dynamics between actors shape interpretations as to what constitutes sustainability.

Before commencing data collection, a number of initial steps were taken. Firstly, extensive analysis was conducted in order to ascertain key trends and patterns in seafood production and consumption, within both Sweden and on a global level. From this analysis, a specific seafood type (shrimp) was selected, due to the fact that shrimp exemplified the social and environmental challenges associated with complex global supply chains.

Secondly, key actors involved in the supply chains of each species were identified. A 'snowball' style of identifying actors was used, which drew on conducting several pilot interviews with easily identifiable actors in order to find actors which were less obvious during content analysis. Once a profile of key actors was formed, interviews were conducted with key personnel from each actor/organization involved in the

industry. Semi structure interviews were used, focusing primarily on attempting to understand how the organization interpreted the notion of sustainability in relation to shrimp, why they interpreted it in this way, and the degree to which other actors in the industry shaped this interpretation. As of September 2019, more than 30 hours of recorded interview data had been collected from interviews with a range of actors directly implicated within the Swedish shrimp industry, as well as an additional peripheral organizations.

The societal setting of this study was one of rapidly declining global fish stocks, increasing disconnect between where seafood is caught and where it is sold and mounting pressure on both business and end consumers to engage with fisheries resources in a more environmentally sustainable manner. The study is of interest to a wide range of stakeholders associated with fisheries management and the seafood industry, including policy makers, seafood retailers, governmental agencies, commercial fishing companies and seafood consumers. The findings of this study have direct relevance for many other countries that have similar economic and consumer market conditions to Sweden, such as Denmark, Norway, Germany and The Netherlands.

3.1.1 Initial analysis

Firstly, extensive analysis of industry reports, academic publications and certification schemes pertaining to fishing and seafood was conducted in order to ascertain key trends and patterns in seafood production and consumption, both within Sweden and at a global level. The approach taken was based around idea of "controversy mapping" – seeking to pinpoint the location of the greatest tensions within the seafood industry (Otero and Baumann, 2016). This analysis highlighted shrimp as the seafood that exemplifies the social and environmental challenges associated with complex global supply chains, making it the chosen candidate for this study.

3.1.2 Identifying key actors

The analysis outlined above was used to begin the process of identifying the key actors associated with the value chains of each of the four shrimp species under investigation. A 'snowball' style of identifying actors was used, which drew on conducting several pilot interviews with easily identifiable actors in order to find other actors who were less obvious during content analysis. Noy (2008) suggests that the flexibility, spontaneity and adaptability of such an approach is well suited to a study which has somewhat broad research questions which may be subject to change

as the study progresses – that is, that the study has freedom to change and evolve as it progresses. Heckathorn (1997) notes that the malleability offered under a snowball approach allows for the on-going inclusion of different actors which may have not initially been identified in the early stages of the study. The basis of this snowballing approach was to map out the "entangled actors and relationships" (Gond & Nyberg, 2017, p. 1137) that existed within the Swedish shrimp industry, so as to determine which actors would be included in the study and which would not.

Following this process, key actors were identified. Four distributors of shrimp products – food retailers – were selected to focus on: ICA (ICA Gruppen AB), Coop (Coop Sverige AB), Hemköp (Axfood AB) and Willys (Axfood AB). Together these supermarkets accounted for 79% of all grocery sales in Sweden as of 2018. Four primary producers of shrimp products were chosen to focus on (names withheld due to privacy issues associated with the smaller size of two of these organizations): a Gothenburg-based seafood importer, an Australian commercial shrimp trawler whose product became in demand in Sweden following pressure on retailers to take away tropical shrimp; a Danish-owned commercial fishing company selling shrimp in Sweden, and a Vietnam-based shrimp operation exporting products to Sweden. The certification schemes of the Aquaculture Stewardship Council, Marine Stewardship Council, and Swedish-based KRAV were chosen, while the three most prominent environmental NGOs in Sweden of Greenpeace, SSNC and the WWF were selected. Swedish seafood consumers were also naturally identified as a key actor, and interviewed in this study.

3.2 Data collection

There were three main components to the main data collections in this study:

1. Semi-structured interviews with senior management from each actor
2. Review and analysis of the shrimp products available in Sweden, including both physically acquiring products, observing products in store, and researching information pertaining to the 'journey' of each product from the boat/farm to the point of sale
3. Review and analysis of information relating specifically to each actor interviewed – such as annual reports, sustainability reports and traceability information of products
4. Media analysis, focusing on how the shrimp debate in Sweden played out over both traditional and social media.

These are described in turn below in sections 3.2.1 to 3.2.4.

3.2.1 Semi-structured interviews with senior management each actor

Semi-structured interviews with senior management from each major actor in the Swedish shrimp industry formed the main source of data collection. Once a profile of key actors was formed, interviews were conducted with key personnel from each actor/organization involved in the capture/farming, processing, distribution, labelling, distribution, sale and consumption of shrimp. Michalak et al. (2006, p. 26) note how thematic analysis is well suited to semi-structured interviews, which "began and finished according to a standard script, but were otherwise left unstructured".

Interviews

The choice of semi-structured interviews was considered appropriate given the need for a degree of flexibility when seeking information from a stakeholder interview (Yin, 2003) – especially as the topic of fishing and seafood is somewhat 'controversial' and emotionally loaded. Sticking to specific questions was not likely to produce answers that addressed the key issues. A semi-structured interview allowed for periods of free-flowing conversation and this generally resulted in good quality and more rigid data. It also allowed the freedom to change questions (and questioning style) in light of new information and answers given by previous interviewees. Interviews lasted for on average 48 minutes. Privacy of the respondents – who kindly partook in interviews often out of their own personal time – has been given paramount importance, due to the commercial and sensitive nature of the topic. As such, in the results section only a vague description of the respondent is given (for example, respondent from an NGO), and only the year (rather than the month and day) of the interview is provided.

Interview questions

Three possible 'starting-point' interview questions were used in phase one interviews, which were held between May 2016 and September 2017. These questions were intentionally written in a simple and straightforward manner, so as to avoid unnecessary academic language which might confuse or even potentially be seen as disrespectful to the interviewees (Kvale, 2006):

1. What types of things does your organization do to be sustainable or responsible?
2. What are some of reasons why your organization does these things?

3. How does your organization relate to other organizations in the seafood industry? What kind of interactions do you have? What things do you disagree on?

Phase two interviews, which were held between September 2018 and September 2019, asked more complex and specific questions of actors. An example of such questions included the following:

> Another criticism that your organization [international aquaculture certification scheme] has received from some of the NGOs I've spoken to here is the feed standard that they've said that your organization has been too slow to get up to speed with the feed standards. So, what would you say to that?

> If you get an email from an NGO saying, "Hey, why isn't this being done? Why is the feed standard taking so long?" How do you communicate over the phone or an email what you just said to me then about the pace, that it takes a long time to do things properly? How do you get across to a group like an NGO that may not fully understand how long it takes to do these sorts of things?

> How does your organization use information (such as scientific data) in helping you make decisions around sustainability? What kind of information do you use, and why?

Furthermore, all 37 interviews concluded with a question to each respondent, asking them to reflect on their personal level of optimism about the long-term sustainability and overall viability of the planet's oceans and waterways. This question was asked to them as individuals rather than them speaking on behalf of the organizations that they represented.

3.2.2 Review of the physical shrimp products available in Sweden, and information pertaining to the 'journey' of each product from the boat/farm to the point of sale

The physical shrimp products available in Sweden formed a part of data collection. These products were purchased, and analysis was conducted of what labels and certification schemes each had, what species were used in the product, and any information given regarding method and location of capture and or farming. Figure 1 shows a selection of the products which are the focal point of this study. These products were acquired primarily so as to get product label information which could facilitate a study of the 'journey' of the shrimp, and having leads (such as species names, labels and packaging locations) which could be used in order to research and document the steps that were involved in the shrimp. In the early stages of the study (especially 2015), this was going to form a prominent part of data collection. By 2019

it had taken on a less important role, and while the 'journey' of each species of shrimp was indeed documented (and is available in Chapter 4, Results), this information was not as comprehensively as first planned – due to interviews becoming a more critical aspect of the study, as well as coming up against 'road blocks' in terms of actors refusing to share traceability information. Furthermore, this point was reinforced in a follow-up email exchange with a seafood manager for a major Swedish retailer. During the interview it was repeatedly claimed that the organization strives for openness and traceability of all products. In an email several days after interview, information relating to a shrimp product produced by the company was requested. The response to the email was:

> I am sorry to inform you that this information is nothing I can share with anybody outside my company.

(Seafood manager for a major Swedish retailer, email, 2017)

Figure 1: A selection of shrimp products sold in Sweden featured in this study

Source: L. Wainwright, copyright holder of photo.

3.2.3 Review and analysis of information relating to each actor

The third component of data collection was analysis of information and documents (such as annual reports, sustainability reports and traceability information of products) pertaining specifically to each actor and the four shrimp species. This step differed from the more general review of the fisheries and seafood literature that was

conducted in the pilot phase the study in the sense that it was far more specific. Extensive analysis of secondary data relating to the four shrimp species was conducted, with the ultimate goal being to map out each product and tell its 'story'. This followed the principles of 'archival research' outlined in Ventresca & Mohr (2002), Buchanan and Bryman (2009) and Patton (2005). Archival research can be defined as "any qualitative data reduction and sense-making effort that takes a volume of qualitative material and attempts to identify core consistencies and meanings" (Patton, 2005 p. 453). This involved using product information available from fishing companies, eco-labels and supermarket chains, in conjunction with a wide range of governmental and agency publications (especially The United Nations State of World Fisheries and Aquaculture reports), conventional media, social media, annual reports, and existing academic literature. Focus was on the simple question of "What is going on here?" (Paull. et al. 2013), and trying to decipher who are the actors associated with each of the shrimp, and how they interpret the notion of sustainability and the extent to which this interpretation has been influenced by other actors in the industry. At one point this information was included in the results chapter, but was then moved to the Appendix, and eventually removed from the thesis entirely as it was just too long.

3.2.4 Media analysis

Data from both social media and traditional media were drawn upon in this study. In the later stages of the study extensive focus was placed on understanding how the shrimp controversy was covered across both social and traditional media between 2008 and 2018 – especially in terms of seeking to understand the manner through which NGOs used media during 2011 to 2015, when the shrimp debate was at its peak. This section of data collection helped considerably in the eventual generation of several of the sub-themes which are covered in Chapter 4, Results – especially those relating to how NGO influence was achieved, and how sustainability was operationalized.

Analysis of social media was carried out in a haphazard, unstructured manner, and consisted primarily of searching on Facebook and Twitter for pages and hashtags associated with shrimp in Sweden – especially in terms of the SSNC's prominent Anti-Scampi campaign.

Traditional media coverage of the shrimp debate was undertaken in a more structured manner. An analysis was conducted through the University of Gothenburg Library's Newspaper, Audio and Video Database, which searches

through a massive catalogue of the most common news television programs, newspaper articles and radio broadcasts. Search terms used were various combinations of shrimp, prawn, *räka*, *räkor*, scampi, Anti-Scampi, *hållbarhet* , *hållbar utveckling*, *Pandalus borealis*, *Litopenaeus vannamei*, *Melicertus latisulcatus*, and *Penaeus monodon*. Results suggested that these terms featured around 1,840 times in major newspaper, radio and television stories between 2011 and 2015.

3.3 Summary of completed data collection

3.3.1 Long interviews which were recorded

Thirty-seven formal recorded interviews with key actors in the Swedish shrimp industry took place between May 2016 and September 2019. There were two distinct phases of interviewing. Phase 1 took place primarily in the first half of 2017, concentrated on ascertaining the lay of the land. Phase 2, which took place primarily in mid-2019, focused on asking specific, detailed questions of key actors regarding how they relate to one another, what sustainability means to their organization and why and under what circumstances and how they might they manifest disagreement with another actor.

Each of these interviews was audio recorded and transcribed. The total duration of recorded voice interviews was 30 hours and 3 minutes. The mean interview duration was 48 minutes and 44 seconds. Of the 37 interviews, 14 took place face-to-face (6 in Stockholm, 5 in Gothenburg, 2 in Uppsala and one in San Francisco. The remaining 23 were conducted over phone or video call (12 and 11, respectively). Only relevant content (that is, actual discussion pertaining to this research project) was calculated as recorded time (polite idle chit chat and introductions, which typically made up 10 minutes of each interview, were excluded from the total duration of each interview, reducing the total time from around 34 hours down to 30 hours). Face-to-face interviews often involved further activities before and/or after the interview, such as meeting other staff in the office, consuming refreshments, and being given materials such as documents.

Three interviews of 42 minutes, 56 minutes and 31 minutes in duration were initially recorded but ultimately were removed from this study, due to privacy issues.

Except for a few leads in 2016 which were provided by the author's supervisor, the majority of these respondent s were 'cold called' or emailed. Between May 2016 and May 2019, more than 400 emails were sent to personnel connected to the Swedish seafood industry, and shrimp sub-industry. The average reply rate was around 10%,

and of those 10%, around half would be willing to partake in audio recorded interviews. The author's weak Swedish language skills and subsequent use of English in most of the 'cold' emails may have played a part in the arguably-low reply rate. Table 1 documents the key information pertaining to the 37 voice-recorded interviews:

Table 1: Summary of key information about voice-recorded formal interviews

Date	Location	Duration	Organization	General non-specific description of job/position
2016-05-10	Uppsala, Sweden (Head office of organization)	53 minutes	Swedish incorporated association with environmental focus	Account manager
2016-10-24	Phone call (respondent in Sweden)	33 minutes	Major Swedish food retailer	Sustainability coordinator
2016-11-11	Video call (respondent in Australia)	21 minutes	Australian shrimp cooperative	C-suite executive
2016-12-12	Stockholm, Sweden (regional head office of organization)	1 hour 5 minutes	International wild-caught seafood certification scheme	Program director
2016-12-20	Phone call (respondent in Sweden)	31 minutes	Swedish incorporated association with environmental focus	Account manager
2017-02-09	Video call (respondent in Netherlands)	45 minutes	International aquaculture certification scheme	Communications director
2017-02-10	Stockholm, Sweden (regional head office of organization)	1 hour 7 minutes	International wild-caught seafood certification scheme	Stakeholder manager
2017-02-10	Stockholm, Sweden (regional head office of organization)	34 minutes	International wild-caught seafood certification scheme	Commercial officer

Date	Location	Duration	Organization	General non-specific description of job/position
2017-02-22	Phone call (respondent in Sweden)	43 minutes	International wild-caught seafood certification scheme	Program director
2017-03-18	Phone call (respondent in Sweden)	51 minutes	International assurance, inspection and certification provider	Auditor
2017-03-18	Video call (respondent in Vietnam)	32 minutes	Vietnamese shrimp farming business	Export director
2017-03-21	Gothenburg, Sweden (café)	34 minutes	Major Swedish food retailer	Seafood manager
2017-04-11	Gothenburg, Sweden (research lab where respondent works)	57 minutes	Gothenburg-based university; Swedish incorporated association with environmental focus	Marine scientist and board member
2017-05-04	Stockholm, Sweden (Head office of organization)	1 hour 17 minutes	Major Swedish food retailer	Sourcing manager
2017-05-05	Phone call (respondent in Sweden)	50 minutes	Swedish seafood wholesaler/importer	C-suite executive and owner
2017-05-09	Phone call (respondent in Greenland)	21 minutes	Greenlandic seafood company	Sustainability manager
2017-05-11	Gothenburg, Sweden (interviewers office)	54 minutes	Swedish research institute; Swedish incorporated association with environmental focus	Marine scientist and board chair
2017-05-12	Phone (respondent in Stockholm, Sweden)	30 minutes	Major Swedish food retailer	Sustainability coordinator
2017-05-17	Gothenburg, Sweden	59 minutes	Swedish research institute	Marine scientist

Date	Location	Duration	Organization	General non-specific description of job/position
	(interviewers office)			
2017-05-22	Phone call (respondent in Stockholm, Sweden)	41 minutes	Swedish environmental NGO	Policy officer
2017-05-22	Uppsala, Sweden (head office of organization)	44 minutes	Swedish Government agency	Manager and Nutritionist
2017-06-15	Video call (respondent in United Kingdom)	50 minutes	International wild-caught seafood certification scheme	Supply chain manager
2017-07-19	Video call (respondent in United Kingdom)	49 minutes	International wild-caught seafood certification scheme	C-suite executive
2017-09-12	Phone call (respondent in Sweden)	36 minutes	Swedish seafood wholesaler/importer	C-suite executive and owner
2019-04-09	San Francisco, USA (café)	44 minutes	Swedish environmental NGO	Former employee
2019-05-23	Gothenburg, Sweden (regional office of organization)	25 minutes	Swedish environmental NGO	Director of certification schemes
2019-05-28	Video call (respondent in Sweden)	41 minutes	International environmental NGO	Program director
2019-06-10	Stockholm, Sweden (café)	2 hours 12 minutes	Swedish environmental NGO	Strategic director
2019-06-10	Stockholm, Sweden (regional head office of organization)	1 hour 5 minutes	International wild-caught seafood certification scheme	Senior manager

Date	Location	Duration	Organization	General non-specific description of job/position
2019-06-12	Video call (respondent in Sweden)	54 minutes	International environmental NGO	Global project lead
2019-06-18	Video call (respondent in Sweden)	52 minutes	International environmental NGO	Fisheries expert
2019-08-18	Phone call (respondent in Sweden)	1 hour	Swedish environmental NGO	Strategic director
2019-08-19	Video call (respondent in Australia)	51 minutes	Australian shrimp cooperative	C-suite executive
2019-08-21	Video call (respondent in France)	54 minutes	International aquaculture certification scheme	Communications director
2019-08-21	Phone call (respondent in Sweden)	1 hour 6 minutes	Swedish Government agency	Senior analyst in fisheries department
2019-08-22	Phone call (respondent in Sweden)	50 minutes	Swedish seafood wholesaler/importer	C-suite executive and owner
2019-09-24	Video call (respondent in Australia)	30 minutes	Australian shrimp cooperative	Export director

3.3.2 Follow up

There was further follow up in 17 of the 37 recorded interviews. Typically, this took the form of one or more short phone conversations or email correspondences several weeks after the initial interviews, in order to clarify specific points. Several cases also involved the respondent sending documents or other information which provided further information on a question that may have been incompletely answered during the interview.

3.3.3 Non-recorded formal interviews

Eight unrecorded interviews totalling 6 hours 17 minutes were held between 2016 and 2019 with key personnel from various organizations relating to the Swedish shrimp industry (two of which also were related to shrimp trawling in Australia). Three of these interviews were held face-to-face, and the rest over video call and telephone. The interviews were not recorded for various reasons, but typically due to privacy issues.

3.3.4 Customer interviews and observations

Interviews were conducted with grocery store customers in the process of selecting seafood products. These interviews were held in the seafood freezer aisles of the ICA Rosenlund store in Gothenburg, Sweden. An individual was only approached if they were actually in the process of physically touching a seafood product. and took place on 2017-05-26 and 2017-06-20. Of around 50 people approached, a total of 24 interviews, each of approximately five minutes, were held. These interviews were based around three questions pertaining to their understanding and knowledge of different eco-labels, and the extent to which such labels and consideration of sustainability motivated their purchasing – including paying a price premium.

3.3.5 Viewing and purchasing of shrimp products

Between 2016 and 2019, informal, non-systematic observations were conducted of the shrimp species available at the four largest food retail outlets in Sweden. Furthermore, in mid-2017, every variety of shrimp product available in the four largest Swedish retailers in Gothenburg was purchased. Product information on each packet assisted in the 'following the journey' dimension of the study. The shrimp were eventually consumed by the author of the study. Visits to seafood sections of Whole Foods and Trader Joes supermarket outlets in California, USA in 2018, and analysis and photograph of shrimp products was also conducted, with the same occurring in New South Wales, Australia, in June and September of 2017. This helped to gauge how shrimp product availability in other countries compared to Sweden.

3.3.6 Tours

Several interviews involved extensive tours of facilities and presentation of key organizational information beyond the scope of the seafood industry, such as occurred at the head office of a large food retailer in Stockholm during an interview in May 2017. Other interviews involved the meeting of other key staff in the office

(which sometimes led to them being interviewed), partaking in lunches and coffee breaks, as well as being given pamphlets and booklets. A tour of university research facilities, including fish and shrimp breeding laboratories, took place following an interview with a marine scientist in April 2017.

3.3.7 Other

Informal discussions were held with seafood and shrimp experts during breaks and lunches of academic conferences and events between 2016 and 2019, such as at several University of California Berkeley events in March and April 2019, as well as at a seminar on shrimp at the University of Gothenburg which was held in September 2019. Such discussions did not constitute a formal part of data collection but rather served as a way of increasing understanding of the sector.

3.3.8 Job titles and roles

The personnel interviewed had a variety of different job titles and roles. The majority were at a mid to senior level of management within their respective organizations, with some being at an executive or board level. Nine of the people interviewed held PhDs in fields such as fisheries management and marine biology, with the majority of the others holding Master's degrees. Specific job titles are not used in this study, for privacy reasons.

3.4 Data analysis

3.4.1 Thematic analysis

The interview and observation data were analysed using inductive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006), in order to ascertain key themes so as to describe the relationship between actors in the Swedish shrimp industry regarding debates around sustainability and subsequent contests to the legitimacy of one another.

The 'six steps' of initial familiarization, coding and first-order categorization, generating initial themes, reviewing themes, naming themes and writing up as described by Braun and Clarke (2006) were followed. Drawing on Michalak et al. (2006, p. 27), "emergent themes were selected on the basis of how many participants mentioned them, and how frequently they were mentioned. Thematic analysis was used in "systematically identifying, organizing, and offering insight into patterns of meaning (themes) across a data set". This allowed to "see and make sense of collective or shared meanings and experiences" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 57).

Following transcription, recorded interviews were formatted and printed off – along with key secondary information (mainly the annual and sustainability reports of each actor). The first step involved in thematic analysis was getting to know the empirical material. This meant reading over all of it several times, until a point was reached whereby familiarity was achieved. Next, coding was undertaken. Deriving codes consisted of using different colour pens to highlight each distinct code on the printed material. Following this, first-order themes were developed from the various codes. There was some to-ing and fro-ing in this process, but after some time the main first-order themes became fairly clear and distinct. The focus here was on ascertaining the prevalence and frequency of mention or inference of a particular idea in the empirics (Michalak et al., 2006).

Initially, just three first-order themes were identified: the significant influence of NGOs, contextual uniqueness of Sweden and of the seafood industry, and differences in interpretation and practice of sustainability. The main to-ing and fro-ing took place around whether the 'interpretation and practice of sustainability' theme was in fact two distinct themes. The pivotal moment in this decision was identification of several interviews where respondents clearly spoke of the division between the two. It therefore became necessary to divide this theme into two.

Next, smaller sub-themes were identified under the banner of each broader theme. At this point it became possible to start giving rough working names to each major theme and sub-theme. As in Braun and Clarke (2006), this naming process was not straight-forward, and the names changed considerably over the course of the analysis process. It also become necessary to merge together several second-order categories, which upon first inspection were distinct but after sometime working with the empirical material it became clear that they belonged together. One particular sub-theme which jumped between various broader themes was that of shrimp as a central actor and key stakeholder. Initially this sub-theme seemed to be a part of the first order theme of the uniqueness of seafood. Eventually however, more nuanced and careful reading of the interviews mentioning and inferring this idea led to it being repositioned under the theme of differing interpretations of sustainability.

The subsequent step was to type up a table capturing the four main categories and smaller sub-categories. Following this, it was necessary to select quotes from the empirical material which would best illustrate each theme. This process took considerable time (due to the sheer volume of empirical material). As did trimming down and shortening quotes to exclude irrelevant material.

The end result of this process led to four main themes being derived from the empirical material. Firstly, that there existed significant disparities between actors in their ability to dictate the operating rules of the shrimp industry, including interpretation of sustainability and challenging the legitimacy of other actors. Secondly, the contextual uniqueness of both Sweden, and of the seafood and fishing sector. Thirdly, that there were major differences in interpretations of sustainability between actors, and these differences were brought about through selective use (or disregard) of both science and ideology. Fourthly, descriptions of how sustainability was operationalized in practice by actors. Each of these themes also featured several smaller, more nuanced and specific yet significant sub-themes (totalling seventeen). This material is presented in the following section: Chapter 4, Results.

4. Results

The terms of reference of the results chapter was to present the collected empirical material pertaining to the central research question of the study: 'How is legitimacy contested?' The contextual domain for exploring this question was through analysis of the relations of actors within the Swedish shrimp industry between 2008 and 2018, centring on those groups and individuals implicated within the consumption, sale, production, certification, or advocacy and protection of the four most commonly available species of shrimp.

The empirical material showed that the contesting of legitimacy in the Swedish shrimp industry took place primarily through disagreements around the term 'sustainability'. The data showed that some actors – mainly Swedish and international environmental NGOs – had a disproportionally high level of influence within the shrimp industry. This influence was used by NGOs in order to contest the actions of other actors in the industry by calling into question their involvement with sustainability issues pertaining to shrimp.

Sustainability was frequently stated in terms of being synonymous to legitimacy, and compliance with the new norms demanded by the NGOs became a requisite to achieve social acceptability. Conforming to these interpretations of sustainability was found to be essential in order to negotiate access to the market and maintain this access across time – and in turn, to achieve social acceptability and legitimacy. It was found that many actors were aware that determining what exactly is sustainability was anything but a straightforward process, and in practice often represented a midpoint between scientific information, and political necessity. Because of this, many actors would aim to get an interpretation beyond their goal, on the basis that what they ended up with would be watered down. However, it seems that for primary producers and distributors, these two occurrences did not happen in the shrimp debate, and instead they were overwhelmingly beaten in the debate by the NGOs.

It was found that significant differences existed between actors in terms of how they interpreted shrimp sustainability pertaining to questions around shrimp stock levels, methods of farming and capture and what certification schemes constituted sustainability, and that both science and ideology were used (or disregarded) in order

to push for one interpretation over another. Reasons for these differences sometimes pointed to actors being motivated primarily by interests such as survival and maintaining relevance, minimizing reputational harm and improving financial prospects, and the notion of being willing to endure short-term pain if it meant progressing towards a broader strategic goal. Data suggested that NGOs were able to achieve a significant and unparalleled level of influence by creating and leveraging societal momentum, which was amplified through both traditional and social media.

Running effective campaigns – campaigns amplified by NGO member base through both traditional and social media – were used as the primary initial strategy to push other industry actors into conformity, and the future threat of this occurring again seemed to have acted as a strong enough deterrent for most primary producers and distributors (for the foreseeable future at least) to go along with the NGOs' interpretation of sustainability. It was found that the primary way through which actors operationalized their interpretation of sustainability was through the use of guides, lists, rankings and certification schemes. Some actors, mainly NGOs, created these artefacts. Other actors, mainly fishing companies and retailers, drew on these artefacts heavily or entirely to inform their seafood sustainability strategy either partially or fully on these artefacts, and in doing so partially or fully 'outsource' the determination of their sustainability interpretation to a third party. Finally, both Sweden and the seafood and fishing sector were found to be unique and unusual, for a variety of reasons, factors which could be said to have exacerbated the ferocity of the shrimp debate. The reader is once again reminded that, should they find that during the reading of this results chapter they encounter technical, scientific and methodological details pertaining to fishing and seafood for which they require further information, to consider glancing over the Appendix. Table 2 on the following page presents a summary of the themes covered in this results chapter.

Table 2: Summary of the themes and sub-themes from the empirical material

Themes			
1. Disparities between actors in ability to influence *See Section 4.1*	**2. The contextual idiosyncratic nature of Sweden, and the seafood and fishing industry** *See Section 4.2*	**3. Different interpretations of sustainability and use (or disregard) of information and ideology** *See Section 4.3*	**4. The operationalization of sustainability in practice** *See Section 4.4*
Sub-themes			
The prominent and unrivalled impact of NGOs *See Section 4.1.1*	The uniqueness of Sweden *See Section 4.2.1*	How actors differentiated in their interpretation of sustainability *See Section 4.3.1*	The creation and use of artefacts and outsourcing of sustainability *See Section 4.4.1*
Conformity needed to negotiate market access and maintain access over time *See Section 4.1.2*	The uniqueness of the fishing and seafood industry *See Section 4.2.2*	Scientific data and their ideological interpretation: how and why actors operationalized (or disregarded) information and/or emotion to rally for their interpretation of sustainability *See Section 4.3.2*	Dialogue, roundtables and day-to-day actor engagement *See Section 4.4.2*
How NGO influence was gained and maintained *See Section 4.1.3*	Personal connection to the fishing and seafood industry *See Section 4.2.3*	Shrimp as a central actor and key stakeholder *See Section 4.3.3*	The practice of sustainability at the point of production: Sustainability on board shrimp trawling boats and at shrimp farms *See Section 4.4.3*
The role of conventional and social media in amplifying NGO messages *See Section 4.1.4*	Optimism about the future sustainability of the world's oceans *See Section 4.2.4*		The practice of sustainability at the point of sale: consumer attitudes towards and knowledge of shrimp sustainability *See Section 4.4.4*
NGOs perceived as failing to understand the realities of business *See Section 4.1.5*			Small sector, role swapping and the prominence of specific individuals *See Section 4.4.5*

4.1 Disparities between actors in ability to influence norms

Empirical data pointed to clear and significant disparities between actors in their ability to influence the prevailing norms regarding sustainability (and in many cases in turn what constituted social acceptability and therefore legitimacy) as well as to dictate the overall operating norms of the shrimp industry. These differentials in ability to influence between actors was found to have a substantial role in shaping what can be constituted as 'sustainability' in regards to shrimp stock levels, and methods of farming and capture, amongst other variables. The implications of these differences in ability to influence were and continue to be significant, and gaining access to the market or maintaining legitimacy seems to be heavily dependent on conforming to the wishes of what dominant actors (primarily NGOs) declare to be sustainable. Non-conformity to the guides and lists produced by environmental NGOs could result in exodus from the market. These lists, covered in significant detail in Theme four ('the operationalization of sustainability in practice'), proved influential in shaping the overall seafood strategies adopted by both fishing companies and supermarket chains, and in some cases influenced the strategic direction of the organization in regards to sustainability.

Analysis of data collected in this study – especially interviews with senior management from organizations implicated in the shrimp industry – suggested that disparities in levels of influence actors played a significant role in determining what constitutes 'sustainability'. This applied to a range of questions regarding which species of shrimp are sustainable and which are not, stock levels and how many shrimp can be caught, methods of capture or farming, acceptable levels of bycatch, and a range of other variables associated with the production of shrimp. Despite having access to and utilizing essentially the same data points and the best available science (namely, ICES and UN FAO data which is considered to represent the peak of knowledge in regards to shrimp), actors in the industry concluded widely different interpretations of what constituted sustainability. It became apparent that the shrimp industry represented a domain of multiple and conflicting actor interests. Participating in the shrimp industry was not straightforward or stable process. Rather, it was (and still is) a complex process where the needs of multiple actors had to be met, concessions made, and the ability in place to respond to sudden and unexpected events which could question the legitimacy of a product, corporation or perhaps even the entire industry. The most notable influence inequality which shaped the sustainability debate and associated challenges to social acceptability and legitimacy was that of the dominance of the environmental NGOs - especially the

WWF, Greenpeace and SSNC over other actors. These organizations were perceived as being (and shown, in actuality) to be able to effectively utilize media in order gain the support of the seafood buying public, and as a result achieve levels of influence far beyond what their size or membership base would typically be able to. Actors in the industry, especially fishing companies and retailers, felt that they were at the mercy of whatever the NGOs decided constituted sustainability, and had to comply with these demands by stopping the production or sale of certain shrimp species. The following quote taken from an interview with a sustainability manager for a large Swedish retailer summarizes this theme:

> They made a lot of noise in the media. They really, really – I mean more or less they just forced us to take away the shrimp. They have a lot of influence. And especially when they are doing a campaign. So that could be Greenpeace, *Naturskyddsforeningen*, and WWF. In Sweden now, with this consumer guide, they are having a big influence. Sometimes they think it's their role to be like that and that's why we definitely want to have their list automatically. Sometimes we actually disagree on what [is sustainable] when we have the exact same information.

<div align="right">(interview recording, 2017)</div>

From this broad theme of disparities between actors in their ability to influence the prevailing interpretation of sustainability and overall operating norms of the industry, five sub-themes arose from the data. Firstly, the prominent and unrivalled impact of NGOs: the perception by primary producers and distributors of NGOs having a disproportionally large influence in shaping all aspects of the Swedish shrimp industry. Secondly, evidence of how significant conformity and concessions were needed in order to negotiate initial market access and maintain this access over time. Thirdly, descriptions of how NGO influence was achieve and maintained. Fourthly, the role of conventional and social media in amplifying changes to social norms. Finally, how NGOs were perceived by other actors as often failing to understand the realities of business and placing idealistic rather than realistic demands on them.

4.1.1 The prominent and unrivalled impact of NGOs

A clear and consistent sub-theme to emerge from the empirical material was that of the perception by primary producers and distributors of NGOs having a disproportionally large influence in shaping all facets of the Swedish shrimp industry. The data revealed that NGOs such as Greenpeace Sweden, the WWF Sweden and the SSNC were able to achieve a commanding level of influence over

other actors. This level of influence meant that NGOs played a decisive role in determining and enforcing the levels of social and environmental performance that an actor needed in order to enter the market and maintain a presence over time, and in doing so indirectly dictated and controlled the overall operating terms of the industry.

This perception was also matched by actuality – that the NGOs *did* have a significant level of influence over the shrimp industry. The mechanisms by which the NGOs exerted this influence were primarily through the publication of seafood rating guides and lists, as well as direct campaigning, such as through the Anti-Scampi campaign. NGOs did this by simultaneously targeting the reputation of fishing companies, the outlets that sold their products (primarily supermarkets), and the consumers which purchased them.

A Seafood manager for a major Swedish food retailer spoke how the SSNC in particular had been able to gain a level of "enforcement" over the seafood sustainability decisions of the retailer, describing "The problem is today that *Naturskyddsföreningen* in Sweden, they have still very strong political, how should I say, enforcement on the supermarket chains". (interview recording, 2017)

Another respondent, working for a major seafood certification scheme, described how "a big issue" in their organization was the question of "How do we avoid getting into trouble with the NGOs?" (interview recording, 2017). This question permeated throughout the data gathered during interviews with retailers and seafood corporations. And even when it was not said as explicitly as here, it was still implied.

Many actors felt that their strategic options had become severely limited because of the constraining effects of the demands placed on them by NGOs and the high standard of sustainability which was the norm. A C-suite executive and owner of a Swedish seafood wholesaler/importer reflected on "just how much power they [the environmental NGOs] have over us" (interview recording, 2019).

A marine scientist who was interviewed reflected on the 'Anti-Scampi' campaign run by the NGOs, which resulted in major changes to the availability of and demand for shrimp which were deemed to be 'unsustainable', noting how it had made a big difference:

Yes. That [the Anti-Scampi campaign] made pretty a big difference, mostly at the big chains. They don't sell these scampis anymore and that happened in a fairly short time.

(interview recording, 2017)

Another respondent, from a commercial fishing company, echoed these sentiments, reflecting on how "[It's] so strange that the small organization like *Naturskyddsforeningen* actually can have that kind of influence in this trade in Sweden. (interview recording, 2017)

It was found that primary producers and distributors (that is, fishing and aquaculture businesses, and food retailers) were eager to partake in whatever demands were made of them by NGOs in order to 'keep the peace'. A respondent from an international environmental NGO central to the shrimp debate in Sweden described an interaction with a Nordic retail chain:

I remember some of that campaigning we did more of that at that time, targeting a supermarket… I had some very desperate supermarkets who called me and said, "We've now spent a year, we've done these massive assessments. We've sent out teams. We've paid consultants. We've found a producer we think that we can work with and we want to invest in their business and making sure that it's sustainable.

(interview recording, 2019)

While the perception of the significant influence of NGOs was described on numerous occasions by other actors in the Swedish shrimp industry, it was also described by the NGOs themselves. One interview subject from a major international environmental NGO reflected as follows:

We see that we're having an influence and that consumers and different players are actually following our recommendations. And for some species the recommendations can shift from one year to another, and it can be rapid changes. And, of course, it's complicated for companies to follow these… Well, these shifts in different lights. But still that's how nature works. So, some species, they will go up and they will go down. And I mean it's… There's not really anything we can do about it, that's how nature works… I understand that it's complicated but I also… I mean it's up to the companies to find ways to… Well, to adapt to these changes, and be flexible. Because I mean some stocks you can have a cut in quota with 40% from one year to another. There's nothing that we can… We're just communicating that message.

(interview recording, 2019)

In the words of a program director from another NGO operating in Sweden, "It was campaigning, which Anti-Scampi shows you" through which NGOs have been able to achieve their interpretation of sustainability as "the prevailing one" (interview recording, 2019).

A spokesperson for one of the NGOs seemed surprised at the levels of influence that they were able to command in the Swedish retail food market. One respondent made a comparison between McDonalds, a large multinational organization which their NGO had been campaigning for years, and a Swedish supermarket chain, in order to illustrate how quickly change was achieved in Sweden:

> I think what's always fascinated me with McDonald's is this idea that when we challenged them on sustainability, we haven't really got around to how we're going to deal with the meat issue, but they work with suppliers for a long time, so they don't just change. While some Swedish supermarkets just panic and just go, "Tell me what to do. Tell me who I should buy from." That's their first, and I'm like, "That's not my role. My role is to provoke you or force you to think about what you're doing and then you change.
>
> (interview recording, 2019)

Accordingly, a level of conformity to the wishes of NGOs by primary producers and distributors was needed in order to negotiate initial market access and maintain this access over time.

4.1.2 Conformity needed to negotiate market access and maintain access over time

Negotiating access to the Swedish seafood market and maintaining this access over time required some actors – primarily producers and distributors – to make significant concessions and accommodations that conformed to the wishes of other actors. What constituted legitimate or illegitimate actions was largely determined by the NGOs, and conformity was essential in order to achieve societal acceptance. Empirical evidence suggested that this need for conformity led to the quite dramatically (and for the foreseeable future, permanently) raising of the requirements needed to participate in the Swedish shrimp industry. This seems to have also spilled over into the seafood industry more broadly, and in some cases even causing actors to significantly change their relationship with organizations that they deal with, well beyond the capacity of shrimp.

An export director from an Australian shrimp cooperative looking to export its product to Sweden quickly became aware of the minimum standard of entry into the Swedish market, which in the case of wild-caught shrimp took the form of MSC certification:

> One of the things that became evident early on was that Sweden in particular, if we wanted to get a foot in the door there we had to have an MSC product. It just so happened that that coincided with when the WWF approached Spencer Gulf Association and started working hand in hand to get the accreditation. And so, we obviously supported that.
>
> (interview recording, 2019)

Sometimes this standard of entry was seen as being "unfair", as an actor could have acted with good intentions to orient their sustainability approach towards the wishes of NGOs, but still be denied entry to the market. An analyst in the fisheries department of a Swedish Government agency reflected on this:

> But for the individual fisherman of course, it creates a problem in that well, "I've done everything, I've followed all the rules, but still I get a red light." It definitely creates a sense of unfairness in some cases, I think.
>
> (interview recording, 2019)

One respondent, the owner of a Swedish seafood company, expressed their frustrations in dealing with SSNC, and proposed that campaigns such as Anti-Scampi were not driven by a sense of service to the natural environment but instead used by NGOs as an instrument primarily to survive, maintain relevance and get new members to their organization:

> I have the impression that they have also for the last year, have used this question as one of the biggest tools to survive, by getting new young people to their organizations like, "Please don't eat the shrimps and then you will be a good person and everything else is fine." You can still go with your SUV to work but as long as you don't eat those big shrimp, it's good.
>
> (interview recording, 2017)

It became evident upon analysing data that pressure on the supermarket chains by NGOs, amplified by the media and support of the public, had broad implications on the overall dynamics, relationships and communication styles between actors in the

industry. The shrimp debate was seen to act as a gateway to other sustainability conversations and cooperation. A respondent working for one of the large Swedish retailers spoke of how an unprecedented level of cooperation between retailers became necessary, due to NGO pressure:

> At first with organizations like the WWF, MSC and *Naturskyddsforeningen*, it was more of a resistance from all the retailers, to discuss with them. But now it's completely different. It's more of a cooperation. Because what we have to admit actually, is that I don't think that we today had been where we are without NGOs or the media actually. It's definitely media and NGO which have a part, which have pushed all the retailer and the business into more or less, accepted to work with sustainability.
>
> (interview recording, 2017)

Another respondent, an analyst from the fisheries department of a Swedish Government agency, spoke of how the "push" by NGOs on social and environmental matters was a necessary force which was desirable in order to eventually bring about high level changes in policy and legislation:

> And then you kind of have a parallel structure of NGOs that are somehow wanting to push it even more in more direction. It becomes… that's of course really important to have that push one way otherwise the politics would never follow.
>
> (interview recording, 2019)

NGOs themselves appeared aware of the level of influence that they held in terms of determining the operating terms of the market, as highlighted in a point raised by a program director of one of the large international environmental NGOs:

> And I think retailers and producers are very, very sensitive to what is going on, in terms of the market. I mean, if you feel real pressure or if you feel a trend, you can definitely see the changes that are happening in the companies.
>
> (interview recording, 2019)

Furthermore, the data suggested that NGO-led campaigns could not only change the sustainability behaviour of primary producers and distributors in the immediate term, but could also act to keep them basing their sustainability interpretation on that deemed acceptable by the NGOs on a longer-term basis. The data indicated that the organizational memory of the impact of initial campaign was lasting, and created

ongoing 'obedience.' As of 2019, all of the major food retailers in Sweden either partially or fully base their sustainability strategy on a list produced by an NGO.

4.1.3 How NGO influence was gained and maintained

NGO influence and ability to mount social acceptability and legitimacy challenges was gained and maintained in a number of different ways. Data suggested that this included the use of campaigns, protests, lobbying, favourable media coverage, meetings with primary producers and distributors, and seeking to create a situation whereby the guides, lists and rating systems produced by NGOs would be perceived as being guiding documents through which all seafood sustainability decisions should be made. The primary mediums through which these activities were carried out were online (primarily through social media), over traditional media (television and radio), through in-store protests, and through these mediums rallying the Swedish public to support their cause. According to a respondent, a director of certification schemes at a Swedish NGO, this influence was achieved by NGOs using a "multitude of tools that have addressed the same issue." (interview recording, 2019).

Other respondents during interviews were very open with the fact that their goal was to gain a commanding narrative of the sustainability definition in the seafood industry, such as a director at a Swedish NGO reflecting on changing social norms:

> We're not a political organization, but we're using political methods and we try to influence politics, but we don't have a party politics. We have a sort of, we try to take the voice of the one who is not at the table when decisions are made. So, who gets to decide? Well, we would like to get to decide, but usually, it's always a compromise. We always want to get further and then have... what society ends up is a bit below what we aim for. We know also that 10 years later, we usually get where we want. We're trying to push society always to move in that direction, which isn't the same thing as always being who decides. Others are perhaps seeing the same aspects 10 years later then, well.
>
> (interview recording, 2019)

It is interesting to note here the way in which it is described how "what society ends up is a bit below what we aim for" highlighting how actors may intentionally 'overshoot' their wished interpretation of sustainability on the basis that what they will get will inevitably be a somewhat watered-down version. The Swedish shrimp

case however, was not really an example of this phenomena: rather, the NGOs got exactly what they sought (and in many cases, much more).

A key way that NGOs were able to achieve such a level of influence and mount contests to social acceptability and legitimacy was through utilization of their membership base. Respondents working for the WWF, Greenpeace and the SSNC frequently described during interviews the extent to which having large membership bases enabled them to act quickly and decisively to start and spread campaigns.

A policy officer working at one of the NGOs reflected on the importance of using their members during campaigns:

> We do have a group of people who are very engaged in this issue [of shrimp sustainability]….We launched reports, did campaigning via various social media all that. Our members went to different restaurants in Stockholm and the restaurants and stores had actually said, "Okay, whoa. We didn't realize you have the issue with this." And they decided to not send shrimps, then they got a diploma, they can put on the windows. Using your members, the active members and the members who are very much interested in a specific issue is a good way of going about this issue. When it comes to the other issues, we are working with the state fisheries. I also do a lot of direct lobbying towards politicians.
>
> (interview recording, 2017)

The active involvement of members in campaigning efforts was one of several ways that NGOs increased their size and ability to influence other actors into changing their behaviour.

A director of certification schemes at another Swedish environmental NGO described the same phenomena, i.e. how they could tap into the sentiment and feelings of both their membership base and also the broader Swedish public in order to gain a decisive say on a topic such as shrimp:

> What is our organization's strength is that we have this outreach into the public because of all our members. When something is boiling, we sense that... If you look at the wave, it's not us who starts the wave but when it comes, then we can enforce it.
>
> (interview recording, 2019)

A respondent from yet another NGO (an international one with a presence in Sweden) described how the large size of their organization enabled them to achieve

influence, primarily by seeking to use consumer pressure to change the actions of firms:

> [NGO name] is a huge organisation, we have a strong brand, and many people recognise it and believe in our messaging. And we're also independent, which makes it easier for people to trust our work, and what we're doing. Because we don't have a specific interest – our interest is in nature and people. So, I mean I think it's all about consumers and the general public believing in our brand and supporting us. And that's also why the retailers and producers want to follow our messaging, because it's consumer pressure that makes them move forward in their work.
>
> (interview recording, 2019)

Some respondents, such as a project lead at a major international NGO, perceived their role working for NGOs to be about disrupting the norm and creating a "crisis", as it was the best way to bring about change:

> I think our job as [NGO name], it's like my job is to make some sort of crisis that someone has to solve and it means that someone has to sit down and change and think. So, I think if I'm not able to kind of get that immediate… at least in my role, as an oceans campaigner, working globally, if I don't get that sort of gut reaction, I think I've partly failed.
>
> (interview recording, 2019)

This seeking out of a reaction from companies could be interpreted as a challenge to the social acceptance of their behaviour. Other interview subjects noted how they targeted their campaigning simultaneously at companies and the end customer, such as the SSNC's 'one small thing' video during Anti-Scampi.

A fisheries expert at an international environmental NGO described how their role was not necessarily to ban a certain type of product entirely, but instead to make consumers aware that there are more sustainable alternatives available:

> I think it's important to show that there are alternatives, and that's also how we believe we can shift the market. Because people won't stop eating shrimp, even though we've said like, "Avoid… You shouldn't eat any giant shrimp at all, or tiger shrimp." You will still see people who buy them. And then it's better, and we think that it's more efficient to show… I mean – here's a green alternative. So, if you want to eat this product you should choose ASC.
>
> (interview recording, NGO, 2019)

Sometimes, direct communication between NGOs and corporations was a means of interaction. One respondent, a director at a Swedish NGO, told of how emailing reports produced by their NGO to the head office of Swedish retail outlets was a strategy by which they attempted to achieve their goal of banning the sale of tropical shrimp:

> We sent it to them, [Swedish retailer name], our report on all of this. They wrote to us… they wrote to our head office, saying, "A reply to…" [report name], was what our organization had done. At that time the first thing I wrote was actually to ask them a set of questions, because they can't answer.

> They say that for example the programme provides – they say ASC, provides a means to measurably improve the environmental and social performers of shrimp aquaculture. Then we say – please show us measured improvements… Of chemical use before and after ASC certification, from a specific farm; Please specify kind and amount of antibiotics used before and after. They can't answer, because they have no idea.
>
> <div align="right">(interview recording, 2019)</div>

Another way that NGOs sought to achieve influence was by seeking to shape the formulation of regional, national and supranational legislation governing matters pertaining to seafood.

One respondent, a project lead at an international environmental NGO outlined how old legislation coming up for renewal presented a window of opportunity for shaping new standards and norms:

> Now we have the process…which is a very big priority for [NGO name]. There are new negotiations on an Oceans Treaty, because if we don't get that right, then we're going to be in really big shit. But we have an opportunity to kind of fix some of this, like broken patchwork of governing the high seas and governing the oceans.
>
> <div align="right">(interview recording, 2019)</div>

NGOs also often wrote reports about specific topics, and used these reports to generate awareness as well as to legitimatize their efforts. A respondent from an international NGO spoke of a forthcoming report on unsustainable fishing operations in the Global South: "We're very soon going to release a report about the expansion of fishmeal and fish oil factories in West Africa. They're like basically stealing food in West Africa." (interview recording, 2019)

Between 2008 and 2018, the most significant and influential action taken by an NGO in Sweden was the launch of the 'Anti-Scampi' campaign against tropical shrimp, started by the SSNC. The campaign successfully utilized traditional and social media – especially YouTube, Twitter and Facebook – in order to change an existing norm about tropical shrimp which quickly escalated into something significant, and fundamentally reshaped the dynamics of the seafood sector and shrimp industry.

Anti-Scampi

In 2011, the SSNC launched a massive campaign against farmed tropical shrimp, especially *Penaeus monodon*, but also *Litopenaeus vannamei.* The SSNC utilised social media, traditional media and physical protests in order create awareness of the social and environmental harms which they perceived tropical shrimp farming as causing. The stated mission of the campaign was "*Om du bara vill göra en enda pyttesak som är helt ovärderlig för miljön – då är det att avstå från jätteräkan!*", translating in English to "You only want to do one teeny tiny thing that will contribute to a better world, keep tiger prawns off your plate!" Since 2011, 7 April has been celebrated by *Naturskyddsforeningen* as 'Anti-Scampi' Day.

The campaign centred around a short animated 'ad' shown on television and YouTube titled 'one small thing', as well as two mini documentaries showing the practice of farming of tropical shrimp in Bangladesh, and in Ecuador. *The devastating truth behind shrimp farming* has 114,000 views as of January 2019. During the video, the supermarkets ICA and Coop are singled out and directly asked to stop selling tropical shrimp. The documentary also claims that endosulfan, a broad-spectrum insecticide which is banned in most countries, is still used in prawn farming in Bangladesh. Endosulfan is an xenoestrogen, which mimics the human hormone estrogen and can create serious endocrinological problems in human beings, as well as killing other species in areas surrounding prawn farms and accumulating up the food chain (Dorts et al., 2009). The making of the documentaries, which involved SSNC staff traveling to these countries, was partially funded by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA), a Swedish Government agency. A disclaimer at the end of the documentaries states "Produced with economic support from SIDA. SIDA has not participated in the production of the publication and has not evaluated the facts or opinions that are expressed." The Swedish version of the Anti-Scampi YouTube video was posted in November 2011. Comments from viewers range from people trolling with posts such as "Sucked in, I just put scampi on my pizza!" through to more thoughtful comments such as "I find

this informative but it only covers one point of view." As of November 2017, the Anti-Scampi Facebook page had 14,300 'likes', and the hashtag #keepemoffyourplate featured prominently on Twitter in late 2011 and early 2012, based on searches conducted on Twitter.

As well as an online campaign, the Anti-Scampi campaign also involved protests in the seafood aisles of supermarkets. The sustainability coordinator of one of the major Swedish food retailers interviewed in this study, who witnessed such a protest, noted that the store was overwhelmed by the consumer response to the campaign and were "basically forced" (interview recording, 2017) to remove all tropical shrimp.

A director at an international seafood certification scheme shared their surprise at how quickly the campaign rose to prominence:

> I was so surprised [at Anti-Scampi]… I became aware of this huge issue that it's become with this shrimp and there was even on television, so I realise how high visibility it had.
>
> (interview recording, 2019)

The owner of a Swedish seafood company noted that during the Anti-Scampi campaign, there was absolutely "nothing" (interview recording, 2017) to counterbalance the claims made by some of the environmental NGOs. The whole affair, according to this respondent, presented a one-sided view and turned a complex issue into a black and white one, all the while not giving seafood companies a fair chance to respond and stand up for themselves. A respondent from an international NGO was also surprised at just how successful it was, and the fact that many firms felt upset by the campaign and other decisions around shrimp, such as suddenly 'red lighting' certain species:

> I mean the Anti-Scampi campaign – it went huge. I think it was significant, definitely. And I think we've seen that over the years in terms of other species as well. I mean we had a… The *Pandalus borealis*, here in Sweden, the shrimp fishermen – I think it was in 2014 – we put them on our red light… And I mean it just went bananas, you know. We had so many different phone calls, and the fishermen were really upset and the retailers were upset. And everyone talked about how sustainable they were. And then I mean after the storm you sort of saw an impact in the industry. And it actually, our red-listing, the effect that that had was that the shrimp fishermen went into certification. So, I think it was like one year later they were MSC certified. So that really shows that

what we're saying is having an impact, and they are improving. So even though the instant reaction might be like, "No, you're wrong." After some time has gone, you sort of see an effect.

One of several ways that the SSNC sought to alter norms of what the norms of acceptability for operating in the shrimp industry were (beyond physically protesting in stores, which was done to great effect in 2011) was to make it a distinct condition of their *Bra Miljöval* label that the certified store sell no tropical shrimp at all, no matter what eco-labels they carried. If a store wanted overall *Bra Miljöval* certification (which many apparently did as they perceived it as a strategic advantage in environmentally conscious Sweden), then they had to get rid of all tropical shrimp. This was done, according to one respondent from an NGO, in order to "put pressure on them and their suppliers. All the three major retailing chains in Sweden, it's an oligopoly, more or less, so Coop and ICA and Axfood." (interview recording, 2019)

Not necessarily a tool of influence in and of itself but rather a physical manifestation of their sustainability interpretation, NGOs developed a number of lists, guides, rankings and certification schemes – artefacts which they aimed to get other actors to confirm to. The reputational costs of non-conformity to these documents was perceived retailers as being very high, and as a result all four of the major supermarket chains in Sweden now based their fish and shrimp sustainability strategy around seafood guides, especially the WWF Red List. As a seafood manager for one of the 'big four' Swedish supermarket chains put it, "Its Sweden – we work with the WWF guide as a bible" (interview recording, 2017). A respondent from an NGO was aware of the influential nature of these artefacts and how they could be used to get "reactions":

Our seafood guide, which is a huge part of what we're focusing our work around; talking to consumers and mainly business and fishing industry, on how they can improve their way of fishing, and their way of farming. Our guide is used by many stakeholders. And when we score something with red lights, or yellow lights, and say that it's not sustainable, then we get reactions.

(interview recording, 2019)

Both the use of campaigns and artefacts had impacts across the entire value stream. While some targeted fishing companies and end-retailers, others targeted customers. The flow on effect from targeting any one actor was that the supply and/or demand

of shrimp would diminish. The influence of campaigns and artefacts was amplified and echoed through noise in media, which played a vital role in allowing NGOs to achieve such a level of dominance in the shrimp industry.

4.1.4 The role of conventional and social media in amplifying NGO messages

The WWF, Greenpeace and SSNC were able to use both traditional and social media in order to initially communicate, solidify and amplify their messages around shrimp sustainability. Through media amplification, they were able to quickly gain traction of their message and create unexpectedly high levels of public awareness of the social and environmental issues associated with shrimp consumption. This high public awareness had two profound impacts.

Firstly, from the perspective of actors in the Swedish seafood industry, it quickly reframed the shrimp debate from being a minor peripheral issue to becoming something which had the potential to badly hurt the reputation of primary producers and distributors (or put them out of business altogether), as the Swedish public were now aware of the issue and were majority-sided with the NGOs. Secondly, positive feedback loops in television and radio coverage and social media algorithms meant that the NGOs were given a commanding voice in defining the scope of the debate, and perceived as being crusaders for good, while the primary producers and distributors were framed as being out of touch and needing to catch up with modern societal norms. Far less media coverage (if any) was given to the responses of the fishing companies and food retailers whose actions were the ones under scrutiny.

Debate around the social and environmental sustainability of shrimp is a topic that has received and continues to receive significant media coverage in Sweden. While the debate peaked between 2011 and 2015 and has not since reached these heights in terms of the breadth and depth of media coverage, the topic of shrimp and questions abound their sustainability endure. This media coverage has taken two distinct forms. Firstly, coverage by both government-owned and private media outlets. This form of media attention has primarily consisted of supposedly-impartial, indifferent reporting of the key happenings of the shrimp debate, taking place through the conventional media channels of television, radio and newspaper. The second form of media coverage has been the use of social media by the actors involved in the shrimp debate in order to shape the debate to suit their narrative. This has taken place primarily over social media sites such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube, and has consisted typically of actors using these social media sites to encourage the general public of Sweden to take a particular stance on the shrimp debate and translate that

stance through to actionable behaviours (such as buying or not buying shrimp, or even physically protesting in a store).

At the onset of this study it appeared that the media was simply a platform or location where actor voices were projected. However, it has become clear that the media itself is (perhaps unintentionally) a prominent actor in the Swedish shrimp debate, and based on the significant role that the media has played it meets the criteria of a "a participant in an action or process" (the definition of 'actor' used in this study) as opposed to merely being a passive bystander or observer.

This sub-theme provides a description of the role of the media in the Sweden shrimp sustainability debate. Part one considers the role of conventional media, drawing on data gathered in a library database archival study of key stories relating to shrimp in Sweden from 2008 to 2018, a period which has seen drastic changes to the shrimp and broader seafood market in Sweden. Part two considers the role of social media, with the focus falling largely on the Anti-Scampi campaign from 2011 to 2014, given that this was the time period when social media came to the highest prominence. Both sections also make use of interview data.

Conventional media
Analysis of interview data revealed that some actors, especially seafood companies and retailers, had the perception that that throughout the shrimp debates the media had taken a very 'pro-sustainability' stance, choosing to side with the NGOs. One respondent, a manager for a large retailer, described it as follows:

> I don't think that we today had been where we are without NGOs or the media actually. It's definitely media and NGO which have a part, which have pushed all the retailers and the business into more or less, accepted to work with sustainability.

(interview recording, 2017)

To investigate whether this comment and the dozen or so similar ones throughout the interview data set are merely anecdotal or in fact do paint an accurate representation of what happened, it was necessary to delve into some of the key media stories relating to the shrimp debate in Sweden between 2008 and 2018 and attempt to summarize the general tonality of the reporting. Otero and Baumann's (2016) study of the *Pandalus borealis* 'red listing' raised an interesting *caveat* in regards to the role of the media, noting that the media "determines how much exposure a particular perspective gets, which in turn affects the perception of audiences." (Otero & Baumann, 2016 p. 56)." The sentiment of such a point is that while the media may not directly take sides in a given debate and may portray a sense of impartiality, the

reality is that a story can easily be skewed simply by giving more air time and coverage to the side that is favoured. We must consider here that a media organization such as public broadcaster Sveriges Television AB (SVT) does not have direct associations with the seafood industry in Sweden, and as such there is no suggestion that any media organization has taken or would take a particular stance on shrimp for the purposes of their own advancement. However, what seems to have happened instead is that NGOs such as Greenpeace, the WWF and SSNC have through a variety of mechanisms been able to create a situation whereby they were able to successfully use conventional media to amplify their message, and in doing so making their stance on shrimp become the dominant narrative reported.

While Sweden is a country that has frequently been an early adopter of technical breakthroughs and new forms of media, the three 'traditional' media forms of newspapers (physical and online), television and radio play a surprisingly significant role in day-to-day life. Media organizations in Sweden are generally very trusted. A recent study on Nordic Leadership, produced by the Nordic Council of Ministers, noted that "In the Nordic region, we emphasize the importance of companies having responsible relationships with peripheral actors and society more than in other parts of the world." (*Nordic leadership*, 2018, p. 27). An analysis was conducted through the University of Gothenburg Library's Newspaper, Audio and Video Database, which searches through a massive catalogue of the most common news television programs, newspaper articles and radio broadcasts. Search terms used were various combinations of shrimp, prawn, *räka, räkor*, scampi, Anti-scampi, *hållbarhet , hållbar utveckling, Pandalus borealis, Litopenaeus vannamei, Melicertus latisulcatus*, and *Penaeus monodon*. Results suggested that these terms featured around 1,840 times in major newspaper, radio and television stories between 2011 and 2015.

Search results revealed extensive media coverage of the shrimp debate in Sweden between 2008 and 2018. The majority of stories presented a very 'pro-environment' stance, pushing Swedish consumers to minimize consumption of or completely avoid eating tropical farmed shrimp. A story from the 2011-08-25 edition of newspaper *Göteborgs Posten* written by Adrianna Pavlica perhaps best summarizes the 'typical' coverage of the shrimp debate in Sweden:

Headline in Swedish:

> *Kampanj mot jätteräkor: Jätteräkorna förstör miljön och skapar sociala problem. Nu drar Naturskyddsföreningen igång en anti-scampi-kampanj.*

English translation of headline:

Campaign against Scampi: The giant shrimp destroy the environment and create social problems. Now the Swedish Society for Nature Conservation is launching an anti-scampi campaign.

English translation of the article:

Tiger shrimp, gampas, tropical shrimp, scampi. The giant prawns have many names, and have become increasingly popular. – It's very problematic. The giant shrimp is the worst food I can imagine, it's time to deal with it once and for all, says [name withheld for privacy reasons] of the Swedish Society for Nature Conservation, who is the marine ecosystem and fisheries manager. There are both fished and cultivated giant prawns. Fishing is done with trawls and provides great by-catch. – For every giant shrimp you can get a hundred other fish that are just thrown away, says [name withheld for privacy reasons]. But it is the cultivated shrimp that create the biggest problem. Cultivation takes place in Asia, and it is common to cut down a lot of mangrove forest. – The forest is an important resource where people find food and firewood. And it protects against storms and tsunamis. Mangrove forest is one of our most important ecosystems, says [name withheld for privacy reasons]… A lot of chemicals are pumped into the crops, which therefore has to change place after a while and destroys even more forest. In addition, the giant prawns themselves get a lot of antibiotics for preventive purposes, as they easily get sick. But the cultivations also have major consequences for the residents of the area. – People can't fish, for example, they can't access their beach. Usually you do not get through the cultivations, there are usually heavily armed guards there. There are eco-labelled giant prawns, but according to [name withheld for privacy reasons] they are no alternative. – Nobody has managed to produce a giant shrimp that you can eat with good conscience, she says. The Nature Conservation campaign started on Wednesday. By the afternoon, it had already received nearly 1,700 "likes" on Facebook. A short film, *Antiscampi – The Movie* is now available online, and hopes that more people will choose the giant shrimp from the plate.

While the apparent purpose of the above article was to simply report on the launch of the Anti-Scampi campaign rather provide an in-depth analysis of the state of shrimp in Sweden, on the surface it fails the most basic impartiality test of journalism by not offering any counter-voices to that of the spokesperson from the NGO. It is not said whether this was due to lack of availability or interest of a spokesperson or simply whether efforts to find a counter-voice were not made. Some of the suggestions made by the spokesperson from the NGO in this article are arguably exaggerated, such as suggesting a clear causal relationship between shrimp-farm caused mangrove swamp clearing and an increased danger from tsunamis. While it

is indeed true that mangroves do offer protection against tsunamis (Kathiresan & Rajendran, 2005), it is debatable as to the effect that shrimp farms have.

The above news story, which is emblematic of dozens of others, perhaps only tells one side of the shrimp debate, and is typical of the sorts of articles which proved influential in amplifying the messages of the environmental NGOs and creating high levels of public awareness.

Social media

Social media played (and as of 2020, continues to play) a significant role in the shrimp debate in Sweden, and served as an important mechanism for the three NGOs to achieve a commanding level of influence over the narrative by generating public awareness of and support for their stance on shrimp. This momentum was then used to launch contests to the legitimacy of corporations in the industry. Sites like Facebook, YouTube and Twitter allowed NGOs to communicate their interests, engage in virtual protests or lobbying of other actors, to mobilize the public behind their stance, and as a way of openly showing off the support that they have for their stance through the number of 'likes' on a status, page or video. The prominence social media came to light especially during the Anti-Scampi campaign, where the activities of SSNC and their heavy use of Facebook posts and Twitter hashtags lead to rapid and significant awareness amongst Swedish consumers of the apparent social and environmental harms of Shrimp consumption. These organizations were perceived as being able to effectively utilize media in order gain the support of the seafood buying public, and as a result achieve levels of influence far beyond what their size or membership base would typically be able to command.

Empirical material collected during interviews suggested that campaigns played a prominent role in determining how what constituted sustainable or legitimate behaviour in the Swedish shrimp industry between 2008 and 2018. The interview data suggested that both traditional media and social media acted as 'amplifiers' of these movements and allowed them to gain a level of traction and size that would have not been possible otherwise. One respondent from a major international environmental NGO reflected how "Social media has made a massive difference." (interview recording, 2019)

The purpose of social media campaigns during the height of the shrimp debate in Sweden seemed to be primarily to generate public support for the cause of the three NGOs (especially the SSNC, who lead the debate), which could be translated to "target the retailers" to remove "unsustainable" shrimp from their stores, as one

respondent from a Swedish NGO put it (recording, 2019). The respondent reflected on the success of the Anti-Scampi campaign in 2011 as being partly due to the fact that campaigns run through Twitter, Facebook and YouTube were back then somewhat unusual, and puts down the success of the campaign partly "because we were early" (interview recording, 2019). The respondent pointed out that as of 2019 it has become much more difficult to run campaigns over social media due to noise and high demand for the attention of the viewer, which was not as prominent in 2011 when social media was still in (relative) infancy:

> You have to compete with all the kinds of other message. And furthermore, now the algorithms are punishing you if you have too broad a message. They're supporting you if you have an almost populistic message.
>
> (interview recording, 2019)

To summarize, media – both social and traditional – played a significant role in allowing NGOs to rise to a position where they could unfreeze existing industry norms and mount challenges to the social acceptability of the actions of corporations and in turn contest their legitimacy.

4.1.5 NGOs perceived as failing to understand the realities of business

A prominent theme throughout nearly all interviews conducted was that of the tensions present between achieving social and environmental sustainability whilst also achieving immediate financial interest. During interviews, actors would sometimes accuse another actor in the industry another of failing to understand 'their' world, and accuse the other side of being overly idealistic and nor in touch with the 'real world'. This was especially the case for primary producers and distributors, who often claimed that the NGOs were out of touch with 'reality', and sought goals that were overly perfectionistic and not grounded in common sense.

A Swedish seafood company owner argued that some environmental NGOs ignored the realities of business and did not understand how markets worked:

> That's why some people here, like environmental organizations, they don't understand the mechanism behind the market. They just think green. That's good, but we also have to have the mechanism to make it work.
>
> (interview recording, 2017)

A similar sentiment was noted by a sustainability coordinator from a major Swedish food retailer, who reflected on how "It cannot be that way [that sustainability should be put first]. We are a business, we are not WWF. But we really try to do the best we can. (interview recording, 2017)

Another respondent, a manager at a different major Swedish food retailer explained that sometimes NGOs did not understand the timeframe that was required for businesses to bring about changes, and that there were sometimes unintended negative consequences of NGO pressure, such as perfectly good fish and shrimp going to waste:

> WWF thought like you can maybe just get rid of it and you're like... it's already been fished, just going to be labelled and sent to us. We already have orders all this amount, the fish is already dead. But in the way that they are talking to the consumer, sometimes then it will be hard for us to sell it.
>
> (interview recording, 2017)

Other respondents also flagged the fact that seemingly noble causes also had oft-forgotten consequences when sudden changes were demanded. One pondered on what happens"…if you throw out all of the shrimps in Swedish supermarkets or Norwegian supermarkets…" (recording, 2017).

On the other side of the table, a policy officer at a Swedish environmental NGO illustrated a polar-opposite view, suggesting that sustainability was essential for business to operate, due to the limits of the natural environment:

> I'm not interested – you can never run a business that makes money on behalf of the environment or the people who need these resources in order to survive and to make a living.
>
> (interview recording, 2017)

Another respondent working for the fisheries department of a different NGO acknowledged the impact that their actions had on producers, and realised that it did create limits on their access to markets:

> So, I guess that's a good thing because it means that we're actually having an impact. But of course, it's also impacting on producers' possibility to sell their products and access to markets, so…

The owner of a Swedish seafood business felt that it had reached a point where their company and others were getting "fed up" (interview recording, 2017) with NGO pressure (and carry through pressure from retailers) and reflected upon why it was even worth bothering going through rigorous certification schemes like ASC when there is less and less commercial benefit in doing so.

Another respondent, a C-suite executive of a major international seafood certification scheme, felt that some of environmental organizations had made a lot of noise about seafood but made no real tangible or helpful contribution:

> They [NGOs] have a part to play in terms of raising awareness, but as far as I'm aware, there's no evidence they've made a blind bit of difference whatsoever in terms of consumption let alone change on the water.
>
> (interview recording, 2017)

Over the course of several interviews, the owner of a Swedish seafood company which imports shrimp from Asia reflected on frustrations in dealing with NGOs. This respondent believed that NGOs were unreasonable and overly perfectionistic:

> I have reasoned with those people for many years now. I say, 'I would like discussion. Tell me what I can do?' I have the impression that they are more – Some people in this organization [NGO] when I spoke to them last time... It seems that they are just fighting this question [about farmed shrimp sustainability] for historical reasons . They don't want to drop it. They said last time, "We are doing it for our members." I said, "They are misinformed". They think that the worst thing you can do is eating *vannamei* or black tiger shrimps... I have the impression that some of those issues that they [environmental NGOs] – For instance now the shrimp issue that they – they come up with facts that are actually good for them to promote this – How should I say? – boycott against the shrimp. They don't, for instance, take up that 98% of the issues are actually solved by ASC."
>
> (interview recording, 2017)

A manager at a seafood certification scheme (working in the Swedish regional office) reflected similar sentiments in terms of being concerned by NGO pressure, especially in terms of them wanting a standard whereby the bar was raised too high:

How do we avoid getting into trouble with the NGOs because they're critical of our operations?' Mostly the issue is about that the NGO's want the bar to be higher. In a way, it's a strange way of being critical because that's implicitly arguing that you're already doing a good thing but you should be doing it more. You should have higher expectations of fisheries then getting MSC labels should be even more – you should have to be even better from the start while the MSC program is also including learning and improving aspect.

<div align="right">(interview recording, 2017)</div>

One Swedish fishing company described growing tired of meeting the constantly changing demands of the NGOs, and alluded to a point in the future where they might not continue with their efforts unless the NGOs were more reasonable:

Suppliers like myself may not want to continue this effort and all the attention they're actually paying for this program (gaining certification so as to meet the requirements of the NGO lists) today if they don't any benefits out from it or volume.

<div align="right">(interview recording, 2017)</div>

The NGOs themselves realised the pressure they were placing, but emphasized the voluntary aspect of complying with the artefacts. When asked specifically about the pressure placed on retailers and fishing companies by the lists that NGOs created, a fisheries specialist at an NGO reflected:

Yeah, I mean I can definitely understand that point of view. Still I think it's important to remember that our recommendations – they are recommendations, they are not mandatory. So, it's up to each company if they want to follow it or not. We don't set the legislation framework. I mean we give these recommendations and then everyone can decide if they want to follow them or not.

<div align="right">(interview recording, 2019)</div>

The inference here that the lists were merely recommendations was in strong opposition with how they were perceived by corporations, who felt they had little choice but to abide to them.

Also raised was the theme that the lists were by nature unfair and demanded a level of perfection that was simply too high. A respondent from a Swedish government agency fisheries department reflected on how the high expectations of NGOs on fishing companies were indeed sometimes unfair:

But for the individual fisherman of course, it creates a problem in that well, "I've done everything, I've followed all the rules, but still I get a red light." It definitely creates a sense of unfairness in some cases, I think.

(interview recording, 2019)

NGOs such as the SSNC claimed that some third-party certification schemes like the ASC, MSC and others lacked rigor, and therefore they could not endorse them. Such arguments were put to individuals working at these certification schemes during interviews. They frequently acknowledged that their schemes were far from perfect, but that progress had to start somewhere. A director of one such certification scheme noted that perfectionism straight away was impossible:

You can't start 100%, you have to start somewhere and try to increase it. And if you can get the first 15, 20%, the highest performers, and then work down from there. I mean, you have to start somewhere, that's what we want to do.

(interview recording, 2019)

When asked 'What would you say to the argument that some people would make, that having some standards is better than nothing – that the ASC is not perfect but it's a start', a respondent from an NGO suggested that such an argument was flawed, as in their judgement some certification schemes were fundamentally below the standard needed to achieve sustainability that it didn't even represent a starting place but in fact a step backwards. According to this respondent ,the ASC was "Legitimizing destruction, environmental destruction, the… Social… You know, the irresponsible way of… And you're legitimizing corruption, legitimizing everything. (interview recording, 2019)

This was not the case for all NGOs, however. Some actively worked with the certification schemes (and with other NGOs) to improve the sustainability criteria. A respondent from one of the NGOs which retailers had deemed as more reasonable to work with described this multi-actor working relationship during an interview:

When this critique started about the shrimp industry in Sweden, we had long discussions – both [NGOs], with the industry… And what we saw then was… I mean… People didn't stop consuming shrimp, as I said. I mean there was still consumption, and that's why we felt like, okay, we need to change strategy, we need to… This is apparently not working, just to say, "Stop eating…" Because people will still consume. So, we should find another path. And that's why we decided to work with the standard owners. We have a close collaboration both with ASC and MSC… And we're always trying to look at ways that you can sharpen the sustainability criteria in these

standards. And also working directly with producers – I mean we have offices in Asia that are helping shrimp farmers to go into certification processes. That's the way we feel we can shift the industry to become more sustainable.

<div align="right">(interview recording, 2019)</div>

Other NGOs were more hard-line about their view that business models must work within the ecological carrying capacity of the planet – and must do so immediately. During an interview with a respondent from international environmental NGO, a question around the realities of business was directly posed to the respondent:

> 'One of the claims that business has made is that they think that all of you in the NGO world don't understand the realities of business. And of course, as a neutral, impartial researcher, my job is to sit on the fence and to not take sides. They sort of say that these NGOs, they couple you together with the others because they see you all in the same category and they say, "Well, they come and they make these lists every year and they demand that we do this and that. They don't understand how the world works. We can't keep up with the changes that they want. It's all happening too quickly for us. There's too much pressure on us and they don't understand the realities of business that we have to make money, in order to be viable in the future. Yes, we care about sustainability but unless we're making a profit, we can't be sustainable anyway." So, what would you say to a business owner in Sweden who comes across as saying things like that?'

The respondent answered as follows:

> I don't know, like, are you fishing yourself out of business? It's not going the right way, so it's like there's very little evidence and now with the latest report from the west coast, the collapse of the Baltic cod stock, I'm like, "Guys, this is not a very good business model that you guys have." "And if you're not willing to change, you're going to be out of business." But like for me, that change isn't necessarily by being certified; it's by looking at these fisheries and how we do this way differently. Because I do think that we have seen many certified fisheries on the west coast of Sweden and in the Baltics that now have collapsed or are on the brink of collapsing.

<div align="right">(interview recording, 2019)</div>

Other respondents, such as a supply chain manager at a seafood certification scheme, outlined the nuances and complexity of the sustainability debate, and the fact that there were indeed tensions between business realities and aspirational sustainability goals:

It's very realistic tension, and there're two sides of that story. It's absolutely true that that the only way businesses can contribute to sustainability is by being also financially sustainable, right. They do need to run a business, a profitable business, otherwise, they cannot provide to jobs, investing in health and safety, investing in the environment if they're not also making a profit. I think that's also a valid point that maybe sometimes some NGOs forget.

<div align="right">(interview recording, 2017)</div>

The theme of the realities of business was highly significant in terms of attempting to answer the research question of the study of how legitimacy is contested, as it brought to surface the fact that interpretations of social and environmental sustainability were heavily shaped by the need for organizations to be financially sustainable. On one side, environmental NGOs felt that it was inherently wrong for an organization to profit from shrimp production that produced what they perceived as an unacceptably large level of social and environmental harm. On the other side, commercial fishing companies and retailers felt that NGOs placed unrealistic expectations on them in terms of asking too much in terms of being sustainable, and not being aware of the realities of running a business and that an organization must be able to survive financially in order to have any sort of sustainability policy.

4.2 The contextual idiosyncratic uniqueness of Sweden, and the seafood and fishing industry

Thematic analysis of empirical material revealed that there was something unique and unparalleled about both Sweden, and the seafood and fishing industry. This contextual uniqueness had implications for how contests to legitimacy manifested. This theme was on numerous occasions explicitly raised (usually unprovoked) by the majority of the respondents during interviews, and further reinforced through analysis of secondary data. Many respondents felt that the culture and history of Sweden had created an operating environment that demanded a very high level of environmental and social responsibility from all actors in all capacities of society – but especially those operating in food production, and *especially* in the fishing and seafood sector. It was seen that this industry was regarded as being different and unique, and that the shrimp had come to symbolize much of what was seen as being wrong with the food industry. Four sub-themes contributed to the overall formation of the broader theme of idiosyncratic uniqueness: the high social and environmental operating standards expected of all actors in Sweden and the historical and cultural reasons for this; the uniqueness of the fishing and seafood industry; personal

connection of the individuals representing each actor to fishing and marine life; and finally, the sense of optimism (or lack thereof) about the future of the world's oceans and waterways. These four factors seem to have led to a situation which made contests to societal acceptance of corporations more easily achievable than in other contextual domains.

4.2.1 The uniqueness of Sweden

Empirical material suggested that Sweden was perceived as being a country where high levels of social and environmental awareness and performance was expected of business, government, NGOs and private individuals. While such expectations existed in other countries (especially neighbouring Nordic countries), data suggested that there was something unique about Sweden, that this uniqueness was partly due to the history of the country and that it had significant impacts in terms of how social and environmental issues were framed and debated within Sweden. These high levels of expectations led to a situation where SLO and environmental issues were intrinsically connected, and contests to legitimacy were more possible than in other industry settings.

A director at a Swedish environmental NGO offered the suggestion that part of the reason why NGOs were able to achieve such a level of influence in shaping what constituted sustainability in terms of shrimp was due to historical, social and political reasons which have made matters of the natural environment a constant issue of importance amongst the Swedish population. NGOs in Sweden with an environmental focus have been, according to this respondent, able to play on this historical importance of nature in order to amplify their impact and command a dominant role in public discourse:

> I don't think it was a coincidence that all of this happened to be in Sweden…We had a period of almost, I think 40 years of, well, consecutive Social Democratic governments. There was a huge focus on trying to even out the balance between the production and the consumer side., Nature has always been like the church, for Swedes and protecting it is something which came into play when we started seeing that stuff happened.. The end of the '80s, when the seals started dying on a massive scale here on the West Coast, it was around the same time as the sentiment of, okay, what we're doing is having an effect on the environment. Silent Spring came in the '60s and that also affected Swedes a lot. We had the first Human Conference for Environment in '72, in Stockholm… All of this has meant that organizations such as ours have had and maybe always will have a big role in shaping the conversation around environmental issues. It's all this cultural

thing, all this. We're the most individualistic people in the world and we love collective, the collective society.

<div align="right">(interview recording, 2019)</div>

Moreover, it was said that the unique history of Sweden in regards to matters of environmental concern, social equality and egalitarianism meant that the conditions for the launch of contests to legitimacy, such as the 2011 Anti-Scampi campaign, were optimal. One respondent, a director a Swedish NGO, described this as follows, making a comparison between Sweden and the United States:

> You have the folk school movement, for example. And then social concern for more egalitarian society. Co-op was also a big movement. All of these social and historical matters. These set the tone. And they said, you know, like bananas, if they went to the United States, they would be concerned about if there was anything damaging in the banana, for the consumers. While the Swedish would say, 'How is it with the workers, how is it for the environment'? And they would ask me, but you know, "Have you found any antibiotics in the shrimp?" I'm not really… That's of little interest really.

<div align="right">(interview recording, 2019)</div>

Another respondent emphasized the unique culture in Sweden, a culture where societal expectations of business are very high, and consumers want to know where their food comes from and how it was produced. The respondent, a director at an international NGO, told of a seafood company selling in Sweden who was initially against the idea of gaining MSC certification of their products, but eventually was pushed into it due to consumer and retailer pressure:

> They were really against eco-labelling. After a couple of years, they found the pressure that consumers, retailers, would not buy something unless they had the transparency, unless they could provide and really prove that they had sustainable stocks. And therefore, the fishermen went in and got their fisheries certified.

<div align="right">(interview recording, 2019)</div>

The fact that Sweden was one of the first countries in the world to have 'eco-label' schemes in place has meant that there has historically been fairly high consumer awareness of these labels and trust in them. In the words of a program director for an International NGO operating in Sweden:

The existence of labels so early in the Swedish market has pre-empted a lot of green claims coming in. There was already a benchmark in there. The confusion is less, whereas if you ask a U.S. customer what they think is green, you have such an abundance of green claims.

<div align="right">(interview recording, 2019)</div>

A project lead at an international environmental NGO made comparisons to Norway, and suggested that although culturally and geographically similar, Norway and Sweden in fact had quite different approaches to sustainability:

I think, like we're [Sweden] a smaller population. I think we have quite a lot of space. I think we have a closer relationship to nature. I think we're also very trend sensitive, we that live in Sweden… I think also, if you look at Norway for example, going into supermarkets it's like super depressing. Everything in Norway, we put the Norwegian flag on the product, it's enough. It's not always a sustainability label because everything in Norway is sustainable by definition, being Norwegian. While, in Sweden, we've had Göran Persson, a former Prime Minister way back, saying that he was sceptical even to eat the meat that was produced in Sweden if it wasn't sort of certified. So, I think it's a huge difference in Sweden. A Swedish flag on a product doesn't necessarily give Swedes the confidence that that product is good. We want additional insurance of that. But like in Norway, the flag is like, yoo-hoo!

<div align="right">(interview recording, 2019)</div>

These above-average social and environmental standards of operation were picked up and responded to by foreign seafood companies trying to sell their product in Sweden, such as an Australian shrimp cooperative which realized that an eco-label was essential to "get a foot in the door" (interview recording, 2017) in Sweden.

A similar response was ascertained from an export director for a commercial shrimp farming operation based in Vietnam, which sought to farm their shrimp in a certain way and with certain certification (ASC) to access "Northern European markets, including Sweden" (interview recording, 2017). With the knowledge of the strict sustainability requirements of the Northern European markets, this company oriented its entire business model towards achieving this aim of gaining market access by setting up amongst the most high-tech, environmentally sustainable shrimp farming operation in Asia.

Sweden was described by one respondent, a director at an international certification scheme, as being a "frontrunner" in terms of sustainability, and reflected on the strong "emotional ties" that Swedes have to the natural environment:

> Sweden, you're in the right country I think for sustainability and they're always frontrunners. And it really resonates with the consumers in Scandinavia, in northern Europe in general… If you're a developing country, if you're Indonesia or some African nation, they don't have the luxury to think about sustainability sometimes… We have this in Sweden where you can walk and enjoy the nature, and it's for everyone. I think that has really played a role, because everybody feels like they have a stake in the environment, because it belongs to everyone.. They have such strong emotional ties to the environment in the Nordic countries.
>
> (interview recording, 2019)

Similar sentiments were echoed by a fisheries expert at an international environmental NGO, who also emphasized the generally positive perception that social and environmental NGOs in Sweden have:

> One thing, I think Sweden is a country where we have consumers that are very aware and informed about sustainability issues. So, I mean we have a very mature market here, which makes it easier for us to do our work… And I mean in Sweden in general we are a very open society, and any NGO has – I mean there are a lot of civil society organisations working in Sweden that have a good reputation. So that might also have something to do with it.
>
> (interview recording, 2019)

The high levels of environmental awareness of Swedish consumers, combined with their supposedly positive interpretation of NGOs, may have created a synergistic positive feedback loop which allowed such a sudden and dramatic rearrangement of hierarchical relations between actors in the shrimp industry from 2008 to 2018.

A program director at an international environmental NGO reflected on how quickly Swedish fishing companies were to take up certification schemes, due to the societal expectations within Sweden:

> They [fishing companies] were really against eco-labelling. After a couple of years, they found the pressure that consumers, retailers, would not buy something unless they had

the transparency, unless they could provide and really prove that they had sustainable stocks. And therefore, the fishermen went in and got their fisheries certified.

(interview recording, 2019)

A notable concept which arose from data was trust, cohesion and cooperation – traits which are well-established in literature as being hallmarks of the Nordic model of capitalism but seemed to hold even greater significance in Sweden compared to Denmark and Norway. A director at an international NGO spoke of how in Sweden there was a level of cooperation which was not seen elsewhere:

> And Sweden is so advanced in the fact that, at the moment, these big retailers have actually come together and signed an agreement that they want to sell only sustainable sourced products by I think, 2050 or something like that.
>
> And just that is incredible. I mean, these are competitive companies that are coming together and I mean, just that is quite an incredible stance. If we could see some more of these types of initiatives all around the world, that people realise that it's not about competition anymore and about your own economic growth, it's something that we all kind of have to take responsibility, I think we will be well ahead of trying to change some things.

(interview recording, 2019)

This is a very interesting reflection, because the level of cooperation alluded to by this respondent is specifically about companies working with other companies, rather than companies working with NGOs.

Another respondent from a different NGO also spoke of this desire for cooperation. The respondent suggested that the aspiration for consensus was an asset when trying to achieve sustainability goals, as was the somewhat informal nature of interactions due to the relatively informal nature of how Swedes are:

> I think also just the Swedish mentality is very much about finding consensus and driving things forward. They're a very progressive culture, I would say, with everything. I mean, just generally I think in Sweden people are not settled with just how things are. They're always seeing how they can improve things and I think that quality comes about. And I think because it's a small nation, it's very easy to kind of infiltrate these different sectors. Everyone knows each other. So, within the food retail, everyone kind of knows each other. We're on a first name basis, we don't have

hierarchies, you can talk to a Minister on a first name basis and just that is quite unique, I think.

Working on the basis that others will usually do the "right thing" was a theme that arose several times during interviews, with the below quote emblematic of several more not included here. A senior analyst in the fisheries department of a Swedish Government agency put this as: "You trust the system [in Sweden]. You trust others to do the right thing" (interview recording, 2019).

Sweden as a global role model, trend setter and opinion-leader
The uniqueness of Sweden in terms of its unusually high levels of social and environmental awareness and expectations on all organizations and individuals fed into another directly related yet subtly different sub-theme: that Sweden's biggest impact could be achieved as being a global role model, trend setter and opinion leader, rather than through the actions of 10 million people making a significant difference on a planet of seven billion and counting.

Analysis of interview transcripts suggested that numerous respondents felt that Sweden had an important role to play as being a leader in terms of being at the forefront of progressiveness in social and environmental practices, but that in terms of materiality the biggest impact Sweden could have was as a trend-setter. A director at an international environmental NGO pondered on the role of Sweden on the global scale, reflecting on the question of "If these 10 million consumers in Sweden do their part, will it change something? It will have a little impact and hopefully influence others. (interview recording, 2019)

Another respondent, from a different NGO, felt that Sweden had an important role to play, but should stop indirectly outsourcing environmental problems abroad by importing foreign products which were unsustainable:

I do think there is an impact that a country like Sweden can have. And I think, actually, the reality is that we should not be eating as much seafood and it's the same thing with meat. I mean, the fact that we rely on 80% of our seafood from abroad. Why should we be ravishing ourselves in fisheries from other places? So, we've been very spoiled and not very responsible.

(interview recording, 2019)

In response to the question "Does it matter if Sweden looks after its own fisheries well if it's importing an increasing amount of seafood from countries that might not have this strict processes for managing their own sustainability?", an analyst in the fisheries department of a Swedish Government agency reflected:

> Well, it depends on what you mean by 'matter'. Of course, it matters for the state of the stocks in Swedish waters. But as to the global sustainability, of course it's really important that we somehow have a check on what we import and what the rules around that is.
>
> (interview recording, 2012)

A project lead at an international environmental NGO offered the observation that because of Sweden's small size it could not compete on every front, but had to find its "place in the world" by choosing a niche:

> We have found our place in the world by saying this is where we can be powerful, like we make big contributions to the UN's environmental programmes. They can kind of trade on our ability to do that, because we can't compete on other things as well, I think, as other bigger nations. But we want to be there in the lead with the rest of them, then we niched ourselves into a corner.
>
> (interview recording, 2019)

In regards to fisheries, the leadership Sweden had taken on cod management in the Baltic Sea was cited as an example by one interview subject:

> I think the Baltic cod is a great example now where Sweden is showing great leadership… And you actually see that countries are following, and there are many countries – I mean some are completely against closure of the fishery, but some are sort of balancing… So, they won't take the lead, but as soon as one country sort of says "This is what we want to see…" They are more on the verge of… Like they don't really know where they are – if they are against or for. It's easy for them just to follow.
> So, I think I mean Sweden definitely has the possibility to take the lead on many different issues. And just the fact that… I mean I think what's happened with Greta Thunberg, I think that's an amazing example of where you can have a huge impact. Like one little girl from Sweden is travelling across the world and meeting with different leaders. It's amazing. So, I definitely think that things can change.
>
> (interview recording, 2019)

In summary, the collected empirical material was clear that something was atypical about Sweden. It seems that the unusually high level of knowledge, interest and expectation regarding social and environmental issues from multiple different parties (including society-at-large) and ideas of Sweden's place in the world as a role model played an important role in setting the scene for the contests to the legitimacy of seafood companies during the shrimp debates.

4.2.2 The uniqueness of the fishing and seafood industry

In a similar way to the empirical material suggesting that there was something peculiar about Sweden, data also pointed to there being something unique about the fishing and seafood industry. This uniqueness had implications regarding the contestation of legitimacy.

A prominent theme throughout the data was that some actors – especially primary producers – felt as though there were unreasonable and unrealistic expectations placed on the seafood industry, expectations far greater than those placed on other sectors, especially land-based agriculture and food production. The net result of this was, according to respondents, that commercial seafood companies felt that they were required to meet a higher level of sustainability and corporate social responsibility than their counterparts in other food industries such as meat and vegetable production. Three main reasons for this were noted: the fact that the seafood industry is comparatively younger than other food industries, that seafood production involves a higher level of complexity, and that commercial seafood organizations in Sweden (especially those involved in shrimp production) lack the lobbying influence present in other food industries like meat. The owner of a Swedish seafood company reflected on this during an interview:

> Also, one thing, which is of course not maybe correct to say, but the seafood industry also has much smaller companies than for instance the meat industry. They [the meat industry] can lobby when there is problem.
>
> (interview recording, 2017)

The suggestion that "they can lobby when there is a problem" seemed to suggest that this respondent felt that they couldn't lobby as successfully when challenges were mounted by external actors (such as NGOs).

During informal discussion after the formal part of the interview was over, the respondent also suggested that the Swedish seafood industry tended to have a less powerful lobby group than compared to Norway, due to the less conglomerated nature of the industry.

According to another respondent, a Swedish seafood importer, the seafood farming industry is much newer than more established and traditional animal farming practices, and because of this people are not as educated as to how it is done and it is therefore placed under a higher level of scrutiny.

> It's a young industry. I think that many people, they have not the correct information of things that are going on, especially, let's say, *Pangasius*, shrimp, *Tilapia*, shrimp, you have to have them somewhere. It's moving up on land. People don't say anything about cows or that you have pigs or that you're cultivating rice or whatever. Of course, aquaculture also needs space…You must do it somewhere.
>
> (interview recording, 2017)

The respondent continued, reflecting on how they felt as though NGOs applied "extra pressure" to the seafood industry:

> I have the impression that a lot of those environmental organizations, they put some extra pressure on the seafood industry to be better than everything else... Of course, when you cultivate pigs or chicken, you will have things that is coming out from the production, which is not good that you have to take care of. It's the same with the seafood industry.
>
> (interview recording, 2017)

This sentiment appeared elsewhere. An analyst in the fisheries department of a Swedish Government agency commented on how fishing was unique to traditional agriculture in the sense that it is a "system that's already established" – a possible reason for the higher scrutiny placed on the industry:

> I mean, I think my vision, the way I see it is I still believe in having sustainable fisheries. I think fisheries are a good way of… just like you have hunting in Sweden, like venison and wild meats, it might be something that you'd be… it's still a good way of raising animals.
>
> Also, in the extent that you can, so I don't really see… it would be very interesting to see in the future of course, it [fishing] can ever replace the kind of industrial scale,

agriculture and rearing industry that we have at the moment to a great part. But I think it can be a complement. And I think there's definitely a lot of positives when it comes to being able to harvest a system that's already established, rather than having to make your own replaced because usually what happens if you make your own system you replace a natural system that's already there.

(interview recording, 2019)

Another respondent, a marine scientist, touched on how fishing raised unique emotions within people due to the fact that live animals were involved, but noted that this also existed in other forms of food production and was "not exclusive to fish":

Yes, kind of. We of course get negatives in agriculture too … It's not exclusive to fish. That goes for any form of intensive farming, once people actually get an entry and look at it, they usually get quite upset. We're quite disconnected from the food chain, so we don't see it, we don't really care.

(interview recording, 2017)

A manager of a Swedish food labelling scheme commented that it is often forgotten that "Carbon dioxide from meat production is very high" and this is something which is often forgotten about or ignored by those who worry about the environmental impacts of the seafood industry. (interview recording, 2017). The implication here (and in the preceding comments) was that equal scrutiny was not being applied, and the seafood industry was being singled out.

Somewhat ironically however, fish and seafood also seemed to be framed in terms have the advantage that if looked after properly, they could be sustainable. It was suggested by a project lead at an international environmental NGO that fish and shrimp, unlike domesticated agricultural species, had in theory the ability to be sustainable forever:

The weird thing with fishing, compared to like meat production, I think fish can sustain us forever. One billion people rely on fish as their main source of protein, or seafood and if we do it right, we have all the chance in the world to have a healthy ocean, a healthy diet and fish.

(interview recording, 2019)

A member of fish policy board for a certification scheme suggested that a reason as to why the seafood industry gets a disproportionate degree of scrutiny is due to its

complexities and the huge variety of species involved. Trying to make sustainability decisions around "thousands of species of fish" was described to be significantly harder than for pigs and cows:

> With these thousands of species of fish, they won't fit into a rule book in a way that the normal agriculture species like the pigs and cows. It's much simpler there. This is how we need to do it, but with fish there are so many things that everything cannot be covered.
>
> (interview recording, 2017)

This idea of fish and shrimp not fitting into a rule book is interesting, and perhaps had this debate been around beef production rather than shrimp it would have not resulted in actors having such different interpretations of what constitutes sustainability.

In summary, comparisons made by interviewees between seafood with other forms of food production highlighted that the expectations as to what constitutes 'sustainable' are in general greater for seafood. This seemed to carry through to judgements on the social acceptability of actions taken by corporations operating in the seafood space, and opened up avenues for contests to legitimacy.

The mystery of the ocean and marine life
A specific sub-theme to emerge from the empirical material in regards to the uniqueness of the seafood and fishing industry was the unknown, mysterious nature of the ocean and the species within it, causing people to think about the ocean and waterways of the planet (and the fishing activities that take place within them) in a different frame of reference to other environmental issues. This seemed to have implications for the contesting of legitimacy to organizations associated with the industry, due to the fact that any actor in the seafood space had to deal with this perception of specialness, awe and uniqueness of marine life.

A project lead at an international environmental NGO reflected on the unknown of the ocean:

> I think the ocean is still very much unknown and I think that also makes that little group of, ocean, almost animals, and then the ecosystem. It's like easier and more difficult when it's the high seas, it is half of the surface of the planet.
>
> (interview recording, 2019)

It was suggested by another respondent from the same NGO that because of the vast size of the ocean, historically it had been neglected because of the belief that it "can sustain us forever" no matter how it is treated (interview recording, 2017). However recently there has been a significant change and many people have realised that this is not the case, and as such are increasingly aware of the importance of protecting oceans and the species that reside within them:

> People care deeply about the oceans, that's what we see, when we communicate about oceans, about how much people care. And of course, the plastic issue has helped, like getting people even more attention to the oceans, but I think there hasn't been as much political will, I think, and energy going into the ocean system because the ocean has just been that sort of vast thing out there, that people thought can sustain us forever.
>
> (interview recording, 2019)

This respondent then described the strangeness of many of the species that inhabit oceans and serve as a food source for humans:

> It's interesting because it's of course different in different cultures, how people perceive life in the ocean but I think generally, people are amazed by it. Like its size, like mystery, strange things like shrimp.
>
> (interview recording, 2019)

Shrimp was also specifically singled out by owner of a Swedish seafood company as being "some kind of symbol for bad cultivation." (interview recording, 2017).

Due to the world's oceans blurring across artificial boarders created by humans, it was felt that a level of consensus was needed to achieve sustainability that was greater than most other environmental issues – especially in terms of combatting illegal fishing. This seemed to be described in terms alluding to some sort of 'tragedy of the commons' type situation. A respondent from a Swedish Government agency described this as follows:

> There are other countries that have illegal fisheries, but actually getting these countries to take responsibility for ships and citizens involved in the illegal fisheries... Addressing the illegal fisheries and getting some kind of consensus around that is going to be really key.
>
> (interview recording, 2019)

Empirical material suggested that the oceans and inland waterways of planet earth were unique, mysterious and special, and as such any species sourced from them for human consumption were subject to a higher than usual degree of scrutiny. This above-average level of scrutiny seemed to have implications regarding the speed and significance of contests to the legitimacy of organizations deemed to have not fully appreciated this uniqueness.

4.2.3 Personal connection to the fishing and seafood industry

As a final question to close off nearly all of the 37 formal recorded interviews conducted in this study, respondents were asked for their thoughts on the optimism of the future of global fish and shrimp stocks. This theme is dealt with explicitly in Section 4.2.4, but first it is important to consider another sub-theme which arose from this line of questioning around optimism: the notion of a strong personal connection to fishing, seafood and the ocean. Often in answering the optimism question, interview subjects shared personal stories of why they ended up in the fisheries industry, what they studied at university, memories of family holidays as a child or pet fish.

This theme brought to the surface the notion that interpretations and enactments of sustainability occur not only through strategies but also through the individual people who speak for and act on behalf of organizations and their own philosophies and worldviews. This in turn shapes how these organizations relate to other organizations. The differences that exist between people have an impact upon how a definition of sustainability is portrayed, and while formal definitions are emphasised in documents such as annual reports which may govern overall direction, it is ultimately those who work within organizations that must speak the policies and enact them.

A respondent working for an NGO recounted their childhood fishing experiences in Sweden, and how this contrasted with the lack of fish in 2019:

> I used to fish plaice and cod in the Gothenburg Archipelago when I was a kid. There was enough fish for everyone. Now we have, they bottom trawl larger and larger areas and use more and more nets to get less and less fish and the fish we get, we can't hardly eat.
>
> (interview recording, 2019)

Another respondent from a different NGO also spoke of their childhood in the Archipelago, this time in Stockholm, rather than Gothenburg:

> We had boats when I was a kid. I spent much time in the Archipelago, much of the time we had sailboats. So, I grew up spending every summer holiday sailing around the Archipelago. So, my parents, at least my Dad, has a very strong relationship to the ocean.
>
> So, the ocean has always had quite a central part in my family, in terms of how we define what vacation is and what's relaxing and spending time together. I love the interface between science and politics and that's always been something that interests me a lot. So, I'm not a marine biologist, I didn't go to school to dig into the nitty gritty details. But I have a mix of political science and nature studies and for me, that's kind of a mix of understanding enough of being able to understand marine science and understand how the world's natural system works, but couple that with also understanding politics and change.
>
> (interview recording, 2019)

Another respondent shared their experience of spending time in Asia and reflected on how seeing the "craziness of overfishing there" shaped a longer-term interest in fisheries, as well as identifying that their interests and skillset could be best utilized by working for an NGO:

> I did my project in Asia, looking at fisheries there, compared to marine protected areas. I really saw the craziness of overfishing there and just going to the seafood markets where they want everything fresh and you would just see these baby groupers in these bowls that were being sold. So, I really had the hands-on experience of seeing how this huge nation was just exploiting the resources and how the water was just awful and pretty nitrified, and it was in bad state. So, that got me really interested in the fisheries issues and then I just knew what I wanted to do now was to work for an NGO and I want to work with fisheries.
>
> (interview recording, 2019)

Organizations are entities made up of people, and as such it is hardly surprising that interviews indicated that each person brings with them a history and worldview which both shapes and is shaped by the organization for which they work.

4.2.4 Optimism about the future sustainability of the world's oceans

The notion of personal philosophy was also prevalent in the concluding question in interviews that was asked of all respondents regarding their optimism for the future of global fish stocks. Many felt that their entire purpose of being in the industry was to ensure the long-term sustainability of the world's oceans, and that their own interpretation of sustainability and the one that they spoke for on behalf of their organizations was deeply influenced by this passion for this.

All interview subjects were asked to reflect on their personal level of optimism about the long-term sustainability and overall viability of the planet's oceans and waterways.

A respondent from an NGO felt some optimism about the future of the world's oceans and waterways, but was overwhelmed by the enormity of the task at hand:

> I do think that they're sort of signs of hope or that things can change, but then they're way too small and isolated and it doesn't come in a systematic manner like we see clearly that stakeholders are massively failing to manage the high seas.
>
> (interview recording, 2019)

A manager at a major seafood certification scheme described their level of optimism, due to the people in the fishing and seafood sector. They reflected "I am optimistic because I've met so many enthusiastic people who see only opportunities. There's some very amazing people in the industry. (interview recording, 2017)

Another interviewee from an NGO broke down optimism by locations in the world and pointed out the somewhat sobering reality of overfishing the Atlantic, Baltic and Mediterranean oceans and seas:

> I would like to say that I'm optimistic, but I must admit that sometimes it's difficult. Because things are moving slowly, and when it comes to regulation, I mean it takes… It's long term processes, and it will take time. And I think the difficulty now is that there are so many different issues that are interacting.
>
> (interview recording, 2019)

On the other hand, a respondent from a Swedish Government agency pointed to the Baltic Sea as a small success and a sign for optimism going forward:

> There's a lot of unknowns here, I'd say. I think we definitely… I mean there's a lot of work going on and I think a lot has happened in the last 10, 20 years and it's definitely going in the right direction. And if we look at close seas here, like North Sea and also the Baltic, I think there has been quite a lot of improvement, but there's also a lot of work left to do, but I would totally not… I wouldn't paint it totally black… So, I'd say I'm definitely positive and globally, I think we have some major challenges.
>
> (interview recording, 2019)

The rise of China as a major player in global fisheries (and the largest seafood consumer in the world) was also cited by this respondent as being a critical factor shaping the overall future viability of global fish stocks. One respondent put it in the following terms:

> If you don't get China on board, where you know, you can clearly see that a large part of the illegal fisheries is happening in the world, many of them aren't Chinese fishing boats or maybe they're not Chinese but somehow there's some connection to China, and many other… and some other Asian countries.
>
> (interview recording, 2019)

A respondent from an international environmental NGO spoke of how their drive to "go to work every day" was motivated in part by a level of optimism about the future viability of global fish stocks, as well as a belief that they could bring about change:

> Yeah, we have to, otherwise I would probably work for the… no. Of course, I think, I couldn't go to work every day and think, I don't have a chance to change anything. I think it's wonderful, you have to believe in your ability to punch above your weight and I think to find that crack in the system or weak spots that you can make sure that things change.
>
> (interview recording, 2019)

This idea of 'making a difference' was brought up by others, such as during an interview with a supply chain standards manager at a seafood certification scheme, who commented that "Yes, I do believe that what I do makes a difference even if it's only a small difference"(recording, 2017).

Another respondent, – a director at another seafood certification scheme– spoke of how 2019 was somewhat of a "crossing point" with fisheries management, as well as other global environmental challenges such as climate change. The UN SGDs were mentioned as one of the supranational frameworks capable of bringing about a "large change" (interview recording, 2019).

Concerningly, it was marine scientists – arguably the best informed of any of the respondents – who displayed the lowest levels of optimism about the future of the world's oceans. This reflection of one marine scientist is emblematic of several other responses from experts holding PhDs in the field:

> I think it would be really difficult to prevent it from further declining [the state of the world's fisheries]. Like you said before, it's interconnected because a lot of the fish feed in agriculture, for at least some species come from the wild. It needs to be worldwide agreement. Lately, it's not look like anyone can agree on anything in the worldwide level. No, I'm a bit pessimistic, unfortunately.
>
> (interview recording, 2017)

A respondent from a Swedish environmental NGO displayed similar levels of pessimism, alluding to UN FAO data:

> Eighty per cent of the world fish stock are being over fished towards unsustainable levels. It's quite depressing… In a sense, it's quite disgusting but at the same time, I think that over the past couple of years we've seen some improvements.
>
> (interview recording, 2017)

The levels of optimism (or lack thereof) from respondents towards the future viability of the natural ecosystems of the planet's oceans and waterways varied considerably, but in general pointed to an understanding of the severity of the current situation with a cautious level of hopefulness towards a better future.

4.3 Different interpretations of sustainability and use (or disregard) of information and ideology

Thematic analysis of the empirical material – especially interview transcripts – revealed that actors in the industry had significantly different interpretations of what 'sustainability' actually meant. These differences between actors were substantial, and were typically showcased through the decision of each actor to either embrace

or reject various ranking systems, guides, lists, and certification schemes. Directly connected to this was the prominent theme of tensions between how decisions around sustainability were made, relating specifically to the use or disregard of the best available science on shrimp farming and fishing as well as emotion, subjective opinion and ideology. Ultimately, it was these differences in interpretation which led to the contestations to societal acceptance and legitimacy which took place. The word 'sustainable' often even became synonymous with the word 'legitimate'.

Three sub-themes are explored underneath this broader theme. Firstly, how actors differentiated in their interpretation of sustainability. Secondly, tensions between information and ideology and how and why actors operationalized (or disregarded) this to rally for their interpretation of sustainability. Finally, the role of shrimp as a central actor in the contestation of legitimacy.

4.3.1 How actors differentiated in their interpretation of sustainability

Interviews with key individuals in the Swedish shrimp industry triangulated with formal sustainability definitions offered by each actor, as well as the *actual* interpretation that was ultimately practiced by each, showed that between 2008 and 2018 there was significant differences in how actors in the Swedish shrimp industry interpreted sustainability. Respondents speaking on behalf of NGOs had and continue to have what many perceived as a 'hard-line', black and white stance on shrimp, declaring that tropical shrimp could never be produced sustainability, no matter how it was done. One respondent put it in the following terms:

> With shrimp, there is absolutely… As it is, it can never be sustainable, if it is in the intertidal area in the tropics. It can never be sustainable.
>
> (interview recording, 2019)

This statement was broadly in line with what this NGOs actual sustainability interpretation regarding shrimp was.

Other respondents dismissed such interpretations by NGOs as being unreasonable, and simplifying a debate deserving of nuance and detail into one of 'good or bad'. One respondent from a commercial fishing company suggested that much of this was due to NGOs being out of touch with the grassroots reality of shrimp farming and production:

> Sometimes some of those things that coming from those environmental organization is just bullshit… I say to them, "How many times have you been visiting Vietnam yourself?" No times, they said. I myself have been there 25 times … maybe I have more knowledge about what is right and wrong.
>
> (recording, 2017)

Some respondents, such as a supply chain manager at a seafood certification organization, took a more middle-of-the-road type response, suggesting that all in the industry were essentially striving for the same goal even if they didn't realize it:

> I think often they [different actors] do actually realize everyone is trying to achieve the same thing. They just have to represent different interests and the only way how we are going to get it is if all the interests are met sufficiently.
>
> (interview recording, 2017)

An analyst in the fisheries department of a Swedish Government agency reflected on the various tools available to each actor to inform their interpretation of sustainability:

> Yeah, I mean you can see that you have very different tools depending on whether you work in an authority or if you work in an NGO or as a commercial company. And clearly, within the world of authorities it's all about legislation and regulation and also possibly incentives. Of course, we can also work with awareness raising, but if you talk about like hard tools, it's mainly the incentives and the regulations. So that's why I refer a lot to those kind of tools, but of course certifications such as MSC and collaborations. Those are the key tools that we have.
>
> (interview recording, 2019)

The same respondent then described how there is indeed a 'best available science' for shrimp (ICES data for wild caught shrimp) and that any sort of success requires a shared definition to work towards:

> I think that the really key question is in having joint definitions for what sustainability is, and in the fisheries world, at least in this part of the world, the ICES advice is pretty much the bible.
>
> (interview recording, 2019)

In an interview with a director from an NGO, it became apparent that some actors make no secret of the fact that they intend to have their interpretation of

sustainability as the dominant one in the shrimp industry. When asked about who should get to decide what constitutes sustainable, they responded as follows: So, who gets to decide? Well, we would like to get to decide, but usually, it's always a compromise. (interview recording, 2019)

A sourcing manager for a major Swedish retailer offered a more broad, philosophical interpretation, noting that:

> For us, the word sustainability is about what's behind the product and how the product is produced, by whom, under which conditions and where in the world the product is produced.
>
> (interview recording, 2017)

This definition offered is largely in line which the formal definition used by the company for which this individual worked.

While most of these interpretations offered during interviews matched up with the organization's more formal definition, the primary means through which this study ascertained the sustainability interpretation of each actor was by looking at what each actor *actually did* in practice. In reality, the 'interpretation' of sustainability in could be best ascertained by seeing whether an actor produced, sold, endorsed, or consumed a certain species of shrimp, and what rankings, certification schemes, lists, and scientific information they drew upon to validate such a decision. The stance of each of the 12 main actors in relation to certification schemes, environmental NGOs and scientific data as of mid-2019 are summarised in Table 3, over the following pages.

Table 3: The stance of the 12 main Swedish actors in relation to certification schemes, environmental NGOs and scientific data, mid-2019

ACTOR/ STANCE	World Wide Fund for Nature Sweden	Greenpeace Sweden	Swedish Society for Nature Conservation (*Naturskydds-foreningen*)	Aquaculture Stewardship Council	Marine Stewardship Council	KRAV	ICA	Coop	Axfood – Willys and Hemköp	Swedish seafood importer	Australia shrimp co-op	Swedish government agencies and research institutes
Formal publicly conveyed stance on ASC-certified shrimp	Supports (co-founded the ASC in 2010).	Highly sceptical but supports in some cases.	Does not support. However, between SSNC respondents interviewed, stances ranged from passionately against ASC to neutral / slightly supportive.	N/A (is own label).	Supports.	Sceptical but supports.	Complex. ICA previously sold large quantities of ASC-certified tropical shrimp but does not any more (except in a few limited locations across Sweden where ASC-certified *Litopenaeus vannamei* are still available). Bases overall seafood strategy heavily on WWF's guide.	Complex. Coop previously sold ASC-certified tropical shrimp but does not any more. Coop bases its overall seafood strategy heavily on WWF's consumer guide and Greenpeace Sweden list.	Aims to make all decisions based on best available science. Uses the artefacts developed by NGOs, MSC, ASC and KRAV to inform own fisheries policy.	Supports. Has ASC-certified *Litopenaeus vannamei* and *Penaeus monodon* in product range. Prior to SSNC pressure, supplied all of the Swedish retailers with *Litopenaeus vannamei* and *Penaeus monodon*. Presently, only supplies one of the big four retailers.	N/A – Not relevant as only produces wild-caught shrimp.	No clear stance – claims to support best available science rather than specific certification schemes.

ACTOR/ STANCE	World Wide Fund for Nature Sweden	Greenpeace Sweden	Swedish Society for Nature Conservation (*Naturskydds-foreningen*)	Aquaculture Stewardship Council	Marine Stewardship Council	KRAV	ICA	Coop	Axfood – Willys and Hemköp	Swedish seafood importer	Australia shrimp co-op	Swedish government agencies and research institutes
Formal publicly conveyed stance on MSC-certified shrimp	Supports.	Highly sceptical but supports in some cases.	Supports but also critical of certain aspects.	Supports (certification schemes are related to one another – share some processes).	N/A (is own label).	Supports but also critical of certain aspects.	Supports. Extensive range of *Pandalus borealis* products available in stores.	Supports. Extensive range of *Pandalus borealis* products available in stores, including own private labelled product.	Supports. Extensive range of *Pandalus borealis* and *Melicertus latisulcatus* products available in stores, including own private labelled product.	Does not produce any MSC-certified shrimp products.	Supports. Gained MSC certification in 2011 for *Melicertus latisulcatus*, which are sold in both ICA and Willys.	No clear stance – claims to support best available science rather than specific certification schemes.
Formal publicly conveyed stance on other certification schemes (KRAV, *Bra Miljöval*)	Judges each on their own merit, supports KRAV.	Judges each on their own merit, supports KRAV.	Produces *Bra Miljöva*l so supports it; sceptical but somewhat supportive of KRAV.	Judges each on their own merit, supports KRAV.	Judges each on their own merit, supports KRAV.	N/A (is own label).	Supports KRAV (has some KRAV certified *Pandalus borealis* products available in stores).	Supports KRAV (Coop private label *Pandalus borealis* product are KRAV certified).	Supports KRAV (Axfood Garant Eko private label *Pandalus borealis* products are KRAV certified). Both Willys and Hemkop sell these.	Highly sceptical of SSNC in general (producers of BM scheme). No KRAV certification of shrimp, nor clear stance on KRAV.	No stance since Australian based.	No clear stance – claims to support best available science rather than specific certification schemes.
Relationship with the three major environ-mental NGOs in	WWF acknowledges that it plays a different role to Greenpeace.	Greenpeace acknowledges it plays a different role to WWF. Respondents	Critical of Greenpeace and WWF for not taking a strong enough	Co-founded by WWF in 2010, so in general supports.	Works closely with and supports the WWF (who founded the MSC). Engages	Mixed.	Bases own seafood guide heavily off WWF list.	Bases own seafood guide heavily off WWF and	Bases own seafood guide heavily off WWF list.	Highly critical of all three, especially SSNC.	No direct engagement.	Indifferent.

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ACTOR/ STANCE	World Wide Fund for Nature Sweden	Greenpeace Sweden	Swedish Society for Nature Conservation (*Naturskydds-foreningen*)	Aquaculture Stewardship Council	Marine Stewardship Council	KRAV	ICA	Coop	Axfood – Willys and Hemköp	Swedish seafood importer	Australia shrimp co-op	Swedish government agencies and research institutes
Sweden (WWF, Greenpeace, SSNC)	Respondents in interviews reflected that SSNC was perceived as being extreme, black and white.	in interviews reflected that SSNC was perceived as being extreme, black and white.	stance on shrimp.		in robust dialogue with MSC.			Greenpeace list.				
Primary medium through which shrimp sustainability stance is conveyed	Annual WWF Sweden Consumer Fish Guide. Traffic light system of red, orange and green is used to communicate to consumers which products to avoid, re-consider and buy (respectively).	Globally, Greenpeace produces the 'Greenpeace International Seafood Red list'. Regional Nordic office of Greenpeace can slightly alter this list to suit specific countries.	Bra Miljöval certification of food retail stores (which cannot take place if any tropical shrimp are sold); campaigns such as Anti-Scampi; reports such as the 'Murky Waters'(critical of farmed shrimp).	Certifying fisheries for ASC-certification; appearance of ASC label on shrimp packaging. Done through rigorous process using an independent certifier which assesses farm against Fisheries Standard.	Certifying fisheries for MSC-certification; appearance of label on product. Done through rigorous process using an independent which assesses fishery against the Fisheries Standard.	KRAV label and underlying board which draws on the opinion of experts to make judgements.	Seafood policy conveyed in annual report, sustainability report, and website; decision to sell or not sell a certain variety of shrimp.	Seafood policy conveyed in annual report, sustainab-ility report, and website; decision to sell or not sell a certain variety of shrimp.	Seafood policy conveyed in annual report, sustaina-bility report, and website; decision to sell or not sell a certain variety of shrimp.	Sustainability information on website; decision to sell or not sell a certain variety of shrimp, ASC certification.	Sustainability policy covered in annual report, sustainab-ility report, decision to catch or not catch certain variety of shrimp, MSC.	
Use of scientific data pertaining to shrimp capture and farming (primarily ICES and UN FAO)	According to the WWF Sweden it bases its decisions around shrimp on the best available science and has extensive procedures to ensure this happens.	According to Greenpeace Sweden it bases its decisions around shrimp on the best available science and has extensive procedures to ensure this happens.	According to SSNC it bases its decisions around shrimp on the best available science and has extensive procedures to ensure this happens. Some respondents from other	Comprehensive scientific process in place to assess sustainability of fishery and make nuanced judgements on how many shrimp can be caught, what species and using what	Comprehensive scientific process in place to assess sustainability of aquaculture operation and make nuanced judgements on the social and environmental impacts of shrimp	Comprehensive scientific process in place to assess sustainability of fishery, using independent experts on a fish advisory board. Draws on ICES data.	Aims to make all decisions based on best available science. Uses the artefacts developed by NGOs, MSC, ASC and KRAV to inform own	Aims to make all decisions based on best available science. Uses the artefacts developed by NGOs, MSC, ASC and KRAV	Aims to make all decisions based on best available science. Uses the artefacts developed by NGOs, MSC, ASC and KRAV	Aims to act in accordance with best available science while being realistic about the time needed to bring	Extensive process in place (including yearly engagement with Australian Government) to ensure best practice grounded in science. Also	Strongly supports using best available science for all decision making, including ICES and UN FAO.

ACTOR/ STANCE	World Wide Fund for Nature Sweden	Greenpeace Sweden	Swedish Society for Nature Conservation (*Naturskydds-foreningen*)	Aquaculture Stewardship Council	Marine Stewardship Council	KRAV	ICA	Coop	Axfood – Willys and Hemköp	Swedish seafood importer	Australia shrimp co-op	Swedish government agencies and research institutes
	According to the WWF (2019), "These methodologies are risk based and are regularly… relevant and scientifically robust" (WWF Sustainable Seafood Guides Methodology, 2017, p. 1).	According to Greenpeace International (2019), "Defining which fisheries should be on a red list is a complex task submitted through a methodology with very specific criteria."	organizations claimed during interviews that this was not the case.	method of capture. Draws on ICES data.	farming. Draws on best practice guidelines.		fisheries policy.	to inform own fisheries policy.	to inform own fisheries policy.	about change. Also places high trust in ASC certification process	places high trust in MSC certification process.	

4.3.2 Scientific data and their ideological interpretation: how and why actors operationalized (or disregarded) information and/or emotion

A highly recurrent theme that arose from the data was that of significant differences in how scientific data pertaining to the fishing and farming of shrimp was interpreted and operationalized by each actor. Despite there being few disagreements regarding opinions on the quality and correctness of available scientific information (namely, ICES stock data for wild caught shrimp, and various UN FAO sustainability guidelines for farmed shrimp[3]) and also stating that they made decisions based on the best-available science (as shown in Table 3) there were major differences in how each actor viewed what constituted 'sustainability' in terms of the science.

Some actors, such as the SSNC, believed that tropical shrimp farming could never be sustainable, no matter how it was done or what certification schemes (such as ASC) were in place. Such a perspective was perceived by several actors – especially Swedish seafood businesses – as being an irrational, emotive view of shrimp farming which was based on ideology rather than best available science. Similar happenings occurred in wild-caught shrimp. For example, a large international NGO with a presence in Sweden made an interpretation of ICES stock data that other actors perceived as overly conservative and unscientific. This interpretation was then used as grounds for 'red listing' *Pandalus borealis*, which stunned many fishing businesses in Sweden. The empirical material revealed some instances where science was used as a mechanism for supporting and furthering the interests of an actor, rather than being used to make neutral, impartial and objective decisions about social and environmental matters. This was done by either fully-disregarding or cherry picking best-available science to support the objectives of the actor. This theme of tensions over what constitutes science and what constitutes emotive ideology, is explored in the following pages.

The debate around sustainability tended to break down into one over emotion, ideology and tradition versus science and evidence. In the majority of the interviews with producers and sellers of shrimp, respondents felt that the NGOs made decisions based on emotional reasons and ignored the facts, and used campaigning methods and language stronger than what could be justified if a neutral standpoint on the issue of shrimp was to be taken. The description by SSNC website of tropical shrimp as being "one of the world's worst environmental

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[3] UN FAO guidelines on sustainable shrimp farming include the *International Principles for Responsible Shrimp Farming*, *Best Practices in Shrimp Aquaculture* and other documents.

hazards" was mentioned by the owner of a Swedish seafood as being emblematic of the black-and-white, reductionist stance on the topic taken by NGOs. The same respondent also argued that SSNC were fighting tropical shrimp on a historical basis, and even when presented with evidence that contradicted their claims, they would double-down rather than concede that they were incorrect so as to save face, arguing that "It seems that they are just fighting this question [about farmed shrimp sustainability] for historical reasons. They don't want to drop it." (interview recording, 2017)

A Marine scientist interviewed during the study, amongst others, suggested that the emotional-based campaigning done by NGOs was done partly as a mechanism of self-preservation and profiling:

> I don't think everything that they [environmental NGOs] do is purely science-based. They have some very strong campaigns and they like to profile themselves. They have this anti-scampi campaign- and that doesn't distinguish between-- There are so many ways of farming shrimp. There are terrible ways. There are much better ways, really extensive ways. They don't support ASC because they don't think it's rigorous enough and also the other certifications. Their conclusion is basically, you shouldn't eat tropical shrimp at all. That's the simple conclusion. That is a decision or recommendation that certification doesn't do. It doesn't tell you what to eat or what you shouldn't eat ... It's all about maximum sustainable yield, impacts within ecological limits, evidence based.
> (interview recording, 2017)

Another respondent, a C-suite executive of a major international seafood certification scheme, criticized the ambiguity in many of the 'rating systems' created by some of the NGOs, suggesting that many reduce complex phenomena into over simplistic categories which don't do justice to the nuance of the topics:

> A student could simply release some year-old data, decide whether fish is green, yellow or red producer card, try and influence consumer behaviour, but there's no traceability, there's no action plan to improve, there's no accountability.
> (interview recording, 2017)

An interview subject working for an NGO claimed that their NGO didn't have any agenda, stating that "Because we don't have a specific interest – our interest is in nature and people." (interview recording, 2019)

On the other hand, the owner of a Swedish seafood business believed that many Swedish NGOs did in fact have specific interest; namely, to maintain and grow their membership base and financial resources: They (SSNC) have used this question (of shrimp sustainability) as one of the biggest tools to survive, by getting new young people to their organizations". (interview recording, 2017)

In terms of making sense of the available science on shrimp stocks, farming and capture levels and other measures of sustainability associated with shrimp production, while the marine scientists interviewed in this study suggested that there were cases where accurate judgements could not be made due to a lack of information, on the whole the majority of marine scientists specializing in shrimp tended to agree regarding what constituted sustainability. One of the marine scientists, holding a doctoral degree specifically in shrimp and fish stock forecasting, put it as follows:

> No, I wouldn't say that we disagree (with defining what is sustainable and what isn't). Normally the problem is that either there are sufficient facts, or there are not sufficient facts to support. If there are sufficient facts, then that is normally evident. Whether this is good or it's bad. There is, of course, weighing of different things. I haven't experienced that we actually had different opinions in the end. Because normally someone is responsible for presenting a case, and then it's discussed. Maybe some additional knowledge someone has is taken in. Normally, then, everyone accepts it. I haven't experienced that we have totally different views.
>
> (interview recording, 2017)

This would suggest that the lack of agreement between actors in the industry was not due to there being high levels of discrepancy and uncertainty in the science, as might be the case with other environmental issues. It became apparent that all of the NGOs had marine scientists working for them, many of whom holding PhDs specifically in topics relating to fisheries and forecasting, suggesting that it was not an inability to interpret data that influenced stances as to what constituted sustainability. The fact that the science is somewhat 'settled' and the fact that there was not an inability of actors to be able to interpret the science, suggested that influence dynamics between actors – rather than availability of and ability to interpret good quality data —was the driving force behind the widely different conclusions reached on sustainability by the different actors within the shrimp industry. These dynamics were fuelled by some actors taking an ideological, emotional or historical stance on shrimp in order to use the shrimp debate as a mechanism to achieve other aims. A C-suite executive

of a large seafood certification scheme, who was interviewed in this study, suggested that while the science may be settled in many cases, emotion around bycatch such as dolphins could often overpower science. This emotion was propagated by NGOs and in many cases supported by the public. One customer interviewed while purchasing seafood in Gothenburg spoke of emotive imaging regarding seafood sometimes being used as a "guilt trip" (author's notes, 2017). A seafood manager alluded to the idea of their supermarket chain being "shamed" into complying with the wishes of the NGOs, even though they believed that their own interpretation of the shrimp debate was already scientific (interview recording, 2017).

So, while it may have been the case that a producer or seller was legally and ethically (in their mind) following the best available science involved in the value chain of shrimp production, this licence to operate could still be contested if another actor could successfully generate a swell of emotion and momentum.

A C-suite executive of an international seafood certification scheme described this interplay between science and emotion as follows:

> Am not passing a judgement one way or the other, but from a science perspective, if the dolphin population is healthy and if that by-catch is not detrimentally affecting their reproductive health and recovery of that dolphin species, it could probably meet our standard.
>
> (interview recording, 2017)

This quote is interesting because it captures the idea that following the best available scientific advice on any given environmental issue does not mean perfection; rather it means that the action is sustainable because it allows the entity or ecosystem capacity to recover, even if something is harmed or killed in the process.

A respondent at an international NGO reflected on some of the tensions between scientific data and emotion and ideology when making decisions around seafood sustainability, including giving weight to certain issues over others when weighing up information:

> I mean if you think that animal welfare is the most important issue, of course you will react to that information. We are a nature conservation organization, so we're focusing on the stock and the biology. So, I mean the seal issue is a great example now, where some people get really upset when you talk about protective hunting.

But otherwise I think just basing your messaging around best available science is very important, and I mean science is like the best thing we've got.

And then I mean our messaging has always been the same; it's like we need to look at the science and follow the scientific advice. And if we should diverge from that path and say something completely different we would lose our trustworthiness.

So, I think like basing your messaging on science is definitely important. But that said, I mean science also has its limitations. So, I think I mean it's tricky, I definitely think where there is available science, you should definitely use that and listen to that, and take that in. But you should also be open to look at other factors, because I mean science isn't complete, there are knowledge gaps… And I mean that's where the positions and the arguments come in, and the feelings. Because if we had perfect science we wouldn't really have an issue. But the problem is that we have limited knowledge but we still need to act. And how do we do that, because we can't wait until we have all of the information because that would take forever.

(interview recording, 2019)

There were cases of black-and-white, absolutist, all-or-nothing mentality shown by some actors. When asked 'Do you think a standard could ever be made that could assure the sustainability of farmed shrimp?', a respondent from a Swedish environmental NGO replied with "It can't be done, no." (interview recording, 2019)

A director of certification schemes at a Swedish NGO spoke about how the formulation of a sustainability interpretation is inevitably a political one to some degree:

It's always a political decision. Usually we would have a sort of agreement on, for instance, a hierarchy of issues in relation to each other. Where you draw the line is a political decision and that will always be a political decision.

(interview recording, 2019)

A similar sentiment was echoed by a project lead at an international environmental NGO, who reflected: "Sadly it's definitely not science…. it's like science and politics." (interview recording, 2019).

A fisheries specialist at a different international environmental NGO emphasized that their sustainability interpretation was based only on independent advice that was scientifically rigorous:

> It's really important that our advice is correct, and that's why we are using researchers to do these assessments for us. So, it should be an independent… And all of the information comes from scientific journals. So, I mean we have… It should either be documents and reports from government agencies – that they have published – or scientific journals. Those are the only types of report and documentation that we use in our assessments.
>
> <div align="right">(interview recording, 2019)</div>

Interviewees noted that discussions with other actors in the industry were often respectful, but that the levels of compromise, cooperation and strive for 'win-win' that are often flaunted in the sustainability and stakeholder literature were not representative of what actually happens in practice. One respondent described this as "it doesn't always work, sometimes opinions are just too opposite" (interview recording, 2017).

4.3.3 Shrimp as a central actor and key stakeholder

The four species of shrimp around which all debate was based were found to be a central actor (albeit unknowingly) and prominent participant in legitimacy contests in their own right, both affecting and being affected by the debate and subsequent decisions. One respondent noted how shrimp had become emblematic of the broader sustainability debate, noting that "the shrimp has been in Sweden some kind of symbol for bad cultivation (interview recording, 2017). A Stakeholder manager at international wild-caught seafood certification scheme reflected that "I would say the fishes and shrimp are also stakeholders for me." (interview recording, 2017)

While shrimp were acknowledge by many to be a genuine actor in the process, they were often ranked lowly in terms of emotional appeal and concern for their welfare, due partly to their small size and unusual appearance.

A respondent from an international NGO suggested that creating public awareness about small crustaceans such as shrimp and krill required explaining it in a way that the general public would find more relatable, such as showing the relationship between crustacean and other larger animals, which have more 'emotional' appeal:

It's like when you talk about krill, people wouldn't necessarily relate to krill, but if you talk about the food for whales, then people go, "Huh." I think it's the same on the Savannah. We would care way more about a giraffe and an elephant than a wild dog. It's just something that we have and I think also it's of course up to us to use that to our advantage. Like when we talk about krill, if we want to make people concerned about krill and the future of it, and krill management for example, then if you talk about the food for penguins and whales, you get more people interested. And then of course you have to make sure that you then take them through the whole, why certain things are important and talk about the ecosystem.

(interview recording, 2019)

Another respondent, from an international seafood certification scheme, noted that there had been increasing pressure to develop some sort of animal welfare standard for the shrimp themselves:

Something that people have criticized as well, that we didn't have animal welfare standards. That's something in the pipeline and we have one full-time person who's only working on the animal welfare. I don't know when it's going to be launched yet, but it's in the pipeline and this improvement programme I also talked about, just to harness the more small-scale farmers and the lower performers.

(interview recording, 2019)

A theme raised by several respondents was that because shrimp were indeed legitimate actors, they, like other marine species, needed consideration in regards to matters of animal welfare. Commercial seafood organizations were seldom concerned with the welfare of shrimp, and more concerned with quality, while several marine scientists spoke of the difficulties in measuring the welfare of shrimp.

A Swedish seafood company owner who imports large quantities of shrimp from farms in Asia said that the wellbeing of shrimp was a minimal priority, noting that as humans we put "different valuations"(interview recording, 2017) to different animals, and shrimp are of low concern to people compared to horses, cows, and pigs for instance. The most important factor in killing shrimp humanely, according to the respondent, is maintaining their quality: "They put it [the shrimp] in ice water, of course it's to protect the quality. It's not because of animal welfare or anything like that". (interview recording, 2017)

However, the respondent reflected that there are still concerns about maintaining a 'good' image of treating shrimp well and that negative photos or videos could harm the reputation of the company:

> I was [at a shrimp farm] and they [the employees] took photos holding up the live shrimps by the tentacles. Of course, when someone saw that picture I thought it was a nice-looking picture. They say, "Don't put that on the internet." Because it's still a live shrimp that someone will have the feeling that they are [being harmed].
>
> (interview recording, 2017)

The above statement is interesting as it suggests that any sort of dealing with live animals carries with it a higher level of potential for reputational harm when compared to other materials used in the production of goods and services. This potential for reputational harm may be a reason why the shrimp debate could be so effectively leveraged into successful challenges against the societal acceptability of the actions of particular organizations.

One of the marine scientists interviewed noted that animal welfare can have implications for product quality, citing the case of salmon:

> Also, from the aquaculture literature, there's several papers showing that with salmon, more intense stress during the time up until death, that has effects on the colour of the meat… Also, things like storage time, shelf-life, once you get them out in the storage, so it's actually decreasing the time before they go bad with these.
>
> (interview recording, 2017)

In response to the question "How do you measure the welfare of the fish and shrimp", the same respondent noted:

> Well, that's one of the reasons why it is so complicated. But really, just looking at mortality, if you use traps or gill nets, and like how sensitive they are at each step. If we could get past those means, and then start discussing how much pain is with the hook in the lip. In my world, we're so far from that yet, because there's all these fishes suffocating in the boat and stressed to death in gill nets.
>
> (interview recording, 2017)

Interpretations of what constitutes sustainability in regards to shrimp capture levels, methods and species types was shown to be influenced by recognition by some actors

as to the fact that shrimp are indeed living creatures. However, it became apparent in interview that due to the subjective ways that people categorize and place value on animals, shrimp were ranked lowly in terms of their appeal beyond simply being a food item. Shrimp were viewed by many actors as more of a commodity or crop as opposed to an animal. Nonetheless, the recognition of shrimp as living creatures and having intrinsic value both for themselves and in their broader ecosystem context seemed to play a part in framing the overall tone of the debate, which arguably would never have reached such a level of ferocity had it been about a topic not as closely related to the natural world.

4.4. The operationalization of sustainability in practice

The third major theme from the data explored in the preceding pages showcased the fact that there were major differences in how sustainability was perceived by actors in the Swedish shrimp industry. The fourth and final major theme to emerge from the data is that of actor descriptions of how these interpretations of sustainability were actually *operationalized* in practice, and the connotations of these operationalizations for legitimacy contestation. Five sub-themes are explored in Sections 4.4.1 to 4.4.5: Firstly, the creation and use of guides, lists, rankings and certification schemes. Secondly, the way in which some actors engaged in hedging, absolving responsibility and surrendering control by outsourcing the practice of their own sustainability strategy to third parties. Thirdly, consideration of dialogue, roundtables and day-to-day actor engagement. Fourthly, the practice of sustainability at the point of production: sustainability on board shrimp trawling boats and at shrimp farms. Finally, the practice of sustainability at the point of sale: consumer attitudes towards and knowledge of shrimp sustainability.

4.4.1 The creation and use of artefacts and outsourcing of sustainability

The data revealed that by far the most common way for each actor to demonstrate their day-to-day practice of a sustainability interpretation was through the use of various seafood artefacts such as lists, guides, rankings and certification schemes. Some actors, such as certification organizations and NGOs, created these artefacts. Other actors, such as seafood business and retailers, drew heavily on these artefacts to operationalize their sustainability interpretation and to illustrate a practical manifestation of their concession to NGO demands. This was done by seeking formal certification from other actors (primarily ASC, MSC and KRAV) and/or by either

partially or fully basing their own lists, guides and rankings on those artefacts produced by the NGOs.

Data suggested that sustainability artefacts such as lists and guides came into existence based significantly on the environmental protection agenda of the NGOs producing them, and served as playing a major role in shaping relations between actors in the shrimp industry by indirectly forcing them to comply with the lists. Complying to the artefacts became essential to maintain societal acceptability. Not complying to the artefacts was grounds for having this acceptability revoked, and in some cases having the overall legitimacy of the business contested (as happened to several seafood companies).

A fisheries specialist at an international environmental NGO described during an interview how certification schemes, lists and guides were the "main tool that companies are using today to work with sustainability" (interview recording, 2019).

In a similar manner, a director at a Swedish environmental NGO described how their organization "endorses the MSC, we relate to the WWF list of fish in our criteria" (interview recording, 2019).

The WWF Sweden's approach to enacting its interpretation of sustainability takes place through the publication of an annual *Consumer Fish Guide* in Sweden, which ranks shrimp and fish species according to the WWF's internal sustainability methodology and uses a consumer-friendly traffic light colour system in the guide to portray the rankings. A respondent spoke of the significant time and effort it has taken to get their seafood guide to its current status.

> The WWF seafood guide, the national Swedish one, has been existing for quite a long time. I think the first one was launched in 2001. So, it's taken a while to get it to the sort of recognition it is at the moment. And just to explain that we also have seafood guides in the other countries; quite a lot across Europe but also around the Baltic region, as well as Norway. But it's true that Sweden has been quite successful. The WWF Sweden has been quite successful to really get this to be a guide for the retailers and producers to follow. And the question of why, I think it is because it's been a guide that we've used for a very long time. I have to say, from the beginning, we got a lot of pushback, a lot of criticism, a lot of tough dialogues with the fishing sector. And I think also because we work on both ends, so we also work with the markets and the producers

as well as the fishery sector. Furthermore, we (in Sweden) rely on 80% of our seafood from abroad. So, this list needs to make judgements of places far away.

<div align="right">(interview recording, 2019)</div>

The mention by the respondent of how "we work on both ends" was a finding which was unique for the NGOs Greenpeace and the WWF, who seemed to convey a more 'balanced' understanding of business necessities compared to the SSNC, which was portrayed by several respondents (all fishing and seafood companies) to be primarily concerned with pushing against business rather than trying to work with business. However, the WWF like most other actors made no secret of the fact that they believed that their stance on sustainability should become the dominant one in the Swedish shrimp industry. The way that they sought to negotiate sustainability in practice was publishing the list and using it to push and influence the retailers and the producers and by doing so also indirectly put "pressure on the fisherman to change their habits and look to alternatives" (interview recording, 2019).

Managers interviewed from the four largest Swedish grocery retail outlets including ICA, Coop and Axfood (the parent company of Willys and Hemköp) reflected on the degree to which NGO-created lists influenced their practices and decisions in regards to seafood. One sustainability manager described the operationalization of their shrimp and fish sustainability strategy as follows:

> Basically, for us in Sweden, we have once a year we do a new update of fish list which is very similar to the one that WWF produces. If we say as a company that we don't sell these products, then no one should sell it from our 674 stores...Our fish list is like the law.

<div align="right">(interview recording, 2017)</div>

Religious metaphors were used by some retailers to describe the esteem to which they held NGO lists in, with the sustainably coordinator of one of the big four retailers in Sweden described using the list as "a bible" for the practice of their own seafood sustainability strategy (interview recording, 2017).

This theme highlighted the fact that a recent trend in the Swedish shrimp industry (and more generally in the fisheries sector globally) was the usage of artefacts as the primary means through which organizations that practiced sustainability certify sustainability. And also, perhaps the primary means through which NGOs ascertain the SLO of firms. Beyond the organizations that actually designed schemes, actor

knowledge about how they operate and what they mean was surprisingly limited, including amongst the seafood managers from retailers who so adamantly supported their organizations adopting such schemes. However, most actors knew that eco-labels in some way represented a more responsible environmental choice, and thus were happy to engage with them due to the reputational benefits for doing so, and the mitigation of risk (damage to brand image due to NGO pressure). This led to an unusual phenomena: the outsourcing of sustainability strategy and practice to third parties.

Sustainability outsourcing and hedging

Thematic analysis of empirical material brought to light a specific phenomenon in relation to the question of how sustainability strategy was formulated and executed in practice: that many actors in the Swedish seafood industry (primarily producers and distributors – that is, seafood companies and retailers) would essentially outsource the formulation of their own sustainability strategies to third-parties; namely, environmental NGOs, and certification schemes. This was done by 'hedging' their own strategy on the guides, lists, rating schemes and certification labels produced by environmental NGOs, and certification and eco-labelling organizations (such as the MSC, ASC and KRAV). It seemed that primary producers and distributors partook in this outsourcing strategy as a means of protecting their own interests: namely, in terms of minimizing future risks of NGO campaigns and associated reputational and financial costs, and minimizing the time, effort and financial costs needed to seek out sustainability data and make decisions for themselves.

Numerous interviewees spoke of how they were acutely aware of the fact that many businesses in Sweden were using their sustainability guides to not only inform their own sustainability strategy, but in many cases copying it word for word and in essence inferring that 'our sustainability strategy for seafood is whatever the NGOs tells us it is'. One respondent referred to this as the "outsourcing of sustainability" (interview recording, 2019).

The hedging of an actor's sustainability strategy on that of another actor was seen as a way of keeping the peace. One respondent described it as follows:

> We're not always in agreement with WWF, but it would be a waste of time to try and launch your own list in parallel. Sometimes acceptance is best, and then try to work with them to improve it… But we will never agree with them on ASC.
>
> (interview recording, 2019)

Supermarkets especially seemed eager to concede to the NGOs and conform to their wishes in order to put an end to the campaigning and negative media coverage. A project lead at an international environmental NGO described how "Some supermarkets just panic and just go, 'Tell me what to do. Tell me who I should buy from.'" (interview recording, 2019)

Some NGOs even pushed back against the Swedish supermarkets' concessionary tone, noting that they had become overly placid and given over too much authority to NGOs. A respondent from one such NGO was aware of how primary distributors had essentially outsourced their sustainability strategy and practice to NGOs, but was critical of it in the sense that it absolved them of responsibility and placed the onus on the NGO rather than them:

> I've said to many supermarkets, "We're not here to tell you what to…" Like, "You have to make sure that you have systems in place. When people come into your supermarket, that they're not buying anything that is sort of tainted with, like slavery, like tuna, human rights abuse, using the tuna cans or chemicals in your kitchen sprays that are bad." It's like, "It's your job. It's not my job to walk around with 15 guys and a scanner and check your stuff"
>
> So, guys, I think, and all of that kind of stuff and these lists, people go, "Oh look, they're super effective," and I was like, "Are they? Where's the evidence, more than like a media peak?" Yeah and they also receive massive criticism for some of the work that they do with some of their lists and for the staff. So, it's like I wouldn't… That's the WWF approach and of course they're different from us, but I think also you create financial ties, because, of course, that also comes with a financial transaction.
>
> (interview recording, 2019)

Interestingly, a respondent working for a large seafood certification scheme reflected that during the early days of the establishment of the scheme, it was important to communicate existing links to NGOs in order to establish credibility:

> I remember when I had to write the emails to say, "Hello, I'm from the [international seafood certification scheme], we were set up by the WWF." And I always used to mention it, just because otherwise people would think, "Who is this person? What's this organization? Never heard about it!" As you would, you know. So, I used to stress the dialogues and the links to the WWF for example. So, it's really changed.
>
> (interview recording, 2019)

A critique of outsourcing sustainability to a third party is that it sometimes means that a company will jump ship and fickly change suppliers, rather than seek to work with the supplier to fix the issue which the third party identified. A respondent international environmental NGO described how long-term partnerships where large businesses would work with their supplier on a long-term basis to fix their problems rather than abandon them were often more meaningful and beneficial than simply going along with the lists and rankings produced by NGOs:

> So, McDonald's, they've worked with the same fish supplier for like, I don't know, 20 years, with the same salad suppliers, the same… so they have a very small set of suppliers, but they work with them on improvement programmes and I think that's actually a really nice thing to do. So, they're not just sort of jumping from one thing to the other because the environmentalists are screaming, because the only way of changing over time is to have businesses that are willing to invest in overtime and use their powers.
>
> I'm certainly not the greatest fan of McDonald's, but I think they understand their size, they understand their influence and they do these long-term partnerships. And I would like to see more of this, because the thing that really annoys me is like when these rankings come some people go, "I'm going to stop tomorrow." That goes a bit back to the McDonald's situation. Like, it would have been interesting if Coop or ICA or Hemköp had decided to go like, "No, no. We're going to have a small section of it, we're not going to sell lots of it, but we believe that this can be and we are willing to invest to work with these people." But they all chose the easiest option out and then of course the problem is when you then come in with like, "Oh but you can eat it if it's certified." I think we know that it's only the big players that can afford to certify, then you like squeeze the small-scale guys even more.
>
> (interview recording, 2019)

When asked about the pressure of having retailers in Sweden hedge their seafood sustainability strategy almost entirely on the lists produced by NGOs, a respondent from an NGO noted that this meant there was increasing pressure on their organizations to ensure that the advice was accurate and based on science:

> I mean it's definitely a pressure, and we have a huge responsibility of course to make sure that our advice is correct. And I mean I think it's important as well to say that we're not defining what's sustainable and what traffic light we should give a specific fishery; we are using experts that have experience, and that are educated fisheries biologists, to do these assessments for us.
>
> (interview recording, 2019)

This partial or full absolving of responsibility seemed to be a trend that was becoming increasingly common in the seafood industry within Sweden, and carried with it significant connotations in terms of establishing legitimacy.

4.4.2 Dialogue, roundtables and day-to-day actor engagement

Beyond artefacts schemes to inform sustainability practice and change that of others, actors also practiced sustainability in other ways. These included planned dialogues and multi-stakeholder roundtables, routine day-to-day engagement, and informal discussions, which often came about due to the small size of the sector in Sweden meaning that individuals over time came to know each other on a more personal level. It was also found that individuals would also from time to time swap roles within the industry, such as working for a fishing company and later in their career for an NGO, and that this would carry implications regarding how the individual viewed sustainability. Furthermore, it was found that specific individuals within organizations could have a disproportionally large impact over the formulation and execution of sustainability strategy.

One respondent, a fisheries specialist at an international environmental NGO, stressed just how important dialogue with other actors in the seafood industry was:

> Our dialogue with the industry is super important. And I mean we of course want them to continue to use our guide, and if they feel that we're not updating and we're not… We're only talking about the negatives all the time, and when there is a positive change we're not changing our assessments, it doesn't look good. And we all have the same purpose and are striving towards the same goal, and that's sustainability. And I think just having a strong collaboration with the industry, and having their trust and feeling that our information is reliable, that's super important.
>
> (interview recording, 2019)

Another respondent, from a different NGO, described a similar style of relationship:

> For instance, we're working very closely with Axfood around seafood, and we're supporting them in terms of their goal to have only seafood on green light. So, there we have a specific formal co-operation, so we're working very closely with them… all the big food producers and retailers in Sweden, we have a network with them. And that of course focuses on a range of different sustainability topics. So, it's not only covering seafood, but it's also meat and vegetables and all types of issues that we integrate and discuss with them. So, I mean and they meet once in a while, I think

around four times per year – it's colleagues of mine who are facilitating this dialogue, with the companies. So, we also have that. And from time to time they are discussing seafood, and they want to have input from me as a seafood expert, to that discussion.

<div align="right">(interview recording, 2017)</div>

The framing of this relationship as constructive and being based around its dialogue is interesting. Dialogue by definition suggests two-way, consultative discussion. Such a framing of the communication style is in direct opposition to how much of this relationship was perceived by supermarkets and fishing companies, who viewed the NGO mode of communicating as less consultative and more commanding, with one supermarket manager describing how the NGOs "… more or less they just forced us to take away the shrimp" (interview recording, 2017).

Respondents from NGOs also spoke of more ad-hoc, day-to-day consultation with actors who had queries regarding judgement calls that had been made on certain fish and shrimp stocks. One respondent described this as follows:

And then of course I mean I get daily emails and calls about specific assessments; someone wants to know about pike perch, from Swedish lakes, or usually it's about understanding why a specific species is on a specific light. Because we don't have that information in the guide, because it would be… It would be too much information… But I still get like phone calls and emails where people want to know, what are the main issues here? And I think that's definitely something we're welcoming. Because when companies are calling me, and being like, "Hey, we're talking to our supplier now, and we want to understand why you think this is not sustainable…" And I can give them support in that dialogue, and hopefully get their suppliers to improve, then that's terrific; that's how we want these things to work.

<div align="right">(interview recording, 2019)</div>

A supply chain manager from a major seafood certification scheme reflected on how the current popularity of the term 'stakeholder' and forming stakeholder groups and committees in the industry has led to confusion and oversaturation, noting that within their organization there is often misunderstanding as to the difference between what the "Stakeholder Advisory Group" and the "Stakeholder Council" do (interview recording, 2017). This sentiment was furthered by another respondent from the same organization:

On the battle of wave of, "Let's get more dialogue. Let's also take stakeholder participation into the fisheries policy world." Those advisory councils will create in to feed in to that process. Okay, checkbox. We have stakeholder participation now. There was a lot of work to do to manage expectations. What are they really supposed to do? I come here with my recommendation, but are anybody listening? How should that recommendation look to be useful for policy-makers?

(interview recording, 2017)

Such a sentiment was also echoed by one respondent from an NGO, who argued that sustainability roundtable discussions and stakeholder dialogues were nothing more than façades of democracy, and that unpopular opinions were in reality not taken into consideration. A respondent described their experience at an industry-led stakeholder dialogue on shrimp as follows:

It's called a dialogue – Shrimp Aquaculture Dialogue. It was all from the beginning, it was all the industry and WWF, nothing else. It was in lush, you know, very nice, big hotels – very expensive…. And if you wanted to enter, you had to be able to say that you believed in certification. Yes. You cannot come in there, you cannot go in there if you do not say you believe in certification. And we didn't believe in certification, so we could not participate in the dialogue. So, they had put a name for this group – it was called the critical outsiders. You know, to show that we're outside, you know. And we gave very detailed criticisms, to each criteria, to everything, you know. And the only thing that the consequence of this, the result of this was just that they adapted their marketing.

(interview recording, 2019)

A senior analyst in the fisheries department of a Swedish Government agency described some of the ways that the government engages in fisheries sustainability dialogue with actors, both recreational and commercial fishers:

So, for each one of these areas of Sweden, we have regular meetings with these parties and we discuss the latest advice, so there's constant fisheries monitoring going on. And based on that, the scientists then present the advice for the fish stocks and there's a discussion of trying to make a priority of which regulatory measures might be required and which ones to prioritize. Because we don't have any endless resources so in some cases, it might take some time before you actually can put a regulation in place, even though you see the need for it.

(interview recording, 2019)

One interesting point raised by a respondent was that of not giving one particular actor special treatment, so as to minimize any perceptions or actual occurrences of corruption or backroom dealings. Given that this person worked for an organization owned by a state government, this was of perhaps of more concern than to other organizations which are privately owned. A practical manner for getting around this, according to the respondent, was to only see everyone together:

> You should try only to meet them in in meetings, where all different companies are present. We don't negotiate with only one company or with only one interest group because then, if we would have only one on one, then they would have much more possibilities to lobby on us.
>
> (interview recording, 2017)

Sometimes, dialogue between actors was made challenging due to 'language differences' (both in terms of actual languages, but also in terms of vocabulary, metaphors and terminology). A stakeholder manager at an international seafood certification scheme described how "They [fishers] know their own world but they don't know the policy world and then you serve them graphs and things and... it's a big learning curve for them." (interview recording, 2017). This of course carried implications regarding how sustainability was *actually* practiced at the point of production.

4.4.3 The practice of sustainability at the point of production: sustainability on board shrimp trawling boats and at shrimp farms

While many of the respondents had strong beliefs about what should and shouldn't happen in regards to environmental issues associated with shrimp capture and farming, only several respondents had actual first-hand experience from being on a shrimp trawling boat or visiting a shrimp farm. This is not in any way to say that their opinions are less valid. We know in academia for instance that someone can be a world-leading expert on Egyptology without having ever been to Egypt and seen the Giza Pyramids with their own eyes. However, some might raise questions as to a possible gap between theoretical understanding and sensory experience with the phenomena in question.

The respondents interviewed who had actually spent time involved in the grassroots practice of sustainability at the point of production of shrimp described a number of interesting things. Some of these things showed congruency between high-level

sustainability policies. Others showed a significant gap between what was said to happen and what *actually* did happen.

A marine scientist who had spent extensive time on shrimp trawling vessels provided an interesting description of 'what happens':

> The bigger shrimp are boiled on board. The smaller ones are landed and they go to the processing. Because they're so small, they their process then and sold as salads or products… If there is any fish taken on board that, that fish is usually dead. It's a deep-sea fishing [pressure changes kill fish]. You can really count on the zero survival rates [of bycatch]… And they're just thrown overboard. There's no demand for them. There is also this confusion with the EU Landing obligation. That people think that means that everything has to be brought ashore. The landing's obligation only concerns quota species.
>
> <div align="right">(interview recording, 2017)</div>

The respondent then reflected that it is extremely hard to monitor and enforce sustainable fishing practices, given the nature of what fishing entails:

> It is very tricky to enforce and actually control fisheries. Fishing by nature takes place far away and at sea and the fisherman is alone. It's a tricky part to enforce fishes' regulations. You have all the problems with the boats going out, and even airplanes involved. Filming and then spotting where different boats are fishing, and then what I'm filming. There are also these CCTV cameras. Having them installed on their fishing vessels is also one way of enforcing the landing obligation.
>
> <div align="right">(interview recording, 2017)</div>

In an unrecorded interview with a fisher who had worked for several years on a shrimp trawl vessel, they spoke of how cold and non-nimble fingers on the hands of the fishers due to the climatic conditions meant that sometimes the bycatch was not sorted as quickly or properly as it was supposed to be.

An Australian shrimp trawling cooperative officer suggested that over time, fishers became somewhat desensitized to seeing bycatch trash around in the sorting trays during a shrimp trawl:

> Naturally with bycatch, I'd say fisherman are less sensitive to it. Of course, because they've been living it for years, and they've seen that, and they know, it comes up, it goes down.
>
> <div align="right">(interview recording, 2017)</div>

The respondent also described how sometimes plans would deviate from the official management plan, depending on how things were out on the ocean (as judged from results during early trawls).

> We've got rules in place and we have a committee of fishermen plus a government, and a scientist. The management plan, which sets out the rules, the umbrella under which you got to operate… But we change this sometimes. For example, they're looking at early March fishing as opposed to late March, and the scientist will say, your shrimp grow really quickly in early March, you might get early you're taking smaller shrimp if you just wait three weeks, they'll be much bigger: you'll get more money.
>
> (interview recording, 2016)

It is interesting here to note how the benefits are framed in financial terms as well as environmental sustainability terms: that by listening to scientific advice and waiting a few more weeks, the population would be healthier and the individual shrimp would be larger and produce a better financial return.

A stakeholder manager at a seafood certification scheme spoke of the gap between those who design policies and those who have to actually implement them, and the various challenges associated with different 'languages' being spoken:

> How is this some new research going to be packaged and served to them [fishers] in a way that they can actually use in their daily jobs?
>
> Part of that part of that development is that some of those guys have stayed with it for 10–15 years and they are becoming experts in both 'Brussels language' and science language so they are they are building these bridges themselves. But it took 15 years, so they are very, very valuable sort of in-between people, but the closer they move to the other afters the more and more they become for from… Because here's this guy in suit and tie and his old buddy on the fishing boat when this guy start speaking science and-and-and Brussels language. It feels like, are you really representing us? People speaking different languages in the meeting and not understanding each other.
>
> (interview recording, 2017)

Another respondent reinforced this sentiment, reflecting that sustainability at the point of capture relies on a shared understanding of a common 'language': "They [commercial fishing companies] are trying to learn the language of Brussels and science. It's strategically smart for them to do so." (interview recording, 2017)

While companies would often claim that transparency of sustainability practice was a key value, in reality this was not always the case. A mismatch was found between what many companies claim to want in terms of transparency and openness of supply chains versus reality. One respondent, a supply chain manager at a wild-caught seafood certification scheme, noted that a high level of transparency can give an advantage to competitors:

> For competitive reasons, organizations are not necessarily very keen for the supply chain steps to be transparent. Which is different from an Amazon package where the mailman doesn't really matter, you don't care that they can see that he had a package and brought it from whatever place. But in this case, it does matter because they basically give their commercial advantage away by saying who they source it from. That is something that is one of the challenges to get this traceability done.
>
> <div align="right">(interview recording, 2017)</div>

Furthermore, this point was reinforced in a follow up email exchange with a seafood manager for a major Swedish retailer. During the interview it was repeatedly claimed that the organization strives for openness and traceability of all products. In an email several days after interview, some information relating to a shrimp product produced by the company was requested.

Email extract:
> For example, the [removed for privacy] branded *Räkor* states on the pack "packed in Norway for [removed for privacy] Sweden." Would you possibly have any more information regarding exactly where the product was caught, the fishing company involved, transportation to Sweden etc. I am more than happy to chat over the phone if this suits you better than email.

The response from the email was:

> I am sorry to inform you that this information is nothing I can share with anybody outside my company.
>
> <div align="right">(email, 2017)</div>

While this in itself is perhaps just an anecdotal example, it goes directly against the oft-cited claims by the four supermarkets in Sweden of supply chain transparency and points to a mismatch between high-level policy and operational practice of said policy.

It is necessary to conclude this sub-theme with a brief overview of the actual process involved in shrimp capture and farming.

How shrimp are caught in the wild: **Pandalus borealis** *trawling*
*Pandalus borealis* is usually found on soft muddy ocean floors, at depths of around 1000 metres.

Figure 2: *Pandalus borealis* resting on the muddy ocean floor – its preferred habitat

Source: United Nations Food and Agriculture Species Factsheet, 2017, used with permission.

It is caught primarily using a method of fishing known as bottom trawling, whereby large nets are dragged along the ocean floor. After being pulled for a period of between 5 to 10 hours, the nets are pulled up to the boat and the contents are poured into the sorting tray. While technological advancements such as GPS systems and depth finders have aided fishing companies in locating shrimp, the actual method of shrimp trawling has changed little over the past 100 years. In broad terms, bottom trawling is deemed by the SSNC, the WWF and Greenpeace to be an environmentally destructive method of capture. Despite this, two of these organizations are generally speaking supportive of trawling if it follows best practice and has MSC certification, as there is almost no other viable method of catching these shrimp otherwise. Figure 3 shows a bottom trawl net set up for *Pandalus borealis*.

Figure 3: A bottom trawl net set up for *Pandalus borealis*
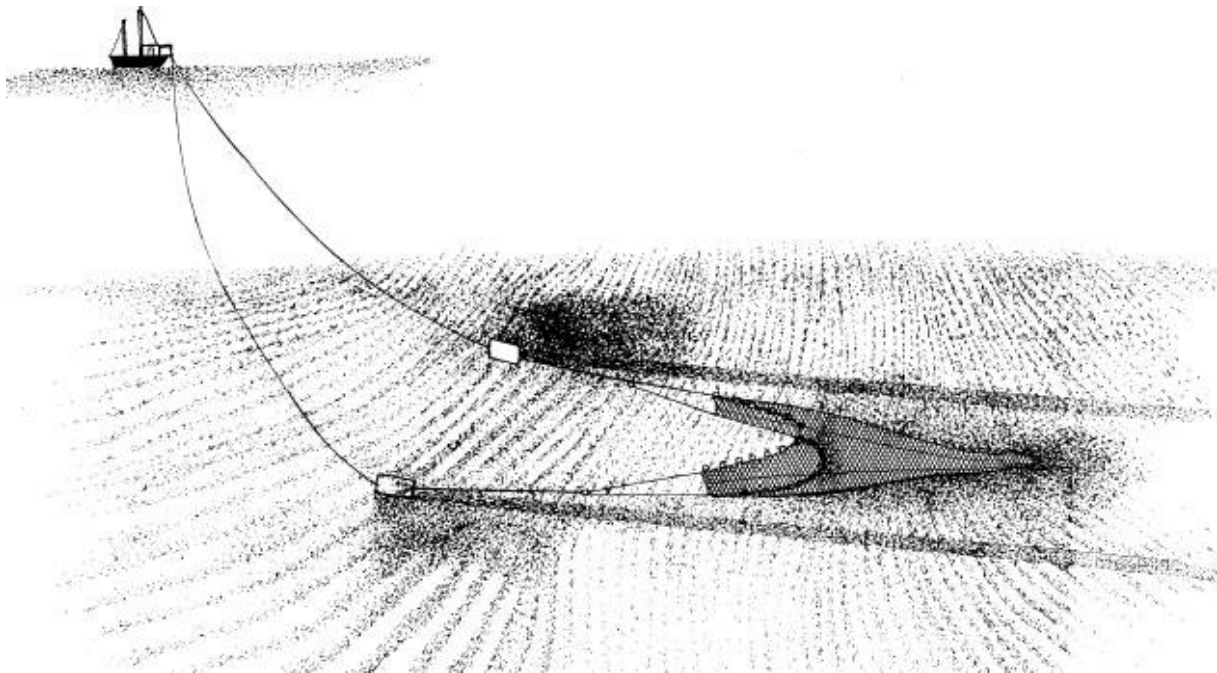
One significant issue raised by a marine scientist interviewed in this study (interview recording, 2017) relates to the sustainability at the point of production of *Pandalus borealis*. The respondent suggested that a prominent problem in *Pandalus borealis* trawls is that only shrimp of a certain size will be sellable, and hence the smaller ones are useless to the fishing company in an economic sense. Under the EU-landing regulations, all target species caught are supposed to be landed, no matter what size. However, there have been many claims of fishing vessels in Swedish and Norwegian waters throwing back small shrimp, as they take up valuable space in the cargo hold. These shrimp are dead by the time they return to the water, as they have usually been in the sorting tray for too long, as well as the fact that the sudden change in pressure from bringing up the net by several hundred metres kills most. So, a situation exists whereby shrimp that are perfectly edible are being returned to the ocean dead, because of a lack of economic incentive to keep them.

Pandalus borealis is the most consumed species of shrimp in Sweden, and the most readily available at retail outlets and restaurants. A wide range of different *Pandalus borealis* products are available, produced by different companies, at different price points, sizes, featuring different labels and in various states of processing (such as peeled, unpeeled or semi-peeled leaving only the tail on). Increasingly, a trend in Sweden and globally is for private labels – that is supermarket chains – to brand

products of their own. In most cases this involves buying from a wholesaler and then packaging and branding it under the name of the supermarket, but in a few cases it involves a degree of vertical integration, as in acquiring the shrimp themselves through company-owned fishing operations. In coastal cities in Sweden, especially on the West Coast near the fisheries, such as Gothenburg, it is common to find fresh *Pandalus borealis* which have been caught the same day, in the supermarket seafood aisle. These shrimp usually come to the Gothenburg Fish Action. This was confirmed during fieldwork at an ICA store in Gothenburg. The price varies depending on the market conditions on any given day, and hence it is common to see a chalkboard outside this particular ICA store saying "fresh shrimp!" (*färsk räkor*) and the price per kilogram in Swedish Krona.

The journey from the sea floor to supermarket shelf typically takes the form of the following steps. This information was ascertained primarily through extensive analysis of the MSC certification guidelines for *Pandalus borealis*, as well as discussions with fishing companies.

1. Optimal fishing conditions are identified, based on moon cycles, weather, month of the year and compliance with regulations and requirements of certification schemes if present.
2. Fishing boat leaves port in early evening.
3. Trawl nets are lowered to the ocean floor. Nets feature bycatch reduction devices, so as to give non-target species such as fish, turtles and dolphins the opportunity to escape.
4. Trawling takes place for 5 to 10 hours, depending on weather conditions and geography of ocean floor in target area.
5. Trawl nets are pulled from the ocean floor. Nets are opened on a sorting tray. Bycatch is discarded in the discard chute.
6. Shrimp to be sold fresh are boiled on board, and then put on ice. Shrimp to be frozen are washed and then sorted by size.
7. Boat returns to port. Fresh shrimp are often taken to auction within several hours of boat landing, such as the Gothenburg Fish Auction. Frozen shrimp are washed and then frozen.
8. The frozen shrimp are proceeded according to the specifications of the company itself, or of the client of the fishing company is acting as a wholesaler. In many cases, shrimp are peeled outside of Sweden.

9. Shrimp are packaged with appropriate labels/certification logos, and distributed by truck to supermarkets if within EU. If shrimp are exported to a country outside of the EU, transportation usually takes place by a bulk freight vessel.
10. Shrimp arrive in retail outlet freezer aisle ready to be purchased by the consumer.

How shrimp are farmed: *Litopenaeus vannamei*

The majority of *Litopenaeus vannamei* produced, are raised in shrimp farms. Farming takes place primarily in South America, and South East Asia, with China, Thailand, Vietnam, Ecuador and Peru being the top producers, respectively.

Shrimp farming is a form of aquaculture in which juvenile shrimp are introduced into an artificially created body of water, fed intensively, and then, once they reach a large enough size, removed from the pond and sold for human consumption. Since *Litopenaeus vannamei* is a marine species requiring saltwater, farms are usually located in coastal areas, and seawater is pumped directly from the ocean into the farms. Figure 4 shows the basic principles of farming *Litopenaeus vannamei*.

Figure 4: *Litopenaeus vannamei* farming
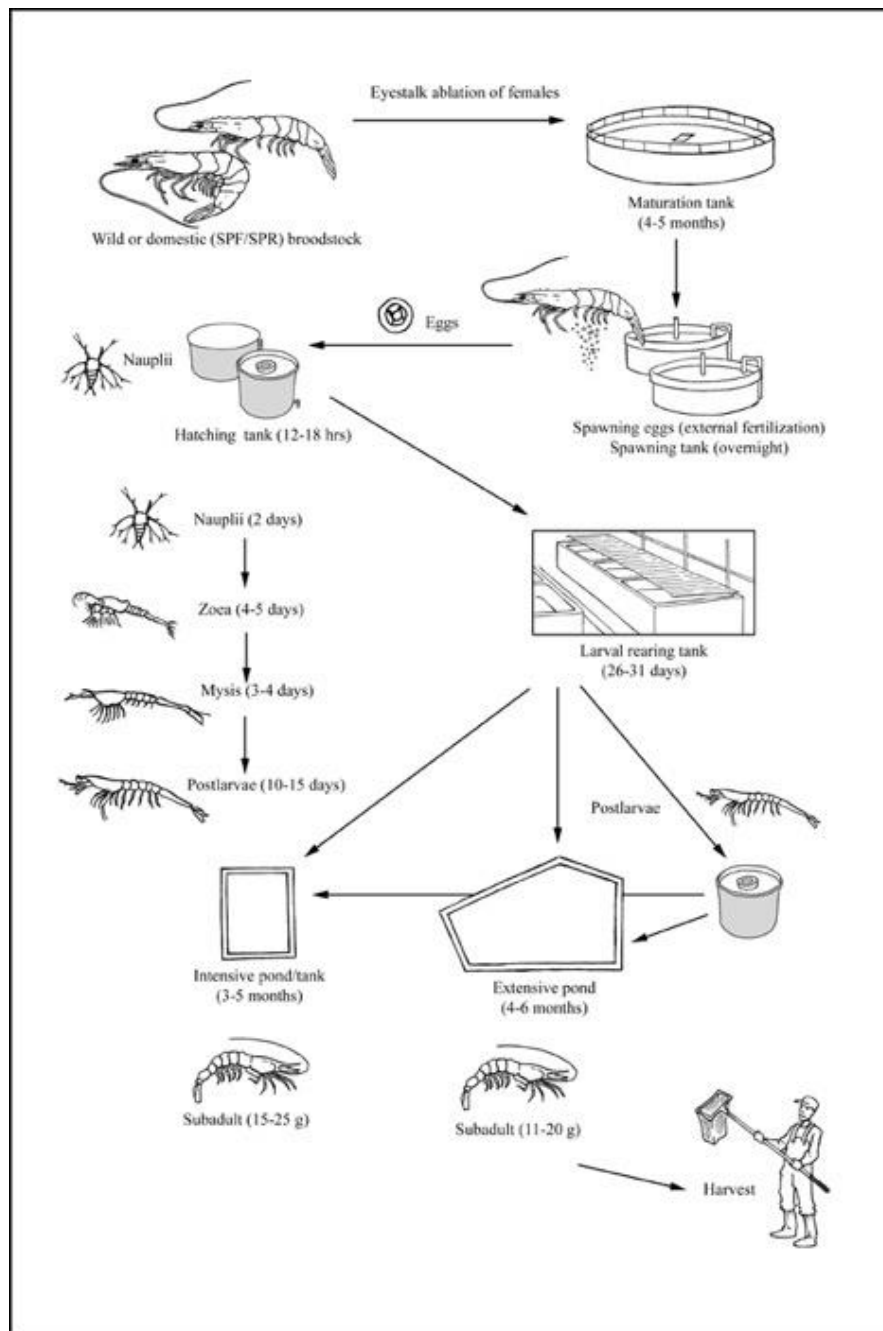
Source: United Nations Food and Agriculture Species Factsheet, 2017, used with permission.

The process of farming is quite energy intensive in terms of the ratio of food needed for tropical shrimp such as *Litopenaeus vannamei* to grow it to an edible size. This is known as the Food Conversation Ration. The average ranges for farmed shrimp of between 1.6–2.0 is higher than all other commonly farmed seafood such as salmon, and comparable to other farmed animal species including chickens and pigs:

During an interview with a Vietnamese based *Litopenaeus vannamei* farming company, it was noted that increasingly, sustainable methods of farming are being used to counter the perception or actuality of shrimp farming as being environmentally harmful. One such method mentioned by the respondent was using fish rather than chemicals to condition the shrimp ponds. Before shrimp are put in to mature, the water must have the correct balance of natural chemicals. This process can be achieved either through the use of inorganic chemicals, or else naturally by placing fish in the pond. The company now uses *Tilapia* fish to condition the ponds, which not only speeds up the process but also removes the need for chemicals. This practice is endorsed by the literature, as evident in studies such as Kuhn et al. (2008).

The journey of *Litopenaeus vannamei* from a shrimp farm in Vietnam to a supermarket shelf in Sweden typically takes the form of the following steps. This information was ascertained through extensive analysis of the ASC certification guidelines for *Litopenaeus vannamei*, as well as from data obtained during interviews with the CEO of a Swedish seafood importer:

1. Broodstock (the breeding pairs which are selected based on best genetic features), often caught from the wild, are bred in tanks to produce shrimp eggs. These are transferred to hatching tanks.
2. Once the shrimp reach the post-larval size after two weeks, they are placed in a large outdoor maturation ponds (known in the industry as 'grow out ponds'). These are between 2 and 30 hectares in size. Anywhere between 100,000 to 300,000 shrimp are stocked per hectare. Paddlewheel aerators are used in order to break surface tension and oxygenate the water.
3. Shrimp are fed three times a day using a machine which sprays food around the pond. This is far more often than they would eat naturally, and the frequency of feeding is in place so as to grow them as large as possible, as quickly as possible. Shrimp are fed special granulated pellets, which consists of a mixture of ground fish meal and cereals.
4. After three to six months (depending on the size required by the customer), shrimp are removed from the pond. This is done by either completely emptying the pond and picking out the shrimp, or by using large nets to capture them.
5. Shrimp are killed by being put on ice. Once dead, they are either left whole, totally peeled, or peeled only to the tail, depending on the product being produced. Interviews with marine scientists in this study ascertained that it is extremely difficult to assess the welfare of shrimp experienced in this process. No certification scheme currently has a criteria for shrimp pain/welfare.

6. Prior to freezing, shrimp are injected with water. This is so that they maintain their size, some of which is lost when frozen.

7. Shrimp are packaged at a processing facility nearby, placed in boxes and stored in a freezer, ready for shipping

8. Shrimp are shipped to Sweden by container freight vessel, arriving at the port in Gothenburg.

9. Shrimp are repackaged and distributed to supermarket chains as per their orders.

The fact that there was sometimes a disconnect between the translation of sustainability policies and vision statements into practice was a notable theme arising from interviews with actors in the Swedish shrimp industry. Many respondents suggested that a significant gap existed between what was said to happen in formal sustainability reports and statements and then what actually happened on board shrimp trawlers and at farming facilities. This gap was suggested to exist partly because of the lack of congruency and integration between those who design sustainability policies and those who have to enact them on a day to day, operational level.

4.4.4 The practice of sustainability at the point of sale: consumer attitudes towards and knowledge of shrimp sustainability

The purchasing decisions of the end-consumer of the seafood products were notably absent topic during interviews, with most discussion centring on the supply rather than the demand side. Swedish consumers were perceived by respondents to have a good understanding of sustainability issues pertaining to seafood – especially when compared to other consumers in developed economies (such as the United States, and interestingly, also Norway). These consumers were mobilized by NGOs as a major driving force in the uprooting of existing norms around shrimp and the solidification of new norms.

A fisheries specialist at an international environmental NGO described how it was ultimately consumer behaviour that held the key to change, especially in terms of putting pressure on retailers:

> So, I mean I think it's all about consumers and the general public believing in our brand and supporting us. And that's also why the retailers and producers want to follow our messaging, because it's consumer pressure that makes them move forward in their work.

In terms of consumer awareness of specific eco-labels and certification schemes, a respondent from another NGO reflected that most consumers in Sweden recognized the various labels and knew that they stood for something 'good', but got lost in the details:

> People recognize the labels, and they sort of can say that it has to do with animal welfare, it has to do with environmental sustainability, it has to do with social sustainability. So, I mean I think at that level the knowledge and awareness is relatively good. But when you go into details, most people are lost I would say. And especially when it comes to differences between different sustainability schemes, I think very few people can explain like what's the difference between MSC and ASC.
>
> (interview recording, 2019)

In terms of customer awareness of the various labels on seafood products, one retail manager claimed that within Sweden recognition of MSC was high, while lower for ASC:

> We did a survey quite recently and I think it was 56 to 60% of our customers recognize MSC and know what it stands for. If they did a survey on ASC I wouldn't say that it would be that big as we don't carry that much farm products.
>
> (interview recording, 2017)

Another respondent reflected on how there was considerable pressure and expectation placed on the consumer, some of which was perhaps too much:

> And I do feel that for consumers, there's too much responsibility in having to understand all the different labels. And I think it's unrealistic. So, I also think it's a matter of the regulations and policy to help the consumers. I do get frustrated when retailers or politicians say that it's the consumers that need to make the choices, but it's not fair on the consumers to have to be able to understand all this…. I'm not surprised that they're a little bit lost with all their eco-labels, because there's so many.
>
> (interview recording, 2019)

Observations and short casual interviews were conducted in the seafood freezer aisle of Swedish retailer in Gothenburg, on 2017-06-20, which gave an interesting insight into customer awareness of and engagement with seafood labels. Ten out of the 12

customers interviewed noted that they would be willing to pay more for a seafood product sourced in an environmentally responsible manner, with most saying that 20% was the maximum price difference they would pay. When shown a packet of Spencer Gulf King Shrimp with the MSC logo on, 11 out of 12 said they recognized the logo. However, seven respondents noted that they were not very clear as to exactly what the label meant and were more confident with labels on meat, and fruit and vegetables.

In summary, the customer was an important actor who was seemingly less discussed by industry actors during the shrimp debate. While some of the NGO campaign efforts were indeed shaming-based campaigning targeting the customer (for example, SSNC's 'one small thing' advertisement during Anti-Scampi), the majority of efforts seemed to be on NGOs targeting firms and using the momentum of the customer (and the broader Swedish public) to indirectly support these efforts.

4.4.5 Small sector, role swapping and the prominence of specific individuals

The final sub-theme to arise from empirical material was that actors felt that the Swedish seafood industry was especially small (and the shrimp industry even smaller), and this had implications for both how sustainability was interpreted and practiced, and how individuals perceived and engaged with other actors in the industry.

The swapping of roles within the industry, and the fact that many people seemed to stay in the fisheries and seafood sector for life (as is the case in many other industries), seemed to have implications for how sustainability was interpreted and practiced. It became apparent that some people throughout their career have worn several different hats. For instance, when this study commenced, one of the persons interviewed worked at the WWF Sweden. A year later, they worked for the ASC. Many jumped between commercial fishing, certification, academia/science, eco-label/certification and NGO. For example, a respondent interviewed in 2016 at a seafood certification scheme works for an NGO as of 2016. This individual's old job was taken by another individual, who previously worked at SSNC with another individual interviewed in this study. It seemed that the Swedish seafood industry (and especially the shrimp sector) was very small, and most of the key people knew each other very well. This is why perhaps the 'snow ball' warm-calling style of interviewing worked so well in this study: once a foot was in the door and actors became aware that this was a serious, legitimate study, they were all happy to

accommodate and introduce to their colleagues and broader networks. One of the interesting themes that may arise here is the idea of 'role playing', and what the implications might be in terms of negotiating sustainability with other actors when you once yourself (in many cases very recently) represented that actor.

It seemed that these social networks and personal connections served as an informal mechanism for getting things done quickly. A C-suite executive at a large commercial shrimp fishing cooperative noted that many personal connections in the industry were formed years ago in a previous role as a manager of a marine national park. These connections were of great use in terms of knowledge for navigating the "Who's who" of the seafood industry (interview recording, 2016).

One respondent described networking as being the most important aspect of their job, suggesting "I think of networking as pretty much my most important work too. To build those networks that makes things happen somewhere down the line." (interview recording, 2017)

Another respondent, a seafood manager for one of the large Swedish retailers, emphasised the role that major trade fairs and events play in establishing contacts with peers in the industry. These events often served as the location where many decisions were taken in regards to selecting suppliers:

> At Brussels Seafood Fair each year, all of the seafood industries is mixing together for three days. It's the biggest event. Naturally you establish some contacts with your peers, including potential suppliers.
>
> (interview recording, 2017)

In terms of role swapping, one respondent suggested that people in the seafood industry sometimes take on the 'persona' of the organization and role that they work for and in doing so may disregard their personal beliefs or beliefs from former job:

> It's interesting where last week someone who was an ex-colleague and he worked for a long time at [seafood certification scheme], now she worked for another organization and she was defending the position of that organization with a lot of passion and then, over drinks out there.
>
> You can have a chat and you can say, "I know. But I 100% believed in what I said, and I know it wasn't a 100% convenient for [seafood certification scheme]. But this is my

role now and I believed every word I said." I think many people recognize that as well, that you can if you defend another part of the parcel, it doesn't make an instance here if you hold another position.

(interview recording, 2017)

This theme highlighted that ultimately it is individuals that contest sustainability on behalf of organizations, and the personal philosophes of each person (including their experiences from previous roles) can and often does influence how they act.

Furthermore, there were found to be occasions of significantly different stances between employees working for same organization on matters of what constituted sustainability in terms of shrimp and fish species and methods of capture/farming. A respondent working at Swedish NGO noted the separation between the views of individuals in the Stockholm and Gothenburg offices of the same organization, suggesting that "If you ask the colleagues in Stockholm who work with tropical fish, there's nuances there." (interview recording, 2019). Individuals were capable of having a significant and sometimes decisive say over how sustainability was interpreted and practiced. A director at a Swedish environmental NGO spoke of how an individual leaving led to the cessation of a key sustainability initiative, and a significant change of direction of one aspect of their seafood policy: "There was a change of chairman, and ceasing of activity" (interview recording, 2017).

To conclude, a key finding of the data was a seemingly simple and obvious yet often forgotten one: that organizations are made up of people, and that while individuals may speak and act on behalf of an organization, it is still an individual person with agency, autonomy and opinions. This becomes especially prevalent in smaller counties like Sweden, where it becomes possible to get to know individuals. Individuals can (and often do) leave organizations and work for others in the same industry, and the 'baggage' that they bring from their previous role carries subtle yet real implications for how decisions around sustainability might be made and how contests to the sustainability strategy and overall legitimacy of other organizations may be launched.

4.5 Summary

The data presented in this chapter illustrates the four major themes which emerged from the empirical material. Several of the sub-themes beneath these broader themes on initial appearance seem to be particularly interesting – and in some cases novel and unusual. In order to make sense of what these themes may mean in relation to what we currently know and do not know about contests to organizational legitimacy, we must carefully analyse and discuss these, drawing on the primary conceptual framework of the study. This is done in the following chapter.

5. How legitimacy is contested

5.1 Overview

Analysis of the empirical material in relation to the focal research question of the study – how is legitimacy contested? – reinforces many of our existing understandings regarding the complex interplay between actors in a value chain in contesting legitimacy, while also bringing to light several novel occurrences which can contribute to our theoretical framing and practical understanding of the territory. The Swedish shrimp case between 2008 and 2018 illustrates a somewhat unusual occurrence: a situation where NGOs have been able to – in a short space of time – rise to command a dominant position in an industry and dictate the prevailing interpretation of who and what constitutes sustainability, and in turn what is 'legitimate'. This chapter of the thesis tells the story of how norm entrepreneurs – through shaming – can uproot old norms and instil new ones by contesting the SLO of corporations and re-establish new ideas of what should constitute legitimacy, and in turn convince corporations to change their behaviour accordingly. These contests often manifest around debates as to the meaning of ideologically, politically and scientifically loaded terms – in this instance, sustainability, which became a synonym for the broader contest around legitimacy. This story is told in three parts. Firstly, the interplay between norm entrepreneurs, corporations and society (Section 5.2). Secondly, what the contesting of legitimacy looks like in practice and the consequences that arise from shaming-based contests (Section 5.3). Finally, the role of lists, guides and rankings as markers of legitimacy and stabilizers of social norms (Section 5.4).

5.2 The interrelationship between norm entrepreneurs, corporations and society

Legitimacy by definition represents a judgement call: an interpretation by one group of the moral righteousness and acceptability of the actions and/or existence of another. Legitimacy theory aims to explore this judgement call, particularly the interplay between for-profit corporations and society (Shocker & Sethi, 1974). While it is challenging to measure or quantity legitimacy, it can be identified – and its occurrence (or lack thereof) has consequences for multiple different actors (Deegan, 2019). This section of the analysis chapter describes the interrelationship between

society, norm entrepreneurs who contest legitimacy, and corporations which want to be seen as legitimate and protect their interests.

5.2.1 The unusual case of NGOs achieving a norm cascade and successfully challenging and changing what constitutes legitimacy

Under legitimacy theory, there exists a sort of 'social contract' between corporations and society (Guthrie & Parker, 1989; Shocker & Sethi, 1974). It is assumed that corporations have been vested with a unique privilege: the resource of society's acceptance and goodwill, and thus in turn have an obligation to ensure that they maintain congruency between their own actions and the expectations of the society in which they operate (Preston et al., 1995). If the actions of a corporation fall too far out of line from congruency with societal norms, this may prompt challenges to its legitimacy, and in some cases can develop into an existential threat for the corporation's continued existence. In the case of corporations working with natural resources (such as fish and shrimp), the literature suggests that they have an even more delicate relationship with society, which has endowed them with a social licence (Murphy-Gregory, 2018). This delicate relationship makes them more susceptible to legitimacy challenges, depending on the level of their core business activity that is reliant on the SLO topic in question (Lenox & Eesley, 2009; Bell & Hindmore, 2014; Tracey et al.,2013). This SLO may be 'revoked', which in turn creates a serious challenge to the ongoing legitimacy of a corporation and therefore its right to exist. Revoking an SLO requires an actor to mobilize significant resources against a corporation (or to at least create a perception of significant resources) (Cullen-Knox et al., 2017). Some actors seeking to mount a challenge against SLO may believe that minor corrections and adjustments are not good enough, and may seek to bring about larger changes relating to major questions around the overall right to exist of some organizations.

A selection of these actors we can classify as 'norm entrepreneurs' under Sunstein's (1996, p. 909) interpretation of actors "interested in changing social norms". Contests to legitimacy do not necessarily manifest around particular vocabulary pertaining to legitimacy. Rather, they either take place through a range of synonyms which may be 'manager' speak for legitimacy (Deegan, 2019), or instead through a number of 'proxy' terms which may in and of themselves not be immediately linked to legitimacy but carry connotations which may pose a real threat to legitimacy. In this case, the debate between corporations and secondary actors manifested around the

term 'sustainability', which became akin to SLO. This in turn, in many cases, then transcended through to challenges to legitimacy.

The case of the Swedish shrimp case between 2008 and 2018 is an unusual story which documents how three NGOs, playing the role of norm entrepreneurs, were able to partially and in some cases fully revoke the SLO of corporations though sustained and highly effective shaming-based campaigns, and in doing so successfully challenge the legitimacy of seafood business and the retailers selling their products. These shaming-based tactics saw NGOs employ the mediums of both traditional and social media, in conjunction with lists and guides, in order to project a message to four groups that some or all of their shrimp-related operations were illegitimate. These groups were fishing corporations, the end-sellers of their products (that is, supermarkets and restaurants), seafood consumers, and the broader Swedish public. These campaigns were highly effective, and fundamentally reshape the operating norms, or 'rules of the game' of the Swedish shrimp industry, allowing NGOs to achieve a dominant position in determining what constituted the SLO for any actions associated with shrimp – both in the present moment and for at least a decade afterwards (at the time of writing this thesis in 2020, their norms are very much still in place). This is a rather rare and infrequent occurrence in a literature full of examples of NGOs lobbying business but often with limited, slowly-progressing or non-permanent success (Deighan & Jenkins, 2015; van Huijstee, & Glasbergen, 2010; Corell & Betsill, 2001).

This case is perhaps one of the early documented examples of a recent claims of a new trend in the seafood industry of developed countries of an increasing ability of NGOs to shape the operating norms of the industry and mount successful legitimacy challenges by gaining control over what norms confer SLO, and in turn legitimacy. Roheim et al., (2018, p. 395) describe this trend as being about a "shift in the roles that extra transactional actors, including both NGOs and governments, play in markets demanding credence attributes." This paper (and several others like it) are pointing to a 'sea change' which seems to be occurring (especially in the Nordic countries, Germany and the Netherlands), whereby NGOs have a more significant role to play and can influence the course of events around seafood and fishing issues more readily than a decade earlier. While this trend has been identified, there has been lacking a detailed, in-depth example. It is possible that the events in Sweden between 2008 and 2018 written up in this study provide the first comprehensive description of this phenomenon.

The Swedish shrimp case saw a significant rearrangement in terms of the arrangement of actors, and in terms of viewing the industry using a hierarchal lens over control of the norms that confer legitimacy. Empirical material suggested that in 2008, the dominant actors in the industry were the seafood and fishing corporations, followed by food retail corporations. This was ascertained during interviews, where respondents from across the spectrum (corporations, NGOs and so forth) alluded to a 'before' and 'after' type situation – in the same manner as people do when referring to any major historical event which changed the trajectory of events. Just four years later, it was the NGOs who were in charge, and as of 2020 this remains. One respondent from a Swedish NGO described this dominance through an interaction with a corporation who asked that the NGO "Tell me what to do. Tell me who I should buy from." (interview recording, 2019). It seems to be a David and Goliath tale, where NGOs started off as David but quickly found themselves rising to become Goliath – and maintaining that position. From the empirical material, it seemed to be the case that NGOs were able to achieve such a significant degree of influence and rise to the status of industry-shaping norm entrepreneur due to four main factors, both planned and accidental: the effective use of shaming-based strategies, tapping into a high level of social and environmental awareness within the Swedish public, successfully amplifying their message through effective use of television, radio, social media and membership base (that is, members of the NGOs), and the use of artefacts such as lists and guides as physical manifestations of contracts for corporations to abide by.

The findings in this study are inline with existing literature regarding the symmetry of the contestation topic to the core activities of the corporation (Lenox & Eesley, 2009). To those corporations whose entire existence was central in the shrimp debate (such as the Swedish seafood importer interviewed in this study), the NGO campaign efforts represent a very real threat to their SLO, and in turn their legitimacy. Under the presumptions of the effect of NGO pressure based on corporation size (King & Soule 2007; Lenox & Eesley, 2009; Ingram, Yue, & Rao, 2010), this would mean that a smaller seafood company would have a difficult time to manage such contests. Such a finding was seen in the empirical material. To this smaller shrimp importer interview in this study, the owner of the corporation was "fed up" (recording, 2019) with NGO activities and realised that their protests represented a very real threat to the viability of their business.

Under Sunstein's (1996) model of norm entrepreneurs, it seems to be the case that in this case the NGOs were able to create *norm bandwagons*, where efforts by one or more actors lead to initially small shifts, which grow increasingly larger as more people pile on the bandwagon. This coincided with a *norm cascade,* which is characterized according to Sunstein by "rapid shifts in norms" (Sunstein, 1996, p. 909). Like the chicken and the egg, we cannot from the data clearly articulate the sequence in which this occurred (that is, whether the bandwagon preceded the cascade, or vice versa). And perhaps this exposes an oft-cited critique of theoretical models: that rarely do things in reality pan out as simply as models suggest they do. But what we can say is that the Swedish shrimp case did clearly feature both phenomenon. If we couple this finding together with what we know about SLO, we can add to Sunstein's concept by proposing that both *norm bandwagons* and *norm cascades* seem to be a necessary prelude to 'unfreeze' existing SLO norms, and allow for new norms to be solidified. The Swedish shrimp case saw the norm that tropical farmed shrimp were acceptable to eat unfrozen, and a new norm solidified: that it is unacceptable. Moreover, elements of the empirical material from this study suggested that norm entrepreneurs do not always want to just change a social norm: in many cases, they want to change the social norm *and* have legal frameworks updated to reflect this new norm. This was explored in depth during an interview with a respondent from an NGO, who explicitly referred to the multi-dimensional aspects of NGO campaign work. Cullen-Knox et al., (2017) showed how challenges to SLO of corporations within the Australian marine industry simultaneously sought to shift social norms and update marine governance legislation. While in this case this did not happen, it is quite possible that in the future new Swedish fishing legislation may come more quickly, and more in the interests of NGOs, due to the 'Goliath'-type status which NGOs have achieved and (at least at the time of writing in 2020, maintained) within the Swedish seafood industry. The overall hierarchy of relations between actors – that is, the influence hierarchy in terms of ability to achieve ones desired outcomes ahead of another – seem to be able to be questioned, reset and rearranged based on pressure brought about by one group of actors: in this case, NGOs. We can see a distinct and clear alternation in the arrangement of the hierarchy of relations in the Swedish shrimp industry pre-controversy in 2008, and post-controversy, in 2018.

It seems that NGOs were able to instigate a shift in norms by carefully tapping into the significant levels of environmental awareness and interest of the Swedish pubic in order to mobilize actors, and in doing so require compliance with new, updated norms and in turn alter the SLO required of firms in the seafood industry. Sweden

was an early and eager participant in the global environmental movement which started in the late 1960s, and since then issues of environmental sustainability have featured highly in public debate and policy decisions (McCormick, 1991; Mol, 2000). What this has meant is that Swedish society generally has a strong awareness of environmental issues, and holds organizations to high standards regarding what they can and cannot do – higher standards than might exist in other countries such as the United States (Boström & Klintman, 2006). The norm in Sweden is not that you have to follow the law; it is much more than that. While abiding by the law might give you the *right* to exist, it seems to be the case that if a corporation wants ongoing legitimacy it must go above and beyond legislative requirements and keep up with changing social norms.

The voices of NGOs were significantly amplified and assisted though the mediums of both social and traditional media, and furthered through mobilization of membership base, consumers, and instilling fear of harm to reputation in the minds of firms – especially food retailers. The initial small-scale campaigns such as 'Anti-Scampi' started by the SSNC were amplified through media and exacerbated by positive feedback loops – until they reached levels where they became self-sustaining and growing exponentially. The result of this was that NGO pressure on firms grew to become powerful enough to challenge the legitimacy of the fishing companies and supermarkets as the primary determiners of sustainability.

The NGOs were able to break down an existing interpretation of legitimacy – through the synonym of sustainability – replace it with a new one, and reaffirm and solidify this interpretation as the new norm to which other actors must conform.

This course of events in itself is not overly suprising, as it represents how change occurs in many different contexts. What *is* surpising, however, is the fact that it was NGOs who were able to achieve this: organizations whose impact on firms is usually documented in the literature as being moderate to minimal. One key finding from the Swedish shrimp case was how one actor (or group of actors – that is, the three NGOs) could essentially multiplity their actual and percrived influence through the leveraging of some public support, and – either intentionally or unintentionally – create a perception in the minds of other actors that the public support is large and overwhelming.

This case was not just an example of an industry which had a particular set of stances on environmental issues at one point in time which were unstabalized and then re-stabilized (at a higher level of expectation) by secondary actor pressure. Rather, it showed the significant role that the public plays. It affirmed existing models relating to NGO-corporation such as Den Hond and De Bakker's (2007), which takes an institutional-theory inspired approach to analysing how industry norms can be fundamentally reshaped through effective use of pressure tactics by NGOs against firms, but also exposes them on their limited description of how socteial norms and public sentiment play into the process. Such models theorize – despite having few practical cases to illustrate – that sustainability change in an industry or sector follows basic premise of an unfreeze-change-refreeze model (similar to works such as Lewin 1951), and that NGOs can be the ones who bring about such changes.

Some of the empirical material generated from interviews was startling in terms of how clearly and consistently it documented that primary producers and distributors were at the mercy of NGO – and unlike anything else in recent literature. It also reaffirmed that the language used to contest legitimacy is often not straightforward, and may take place through proxy words or metaphors. In collected empirical data, there were few examples of actors using direct phrases which called into question the right of another organization to exist. Instead, words like 'sustainable' 'sustainability' and 'responsible' were used. It seems to be the case that a challenge to a sustainability question can in some cases be akin to a challenge to overall legitimacy – especially to corporations already involved with natural resources, and as such have an SLO granted to them (Cullen-Knox et al., 2017).

5.2.2 Whole, part, some: the degree of exposure and the nature of the legitimacy challenge

Legitimacy theory proposes that there are various degrees of seriousness in challenges to an organization's legitimacy (Suchman, 1995). It is the case that "An audience may grant legitimacy to an organization for one of its roles but not for another." (Ayling, 2017, p. 352). As such, it is not a black-and-white, yes-or-no matter of saying that an organization is legitimate or not – rather, it is more complex and nuanced, and relies on looking at the degree of exposure that an organization has to the social norm which is being challenged. A corporation may be legitimate and have SLO in the vast majority of its spheres of influence, but be called into question by an influential external actor who suggests that it is judged to be falling short in one area (Murphy-Gregory, 2018). In some cases, a challenge may represent a serious and real

threat to the corporation's overall legitimacy (and hence their continued existence) – something which also reflects the blurring between the "perceptions and social constructs" of both the issue itself and the views of actor who is voicing concern about the issue (Ayling, 2017, p. 532). This may require the corporation to undergo a major soul-searching exercise, and to walk on the boundaries between order and chaos, between the known and the unknown as they seek to figure out who they are and how they can once again be seen as legitimate. In other cases, a challenge to legitimacy may be trivial and minor, and no response is necessary, other than the usual ongoing efforts of managers in organizations to use corporate disclosures to "manage or manipulate their relationship with society" (Deegan, 2019, p. 2316). Or in some cases an issue can be trivial and minor now, but if let alone could have the potential to grow into something serious. As such, in a space-time continuum organizations will rotate between seeking to extend, maintain or defend legitimacy, depending on what the situation calls for (Milne & Patten, 2002).

The Swedish shrimp industry reinforced the fact that legitimacy threats are closely tied to the degree of exposure that the organization has to the social norm which the norm entrepreneur(s) is trying to change, as well as the level of status and authority of the norm entrepreneur(s) launching the contest (as perceived in the eyes of the corporation on the receiving end of their efforts). To several Swedish seafood companies, whose primary operation was importing farmed shrimp from Asia, the NGO-led campaigns and requirement of abiding by their artefacts represented a serious, real and immediate threat to their business model, and in many cases their ongoing existence. To other corporations (such as supermarket chains) the shrimp issue was more of a peripheral one, with shrimp representing just one of hundreds of products sold in their stores, and a small contributor to revenues. However, while the shrimp issue was not in itself a threat to the overall legitimacy of ICA, Coop and Axfood, the broader implications of the NGO movement seemed to have enough potential for harm that the supermarkets deemed the best course of action as conceding to the wishes of the NGOs and conform to the artefacts. This would make sense under recent framings of SLO as being primarily about situations "concerning corporate use of public natural resources" (Cullen-Knox, 2017, p. 70) rather than being just another word for legitimacy (Gehman, Lefsrund & Fast, 2017). The idea of fish and marine life being a public resource – and this being a defining feature of SLO – perhaps means that corporations will have a much more cautious approach, as they foresee that loss of SLO on the seafood question could open up broader challenges to their overall legitimacy. This could explain why conformity from Swedish

supermarkets to NGO-developed artefacts was achieved so readily. Moreover, we can suggest that perhaps corporations will be happy to fold on issues which represent a small area of their existing business but potentially larger threat to future legitimacy, while if the challenge represents a threat to most of all of their business area (and hence their immediate legitimacy) they will be willing to fight. This is especially the case in a context of increasing conglomeration, as well as global exposure and complexity supply chains, meaning that the chances of a corporation receiving exposure to a challenge is high. Perhaps the four Swedish retailers were happy to concede on shrimp because in the scale of things it represented such a small percentage of their revenues (one can anecdotally determine from the language used by retail managers during interview that shrimp products constituted less than 1% of overall revenues and it was not worth risking broader legitimacy over). Perhaps if a similar campaign was launched against a product with higher volumes and larger contribution to revenue, the push-back from retailers might have been much more significant. Such a hypothesis follows under the legitimacy theory assumption that "Managers' efforts in undertaking legitimating actions are assumed to be motivated by survival or probability goals", which in turn are "ultimately linked to the self-interest of the manager" (Deegan, 2019, p. 2315).

A final and very important aspect of this discussion is to understand the interrelationship between an issue-specific legitimacy, and broader legitimacy. It appears that it is increasingly becoming the case that the loss of legitimacy regarding one social or environmental issue can have 'spill over' effects in terms of the overall holding of legitimacy and a social license to operate (van Huijstee & Glasbergen, 2010); Murphy-Gregory, 2018). This could explain why the four food retailers in Sweden were so quick to respond to the wishes of the NGOs – because they realized that this issue had the potential to challenge their overall legitimacy as organizations which take sustainability seriously and are a productive and important part of Swedish society. It seems that the reasons for a retailer such as ICA deciding to accept the demands of NGOs regarding shrimp and base their seafood guide around the WWF-developed list represents a concession from ICA: that they were willing to 'give up' control of shrimp – in the scale of things a tiny proportion of its product range of several thousand – in order to not harm its broader legitimacy.

5.2.3 Perception and representation

A central premise of legitimacy theory is that achievement of legitimacy requires corporations to be "operating in conformance with community expectations"

(Deegan, 2019, p. 2315). Existing literature, however, is not overly precise as to how corporations are supposed to ascertain this, with recent voices such as Deegan (2019) calling for better practical toolkits for managers to work with these questions. Moreover, there remains ambiguity surrounding how to gauge whether the demands made by secondary actors such as NGOs, who sometimes assert to be representative of and speak on behalf of these expectations, are in fact representative of societal norms. Because legitimacy by definition exists within the context of a relationship, it flows both ways. Legitimacy is a "resource… on which the organization is dependent for survival and is conferred on the organization by society" (Deegan, 2019, p. 2315). Existing descriptions of legitimacy in the literature have clearly acknowledged this framing of legitimacy as a resource, dating back to O'Donovan's (2002) mapping of the intersection between the two and even the resource dependency ideas of Dowling and Pfeffer (1975). This resource however, appears to be a complex to and fro between the dominant perception or judgement of the actions of an organization, and the quantifiable reality (in terms of a neutral, quantitative interpretation of information pertaining to its legitimacy). The fact that legitimacy is, by definition, embedded within a relationship means that it cannot be objectively quantified. Adams (2008, p. 366) puts it, "Legitimacy, like reputation, is subjective. "

This case documented several NGOs who at times inferred that they were speaking on behalf of the Swedish public. The majority of the Swedish public, according to these NGOs, had strong feelings towards shrimp sustainability and felt that current practices were not in line with their expectations. It was not the purpose of this study to gauge the opinion of the Swedish public on shrimp sustainability, and thus we do not have the data to say what their views on average are, and how close these were to what NGOs suggested they were. Nonetheless, preliminary evidence collected during interviews with customers seems to suggest that while indeed many Swedish consumers did have reasonable levels of awareness of seafood sustainability issues, they did not possess nearly the same levels of strong feeling or outrage towards the selling of 'unsustainable' shrimp as the NGOs who claimed to be speaking on their behalf said they did. The data suggested that consumers seemed indifferent or even apathetic, with shrimp sustainability not being nearly as high on their agenda as NGOs had claimed it was. By claiming to speak on behalf of the public, the NGOs were able to create in the eyes of primary producers and distributors the idea that they had their finger closely on the pulse of what society deemed as legitimate, and were able to harness this perception of being a figurehead and spokesperson of societal legitimacy in order to reshape the shrimp industry to their own liking. To

draw on a metaphor, in the eyes of the fishing companies and retailers the NGOs had an army of several thousand behind them, when in reality they perhaps only had a brigade of a few hundred.

Furthermore, one could also suggest that the NGOs partly contradicted their own claim that the Swedish public had made up their mind about shrimp sustainability by the fact that many of the campaigns were targeted at the public themselves, such as the SSNC television and YouTube advertisements asking the Swedish public to do one small thing that is priceless to the environment – stop eating tropical shrimp.

The role of the NGOs in the Swedish shrimp case may have some implications for our understanding of the way in which legitimacy is "conferred on the organization by society" (Deegan, 2019, p. 2315).

From the data collected in this study, I propose that the 'conferral process' in practice perhaps can be best described in four stages. This conferral process is more iterative rather than linear in the sense that it in practice does not necessary follow step-by-step sequence but instead may skip a stage, repeat a stage, or go back a stage. These four stages are as follows:
1. Secondary actors make demands of corporations, which may or may not be in line with actual societal norms
2. Corporations determine whether the claims being made are in line with community expectations
3. Corporations (often unknowingly, and in a non-methodical manner) calibrate the legitimacy of the actors bringing about the demands, and make a judgement as to whether the secondary actor has enough authority and momentum to cause them harm (reputational harm, financial harm and so forth).

If threat level is not serious, no further major action is taken by the corporation. If threat level is determined to be serious, the corporation moves onto step four:

4. Corporation responds in any number of ways, primarily oriented around stopping/starting activity, disclosing further social/environmental information, publicly communicating past instances of good behaviour and so forth.

Perhaps the process of 'conferring' actually takes place via the judgement of a corporation's actions through the eyes of one or more actors who claim to be representative of and speaking on behalf of society, rather than society itself.

The second point of this list is especially important. Perhaps the *perception* of secondary actors representing community expectations is equal in importance as *representation*. What this means is that if a secondary actor can do a good job at making out as though they speak on behalf of the community, then in the eyes of the corporation it is essentially akin to them *being* representative of community expectations.

While actors speaking on behalf of a society (which by definition has no single voice of its own) and corporations judging them is not a new concept in itself (and has been covered in related literatures such as stakeholder theory for several decades — see Mitchell, Agle & Wood, 1997, for instance), what is novel is the interplay between the dominant perception versus the quantifiable 'reality' (as judged through a neutral observer's interpretation of information from sources such as annual reports). Achievement and maintenance of legitimacy may not necessarily be as much about being congruent with community expectations as much as appeasing the wishes of those who have the potential to do harm to the corporation's interest and who claim to *represent* and *speak on behalf of* community expectations. And a corporation must be able to ascertain the legitimacy of the secondary actor themselves (and their potential to cause harm) when deciding whether to obey the wishes of the actor seeking to challenge its legitimacy. Thus, conceptual models within legitimacy theory (such as SLO) could be improved by better accounting for these nuances. This follows calls from recent papers such as Mitchell et al., (2015), which describes how NGOs – like any group of individuals – are subject to the possibility of using the guise of speaking on behalf of the public as a mechanism to achieve their own interests. It also partially responds to recent calls to address some of the short-fallings in legitimacy theory in terms of "how managers determine the existence, or degree, of legitimacy threats" (Deegan, 2019, p. 2311). In the opinion of the author, one such strategy could be incorporating the 'reasonable person' test used in English Common Law into SLO. This could be a way of ensuring congruency between the sentiments of society on a particular topic, and the sentiments expressed by any groups or individuals who claim to speak on behalf of society.

5.2.4 Summary

The interplay between norm entrepreneurs, corporations and society is complex and difficult to quantify, due to the very notion of legitimacy being a judgement call. A prelude for a contest to legitimacy seems to be secondary actors who can achieve a

belief in minds of corporations that they are speaking on behalf of what society wants. A contest to a corporation's SLO may in some cases be minor, and easily and quickly resolved. In other instances, it may represent a serious threat to the overall legitimacy and therefore ongoing existence of a corporation. This seems to be based on the degree of exposure that a corporation has to the social norm under debate, as well as the balance and framing of the relationship between the corporation and secondary actors.

5.3 What the contesting of legitimacy looks like in practice and the consequences that arise from shaming-based contests

Under legitimacy theory, the granting of societal acceptance of organizational behaviour is a resource which must be continually earned (O'Donovan, 2002). If it occurs that the actions of an organization are judged to fall too far outside of societal norms, this may lead to an organization being 'called out' – typically by an NGO (Deegan, 2019; Murphy-Gregory, 2018). It may be the case that actions have indeed fallen outside of societal norms, or instead it could be the case that it is perceived that this has happened.

As previously established in the first part of this chapter, the seriousness of such a call out depends on several factors, such as the perceived status and authority of the actor making the claim, and whether the claim represents a minor or serious level of threat to an organization's right to exist. In domains where natural resources are consumed, there seems to exist an even greater obligation of organizations (especially corporations) to continually show that they are meeting societal norms. The contesting of the legitimacy organization in the natural resources sector (or specific industry within the sector, such as fishing) usually starts with a challenge to SLO (Cullen-Knox, 2017). In this section of the analysis, we consider how the contesting of legitimacy happens in practice and what the consequences of it are, with a focus on the role of shaming-based strategies utilized by NGOs against corporations.

The 2008 to 2018 shrimp sustainability case in Sweden demonstrated how the legitimacy of corporations (in this case, fishing and seafood businesses and the retailers selling their products) can be successfully contested by secondary actors such as NGOs playing the role of norm entrepreneur (Sunstein, 1996) through shaming-based tactics oriented towards uprooting existing social norms and solidifying new ones. To corporations, these efforts to change norms manifest as a

challenge to their Social Licence to Operate (SLO) – a challenge which may be serious enough to pose a threat to their overall legitimacy. From the perspective of corporations (especially smaller ones), the efforts of norm entrepreneurs represent unreasonable overreach of authority by a secondary actor who has over-shamed a law-abiding corporation that was making sincere attempts (sincere when viewed through the eyes of a hypothetical *reasonable person*, that is, the man on the Clapham omnibus in English Common Law) to keep up with new societal norms. Once a new norm has been successfully stabilized, secondary actors then seem to act as gatekeepers of assessing ongoing corporation compliance, in some cases monitoring and enforcing by making it a norm in itself that corporation data on a particular topic (in this case, shrimp sustainability) be funnelled through the secondary-actor produced rankings, lists and guides. Secondary actors seem to leverage the corporation's memory of past shaming and the latent threat of future shaming as a mechanism to keep ongoing compliance to these norms, and corporations may 'hedge' their own internal strategy closely on these artefacts in order to appease the wishes of the secondary actor so as to ensure maintenance of SLO, and in turn overall legitimacy.

5.3.1 Intentional overshoot in the eyes of secondary actors, but illegitimate overreach in the eyes of corporations

The idea of legitimacy as being a flowing resource of "on-going acceptance or approval" (Parsons, Lacey & Moffat, 2014, p. 84) granted to the corporation by society is a central feature of legitimacy theory. It is far less clear, however, how this actually plays out in practice (Deegan, 2019), and even less clear as to how the strategic interests of challenges to legitimacy happen. Drawing on our understanding of both corporation-NGO interactions (van Huijstee & Glasbergen, 2010) as well as SLO challenges in regards to marine resources (Murphy-Gregory, 2018) we could assume that an actor striving to change the behaviour of a corporation may perhaps intentionally overshoot their goal, on the basis that what they end up with will be scaled back somewhat. The empirical material from this study, however, showed the case of the NGOs pretty much getting exactly what they aimed for: the removal of all tropical shrimp from Swedish supermarket freezers, and making compliance to their lists, guides and rankings an essential element of SLO. From the data collected in this study, it is impossible to ascertain whether this was a calculated play by NGOs, that is, that they deliberately, calculatedly and intentionally overshot their goal on the anticipation of the final result being scaled back. There are some suggestions of this, such as during an interview when a respondent from a Swedish environmental NGO

reflected that "What society ends up with is a bit below what we aim for "(interview recording, 2019). But what we *can* say from the empirical material is that the NGOs clearly got what they were striving for: a significant rearrangement of the rules of the game of shrimp in Sweden. While the NGOs did not work in unison (in fact in some cases they were against one another, as seen in one of the sub-themes in the Chapter 4, Results), their three-pronged challenge to legitimacy seemed to create synergistic effects and reduce the effective size of the challenge.

From the perspective of the corporations on the receiving end of these challenges to legitimacy, empirical material suggested that some actors, especially smaller Swedish seafood businesses, felt as though there was an illegitimate overreach of authority by NGOs. From their perspective, even when they followed the law, even when they speedily partook in voluntary certification schemes such as ASC, they were still shamed. But we know that following the law isn't enough. In fact, the very basis of SLO is that compliance to the law is already assumed, and that further steps are required for SLO to be earned (Kelly, Pecl & Fleming, 2017).

It is hard for us to ascertain exactly what these findings around overshoot and overreach mean for legitimacy theory, other than to say that perhaps the strategic goals of actors who bring about challenges to legitimacy are not as straightforward as has been accounted for in existing literature. There are some signs that the fishing, seafood and marine industry has a 'uniqueness' about it, an idiosyncratic aspect which seems to sometimes yield unexpected results in terms of challenges to legitimacy which go against some of the assumptions of legitimacy theory (Kelly, Pecl & Fleming, 2017). This has been documented in a growing body of literature, most of it coming out of Australia (see papers such as Murphy-Gregory, 2018; Haward, Jabour & McDonald; Kelly, Pecl & Fleming, 2017; Cullen-Knox et al., 2019). Perhaps it is the case that some actors may indeed be calculative and anticipate the scaling-back effect, and hence intentionally overshoot. It may also be the case that sometimes norm entrepreneurs themselves are surprised when they actually achieve what they were desiring. We must also consider the notion that some contests of legitimacy may in fact be illegitimate, unreasonable or unfair. Such a suggestion goes against the grain of the sustainability, CSR and legitimacy theory literature, which, roughly speaking work on the assumption that all scrutiny of corporations is an inherently good thing (Taebi & Safari, 2017). It may be the case that our understanding of legitimacy needs to better incorporate that not all challenges to

legitimacy are necessary 'good' or legitimate, even if it is the case that they achieve their goals.

Empirical data from this study indicated that seafood businesses felt as though NGOs would continually push and push, and when demands were met, new ones would be set. A simplistic analysis of this situation would be something along the lines of the following: it is not a 'good' outcome to push a small seafood business to the point of seriously questioning their future in the industry. And especially not one who is behaving lawfully, and who in the opinion of most neutral onlookers would seem that they are doing their utmost best to respond to pressure and update their practices in a timely manner. Moreover, it is the case that if a norm entrepreneur truly is passionate about changing a norm that they genuinely believe will enhance society, then they must learn when they have achieved that goal – and not continually push for more just for the sake of it.

However, such an interpretation only tells part of the story as it fails to adequately capture the nuances and complexity of the situation. In many ways, NGOs *have* to keep protesting – even when their demands have been met. They cannot just stop. So much of their identity, relevance, media exposure, and membership base is congruent with lobbying and campaigning. It is not just simplistic to expect them just to stop and back down, but also unrealistic. Here in lies a problem though. The empirical material from this study suggests that some seafood businesses were feeling fed up from NGO pressure, to the point where they were considering quitting the industry all together. How do NGOs balance out the need to manifest their purpose to lobby corporations into changing their behaviour, while not doing it to the point where corporations simply stop caring and quit? A corporation that no longer cares and has nothing to lose, or one who quits, and leaves space to be filled by another (possibly environmentally worse actor) presents challenges. There is no 'answer' to this question. Except to say that the NGO-corporation relationship seems to be one of checks and balances, where pressure from NGOs should keep corporations on their toes in terms of complying with social norms. And NGOs are in a difficult position to find the right balance between campaigning hard enough to achieve their goals, while not pushing too hard that they have resentful corporations who feel that their efforts are not being appreciated and will stop trying and caring.

5.3.2 How norm entrepreneur-led shaming can successfully contest SLO and create legitimacy challenges

Norm entrepreneurs work to introduce and stabilize new norms by drawing on different tools, and will utilize whatever seems most effective to achieving their

desired chances (Sunstein, 1996). Assumptions within the firm–NGO relationship are congruent with this, suggesting that NGOs will draw upon an "interplay between contrasting strategies" (van Huijstee & Glasbergen, 2010, p. 1) to bring about their desired changes. This could be both a mix of activities which draw on both 'carrot' motivated (that is, ones designed to encourage corporations to make changes due to positive benefits, altruism and so forth), or 'stick' (activities which present perceived or actual threats to a corporations financial performance, reputation). From the empirical data we can conclude that the majority of NGO efforts to change the behaviour of corporations in the Swedish seafood industry between 2008 and 2018 were 'stick' based, and drew heavily on shaming. Bloomfield describes how "shame campaigns aim to change industry practices by targeting the reputational value of individual firms" (Bloomfield, 2014, p. 263). The contextual domain for these occurrences is one where increasingly, private actors (as opposed to state-based) are playing a prominent role in bringing about social and environmental change (Bernstein & Cashore, 2007; Cashhore, 2002). Swedish supermarkets, seafood businesses and consumers were targeted with a multi-pronged shaming approach which sought to target their reputational value, both individually and collectively as an 'industry' associated with shrimp. The message was further amplified by involving the customer-end, and the broader Swedish public as an observer. This included shame-based campaigns (that is, the SSNCs 'Anti-Scampi' movement), shame-based lists and guides (that is, the seafood lists and guides produced by the WWF and Greenpeace), formal communication of policy stances (such as website text and annual reports), and in some cases direct shaming by physically going into stores and protesting (as happened when SSNC volunteers dressed up as giant shrimp and held signs and protested inside and in front of stores and restaurants selling/using tropical shrimp). This goes in line with what we know about challenges to SLO: "The withholding of a SLO may appear in the forms of market forces, campaigns and protest." (Cullen-Knox et al., 2017, p. 70). We must again here reiterate the 'orientation' of some recent framings of the SLO of companies operating in contentious environmental domains: that the burden of proof seems to be on the corporation to justify why it should be allowed to exist, rather than existence being the status quo. Recent articulations of NGO-corporation interactions suggest that SLO is "is often thought of in a negative sense: it is rare to hear of corporate actors who indeed possess a SLO. NGOs invoke the term to broadcast to governments and citizens that an actor has lost, or failed to achieve, a SLO." (Murphy-Gregory, 2018, p. 326).

Some of the shaming campaigns seemed to use a carrot to reward businesses who conformed to the wishes of the NGOs, whilst simultaneously seeking to create some sort of critical mass which would lead to shaming of those who were not a part of the moment. One respondent from an NGO reflected on how "Our members went to different restaurants in Stockholm and the restaurants and stores had actually said, 'Okay, whoa. We didn't realize you have the issue with this." And they decided to not sell shrimps, then they got a diploma, they can put on the windows." (interview recording, 2017). Under the assumptions of SLO, the diploma in the window showcases that this organization has confirmed to the new societal norms (or at least the norms that the NGOs deem acceptable). If enough stores had these diplomas, it could create a critical point where perhaps *not* having one would in itself could be considered a form of indirect shaming. Perhaps it is also the case that showcasing the costs of non-conformity to primary producers and distributors by 'making examples' of individual actors (both positive examples – that is, having a diploma, and negative – that is, not awarding one) was a mechanism through which NGOs could ensure the longevity of the effectiveness of shaming and that ongoing that conformity to artefacts was maintained.

Friman (2015) notes that it is important to make clear distinctions between shaming of an act, and shaming of a person/organization, with the former according to Friman allowing for "opportunities for the targeted actor to re-join the community" while the latter focuses more on "condemnation" (Friman, 2015, p. 4). Analysing the empirical material with this distinction in mind, it would seem that in the shrimp debates there was a mixture of shaming specific acts (that is, of corporations involved in the production, sale or consumption of 'unsustainable' shrimp'), shaming of organizations, and both simultaneously. Some actors, such as the SSNC , seemed relentlessly hard-line, and not open to actors "re-joining the community" but instead determined to ensure that they were no longer in business. This was the case for those seafood companies selling tropical shrimp, and in the minds of one interview respondent there was no way that being in the business of selling tropical shrimp could ever be sustainable, even with rigorous certification.

Perhaps the Swedish shrimp case also demonstrates an example of the ''radical flank'' mechanism (Anner, 2009). We could suggest that the most 'radical' of the actors, the SSNC (who campaigned for all tropical shrimp to be removed, regardless of certification) made the wishes of the other two NGOs (Greenpeace and the WWF, who wanted ASC and MSC certification to be put in place) look more respectable,

and increased their chances of corporations abiding by their wishes. It is especially interesting here to note that, from the perspective of some of the respondents interviewed working for NGOs, they felt as though their efforts to bring about change were not political. A director of certification schemes at a Swedish environmental NGO framed this as "We're not a political organization, but we're using political methods and we try to influence politics, but we don't have a party politics." (interview recording, 2019).

Moreover, the effectiveness of shaming seems in part due to the arrangement of the actor being shamed in relation to others. Taebi and Safari (2017) suggest that evidence points to shaming being especially effective in cases where there is a business-to-consumer relationship in place (as opposed to a business-to-business). This is perhaps due to some of the synergistic effects and positive feedback loops that come to be when both the corporation and its customers see the shaming campaign. This was well documented in some of the early 'name and shame' campaigns of the 1990s, such as when Nike was called out for its supply chain practices. As established already, in the Swedish shrimp case the shaming was targeted at multiple levels of the value chain.

5.3.3 The conveying of a shaming-based campaign: the important role of social media

Shaming messages invoke a challenge to the reputation or status of organization and/or individual, and in doing so call on them to change (Friman, 2015). Between the shamer and the shamee, there is a complex interplay of forces which may result in the reduction, amplification or distortion of the shaming message. Amongst other factors, the medium through which messages are conveyed will influence this interplay.

When the works of Skeel (2001) on shaming were written, it was mostly the case that television, radio and print media were the mediums through which shaming-based campaigns were run. Just two decades later, rapid advancements in information communication technology have led to a situation where social media platforms are as influential as traditional media (if not more so) in running any sort of campaign. Social media has allowed for "…effortless boundless communication" (Cullen-Knox et al., 2017, p. 71). Murphy-Gregory (2018, p. 326) suggests that "successful prosecution of SLO campaigns is dependent upon rapid dissemination of information by NGOs, often via social media platforms, which allows them to access and engage the public, other NGOs and corporations in order to build common

understandings of appropriate behaviour and practices (Prno and Slocombe, 2012; Haward et al., 2013; Leith et al. 2014; Lester 2017)."

The Swedish shrimp case showed how norm entrepreneurs (such as NGOs in this case) can draw on multi-pronged approaches to amplify and exacerbate their message through social media, traditional media, and membership base and create the perception (from the perspective of a corporation) that their claims are important and urgent, and that they are speaking on behalf of societal norms. As already established, this may or may not have been the case here. But that is beside the point. What is important is that enhancement of the significance of ones claims seem to become increasingly possible through online activism, where the actuality or façade of a large number of people being involved and concerned can be created quickly and in large numbers, due to the relatively low costs and effort of being involved in shaming activism, such as clicking a 'Like' button (Karpus, 2018). A corporation may perceive such a campaign as being large and a genuine threat to their legitimacy, when in quantifiable terms it may be far smaller and less serious, due to the possible 'smoke and mirrors' effect of social media creating a gap between the actual state of affairs (in terms of quantifiable variables) versus the dominant narrative or perception. Online protests allows "A particular view can appear to be widespread at a significantly quicker rate compared to traditional forms of protest." (Cullen-Knox et al., 2017, p. 71). The role of social media in campaigns and in legitimacy challenges is a young field and there is still much that we don't know. As Fine (2019, p. 257) notes, "The new media, evolving over the past two decades as purveyors of scandalous information, have only started to be examined."

The Swedish shrimp case also contributes to literature on firm-NGO relations by documenting examples of operational tactics and strategies which worked – especially in terms of an early example of the successful utilization of social media. The start of the Anti-Scampi campaign in 2011 came about at a time when social media-led campaigns were still in their infancy (Gomez-Carrasco & Michelon, 2017). Since then, sites like Facebook and Twitter have allowed actors to communicate their interests, engage in direct dialogue with one another, to mobilize the public behind their stance, and as a way of openly showing off the support that they have for their stance. They have also created problems for firms in terms of the speed at which they are expected to respond to social media pressure regarding a particular issue.

Deegan (2019) points out that a gap within the legitimacy theory literature is understanding what channels of communication provide the best mediums for disclosures. While the data from this study cannot be used to make claims about the best mediums for firms to discourse to external actors, what we *can* conclude is that that corporations will increasingly be targeted by social media-based campaigns and be required to respond – a response which may sometimes have serious implications for legitimacy.

5.3.4 The consequences of the overuse of shaming, and illegitimate use of shaming

Shaming-based challenges to legitimacy have a valid role to play. Harnessed effectively, shaming can be a legitimate instrumental tool for bringing about a desired goal. Recent contributions such as Bloomfield (2014) acknowledge the effect that NGO led shame-based campaigns can have against corporations.

Shaming however – like any sort of reputational attack – has consequences. These consequences are very real, and extend not just to the group or individual being targeted, but also across broader dimensions of society. This section of the analysis considers both: consequences of shaming for specific organizations, and consequences for broader society.

There exist within the literature questions regarding the morality of shaming. One angle, offered by Taebi and Safari (2017, p. 1300) is that because of the size and capabilities of corporations, they are in a unique position of responsibility and thus shaming is fair game. This is roughly in line with the broader assumptions of legitimacy theory and the CSR/sustainability literature. However, let us consider the other side of it: what it is like from the perspective of a corporation.

Shaming and pushing for higher and higher expectations of corporations may have the consequence of some (especially small primary producers) feeling frustrated and quitting all together. While some may see this is a 'victory' as in their eyes of the norm entrepreneur bringing about the shaming, as in that their the corporation was engaged in a fundamentally illegitimate activity, others may perceive it that unfair and excessive demands were placed on a law-abiding corporation that genuinely tried to keep up with changing SLO and now there is one less actor to produce a good that society values and one less actor to progress the norms of the industry in the future. The owner of a Swedish seafood business interviewed in this study felt that it had reached a point where their company and others were getting "fed up"

(interview recording, 2017) with NGO pressure (and carry-through pressure from retailers) and reflected upon why it was even worth bothering going through rigorous certification schemes like ASC when there is less and less commercial benefit in doing so.

If norm entrepreneurs like NGOs over-reach, push too hard or over-use shaming tactics in their efforts to uproot old norms and replace them with new ones, they run the risk of some actors quitting all together. While from the perspective of an NGO with hard-line environmental stances it may be hailed as a victory for a fishing company to quit and a sign of progress towards a new norm, there are of course consequences of this – sometimes unforeseen ones. In general terms, existing literature on legitimacy assumes that challenges to social license are made on grounds whereby the actions of a corporation have drifted too far from societal norms, and thus need to be brought back into line (usually achieved through a mechanism – shaming for example). However, it would seem that in practice there is more complexity to this than existing literature has accounted for.

SLO literature does not offer clear explanations for what happens when the demands of a secondary actor are unreasonable, overly-demanding, or ask for something that is well beyond what social norms dictate. Under SLO and its self-correcting marketplace assumptions, secondary actor overreach would be autocorrected by the existing norm remaining in place. Within the SLO literature there seems to be an unspoken assumption that 'all pressure on corporations is inherently good and leads to better accountability and outcomes'. But what if it goes too far? What of a corporation that is operating completely within the bounds of the law, by all intents and purposes is abiding by social norms, and is also making genuine attempts to keep up with the wishes of NGOs? Should this corporation be shamed to a point where it throws in the towel and quits all together? While the Swedish shrimp sustainability case did not result in any seafood companies collapsing (at least to the knowledge of the author), it did lead to several small business owners publicly questioning the worth of continuing in an industry where they were constantly belittled, in spite of their best efforts. The owner of a Swedish seafood business importing shrimp from farms in Asia spoke during interviews in 2017 and again in 2019 of being frustrated with NGO pressure. This individual reflected upon why it was even worth bothering going through rigorous certification schemes like ASC when it seemed that nothing would please the NGOs, and they would continue to shout anyway. In the eyes of this individual, nothing they ever did would ever please the NGOs, and they would

keep finding smaller and smaller things to push back on. Perhaps this demonstrates that if NGOs truly were interested in achieving a goal, they would stop when they reached it. One must ask the question as to the motives of actors who claim to be acting in the best interests of the public and to keeping corporations accountable. If you really cared about sustainability, you would accept when a business achieves this, rather than always wanting more and more, pushing no matter what, even when a target has been met. Perhaps NGOs should back off a little bit, and acknowledge when genuine attempts to improve are being made and seek to work with a corporation in bringing about change rather than view them as the enemy.

The theoretical assumptions of SLO – which lean more towards the interests of NGOs and society – must be updated so as to be able to offer better explanations for cases of overreach and associated over-shaming. This is increasingly needed in the new age of smart phones and social media, which allows for scrutiny of corporations at ever-increasing levels of accessibility and unforeseen speeds. A Twitter-based hashtag shaming campaign can emerge within a few hours, and a corporation may be called on to respond the very next day. Cullen-Knox et al., (2019, p. 70) discuss how social media has led to a situation where "interest groups can now contest… with limited disciplinary or political barriers and at an unprecedented pace". The 'unprecedented pace' point here is important. The frantic, polarized nature of many such campaigns often does not allow for the time, nuance or detail needed to discuss a complex topic like shrimp sustainability. Or even whether the demands of the campaign are actually in line with societal expectations, or are instead perhaps in the guise of self-interest cleverly disguised as a noble action against a big evil business. It is very possible that the speed of such campaigns means that corporations – especially small business with less resources to fight back – sometimes do not get a fair chance to voice their side of the story. Moreover, the sudden cost to reputation of such campaigns may lead to knee-jerk type reactions rather than considered, good quality decision making which usually takes time.

It is not the purpose of SLO (or its father theory in legitimacy) to offer an 'all-encompassing' explanation of the interplay between society, corporations and secondary actors. Legitimacy theory emerged from the resource-dependency assumption that legitimacy is a resource "conferred… by society" (Deegan, 2019, p. 2315), and as such it is a privilege for a corporation to have this conferred, and thus they must work hard to maintain it. All of that said, it is necessary that we consider ways that the SLO model might be improved so as to better account for the gap which

appeared in cases such as the Swedish shrimp case (and several others like it). This gap can perhaps best be explained as the space between what secondary actors claim to be the societal norms that they are fighting for, what the societal norms are in reality, and the goodwill of a corporation and the authenticity of its willingness to change – all of which compounded by time urgency. One way of updating and improving the SLO model might be to draw inspiration from a model such as Mitchell, Agle and Wood's (1997) Stakeholder Salience Model, and develop a mechanism which allows managers to rank the claims of actors, and also determine what congruency exists between the claims of the actor and societal norms. This would help to respond to recent calls within the legitimacy theory literature for usable, practical tools to allow managers to work with questions of legitimacy (Deegan, 2019). Another improvement to SLO (and to the broader legitimacy theory, and even CSR/sustainability field) which could assist in achieving greater 'impartiality' (for lack of better term) would be for the literature to more clearly acknowledge the pivotal changes brought about to the assumptions of SLO by social media, and the speed and severity of reputational damage which can occur through social media based shaming. While several papers have dealt with this (such as Cullen-Knox's et al.'s 2019 look at the 2012 Super Trawler case in Australia), there is perhaps a need for the literature to better articulate the stance that not all shaming leads to good outcomes, that corporations have the right to push back against unreasonable demands which are well beyond the SLO, and that not all changes necessarily constitute 'progress'. There seems to be a desire to have a conceptual tool which strikes a fairer balance between achieving accountability of corporations through secondary actor pressure, while also being fair and reasonable to businesses that abide by the law, and are willing to change and update their practices.

Or perhaps it is the case that the urgency of the many social and environmental challenges facing planet Earth requires an equally urgent and frantic response – a response which may occasionally overstep its boundaries, but is doing so for the right reasons. Such a sentiment was expressed by several respondents from NGOs during interviews, and it is a very valid and reasonable point.

The second facet of shaming we must consider are the broader societal implications of shaming. Shaming, along with its closely associated counterparts such as 'call-out culture' may have started with legitimate underpinnings and oriented towards noble causes such as exposing genuine instances of poor behaviour, or striving to achieve a seemingly noble social or environmental goal, but in the opinion of many (including

this author) it is increasingly being overused. As Skeel (2001) notes, bringing about shame typically required low cost and low risk for the 'shamer', but in turn creates high costs and high risks for the shamee. The frequency and ferocity of such shaming attacks, and the increasingly minor things chosen to shame on have led to a level of black and white, with-us-or-against-us, all or nothing mentality which fails to realize the complexity, nuance and grey in many complex social, environmental and economic issues. The 'mob-justice', 'pile-on' and frenzy features of shaming in today's culture are suggesting worrying signs regarding how societies value truth. Danish existentialist philosopher Soren Kierkegaard argued that truth was not necessarily where a crowd of people was, but in fact in many cases the truth was in the location where there was no crowd. Moreover, it seems to be the case that when one 'victory' is achieved, rather than stopping, shaming will be used on increasingly smaller and smaller issues. It is also the case that many of the demands made by so called 'hashtag activists', and 'armchair critics' (a group that sometimes includes those from both within businesses and NGOs) are simply unreasonable and demand changes which are unrealistic and not grounded in common-sense or real-world experience.

Shaming sometimes enables the simplification of oft-highly complex topics into good versus evil, right-versus-wrong framing. It calls for quick, rash judgements while never giving the benefit of doubt to the other side. A well-designed shaming message will target the reputation of an individual/organization on such a framing, and indirectly invite the audience witnessing the shaming to make a polarised, non-nuanced judgement (Friman, 2015). In the opinion of this author, this is not helpful, and reduces the quality of debate and subsequent outcomes. It also perhaps shows a level of intellectual laziness, and an unwillingness of the shamer to venture into the debate with courage and a mindset that maybe it is *they* who might be partly wrong, and the truth might in fact lie halfway between their opinion and the opinion of the one who they have interpreted as an adversary. British philosopher John Stuart Mill (1859) puts such a sentiment in the following terms:

> He who knows only his own side of the case knows little of that. His reasons may be good, and no one may have been able to refute them. But if he is equally unable to refute the reasons on the opposite side, if he does not so much as know what they are, he has no ground for preferring either opinion... Nor is it enough that he should hear the opinions of adversaries from his own teachers, presented as they state them, and accompanied by what they offer as refutations. He must be able to hear them from persons who actually believe them... he must know them in their most plausible and persuasive form.

The second part of this message dealing with "he should hear the opinions of adversaries *from*" is especially important in the Swedish shrimp case. Most members of the public could not muster the time, energy or effort to do their own research on the topic of shrimp sustainability, spending hours reading up on ICES stock data, or trawling through pages of UN FAO best practices for shrimp farming. Under John Stuart Mill's framing, perhaps such an individual does not therefore have the *right* to agree with or disagree with a shaming message, and as such should perhaps source primary data through which to make up their own mind and take a side, and until that point refrain from jumping on the shaming bandwagon. This is especially the case when it comes to shaming, given that there is another person or organization whose very reputation and standing is being called into question (Skeel, 2001). Therefore, perhaps it is a luxury and a privilege to involve a judgement in a shaming-based debate, and one which carries significant responsibility. When questioned on the topic by peers regarding the status or legitimacy of an organization or individual perhaps a reasonable response might be something like: 'I'm only very loosely familiar with it, and have to read and listen a bit more before I can form an opinion of my own." While an aspiration to have a society full of people with the time to carefully read up on topics and speak in precise and nuanced terms is of course idealistic and perhaps not realistic, it is the opinion of the author that the quality of public debate has reached a point where something drastic needs to change, as the harm done by polarizing, us versus them mindsets, is severe and widespread across multiple contexts. If the pursuit of truth and evidence-based decision making still remains a distinctive hallmark of Western countries such as Sweden, then it is the case that shaming messages should be viewed with a higher degree of critical thought than happens at present (and happened in the Swedish shrimp sustainability case).

Shaming-based legitimacy challenges can be a highly effective way for norm entrepreneurs to bring about changes. But with great power also comes great responsibility, and the party bringing about the shame must be careful to manoeuvre in a manner that maintains a level of honesty, integrity and commitment to high quality public debate.

5.3.5 Moments of controversy and critical incident

In a longitudinal sense, contesting of legitimacy seems to take place in three manners: on a gradual and ongoing basis, around moments of controversy and critical incident, and a combination of the two, which assumes the former built over time to bring about the latter. The Swedish shrimp case seemed to be an example of a moment of

controversy and critical incident: a fast-paced *norm cascade*, which is characterized according to Sunstein by "rapid shifts in norms" (Sunstein, 1996, p. 909). Both the start of the Anti-Scampi campaign in 2011 and the unexpected 'Red Listing' of *Pandalus borealis* in 2014 saw what can (relatively speaking) be described as profoundly quick changes to social norms, and in turn the required SLO needed by corporations to maintain the needed level of legitimacy.

Legitimacy theory literature has given coverage to the three manners of timescale of contesting, as described above. However, it would be fair to suggest that perhaps legitimacy theory and SLO orient themselves mostly towards the 'gradual' interpretation: that the interplay between corporations, societal values, and the actors who play the role of keeping these in check (such as NGOs) is somewhat of a gradual process of give-and-take (Parsons, Lacey & Moffat, 2014, p. 84). Existing literature has paid less attention to the role of controversies and pivotal moments as re-establishing ideas of what is 'legitimate'. One could argue that this is especially important in 2020, as the novel coronavirus SARS-CoV-2 causes COVID-19 disease in hundreds of thousands of people around the world. Many norms and value structures have been (and continue to be for some time) uprooted and become, metaphorically speaking, wet cement once again, and open for contestation. In time, things will stabilize and order and normality will return, but the legacy of the critical incident of COVID-19 will perhaps become a semi-permanent fixture ingrained in norms, just as happened on a more micro level for the Swedish shrimp controversy.

The granting, maintenance of legitimacy seems to have more of a haphazard flow of occurrence than simply the routine granting of "on-going acceptance or approval" (Parsons, Lacey & Moffat, 2014, p. 84) of the actions of an industry or an actor within it as is described in many interpretations of the concept of social license to operate. This study highlights how the contesting and determination of legitimacy seems to take place when a particular controversy arises – causing a potentially sudden and significant change in what constitutes legitimate, as opposed to a more gradual change as outlined in existing literature. The most obvious example of this was the Anti-Scampi campaign run by the SSNC, whereby the organization was able to yield significant public support for their cause and in doing so heighten requirements of SLO needed to operate in the shrimp industry.

The heightened requirements for the license were essentially that consumers had to stop eating all species of tropical shrimp, retailers had to stop selling them, and

fishing companies had to stop farming or catching them. The majority of actors went along with this, "fitting in and adapting to the prevailing social norms" (Parsons, Lacey & Moffat, 2014, p. 84) which the campaign brought about: namely, that it was now unacceptable to have anything to do with tropical shrimp. Under O'Donovan (2002) management essentially has four main options in an event which threatens the organization's legitimacy, ranging from complete avoidance through to total conformity. Management of firms Sweden could be said to have to have taken the most drastic of these options – option D – "Conform to the new societal norms by quickly changing practices so that the organization may regain its legitimacy." O'Donovan (2002, p. 348).

These moments of controversy where an action is suddenly called into question seem to represent the 'boil-over', or tip of the iceberg, of a deeper issue which has been brewing for some time. They create an opportunity for society to check it's alignment with the behaviour of organizations – and also a chance for organizations to check their alignment with society. This seems to both be the cause of, and cause, a feedback loop —one which has the ability to quite quickly change what constitutes legitimacy, followed by a period of stability before the next controversy causes legitimacy to be questioned and potentially rearranged again. The relationship between firms and society in terms of the granting of legitimate therefore seems to be better described through a metaphor such as a severe weather event – like a sudden flood which spills over and rearranges the organization of an environment, rather than how regular rainfall occurs and over time slowly reshapes the direction of the flow of a river. The theoretical implications of such a finding are moderately significant, as they illustrate a case study of how the requirements needed to negotiate access to and maintain access to a market can be changed suddenly and considerably by one actor multiplying its influence through the leveraging of public support. It could be argued that that existing models of social license do not properly capture the speed and magnitude at which change can occur. Otero and Baumann (2016) showed in their study of the controversy around *Pandalus borealis* that controversy mapping can be an effective way of seeking to understand the interplay between societal norms and moments of controversy. Perhaps more studies like this are needed.

5.3.6 Organizational memory of past shaming and latent threat of future shaming can keep corporations 'paralysed'

It seems to be the case that the 'memory' of successful shaming campaigns lingers on far beyond the time when the actual shaming took place. From the data collected in

this study, there is clear empirical evidence that shaming-based campaigns can invoke both changes to organizational behaviour in the present, as well as changes for some time to come. While there is some contestation as to whether organizations can actually *remember* things (at least in the way we apply this term to humans) or whether this is indeed just a nice metaphor (Argyris & Schon, 1978), more recent contributions have clearly established that whether or not memory exists in the way we would like to view it, memory of sorts does indeed exist, and associated knowledge transfer certainly exists (Muskat & Deery, 2017; Walsh & Ungson, 1991). There seems to be little coverage regarding the interplay between legitimacy and organizational memory and/or knowledge transfer, the exception being the proposition offered in Stringfellow and Maclean (2014) that foresight and scenario planning can help organizations plan ahead to engage proactively with possible legitimacy challenges.

Effective shaming-based campaigns seems to loiter for some time within corporation organizational memory, and can keep a corporation obedient and compliant to the ongoing wishes of the party which brought about the shaming – even if the secondary actor in reality no longer has the influence (or perception of) that they once had. This seems to be almost some form of 'paralysis', where the 'memory' of the shaming is so strong that it creates almost a sense of 'learned helplessness' (Seligman, 1972). Most of the Swedish supermarket chains targeted by NGO shaming decided to minimize the risk of future shaming by simply handing over all future judgements on seafood sustainability to NGOs. This took the form of permanently outsourcing judgements on the acceptability, legitimacy and sustainability of shrimp by hedging their own seafood guides on those produced by the NGOs. This phenomenon is explored in the third section of this chapter, when we consider the role of artefacts in legitimacy. However here it is necessary to point out that shaming can change behaviour both in the present but also on an ongoing basis.

The latent threat of future shaming seems to be a strong driver in ensuring ongoing obedience to the status quo. Framed around legitimacy theory (and drawing on legitimacy theory's origins in resource-dependency), this finding can be explained in terms of the manner through which "organizations are controlled by an external source to the extent they depend on that source for a large proportion of input or output" (Pfeffer & Salanick, 1978, p. 271). It would appear from the data that in the case of Swedish seafood business and supermarkets, the organizational memory of

the initial campaign serves as a significant-enough deterrent to risk any further reputational or financial harm.

Such a finding carries implications in terms of how going forward, firms might be more proactive about seeking out relations with NGOs and marinating ongoing dialogue – so as to avoid unexpected campaigns. Recent voices in the firm-secondary stakeholder literature such as Sulkowski, Edwards & Freeman (2018, p. 31) describe this, noting that a recent trend seen was that of firms being proactive and actively seeking out and initiating relations with secondary stakeholders, "possibly even starting, propagating, or leveraging movements – to affect positive change" leading to "sustainable value." It also shows a case where being an actor in an industry – whether a producer, seller or even consumer – requires a new and previously unseen level of agility and speed in terms of quickly adjusting to the SLO and legitimacy requirements determined by other, influential actors. For example, a guide may list a particular shrimp species as being unsustainable, meaning that the retailer must stop selling it so as to avoid NGO protests and upstream the producer must stop catching or farming it and downstream the consumer no longer has the choice to purchase it. The speed at which such a change could occur goes inline Stringfellow and Maclean's (2014) argument for organizational foresight needed to predict future legitimacy challenges, and suggests that management of legitimacy is as much about proactiveness as it is about reactiveness.

5.3.7 Summary

Legitimacy is contested by norm entrepreneurs who utilize a range of reward and punishment tactics to coerce corporations into changing. Punishment and threat based tactics drawing on reputational harm through shaming (especially utilizing social media) seem to be especially effective at achieving partial or full revoke of a corporations SLO and requiring them to conform to the new set of norms. There are consequences of these tactics – especially shaming. In some cases, efforts by NGOs and other secondary actors may in either perception or actuality represent an overreach of their authority, and do serious and unreasonable harm to the legitimacy of a law-abiding corporation which is doing its upmost to respond in good faith to meet societal norms. Moreover, successful shaming campaigns and the latent threat of future shaming may stay in the corporation's memory and keep them obedient to the wishes of secondary actors on an ongoing basis.

5.4 Lists, guides and rankings as markers of legitimacy and stabilizers of norms

A central tenant of legitimacy theory is that maintenance of legitimacy requires corporations to voluntarily and recurrently disclose to external actors (including society-at-large) enough social and environmental information to justify their continued existence (Patten, 2019; Guthrie & Parker, 1989). However, there remain questions around exactly how this should and does happen, questions such as "what specific types of, and media for, disclosures are most effective in supporting the legitimacy of an organization?" (Deegan, 2019, p. 2311). It was once the case that the annual report was the vehicle through which a company could communicate legitimacy (O'Donovan, 2002). The appearance of sustainability-specific sections in annual reports, followed by separate sustainability reports on their own saw a new era of artefacts communicating legitimacy (Mousa & Hassan, 2015). At present there is little coverage in the legitimacy theory literature regarding the fairly-recent phenomena of external actors (especially NGOs) developing their *own* lists through which they provide a judgment rating or ranking of the actions of a corporation. One might think of this as being a situation where the burden of proof has shifted that is, rather than the corporation providing information to external actors, the roles in some industries and some countries have nearly reversed and the onus is now on the corporation to show that they meet the requirements of these lists, guides and rankings. This trend has been identified particularly in the fisheries and seafood industry (see Roheim et al., 2018) – and in many ways makes sense, due to the unique properties of the trade in terms of it being based largely on business use of natural resources, and as such being frequently implicated in SLO challenges (Cullen-Knox, 2017).

The empirical material collected during the Swedish shrimp case showed how secondary actor pressure on corporations lead to a situation where the social license to operate (and in turn, an organization's overall legitimacy) became that all shrimp information was required to be funnelled through various lists, guides and ranking schemes (henceforth described as artefacts). It brought to surface level questions around what information should be used to assess questions such as social and environmental; sustainability (and in turn, whether SLO exist), and who should get to decide such questions. There are four implications of this which are notable and add to our understanding of the interplay between legitimacy and corporations, society, and secondary actors. Firstly, that in some situations, achievement of SLO

can lead to corporations essentially outsourcing internal strategy formulation to secondary actors – both on a one-off and ongoing basis. Secondly, that intense shaming campaigns can result in secondary actor-developed artefacts becoming norm-mandated as a required for SLO, and as this case showed, corporations may not deviating from these artefacts even nearly a decade afterwards (or mount a challenge against their authority) – even if the boundaries of the artefacts or the content is changed significantly from what it originally was. Thirdly, that abiding by artefacts will have different implications for corporations, depending on their degree of exposure to the legitimacy topic in question. Finally, questions around the information and/or and ideology that can be used to inform artefacts – that is, what methodology is employed in their creation.

5.4.1 The integration and normalizing of artefacts

Under the assumptions of the concept norm entrepreneurship, we assume that "existing social conditions are often more fragile than might be supposed", meaning that existing social norms can and often are uprooted and replaced – with this cycle of update continuing on an ongoing and a perpetual basis (Sunstein, 1996, p. 909). Given the shared theoretical assumptions of norm entrepreneurship with legitimacy theory, the subjective notion of constitutes legitimacy also lends itself to a similar premise: that norms are not fixed and can be contested through successful challenges (Deegan, 2019). While we know much about these challenges look like through the previous section of this chapter, we know far less about the possible interrelationship between such contests to legitimacy and norm shifts, and artefacts such as documents, guides, lists, rankings: that is, questions like how do they artefacts come to be, what relationship do they have in communicating, effecting and being effected by social norms, and what role they might plan in a successful contest to a corporations legitimacy. The Swedish shrimp case saw not just major shifts to norms, but simultaneously (and perhaps inseparably) saw artefacts instilled within these norms. As empirical material established, it became a SLO for corporations to closely abide by the requirements of the artefacts generated by the three NGOs. In the eyes of the NGOs they were merely "recommendations – they are recommendations, they are not mandatory" (interview recording, 2019). But from the perspective of corporations, they were anything but recommendations, and represented a mandatory component of achieving SLO. As one respondent, a manager for a large Swedish retailer, put it, the NGOs "… more or less they just forced us to take away the shrimp." (interview recording, 2017)

Suchman (2003, p. 91) describes how the contract is a social artefact, and exists within a complex interplay between the microdynamics of the individual transacting parties and the macrodynamics of "larger social systems". While a seafood guide produced by an NGO is not a contract per say, it shares many of the characteristics of Suchman's framing of a social artefact. Moreover, in the Swedish shrimp case, NGO-produced artefacts became so deeply normalized as a requirement to obtain SLO that they essentially became akin to a contract – that is, the bounds of corporation behaviour were constrained by them. The requirement for corporation information on shrimp sustainability to flow through a narrow channel or bottleneck (that is, the guides themselves) and from this flow a judgement to be granted on the legitimacy of activities follows Fine's (2019, p. 248) idea that reputation often takes the "form of a ranking, list, or hierarchy that permits the human desire for evaluative comparisons." Having lists seems to be a way for NGOs to 'keep track' of corporation performance on questions of shrimp sustainability, and also for NGOs to publicize cases of non-compliance. Here it is again vitally important to reiterate that the three NGOs – WWF, SSNC and Greenpeace – were not always on the same page. Empirical material revealed that managers from Swedish supermarkets and seafood companies alike seemed to feel as though the SSNC had the most hard-line stance on shrimp sustainability, followed by Greenpeace somewhere in the middle and then the WWF. This is in line with Ayling's (2017, p. 352) suggestion that "The factors or qualities that will satisfy an audience of a given entity's legitimacy may differ." Moreover, it also follows recent suggestions in the fisheries and seafood literature regarding the subjective nature of many judgements regarding seafood sustainability made by NGOs: "The criteria used by certification standards and recommendation lists are open to broad interpretation, therefore contested between NGOs driving further proliferation of definitions and sustainable seafood programmes." Roheim (2018, p. 392).

It seems to be the case that artefacts are of significant importance in facilitating judgements around legitimacy, as they provide a rough framework through which to make such judgment. This follows a basic human desire for the need for reputational judgements to be made through semi-structured or structured frameworks of ranking and hierarchy, which allow for evaluative comparisons (Fine, 2019). Thus, we can suggest that contests to legitimacy are intertwined with artefacts which allow for judgement calls around reputation to be made.

5.4.2 *The outsourcing of strategy, surrender of control and absolving of responsibility to artefacts*

While it is common for corporations to receive outside advice temporarily on how to run an aspect of their business or to outsource routine, regular processes, it is rare that strategy formulation relating to core competencies is semi/permanently outsourced (Quinn & Hilmer, 1995). The Swedish shrimp case saw several cases of 'outsourcing' of strategy – the partial surrender of control and absolving of responsibility – by corporations choosing to hedge (or in many cases matching word for word) their own seafood strategies on the guides, lists and rankings produced by NGOs.

In doing so, these corporations (especially supermarkets) partially absolved responsibility, but also lost a level of control. This control was further lost due to the fact that many of the NGO-generated lists themselves relied on third-party data (such as MSC and ASC), resulting in these lists being even further outside of the control of corporations. There are of course risks entailed in this. However, in the eyes of these actors, obviously risks which are less than those of not complying. The consistent finding from interviews with senior management of supermarket chains was that this was done primarily on the basis that abiding by these lists was essential in order to meet the new benchmark for SLO, and avoid serious challenges to legitimacy and acceptance. So far this go that several interview subjects refereed to these NGO-produced lists in terms of being akin to religious texts, such as the bible comparison made by the seafood manager of one of the large food retailers. This is in line with the assumption in legitimacy theory regarding how legitimacy-seeking efforts "… actions are assumed to be motivated by survival or probability goals", which in turn are "ultimately linked to the self-interest of the manager" (Deegan, 2019, p. 2315). Recent studies such as Niu et al., (2019) have highlighted such a phenomena as a logical response to external actor pressure on the firm by considering the integration of sustainability congruence throughout the entire supply chain. But as of yet, such studies have not given in-depth coverage to the nature of such a decision, its nuances and its consequences (in both the immediate and long term).

This is a fascinating notion: that a retailer like ICA or Coop can effectively 'outsource' the risk of making decisions about complex social and environmental issues to a third party, without their direct involvement and with no direct financial costs. This, of course, carries many advantages such as saving time and money and leaving it to an organization with particular expertise in the field, but also carries many unique risks:

namely, the idea of blindly endorsing someone else's judgment and giving too much credit to the ability of these NGOs to accurately determine what is sustainable and what is not, and the potential of harm to a retailer if controversy strikes and not having a leg to stand on in saying 'Errr, we let the WWF decide our list; it's not our fault'. This is especially true when such a list relies on the input of other third party data, and as such becomes even more far removed from the locus of control of a firm. The norm became stabilized that 'lists are good'. This is not an overly unusual occurrence, and has been previously. What was unusual, however, was the way in which use of the artefacts *themselves* became the SLO rather than the values that they actually communicated. This meant that the contents of the lists remained fairly open, and the margin for change was large. And changes to the lists have indeed happened. There is a risk here for corporations – that by agreeing to accept lists but not specifying their parameters, they are exposed to the possibility of norm entrepreneurs using this to their advantage in the future by putting things in the lists which were outside of the 'spirit' and boundaries of the agreement of accepting the lists in the first place. While the norm has been stabilized that 'lists are good', the lists and other artefacts still have agency in the sense that the *information* that feeds into them can change rapidly and significantly. Legitimacy theory assumes that the firm will voluntarily provide external actors with social and environmental information to show conformance to societal norms (O'Donovan, 2002). There is little literature on the phenomenon seem here where this is 'outsourced'. Perhaps this finding —and its implications – warrant further investigations in future studies.

5.4.3 What information and/or ideology should be used to inform artefacts, and where should the cut-off points of artefact taxonomy be?

Legitimacy theory assumes that disclosure of social and environmental information will assist in corporations achieving and maintaining legitimacy (O'Donovan, 2002; Deegan, 2019). However, as legitimacy represents a judgement, it is subjective. As is the way that external actors view information released by corporations. As Ayling (2017, p. 351) puts it, "Legitimacy is largely a matter of perceptions and social constructs." As such, it would seem that the artefacts used to judge legitimacy follow this logic. The Swedish shrimp sustainability case illustrated that there often exist significant ambiguities in terms of questions around what information and/or ideology should be used to generate artefacts, and *who* should get to make these calls. In this case, the contesting centred around the meaning of 'sustainability', which seemed to become in itself a proxy for legitimacy. Broadly speaking, there were three main stances on the artefacts: NGOs claimed the artefacts to be based on science and

an honest and accurate tool through which to assess the legitimacy of corporations. Fishing and seafood corporations viewed the artefacts as being illegitimate, and subjective non-scientific lists developed to further progress NGO interests. Supermarkets viewed them with a degree of scepticism, but were quick to accept their authority.

The theoretical implications of such findings are that many of the well-intended models and initiatives in the realm of sustainability, corporate social responsibility and stakeholder engagement could arguably be said to work on naïve, overly optimistic and unrealistic assumptions about human and organizational behaviour. In a perfect world, and a world described in a considerable amount of the sustainability literature, what species of shrimp to capture, at what volumes and using what methods would be made based on some sort of highly cooperative and collaborative actor or stakeholder dialogue where each was able to openly express their interests and these could be balanced against the interests of others so a 'win-win' solution for everyone could be derived, including the long term survival of shrimp. However, one could critique many of the models presented in existing literature as falling short, due to their failure to acknowledge evidence which points to uncomfortable realities – that is, that self-preservation, survival and progressing one's own interests matter more to actors than enacting a science-based interpretation of sustainability. Interviewees noted that discussions with other actors in the industry were respectful, but that the levels of compromise and cooperation that are often flaunted in the sustainability literature were not representative of what actually happens: "It doesn't always work, sometimes opinions are just too opposite." (interview recording, 2017).

Recent contributions to the SLO literature, such as Leith et al., (2014) and Prno and Slocombe (2012), have proposed that NGOs are taking a leading role in determining the SLO of a corporation, and that a hallmark of a successful determination is "rapid dissemination of information" (Murphy-Gregory, 2018, p. 326). As well as this dissemination of information being in the form of campaigns, it seems that it is also increasingly in the form of lists, guides and rankings – especially ones which can be updated in real time (such as seafood rating guides for smartphones). We must ask however, whether NGOs have in producing these artefacts perhaps overshot their own legitimacy, and have done a mediocre job at turning complex topics which require nuance and detail to discuss into black and white, all or nothing judgements (or in this case, red, yellow or green ratings). Perhaps ascertaining the social and

environmental sustainability of *P. mondon* simply cannot be done with three colours, and attempting to do so does injustice to the complexity of the issues. Or perhaps it is a well-intended effort to make complex information palatable in the eyes of the consumer, who only has limited time to spend on making decisions in the supermarket freezer aisle.

In other academic disciplines, there are similar debates around the ambiguity of categorization, classification, taxonomy and cut-off points. Mood Disorders such as Bipolar Disorder have just three categories: either the patient does not have it, they have Type I, or Type II. Recent voices in that literature, such as Phelps (2016), believe that this rigid categorization does injustice to a disorder which should be dealt with in more case-specific and nuanced terms, and that a better way of framing it would be a spectrum (as happened with autism).

There are of course consequences of categorization— consequences which some respondents interviewed in this study felt that NGOs did not appreciate or understand enough when making judgement calls. While from the perspective of the NGO making the call that a species of shrimp should move from 'green' to 'red' (as happened in Sweden in 2014, when the WWF deemed that *P. borealis* stocks were 'unsustainable') was one which to them had no serious repercussions, to other actors in the industry it had immediate and potentially catastrophic implications for the entire legitimacy of their organizations. Under recent understandings of NGO-firm interactions (Taebi & Safari, 2017; Karpus, 2018), this red listing would be considered an example of shaming. We could say that this shaming in this case fulfilled the criteria described by Skeel (2001): that bringing about shame typically required low cost and low risk for the 'shamer', but in turn creates high costs and high risks for the shamee. In this case, the WWF, with the stroke of a pen or click of a button, put the new list online, and suddenly the legitimacy of more than a dozen small fishing companies operating in Sweden was under threat.

One way of framing this is through the old adage that with great power comes great responsibility. Perhaps as NGOs continue to grow in prominence and ability to influence, they too must stop and consider that their sometimes harsh and categorical judgements will have real-world consequences. As the once-skewed dynamics between NGOs and corporations become slightly more equal (Karpus, 2018; Roheim et al. 2018), perhaps there needs to be better efforts made by both parties to be open to genuine dialogue and engagement, and seek comprise, win-win outcomes rather

than rash judgements. It is easy to simplify complex debates into simplistic categories. It is much harder to actually have the necessary debate – and for all parties to admit that perhaps the lines are much less clear than they might seem. Or perhaps such an expectation is overly idealistic and itself hypocritical by the very fact it sets stringent requirements of others while being overly righteous in its expectations.

An actor may make what looks like on the surface an 'emotional' or 'unscientific' decision – but may in fact be fully aware of what the best-available science is and how to use it (and prepared to use it in the future), but at this moment in time has determined that the best course of action represents making a different interpretation of sustainability. In some cases, this could represent deep commitment to a longer-term cause, and illustrate enduring short-term pain (that is, negative perceptions by other actors for being overly emotional or ideological) for longer-term gain (eventually achieving a commanding level of narrative in social and environmental debates).

What is key here is acknowledgement that the goals of many actors work on very different time spans. An organization such as Greenpeace works on strategic plans which look 10 years ahead, and therefore may be willing to behave in a certain way in the short term if it will lead them towards their longer-term vision. Gupta (2009, p. 417) describes this as being about "wins and losses are smaller battles in a larger war, and that the interactions between movements, policy makers, and the public are protracted and iterative." The empirical material showed that while there might indeed be a well-known and authoritative body of 'best available science' on a particular environmental topic, such information is often underutilized, cherry picked, or in some cases ignored completely, and the reasons for this are complex and varied, and usually not adequately described by saying that an actor ignored scientific information.

Another facet of the need for nuance in ascertaining the motivations for an actor's interpretation of a contested term (in this case, sustainability) and subsequent use of information is the fact that actors understand that in a negotiation they will likely have to concede some of their ground, and as such will put forward an interpretation of sustainability which is beyond their actual target – with the anticipation that it will be watered down. This point was obviously covered earlier in the chapter in regards to intentional overshoot of desired social norms, but this facet of it relates to use of information in engaging in debate around a term which has consequences for legitimacy. In layman's terms, such an approach can be best described with an

adaptation of Norman Vincent Peale well-known adage "Shoot for the moon – even if you miss, you'll land among the stars". Such an approach goes in line with existing literature such Rametsteiner et al.'s (2011) argument that terms such as 'sustainability' often represents a halfway point between science and political contestation – contestation which can be won by the most dominant actor in an industry. Empirical material documents examples of actors openly wishing for their organization to have the definitive narrative on sustainability, but being realistic about the fact that it was often a process of negotiation concession. As one respondent pondered during an interview: "So who gets to decide [what is sustainable]? Well, we would like to get to decide, but usually, it's always a compromise" (interview recording, 2019). Aiming for the stars and hitting the moon seems to also be about the interplay between operational, tactical and strategic decisions and the respective time frames that each of these considers. Gupta (2009, p. 417) describes the relationship between actor behaviour in the present and their longer-term objectives, noting how "Choices, in turn, can make it harder or easier for the group to cultivate public support, access resources, and engage in future mobilization and contention."

This is due to the fact that interpretation of sustainability often ends up becoming a hybrid of scientific information shaped and skewered by political will. As one respondent put it, "… it's definitely not science... it's like science and politics" (interview recording, 2019). In the case of the Swedish shrimp industry, political will took the form of factors such as: gaining access to a market or protecting existing access; self-preservation and survival; reputation and creditability protection or advancement; protection or advancement of finances; appeasing an ideology or worldview; expanding membership base; self-promotion; and altering behaviour to meet changing societal norms so as to maintain legitimacy and relevance. These reasons tended to be in line with the legitimacy theory literature's understanding of what motivates legitimacy-seeking behaviour (Deegan, 2019).

Interviews with marine scientists and other experts holding PhDs in fisheries and seafood management confirmed that the ICES data is considered by experts in the field to be the best available science regarding fish/shrimp stocks, while UN guidelines represented best practice in terms of aquaculture. This further added to controversy, as many of the NGO guides and lists only used such data very loosely or in some cases not at all. A C-suite executive of a large seafood certification scheme who was interview in this study suggested that while the science may be settled in many cases, emotion around cute and likable marine creatures such dolphins could

often overpower science. This follows the trend established in the SLO literature of the fisheries and seafood industry having a 'uniqueness' about it, and such a proposition by the respondent is in line with the findings of Cullen-Knox et al., (2017) and Haward, Jabour and McDonald (2013)

5.4.4 Summary

Artefacts such as lists, guides and rankings play an important yet (at present) underappreciated role in the construction and deconstruction of legitimacy, and associated challenges to SLO. Legitimacy can be successfully contested by challenges to information, how it is conveyed, and who conveys it. Moreover, while artefacts can be stabilized as a norm, the artefact itself has agency when it is enacted in the case of guides and lists due to the fact that information is constantly changing. Furthermore, there seems to be an emerging trend in contexts with higher levels of legitimacy risk where corporations may 'hedge' their own internal strategy decisions (especially subject matter related to social and environmental issues) on the artefacts produced by secondary actors – or in some cases outsource the strategy decision completely.

6. Conclusion and contributions

6.1 Conclusion

Legitimacy is constructed by organizations showing deliberate and ongoing compliance to the norms of the contexts(s) in which they are operating, and integrating these norms into the value structures which underpin both their strategic orientation and operational decision-making capacities. This same legitimacy can be contested in a number of ways, such as by secondary actors (for example, NGOs) playing the role of norm entrepreneur and using a multiplicity of incentive and disincentive-oriented tactics against organizations in order to attempt to uproot existing social norms and solidify new ones in their place. Disincentive-oriented tactics which seek to question reputation such as shaming seem to be especially effective – particularly when run over social media. To corporations operating in a domain implicated with natural resources, these efforts to change social norms manifest as a challenge to their Social Licence to Operate (SLO), challenges which may be serious enough to pose a threat to their overall legitimacy – depending on their perception of the degree of influence of the norm entrepreneur launching the challenge, and the perception or quantifiable actuality of their claims being representative or broader societal norms. These contests often manifest around debates as to the meaning of ideologically, politically and scientifically-loaded terms – such as 'sustainability' or 'responsibility', which can and often do become synonymous for legitimacy. From the perspective of corporations (especially smaller ones), the efforts of norm entrepreneurs can represent unreasonable overreach of authority by a secondary actor who has over-shamed a law-abiding corporation that was making genuine attempts to keep up with new societal norms. Once a new norm has been successfully stabilized, secondary actors then seem to act as gatekeepers of assessing ongoing corporation compliance to these new norms, in some cases monitoring and enforcing by making it a norm in itself that corporation data on a particular topic (in this case, shrimp sustainability) be funnelled through the secondary-actor produced rankings, lists and guides. Secondary actors seem to leverage the corporation's memory of past shaming and the latent threat of future shaming as a mechanism to keep ongoing compliance to these norms, and corporations may 'hedge' their own internal strategy closely on these artefacts in

order to appease the wishes of the secondary actor so as to ensure maintenance of SLO, and in turn overall legitimacy.

6.2 Contributions

This study has offered empirical evidence solidifying many of the existing claims within the legitimacy theory, sustainability and CSR, and fisheries and seafood literature. One of many such cases of solidification includes reinforcing how questions of legitimacy and social licence are increasingly becoming synonymous to questions around sustainability and responsibility. This appears especially the case for corporations operating in contexts where they are using on a natural resource (such as fish and shrimp), and builds on previous work such as Murphy-Gregory (2018) which recognise the explicit link between SLO and natural resources.

Beyond solidifying existing claims however, there are four modest yet novel contributions which this study makes that may add to and extend our understanding of legitimacy.

Lasting NGO success against corporations
The first contribution of this study is a well-documented case of NGOs launching a successful legitimacy challenge and achieving new operating norms within corporations, a specific industry and the broader society of a country – norms which have remained in place for almost a decade. This is a rather rare and infrequent occurrence in a literature full of examples of NGOs lobbying corporations but often with moderate to minimal, slowly-progressing success, and success which is often reversed once the campaign ends (Deighan & Jenkins, 2015; van Huijstee & Glasbergen, 2010; Corell & Betsill, 2001; Waldron, Navis & Fisher, 2013). The Swedish shrimp case presents a set of empirical material quite abnormal in a literature with numerous cases of "mixed or partial success" in NGOs achieving their goals (Sasser, Prakash, Cashore, & Auld, p. 28, 2006), or achieving "incremental outcomes" (Gupta, 2009, p. 417). It contributes by showing a situation where a contest to legitimacy in the form of NGO pressure has led to permanent and lasting change across multiple levels of analysis. Such lasting change is unusual – especially when it is considered that it occurred not just at an individual corporation level but also across broader industry and societal norms. The contribution perhaps shows an empirical manifestation of ideas raised in papers such as Waldron, Navis and Fisher, (2013), Lenox & Eesley (2009) and Spar & La Mure (2003).

Voices in the social science literature such as Bernstein and Cashore (2007) have argued that "in the absence of effective national and intergovernmental regulation to ameliorate global environmental and social problems", it will increasingly be left to private actors to change things. As such, it is vital that there is a clearer understanding of how corporations and NGOs alike both establish and contest legitimacy of one another.

This study extends contributions by Lenox & Eesley (2009) by highlighting the extent to which contextual domain and proximity of the focal topic in relation to the corporations core activities matters in terms of the likelihood of a legitimacy contest succeeding. It furthers voices such as Bell & Hindmore (2014) and Tracey et al.,(2013) in showing how significant the role of the public can be to amplify the influence of NGO campaigns against corporations.

The Swedish shrimp case is perhaps one of the early documented examples of a recent claims of a new trend in the seafood industry of developed countries (especially in Northern Europe) of an increasing ability of NGOs to shape the operating norms of the industry and mount successful legitimacy challenges, challenges which have a lasting impact on corporation, industry and societal behaviour. Roheim et al. (2018, p. 395) describe this trend as being about a "shift in the roles that extra transactional actors, including both NGOs and governments, play in markets demanding credence attributes." This study contributes by providing an impartial, detailed and longitudinal investigation into the circumstances which enabled this infrequent occurrence to take place. Both voices in the academic literature and practitioners may be able to extrapolate lessons from this case, such as: the degree of impact of well-run shame-based campaigns drawing on social media; the increasing synonymity between legitimacy and notions of being sustainable and responsible; and, the significance of stabilizing artefacts as markers of legitimacy and being in control of what information goes into these artefacts. This contribution builds on and furthers Black's (2008, p. 157) argument that understanding "institutional embeddedness… [is] critical for understanding how legitimacy is constructed, both by those making legitimacy claims and by the regulator who is responding to them, often by making legitimacy claims of their own."

Corporations maintaining legitimacy by hedging against and 'outsourcing' to NGOs
The second contribution of the Swedish shrimp case study is the capture and exploration of the unusual and relatively under-documented phenomenon of a peculiar response to a SLO and legitimacy challenge: corporations 'hedging' their

own internal strategy decisions (especially decisions related to social and environmental issues) on the artefacts produced by secondary actors – or in some cases outsource the strategy decision completely. While this phenomena has been described in several studies previously (see for instance Niu et al., 2019, and Mendoza & Clemen, 2013), it has been underexplored in the sense that it has been semi-ignored and taken for granted as being a logical and reasonable response to stakeholder pressure on the firm. This study contributes by suggesting that while such a response may indeed be rational, there is in fact considerable complexity, nuance and consequence in such a decision to 'outsource', and existing literature may have not fully grasped the significance of allowing a third-party actor to 'infiltrate' internal decision-making processes. It extends Lenox & Eesley's (2009) ideas around the various criteria that corporations use when responding to NGO pressure, and shows that corporations will weigh up various factors in considering how to respond and choose an appropriate course of action. It provides an unusual example of a response to NGO pressure under Spar & La Mure's suggestion of "when the costs of compliance are low or the benefits high, firms are more likely to concede [to the wishes of NGOs] (Spar & La Mure, 2003, p.95). Furthermore, it showcases that artefacts are playing an increasingly central role in both establishing and contesting legitimacy, and more attention should be paid to the specific phenomena of outsourcing said-artefacts to external actors. This study finds that while hedging can be a good way to negate external actor pressure and retain social licence, it also comes at a cost: a loss of agency and control over the firm's own sustainability decision-making. Future studies are needed to investigate the longer term effects of sustainability hedging and outsourcing.

Shame-based campaigning against corporations
Thirdly, this study shows that shaming against corporations can have varying degrees of impact, depending on factors such as the contextual dynamics of the situation (such as country and industry specific norms), the style of the relationship (for example, business-to-business or business-to-consumer) and perhaps most importantly that shaming can have effects in multiple time dimensions (both immediate impacts, and longer-term impacts). This study showcases a comprehensive example of a shame-based campaign in practice; one that was able to in an efficient and effective manner uproot an existing social norm and replace it with a new one, and translate this through to lasting changes to the SLO required for firms to be considered legitimate.

Shame-based social media campaigns have been studied considerably in recent years (including the use of shame by NGOs against corporations, such as Karpus, 2018; Bloomfield, 2014). This study however broadened the frame of reference in order to capture three things which were previously missing. Firstly, the implications of shame-based campaigns on all actors within a value stream. Secondly, the interplay between shame and broader societal values. Thirdly, the impacts of shame across space-time dimensions.

Recent voices in the space have noted how "Future empirical research needs to explore the effectiveness of shaming strategies in different business relationships" (Taebi & Safari, p. 1303). This is significant because we know that actors do not operate in a vacuum away from broader societal trends and other actors. Existing literature has dealt considerably with the micro-level of analysis of shame used against specific people and specific organizations, but has failed to account for the way that shame-based campaigns can both affect and be affected by other actors, and society-at-large. This matters in terms of understanding how contests to legitimacy happen. Because, as Ayling (2017, p. 366) puts it, legitimacy contests are "complex contests over an intangible resource and are conducted at multiple levels before multiple audiences."

Moreover, this study contributes by clearly showing the impacts of shame in both the immediate term and the longer term. It showed a shame-based campaign in practice and its longer-term consequences for all actors within a value chain and their hierarchal arrangement within an industry, and illustrating how shaming can lead to changes not just to a corporation, but to the norms of an industry and even infiltrate into a broader societal norm (in this case, that eating tropical shrimp is bad).
This study documents the interplay between the general public and the actors in the industry, and shows the "multiple dimensions" perspective of legitimacy challenges suggested by Ayling (2017, p. 366).

This study suggests that where possible, longitudinal analysis rather than face-value, surface impact should be used as the prominent frame of reference for future studies considering the impact of shaming in order to fully capture and understand its effects for legitimacy contests. These studies are needed in order to improve our understanding of the longer-term consequences of shame-based campaigns against organizations— especially in terms of how the latent threat of it happening again might come part of organizational memory and identity. And especially as social

media activism continues to be one of the primary means through which activism against corporation's manifests.

To NGOs and other actors keen to change social norms, this contribution shows that this can be done through a variety of tactics – especially challenges to legitimacy which utilize shaming and make out as though a corporation has drifted far from acceptable social norms. Caution must be applied however. Not all 'progress' is necessarily good or legitimate, and norm entrepreneurs must carefully think through the broader consequences of their actions if they wish to uproot an existing norm and replace it with a new one. Likewise, shaming must be used cautiously and responsibility, as it has real consequences which extend far beyond pressing a 'like' button with a mouse.

For producers and suppliers and distributors in the seafood industry, this contribution showcases the need to strive to find realistic and workable midway points between optimal environmental outcomes and the (sometimes harsh) realities of business which are reasonable and palatable to key actors, and be willing to concede ground and make compromises in order to avoid large-scale shame-based campaigns. To smaller fishing and seafood businesses, this contribution indicates that while it is good to keep up with changing societal norms, it is also reasonable to push back if the demands made against them are unreasonable.

The role of artefacts in the establishment and contestation of legitimacy
The fourth and final contribution of this study is the important and presently perhaps underappreciated role played by artefacts such as lists, guides, and rankings in the establishment of legitimacy and subsequent challenges to this legitimacy. This study clearly showed that legitimacy can be successfully contested by challenges to information, how it is conveyed, who conveys said information and the mediums through which it manifests. As described in contribution two, there seems to be an emerging trend in contexts with higher levels of legitimacy risk where corporations may 'hedge' their own internal strategy decisions (especially subject matter related to social and environmental issues) on the artefacts produced by secondary actors – or in some cases outsource the strategy decision completely. Previous literature in the legitimacy theory space has clearly documented how organizations will voluntary disclose social and environmental information as a mechanism to enhance reputation, gain or maintain SLO (Pattern, 2019; Guthrie & Parker, 1989). This literature has also acknowledged that artefacts such as rankings and lists (both those

produced by the organization itself and those produced by third-parties which provide a judgement call on the performance of the organization) are correlated with the attainment of legitimacy (Deegan, 2019). It has also been ascertained that artefacts can play an important role in establishing legitimacy (Bartlett, Pallas and Frostenson, 2013, p. 530) However, it is unclear in existing literature the extent to which artefacts can be involved in the *contesting* of legitimacy. As it is also unclear as to the interplay between the longevity of the impacts of NGO efforts to change corporation behaviour and the role of artefacts.

This study contributes by suggesting that artefacts have a pivotal role in both contesting legitimacy and stabilizing new SLOs and broader social norms. Artefacts may serve as an important mechanism for NGOs to achieve changes to corporation behaviour, changes which persist over time. It fills the call by Bartlett, Pallas and Frostenson (2013, p. 530) for further research into how legitimacy manifests around artefacts which provide reputational signalling, especially "across multiple levels of analysis", as this study does with its actor value-chain approach. Moreover, it furthers Black's (2008 p. 157) claim around "embeddedness" by showing how, just like behaviours and norms, tangible artefacts play a vital role in both contesting and stabilizing legitimacy. Furthermore, it perhaps provides empirical evidence of Sauder and Espeland's (2009, p. 63) idea of organizations providing "symbolic responses to environmental pressures without disrupting core technical activities". Finally, it adds substance to the ideas hinted at by recent voices (such as Niu et al., 2019, and Mendoza & Clemen, 2013) that corporations are increasingly recognising the importance of lists and guides produced by external actors.

This contribution also responds to recent calls in the literature for more practical examples regarding "how managers" should work with SLO and subsequent challenges to legitimacy in a strategic and practical sense rather than the mostly-theoretical and abstract descriptions offered in existing literature (Deegan, 2019, p. 2311). Future studies are needed in order to further investigate and more clearly articulate the role of artefacts in contesting legitimacy – especially in countries outside of Northern Europe which perhaps have less of an appetite for sustainability.

6.3 Concluding remarks: cautious optimism for the waters ahead

The latter stages of the twentieth century and first two decades of the twenty first saw a major global trend towards significantly greater expectations of organizations to incorporate sustainability and responsible business practices into their actions and identity – expectations which are now demanded by shareholders and consumers as well as traditional activist stakeholders such as environmental NGOs. What started as a seemingly small side piece has now become a mandated SLO. It is therefore very likely that going forward greater interest (both from researchers and practitioners) will be placed on understanding how and why challenges to organizational legitimacy, reputation and status come to be, the reasonableness of such challenges, and the various options that organizations have to respond.

Wicked problems such as overfishing and unsustainable fishing are extremely complex and intricate, involve multiple actors with multiple (and often conflicting interests) and overlap with other social, economic and environmental issues. However, the very complexity of unstainable fishing also lends itself to multiple points of intervention, including regulation, market-based incentives and voluntary schemes. Working with law-abiding corporations which are genuinely willing to improve and change their ways seems to be a more positive and beneficial goal to strive towards than eliminating them entirely. Globally, 33% of wild-caught marine fish and invertebrate (including shrimp) stocks are being harvested at biologically unsustainable levels. Sixty per cent are considered to be 'fully exploited', meaning that there is no room to increase catch-rates. Just 7% of fisheries are considered to be 'underexploited' (United Nations FAO, 2018). Aquaculture is no silver bullet and is fraught with its own set of challenges. It is clear that change must happen – and quickly. But change is not akin to eliminating actors from the industry altogether. Fishing and seafood farming practices – done legally and based on industry best practice and voluntary adoption of high-quality certification schemes such as ASC and MSC – have a very legitimate and necessary place in the opinion of this author. Daily, fish provides more than 3 billion people with 20% of their intake of protein. More than 65 million people are directly employed in the primary capture and farming of fish. (UN FAO, 2018). Furthermore, as debates around problems such as unstainable fishing continue to become increasingly prominent (and increasingly measurable, through largescale mechanisms such as the UN SDGs), discussions will increasingly be raised around the extent to which information and or/ideology is used in attempts to meet these challenges – including the role of artefacts such as rankings, guides and lists and what role they play in making a judgement and disseminating information. It is the view of this author that we must always strive to

follow the best available scientific evidence when making decisions about environmental matters, whilst also showing a level of understanding and appreciation for actors who are not yet perfect but are making real efforts to reinvent themselves towards an orientation which is realistic about the finite resources of the world's ecosystems and the carrying capacity and boundaries of our planet.

7. Appendix

7.1 The shrimp

7.1.1 *Pandalus borealis*

Figure 5: *Pandalus borealis*
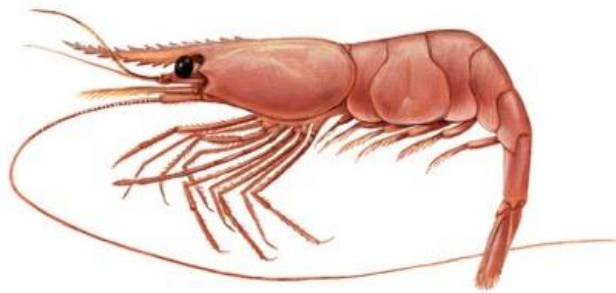
Source: United Nations Food and Agriculture Species Factsheet, 2017, used with permission.

Pandalus borealis is a species of cold-water marine shrimp in the Carideans family. It was first described by Danish zoologist Henrik Nikolai Krøyer in 1838, and in 1861 it was categorized by Krøyer under the taxonomy *Dymas typus.* In 1946, it was reclassified as *Pandalus borealis.* It is sold under a variety of different names, including Pink Shrimp, Deepwater Prawn and Northern Shrimp (UN FAO Species Fact Sheets, 2017). In Swedish, it is known as *Nordhavs Räka*. *Pandalus borealis* has a wide geographical range, with a presence in most parts of the North Pacific and North Atlantic Oceans. As part of the 'coldwater shrimp' grouping (with the other being 'tropical') *Pandalus borealis* is found in water temperatures from 0°C to 8°C. Swedish fishing boats capture *Pandalus borealis* in the seas off the West Coast of Sweden, as close to the shore as just outside of the Gothenburg Archipelago, the Northern Kattegat, and in the Skagerrak, a straight of water between Sweden and Norway which accounts for amongst the most significant *Pandalus borealis* stocks. According to the UN FAO Fact Sheet on shrimp, "Commercially, [*Pandalus borealis*] it is one of the most important carideans". In 2015, an all-time high of 110,000 tonnes of *Pandalus borealis* was consumed in Sweden (Brosius, 2014). Born as male, it takes two to three years before its sex changes to female, meaning that in order to reproduce it must live for what is considered to be a long time in shrimp terms, and as a result stock levels

can be easily and quickly diminished if too many young shrimp are caught before they have been able to reproduce (Bergström, 2000). Male *Pandalus borealis* grow to a minimum length of 120 mm, while females reach 165 mm. This places it amongst the smaller shrimp species, with tropical shrimp such as *Pandalus monodon* capable of reaching 330 mm. (UN FAO Species Fact Sheets, 2017).

Pandalus borealis is the most consumed species of shrimp in Sweden, and the most readily available at retail outlets and restaurants. A wide range of different *Pandalus borealis* products are available, produced by different companies, at different price points and sizes, featuring different labels and in various states of processing (such as peeled, unpeeled or semi-peeled leaving only the tail on). In coastal cities in Sweden, especially on the West Coast near the fisheries, it is common to find fresh *Pandalus borealis* which have been caught the same day, in the supermarket seafood aisle.

7.1.2 *Melicertus latisulcatus*

Figure 6: *Melicertus latisulcatus*
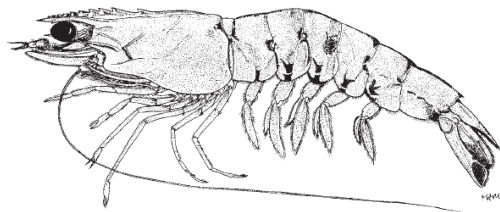
FAO

Source: United Nations Food and Agriculture Species Factsheet, 2017, used with permission.

Melicertus latisulcatus is a species of marine tropical prawn in the *Malacostraca* class, native to large parts of the Pacific and Indian Oceans. It was first identified by Japanese marine biologist Kamakichi Kishinouye in 1896. Living along warmer coastal waters at temperatures between 20°C and 25°C, it has a wide geographical distribution, with the extremities of its range being as far north as Japan and as far south as the Great Australian Bite, from west to east ranging from Tanzania to Fiji. It is sold under market names including the Western King Prawn, Spencer Gulf King Prawn and King Prawn. In Swedish, it is known as the *Kungsräka*; often preceding the name being specific reference to the fact that it is from Australia. It is a medium-

to-large sized species, living at depths ranging from near to the water's surface to 80 metres beneath the sea.

In Sweden, the only *Melicertus latisulcatus* available are sourced from a fishery in the Spencer Gulf, in Southern Australia. The prawn trawling companies of the region have formed a cooperative of 39 shrimp trawling license holders, known as the Spencer Gulf and West Coast Prawn Fishermen's Association (SGWCP), which successfully gained MSC certification for the *Melicertus latisulcatus* stocks in the waters of South and Western Australia. Based on interviews with management from the Association and consultation of publicly available documents including MSC certification, *Melicertus latisulcatus* are captured in the fishery using what is known as the demersal otter trawl technique, using the Double Rig method. Interestingly, the trawl duration of is just 3–5 hours, with the Association noting "the short duration increases the chance of survival for all by-catch (non-target species)" (Harvesting Methods, Spencer Gulf and West Coast Prawn Fishermen's Association, 2017).

7.1.3 Litopenaeus vannamei

Figure 7: *Litopenaeus vannamei*
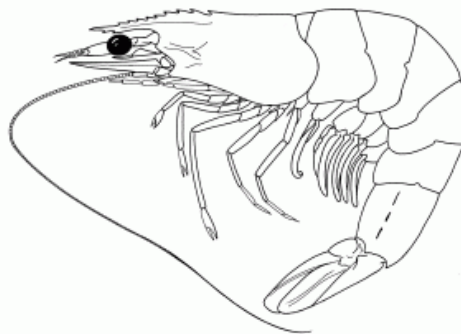
Source: United Nations Food and Agriculture Species Factsheet, 2017, used with permission.

Litopenaeus vannamei is a species of tropical marine shrimp in the *Penaeidae* family, native to the East Pacific Ocean, living in coastal areas between Mexico in North America and Peru in South America. It was first identified by Boone in 1931 as *Penaeus vannamei*, but was later reclassified. It lives in waters with temperatures above 20°C, and reaches sexual maturity after just 6 months, which is a relatively short duration compared to other shrimp varieties. *Litopenaeus vannamei* has a range of market names, including White Shrimp, White Prawn, White Pacific Shrimp or King Prawn. In Swedish it is known as the *Vannameiräka*. Originally a shrimp species

that was almost exclusively wild caught, *Litopenaeus vannamei* was first farmed in 1973 in the United States. By the late 1990s a larger quantity of farm-raised *Litopenaeus vannamei* were being produced than those caught in the wild. As of 2017, 55% of all shrimp consumed globally are farmed, with 80% of farmed shrimp being either *Litopenaeus vannamei* or *Penaeus monodon*. Together, they are the two most commercially important varieties of farmed shrimp. (UN FAO, 2016).

As of September 2018, *Litopenaeus vannamei* is only available in one of the big four Swedish supermarket chains: Axfood subsidiary Hemköp. It can also be found in several other foreign-owned supermarkets such as German chain Lidl. It is quite possible that by the end of 2018 Hemköp will cease selling *Litopenaeus vannamei*, so as to better align with Axfood's Fish Policy. The only *Litopenaeus vannamei* product available is produced by a Gothenburg-based seafood company which farms shrimp in Vietnam. This product features both ASC and Keyhole certification.

7.1.4 *Penaeus monodon*

Figure 8: *Penaeus monodon*
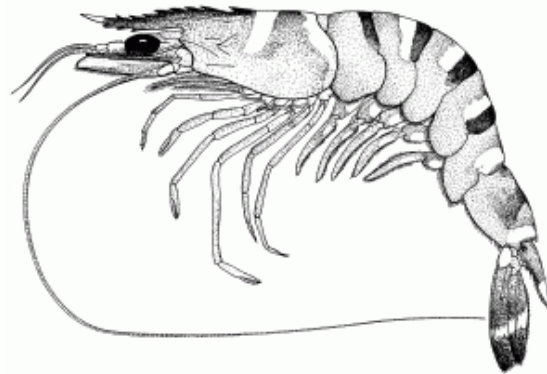
Source: United Nations Food and Agriculture Species Factsheet, 2017, used with permission.

Penaeus monodon is a large species of marine tropical shrimp in the Penaeidae family. First identified by Fabricius in 1789, it was classified as *Penaeus monodon* in 1959. It is native to coastal areas in the Indian Ocean, and Western Pacific Ocean. It is sold under a variety of names, including Tiger Prawn, Giant Tiger Prawn, Giant Tiger Shrimp, Jumbo Shrimp, and Asian Tiger Shrimp. In Swedish it is known as the *Tigerräka*. The tiger reference in its name is due to both its coloration, and the distinct banded lines on its body. It is found at depths ranging from the ocean's surface down to 110 m, and can survive in a wide range of water temperatures ranging from 18°C to 34.5°C. It is the largest of the tropical shrimp species, reaching up to 330 mm in length. While *Penaeus monodon* is caught in the wild (using bottom trawling), the vast majority of

production comes from farms, most of which are in China, Thailand and Vietnam. In terms of farming methods, *Penaeus monodon* shares many similarities with *Litopenaeus vannamei*, with essentially the same process in place. The only major difference is that *Penaeus monodon* grows slightly slower than *Litopenaeus vannamei*, adding an additional two months to the process, totalling in even months from larval form to market size.

Penaeus monodon is no longer available at any of the big four Swedish supermarket chains, and is increasingly rare at smaller retail outlets. In fact, no *Penaeus monodon* products could be found upon visits to multiple smaller retailers in both Gothenburg and Stockholm throughout 2017–2018. Once a commonly available species, it was one of the two target species in the *Naturskyddsforeningen* Anti-Scampi campaign, which commenced in 2011. It is still produced by several Swedish seafood companies including a Gothenburg-based seafood importer, which was interviewed in this study. Their *Penaeus monodon* product can be ordered online by wholesalers, hotels and restaurants, and consumers directly. It features both ASC and Keyhole certification.

7.2 Eco-labels, certification schemes, lists and guides

7.2.1 Marine Stewardship Council Certification

The Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) is an international not-for-profit NGO, which founded and manages the world's largest 'eco-label' certification scheme for wild caught fish. Founded in 1997, the MSC's stated mission is "… to use our eco-label and fishery certification program to contribute to the health of the world's oceans by recognizing and rewarding sustainable fishing practices, influencing the choices people make when buying seafood and working with our partners to transform the seafood market to a sustainable basis." (MSC Annual Report, 2016). This mission is operationalized primarily through the MSC 'blue tick' logo, which appears on seafood products that have been caught from fisheries which have been assessed by the MSC as being 'sustainable'. It is considered to be the "dominant" certification scheme around the world for wild-caught fish (Ponte, 2012, p. 304). Fishing companies, cooperatives, NGOs and even individuals may apply to have a fishery certified. The MSC itself does not carry out the actual certification – rather, this is done by an independent third party, such as an auditing organization, with the idea behind this being to ensure best practice in governance and minimize perceived or actual conflicts of interest. The main responsibility of the MSC is the development of certification criteria, consultation with stakeholders and broader

activities oriented towards the sustainability of the planets oceans. The MSC is funded primarily by donations and license fees from certifications. Contrary to popular belief, the MSC does not certify specific species, products, or a particular fishing company in isolation. Rather, it certifies an entire fishery – that is, a species of fish or shrimp living in a particular region of ocean caught using a specific method of capture. What this means is that any seafood product derived from fish or shrimp taken from an MSC certified fishery can be sold using the MSC logo.

This certification of a fishery rather than a particular species creates a situation whereby shrimp can be MSC certified if taken from one region of an ocean, but not certified if taken from another region. Or further still, shrimp may be caught from a region which the MSC deems to have sustainable stock levels, but if specific fishing methods are not followed then the fishery will not be certified. Such examples are evident when looking at the WWF Sweden's 2017 *Consumer Fish Guide*, where *Pandalus borealis* is simultaneously listed as green light (MSC certified), orange light, and red light, depending on what region it is caught in and the method used.

MSC certification is based around two main 'Standards'. The first of these is the Chain of Custody Standard, which, according to the MSC is "… designed to ensure that every distributor, processor and retailer trading in MSC certified sustainable seafood has effective traceability systems in place. It is there to reassure consumers that MSC products are what they say they are – sourced legally from a certified sustainable source, and not mixed or replaced at any point with uncertified seafood." (MSC, 2017). The second is known as the Fisheries Standard, which focuses on ensuring that certification criteria "… reflects the most up-to-date understanding of internationally accepted fisheries science and best practice management." (MSC, 2017). The certification process is complex and features 28 specific criteria, which centre around three main themes: that a stock is sustainable and will continue to survive indefinitely; that fishing operations are carried out in such a way that they minimize harm to surrounding ecosystems; that relevant laws are abided to and the fishery have a management strategy which is able to respond to changing environmental needs. In order to gain certification, the applicant party must have an overall average score of 80 out of 100, and if even one of the 28 criteria is scored below 60 then the fishery automatically fails and will not gain certification.

The MSC has a strong connection to Sweden. Swedish consumers are, when compared to consumers in other countries, amongst the most aware of and receptive to the label, and in general very supportive of the idea of paying a price premium for

sustainable seafood (Blomquist, Bartolino & Wald, 2015). The MSC has in the past been supported by the Swedish Government, including financial support given to the MSC by Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA) during the MSC's infancy in the late 1990s. The MSC is now the most common 'eco-label' appearing on seafood products in Sweden, with the vast majority of wild caught frozen shrimp products appearing in the big four supermarket chains of ICA, *Willys*, *Hemköp* and Coop being MSC-certified. The label is strongly supported by all four supermarket chains, which view the MSC as being an accurate indicator of social and environmental sustainability.

7.2.2 Aquaculture Stewardship Council Certification

The Aquaculture Stewardship Council is a not-for-profit NGO which manages the world's largest certification scheme for farmed seafood, or aquaculture as it is known. The ASC was founded in 2010 in a collaboration between the WWF and the Netherlands-based Sustainable Trade Initiative. The ASC shares many similarities with the MSC, and although run separately to one another, have numerous crossovers in the work that they carry out. The ASC certifies specific species of fish and shrimp as coming from a farming operation, and once certified, seafood produced from these farms can carry the ASC logo. Like the MSC, the ASC utilizes third-party audit services during the actual certification. The current standards that the ASC uses came about as a result of the Aquaculture Dialogues, a negotiation process that took place over several years and involved more than 2,000 stakeholders with interests in the aquaculture industry. The ASC's standards cover eight types of seafood, including shrimp. The shrimp guidelines focus on five criteria: biodiversity, feed, pollution, disease and social.

As of November 2018, ASC-certified shrimp can only be found in one of the big four Swedish supermarket chains: Afxood subsidiary *Hemköp*. This product consists of frozen peeled *Litopenaeus vannamei* from ASC-certified farms in Vietnam. However, these are increasingly hard to find in any of the big four supermarket chains, due to the extensive pressure placed on the supermarkets by *Naturskyddsforeningen* during the Anti-Scampi campaign. They still exist sporadically in a few smaller independently owned ICA franchised stores.

7.2.3 KRAV

KRAV is a Swedish incorporated association that develops standards for food products and campaigns for responsible and healthy consumption through

promotion of the KRAV eco-label. Established in 1985, KRAV's stated vision is that "… all production of food is economically, organically and socially sustainable and meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs." (KRAV, 2017). This vision is operationalized primarily through the use of the KRAV label, which appears on more than 8,300 food products in Sweden (KRAV operates exclusively in Sweden). The KRAV label has an awareness rate of 98% amongst the Swedish adult population. Presence of the KRAV label certifies that food is organic, and has been produced in an ethically responsible manner. KRAV's standards have been adapted to meet the guidelines stipulated by the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements (IFOAM), as well as the EU regulations on organic food, which are laid out in EC No 834/2007. The Fish Policy Group determines what species of fish or shrimp may be caught and at what quantities; the locations where the fishing may take place; the size of the fish or shrimp that can be taken and those that must be returned to the ocean; the equipment allowed to catch them with; and acceptable ratios of bycatch (that is, non-target species caught during prawn trawling). KRAV features two unique criteria that are not covered by the MSC and ASC. The first of these is measurement of CO_2 emissions, and reductions where possible. In relation to seafood, this criterion implements mandates on fishing vessel fuel usage. Animal welfare is the second unique feature of the KRAV label which is not present in other similar schemes. The Fish Policy Group makes the final decision regarding whether a fishing company's proposed operations can be KRAV-certified, and passes this judgement on to KRAV. A fisheries stock assessment costs 30,000 SEK, regardless as to whether certification is granted or declined (KRAV License Price List, 2017, p. 1). Organizations whose applications are declined may reapply again in the future.

7.2.4 Naturskyddsforeningen Bra Miljöval

Bra Miljöval (English: Good Environmental Choice) is a labelling scheme run by Swedish NGO *Naturskyddsforeningen*. It certifies products, services, as well as specific supermarket and grocery stores, with the label being featured on cosmetic products, portable grills and even insurance. *Bra Miljöval* is not a certification scheme or standard; rather, the appearance of the label reflects the judgement of *Naturskyddsforeningen* that the product or service in question is "… least harmful to the environment", (*Det här är Naturskyddsforeningen Bra Miljöval*, 2017). According to *Naturskyddsforeningen*, "… the yearly requirements (for awarding the label) have different themes and are different from year to year." The annual *Livsmedelsbutik Report* (English: Grocery Store Report) conducted by *Naturskyddsforeningen* gives a

comprehensive analysis of the products sold at retail outlets in Sweden. At present the *Bra Miljöval* logo is not used on food products. However, it is awarded overall to food retail stores. One of the current criteria for awarding the label to a supermarket or grocery store is "The shop has chosen not to sell products such as king prawns that are harmful from an environmental standpoint." (*Det här är Naturskyddsforeningen Bra Miljöval*, 2017).

7.2.5 WWF Sweden Consumer Fish Guide

The WWF publishes annual guides designed to inform seafood consumers about the environmental and social issues associated with different types of seafood, and encourages them to make environmentally responsible purchasing decisions. The guides cover the most commonly eaten wild-caught and farmed fish and shrimp species, and use a traffic light rating system of Red ("Don't Buy"), Orange ("Think Twice") and Green ("Best Choice") to pass on recommendations to consumers. Some species feature multiple ratings, depending on the location that the species is caught or farmed, and the methods used. The guide provides comprehensive descriptions of the environmental issues associated each species, focusing around three questions: 1. What is it? 2. How was it caught or farmed? 3. Where is it from? As of 2017, there are 27 country-specific lists, with most of the countries being in Western Europe. While these lists are developed for different countries, broadly speaking the lists are similar, with differences between countries due to the availability of some fish and shrimp species, languages spoken, as well as changing consumer preferences between different countries. In explaining this, the WWF (WWF *Sustainable Seafood Guide - Methodology*, 2017, p. 1) notes:

> WWF offices in each country develop fish guides suitable for their office location. The selection of species and origins is based on the market relevance of these for each individual country… However, all guides use recommendations from a shared pool of WWF assessments and therefore provide consumers with the same recommendations for the same seafood species. The Swedish chapter of the WWF (The WWF Sweden), works closely with the WWF International to develop and regularly update the list, but also has a degree of autonomy given their expertise of Sweden-specific issues.

The methodology used by the WWF for arriving at the assessment for each species centres around two documents: *The Common Wild Capture Fishery Methodology*, which is used to assess wild caught species, and *The Common Aquaculture Methodology Questionnaire*, which is used to assess farmed species. According to the WWF (2017), "These methodologies are risk based and are regularly updated so that they remain

relevant and scientifically robust" (WWF *Sustainable Seafood Guides Methodology*, 2017, p. 1). In terms of the actual source of the data which is inputted into the methodology document to derive at an answer, the WWF's website states that it as well as utilizing the expertise of its own marine scientists and those from the above-mentioned foundations and institutes, it "… makes use of publicly available scientific data and documents to assess the environmental sustainability of seafood."

7.2.6 Greenpeace Red List Fish

Greenpeace International publishes a seafood guide called *Red List Fish*, which proposes a list of fish and shrimp that seafood consumers should avoid due to the social and environmental harms associated with their capture or farming. It is not country-specific, and the recommendations are for consumers globally, not just for Sweden. As of 2017, the list features 21 types of fish, and the entire category of tropical shrimp. A unique feature of the Greenpeace list is that it features a social dimension. For example, under 'tropical shrimp', it is noted that "The placement of shrimp farms often blocks access to coastal areas that were once common land in use by many local people." (Greenpeace *International Seafood Red List*, 2017, p. 1). In terms of the methodology used to compile the list, the guide states that the Red List is "scientifically compiled" and that those species appearing on it are there because of "major concerns for fisheries, including low stock numbers, destabilization of the ecosystem-wide food chain, and irresponsible fishing or farming practices that contribute to the destruction of our oceans. (Greenpeace *International Seafood Red List*, 2017, p. 1). In a similar manner to the WWF, Greenpeace uses two methodological documents to make assessments: one for wild caught seafood, and one for farmed seafood. The assessments are made by Greenpeace themselves. The procedure is based on "… answering a relatively simple set of 'worst practice' questions in various aspects of fishing for which an answer of 'yes' immediately grades a fishery as red." (Greenpeace *'Red-Grade' Criteria for Unsustainable Fisheries*, 2016, p. 1)

7.2.7 ICES Data Centre

The International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES) Data Centre is widely used by stakeholders in the fishing industry to make decisions. Data is freely available online, and any interested persons can search through a database of over 300 million different measurements regarding marine ecosystems, fishing methods, species, and more. Search tools developed by ICES allow for users to produce data sets comparing and contrasting different metrics – for example – the impact of a particular shrimp trawling method on a species of dolphin. The Data Centre also

features stock assessment graphing tools, oceanographic calculator and modelling tools, terminology dictionaries, and tools for coding and organizing data. NGOs such as Greenpeace are known to draw heavily on ICES data when compiling their Red List Fish guides, in particular, the Stock Assessment Graphs, which are widely considered to represent the most accurate data on stock levels of particular fish or shrimp stocks, and are often used to form the basis of regional fisheries policies, such as the European Union's Common Fisheries Policy (Daw & Gray, 2005, p. 190).

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