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# The role of the individual's perception

Insights into the lived experience of partnering in Dutch Urban Development Projects

**Keywords – Urban Development Management, Partnering, Public-Private Partnerships**

TUDelft

# The role of the individual's perception

## Insights into the lived experience of partnering in Dutch Urban Development Projects

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For my family, my friends and Max.

Thank you for all your support throughout this master's degree.

# Abstract

As Dutch Urban Development (UDM) and Partnering research seem to somewhat disconnectedly explore each other's fields, this thesis attempts to join both domains by gaining insights into factors that promote the emergence of partnering relations between individuals working in Dutch Urban Development Projects (UDPs).

Applying a practice-based approach, data from ten semi-structured interviews was translated into case narratives that provide insights into the lived experience of Dutch UDPs which, after the understanding of this thesis, can be considered partnering projects.

By analysing the case narratives, it was revealed that the construction and negotiation of partnering was predominantly led by the public managers whereas the choice of means depended on the underlying project circumstances, expected benefits and the individuals understanding of partnering.

Analysing the interpersonal learning process, the individual learning processes prior to the project and learnings about the partners behaviour during the first meetings and challenging situations were determined as crucial to the emergence of partnering relations.

Moreover, most formal partnering components seemed to have an overall positive but also paradoxical effects depending on the project and the individual. To overcome paradoxes, joint problem solving seemed the most commonly applied and favoured management practice during partnering.

Applying sensemaking to collected case data, it is concluded that named factors and their effect differed depending on the individual's perception. Based on a conceptual model, it is explained that factors promoted the emergence of partnering when they were perceived as in harmony to the individuals understanding of partnering.

Ultimately, picking up on the suggestion of Kadefors (2004) to apply trust theory to study partnering, it is suggested that the individuals starting level of trust, the individual's choice and ability to trust, the human preference for reciprocity as well as the individuals abilities, benevolence and integrity should be considered as factors when researching the emergence of partnering.

# Management summary

## Introduction

Currently, two domains seem to come together without much knowledge acquired from each other as of yet. They are the domain of Dutch Urban Development (UDM) and the domain of partnering research.

Whereas the Dutch UDM domain seems to just discover formal opportunities (Kersten et al., 2019; van Zessen, 2020) to facilitate a culture towards more 'teaming' in the domain (Deloitte, 2017; Heurkens, 2012), partnering research has been developing strategies to promote relationships based on trust and mutual understanding in the construction sector since the 1980's (Larsen, 2007; Lahdenperä, 2012).

As partnering researchers, however, still have difficulties to attribute project success to the adoption of formal partnering principles (Nyström, 2008), increasingly researchers are interested in understanding the relationship between the more structural elements and the social dynamics in partnering practice (Bresnen & Marshall, 2002).

To achieve this, scholars suggest to investigate the 'lived experience' (Bresnen, 2009) of partnering in further contexts and cultures (Bresnen & Marshall, 2002; Jacobsson & Wilson, 2014; Smith & Thomasson, 2018).

As moreover, Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) in UDPs (Smith & Thomasson, 2018; Karrbom Gustavsson et al., 2017) are increasingly becoming the focus of partnering researchers, this thesis builds on the respective suggestions by revealing insights into partnering practices in Dutch urban development projects (UDPs).

The main research question of this thesis was hereby, to better understand:

*MRQ: What are factors that promote the emergence of partnering relations in Dutch UDPs?*

## Method

Based on suggestions from research (Bresnen & Marshall, 2002; Nicolini et al., 2003), this thesis adopted a practice-based approach to study the daily practice of Dutch UDP projects.

In consultation with experts from the Dutch UDM domain, two cases have been selected where individuals consider their relationships to be widely based on trust and mutual understanding (Nyström, 2007). Furthermore, formal partnering components such as a bid evaluation process based on soft parameters, an open book system and core collaborative tools are also in place (Eriksson, 2010).

Taking an interpretivist ontological standpoint, data from five semi-structured interviews per case was translated into coherent case narratives (Clandinin, 2006) to better understand the first person view of partnering practices in Dutch UDPs.

## Case analysis

The case narratives hereby revealed a considerably different set of factors that case informants perceived to have contributed to the emergence of partnering relations within as well as between projects.

As such, in case A, case informants mentioned a variety of factors surrounding the open book system, personal interaction as well as a strong leadership position of the public manager to have been crucial.

On the other hand, in case B, case informants emphasized a variety of factors surrounding the design of the tender and the partner selection process and as well as the management practice of jointly owning and solving problems as crucial to the emergence of partnering between individuals.

## Cross-case analysis

In the cross-case analysis of this thesis, cases were compared to each other while determining the answer to four sub research questions:

*How is partnering is constructed and negotiated in place?* (RQ1), *How does the interpersonal learning process towards partnering relations look like?* (RQ2), *How do formal partnering components interact in the informal*

*process towards partnering relations?* (RQ3) and *How do individuals manage paradoxes, contradictions and unintended consequences at an interpersonal level?* (RQ4).

Insights of the cross-case analysis of both cases are summarized in Figure 1 below.

| Construction and negotiation of partnering | Interpersonal learning process | Interaction of partnering components | Management of paradoxes |
|---|---|---|---|
| • Dependence of project circumstances, expected benefits and individuals understanding of partnering | • Long and short-term learning processes of public managers initiated by disruptive events | • Components have been introduced in three stages | • Management practices that work for both partners first need to be discovered |
| • Was led by the public managers resulting in clear relational game rules and a change of the organisation of the project | • Positive and at least neural starting level of trust is relevant | • Most components have a positive effect, however the relevance of components differs | • Joint probem ownership and solving as frequently mentioned partner management practice |
| • Informal processes surrounding the formal partnering components crucial | •Learnings about partners behaviour from first meetings and critical situations crucial | • Some components have paradoxical effects such as the open book system or e-mails | • Some paradoxes are more difficult to solve than others (e.g. social complexities within the public organization or paradoxes surrounding the role of wider team members) |
| • Own behaviour as means to negotiate and construct partnering | • Learnings about the partner depend on the own perceptions of explicit and implicit action in resonance with the own understanding of partnering | • Partnering efforts need to be mutual | • Frequent communication, continuous promotion of founding relational and (contractual) flexibility as further important practices |
| • Behavioral game rules were put in place based on which private parties are invited to co-create partnering | • Positive experiences need to overweigh negative ones considerably for partnering relations to emerge | • Effects of partnering components depend on the individual perception of actions | |
| • Behavioural principles were further safeguarded formally | | | |

**Figure 1: Summary findings RQs (own figure)**

Conclusion

Based on the revelations from the cases and cross-case analysis, it has been observed that not only was there a very different set of factors that was named by the case informants, but that whether a factor was perceived as inhibiting or promoting the emergence of partnering relations depended on the individual's perception.

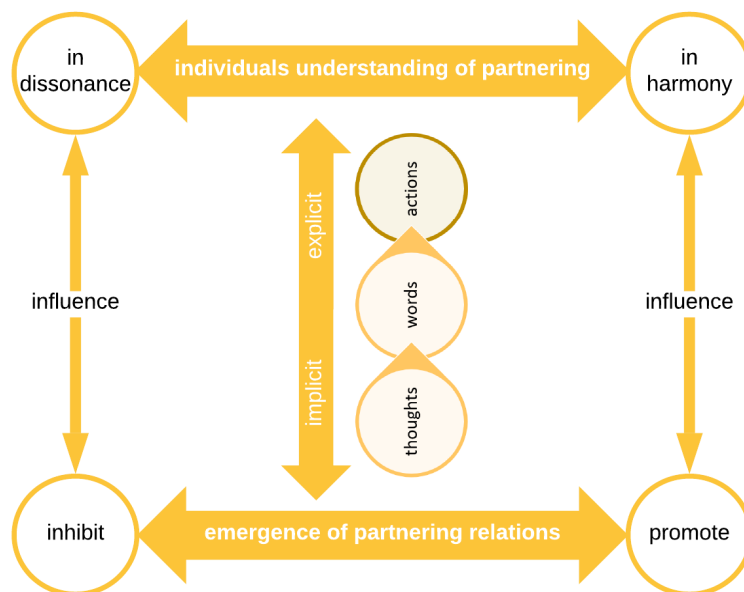To illustrate this further, Figure 2 has been developed.



**Figure 2: The individual's perception as key to the emergence of partnering relations (own figure)**

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Here, it can be seen, that depending on the individuals understanding of partnering relations, individuals consciously or unconsciously are engaged in a set of implicit or explicit actions, such as implementing a partner selection process or the respectful treatment of sensitive information.

Depending on the individual's perception of the performed actions, words said or merely the perception of the other persons thoughts, when these were in dissonance with the own partnering understanding, they were likely to inhibit the emergence of partnering relations. However, when they were perceived as in harmony with the individuals understanding of partnering, they were likely to promote the emergence of partnering relations.

Ultimately, revisiting the suggestion of Kadefors (2004) to apply trust theory to study partnering, it is suggested that the individuals starting level of trust, the individual's choice and ability to trust, the human preference for reciprocity as well as the individuals abilities, benevolence and integrity should be considered as factors when researching the emergence of partnering.

## Discussion

Discussing findings in the light of current research, a set of recommendations for individuals that are interested in contributing to a change of culture in the Dutch UDM domain have been developed.

Accordingly, researchers are asked to join Dutch UDM with construction project partnering research through social studies. For public managers, it is suggested that to gain more knowledge on the informal aspects of collaboration and with it the organisational and behavioural changes that might be needed for partnering relations to arise. Private managers on the other hand are encouraged to be more proactive e.g. by asking for more interaction or suggesting partnering during the tender process.

Moreover, for capacity building organisations, it is suggested to quickly builds upon knowledge on partnering to being able to teach practitioners and students on the concept of partnering but also the variety of abilities that are needed if partnering is to be consciously pursued in the domain.

Ultimately, reflecting on this research, it is concluded that with the insights of this thesis and the joint efforts of different parties, the institutionalisation of partnering as an alternative approach to existing practices in Dutch UDPs might not only be interesting but also within reach.

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**Figure 3: Reading guide (own figure)**

This Master thesis report is divided into eight chapters (Figure 3).

In the first chapter, the topic of partnering in Dutch urban development projects is introduced to the reader to provide an overview of the research problem, objective and aim of this research.

Based on the introductory chapter, chapter two elaborates on the chosen research method in preparation for the empirical research.

In chapter three, the emergence of partnering in two Dutch Urban development projects (UDPs) is analysed from the viewpoint of interviewed case informants. The main aim of this chapter is to gain insights into the lived experiences of partnering and properly inform the reader about the factors case informants perceive to have contributed to the emergence of partnering.

Following the case analysis, chapter four focuses on cross-analysing the two cases. Here, the factors identified by project informants are further analysed based on a set of research questions to better understand the type of factors that promoted the emergence of partnering.

Based on the insights from the cross-case analysis, in chapter five, the main conclusion of this thesis is revealed. Furthermore, analysed factors are compiled and arranged into a conceptual model.

Following the conclusion, in chapter six, a discussion of the thesis findings in the light of current research, concrete recommendations for researchers and Dutch UDP practitioners and a reflection round up this thesis.

Ultimately, in chapter seven and eight, the references and appendices are provided.

# 1.0 Introduction

This thesis has been carried out against the background of the growing complexities in today's cities. It builds upon the insight that to develop 'Sustainable Urban Development Projects' (SUD) (Yigitcanlar & Teriman, 2015), one actor cannot do it on its own.

As public and private parties, in consolidation with the society, seem to have difficulties to collaborate in The Netherlands, the starting point of this thesis is the current collaboration situation in the Dutch urban development domain. As the concept of partnering aims to help individuals in the construction sector to refocus on their task at hand, namely, to co-create the sustainable development of our today's cities, this thesis furthermore investigates the opportunities and challenges with this approach.



1.1. Motivation

1.2 Background

1.3 Problem statement

1.4 Objective

1.5 Research questions

1.6 Relevance

1.7 Summary

**Figure 4: Reading guide chapter one (own figure)**

As shown in Figure 4, this introductory chapter is comprised of the following elements: a more specific motivation for this thesis (Chapter 1.1), followed by the underlying background of both, Dutch UDM research and partnering (Chapter 1.2).

Having understood the challenges and emerging trends of both research domains, a combined problem statement is provided in chapter 1.3, which is translated into the research objectives in chapter 1.4 and the underlying research questions of this thesis presented in chapter 1.5.

Chapter 1.6 holds an explanation of the scientific, social and practical relevance and finally, a summary rounds up this chapter (Chapter 1.7).

# 1.1 Motivation

Currently, it seems that two research domains are merging without much knowledge from each other yet, which are the domains of Dutch Urban Development Management (UDM) research and partnering research.

> *Dutch UDM research entering field of partnering*

Facing inter-organizational collaboration challenges in Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) in Dutch urban development projects (UDPs) (Heurkens, 2012), currently, voices such as Heurkens & Hobma (2014) and Deloitte (2017) explain about a need for an informal collaboration culture respectively a focus on 'teaming' in Dutch UDP practice.

As a response to this criticism and in the hope that public and private actors become partners instead of just associates, currently, the rise of the 'partner-selection process' can be observed in Dutch UDP practice (Kersten et al., 2019; van Zessen, 2020).

Since these observed trends sound very familiar to the aim of partnering research to help actors in the construction sector to build relations based on trust and mutual understanding (CII, 1991; Nyström, 2007) by among others the introduction of formal processes such as a bid evaluation based on soft parameters (Eriksson, 2010), it appears that Dutch UDM research is somewhat unknowingly entering the domain of partnering research.

Since the partnering concept seems to have already found its way into Dutch construction management research (Koolwijk et al., 2018), it is therefore assumed that it is only a matter of time that also Dutch UDM research will discover the concept of partnering.

Not only Dutch UDM research but also European partnering research seem to have somewhat entered UDM research in a disconnected manner. While partnering projects between publicly owned companies and private parties have been studied by partnering researchers in the past(Eriksson, 2010; Jacobsson & Wilson, 2014), it seems that only recently PPPs between municipalities and private parties in UDPs have been investigated (Karrbom Gustavsson et al., 2017; Smith & Thomasson; 2018).

Since the partnering domain has been found to be disconnected from UDM research, this domain is having difficulty attributing project success to the use of partnering principles (Nyström, 2008), Bresnen & Marshall (2002) explain that further insights into the juxtaposition between local partnering practices and the wider industry discourse are needed to better understand the emergence of partnering relationships.

As other publications by Bresnen, 2009, Jacobsson & Wilson, 2014 and Smith & Thomasson, 2018 express a need to further understand partnering relations in different parts of the industry and different countries, this shows that a study that unites Dutch UDM with partnering research is worthwhile to pursue (Figure 5).



**Dutch UDM research**
•Call for teaming
•Rise of partner selection methods

**Partnering research**
•Research of UDPs
•Interest in partnering practices from abroad

**Figure 5: Motivation summary (own figure)**

## 1.2 Background

As mentioned in the previous sub-chapter, the motivation of this thesis stems from the observation that Dutch UDM research and partnering research seem to come together without having much knowledge from each other yet.

In the following section, background on Dutch UDPs and partnering is presented to introduce the reader to the challenges, emerging trends and currently investigated solutions of both domains.

## 1.2.1 Dutch Urban Development Projects (UDPs)

Dutch urban development projects (UDPs), which can be seen as *"(…) a framework of concrete material interventions inside a geographically distinct urban area''* (Daamen, 2010, p. 18),  have evolved considerably over the past decades.

Starting from UDPs rather being under government leadership, since approximately the beginning of the 2000s (Heurkens, 2012), increasingly it is being recognized that "(…) collaboration between public actors, societal organizations, citizens and companies is needed to effectively handle problems and to seize opportunities" (Ministerie van Volkshuisvesting, Ruimtelijke Ordening en Milieu [VROM], 2006).

***The rise of Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs)***

With the growing importance of the private sector for Dutch UDP practice, intensified cooperation resulted in inter-organisational changes that can be most profoundly visible in the rise of Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) in urban developments (Heurkens, 2012).

The understanding of PPPs is hereby suspect to very country-specific characteristics and terminologies that constantly evolve (Tang et al., 2010; Heurkens, 2012). Using the definition of Nijkamp et al. (2002, p. 1869) for

the Dutch context, a PPP can be understood as *"(...) an institutionalized form of cooperation between public and private actors who, on the basis of their own indigenous objectives, work together towards a joint target, in which both parties accept investment risks on the basis of a predefined distribution of revenues and costs."*

### Inter-organisational collaboration challenges

In the Netherlands, the most institutionalized PPP model is the 'joint-venture'. In this model, public and private parties typically form a land development company (*Dutch: 'GEM'*) and become shareholders. Entering into the partnership rather upon a coincidental interest in a development project and based on land ownership, after the transfer of land to the development company, together, public and private parties prepare the land and release or sell the land parcels while widely sharing their profits, losses, risks and responsibilities. (Heurkens,2012).

Unfortunately, several inter-organisational collaboration challenges are reported from this model that include incompatible value systems causing hybridism, misconceptions causing distrust, and an inability to cope with external dynamics (Heurkens, 2012).

### The search for alternative organization forms

Criticising Dutch UDP practice to inherit a sense of ineffectiveness and inefficiency (van de Klundert, 2008; Van Rooy, 2009; de Zeeuw, 2007; Daamen, 2010; van der Krabben, 2011) until even stating that Dutch PPPs had their chance to mature for about 20 years and only a few truly successful projects have been realized (Harms, 2008), a search for alternative organization forms evolved during the last years.

Inspired by UK practice, among others, the 'concession model' evolved from voices such as de Zeeuw (2007) who argued that a clearer role distribution, with a facilitating public and a leading private sector role (Heurkens, 2012; Heurkens et al., 2014), might help to solve inter-organisational collaboration challenges. This approach seemed logical as actors in joint venture models naturally tended to go back to traditional ways of working of contracting out and separating responsibilities despite being in an inter-organisational collaborative relationship (Klijn & Teisman, 2003).

Unfortunately, the concession model faces similar challenges as the joint-venture model. Reporting about a 'we against them' relationship, a lack of public role consistency during the realization stage, an inflexibility of concession agreements, a lack of commitment and competences of public project managers, unsatisfactory community involvement and a lack of public management in the development process, Heurkens (2012) explains that a clear task distribution still requires an extensive informal public-private collaboration culture; a culture that is currently lacking in the Dutch urban development domain (Heurkens & Hobma, 2014).

### UDM entering Partnering

To overcome the pertaining lack of efficiency and effectiveness of Dutch UDPs, the search for different organisation forms continues (e.g. 'Developing Apart Together' (see de Zeeuw, 2019; Hobma et al., 2019)).

In addition, this search, however, a new trend seems to emerge in Dutch UDM research. Acknowledging that 'soft' sociological aspects in Dutch PPP research have been rather overlooked by 'hard' economic and spatial aspects (Bult-Spiering & Dewulf, 2008), Heurkens (2012, p. 33) explains that ''A possible solution does not only lay in the construction of solid agreements, it is the culture that needs to change as well.'' As Deloitte (2017) call the required change as a need for more 'teaming' in The Dutch UDP domain, it appears that, unknowingly, Dutch UDM research shows interest for the research field of partnering (CII, 1991; Nyström, 2007).

While most suggestions are still rather vague, some researchers like Kersten et al. (2019) and van Zessen, (2020) describe the rise of the so-called 'Partner selection procedure' as a formal process that ''(…) could be the answer to the rising complexities in urban area developments'' (van Zessen, 2020, p. 4) in Dutch UDPs.

As a 'bid evaluation based on soft parameters' is also suggested by several partnering researchers as a means to facilitate partnering relations (Eriksson, 2010), it seems that also the first more concrete solutions of Dutch UDM research overlap with suggestions by partnering researchers.

Herby, it, however, needs to be mentioned that several partnering researchers question this rather 'positivistic' approach of being able to 'engineer' relationships by means of formal processes (Bresnen & Marshall, 2002; Bygballe et al., 2010).

Before more background is provided regarding partnering research and particularly where partnering research potentially meets (Dutch) UDM research, Figure 6 summarizes the above-described events in an event-based model.

It is important to mention that the depicted events are a simplification of reality where time dimensions have been widely disregarded.



**Figure 6: Event-based model Dutch UDM research (own figure)**

## 1.2.2 Partnering

As mentioned above, partnering is a concept that aims to help actors in the construction sector, among others by introducing a set of formal procedures, to develop relationships based on trust and mutual understanding. While that is correct, this chapter elucidates the wider background of the concept as well as explains the current state of research.

***Partnering is not new***

Firstly, it shall be clarified that ''(…) there is really nothing new in partnering as it has been customary in numerous industries and markets that trust-based, non-adversarial, noncontractual relationships often are preferable to contractual relationships'' (McGeorge et al., 2002, p. p. 226). As Larsen (2007, p. 3), however, explains, ''In some places it does seem, though, that partnering and trust are new concepts to an industry with widespread adversarial practices.''

***Partnering on its way to Europe***

In the construction sector, partnering was introduced approximately in the 1980's (Larsen, 2007). It is unclear whether the concept stems from the Japanese 'Kaizen' supply-chain philosophy that closely relates with the principle of Total Quality Management or from the Construction Industry Institute (CII, 1991; Larsen, 2007) since then the partnering concept has travelled the globe (see Lahdenperä, 2012; Larsen, 2007) to provide for an alternative management theory to current practices as the sector increasingly realises that project-based production in construction is so different from all other industries that it needs a theory of its own (Koskela & Ballard, 2006).

Worldwide, partnering is said to be institutionalised in the US, parts of Asia as well as some countries of Europe such as the UK and Denmark (Larsen, 2007; Bonke, 2010). Orientating themselves among others at the UK and Danish practices, increasingly other Nordic countries such as Sweden or Norway are becoming interested in a sector-wide implementation of the partnering concept (Larsen, 2007; Bygballe et al., 2010; Hosseini et al., 2018).

***Suitable for dynamic capital projects***

Interest for partnering herby particularly arises as construction projects are becoming increasingly more complex. As a trust-based environment is said to neutralise opportunism (Grossman & Hart, 1986), a variety of benefits are expected from partnering relationships including an increase in efficiency, quality, a reduction of litigations and a faster resolution of disputes, an increase customer satisfaction, an elimination of adversarial relationships, more sustainability etc. (Hosseini et al., 2018).

Particularly beneficial when applied from the beginning of a project (Nyström, 2007), Eriksson (2010) explains that partnering is suitable for dynamic capital projects that can be characterized by high complexity, customization, duration, time pressure and/or high uncertainty.

As respective projects can be particularly found in the infrastructure sector, it becomes logical why partnering principles were first applied in projects such as the Oresund fixed link bridge and tunnel between Sweden and Denmark or Terminal 5 in Heathrow Airport (Larsen, 2007).

### *A slightly more conservative approach than project alliancing and supply chain integration*

With a focus on the early involvement of key parties, transparent financials, shared risk and reward, joint decision-making, and a collaborative multiparty agreement (Lahdenperä, 2012) partnering is very similar to other collaborative construction project arrangements such as project alliancing or the philosophy of supply chain integration.

While all concepts are the result ''(…) of many development efforts owing to the frustration felt toward the opportunism inherent in traditional contracting'' (Lahdenperä, 2012, p. 57), partnering is said to be the more conservative approach concerning the work scope and liabilities. Furthermore, partnering is rather seen as an enacting strategy to existing contract models instead of a separate contract form (Hosseini et al., 2018).

Ultimately, Lahdenperä (2012), however, explains that the concepts are very fluid and that the border between them is increasingly becoming blurred.

### *Partnering can be defined as a Ludwig-Wittgenstein family resemblance concept*

While most authors typically refer to the early definition of partnering as a *''(…) relationship is based upon trust, dedication to common goals and an understanding of each other's individual expectations and values"* (CII, 1991), until today, no shared definition on partnering has been reached as the understanding of partnering varies between local understandings and practices (Bresnen, 2009).

Instead of attempting to provide a written definition, Nyström (2005) explains that partnering could, however, be defined as a Ludwig-Wittgenstein's family resemblance concept.
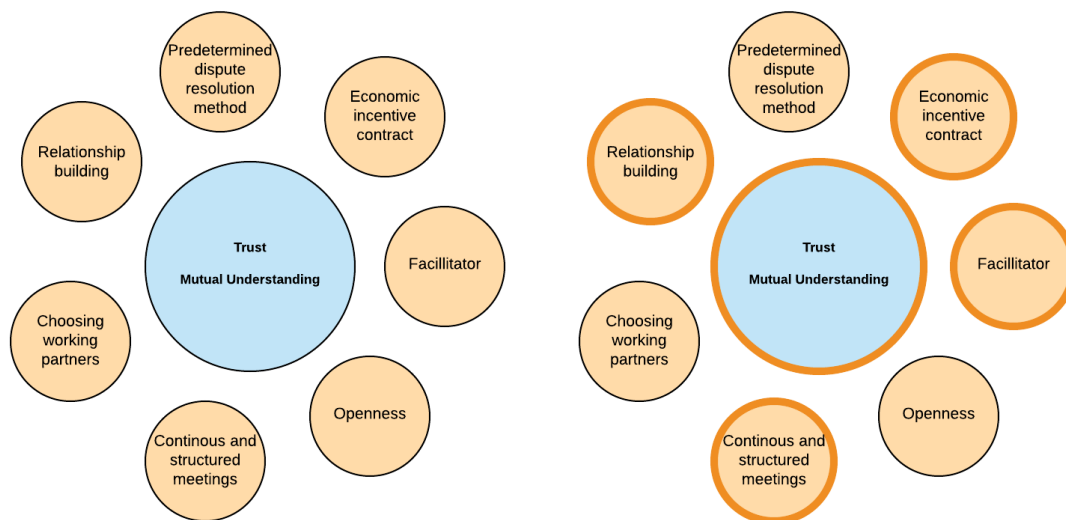


**Figure 7: Partnering flower and applied partnering flower (own figure, after Nyström, 2007)**

As can be seen in Figure 7, hereby, partnering could be depicted as a family of concepts that consist of a set of interrelated characteristics.

### *A family of construction relationships based on trust and mutual understanding*

At the centre of this 'partnering family', most researchers see construction relationships based on trust and mutual understanding (Nyström, 2007). Calling the partnering family a 'partnering flower' due to its shape, Nyström (2007) explains that next to the defining core of the partnering flower, the partnering concept consists of a variety of supporting 'leaves'.

In literature, they are sometimes called components (Eriksson, 2010), elements (Hosseini et al., 2018), means (Jacobsson & Wilson, 2014) or key success factors and tools (Smith & Thomasson, 2018), these 'leaves' are usually discussed as formal processes that shall help to facilitate the so-called 'partnering relationship'.

As the type of 'leaves' and their utilisation can look very different depending on the project (Hosseini et al., 2018), there is currently some confusion in the domain whether ''(…) practitioners have misunderstood what partnering entails or the minimum requirements are too stringent and do not reflect the real-life use of the concept'' (Hosseini et al., 2018, p.1).

### While all partnering components might contribute, not all are needed to define partnering

Basing the partnering concept on the partnering flower of Nyström (2007), it is understood that for a construction project to belong to the partnering family, it does not matter whether a project only uses the rising Dutch partner selection method (in Figure 7 called 'choosing working partners') or an integrated version including compensation based on open books and core collaborative tools as long as the individuals working in the project perceive that their relations are somewhat based on trust and mutual understanding.

This seems to also aligned with Jacobsson & Wilson (2014) who explain that while all partnering components, and particularly the above three (Eriksson, 2010), might contribute to the emergence of partnering relations, not all components are necessary to define the partnering concept.

Ultimately, as Koolwijk et al. (2018) reveal that relations based traditional project-delivery methods can also foster integration within project-based design teams, indications are given to believe that indeed projects that do not apply partnering 'leaves' can also reach partnering relations and therefore belong to the partnering family.

### Partnering is a complex interplay between formal and informal processes

Currently, partnering research is becoming aware that, for the emergence of partnering relations, more factors are required than just applying formal components. Explaining that ''(…) the nature and quality of relationships between client and contractor [individuals] depend upon a complex and dynamic interplay of formal integrative mechanisms and informal social processes'', Bresnen & Marshall (2002, p. 498) criticise that existing research has been somewhat undermining the social dimension in the emergence of partnering relations including informal processes such as adopted styles of organisation and management, project
team dynamics, broader structural and cultural attributes as well as human resource management practices.

### Partnering components can have paradoxical effects

The importance of informal processes in the creation of partnering relations hereby becomes particularly obvious from the researches of Bresnen (2007), Chan et al. (2012) and Kadefors (2004).

Whereas Bresnen (2007) highlights some overall paradoxes of the partnering concept such as a risk to overengineer processes, Chan et al. (2012) reveal that partnering might also be susceptible to paradoxes in the area of sensemaking, formality and time synchronicity.

Ultimately, Kadefors (2004) found that also the partnering components themselves can have paradoxical effects on the processes of trust-building and co-operative interaction.

While she finds that, in Swedish practice, relationship monitoring practices and conflict resolution methods impacted the generation of trust rather positively, she explains that other mechanisms as economic reward systems or a strong focus on economic incentives sometimes had paradoxical effects.

### Trust theory might help to understand partnering

Furthermore Kadefors (2004), however, describes that the emergence of partnering (paradoxes), might be explainable by trust theory as the emergence of trust as a psychological state is vital to the emergence of farther-reaching co-operative processes.

In specific, the researcher explains that, depending on institutional factors and the perceived incentives for cooperation, individuals usually start their relationships with a certain level of trust.

From this starting level in combination with the individual's propensity to trust, individuals need to develop interpersonal trust for trust to emerge through intense interaction over a longer period of time. The development of relational trust, however, is suspect to so-called 'antecedents of trust' including the perceived ability, benevolence and integrity of the to be trusted person. (Kadefors, 2004).

Hereby, ''(…) ability refers to skills, competencies and characteristics relevant to the specific situation, while benevolence is the extent to which a trustee is believed to want to do good to the trustor. This aspect

encompasses factors such as loyalty, receptivity and caring, and suggests that the trustee has some specific attachment to the trustor, aside from an egocentric profit motive. Integrity, finally, involves a perception that the trustee adheres to a set of principles that the trustor finds acceptable. Such principles include consistency, fairness, reliability, openness and a general value congruence'' Kadefors (2004, p. 177).

Ultimately, Kadefors (2004), however, explains that there is also a preference for reciprocity in human interaction which can, if violated, harm the emergence of interpersonal trust.

### *Insights into the lived partnering experiences from other contexts are needed*

Furthermore, it becomes increasingly clear that partnering is an emergent and social achievement (Bresnen & Marshall, 2002) that engages individuals into a variety of learning processes.

Observing that ''(…) the group is moving through the loop of expectations-actions-learning as the described factors to a large extend are constructs on an interpersonal level'', Jacobsson & Wilson (2014, p. 1923) explain that similar to the pyramid of human needs of Maslow (Maslow, 1981), individuals might need to climb a certain 'hierarchy of needs' until a partnering way of working can be reached. According to the researchers, this hierarchy consists of a foundation, means (the partnering 'leaves') and a set of factors that all have their adoption curves.

Consequently, individuals do not only need to adapt to novel formal procedures such as the use of an open book system but, through particularly the joint overcoming of challenges (Smith & Thomasson, 2018), individuals must learn that they can trust and rely on each other (Kadefors, 2004).

Among others due to the complexity of this learning process, increasingly researchers understand that to better understand the factors that promote the emergence of partnering relations, more insights from lived partnering experiences from other contexts might be needed (Jacobsson & Wilson, 2014; Bresnen & Marshall, 2002; Bresnen, 2009).

### *Partnering research enters UDPs*

One of these other contexts might just be PPPs in UDPs. Being among the first researchers that consciously focus on the partnering concept in the context of public-private collaboration where ''Partnering becomes in this way one form of a Public-Private Partnership (PPP) where collaboration is emphasized'', Smith & Thomasson, 2018 (p. 192) explain that the emergence of partnering in PPPs can be much more complex than previous studies indicate.

Whereas their investigated projects, two UDPs in the water sewage sector, might not necessarily fit the understanding of UDPs of this study (see 1.5.1 Definition of terms), the researchers explain about the paradoxical influence of public parties in the creation of partnering relations. Moreover, the researchers explain that the partnering process resulted in a mutual learning effect that was particularly prominent on the public side as ''Both municipal companies attributed an increase in their knowledge of project management to what was gained through the collaboration with the contract company'' (Smith & Thomasson, 2018, p. 203).

A potentially more suitable study is the one by Karrbom Gustavsson et al. (2017) in Lill & Witt (2019). Whereas here the researchers in return rather focus on partnering as a supply chain integration concept, the study is interesting as it analyses a variety of complex urban development (real estate) projects of the Stockholm Royal Seaport where ''(…) each stage of Stockholm Royal Seaport can be studied as a program including a multitude of interdependent and parallel projects performed within a limited timeframe and a limited area'' (Lill & Witt, 2019, p. 253)

''Since formal procurement and contracting mechanisms are put in place mainly at the project level, not the program level'' (Lill & Witt, 2019, p. 253), further indications are given that partnering in PPPs in UDPs might be more complex than in single construction projects and therefore particularly interesting to study.

In conclusion, there seems to be increasing interest in the partnering research domain to gain more insights into foreign practices in different domains of the construction sector (Bresnen & Marshall, 2002) including PPPs (Jacobsson & Wilson, 2014) in urban development projects (Smith & Thomasson, 2018; Karrbom Gustavsson et al., 2017). Accordingly, this thesis understands that ground is given to believe that not only Dutch UDM

research but also partnering research might be interested in the lived experiences from partnering practices in Dutch UDPs.

Similar to the former chapter, below in Figure 8, a selection of events in the partnering domain is depicted. Hereby, again, no assurance for the chronological correctness of events is given. Also, it is to be noted that only a few events were selected from the above description.
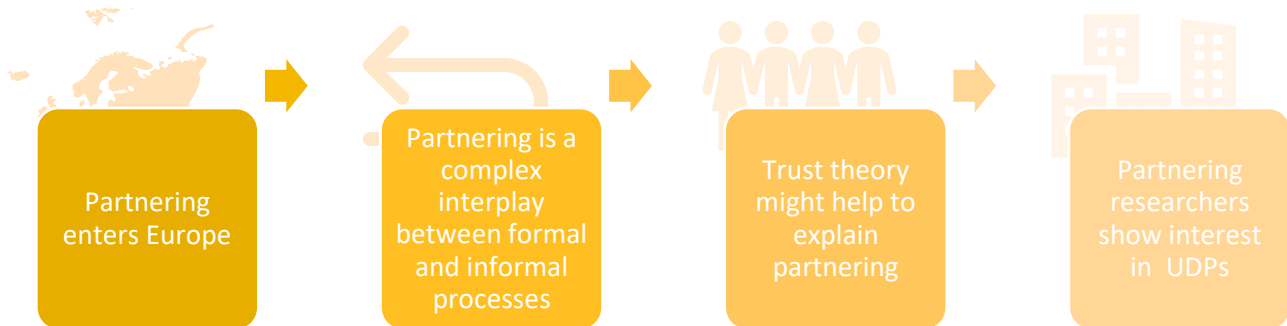


**Figure 8: Event-based model partnering research (own figure)**

## 1.3 Problem statement

In the previous chapter, it has been displayed that (Dutch) UDM research seems to currently investigate partnering practices somewhat disconnected from the partnering research domain.

Also, it was portrayed that partnering is currently showing interest in foreign partnering practices and new domains such as PPPs in UDPs in the hope to reveal factors that promote the emergence of partnering relationships. Accordingly, the joint problem statement of this thesis translates to:

> *There is not much knowledge on factors that promote the emergence of partnering relations in Dutch UDPs.*

*Note:* For term definitions see Chapter 1.5.1.

## 1.4 Objective

Following the above, the objective of this thesis is:

> *To reveal factors that promote the emergence of partnering relations in Dutch UDPs.*

Hereby, it shall be noted that this thesis aims to focus on the emergence of partnering relations between individuals working in Dutch municipalities and individuals working in private organisations during their daily practice.

In particular, the objective is to understand the first person view of practitioners on how structural and more interpersonal elements interact.

Also, it is important to mention that this objective does not focus on factors that make individuals interested to pursue partnering relations, but which factors contribute to how individuals perceive their relations to be 'partnering relations.'

*Note:* For term definitions see Chapter 1.5.1.

# 1.4.1 Expert consultation research objective

To verify the objective of this thesis and develop suitable research questions, several Dutch experts were consulted regarding their opinions on the research topic.

In total, three experts from the Dutch UDM domain and two experts on partnering were consulted.

Expert A and B herby work as consultants in the Dutch UDM domain. Furthermore, expert B, similar to expert C, is a university researcher. Expert D and E are researchers and part-time consultants in the area of construction partnering at a Dutch university.

***UDM experts unaware but curious of partnering***

Expert A, B and C explained that they have never heard of topic of partnering prior to this thesis proposal.

The researchers had to be introduced to the concept, such as the attempt to help actors in the domain to develop relationships based on trust and mutual understanding but also the variety of formal components that shall help to facilitate partnering relations. The researchers agreed that it is an interesting and timely topic given the variety of inter-organizational collaboration challenges UDPs currently face.

When explaining the experts about the formal partnering components such as a bid evaluation based on soft criteria, compensation based on open books as well as core collaborative tools such as workshops, predetermined conflict resolution methods and team-building activities (Eriksson, 2010), expert A explains that he finds particularly the latter very interesting to focus on.

Expert B, on the other hand, reacts to the 'selection process based on soft criteria' as promising as he explains that there is currently the 'partner selection process' being introduced in some Dutch urban development projects.

Expert C seems knowledgeable about what happens behind the façade of several Dutch UDPs. This expert is aware of several projects that face collaboration challenges, but also is aware of projects that can be characterized as ''(…) strong contacts that got along very well beside it being a forced marriage''. As a result, he expressed interest in the overall concept of partnering.

***Dutch construction partnering researchers encouraging study***

Expert D and E encouraged the investigation of partnering practices in specifically the Dutch UDM domain. Expert D herby particularly expressed interest in the paradoxes with partnering components, particularly with the open-book system, as he experienced paradoxical effects of partnering components during his professional career.

Ultimately, expert E claimed that the research topic might be interesting. In particular, he recommended the topic of learning to focus on daily management and to observe how public and private parties overcome their disconnections when paradoxes occur.

**Table 1: Expert consultation summary (own table)**

| Expert | Position | Comment |
|---|---|---|
| **UDM domain** | | |
| A | Consultant and researcher | No knowledge, but interest in partnering, particularly interested in collaboration tools |
| B | Consultant | No knowledge, but interest in partnering, but on the rise of a partner selection process in Dutch UDPs |
| C | University researcher | No knowledge, but interest in partnering, explains about collaboration challenges but also projects where individuals got along well |
| **Construction project domain** | | |
| D | Consultant and researcher | Has knowledge and experience with partnering. Encourages study and expresses particular interest in the paradoxical effects of components |
| E | Consultant and researcher | Has knowledge and experience with partnering. Encourages study including a focus on lived experiences of daily managers in overcoming disconnections, learning to trust and partnering paradoxes |

## 1.5 Research questions

From the joint objective, while taking into account the suggestions of a variety of experts, a set of research questions have been developed.

Since studying the 'lived experience' of PPPs in UDPs in different (cultural) contexts may help to reveal factors that promote the emergence of partnering (Bresnen & Marshall, 2002; Bresnen, 2009), the main research question (MRQ) of this thesis is translated into:

> *MRQ: What are factors that promote the emergence of partnering relations in Dutch UDPs?*

Repeating Bresnen (2009, p. 932) and his statement that, against the often inherent positivism in partnering research ''(…) there is another way of revealing insights about partnering that owes a lot more to understanding how partnering is constructed and negotiated in situ and how the knowing and learning associated with partnering is, consequently, situated in practice'' (Bresnen, 2009, p. 932) (see also Chapter 2.0 Research method), among others, the following sub-research questions have been developed (*RQs*):

> *How is partnering constructed and negotiated in place?*

> *How does the interpersonal learning process towards partnering relations look like?*

> *How do partnering components interact in the informal process towards partnering relations?*

> *How are paradoxes, contradictions and unintended consequences managed at an interpersonal level?*

## 1.5.1 Definition of terms

The following definitions of terms have been adopted in this thesis:

**Table 2: Definition of terms in research questions (own table)**

| Term | Definition | Source |
|---|---|---|
| **Construction** | *''Construction refers to the creation of an abstract entity.''* | Oxford University Press (OUP) (2019) |
| **Emergence** | Emergence refers to *''The process of coming into being, or of becoming important or prominent''* | Oxford University Press (OUP) (2019) |
| **Factor** | A factor refers to a *''Circumstance, fact, or influence that contributes to a result or outcome.''* | Oxford University Press (OUP) (2019) |
| **Negotiation** | Negotiation can be defined as a *''Discussion aimed at reaching an agreement''* | Oxford University Press (OUP) (2019) |
| **Partnering relations** | The term *'partnering relations'* is used interchangeably with the term *'partnering'* during this thesis. Partnering, respectively partnering relations are associated with relationships between individuals that are widely based on trust and mutual understanding. As this thesis takes on an ontological interpretivist standpoint, meaning that partnering is understood to be created from the perceptions and consequent actions of the social actors concerned with its existence, this thesis widely adopts the understanding of partnering respectively partnering relations from the first person view of case informants. | Own definition |

| Promote | Promote refers to *''Further the progress of (something, especially a cause, venture, or aim); support or actively encourage''* | Oxford University Press (OUP), 2019 |
|---|---|---|
| **Public-Private Partnership** | *''A PPP is an institutionalized form of cooperation between public and private actors who, on the basis of their own indigenous objectives, work together towards a joint target, in which both parties accept investment risks on the basis of a predefined distribution of revenues and costs''* | Nijkamp et al. (2002, p. 1869) |
| **Urban development project** | '*'An urban development project refers to a framework of concrete material interventions inside a geographically distinct urban area.*'' | Daamen (2010, p.18) |
| | In specific, this thesis investigates two Dutch UDPs. **Case A** is a sustainable housing development between a middle-sized Dutch municipality and multiple private actors that partner for a life span of almost two decades. In this project, elements of project and strategic partnering can be found (Gadde & Dubois, 2010) | Own description based on case information |
| | **Case B** is an inner-city project with an estimated life span of prospectively around five years between a big Dutch municipality and one private developer. Accordingly, here partnering is applied in a single project. | Own description based on case information |

# 1.6 Relevance

As already indicated in the background of this thesis (Chapter 1.2), this thesis is considered scientifically relevant for both the Dutch UDM and the (European) partnering domain.

## 1.6.1 Scientific relevance

### *Dutch UDM research*

For Dutch UDM research, this thesis is considered relevant due to mainly two aspects.

#### *A potentially suitable concept to existing UDP challenges*

Firstly, this thesis is considered relevant as it aims to provide relevant information on whether the partnering concept is a suitable concept to better understand and potentially overcome some of the collaboration challenges in Dutch UDPs. Hereby, this thesis particularly addresses Dutch UDM researchers that already expressed interest in the topic of partnering (Bult-Spiering & Dewulf, 2008; Heurkens, 2012; Heurkens & Hobma, 2014; Deloitte, 2017) but also researchers that are curious to hear about new solutions and concepts.

Since the Dutch partner selection process is currently finding proponents in Dutch UDP practice, this thesis could furthermore be scientifically relevant for scholars that are interested in the effects of more specific formal processes to facilitate partnering relations such as partner selection processes (Kersten et al., 2019; van Zessen, 2020).

#### *Insights into Dutch partnering practices in UDPs*

Secondly, from an UDM research point of view, this thesis is considered relevant as it aims to provide insights into Dutch partnering practices and challenges. While insights into Dutch partnering practices aim to equip Dutch UDM researchers with knowledge on existing partnering practices in Dutch UDPs, insights into the challenges of practitioners might help to develop suitable strategies to overcome the challenges that supporters of professional relationships based on trust on mutual understanding are facing in their daily work life.

### *Partnering research*

From a partnering research point of view, this thesis is considered scientifically relevant due to predominantly three aspects, whereas the first overlaps with the previous chapter.

#### *Insights into Dutch partnering practices in UDPs*

Firstly, this thesis is considered scientifically relevant as several researchers (Bresnen & Marshall, 2002; Jacobsson & Wilson, 2014) explain that more insights into foreign partnering practices are needed to better understand the factors that promote the emergence of partnering relations.

Since there is evidently a current increased interest in the complexities of partnering practices in PPPs in UDPs (Smith & Thomasson, 2018; Karrbom Gustavsson et al., 2017), this thesis aims to enrich European partnering research, which is highly influenced by British and Swedish practice (Hong Yuming et al., 2012), with insights from partnering practices in Dutch UDPs.

***Insights into the dynamic interplay between formal and informal processes***

Furthermore, this thesis aims to contribute to an improved understanding of the dynamic interplay between formal and informal processes, which is currently missing in partnering research (Bresnen & Marshall, 2002). Having predominantly exploited the facilitation of partnering relations through formal means (Eriksson, 2010), this thesis aims to let the individuals working in the projects explain themselves which factors they perceive to have contributed to the emergence of a partnering way of working in their projects.

***Paradoxical effects of partnering and their management***

Ultimately, as there is limited research that seems to exist regarding the paradoxical effects of formal partnering components (Kadefors, 2004) and overall partnering paradoxes (Bresnen, 2007; Chan et al., 2012), this thesis aims to contribute further knowledge on the paradoxical effects of partnering components as well as the management practices that individuals apply to overcome these paradoxes.

## 1.6.2 Social relevance

It is assumed that there is also a social relevance dimension to this thesis.

***Increasing the effectiveness of the sector***

Primarily, there is a social relevance considered to this thesis as social complexities seem to pose major barriers to the effective co-creation of sustainable UDPs (Yigitcanlar & Teriman, 2015) in the Netherlands (Bult-Spiering & Dewulf, 2008; Heurkens, 2012), but also in wider parts of the global construction sector (Koskela & Ballard, 2006).

While many public and private parties, under consultation with society, seem to have understood that they need to work together, they are having difficulties to understand how partnering between individuals emerges in practice.

By revealing insights into factors that contribute to the emergence of partnering relations, this thesis aims to help individuals to unlock the potential of collective intelligence in the hope that society will benefit from improved services.

***The construction sector as an attractive workplace***

Secondly, this thesis aims to contribute in making the construction sector a more attractive workplace environment. Reading partnering project evaluations (Nyström, 2008), it becomes clear that many benefits of partnering are the more intangible benefits of a trust-based work environment such as more fun at the workplace or the attraction of younger professionals into this field.

By doing so, it is hoped to contribute to a work environment in which developing today's cities will not feel like a tiring job but as a source of inspiration and passion.

## 1.6.3 Practical relevance

The practical relevance of this thesis is divided into the practical relevance for professionals working in Dutch UDPs as well as the practical relevance for the (predominantly European) construction sector.

### *Dutch UDP practice*

As this thesis focuses on Dutch UDPs, this thesis should be relevant for professionals working in Dutch UDPs in the first place.

***Letting professionals understand the why behind trust-based relations***

Becoming aware of the emergence of partnering in the domain, understanding the benefits, challenges and barriers, this thesis is considered practically relevant as it might inspire further individuals to strive for relations based on trust and mutual understanding.

As Sinek (2009, back cover review) explains that ''(…) people won't truly buy into a product, service, movement, or idea until they understand the WHY behind it'', by presenting the lived experience of individuals

working in these projects, this thesis hopes to inspire practitioners to pursue partnering relations to therewith contribute to the required change in culture in The Dutch UDP domain (Heurkens, 2012) towards informal collaboration (Heurkens & Hobma, 2014) and 'teaming' (Deloitte, 2017).

***Raising awareness on the impact of thoughts, words and actions***

Moreover, this thesis is considered practically relevant as it provides insights into the impact of thoughts, words and actions of individuals in the emergence of a trust-based work environment. By placing focus on both formal and more informal aspects that contribute to the emergence of partnering in Dutch UDP projects, this thesis aims to present professionals a set of tools at hand so that they can better understand how they can influence the emergence of partnering relations themselves.

Based on this, this thesis also invites individuals to share their knowledge and inspire each other how partnering relations between public and private managers can emerge and more in specific how wider formal and informal factors can be understood and utilized to promote the emergence of partnering.

## Construction sector

Ultimately, as not only Dutch UDPs but the global construction sector seems to be one of the few places where the benefits of partnering relations are a rather new concept (Larsen, 2007), practical relevance for the Dutch and maybe even the European construction sector may be given.

***A more value-based work environment***

In addition to helping individuals find ways of trusting each other, this thesis hopes to contribute to the construction sector becoming a more value-based work environment where prices are estimated rather based on the perceived or estimated value of service by individuals instead of the product or historical prices.

Translating this to UDPs, this means that the cost of a project shall be measured based on the perceived quality of the services received by the citizens but also the quality of the processes involved in developing UDPs.

This is considered relevant as, essentially, developing UDPs means joint efforts given by a range of individuals. By revealing insights into the emergence of partnering relations, this thesis aims to inspire the construction sector to become an environment where individuals make predominantly positive experiences with inter-organizational collaboration but also where practitioners are more mindful about their very own behaviours and dynamics of their environment.

In Figure 9, a summary of the scientific, social and practical relevance of this thesis is given.



| Scientific | Social | Practical |
|---|---|---|
| •Suitability of partnering for UDP challenges •Insights into Dutch partnering practices in UDPs •Insights into the dynamic interplay of formal and informal processes •Revealing paradoxes | •Increasing the effectiveness of the sector •The construction sector as an attractive work place | •Letting professionals understand the why behind partnering relations •Raising awareness on the impact of thoughts, words and actions •A more value-based work environment |

**Figure 9: Summary scientific, social and practical relevance (own figure)**

## 1.6 Summary

In summary, this chapter showed why and where Dutch UDM research and partnering research are currently meeting each other.

In particular, it was explained that both domains show that there is a lack of insights and knowledge on the practices and emergence of partnering relations in PPPs in Dutch UDPs.

Based on the recommendations from existing literature on partnering, this thesis aims to reveal factors that contribute to the emergence of partnering relations between individuals working in Dutch UDPs by answering four sub research questions.

Ultimately, this chapter explained that this thesis is considered scientifically, socially and practically relevant for both the Dutch UDM domains and the partnering domain as a better understanding on the emergence of partnering relations proposes to help developing more sustainable cities in the future.
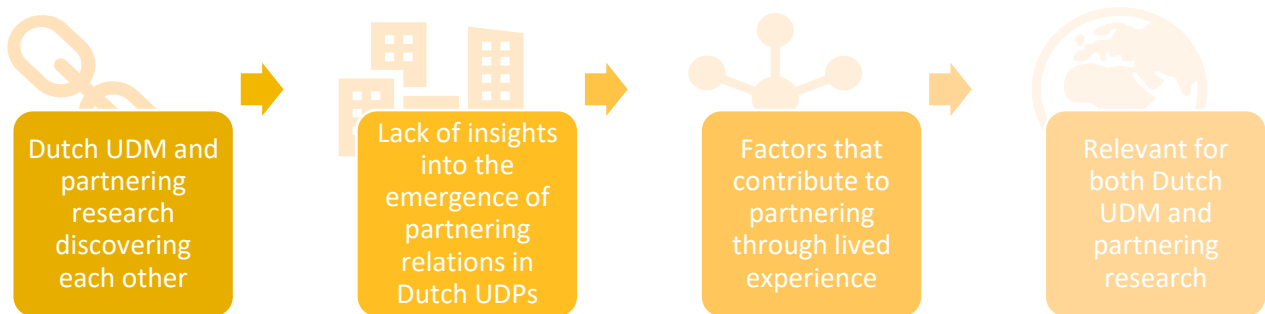


**Figure 10: Summary research method (own figure)**

# 2.0 Research method

This chapter presents the chosen research method to reveal factors that support the emergence of partnering relations between individuals in Dutch urban development projects.
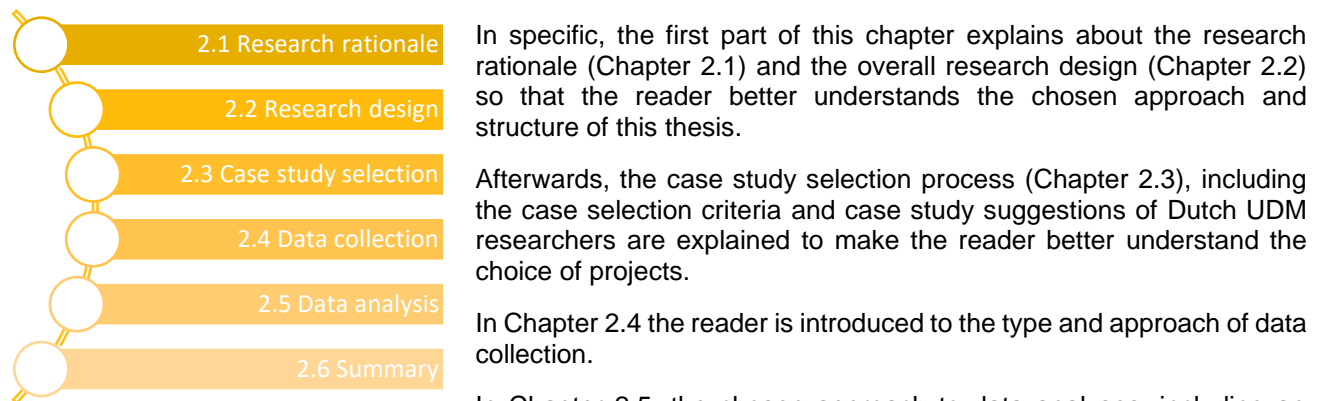


**Figure 11: Reading guide chapter two (own figure)**

In specific, the first part of this chapter explains about the research rationale (Chapter 2.1) and the overall research design (Chapter 2.2) so that the reader better understands the chosen approach and structure of this thesis.

Afterwards, the case study selection process (Chapter 2.3), including the case selection criteria and case study suggestions of Dutch UDM researchers are explained to make the reader better understand the choice of projects.

In Chapter 2.4 the reader is introduced to the type and approach of data collection.

In Chapter 2.5, the chosen approach to data analyses, including an analytical framework and the principles taking into account while gathering and evaluating data, is presented.

Ultimately, a summary of this chapter is provided (Chapter 2.6)

# 2.1 Research rationale

This research is conducted due to the need to gain further insights into the emergence of partnering.

Partnering can be seen as an informal and emergent practice ''(…) that is not only situated in particular (local) circumstances and practices but also actively constituted through the collective sense-making activity of those directly involved'' (Bresnen, 2009, p. 923).

As emergence signals that partnering is a fluid and dynamic concept, this thesis takes a 'practice-based' approach where ''(…) interest is directed towards how practices (and, through them, structures and systems) are constituted and reconstituted through the complex and situated use of a wide array of tools, technologies, objects, languages and bodies of knowledge that populate a domain of activity'' (Bresnen, 2009, p. 923).

While doing so, the author takes a subjective stance, where the social world is seen as always evolving and emerging in social interaction in-between and in the minds of individuals (Nicolini et al., 2003).

Accordingly, to capture social reality, two case studies based on semi-structured and in-depth interviews with key informants were carried out. Based on the 'first person view' of the individuals perceived dynamic social world, coherent case narratives were developed (Clandinin, 2006) that show the interaction between the more 'structural' elements as well as the social dynamics of their daily life as both merge in an ongoing interaction between actors.

Hence, the researcher takes on an interpretivist ontological standpoint as he is aware that social reality has a specific meaning and relevant structure for the beings living acting and thinking within it (Schutz, 1967).

Ultimately, the author, however, is also aware that by doing research an own social reality is created that might not necessarily fully reflect the reality of the individuals working the analysed projects.

## 2.2 Research design

In Figure 12, the research design of this thesis is shown.
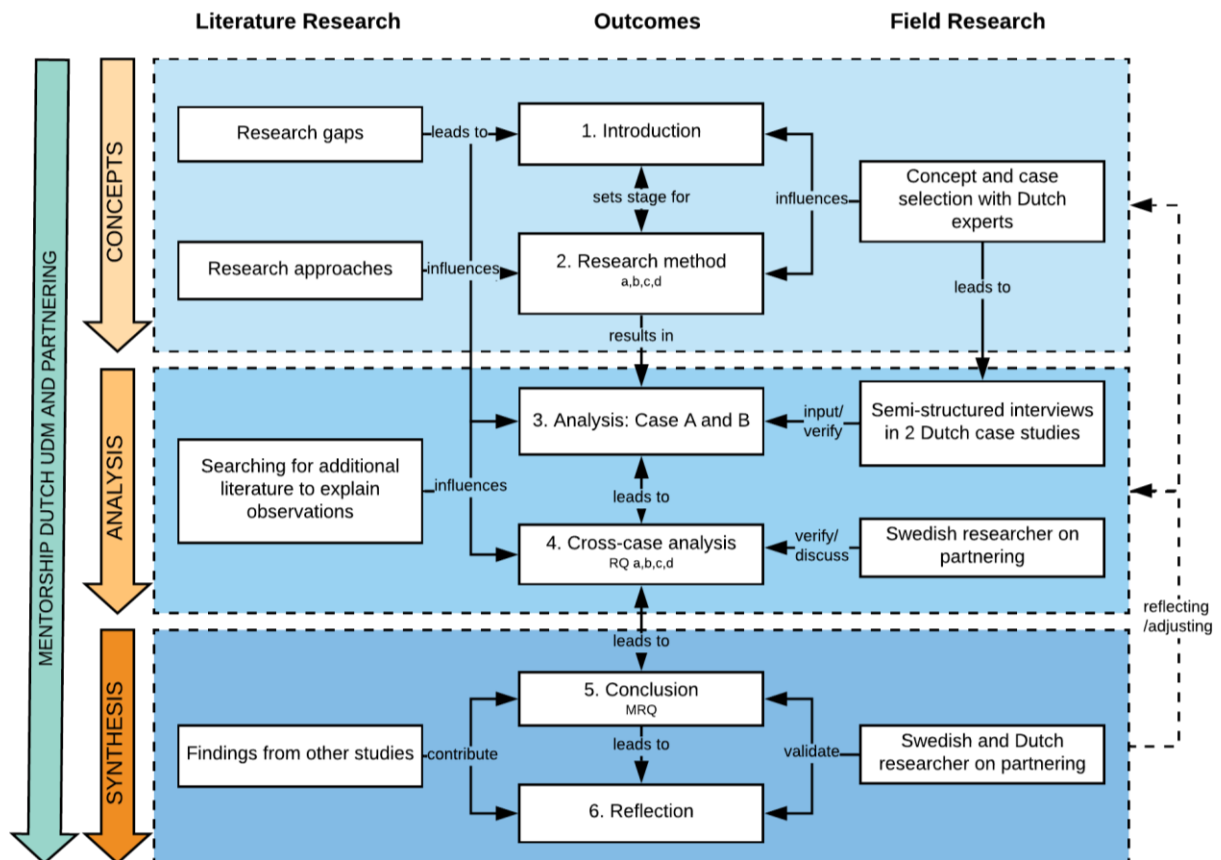


**Figure 12: Research design (own figure)**

### *Concepts, analysis, synthesis*

As can be seen, the thesis consists of literature research and field research that leads to the desired outcome. The 'concepts' and 'analysis' herby have the aim to present the research problem and derive at the research questions of this thesis. In contrast, the 'synthesis' aims to derive at conclusion that complement the current body of Dutch UDM as well as partnering research.

### *Literature research, outcome, field research*

Furthermore, Figure 12 above is divided into three parts: 'literature research', 'outcome' and 'field research'. The literature research aspect of the research design comprises of a literature review of the Dutch UDM and partnering domain to identify the relevant research gaps and formulate suitable research questions. This is done to better understand the most suitable research approaches as well as understand and critically reflect on the observations made in this study.

### *Close interaction between theory and practice*

To combat criticism that current research is somewhat disconnected between theory and practice and therefore to limit the 'knowledge transfer problem' between the two (Van De Ven & Johnson, 2006), close interaction was held with practitioners and further researchers in the course of this thesis. Firstly, the concept and case selection were carried out in consultation with Dutch experts from the UDM domain respectively partnering research.

Afterwards, semi-structured interviews with five informants per case were conducted. After the interviews were conducted, several informants were involved in the validation of the social reality that was constructed by the author in the case analysis.

Ultimately, the results from the cross-case analysis to answer the sub- and the main research questions were validated, discussed and reflected upon including the opinion of further researchers on the topic of partnering.

***Mentorship experts Dutch UDM and partnering research***

Ultimately, this thesis process was supported by the mentorship of two TU Delft researchers, Dr.ir. E.W.T.M. Heurkens and Ir. JSJ Koolwijk. Combining the expertise of Dutch UDPs with the field of project alliancing, supply chain integration and partnering, the thesis is tied to the latest research.

***Anonymizations of cases***

As a result of these considerations, due to the delicacy of the topic, the decision was made to fully anonymise the cases of this study. As can be furthermore read in the reflection of this study (Chapter 5.6), there are still several ethical and moral issues evolved from this study that led to the necessity of editing sentences in the case analysis.

## 2.3 Case study selection

The cases used for this thesis were purposively selected to obtain relevant data (Baskarada, 2014). Case selection was based on the following selection criteria were used to select suitable case studies:



*Urban development project*

The first criterion is that the project needs to be an urban development project. Here, the definition of Daamen (2010, p.18) is used for reference, which says that "*An urban development project refers to a framework of concrete material interventions inside a geographically distinct urban area.*"



*Public-Private Partnership (PPP)*

As this thesis operates in the field of PPPs, the selected cases need to also be PPPs. The definition used as reference is as follows: *''A PPP is an institutionalized form of cooperation between public and private actors who, on the basis of their own indigenous objectives, work together towards a joint target, in which both parties accept investment risks on the basis of a predefined distribution of revenues and costs''* (Nijkamp et al., 2002, p. 1869).



*Criteria for partnering*

The last criterion was that the work environment of the projects can be somewhat described as being based on trust and mutual understanding (Nyströms, 2007) as well as that all three 'core partnering components' mentioned by Eriksson (2010) should be present in the projects selected (Chapter 1.2.2).

The latter is translated to a bid evaluation based on soft parameters, compensation based on open books and the usage of collaborative tools for core partnering components as further selection criteria.

## 2.3.2 Expert consultation case selection

To select suitable projects in the Netherlands, three experts from the Dutch UDM domain were consulted to find Dutch UDPs that currently apply partnering principles.

Three experts, in the following called expert 1A-C (see also Chapter 1.4.1: Expert opinion on research objective) have been asked about potentially suitable projects in The Netherlands that meet the criteria expressed above.

Expert A works as a consultant and researcher at a Dutch university, while expert B works in a known Dutch consultancy firm and expert C is a university researcher (Table 3).

*No awareness about partnering projects*

Firstly, none of the consulted experts did not know of any partnering projects. In actuality, non of the experts were aware of the concept of partnering in general. Asa result, they were instead asked about projects that contain partnering components based on Eriksson (2010).

Also, it was determined that these set requirements were difficult to comply with. Expert A asked several questions about the heterogeneity of the components and how they shall relate to each other. Ultimately, he advised approaching his colleague, expert C, with a set of revised selection criteria as he is currently investigating a variety of Dutch UDPs.

As a result, selection criteria were reduced to the core components of Eriksson (2010) such as a selection process based on soft criteria, a compensation form based on open books or using core collaborative tools. Besides, individuals were asked whether they knew about projects that were known for having achieved public-private relations that could be characterized as being based on trust and mutual understanding.

*Requirements are 'quite rare'*

Expert B explained that finding a project that meets all requirements is 'quite rare' and that he is not sure such a project exists at all. Concerning a selection process based on soft criteria, however, he mentioned three Dutch case studies that did fulfill that criterion. He was aware of those specific projects as he was a supervisor to a graduate student on the topic of 'Designing a partner selection process' and because the projects were mentioned in the Dutch 'Rijswijzer Gebiedsontwikkeling', which is a practical guide for urban development projects in the Netherlands (Kersten et al., 2019). Afterwards, he also suggests two older projects that were well known for their good collaboration processes.

*Knowledge of projects that used a partner selection procedure*

Ultimately, expert C mentions that he is aware of projects that have had a good collaboration process despite not using all of the core partnering components by Eriksson (2010). Expert A by instance explains about a project that can be characterized by ''(…) strong contacts that got along very well beside it being a forced marriage.'' This is interesting as it gives indications that indeed a good collaboration process, respectively a partnering way of working, in Dutch UDPs can be achieved in traditional projects, too.

**Table 3: Expert consultation (own table)**

| Expert | Position | Comment |
|---|---|---|
| A | Consultant and researcher | No knowledge on partnering, selection criteria might need to be lowered |
| B | Consultant | No knowledge of partnering, there might be no projects that fulfil criteria exist, suggesting three projects that used a partner selection process as well as older projects that had a good collaboration process |
| C | Researcher | No awareness of respective projects but insights into traditional project setups where individuals got along very well |

Ultimately, in Table 3, the expert opinions are summarized. Please note that the chosen cases and contacts are mainly derived from the consultation of specifically expert B.

## 2.3.3 Case description

With the help of the consulted experts, two Dutch cases were selected. Following the selection criteria (p. 28), both projects were PPPs that were formed to jointly develop urban areas. Furthermore, both informants from both projects confirmed that they would consider that the relations established during their respective projects

were reached were based on trust and mutual understanding, as well as that the projects applied formal partnering components.

***Comparability vs. inhomogeneity***

The advantage of these selection criteria was that it made the two cases in some way comparable. Besides these criteria, however, it proved that the projects are far from homogeneous given the differences in the task at hand, the number of partners that are partnering, the years of partnership, the personal experiences of parties, the gender distribution within the projects as well as the age distribution of individuals within the projects is different. Also, the municipalities the projects are based in differ in size and location as well as the involved private consortia are not comparable.

However, due to several fixed parameters, the context in which the projects operate, namely PPPs in urban development projects, is similar. This was considered to making it easier to identify, understand and compare internal processes.

Ultimately, as the partnering groups are only fixed in a limited number of parameters, the identification of similar processes and stages indicates stronger generalizability to projects with similar fixed parameters than if the projects would have more fixed parameters.

***Generalizability vs. depth***

As this thesis aims to understand the local situated practice of partnering in Dutch UDPs to understand whether there are overarching factors that contribute to the emergence of partnering, the minimum amount of cases that need to be examined is two.

A minimum sample of two cases is required so it is possible to compare and identify similarities in the emergence of a partnering way of working. Due to time constraints, a small sample enabled for comparisons to be conducted while providing enough depth of understanding of the cases. Sufficient depth is required as Bresnen (2009, p. 932) points out that it is crucial to understand ''(…) how partnering is constructed and negotiated in situ and how the knowing and learning associated with partnering is, consequently, situated in practice.''

## 2.4 Data collection

Data was collected through interviews during the time period between 03.04.2020 and 17.04.2020 (just over two weeks in total).

Cases were selected based on consultation with four Dutch experts (see Chapter 2.3.2, p. 28) and one former Master student that had investigated the selected cases for her Master thesis.

Based on this, case informants were approached via e-mail including a description of the topic of the Master thesis as well as a small attached flyer that would provide further background information on the thesis, the time required and the background of the researcher. After the first interviews, further informants were selected using the snowball method (Atkinson & Flint, 2004).

***Five informants per case***

The interviews were made up of a total of 5 interviewees per case; four individuals from the private side for case A and four individuals from the public side for case B. In both projects, with the exception of case B, the senior managers of the respective organisations were interviewed. In total, two developers under 35 years old were interviewed (as shown in Table 4).

**Table 4: Case information (own table)**

| Information | Case A | | Case B | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Public or Private | Public | Private | Public | Private |
| Number of informants | 1 | 4 | 4 | 1 |
| Men | 1 | 4 | 1 | 1 |
| Women | 0 | 0 | 4 | 0 |
| Senior management | 1 | 2 | 2 | 0 |
| <35 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| >35 | 1 | 3 | 4 | 0 |

Most of the interviews were limited to one hour and were mostly held in English with some parts conducted in Dutch. One exception to this was the first interview of case B which took 1,5 hours since the interview was with two people at the same time. This was also the only interview that was held entirely in Dutch. The remaining interviews were 1-1 interviews. Due to CoVid-19 circumstances, interviews were held via the virtual communication platform 'Zoom'. With permission form the interviewees, the video interviews were recorded accordingly.

After the interviews, selected parties were asked to fill in a questionnaire where participants would be asked about the partnering components they used in their respected project. This served the purpose of becoming more aware of the components used which in return helped to probe effectively towards specific partnering components in consecutive interviews. From cases A and B, the questionnaires were filled in by two participants each. The questionnaire results can be found in 8.2 Appendix II: Follow-up questionnaire.

*Semi-structured interviews*

The interviews were semi-structured and focused on the collaboration processes of the respected projects (see 8.1 Appendix I: Interview protocol). The interview design of the semi-structured interview is provided in Table 5. As shown in the table, the topic and the question sequences were mostly fixed.

However, this was not always the case as interviewees would sometimes already answer questions from the next question sequence. The question formulation was fixed & free as there were some preformulated questions in the interview guideline, however, for the most part, questions depended on the direction the interviewee would take.

Furthermore, an encouraging interviewing style was used to motivate the interviewees to provide examples from practice and associated meaning (Moerman, 2010). Sometimes, a 'naïve' interview style meaning that it was pretended to be unaware of project details besides having heard about similar situations and explanations beforehand from other interviewees.

Concerning the probing techniques, directive and non-directive probing was used (Moerman, 2010). The probing style depended on the situation and varied between as well as within the interview conducted.

**Table 5: Semi-structured interview design (own table)**

| Type | Semi-structured interview |
|---|---|
| Topic | Fixed |
| Question formulation | Fixed |
| Question sequence | Fixed & Free |
| Interviewer behaviour | Fixed (Mostly 'encouraging') |

The interviews started by asking about the individual's background and position in the project. Afterwards, they were asked about their very own understanding of partnering, respectively a good collaboration process within PPPs. They were also asked in how far their current process differs from other approaches.

Afterwards, questions were asked about the project team and in specific about what goes well within their group dynamics. Depending on the path the interviewee took, questions were asked surrounding the use of different core and optional partnering components mentioned by Eriksson (2010).

They were also asked about possible recommendations on what their organisation could do to help their employees in their respective collaboration process as well as what could be done on a national, respective political level so that more urban development projects would pursue partnering relationships.

*Narrative inquiry analysis*

To analyse the data, a combination of deductive and inductive coding was applied (Christians & Carey, 1989). Thus, at the same time, a predefined codebook was used while inductive coding was used in parallel. This enabled an open mind could be kept during the coding process for new themes that emerged from the data.

Based on the codings, the thesis analysed the experience of individuals narratively. The rather novel approach of a narrative inquiry was used (Clandinin, 2006) since Bresnen (2009) encourages to tap into the 'lived experience' of partnering projects.

Following Clandinin (2006), the project analysis is a recursive and reflexive process that starts from starting stories of individuals to developing interim and final research texts.

## 2.5 Data analysis

Data was analysed using theoretically driven thematic analysis using the qualitative research method software Atlas.ti. The analysis was process-oriented and on an individual level to identify most frequently mentioned topics that were relevant to understand the emergence of partnering relations in two Dutch UDPs.

## 2.5.1 Analytical framework

To analyse, understand and structure data, existing partnering literature was used as framework basis.

Whereas a substantial amount of papers was reviewed, in the following Table 6, an overview of inputs that are considered crucial to understand the case analysis, cross-case analysis and conclusion is given as the analytical framework of this thesis.

**Table 6: Utilisation of partnering literature (own table)**

| Scholar | Chapter in report | Usage made from |
|---------|-------------------|-----------------|
| Eriksson (2010, p. 915) | 3.A/B.3 Procedural components | Table 4: Core and optional components of partnering |
| Eriksson (2010, p. 908) | 4.1.1 Project circumstances | Figure 1: Coopetition continuum (developed from Eriksson, 2008b) |
| Hosseini et. al (2018, p. 6) | 4.1.2 Reasons for partnering | Table 2: Partnering Purposes |
| Jacobsson & Wilson (2014, p. 1923) | 4.3 Interpersonal learning process towards partnering relations | Expectation – actions – learning cycle |
| Nyström (2007, p. 3 ) | 1.2.2 Partnering  5.2.2 Partnering flower | Figure 1: The partnering flower |
| Kadefors (2004, p. 176f.) | 1.2.2 Partnering  5.2.2 Partnering flower | Literature review on trust theory |

In particular, five researchers need to be mentioned that were defining for the way partnering was understood and data was analysed during this thesis.

The first literature is the research of Eriksson (2010). With his research *Partnering: what is it, when should it be used, and how should it be implemented?* and particularly *Table 4: Core and optional components of partnering* he provides a valuable analytical framework to analyse procedural components that were used in the here analysed UDPs in the Chapters 3.A/B.3.

Next to the components, from the same research his *Figure 1: Coopetition continuum* was used as an analytical lens to better understand the project circumstances that might have led public managers to decide to pursue partnering relations in Chapter 4.1.1.

In the same chapter, 4.1.2, inputs from Hosseini et al. (2018) *Project Partnering in the Construction Industry: Theory vs. Practice* were used to better understand the reasons for partnering. Accordingly, *Table 2: Partnering purposes* from the construction project domain were used to analyse expected benefits with partnering by the public managers.

The next study to mention is by Jacobsson & Wilson (2014) *Partnering hierarchy of needs.* Whereas their entire study helped to understanding how partnering relations can develop in practice, in particular the insight that individuals needed to go through several *expectation – actions – learning* cycles until partnering could be reached, helped to develop a suitable analytical framework to analyse the interpersonal learning process towards partnering relations within the here analysed UDPs (Chapter 4.3)

Furthermore, Nyström (2007) and his dissertation *Partnering: definition, theory and evaluation* is relevant to mention as his idea of explaining partnering as a *Ludwig-Wittgenstein family resemblance concept* inspired this thesis.

With his concept, it was possible to capture the dynamic and fluid character of the concept as well as show the variety of local manifestations partnering can have in practice. The concept was hereby not only presented in the background Chapter 1.2.2, but also severed as a basis for the conclusions given in Chapter 5.2.2, where a partnering flower was developed that reveals complementary factors to existing research that are considered relevant to the emergence of partnering relations.

Lastly, Kadefors (2004) *Trust in project relationships—inside the black box* needs to be mentioned. Introduced in the background chapter of partnering in Chapter 1.2.2, trust theory as a concept to understand the complexities of partnering was crucial to derive at the conclusions of this thesis.

Not being sure how to understand the data, it was only until the writing of Kadefors (2004) was revisited, that it was possible to make sense and explain the observations made in the here analysed UDPs. Ultimately, input from Kadefors (2004) significantly contributed to clustering the variety of insights from the case and cross-case analysis into a set of umbrella terms that might be able to explain why case informants perceived certain factors as relevant to the emergence of partnering in Dutch UDPs.

## 2.5.2 Data plan

Throughout this thesis, data was handled according to the FAIR guiding principles (Wilkinson et al., 2016). Accordingly, data should be findable, accessible, interoperable and reusable for other researchers.

To comply with the FAIR guiding principles but also the ethical considerations, data acquired from interviews and questionnaires were only stored locally on one computer and included a temporary backup on an external hard drive.

Before the interviews, participants were asked to sign a letter of consent where they agreed that the interview sessions would be recorded and that its content would be used for this thesis as well as possible further publications.

After this thesis, data was anonymized and the Atlas.ti project bundle was secured with restricted access in a repository of the TU Delft.

## 2.5.3 Ethical considerations

This thesis was furthermore carried out according to the ethical considerations of Bell et al. (2018). Important considerations were herby that:

- The research participants were not to be harmed
- The dignity of research participants was prioritised
- Full consent of the participants was obtained prior to the study
- The protection of the privacy of research participants was ensured
- An adequate level of confidentiality of the research data was provided
- Individuals and organisations were kept anonymous
- Any deception or exaggeration about the aims and objectives of the research was avoided
- Affiliations in any forms, sources of funding, as well as any possible conflicts of interests, were declared
- Any type of communication concerning the research was done with honesty and transparency
- Any type of misleading information was tried to be avoided

## 2.6 Summary

This chapter explained about the chosen method of this research.

Accordingly, it has been elaborated that this thesis has been conducted as further insights into the emergence of partnering in practice seem to be needed. Taking a practice-based approach, it has been outlined that the 'first person view' of practitioners was chosen to understand the relationship between more structural elements and social dynamics in Dutch UDPs.

Also, it has been explained that this thesis intentionally tried to be in a close-feedback loop with practitioners and researchers. Accordingly, among others, experts from the Dutch UDM domain have been consulted in the process of selecting two suitable cases based on a set of case selection criteria.

Understanding that individuals widely associated their relationships with the understanding of partnering relations of this thesis, further information on the interview setup with five daily managers from the public and private side of two Dutch UDPs was given.

Having decided to use the rather novel research method of a narrative inquiry analysis to depict the 'lived experience' of Dutch UDPs, it has been furthermore explained how data was collected and translated into a coherent case narrative. Also, an analytical framework has been presented to understand partnering literature that was applied during the cross-case analysis and concluding chapter of this thesis.

Ultimately, Figure 13 summarizes the main aspects of this research method chapter.
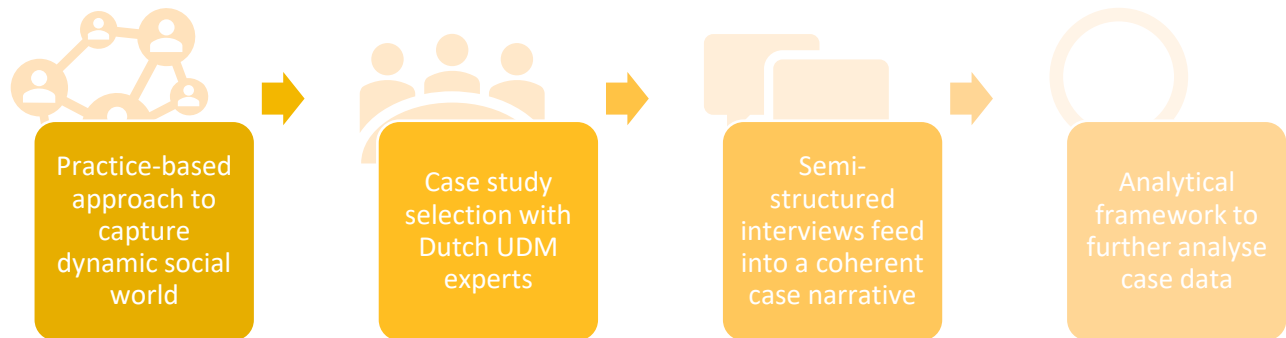


**Figure 13: Summary research method (own figure)**

# 3.0 Case Analysis



A/B.1 Case description

A/B.2 Place and time dependency

A/B.3 Main actors

A/B.4 Procedural components

A/B.5 Understanding of partnering

A/B.6 The emergence of partnering
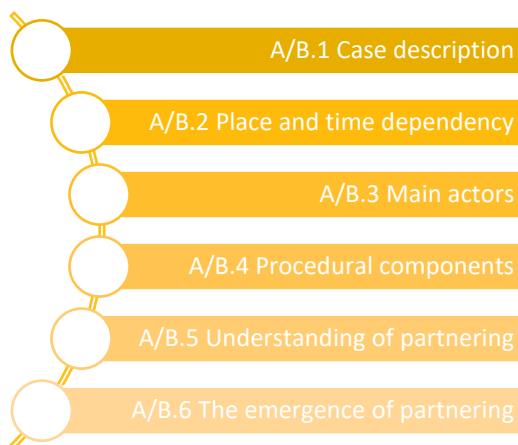
**Figure 14: Reading guide chapter three (own figure)**

This chapter presents the case analysis of the cases A and B. As mentioned earlier, due to confidentiality issues, the private elements of the cases that were assessed were kept anonymous in this chapter.

This chapter is divided into two parts that follow the same structure: Case analysis A and B (as presented in Figure 14).

In the first part of each case analysis chapter, an overview of each case is provided.

In specific, a case description including place and time-dependent variables, an overview of the main actors as well as insights into the applied procedural partnering components are introduced. This is done so the reader can develop an understanding of the respective projects as well as obtains an understanding of the variety of applied formal partnering components (Chapter A/B.1-4).

Later in the fifth chapter, the understanding of partnering by the respective individuals is introduced (Chapter A/B.5). Since there is no shared understanding of partnering in the research domain (Chapter 1.2.2), the understanding of partnering by the individuals working serves as the basis on which the emergence of partnering relations is further analysed.

Finally, Chapter A/B.6 provides the heart of the case analysis. Here, the lived experience including factors that individuals consider having contributed to the emergence of partnering in their project are presented.

*Note:* As a narrative inquiry analysis aims to limit individual interpretation but instead aims to let practitioners explain their view of reality, there are no summaries provided at the end of the case analysis chapters.

# Analysis: Case A

# 3.A Case description

Case A is a brownfield development with the ambition to build around 3,500 sustainable dwellings by 2026.

***A sustainable, diverse and integrated neighbourhood that is EPC 0 certified***

The aim for this large-scale redevelopment project is to develop a sustainable, diverse and integrated neighbourhood that covers three sub-areas and is energy performance 0 certified (EPC). To realize this ambition, the mid-sized municipality 1 (M1) and several private developers entered into a public-private partnership.

In this case, the developers are developing their assigned plots separately, but together, since at the end, the houses are to be sold by the municipality under the collective name of case A. For this project, a separate program office within M1 was set up to develop case A in 2009.

The project is an organic development, which implies that building plots are given out subsequently to private developers. As such, in 2011, M1 set up a tender process that aimed to find a developing partner instead of the commonly applied franchise or joint venture models (Janssen-Jansen et al., 2012), which was won by Developer 1 (D1). This led to the exclusive building rights for the first 250 dwellings while offering knowledge of the real estate market and sustainability as well as connecting the municipal network with the own network of subcontractors and a climate systems expert.

## 3.A.1 Place and time dependency

This project is heavily influenced by its place and history. Among others, since this housing development was initially intended as a new business district development (D1A), the municipality 1 (M1) had taken a loan to purchase a former greenhouse area (D1A) for such purposes.

***The economic crisis changing the original plan***

> *''When you have a long-term development, it is important that you select a partner and not a plan with the highest bid and a beautiful plan. Because with a long-term development, the plan will change and then you have a lot of complications. Therefore, if you select a partner for the long-term you are also automatically flexible in your plan.''*
> - Interviewee M1A

The economic crisis in 2008 significantly impacted the project, as the initially targeted end-user market for the development crashed. As a result, interviewee M1A, who was responsible for case A in the municipality, needed to develop an alternative plan on what to build on the plot. Since the municipality was and still is, paying high interest on their loan (D1A, D1B), it was important to start the development process as soon as possible, regardless of the crisis. After consultation with a nearby university, a plan for a sustainable long-term housing development project for middle-income households emerged. While the ambition was clear, an exact plan on how to reach the goal was not as certain. Combined with the fact that due to the crisis, developers were not able to take a lot of risks, M1A decided to follow a tender process that was not based on price but on finding a partner for the long-term that would provide relevant knowledge and advisory to develop the area (D1A, M1A).

Also, M1A explains that M1 decided to remain the owner of the land in the development and take on the responsibility of selling houses. He explains that ''You will find no other project in Holland where land remains in the hands of the municipality'', but that this was necessary to being able to start developing during the crisis. The winning company was the company D1, which is a big developer and contractor from The Netherlands. Unfortunately, shortly after the tender, the municipality had to engage in a litigation process concerning the land-use plan. After a challenging period for the partnership, resulting in a two-year delay, the project team could finally start developing the area (D1A).

> *'''That is what we always said; we have to hold each other in bad times. So that [the litigation process between M1 and an external stakeholder] was a moment when M1 also needed us to go through this process.''*
> - Interviewee D1A

## 3.A.2 Main actors

Today, case A is made up of M1 and six project developers. M1 and D1, including a climate expert (CE) who, early in the process, was added to D1's team and thus the overall process, formed the starting PPP in the area.

No architect was hired since D1 has an inhouse architect. Only later, other developers joined the area. In 2018, project P was formed as a PPP between M1 and four developers.
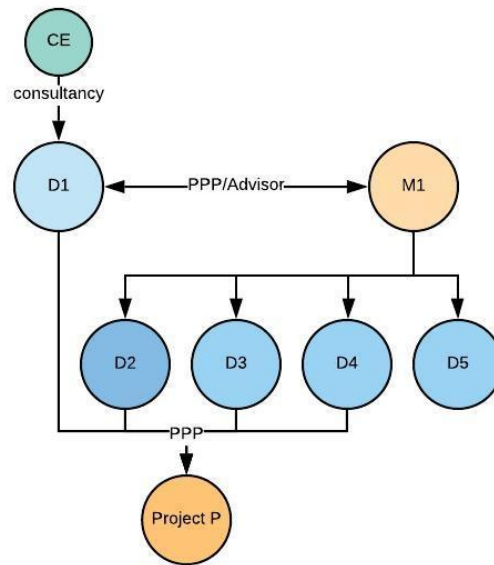


**Figure 15: Main actors (own figure)**

More precisely, the main actors involved at the beginning of the project consisted of a project director and cost coordinator M1A  from the municipality as well as a team from company D1. Next to M1A, there is a solely designated team within municipality M1 that is responsible for case A.

Furthermore, D1's team consisted of among others developer D1A, who today does not work for the company anymore, and senior manager D1B. M1A and D1B have been part of the project since the beginning, which translates into around ten years of shared work experience. During the years of collaboration, several developers were invited to join the redevelopment of the area. This resulted in seven private parties currently building on municipal lands (M1A). Most developers are big Dutch developers and contractors.

Based on the interview with D1B, case A consists of a consistent senior management team throughout the different organisations, while young professionals tend to ''(…) fly in and out'' (D1B). Since 2018, a choice of young professionals, mostly young women, has been assigned a special area in Case A, project P, which is supposed to represent the ideas of the next generation in case A manifested in around 1000-1200 sustainable dwellings.

## 3.A.3 Procedural components

In this project, many procedural partnering components have been identified as being used.

***Almost all partnering components in place***

As shown in Figure 16, all core partnering components including almost all optional components from Eriksson (2010) are present.

Core collaborative tools include start-up and follow-up workshops, joint objectives, team building activities and conflict resolution techniques.

Optional collaborative tools that were determined in case A include joint risk management and a joint project office. Furthermore, in case A, the contractor (D1) was involved early in the concurrent engineering, subcontractors were jointly selected and involved into the project team (climate systems company and real estate agents (D1B)), there is an increased focus on the different contractors' self-control as well as the partners in case A have a joint project office on-site at their disposal.
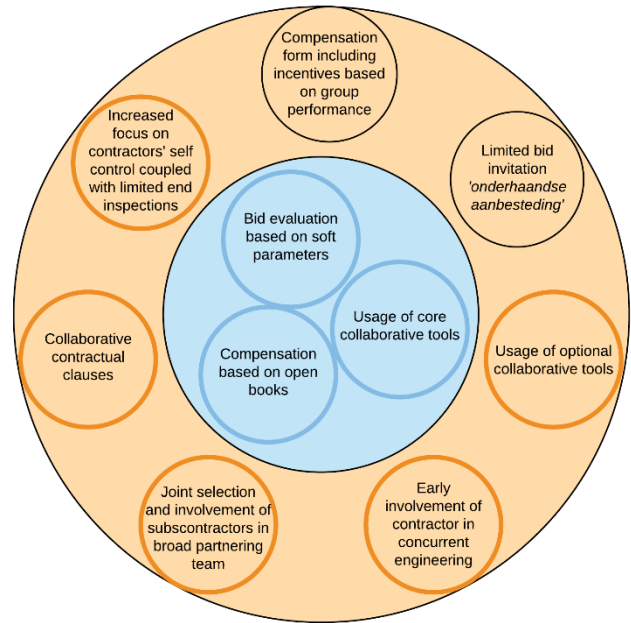


**Figure 16: Partnering flower case A (own figure)**

Next to the open book principles, the contract holds clauses that define the project partnership principles of among others trust, equality and transparency in the process. Ultimately, as developers receive additional plots if they perform well, it can be argued that incentives based on group performance exist in the project as well.

Under consideration of the above described procedural components, the next sections explore a selection of aspects that came out of the interviews with M1A, D1A, D1B, D2A and D2B.

## 3.A.4 Understanding of partnering

As informants were also asked to share their understanding of partnering, respectively (as they did not know what partnering is) what a good collaboration process means to them, the following Table 7 summarizes the pool of definitions that individuals came up with.

**Table 7: Partnering definitions (own table)**

| Interviewee | Definition |
|---|---|
| M1A | It is transparency, no tricks whatsoever. No deals, nothing about that. For long-term working, this is essential, also above finance. You have to trust each other. The competence of the people that work here, that is what I am very critical about. If I will work transparently in good and in bad times, we have to support each other. That means good chemistry between people, honesty and trust. |
| D1A | The most important about partnering is that in good times everybody is each other's partner but in bad times then it depends if you really have a partnership. It is about holding each other in bad times. Because there will always be a bad time. It can be small it can be big but if you really have a good relationship you can have the argument and sometimes the strong discussions but in the end, it has to solve for both of the partners you need to grant something to each other (…) In partnering you also have discussions but it is about the big amounts. Because details are not relevant. It is like the devil in your partnership. |
| D1B | Trust, transparency and flexibility, these are the three keywords why it is working for eight years now quite well. |
| D2A | For me, the most important thing is that it is transparent and open so when I am struggling with something, e.g. something in the plan, then I can just discuss it with the municipality, and we see what the best solution is for the money but also for the people we want to reach. So, I guess that is the most important thing. Of course, we still have disagreements, but we can talk about it. That really helps a lot. |
| D2B | It means that of course first, you have to know each other's goals so what your purpose and what is the purpose of your partner is and how can you meet each other therein. And I think it is very important that you do not just reach your own goals but that you also understand how your partners are in the project. Also, it is about empathy. You have empathy and you show empathy. And you need to do that on different |

| | levels with the aldermen, with the people of the project but also with the directors. Transparency is another thing. So, if you show your own strengths and weaknesses and problems and your partner does the same, then you get a kind of feeling of confidence and trust in each other. |
| --- | --- |

As shown in the table, in case A, the definitions for a good collaboration process surround the keywords trust, honesty and transparency (M1A, D1B, D2A, D2B). In addition, the importance of good private relationships is mentioned by several interviewees. For example, M1A spoke about the good chemistry between people and D2B mentioned that one needs to have and show empathy across different organisational levels if you want to call yourself a partner.

Furthermore, D2B adds, that a precondition of a good collaboration process is to know each other and your goals, struggles as well as weaknesses. Moreover, M1A, partly D1B and particularly D1A explains that in long-term development, there will always be difficult moments. Accordingly, they define partnering as a concept that proves and particularly implies to supporting your partner during challenging times. Also, D1A says that for him, true partnering is about knowing that you can approach your partner if you are facing challenges in the project.

Subsequently, if you are working in partnering, D1A explains that discussions will shift from details to the relevant big topics. Also, he and D2B explain that partnering is not about winning but about finding a solution that benefits both parties. Ultimately, M1A emphasizes that a partnering relationship is a space of 'no tricks', whatsoever.

## 3.A.5 The emergence of partnering relations

The emergence of partnering relations is susceptible to a complex interplay of formal and informal processes. In this section, a variety of processes are described that several interviewees of case A mentioned and thus have been considered crucial to the understanding of the emergence of a partnering way of working in case A.

*Open book system*

One of the central topics of case A surrounds the formal practice of both parties presenting their numbers in an open book system. To understand how far this formal practice promotes or inhibits the emergence of trust in case A, the informal processes surrounding this practice are described from the viewpoint of selected interviewees.

As introduced earlier, case A was not tendered on price, but on finding a viable and reliable partner that would help develop and construct sustainable houses on the municipal plot over the next decades. As the land would remain in the hands of the municipality during the entire development process, one of the municipal conditions for the partnership was that costs would be made transparent by both parties in an open book system. As shown in Table 8, the developers shared their building costs, while in return, the municipality needed to openly provide their calculation system for the residual land value.

M1A explains that the underlying reason for him to establish the open book system was because he needed ''(…) to find out what the private party had'' to start the development despite the economic crisis. For D1A, this did not seem to be a problem. On the contrary, he explains that ''In the beginning, the open book system helped to get the trust towards each other.'' In particular, he explains that this feeling emerged as the open book system helped him to understand the position of the municipality and in particular to ''(…) feel the pain that they have in the interest rate they pay and why it is so important to develop so many dwellings per year.''

**Table 8: Open book system case A (own table, based on information from D1)**

**Open budget Developer 1 (D1)**

*Total building costs D1*

*Additional costs Apartments*
Exclusive costs
1) Costs developer D1
2) Fixed costs
3) Other fixed costs
*Total additional costs:*

*Calculation land price to be paid*
- Total building costs
- Total additional costs
- Contribution connection costs
- Fees permit
- Deposit and interest
+ Share M1 return on buyer options
+ Fixed contributions to the municipality
*To pay to the municipality:*

**Residual land value:**

> *''It [the open book system] helped in the beginning to get the trust towards each other and that the costs are transparent and that you can have a discussion about it. So, you have no discussion about the profit that D1 wants to make but you have discussions about how much does a brick cost.''*
> - Interviewee D1A

Despite learning in the very beginning of the project that ''The biggest challenge in this project is to make tempo'' and ''(…) that if the discussion takes time, the interest rate kills more than the discussion will bring'', a few years into the project, a financial discussion challenged the partnership.

The discussion concerned the claim that the calculated costs for the dwellings by developer D1 were too high. As a result, D1A says that ''We managed to discuss every point of that [the cost calculations] but could not come to a solution in all points.'' To clear the situation, municipality A hired an advisor. D1A, however, explains that the advisor did not bring the intended effects since he was not chosen mutually by the partners and therefore rather ''(…) caused that parties got back into a more traditional role.''

To end the conflict, interviewee D1A explains that ''D1 agreed that they would just do it for the price by the municipality despite knowing that their profit went away.'' As a reason, he mentions that ''We just wanted to stop the discussions because it does not help the project time, financial wise and also not ourselves as an organization.'' While there is no reflection on the municipal side of this particular conflict, D1A mentions that after the discussions, M1A and the team of D1 reflected on the incident and asked themselves ''What did this help us? Nobody knows what the truth in this is, really, because it depends on the point of view and in the end, it is about trust (…) Then we buried it and went on.''

Today, almost 10 years later, still, ''Every day there are challenges about the open book system'' (Interviewee D1B) and in many ways, D1B and M1A describe their relationship as the same that it was 10 years ago; as the open book system is still in place and the municipality is still sending cost advisors to the developers to test if they are not too expensive (D1B; M1A). Despite these similarities, however, the parties seem to have learned how to handle their conflicts surrounding the open book system.

Despite that it ''(…) costs a lot of energy'', M1A explains that hiring independent external advisors helps to clear conflicts in the collaboration. Moreover, the senior managers explained that in the meantime, deeper trust has grown between them and that the open book system is considered as a basis for a good long-term collaboration process. While this does not mean that discussions will not be tense sometimes between the parties, D1B explains that today, at the end of the day, the big decisions are taken jointly by the partners; Even though if it that means that ''(…) sometimes M1A and I must overrule the project developers and the project leaders of the municipality'' (D1B).

> *''We must sell houses and not argue about the cost price of it. This is not the main part of our job. The main part as a development partner is also to help other project development partners to take the same route, the same process and install the same sustainability measures.''*
> - Interviewee D1B

Reflecting on the conflicts surrounding the open-book system, he emphasizes that it is important to go on and not discuss land prices that nobody can foresee anyways. He finds this particularly important since he sees his primary task in the project not in discussing land prices but in helping other developers in the area to work in the same way.

> *''The open book is more of an outcome of the good relation we have with each other in my opinion because open book only works when you trust each other (…) It is there of course but it only works if there is a good relationship.''*
> - Interviewee D2A

In conclusion, D2A, a young developer of company D2, made a comment that somewhat summarizes the paradox surrounding the open book system in case A. Speaking from his own experience in project P, he explains that ''The open-book system fits very well to the way we work (…) but it only works if there is a good relationship.''

Personal interaction in Case A, is a topic that has been mostly associated with positive effects on the emergence of partnering relations in case A.

All interviewees, in one way or the other, shared their positive experiences with a variety of practices such as Friday meetings, excursions, regular BBQ events organised by the different developers or the yearly highlight of the Christmas party where the Aldermen and sometimes even the mayor of municipality 1 would join (D1B). ''We are one family'' and ''It is quite important to make a good atmosphere to develop the area'', says D1B.

Hereby, D1B explains that personal relations do not stop at organizational boundaries. As an example, he explains that with every new election, ''M1A and I go to the new Aldermen, take them on excursions and get to know each other better.'' That the interviewed developers are interested in getting to know the municipality also becomes evident from the interview with D2A. He explains that getting to know the municipality informally during an excursion helped him very much in future meetings.

> ''It is quite important to make a good atmosphere to develop the area. It is quite important to invest in the people's relationships invest time in the aldermen. I got a lot of them in the last six, seven years. Seven or six aldermen that are responsible for case A. And with every new election, I go with new people. M1A and I go to the new aldermen, take them on excursions and get to know each other better. That is where we invest very much.''
> - Interviewee D1B

M1A explains that the frequency of physical meetings is no coincidence, but that it was one of the points that were important for him when forming the partnership. Good communication ''During good times and bad times'' is what made the project survive the crisis in 2008 and what will also make case A survive the CoVid-19 crisis today, he says.

> ''Does it go well in this country? People have no time and I made a big problem about it in 2013. People were saying that it goes well and asked 'why do we have to talk?' And I was saying that no, no, no in times of not so good and in times of good, we still have to work in the same way.''
> - Interviewee M1A

However, he also explains, that three years ago, this opinion was not shared by all of his project partners. ''The project goes well, so why do we have to talk?'' the developers asked, explains M1A. The response of M1A was clear: ''In times of not so good and in times of good, we still have to work in the same way.'' While the developers felt that their time might be too precious for meetings when there are no severe challenges to talk about, M1A explains that after he ''Made a big point about it'' the partners accepted that M1As rules would need to be accepted if they want to continue developing in case A.

The practice in question was the weekly 'Friday meeting'. M1A explains, that already during the early stages of the project, every Friday, the project team would meet in a joint project office on site. In these meetings, not all individuals attended the same meeting. Next to the 'Coordination meeting' (*Dutch: Coordinatieoverleg*), a meeting that includes all public and private senior managers of case A, ''There were several separate meetings where issues were discussed during Fridays'', recalls D1A. The practice was organised in such a way that challenges, that could not be solved in the separate meetings, could be further discussed in the coordination meeting. Since the office is on site, the parties would either

> ''Every Friday have a meeting, with all the private parties and every Friday I ask the partners, partner by partner 'How is it going?' So that it is not only transparent for me but also transparent to the other private partners themselves. So, I constantly, that is the basis, promote transparency, equality, openness. This is the basis of all. This is what I am doing. It sounds so easy. You can have a lot of science about developing in Public-Private Partnerships, but certainly for a long-term development, it starts with transparency and trust and open book principles.''
> - Interviewee M1A

solve project challenges and misunderstandings there or decide to take a joint walk at the construction site to investigate the problem directly. ''It was important that we never laid things down'', says D1A. M1A supports this statement as he tells that one of his main tasks in the project is to make sure that challenges are solved

immediately. Also, he explains that for ten years now, every Friday, the first he thing he does is asking developer after developer how it is going. Hereby, he makes sure that everyone can hear what the other party says. "I constantly, that is the basis, promote transparency, equality, openness. This is the basis of all. This is what I am doing", he says while laughing about how simple his solution to a successful long-term public-private partnership might sound to a master's degree student.

D1B confirms the openness that prevails in the Friday meetings as he shares that Friday meetings feel almost like a "Family council (*Dutch: Familieberaad*) in which his and M1A role is to"(…) arrange that everyone believes that the choices we make are good."

## Public leadership

A third topic that was revealed from the interviews, is the importance of M1A for the emergence of partnering relations in case A. Most interviewees mentioned that, in one way or the other, the collaboration design of case A represents M1A's vision of a good urban development process.

Particularly D2B is convinced that "(…) M1A is a really stabilizing factor in the development (…) He knows that, if an area is being developed, you need to work with the private sector. This is how he envisions it, and this is how he executes it." As reasons for this effect, D2B mentions M1As experience and that "M1A is working steadily on how to reach a purpose. He is discussing a certain problem with his aldermen or his people and then you see that there is progress."

"I think that M1A is a really stabilizing factor in this. He is really experienced even though he has only worked in the municipality, but he knows how it works. He knows that, if an area is being developed, you need to work with the private sector. This is how he envisions it, and this is how he executes it. And that is also how he manages his own organisation but also how he has talks with his aldermen."
- Interviewee D2B

When asking M1A on what differentiates him from other public managers, he says that "In comparison to most of my colleagues, I am patient and take my time to talk things through." D1A supports this statement by explaining that at the beginning of the project when he was also rather new to D1, he had a moment when he was not sure if he could make important decisions without an official mandate of his superiors in D1. In this situation, "M1A taught me that it is not about if you have a mandate but if you can feel it" (D1A). As D1A felt well connected to the directors of D1, M1As advice helped him to be better at his job. This conversation between M1A and D1A indicates, that complementary to his official position as project director and municipal cost manager, M1A occasionally takes on a leader respectively mentorship position towards his younger project partners.

One of the preconditions for such a way of working is certainly that "In case A, everyone is equal" (D1B).

This certainly seems true when listening to D2A, who reflects that besides the generation gap between him and the municipal managers, he felt immediately respected; or D1B, who explains that when dwellings are sold, everyone, developers, municipality and the climate systems experts have to dress in the same outfit to show that they are one collective. Besides these examples, however, it seems that there is one group that is excluded from the 'case A family'; And these are the construction workers. This impression is confirmed by D1A who negates the question of whether he also sees construction workers as a part of the 'case A family'.

Next to a stabilizing and leadership position, M1A also seems to play a major role in the process of making developers discard their old routines and creating a space of psychologic safety; A state where parties can be

"I was 100% transparent on the figures and based on that we kind of developed our relationship."
- Interviewee D2B

open and transparent in their way of working without feeling at risk. One example of how a developer became comfortable in adapting a partnering way of working surrounds developer D2.

The story of D2 is somewhat special as D2 was not tendered to join case A, but as D2B puts it: "We were kind of obligatory because we had land [close by]." As

D2B thought that joining case A would be ''(…) a good way to develop relationships'', he made up his mind on how he could get in contact with M1A.

D2B explains that he saw that ''M1A likes in good times and in bad times you help each other.'' As these are also his company values, he decided to distance himself from old (negative) experiences and seek contact with M1A. To see if you can trust someone ''You [need to] try something'', he explains. Since he was interested in buying an adjacent plot of land from an external stakeholder since considerable time, D2B decided to ask M1A whether he would be interested in undertaking the buying process together. For this meeting, D2B explains that he decided to be ''(…) 100% transparent on the figures''.

When the parties met, D2B describes that he could see ''That he [M1A] is not fooling around with us'' and that ''Based on that we kind of developed our [partnering] relationship.'' As a result of the shared positive experience, D2 and M1, particularly M1A, increased their collaboration on D2s private plot. While the project partners challenges are far from easy, D2B says that despite that there are problems ''(…) you know that there is an underlying line that you know whatever will happen we will solve it.''

> *''Case A with M1A as a director it works really well. We have problems but you know that there is an underlying line that you know whatever will happen we will solve it.''*
> - Interviewee D2B

Another result of D2Bs and M1As shared positive experience is, that M1A, after consultation with D2B (D2B), asked D2 to join case A. In particular, the young developer D2A was asked to become part of project P, a project where young professionals from four different developing companies whose character fits to the way of working of case B are put in charge for the development of around 1000-1200 dwellings. M1A, but also D1B, are very happy and proud of having so many young people in the project. ''We were tired of seeing the old faces'', says D1B which is why ''(…) M1A brought project P to life.''

Despite all the positivity, D2B, however, explains that there are underlying reasons why an open and transparent way of working could emerge in these two situations. By instance in Project P, he explains, it worked because ''In project P, they need each other''.

> *''In project P, they [the young professionals and M1] need each other. When M1A is happy, we are happy.''*
> - Interviewee D2B

In contrast, when D2B had to discuss with M1 about D2s plot of land a couple of years ago, he says ''I am very honest with you back then it was a little bit different. Then it is not good to be fully transparent (…) and also the municipality is not 100% transparent. That is how it works when you negotiate.'' As he hints that the underlying reason for this difference lays in the Dutch land price system, one outcome of the interview with D2B is that the likelihood of a partnering way of working to develop might be dependent on a set of circumstances such as a mutual dependency of parties and the Dutch land price system.

# Analysis: Case B

## 3.B Case description

Case B is a PPP between municipality 2 (M2) and developer 3 (D3) with the joint ambition to transform an undesirable area to a green, thriving district that attracts people to stay and enjoy. The development site is owned by the municipality, which is located between the central station of the city in question and the inner city centre and is currently being treated as a transit area.

***High ambitions and budget neutrality***

For this particular project, the municipality wanted to find a partner that would be able to develop and execute a plan that delivers high standards in regard to spatial and functional quality as well as the reachability of the area, sustainability and health. On top of that, the project also needs to be budget neutral.

To fulfil these demands, in the tender procedure, D3 developed a preliminary design that entails the building of a park, real estate as well as a new canal. The construction and selling process of these elements were the responsibilities of the developer. At the time of the interviews, the project was just about to start the construction phase.

## 3.B.1 Place and time dependency

*''Case B is the third project in the station area that we have approached in a different way. Much more from the side of collaboration''*
- Interviewee M2A

Case B is the third project in the station area that was approached (M2A) in a collaborative manner.

***Process-related innovations that invite for collaboration***

After the first projects had experimented with a tender that allowed for more collaboration between public and private parties and a process that would focus on increasing the involvement of external stakeholders and citizens into the project, in case B, not only were all things are combined, but even more 'innovative' process-related measures were added. As such, the municipality decided to tender a partner based only on a set of generic ambitions and without having a specific program nor detailed plan requirements defined. Next to an individual learning process, the chosen process innovations have been the result of the extreme time pressures and complexity of the location.

Significant time constraints originated from the current plan not being the first one made for the area. Initially, the municipality intended to build a public building in the area. However, after the building permit was approved, the town council voted against the tender. This delay has several implications on the current project since the new plan has to be realized partly based on the old plan.

Accordingly, D3 had to develop a plan that among others deals with already operating public transport routes planned according to an adjusted version of the old plan as well as a tram tunnel, which will start its operation in summer 2020, which will traverse straight through the area and right under D3's building.

## 3.B.2 Main actors

The main actors involved in this project are municipality 2 (M2), developer 3 (D3), their technical advisor (TA) and architect (Arch) (as shown in Figure 17). Furthermore, the province is a major stakeholder, since they are the owners of the aforementioned tram tunnel.
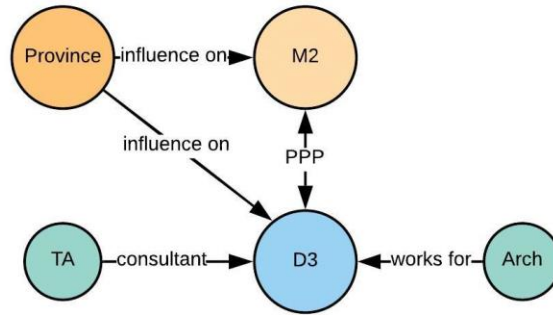
**Figure 17: Main actors (own figure)**

The core project team of M2 consists of project leader M2A, former real estate advisor (and today municipal strategist for public-private collaboration processes) M2B, tender consultant and temporary project manager M2C and urban planner M2D. In addition to M2A's core team, several different departments of M2 are involved in case B for procedural reasons.

After issuing the land (*Dutch: 'Gronduitgifte'*) in 2017/2018, developer D3 and his proposed plan for case B were selected. From D3, interviewee D3A, who is a young developer, took part in the interviews for this thesis. Behind D3A stands a small team of two further individuals from D3, including D3's senior manager.

Since the start of the tender process for case B, a technical consultant (TA) was added to D3s project team. Only during the tender, when information from all major stakeholders, including the citizens, internal stakeholders from the municipality and the province was gathered, D3 hired an architect to join its team. The public-private partnership was signed between M2 and D3.

## 3.B.3 Procedural components

Case B uses a variety of partnering components (Figure 18).

### *Core and several optional components in place*

Following the list of partnering components by Eriksson (2010), in case B, all core partnering components can be found.

This includes a bid evaluation procedure based on soft parameters as well as compensation from based on open books. In addition, core collaborative tools include start-up and follow-up workshops, the development of joint objectives and a variety of resolution techniques.

Optional partnering components include an increased focus on the contractor's self-control, early involvement of the contractor (D3) and collaborative contractual clauses, such as the clause that central to this partnership is the conversation (M2A).
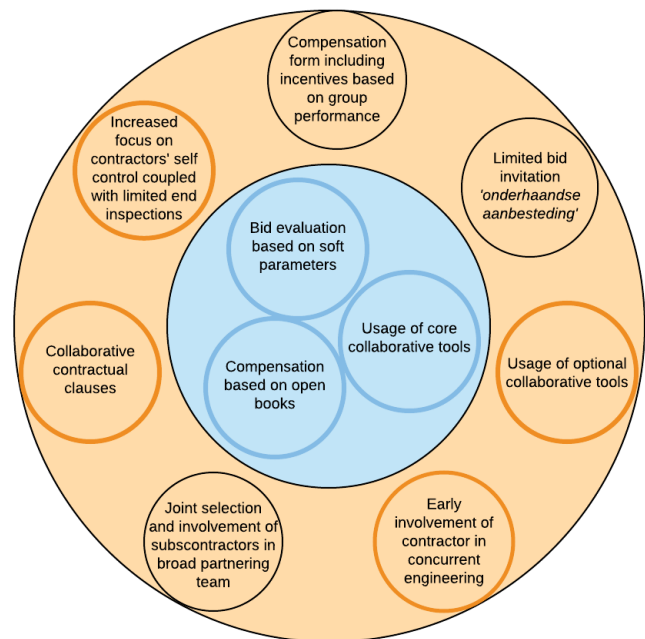


**Figure 18: Partnering flower Case B (own figure)**

Optional collaborative tools used encompass ongoing reviews of the collaboration process and joint risk management in the form of informal meetings. Ultimately, to solve a communication challenge between the partners and the province, an external mediator was used at a later stage of the project.

## 3.B.4 Understanding of partnering

In the following Table 9, the individual understandings of M2A, M2B, M2C, M2D and D3A on what partnering, respectively a good collaboration process means to them are gathered.

**Table 9: Partnering definitions (own table)**

| Interviewee | Definition |
|---|---|
| M2A | Partnering is to get what is below the table above the table because you can often feel that something does not go well. Make that discussable. And that is scary to do but also really exciting. Because you don't know what the other person will do with the information. So, there needs to be a certain level of trust. |
| M2B | That you are allowed to talk or at least ask about the unspoken, which there often is in meetings. Because it is very difficult to talk about something while you know that there is something under the table and you cannot talk about it. |
| M2C | It all comes down if you trust one another. It is important to start with having trust in the other although you do not know each other very well especially in the beginning of these tender procedures. But if you begin with distrust, then it is a long way to trust. You can lose trust, but you have to try to form the members of your own team that they are neutral or have trust in the beginning. And a preselection process is very important for obtaining that. So that you begin at least in a neutral area and at best in a positive flow. |
| M2D | It means that you are open with what you need and with what you want to achieve. So you are open about your interests. |
| D3A | Maybe it is a generic answer, but you have to trust each other. And the main problem is that we are the bad developers that want a lot of money There is not enough trust in each other and we also complain about the municipality and I think that we have to think through all of the regular stuff and try to find ways of trusting each other. And that is very difficult. |

As shown in Table 9 above, most interviewees mentioned trust as the basis of a collaborative way of working.

In this respect, M2C and D3A also explain that in a good collaboration process it is important to try to achieve at least a neutral trust level when meeting another person. This seems to be confirmed by D3A who mentioned that individuals need to find ways to look past common misconceptions. M2C, on the other hand, explained that part of a good collaboration process might also be to assemble an own team that is rather positive or at least neutrally orientated towards the other party.

In addition to a trusting environment, M2D explained in the interview that a good collaboration process can be characterized as an open environment where individuals are open on what they need and what is tried to achieve. This is shared by M2A and M2B who stated that a collaborative work environment is characterised by the fact that you are allowed to talk or at least ask about the unspoken. However, M2A also explained that there needs to be a certain level of trust before full disclosure is possible.

## 3.B.5 The emergence of partnering relations

In the following section, the main aspects that evolved from the interviews with M2A, M2B, M2C, M2D and D3A are presented.

The most frequently mentioned topic by interviewees of case B is the design of the tender process.

Hereby, all interview participants described that, in their understanding, the alternative set up of the tender process was an influential factor why partnering relations could emerge in case B.

That the tender design was herby no coincidence, but the shared result of a long learning and reflection process of several individuals within the municipal team becomes clear from the interviews with the municipal team (M2A, M2B, M2C and M2D).

Project leader M2A explains that her learning process started with negative project experience, where legal disputes and discussions surrounding details in the contract made her decide that she ''(...) never wanted to get back to the old situation and therefore continuously kept looking for how it [collaboration] can work.'' On her journey, M2A explains that negotiation training after the Harvard method was crucial to understanding which path could lead her to success.

> ''I have seen what it does with a project and with people if you work from out a joint objective within framework conditions, then the project just flies. But if you have never seen it and not believe in it, then I can talk with people and they say oh that is interesting but then they go back to their old way of working.''
> - Interviewee M2A

Besides these initial results, M2A, however, tells that only until she saw that collaboration can work in another project, she started ''(…) to believe in it.'' M2B partly shares the journey of M2A. Also wanting to learn from bad project experiences, she explains, that only recently she changed into a position where she can focus full-time on improving public-private collaboration processes; and that one of the currently investigated, and in case B tested approaches, is to, within the existing frameworks and guidelines, give more freedom to the private sector.

Concerning the latter, particularly the experiences of M2D appear to be crucial to understand why a tender design based on showing trust and giving more freedom to the private sector was put in place.

In the interviews, M2D elucidates that in her work as an urban planner for both, public and private parties, she experienced that 'Private parties can work with less concrete solutions.'' As private parties have a lot of knowledge in their organisations, she explains that less, respectively more generic ambitions can give more room to combine public and private suggestions and offers space to be creative and smart and ultimately also improve the collaboration process. The understanding of M2D's understanding and vision of collaborative public-private design process was also one of the reasons why M2A's had asked her to join case B's municipal team.

As a result, the tender was organised in two stages. In the first part, private parties had to answer why they are the right partner for the area and this project (see Figure 19). M2A herby explained that the team wanted the tender to be rather similar to a job application rather than a traditional tender procedure based on price.

Approximately twenty developers reacted to the request, where about half of the applicants were invited for consecutive interviews. After several interview sessions, the remaining three parties engaged in an intensive design process in collaboration with the municipality to develop a preliminary design of case B.

Reflecting on the process, M2A mentions that D3 stood out from the applications because, ''You could see that they really looked into the area and that they did not yet have an architect on board but a technical advisor.''

> *''We learned in the station area that you can get top architects and top developers but if you can't work together, if you are not open and transparent than you can do as many nice pictures as you like but you will not get it done; and for sure not in an area that is so complex and where everything depends on each other as the station area. This is how case B started.''*
> - Interviewee M2A

Particularly the latter showed M2A that D3's team had understood that ''Technology and complexity might be more important than the aesthetical quality in this project.''

Finding a party that is truly interested in understanding M2A's team's case and the team's concerns was important to M2A, as an earlier project evaluation learned her, that ''(…) It does not matter if you hire top-architects or top developers'', but that ''The type of party that works on the project, is what determines everything.''

Today, she and M2B explain that theoretical models help them to better understand what is happening in their collaboration processes and which processes took place during the partner selection. In particular, M2A and M2B explain that they made the experience that discussions in collaboration processes tend to be limited to 'opinions' and that ''We no longer take the time to get to the bottom things.'' As a result of this learning process, in the tender process, the municipality wanted to find a party that would be willing to get to the bottom of challenges and with who it would be possible ''(…) to talk or at least ask about the unspoken, which there often is in meetings'' (M2B).

> *''The society is currently really only opinion, opinion, I don't like it, well, then I disagree. We no longer take the time to get to the bottom of things.*
> - Interviewee M2A

> *''So we made ourselves vulnerable and we told them how our process is designed, how our risks are, how our dilemmas are and that we expected them to do the same.''*
> - Interviewee M2C

M2C mentions that ''That is the whole purpose of these dialogue sessions and the tender procedure because you see different approaches and different ways of working.'' Also, he clarifies that ''(…) the tender procedure is an important moment to build trust'' for both public and private parties.

Particularly the latter was a difficult part because there was a lack of trust, explained M2C. As his team was aware of the many bad experiences that have been and still are being made in the industry, M2C refelects that quite some time at the beginning of the dialogue sessions was used ''to clarify how we [they] are in the game.'' He adds, that, by making themselves vulnerable and by making the process very ''personal'' to have hoped to contribute to an environment in which trust could grow. In return, however, the municipal team made it clear that they expected this behaviour to be mutual.

M2C mentions in the interview that parties tend to forget that during the tender phase ''There you have to define the way you want to work.'' Herby M2C points out that in a partnership, it is important to not only prescribe how the municipal team would want to work but that ''When it is a cooperation you have to try to listen to others as well and if they have some input on how they want to work.''

> *''We tend to forget that the year or six months or nine months in advance during the tender procedure there you set the mark. There you have to define the way you want to work. What we tried was to not only to tell them how we want to work but when it is a cooperation you have to try to listen to the others as well and if they have some input on how they want to work and then something develops. In the end it is chemistry between people.''*
> - Interviewee M2C

M2A explained that these principles are also manifested in the contract. In particular, she explains that the founding principle of the collaboration was chosen to be the 'conversation' (*Dutch: Het gesprek*), which implies wider behavioural aspects such that ''you cannot win'' and that, as mentioned earlier by M2C, ''you have to listen to each other and both parties have a part of the solution.''

M2C elucidated that the reaction to these rather novel type of demands but also the meta discussions about a desired collaboration process between the parties, M2C describes as ''being surprised''. Also, he described that

there were significant differences in the degree that developers were able to adapt to the expectations. Also, M2C mentions that very quickly D3 ''(…) became in sync to what we wanted, what we expected and what they did'' and that this caused that from the very beginning the partners were able to build interpersonal trust.

> *"And this freedom and trust made that from there you have another conversation and that is really nice because then instead that they are defending everything it is more an open conversation about why they did some things and you can ask for the reason why this is better or why this works in the project instead of why they did not do what we asked."*
> - Interviewee M2D

Besides, M2D stated that there is quite a difference in energy that emerges when private parties are allowed to contribute with their solutions instead of fulfilling an extensive list of prescribed design requirements. While not being certain whether this is the reason for the improved collaboration process, she explains that ''(…) the amount of freedom and the trusting environment made that conversations were much more open'' and that ''Quality was always on the table.''

D3A seemed to confirm this statement as he tells that the freedom and the reduced conditions during the tender were aspects that D3 liked very much. Not only as it decreased complexity, but also because the freedom they were given enabled them to create a plan that ''We [They] thought is best for the area.''

Ultimately, D3A mentions that from the developer's point of view, one can perceive a tender process similar to a job application. He clarifies that ''Of course you want a place where you feel good, but the first thing and the main reason is that you want to develop something cool on a very special place'' and that this causes a difference in priorities between municipalities and developers on day one; as for the municipality, the choice of the private party is more important whereas getting the job is most important for the private developer.

In the end, however, D3A explains that ''It is not a company that you choose but a person'' and that ''(…) it is not that one municipality is bad and M2 is good but the team of that M2A has organised things in a different way than other project managers (…)'' which was influential to the emergence of a trust-based environment in case B.

**Who are we searching for?**
We are searching for parties that have collaboration, listening, transparency, creativity, ambition and optimism in their DNA. Parties that ask the question behind the question and think in chances instead of restrictions. Besides the own interest, it is necessary to have an honest interest in receiving a look into the issues of each other and that you are a party that is able to think party-overreaching. Also, and maybe just as it gets difficult.
We are searching parties that hug this way of working and that can bring a challenging task to success by bringing the right people and parties at the right time and on the right spot to bring together.

We are asking you to put together a team that fits to this task. That team can have different parties that build a consortium. The consortium does not need to be complete in the application phase and can during the procedure be extended. The people in the team sees changes in the playground as a challenge and want to move together, without losing their aim. The mindset of the tender and the way of working needs to be safeguarded from the beginning until the end. This is why we are searching for a team that from the beginning until the end is working on this project. The team can be extended but not changed.

**What we offer**
An enthusiastic team of professionals that already worked in this way in the tenders from the North and South building of the station area of our municipality. The team consists of individuals from all departments of the municipality and safeguards the tender and the way of working where the why of the task constantly is in the focus. With openness and transparency as the basis of a good collaboration.

**Figure 19: Excerpt from the tender documents
(own figure, based on information from M2D)**

Another topic that seems crucial to understand the emergence but also today's way of working in case B is the extent to which problems are seen and approached as joint problems in case B.

Formally, in case B, the responsibilities are divided between the parties on paper. However, in practice, the border between public and private seems to be much more blurred. D3A, for instance, explained that ''Because it feels like we are partners and we are both in the same project and we are both responsible for this project.''

This feeling of 'joint responsibility' and thus also 'joint problem ownership' however, first needed to develop. M2C says that at the beginning of the collaboration, there is always insecurity on how the other party will react in difficult moments. Despite him trying to have a neutral, respectively rather optimistic view on the prospective collaboration partners, he explained that ''Only when it is getting difficult then you really get to know what the cooperation is worth.''

> ''Only when it is getting difficult then you really get to know each other and learn what the cooperation is worth. So, every cooperation needs a little crisis.''
> - Interviewee M2C

As an example, M2C claimed that there was a little crisis moment during the tender process with the developers. ''The discussions with all three parties as well as D3 became a bit sour'' and that it could be seen that some parties ''(…) fell back in their old school mode with the cards against your chest and complaining.''

> ''Maybe you can pinpoint it. You have to get to know each other and after two or three meetings you know for yourself it feels ok. But maybe a turning point is when it gets difficult.''
> - Interviewee M2C

In this situation, M2C, however, described the behaviour of D3 as being quite different because when the municipality shared the underlying reasons of their dilemma D3 was ''(…) looking for a way out together with us.'' This behaviour, M2C explains, was important for him to experience because he could see that when it gets difficult ''Your head does not get cut off, but our openness is appreciated, and we try to come up with a plan together and we try to be flexible.'' In retrospective, M2C mentions that this moment was also an important turning point for him from feeling ''okay'' to developing interpersonal trust towards D3.

After the tender process, interpersonal trust continued to grow between the parties. For instance, D3A explained that from the first day, the municipality was very clear about finding a partner for a complex job in a complex location and that ''Until the day of today it feels like we are partners, we understand each other. And in bad times we also need each other.''

Since the project is very complex, indeed the project partners have to face several 'bad times' that, if D3 and the municipal team would not have decided to partner, could have led to juridical disputes in case B.

One of these challenges surrounds the paradox that besides the contract of D3 being officially signed based on the final design of the tender process, D3A currently has ''(...) to talk, convince and talk again with a huge amount of stakeholders within the municipality, and also with the Province/Region'' that want to change or do not agree with details in the final plan of D3 and his team.

As the final plan and a corresponding contract have already been made, D3A explains that ''M2A and her team could make better use of the fact that our plan has been selected to her internal stakeholders.'' However, since, as a partner, social barriers of the municipal team also become his responsibility, he explains that ''It [M2A making better use of the fact that the plan has been already selected to her colleagues] is not a solution in my [his] opinion.''

M2D explains that in case B, one of these social implications of pursuing partnering relations is that it sometimes affects existing power dynamics. As an example, M2D explains that due to the attempt to setup a tender process that would stimulate the emergence of partnering relations with the private developers, the role of the aesthetical committee (*Dutch: Welstandscomittee*) was required to be changed from a decision role to an advisory role. This change in power dynamics, M2D explained, now has wider implications on the project.

Moreover, M2D, mentions that coping with power dynamics can be particularly difficult for wider members of the partnering group. As such, she explains that particularly for the architect of D3, it can be difficult sometimes as he is only a wider member of the partnering group and therefore sits between the 'partnering' and the 'traditional' world. Accordingly, M2C explained that there was a situation in which she experienced a 'breach of trust.' Even though M2C was aware that it would not solve the core of the problem, she explains that ''You make

sure that it does not happen again''; which in this case resulted in rerouting design information through herself before sending information further.

As a result of the challenging power dynamics between the municipal team and other stakeholders within the municipality, as well as a conflict of interest with the province, the project is facing delay. In the case of the partners, since it is considered a joint problem, M2A and D3A explained that, when the reasons are understandable, there is a possibility to change the contract.

> *''We had a lot of delay and then M2A will say okay we understand it and lets change the contract. That happened. The contracts are not flexible, but they are flexible to change the contract because they understand that circumstances can change.''*
> - Interviewee D3A

Interestingly, M2A and M2B explained that they do not feel the necessity for many team building activities to reach a collaborative climate. They stated that the real goal is ''(…) to get the Friday drinks

> *''You can easily achieve a relaxed atmosphere at a 'borrel' but to make this feeling happen in normal meetings that is the goal (M2A, M2B).''*
> - Interviewee M1A and M2B

feeling into the normal meetings.'' Furthermore, M2A, M2B but also D3A make several comparisons to a relationship in their interviews. ''You need to do enough relationship maintenance otherwise you grow apart'' explains M2B. Herby, M2A and M2B clarify that, since they only meet every two weeks, this is not what makes the difference in case B. The difference lays in, as soon as ''You develop all these thoughts in your head'' (M2A) to make phone call instead of further debating over e-mails.

## 4.0 Cross-case analysis

Based on the analysis of case A and B, this chapter cross-analyses the individuals' narratives to better understand the emergence of partnering in the here investigated cases. To properly answer the main research question *MRQ: What are factors that promote the emergence of partnering relations in Dutch urban development projects?* this chapter is structured using the sub-research questions posed at the beginning of this research (Chapter 1.5).



4.1 Construction and negotiation of partnering

4.2 Interpersonal learning process towards partnering

4.3 Interaction of partnering components in the process

4.4 Management of paradoxes, contradictions, consequences

4.5 Summary
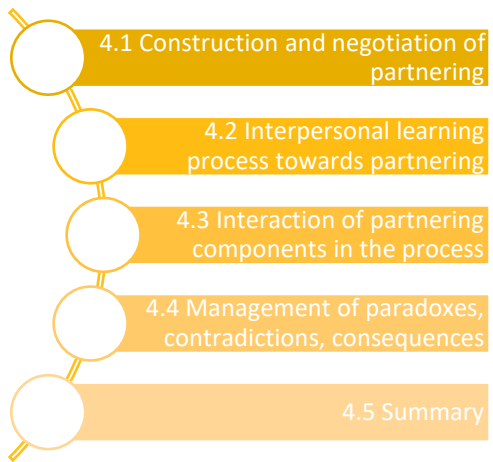
**Figure 20: Reading guide chapter four (own figure)**

This chapter is divided into five chapters as shown in Figure 20.

Chapter 4.1 attempts to visualise how public and private individuals in the cases constructed and negotiated partnering relations by analysing a variety of formal and informal processes.

In chapter 4.2, a selection of interpersonal learning processes is presented that have been understood from the case narrative. By doing so, further insights on potentially influential factors to the emergence of partnering are revealed.

In chapter 4.3, the interaction of partnering components in the informal process towards partnering relations is discussed.

Lastly, Chapter 4.4 investigates how paradoxes from partnering components but also further contradictions and unintended consequences where managed at an interpersonal level.

Chapter 4.5 provides a summary of the main findings in preparation for the concluding chapter of this thesis.

## 4.1 Construction and negotiation of partnering

The first sub research question that was posed in Chapter 1.5 is as follows:



*How is partnering constructed and negotiated in place?*

According to Oxford University Press (OUP) (2019) and Oxford University Press (OUP) (2019), *negotiation* can be defined as a ''Discussion aimed at reaching an agreement'' and *construction* as ''(…) the creation of an abstract entity.''

While both definitions are clear, the first research question poses a major challenge, namely, that due to the lack of a shared definition or understanding of partnering (Chapter 1.2.2), there is no clarity regarding the type of 'abstract entity' respectively partnering 'agreement' that has been tried to be constructed respectively negotiated in place.

To first better understand the type of 'abstract entity' individuals were striving for, the following steps have been developed when answering RQ1:



Understanding the project circumstances

Understanding the public manager's reasons for partnering

Scrutinizing the individuals understanding of partnering based on the cases narratives

Analysing informal and formal processes until the signing of the contract
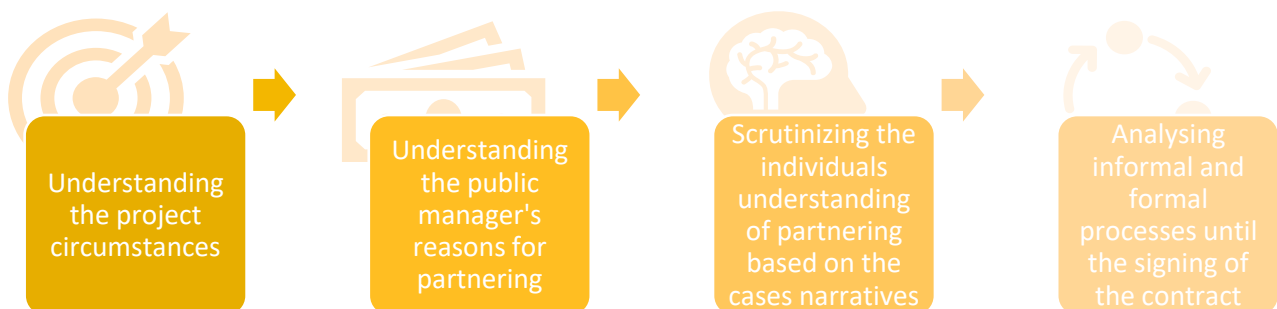
**Figure 21: Event-based model Dutch UDM research (own figure)**

### 4.1.1 Project circumstances

As explained earlier (Chapter 2.5.1), the research conducted by Eriksson (2010) was consulted to understand the project circumstances that typically play a role in the initiating parties' decision to strive for partnering relations in Dutch UDM projects.

Following Eriksson (2010) pursuing of more cooperative-based 'partnering' relations rather than competition-based relations becomes particularly interesting with an increase in project complexity, customization, frequency/duration, time pressure and/or uncertainty (Figure 22).
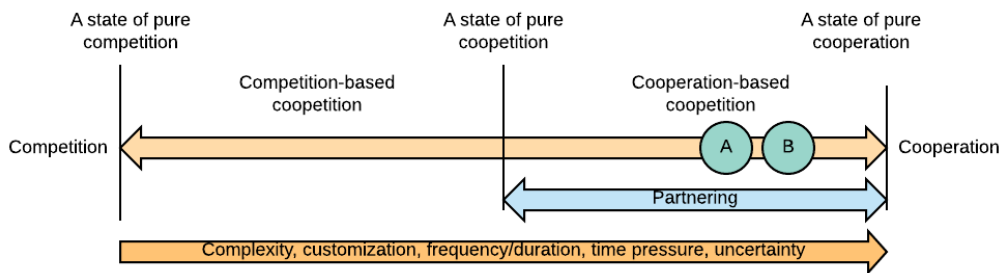


**Figure 22: Coopetition continuum (own figure, based on Eriksson, 2010)**

From the narratives developed for cases A and B, it is hereby assumed that both, case A and case B, inherited a variety of project circumstances that could explain why the application of partnering principles was interesting for the public managers in both cases.

In case A, it was specifically the time pressure that resulted from paying high interests on the loan and predominantly the frequency and duration of the development. This was combined with the complexity of the term 'sustainability' that is considered relevant to understand why public managers became interested in the pursuing of partnering relations.

***Case B slightly more to the right of the partnering continuum***

In contrast to case A, case B has a much shorter project duration. However, due to the high level of technical and social complexity, high level of customization, time pressure and uncertainty, it is assumed that case B may be situated slightly more to the right side of the continuum in comparison to case A (Figure 22).

### 4.1.2 Reasons for partnering

In addition to specific project circumstances of cases A and B, it appears that the understanding of partnering can vary dependent on the individuals expected benefits from partnering according to the case narratives,

To best illustrate the different expected benefits of the initiating public parties, Chapter 2.5.1 is based on the work of Hosseini et al. (2018) who summarized the different expected benefits of partnering from construction project management literature.

In Table 10 where the narratives of cases A & B are translated accordingly, it appears that besides increased safety performance, which is not such a big topic in UDPs, almost all expected benefits collected by Hosseini et al. (2018) were also the reasons of M1A and M2A and her team to find a true partner instead of someone that solely just delivers a product.

**Table 10: Expected benefits from partnering (own table, based on Hosseini et al., 2018)**

| Expected benefits for partnering | Case A | Case B |
|---|---|---|
| Increase efficiency | x | x |
| Increase quality | x | x |
| Reduce Litigation/Dispute resolution | | x |
| Increase customer satisfaction | x | x |
| Elimination of adversarial relationships | | x |
| Sustainability | x | x |
| Safety Performance | | |
| Reduce risk/Risk shared | x | x |
| Enhance communication | x | x |
| Continuous improvement | x | x |

Please note that, as indicated in light green in Table 10, it is shown that there is a slight difference in the expected benefits from partnering between cases A and B.

***Partnering to increase efficiency and achieve sustainability ambitions***

Namely, the narratives of case A and B reveal that in comparison to case B, case A had chosen partnering in particular as a way to increase efficiency. This is assumed, as case A's narrative reveals that finding a partner was the only way to start despite the economic crisis circumstances, which was important particularly due to the high-interest rate M1 paid for the loan of the land. Finding a partner that would cover construction contingency, have the ability to develop as soon as possible and especially agree to open book principles was therefore considered as important preconditions to the emergence of partnering relations.

In addition to the above, the most important reason to search for a true 'partner' rather than just someone who merely 'delivers a product' was the projects' aim to be very sustainable. As M1A stated that he needed a good 'advisor' that would help him execute this ambitions plan, achieve a high score in terms of sustainability, as well as increased efficiency, it is assumed to have been one of the main expected benefits from partnering.

***Partnering to reduce litigation and eliminate adversarial relationships***

In case B, the narrative hints that, from the list of expected benefits of partnering, it was specifically the reduction of litigations, faster resolution of disputes, and the elimination of adversarial relationships that drove the municipal team to organise the project differently.

This becomes particularly clear when M2A described the unpleasant experiences she had with litigation processes in the past. In addition to these reasons, it is also assumed that a high customer, thus citizen satisfaction with the project was the main driving factor. This is mainly assumed based on the explanation of individuals regarding the project scope, which essentially is to create a place where citizens 'want to be.'

## 4.1.3 Understanding of partnering

Having understood the project circumstances and expected benefits from partnering by the public managers, it is now possible to better understand for what type of 'partnering' entity the public managers aimed to create within their projects.

In Figure 23, a summary of the given understandings of partnering from the narratives from case A and B are given.
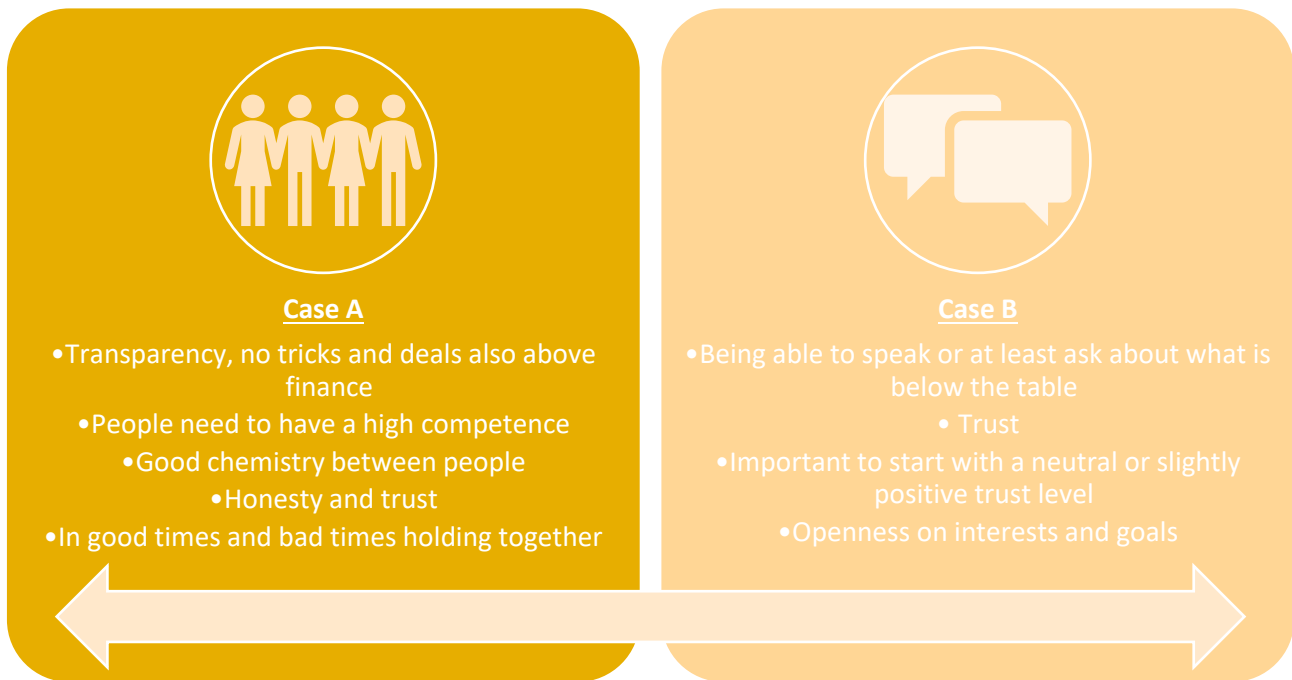
**Figure 23: Public understanding of partnering case A and B (own figure)**

***Good chemistry and trust between people***

As shown in Figure 23, in case A, the public manager explained that partnering for him is about transparency, no tricks and deals also above finance, high competence of and chemistry between people, honesty and trust. Also, a partner is supposed to be there in 'good and in bad times.'

When evaluating the case narrative A, e.g. the focus on transparency, honesty and trust seems suitable as M1A explained that he needed to know 'what the private parties have' (financially) to start developing the project as soon as possible.

On the other hand, the focus on competences, seem important given the sustainability ambitions. Ultimately, good chemistry between individuals seems relevant overall given the fact that, whereas all private developers work separately, the development is developed under the joint name of case A.

***A combination of understandings***

In contrast, for case B, it is assumed that due to the larger group of public managers than in case A, the understanding of partnering may be a combination of understandings.

Following the understanding of project leader M2A, however, a project appears to be a partnering project when it is possible to discuss ''(…) what is below the table'' (M2A; M2B). Furthermore, M2A pointed out that with sharing sensitive information, a certain level of trust may be needed as ''you don't know what the other person will do with the information.''

Given the complexities, particularly the social complexities on the public side that the narrative of case B reveals, it seems understandable why open information sharing and trust in other people are named by almost all public managers in case B.

As all public managers in one way or the other mentioned that partnering is work environment based on 'trust', it is assumed that the understanding of partnering of cases A and B is aligned with what most partnering researchers understand under a partnering way of working (Chapter 1.2.2, p. 15).

## 4.2 Formal and informal processes

Based on the obtained knowledge about the project circumstances, the expected benefits and the individual understanding for partnering of the public parties, finally, it can be evaluated how the informants, and

particularly, the public parties understanding of partnering was constructed and negotiated in place to safeguard their individually expected benefits from the partnership based on the project's circumstances.

To recall, according to Oxford University Press (OUP) (2019) and Oxford University Press (OUP) (2019), *negotiation* can be defined as a ''Discussion aimed at reaching an agreement'' and *construction* as ''(…) the creation of an abstract entity.''

For simplicity reasons, this chapter evaluates the dynamic process of constructing and negotiating partnering relations from the first interaction between public and private parties until the milestone of signing the development contract.

However, it needs to be mentioned that portrayed information is an abstraction of reality, as well as the fact that information has not been further validated.

| Case A: Formal | Case A: Informal | Case B: Formal | Case B: Informal |
|---|---|---|---|
| **European tender based based on soft parameters**<br>•**Open book system** as condition | Getting to know each other in the market consultation | **Tender process based on soft parameters, open book system** and relational principles | Developers get to know M2 through tender document |
| Tender publication | Developer getting to know M1 through tender document | Tender publication | M2 getting to know D3 through application |
| Presentation of the project and process vision | M1 gets to know D1 through application document | **Start-up workshop,** interviews, **joint objective** | Getting to know each other, public managers as role models<br>• Game rules for interaction<br>•D3 reciprocating |
| | Getting to know each other during presentation | **Ongoing workshops** (Dialogue rounds)<br>•including citizens and citytender-team | Joint development of partnering understanding<br>Integration of TA<br>•Getting to know stadstenderteam<br>•Choice Arch |
| Signing contract for first 250 dwellings<br>•including **open book system** and behaviour charter | Contract negotiations<br>•Discussing partnering understanding<br>•Sharing sensitive information | | Solving first bigger challenge together |
| | | Awarding project based on preliminary design | Designing final plan together |
| | | Signing contract based on final plan<br>•including **open book system** and behaviour charter | |

*\* Core partnering components after Eriksson (2010) in bold*

**Figure 24: Formal and informal processes (own table)**

As shown in Figure 24, the processes that took place from the first interaction of the public managers with the private parties until the signing of the contract have been divided into formal and informal processes.

Since case A was developed/realized in the past, the case narrative of project A does not reveal much about the processes that occurred in this period.

*A dynamic interplay between formal and informal processes*

From the interview with D1A and M1A, it appears that in case A, construction and negotiation of partnering were a combination of both formal and informal processes.

Based on Figure 22, case A started with a market consultation. M1A explained that in this market consultation, he asked the developers how many risks they could carry at the time and if they could imagine themselves becoming a partner in case A. It is assumed that already in this stage, expectations og M1A's understanding of partnering had been clarified and thus partly negotiated.

After the market consultation, D1A claimed that, due to the inability of developers to take many risks, a selection process solely based on soft parameters was initiated. Since the tender was not based on a price, one of the project conditions was that the project would need be developed based on an open book principle.

Based on the interview with M1A, it appears that neither the tender process nor the open book principle was strategically put in place to reach a partnering way of working, but instead, were rather rational choices that developed from the project circumstances, expected benefits from partnering, and the situation of Dutch developers at that particular moment.

D1 was awarded the tender and entered into contract negotiations. While it is likely that informal processes surrounding the construction and negotiation of partnering happened during this presentation moment and the contract negotiations, unfortunately, the case narrative does not give much further information.

What is known, however, is that until today, behavioural principles of the partnership are anchored in the contract as well as that the first contract only concerned 250 dwellings with the option to prolong the contract, if the developer's performance as a partner is considered as good by M1.

*Informal processes surrounding the components determining the emergence of partnering relations*

In contrast to case A, the narrative of case B provided more information on the formal and especially informal ways partnering has been constructed and negotiated in place until the contract was signed.

Starting from the tender description (Figure 19, p. 51), the case narrative reveals that a different way of organising the selection process was important as it provided several platforms where the public parties could explain and negotiate their respective understanding of partnering to the developers until a final partner selection was made.

The first platform was hereby the tender document. Here, the public parties had explained what for a type of party, respectively which type of competences and behaviours they were searching for in a private partner. Besides, the public team, however, also explained why they considered themselves a good partner to the developers.

In addition to the tender document, M2C explained that for the public team, it was particularly the first meeting with the developers that was an important step to construct and negotiate the intended way of working in case B.

*The own behavior as a means to negotiate and construct partnering*

As the case narrative reveals, in these first meetings, M2C and his team took much time to acknowledge past experiences, the team's intentions and position in the project as well as explain about the dilemmas that the team is currently facing. M2C stated that by behaving according to the teams own partnering understanding, he tried to provide for a good foundation on which trust could grow.

Accordingly, it appears that in case B, their own behaviour was used as a means to construct partnering.

*Behavioral game rules based on which private parties are invited to co-create partnering relations*

M2C and M2A , however, explained that they also expected similar behaviours from the developers.

Accordingly, it appears that the own behaviour was both, a way to construct as well as to negotiate the public teams 'partnering game rules' and that the private developers would need to respect these if they would want to become the public team's prospective partner in case A.

Next to these unnegotiable 'game rules' as a way to construct partnering, M2C, however, makes it explicit that for him, the further design of the partnership and ultimately the emergence of partnering relations dependent on the participation and behaviours of the different private individuals in the process.

By reciprocating and becoming in 'sync' with the municipalities 'game' they wanted to play, case narrative B reveals that trust and with it partnering relations could be reached already during the tender phase when D3 and the municipal team overcame a challenge together.

***Formal safeguarding of behavioral principles***

Ultimately, from the interview with M2A, it is reported that founding behavioural principles were also recorded in the contract. Based on the preliminary design and the developer's calculations on how they would like to achieve a budget-neutral development, the (partnering) contract between D3 and M2 was signed.

Based on the above observations the answer to RQ1: How is partnering constructed and negotiated in place? results in (Table 11):

**Table 11: Summary RQ1 (own table)**

| In both cases the construction and negotiation of partnering was: |
|---|
| • Dependent on the project circumstances, expected benefits and the individuals partnering understanding<br>• Led by the public managers in charge<br>• Constructed and negotiated by and an interplay of formal and informal processes, whereas<br>  - True negotiation and construction of partnering took predominantly place in the informal processes between public and private individuals |

| Formal processes have either been selected to: |
|---|
| • Give information on what the public team is looking for and what the public party has to offer<br>• Understand better whether a partner is suitable<br>• Increase communication platforms to construct and negotiate partnering informally<br>• Safeguard, show and/or record the public managers understanding of a way of working formally |

| Informal processes helped to: |
|---|
| • Public managers to negotiate their understanding of partnering such as a set of unnegotiable behavioural rules based on which the private parties where<br>  - Partly selected on and, if these rules were accepted<br>  - Invited to further co-create what a partnering way of working could mean in practice |

| The construction of partnering way of working was a result of: |
|---|
| • First acknowledging the past, explained the current position, intention and dilemmas<br>• The public managers trying to behave and communicate according to their own principles so that the private parties could feel comfortable in reciprocating and thus constructing a partnering way of working<br>• Private individuals reciprocating in the public parties game rules<br>• Direct and intense interaction over time and particularly the joint overcoming of challenges |

## 4.3 Interpersonal learning process towards partnering relations

The second research question is as follows:

*How does the interpersonal learning process towards partnering relations look like?*

The case narratives of cases A and B reveal several interpersonal learning processes that took place in the process towards a partnering way of working. To understand how the interpersonal learning process looked like, this chapter dismantles crucial learning processes mentioned in the narratives of cases A and B into sub-steps. Similar to the previous chapter, also these learning processes are simplifications of reality and illustrate only a very small excerpt of learning processes.

As the narrative of case B reveals that particularly the learning processes before the first interaction with the private developers are important to consider when understanding the emergence of partnering relations, this chapter evaluates selected learning processes of what in the following is called the *Pre-partnership stage,* the *Partnership formation and partner selection* stage and the *post-formation partnership management stage* (Sambasivan et al., 2013).

As over the years, additional developers joined the development of case A. At the end of this chapter, learning processes from a *second pre-partnership stage* are illustrated. Here, an excerpt of the learning process of developer D2 is displayed.

### 4.3.1 Pre-partnership stage

As mentioned earlier, the case narratives, and particularly the case narrative of case B, reveals that the learning processes of public managers prior to the development are crucial to understanding the emergence of partnering relations.

As can be seen in Table 12, both public managers from both cases had gone through several learning processes. Structuring Table 12 into a learning – action – expectation cycle was hereby inspired by Jacobsson & L. Wilson (2014) (see Chapter 2.5.1).

Case narrative A reveals that the learning process of the public managers was rather of a short-term nature as the economic crisis required him to act fast. In return, case narrative B reveals that the individual learning process and interest for partnering of several public managers started several years ago. Accordingly, it appears that the learning processes of individuals towards partnering in case A and B are both of a short-term and long-term nature.

**Table 12: Learning-action-expectation cycle pre-partnership stage (own table)**

| Stage | Informant | Learning | Action | Expectation |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Pre-partner-ship stage | M1A | Initial plan is not feasible, developers are not able to carry risks, Project success is dependent on collaboration with the private sector partnering means openness, equality, transparency and trust also above finance | Land remains in hands of municipality, own department is being set up for the project in the municipality, European tender process based on finding a true 'partner' that delivers knowledge and advisory for first 250 dwellings based on open book system | Finding a true partner that will enable to quickly start developing a sustainable and cost efficient residential area |
| | M2A M2B M2C M2D | Collaboration with the private parties and citizens increases project quality, The success of an urban development depends on the type of partner, prescribing most design details does not lead to expected results, It is important that the team has a a neutral or slightly positive trust expectation, Collaboration means that both have a part of the | Gathering a team of likeminded; Design a tender that gives freedom to private sector and that aims to find a true partner; Putting yourself in the right 'mindset' and making yourself vulnerable | There is a real partner out there; Trust will be rewarded through more pleasant process and better project; More room for joint creative thinking will improve collaboration process, quality and reduce complexity |

| | | solution and that you need to be able to talk about what is below the table | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|

**Long and short-term learning processes**

Hereby, it appears that understanding what partnering in Dutch UDPs means and how it can be organised in practice is a rather long-term process, whereas the learnings from the current project situation are rather short-term learning processes.

As an example, it appears that M1As experience has taught him that an urban development project can only be successful if the public sector collaborates openly and transparently with the private sector. However, the economic crisis had taught him that the traditional organisation of an urban development project would not be possible.

**Disruptive events as catalysators for innovation**

Interestingly, in case A, the disruptive event of the economic crisis engaged M1A in a rather short-term learning process and led to the project being arranged entirely differently.

In case B, the disruptive event of a bad project experience engaged the public manager in a learning process that resulted in several smaller steps until the project setup of case B was developed.

As can be seen, the actions that follow the learning processes are quite different, however, result in relatively similar expectations.

Whereas in case A, the public managers rather undertook individual action to develop a project setup including game rules, while in case B, the public manager first gathered a team of likeminded to together reflect on a suitable approach.

**A positive starting level of trust**

In the end, it appears that in both projects, the public managers had optimistic mindsets about finding the right partners. The difference between the two cases is that in case A, there seems to be a rather cautious approach as the first contract was only for 250 dwellings, whereas in case B, the partner selection process concerned the entire development.

In particular, case B reveals that the neutral or at least positive starting level for trust is crucial for the emergence of partner relations.

## Sub-conclusion

In conclusion, it can be said that in the pre-partnership phase of learning processes consisted of long-term and short-term learning processes that both where initiated by disruptive events.

In both cases, these learning processes led the public managers to the result that project success is dependent on the 'partner' qualities instead of design qualities. Whereas in case A, the public manager took a more cautious approach to first only looking for a 'project sequence partner' to see how the relationship develops and in case B, the public management team prepared a process that would look for a 'project lifetime partner', both projects reveal that the optimistic mindset, respectively a positive starting level of trust is a critical factor in the emergence of partnering relations.

| Long-term and short-term learnings inititated by disruptive events | Positive starting level of trust |
|---|---|
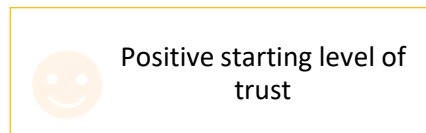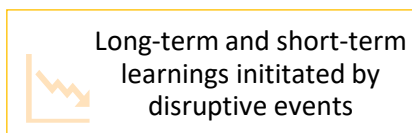
## 4.3.2 Partnership formation and partner selection

Based on the expectations from the pre-partnership stage, both public managers had developed a partner selection process.

As explained earlier, the first contact of the public parties with the private sector was hereby a tender document that would explain the project intention, the partner selection criteria as well as first 'game rules' for the project from the public side such as the open book system. Based on a preselection of applications, different developers were invited into the selection process and finally D1, respectively D3 selected as winners.

Following these events, the following Table 13 gives an overview of the learnings that were revealed from the case narrative.

**Table 13: Learning-action-expectation cycle partnership formation and partner selection (own table)**

| Stage | Informant | Learning | Action | Expectation |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Partner-ship formation and partner selection | M1A | D1 can advise me well and has also inhouse construction capacity, Understanding profit calculations | Signing contract based on open book system for the first 250 dwellings and negotiated profit of the developer | Project can start soon as I know what the private partner has |
| | D1A D1B | We are perceived as a good partner but if we want to receive additional plots, we need to help the municipality to develop a high-quality area, partner wants to work transparently | Signing contract based on negotiated profit through an open-book system | Project can start soon, if we can come so easily to an agreement on profit then we should also be able make good decisions in the future |
| | M2A M2B M2C M2D | D3 seems to respect and have understood our game rules and want to participate in designing the partnership, Good design competences and technical abilities, Challenge during the tender process was solved jointly according to our game rules | Awarding D3 as winner, designing final plan together, signing contract based on numbers provided in open book system by D3 | D3 behaves as a partner in future conflict situations, with a good relationship management we should be able to co-create a good project |
| | D3A | This municipality organises things differently and wants to find a true partner that solves solutions jointly, municipality behaves according to own game rules | Trying to solve challenge together, signing contract based on provided numbers and jointly finalised plan | Developing an exciting project on a good location, final plan can be realized |

### *Learning to trust your prospective partner*

As can be seen, in the partnership formation and partner selection process, all individuals seem to have engaged in a learning process with respect whether they can trust their prospective partner.

In case A, it appears that based on the first talks during the market consultation, the application letter of D1 and a presentation, M1A received the impression that D1 could be a good partner, in the form of an 'advisor' and simultaneously a 'developer.' In return, D1s learning is that M1A is searching for a true partner and that their company seems to suit to D1As vision of the project.

However, it could be imagined that one of the learnings of D1 is also that they need to prove themselves as a good partner if they want to receive further projects in the future.

Based on the knowledge attained, D1 and M1A engaged in contract negotiations. Whereas it is not entirely clear from the case narrative when exactly profit negotiations between D1 and M1A took place, D1A explained that the open-book system, in the beginning, helped him to trust M1A. Accordingly, it is assumed that a positive experience with M1As reaction to the sharing of sensitive information of the developer, led to the fact that the developer perceived that he can trust M1A also in the future.

In return, it appears that M1A was less aware of the impact on the creation of trust his actions had but rather was satisfied that he had found a potentially good partner that would help him to start developing soon.

### *The partners behavior during critical situations*

In return, in case B it appears that the tender process, including an application letter, interviews and several dialogue rounds, the public team had learned that the developer respects and engages in the suggested game rules.

As M2C explained, because D3 ''(…) became in sync with what we wanted, what we expected and what they did'', interpersonal trust could here grow very fast; particularly when the public manager learnt that, also in challenging times, the developer still behaves according to the municipalities idea of a partnering way of working. Besides, M2C but also D3A explained that it was very important to distance oneself from earlier learnings about public-private collaboration processes and only let new learnings about the individuals decide whether the person deserves to be trusted.

Certainly in case B, the design of developer D3 was one of the biggest selection criteria, however, it appears that the learning and therefore expectation that the developer would behave similarly in future conflicts certainly led to a partnering way of working in a comparable early stage to previously reported partnering cases.

### *Sub-conclusion*

In conclusion, it can be said, that the knowledge attained in the first personal meetings between public and private parties contributed substantially to the speed in which a partnering way of working could be reached.

Hereby, it appears that from the public side, it was important to understand whether the developers respect, accept and become in sync with the suggested game rules by the public party.

For the developer, on the other hand, it appears that particularly the respectful dealing with sensitive information was an important learning process in the emergence of a partnering way of working. For both public and private parties, it appears to be particularly the learnings about the partners behavior in critical situations that define whether the project can be called a partnering project.

| Learnings about partner from first meetings | Partners behaviour in critical situations |
|---|---|

## 4.3.3 Post-formation partnership management

Based on the predominantly positive findings regarding the prospective partner from the partnership formation and partnership selection phase, the case narratives reveal that in the post-formation partnership management stage, individuals engaged in further learning processes.

As explained, earlier project participants of case B, already faced a challenging situation that provided important learnings to both partners on how a crisis most likely would be managed. As a result, it is assumed that very early in the process the partners came very close to what the participants consider as partnering relations.

In case A, no 'crisis' event between the developers had taken place yet where partners could learn whether partners would also be there in 'bad times' as M1A referred to it.

**Table 14: Learning-action-expectation cycle partnership formation and management (own table)**

| Stage | Informant | Learning | Action | Expectation |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Post-formation partner-ship manage-ment | M1A | Two years delay due to litigation process leads to financial difficulties; D2 stood by my side truthfully during the litigation process. Advisors say that prices of developer are too expensive | Discussing every point of the cost prices, hiring new external consultant, evaluating on the conflict together and concluding that developer was not playing tricks, but nobody knows what the truth is in cost prices | D2s cost prices might be more often too high according to advisors, however, this is not because developer wants to trick me but because it is really difficult to estimate the future, if we disagree again, we need to either make a deal ourselves or when it is big sums hire an independent advisor |
| | D1A D1B | Even though we are transparent M1A does not believe us and hires consultants without asking us | Discussing every point of the cost prices, jointly hiring advisor, accepting prices besides having the feeling that profit went away | There will be more discussions about costs in the future, this is annoying, but we know that discussions are not about trust but about municipal processes and their pain due to the financial situation |
| | M2A M2B M2C M2D | Partner has to face several challenges due to province, but he does not attack us but wants to solve the problem | Offering help to write e-mails, set up meetings and organises a mediator | Also in the future developer is not mad at us but tries to solve challenges jointly |
| | D3A | The final plan which we signed our contract on cannot be executed because the province changed requirements | Asking partner what they communicated with the province, trying to find a joint way out, asking about the reasons for changes at province, explaining why changes are not possible, convincing and talking with the province | Municipality will help us in future problems and stands by our side |

In Table 14, two events mentioned in the case narratives have been displayed.

### *Learning that discussions are not about trust*

The first learning process of case A concerns the conflict surrounding the open book system that was mentioned by D1A. At this moment, the partners had already survived a two-year litigation process that D1 had to face. As D1A explains that in this moment the partners held each other, it is assumed that substantial trust grew between the project participants.

However, besides these learnings, the case narrative explains about a challenge surrounding land price costs in the open book system. Herby, it appears that when M1A learned from an advisor that D1 is too expensive and confronted him, the developer perceived it as a questioning of the partner's loyalty and truthfulness. After a discussion of the open-book system, it appears that the learning of the developer that M1A had consulted advisors without consulting the developer, introduced a learning process that questioned the partnering way of working in the project.

Ultimately, however, the case narrative reveals that, based on the advice of another, this time jointly, consulted advisor, the developer accepted a lower price besides having the feelings that his profit went away.

In this thesis, it is assumed, that based on earlier learnings e.g. the pain of the municipalities financial position the positive experience from sharing sensitive information on the profit and going together through a litigation process resulted in the fact that the partners understood that in both cases, the conflict was not about a breach of trust, but merely that nobody knows where the truth lies.

Accordingly, it is assumed that the partners had learned that this type of challenge might occur in the future due to the formal process surrounding the open-book system, however, the partners learned that it is not a personal conflict but a factual conflict.

### *Public managers learning to think as developers*

In addition to the above, another thing to note is that the ongoing discussions about the open-book system, according to D1B, caused M1 to think of themselves as a 'developer'.

*Ratio between positive and negative learning experiences*

In case B, the case narrative reveals that after the signing of the contract, the province had changed design requirements that would make the plan of D3 not feasible anymore. Whereas this might be a very big challenge in a traditional way of working as it was the municipalities' responsibility to communicate with the province, based on the earlier learnings about the partner, this conflict was handled as partners. In this specific case, it appears that overcoming this conflict promoted the further emergence of partnering relations as individuals learnt even more that they could rely on each other in conflict situations.

*Sub-conclusion*

In summary, learnings from the post-formation partnership management phase support the earlier perceived importance of overcoming challenges jointly in the process towards a partnering way of working.

Besides, this chapter reveals that a partnering way of working does not mean that the partner always behaves as one would perceive as intuitive to a partnering way of working e.g. one-sided controlling of costs or shortcomings in the communication with external stakeholders.

It is important to mention that the behavior of the counterpart seems to originate from the own perception of actions as trust evoking or trust deterring based on the own underlying value system.

However, it appears that previous positive learning processes about the partner suggest that there is a ratio of bad events that can happen and can be tolerated without questioning the trust in the other partner. Also, this chapter also showed that there are not only learnings that lead towards a partnering way of working but also a partnering way of workings learns individual parties to behave and think as a public respective private party.

| Learnings depend on own perceptions and value systems | Positive experiences need to overweigh negative ones considerably |
|---|---|

## 4.3.4 Partnership formation and partner selection

Ultimately, the last learning process that is presented is the entering of D2 to case A. Whereas case A had been already going on for several years at that point, with the entering of a new developer an embedded new partnership formation and partner selection phase took place.

**Table 15: Learning-action-expectation cycle partnership formation and partner selection (own table)**

| Stage | Informant | Learning | Action | Expectation |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Partner-ship formation and partner selection | M1A | Partnering works really well in my project; Giving trust is rewarded with trust | Buying land together with D2B, appreciating honesty and transparency | D2 performing well in case B |
| | D2B | Learning that M1A likes transparency and being there in good and bad times | ''Trying something'' by approaching M1A regarding the buying of land from an external stakeholder while being 100% transparent | ''M1A is not fooling with us'' if I also work transparently in the future |

As can be seen in Table 15 and as has been revealed by the case narrative, D2B had observed case A and the behaviour of the public manager since considerable time. As he learned that M1A is an individual that organises his projects based on partnering relations, he explains that he wanted to test for himself, whether M1A could be trusted.

As such, he approached M1A and suggested whether they could buy a plot of land together.

As M1A respectfully treated the developer's sensitive information, M2B explains that he had learned that ''M1A is not fooling with us'' and that based on this the senior managers developed their (partnering) relationship.

*Sub-conclusion*

In summary, this chapter confirms again that the learning that sensitive information is treated respectfully is important for private individuals to engage in a partnering way of working.

Much more than only the respectful treatment of information, however, this chapter shows that the perceived abilities of the counterpart and the judgement as actions as benevolent and reliable and integer are relevant to the emergence of partnering relations.

Ultimately, this chapter shows that there are private parties that are interested in pursuing partnering relations with the public sector. However, based on difficult experiences in the past, first positive learnings have to be made.

In this specific narrative, it appears that the emergence of partnering relations can herby take place outside of the analysed project e.g. in the positive experience of public and private parties to buy a plot of land based on full transparency.

However, as the case narrative of project B reveals, this might not always work as the emergence of partnering relations might be dependent on a mutual dependency, respectively the perceived benefits of actors from partnering.

| Perceived respect, willigness to do good, reliablity and integrity | Dependency on individuals perceived benefits from partnering |
|---|---|

In summary, the answer to *RQ2*: *How does the interpersonal learning process towards partnering relations look like?* implies that (Table 16):

**Table 16: Summary RQ2 (own table)**

**In case A and B, the interpersonal learning cycle consisted of:**

• Learning, action and expectation stretched over several phases
- Hereby, particularly, the learning experiences of the public parties before the project appear relevant as they led to the respective understanding of partnering and initiated the setup of the game to be played

**Furthermore learning processes:**

• Consisted of long-term and short-term learning processes that both were initiated by disruptive events
• Led the public managers to the result that project success is dependent on the 'partner' qualities instead of design qualities
• Learnings that happened in the first personal meetings between public and private parties contributed substantially to the speed in which a partnering way of working could be reached

**Hereby, it appears that from the public side:**

• It was important to understand whether the developers respect, accept and become in sync with the suggested game rules

**For the private developers on the other hand, it appears that:**

• Particularly the respectful dealing with sensitive information was an important to build interpersonal trust and thus participate in the emergence of partnering relations
• Are genereally interested in trust-based work relations, but have made many bad experiences
• Can find ways to trust when seeing integrity and reliability from the public side

**For both public and private parties, it appears that:**

• The learnings about the partners behaviour and decisions made in critical situations that defined whether partnering relations could emerge
• Previous positive learning processes about the partner suggest that there is a ratio of bad events that can happen and can be tolerated without questioning the trust in the partner
• Parties did not just engage in a learning process towards trusting each other but also to think and behave as the partner
• The emergence of partnering relations is dependent on a mutual dependency

**Ultimately, the learning process can be described as a spiral:**

• If an individual judge behaviour as trust evoking, it is generally expected that consequent behaviour is also to trust evoking which cause the individual to respond with a trust evoking behaviour
• On the other hand, actions that are judged as negative are generally responded with negative expectations of following behaviour
• Unless the positive learnings from earlier learning effects do not overweigh the negative learning effects considerably, it is therefore considered difficult to break out of this spiral
• This, however, also included that individuals need to learn to leave their earlier bad experience behind and start with a neutral or slightly positive trust when approaching a new PPP

## 4.4 Interaction of partnering components in the process

The third research question is:

> *How do partnering components interact in the informal process towards partnering relations?*
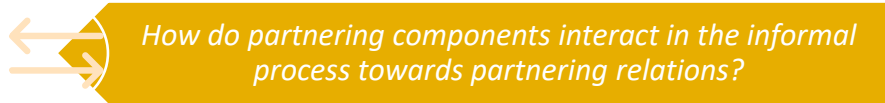
To answer this question, based on the case narratives, this chapter evaluates how procedural components interacted in the creation of the case-specific understanding of partnering relations (see Chapter 1.2.2 for Nyström's partnering flower and Chapter 3.A/B.4 for the case-specific understanding of partnering by the public managers).

As there is much confusion about what partnering 'components' (leaves) are or should be, in the case narrative, formal partnering components of Eriksson (2010) had been taken as a methodological basis to reveal components that have been applied in the respective cases.

Whereas a variety of partnering components have been found that might suit Eriksson's (2010) understanding of partnering components, this thesis has found, that in case A and B, partnering components cannot be as clearly defined or separated as theory suggests.

To provide a more specific overview, in Table 17 a variety of partnering 'leaves' from the case narratives of project A and B have been gathered and structured among the approximate time that they were introduced into the respective project.

**Table 17: Effects of partnering components on developing a partnering way of working (own table)**

| Stage | Case A | Effect | Case B | Effect |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Partnership formation and partner selection** | **Tender process based on soft parameters** | | **Tender process based on soft parameters** | HR |
| | Early contractor involvement | | Inclusion of city tender team and aesthetical quality commission in selection process | |
| | **Compensations form based on open books** | HR | **Compensation form based on open books** | |
| **Partnership governance and design** | Joint selection & involvement of climate systems expert | HR | Involvement of technical advisor in broader partnering team | HR |
| | Joint project office | | Involvement of architect in broader team | HR |
| | **Friday meetings as joint conflict resolution and risk management technique** | | | |
| **Post-formation partnership management** | Involvement of real estate agents in broader partnering team | | Relationship evaluation meetings | HR |
| | Hiring of cost advisors | HR | Hiring of a mediator | |
| | **Teambuilding activities (BBQs, excursions, Christmas parties, etc)** | HR | Joint project presentation at events | |
| | Inclusion of further developers in partnering team | | Use of e-mails | |
| | | | Use of calls | |
| *Green: Slightly until very positive effect; Yellow: Paradoxical effect; HR: High relevance; Bold: Core partnering components of Eriksson (2010)* | | | | |

***Components have been introduced in three stages***

As shown in Table 15 above, for both cases A and B, a variety of formal practices have been used that have been introduced in three different stages. Herby, it can be observed that components introduced in the partnership formation and partner selection phase are made by the public teams in preparation of the negotiation and construction of partnering.

Afterwards, the case narrative reveals that in the partnership governance and design phase, it appears that several components are introduced jointly, but led by the private parties as an addition to the public managers understanding of a partnering way of working. As an example, in case B, the private developer brought an architect to the project only after the public team introduced him to the project complexities and ambitions case A.

Ultimately, based on the course of the project and its challenges, new situation-specific components were introduced by both parties, such as the hiring of an external advisor to help to solve challenges surrounding the open book system in case A.

As the research question is to evaluate how these components interacted in the informal process towards partnering relations, based on the narratives of case A and B, in Table 17, the assumed effect of all procedural components have been displayed.

In particular, all partnering components that appear to have had a consistently positive effect on the creation of partnering relations between project participants are indicated in light green. On the other hand, all components that are considered as having paradoxical effects are highlighted in yellow in Table 15.

### *Most components have an overall positive effect*

As can be seen in the table above, most partnering components appear to have a throughout positive, respectively a not negative, effect in the process of developing a partnering way of working. Also, indicated with HR, some components seemed to have higher relevance than others.

The narrative of case A, hereby for instance reveals, that components that promoted the personal interaction between participants, such as the setup of a joint project office and a variety of team-building events were mentioned as being crucial to the creation of partnering.

In case B, on the other hand, the public managers M2A and M2B explain, that their project team does not meet with the private parties more than in traditional projects and also team building activities do not play a big role as the true goal is to bring informality into the regular meetings.

### *The relevance of components differs*

According, a dissimilarity in the relevance of components could be observed.

Next to a difference in relevance of team-building activities, also a dissimilar relevance of the tender process based on soft parameters in case A and B has been noticed.

Whereas in case A, the case narrative does not reveal exceptional effects of the bid evaluation process on the development of partnering relations, several informants of case B explain that, in their project, the tender process set-up might have just made the difference.

However, it needs to be said that the tender process in case B integrated several partnering components such as start-up workshops and follow up workshops in the form of interviews and dialogue sessions.

Accordingly, it is assumed that what in case A had been achieved through several team building activities and personal meetings in the joint project office, in case B had already taken place during the tender process; indicating that at least in case B, a combination of partnering components took place.

What also might be interesting to mention is that, despite the very positive effect of the tender process for M2 and the later selected D3, the case narrative reveals that the tender process did not necessarily interact only positively in the creation of partnering with other developers.

As the case narrative reveals particularly an incident during the tender process caused that private parties went back into their old roles, which indicates that the interaction of partnering components might have varying effects not only between projects, the course of the project but also between different individuals.

### *Paradoxical effects of the open book system*

Another component that had a dissimilarity in relevance is the open book system. Considered a core partnering ('leave') component according to Eriksson (2010), the open system was present in both case studies.

However, only in case A, the case narrative reveals that the open book system had a high impact on the emergence of partnering relations. Next to this dissimilarity in impact, in case A, the open book system, however, did not only have a positive effect. As such, case narrative A reveals that discussions surrounding the open book system cause parties to go back to a more traditional role.

This is interesting, as, at the beginning of the project, D1A explained that the open-book system, respectively the sharing of sensitive information, helped to create trust between the two parties.

Ultimately, as the case narrative reveals that today, the open book system is considered an important component of partnering in case B, it is concluded that partnering components can not only have varying effects depending on the project, sometimes interact combined in, but that its effects are also dynamic depending on the perceived intention behind the partner's behaviour surrounding the partnering component.

### The importance of mutuality

Another observation that was made is that partnering components can interact positively or negatively depending on whether they have been agreed on mutually.

In case A, it is explained that by hiring a cost advisor, which could be seen as a type of facilitator, this decision inhibited the emergence of partnering relations as he was not chosen jointly. M1A explained that the joint selection of independent advisors helps to solve conflicts between the partners.

This is also confirmed for case B, where the partners solved a conflict among others with the help of a jointly agreed upon mediator.

### The paradoxical effect of e-mails

Ultimately, case B also revealed an interesting observation surrounding the use of e-mails, which could be seen as a very simple IT tool.

Namely, according to the case narrative, e-mails tended to interact negatively in the informal process towards a collaborative climate. Requiring more time to express intentions and emotions adequately, IT tools might have adversarial effects if not accompanied with informal interaction e.g. via calling or frequent personal meetings.

In summary, the answer to *RQ3: How do partnering components interact in the informal process towards partnering relations?* results in (Table 18):

**Table 18: Summary RQ3 (own table)**

**Components are introduced in (3) different stages:**

- First, components selected by the public parties such as a bid evaluation process based on soft parameters or an open book system
- Developed together, but led by the private parties (e.g. the integration of further actors to the project)
- The situation-dependent addition of components by both parties such as the joint hiring of an external mediator or the organisation of teambuilding activities

**Components:**

- Take on project-specific shapes
- Sometimes interact combined with other components
- Have a dissimilar relevance and effect depending on the project and individual
- Interact ambiguously
- Have dynamic effects

**Also, the interaction of partnering components depends on:**

- The perceived intentions behind the partner's behaviour surrounding the component
- Whether agreements are made jointly
- Not which components are is important but how the informal processes surrounding the components look like

## 4.5 Management of paradoxes, contradictions and unintended consequences

The fourth research question is the following:

> *How are paradoxes, contradictions and unintended consequences managed at an interpersonal level?*

While in the earlier chapter, some paradoxes with formal partnering components were already mentioned, in this chapter also more general paradoxes, contradictions and unintended consequences that resulted from a partnering way of working in case A and B are compared.

To understand how individuals managed paradoxes, contradictions and unintended consequences, Table 19 for case A and Table 20 for case B are provided.

Concerning these tables, it is important to mention that both tables are only very small excerpts of reality and portray reality in a very simplified way.

**Table 19: Paradoxes, contradictions, unintended consequences case A (own table)**

| Case A | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Paradox, contraction, unintended consequence** | **Management Public** | **Management Private** |
| *Making tempo vs. two year delay* | | |
| Law case external stakeholder | 1. Explaining the situation | 1. Supporting and understanding |
| *Trust vs. desire for control* | | |
| Conflict over land costs in open book system (V1) | 1. Consulting municipal cost advisors<br>2. Discussion<br>3. Jointly hiring an independent consultant<br>4. Discussion | 1. Discussion<br>2. Jointly hiring an independent consultant<br>3. Discussion<br>4. Accepting that profit went away |
| Conflict over land costs in open book system (V2) | 1. Consulting municipal cost advisors<br>2. Discussion<br>3. Shaking hands despite municipal cost advisor's opinion<br>4. Initiating municipal colleagues into project meetings | 1. Discussion<br>3. Shaking hands despite municipal cost advisor's opinion |
| Conflict over land costs in open book system (V3) | 1. Consulting municipal cost advisors<br>2. Discussion<br>3. Jointly hiring an independent consultant<br>4. Solution based on the consultant's opinion | 1. Discussion<br>2. Jointly hiring an independent consultant<br>4. Solution based on the consultant's opinion |
| *Partnering way of working vs. lack of time* | | |
| Private partners wanting to decrease Friday meetings as the partnership goes well | 1. Explaining principles of partnership and insisting on them<br>2. Explaining principles of partnership and insisting on them | 1. Discussing<br><br>2. Accepting |
| *Long-term orientation vs. lack of innovation* | | |
| Decrease of innovation after several years of partnership | 1. Discussing<br>2. Taking new developers on board<br>3. Asking developers to hire younger people<br>4. Forming project P | 1. Discussing<br>2. Consulting on developer selection |
| *Exclusivity vs. interested developers* | | |
| Developer sees exclusivity wants to join case A and asks to buy land together with the municipality to see the reaction of the municipality | 1. Setting up a meeting<br>2. Using the information trustfully<br>3. Making the deal (a good experience)<br>4. Asking the developer to join case A | 1. Approaching under pretext<br>2. Being 100% transparent<br>3. Beginning to trust M1A<br>4. Making the deal (good experience)<br>5. Joining case |

In the furthest left column of each table (Table 19 and Table 20), a variety of different paradoxes and underlying events are listed. In the middle and right columns of both tables, the actions taken by the respective individuals are portrayed.

As can be seen in Table 19, some paradoxes, such as the conflicts about land costs in case A, are mentioned multiple times while other conflicts are only mentioned a single time.

This was done to illustrate that paradoxes can be reoccurring, but also that solutions to problems can vary depending on the situation.

### *Management practices that work first need to be discovered*

As an example, the narrative of case A reveals that discussions surrounding the land prices can be solved in different ways. As Table 19 illustrates, the first step always hereby seems to be that the partner is approached directly about the conflict. As the case narrative reveals, a result of this approach can then be that parties start explaining and discussing every point of the calculations.

If parties disagree with each other, however, the case narrative reveals that over the years the partners learned that the fastest way to solve the problem is the compromise, even though D1 might sometimes perceives that parts of his profit went away. In more complex situations, the parties hire an external consultant to solve the conflict.

Despite the solution of the conflict, one pattern can be observed in case A, namely, that at the end of the day, decisions are made jointly between the individuals.

### *Frequent communication and continuous promotion of founding relational principles*

Another consequence that may have been unintended is that partnering can work too well so that partners do nott know what and why they need to talk with each other so frequently.

As the case narrative shows, not all challenges are met with compromises and understandings. As a decrease in meetings would change the founding project principles, M1A made it clear that founding principles cannot be changed.

As he claimed that good communication and the continuous promoting of the founding relational principles within the project group are the factors that make him certain that case A will also survive the second economic crisis it experiences, this management practice appears as very critical to an UDPs project success.

**Table 20: Paradoxes, contradictions, unintended consequences case B (own table)**

| Case B | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Paradox, contraction, unintended consequence** | **Management Public** | **Management Private** |
| *Searching for a good partner vs. being a good partner* | | |
| The municipality does not receive information from Province during the tender | 1. Explaining and making oneself vulnerable<br>2. Continuation based on provisory solution | 1. Trying to find a solution together<br><br>2. Working with solution |
| *Selection process based on soft parameters vs. Province* | | |
| Despite contract being signed based on the final design, province approaches developer because he wants to change design criteria | 1. Understanding problem, explaining what they communicated<br>2. Writing e-mails and organizing meetings with province<br>3. Supports developer in meetings and ultimately hires a mediator<br><br><br><br>4. Offer contract change | 1. Asking partner what and if they communicated<br><br>2. Meeting province several times to explain why it's difficult for them to change it and understand why they want to change it<br>3. Meeting province including mediator helps to solve the problem<br>4. Communicate that delay affects costs |
| *Innovative tender design vs. traditional stakeholders* | | |
| More work as municipal employees do have remarks on the signed plan | 1. Explaining problem and underlying reasons to partner<br>2. Setting up meetings<br>3. Change of contract due to delay | 1. Asking questions and understanding the problem<br>2. Talking, persuading negotiating with municipal colleagues |
| *Remain loyal vs. protecting the project* | | |
| Architect sharing information to an external stakeholder without having consulted the partnering group | 1. Approaching developing partner that this cannot happen again<br>2. Approaching architect about problem | 1. Understanding problem and searching for a solution |

| | 3. Putting control mechanism in place | 2. Taking responsibility to control architect better |
|---|---|---|
| *Trust vs. E-mails* | | |
| Despite reporting that parties trust each other e-mails causes insecurity among developer about intentions | 1. Writing e-mail<br>2. E-mail<br>3. Setting up personal meeting about what goes wrong<br>4. Agreeing on calling the next time | 1. Confused by e-mail but trying to find a solution internally<br>2. Writing e-mail back<br>3. Personal meeting<br>4. Agreeing on calling the next time |

### *Joint problem ownership and joint problem solving*

Jointly owning problems and thus also jointly solving them as a strategy to solve challenges has been mentioned specifically by project participants of case B as one of the main reasons for the emergence of a collaborative climate (Table 20).

The approach the partners usually take herby seems to be repeating itself. The first step always consists of either explaining the problem or asking about information concerning the problem. After this step has been completed, the problem becomes a shared problem and the partners engage in the process of trying to find a solution together.

Hereby, it appears that the focus is on trying to solve the situation instead of being worried about the consequences. Particularly the latter seems to be the result of both project partners explaining the individual's flexibility to change the contract if circumstances arise that are understandable.

### *Social complexities with the public organization*

Barriers that form within the municipality have been also mentioned in case B. Here, however, the case narrative reveals that the public manager takes on the task of negotiating with the municipal colleagues. Also, it has been shown that partnering sometimes requires the reorganisation of  projects, which can pose wider social implications on the partnering team.

One strategy that herby seems to be typical for case A is that municipal colleagues are invited  meetings of case A to experience the atmosphere and better understand why decisions need to be made to let the municipal colleagues build their own opinion about the project.

### *The difficult position of the architect*

Furthermore, Case B revealed insights into dilemmas that architects in Dutch UDPs might face.

In particular, the case narrative explains that there was an incident when the architect revealed information to an external stakeholder without consulting the partnering group upfront (Table 20).

Analysing the situation, it is assumed that, as the architect is only a wider member of the partnering group, he might face difficulties when he perceives that 'remaining loyal to the partnering group' might be in dissonance with 'protecting the project' through sharing certain information.

Not having as much interaction as the partners and therefore not being able to build sufficient interpersonal trust, the architect might just be in the middle between the old and new 'power dynamics' that partnering sometimes requires (see 3.B.5).

Accordingly, to prevent similar actions to happen in the future, it becomes understandable why the public managers decided to put a control mechanism into place. However, this practice is understood to be rather inhibiting to the emergence of partnering.

### *A flexible approach to (contract) change*

Ultimately, both cases, but particularly case B, shows the importance of being flexible in the management of paradoxes. Being aware that complexities surroundings UDPs and innovative approaches, particularly the public managers show that in case of change, the contract can be changed.

Accordingly, also situations such as delay are becoming joint problems that are also solved jointly according to the principles of fairness.

In summary, the answer to *RQ4: How are paradoxes, contradictions and unintended consequences managed at an interpersonal level?* results in (Table 21):

**Table 21: Summary RQ4 (own table)**

**Paradoxes, contradictions and unintended consequences are managed differently on an interpersonal level**

- Management practices that are considered as having a negative influence on the creation of interpersonal trust are chosen when interpersonal trust has not been much developed and thus, negative intentions are expected
- Management practices that have a positive influence on the emergence of partneirng relations have more consistently been observed when interpersonal trust has already grown between individuals
- Management practices with members from the wider partnering team where rather answered by control mechanisms

**Manaagement practices that are considered to promote the emergence of partnering relations include:**

- Personally and directly approaching individuals when a problem occurs
- Asking questions to better understand the problem
- Offering help
- Trying to find solutions for the other partner's problem
- Asking for/Explaining the underlying reasons/intentions when something is not clear
- Calling instead of e-mails
- Sharing and repeatedly explaining information
- Explaining in which position the other person's actions put oneself in
- Offering to change the contract if circumstances are understandable
- Jointly consulting independent advisors or mediators
- Giving in even though one might perceive to have lost
- Inviting aldermen to project meetings and excursions

**Conflict management practices that are rather considered to inhibit the emergence of partnering relations include:**

- One sided hiring of an advisor
- Putting one-sided control mechanisms in place e.g. cost control mechanism or information control
- Insisting on the own standpoint
- Not revealing the underlying reasons for an action
- Laying problems aside
- Only criticising without giving an alternative
- Explaining that task is ones job and therefore no help should be expected

## 4.6 Summary

This chapter revealed several insights into the emergence of partnering relations in two Dutch UDPs. As the chapter might be somewhat overwhelming to the reader, in the following Figure 25, an overview of the findings that are considered as most crucial findings can be found.

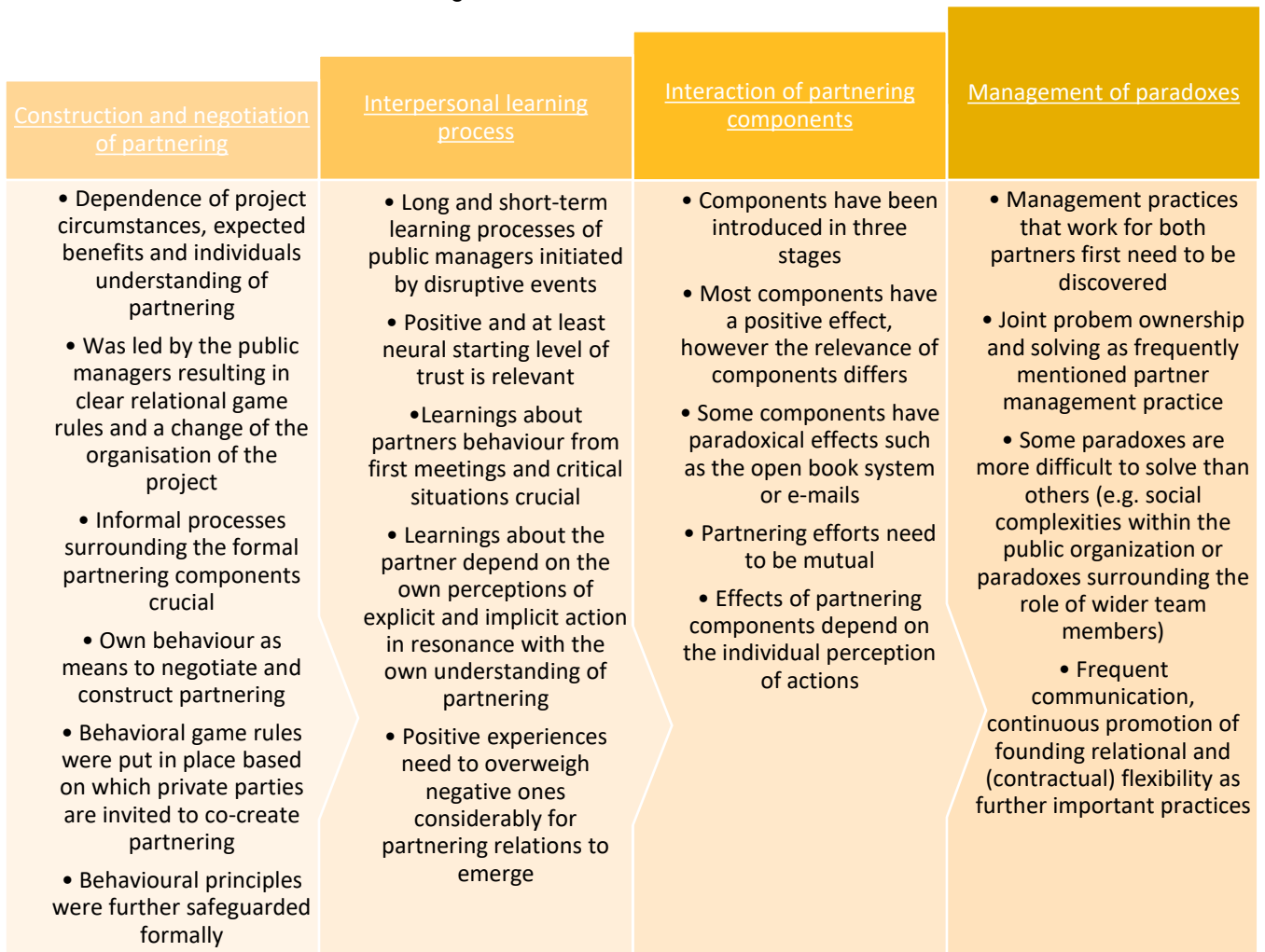| Construction and negotiation of partnering | Interpersonal learning process | Interaction of partnering components | Management of paradoxes |
|---|---|---|---|
| • Dependence of project circumstances, expected benefits and individuals understanding of partnering | • Long and short-term learning processes of public managers initiated by disruptive events | • Components have been introduced in three stages | • Management practices that work for both partners first need to be discovered |
| • Was led by the public managers resulting in clear relational game rules and a change of the organisation of the project | • Positive and at least neural starting level of trust is relevant | • Most components have a positive effect, however the relevance of components differs | • Joint probem ownership and solving as frequently mentioned partner management practice |
| • Informal processes surrounding the formal partnering components crucial | •Learnings about partners behaviour from first meetings and critical situations crucial | • Some components have paradoxical effects such as the open book system or e-mails | • Some paradoxes are more difficult to solve than others (e.g. social complexities within the public organization or paradoxes surrounding the role of wider team members) |
| • Own behaviour as means to negotiate and construct partnering | • Learnings about the partner depend on the own perceptions of explicit and implicit action in resonance with the own understanding of partnering | • Partnering efforts need to be mutual | • Frequent communication, continuous promotion of founding relational and (contractual) flexibility as further important practices |
| • Behavioral game rules were put in place based on which private parties are invited to co-create partnering | • Positive experiences need to overweigh negative ones considerably for partnering relations to emerge | • Effects of partnering components depend on the individual perception of actions | |
| • Behavioural principles were further safeguarded formally | | | |

**Figure 25: Summary findings RQs (own figure)**

## 5.0 Conclusion

This chapter focuses on answering the following main research question:

> *MRQ: What are factors that promote the emergence of partnering relations in Dutch UDPs?*

## 5.1.2 The role of the individual's perception

Considering the variety of insights given by case informants and the further revelations from the cross-case analysis, it becomes clear that for every individual, there was a combination of different factors that contributed to the emergence of partnering relations.

### *If a factor promoted partnering depended on the individual's perception*

Whereas named factors did overlap, it appears that *whether a 'circumstance, fact or influence'* (Oxford University Press (OUP), 2019d) *inhibited or promoted the emergence of partnering relations depended on the individuals perception.*

These insights are mainly based on the findings that emerge from the case analysis of A and B and the cross-case analysis. Here, it has been observed that depending on how partnering was constructed and negotiated, the underlying learning processes, the interaction of formal partnering components and the way in which paradoxes where managed a very different set of factors was named by the case informants.

To give an example, in case A, a private developer explains that he perceived the open book system to have facilitated trust between him and the public manager. Later, when the private manager, however, was questioned in his provided numbers by the municipality, it appears that his perception about the promoting effect of the open book system changed.

On the other hand, in case B, the private developer explained that the different setup of the tender process was crucial for the emergence of partnering. However, when the public managers could not provide required information to the developers during the tender process, it was reported that the conversations with all private managers became more challenging. This indicates that also here the initially promoting effect of a formal partnering components somewhat changed during the informal process towards partnering relations.

Further differentiating factors into more explicit factors, such as the putting in place of a formal partner selection process and more implicit factors, such as the respectful dealing with sensitive information, it is understood that respective factors have contributed to the emergence of partnering relations, if they were perceived by the counterpart as in harmony with the very own understanding of partnering relations.

To illustrate this further, Figure 26 has been developed. Hereby, the model consists of the 'individuals understanding of partnering' and the 'emergence of partnering relations.' Both concepts are connected by a set of explicit until more implicit events such as formal actions, words or mere thoughts.

In the following a set of examples are given in which it is displayed why it is understood that it is the perception that defines whether certain 'factors', such as explicit and implicit actions, have a promoting or inhibiting effect on the emergence of partnering relations.
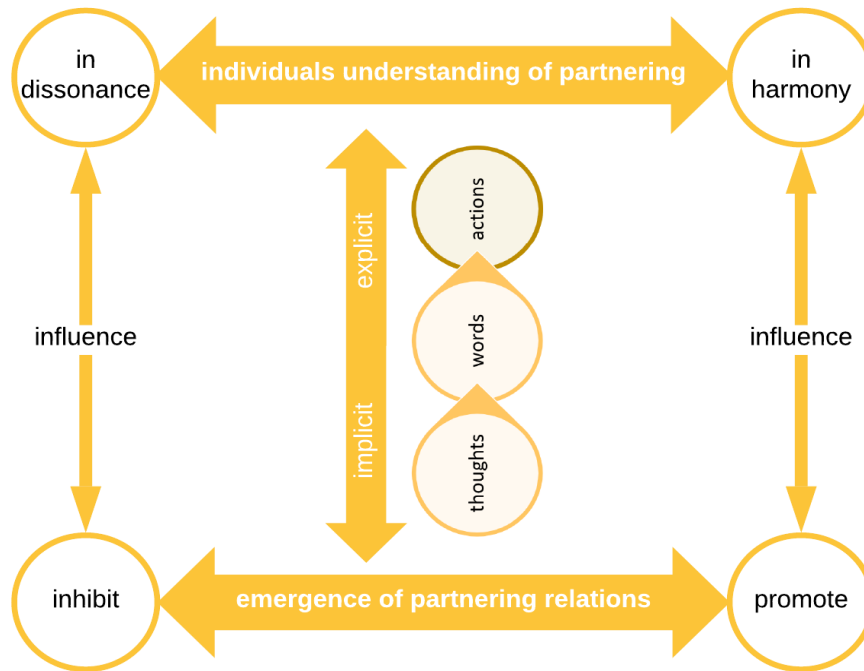
**Figure 26: The individual's perception as key to the emergence of partnering relations
(own figure)**

***Dependence on whether a factor has been understood as having something to do with the relationship***

Firstly, before there was a promoting or inhibiting effect to the emergence of partnering, it seemed relevant whether the counterpart understood this 'factor' as having something to do with the type of relationship that is to be pursued.

An example of this concerns the putting in place of a partner selection process. Whereas this explicit action was purposively put in place by in both cases by both public managers, the case narrative reveals that not all private developers to the tender might have understood the difference in the intended ways of working to a 'traditional relationship'.

***A promoting effect when the factor is in harmony with the individuals understanding of partnering***

If a factor, however, was understood to provide information about the 'to be pursued' relationships between individuals, its effect seemed to depend on whether the factor was perceived as in harmony with the individuals understanding of partnering relations.

This can by instance be seen based on the example of the open book system which was mentioned as crucial to the emergence of partnering relations in case A.

Translating this into the conceptual model, it appears that the public managers requirement of work according to open book principles, was initially perceived as in harmony with the understanding of partnering of the interviewed private manager. Accordingly, it is understood that the open book system had a promoting effect on the emergence of partnering relations at the beginning of the partnership (Figure 27).
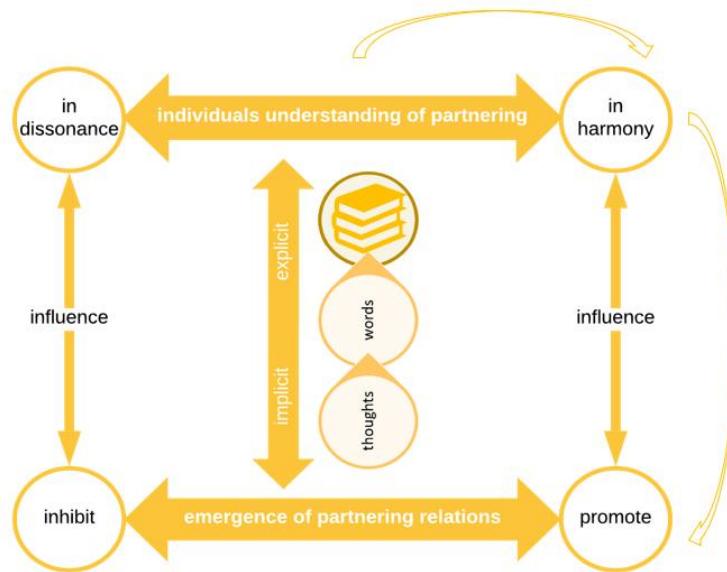
**Figure 27: Promoting effect open book system (own figure)**

The same hereby seems to apply to the partner selection process in case B.

### *An inhibiting effect when the factor is in dissonance with the individuals understanding of partnering*

However, when in the daily work with the open book system, the private developer was approached with the result of a municipal cost advisor that his numbers might need some revision, it was reported that both partners engaged in a more 'traditional role.'

Accordingly, it is understood that both, the public and the private manager received information about their partner that they rather perceived as 'in dissonance' to partnering relations respectively how the behaviour of a partner should be.

As can be seen in Figure 28, as a result of these informal processes surrounding the open book system, it appears that the partnering component temporarily rather inhibited than promoted the emergence of partnering.
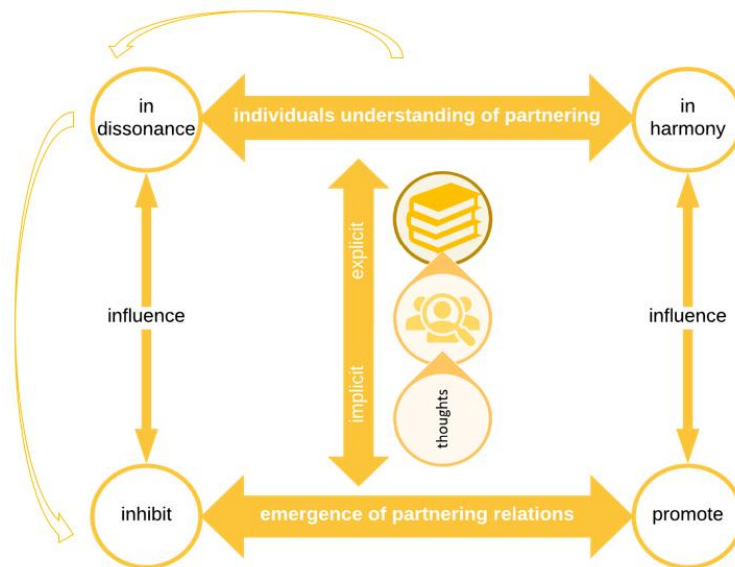


**Figure 28: Inhibiting effect open book system (own figure)**

Similarly, in the example of the partner selection process in case B, when the developers were not provided crucial information by the municipality to continue their calculations, the case narrative revealed that conversations with the private managers became more difficult.

Following the conceptual model, this suggests that there has been something in the public managers behaviour that was perceived as 'in dissonance' with what the developers understand as 'partnering.'

Similar to Figure 28, it is understood that this informal processes surrounding the partner selection process caused a change in perception which therefore caused a temporarily inhibiting effect of the formal partnering component on emergence of partnering relations.

***The perception of the other persons thoughts can have an impact***

From the latter, it can also be understood that not only the immediate actions and words, but also the perception of the counterpart's thoughts, can be considered as 'factors' that inhibit or promote the emergence of partnering relations.

As an example, one-sided controlling behaviour in the course of the open book system by a public manager might lead a private developer to thinking that the partner lacks trust, which then has wider implications on the emergence of partnering relations from the perspective of the private manager.

***A dynamic and fluid concept***

Ultimately, as this thesis shows that partnering is a very dynamic and fluid concept, also the individuals understanding of partnering relations and its emergence is understood to be in a constant feedback loop with each other. This is indicated by the vertical arrow's ('influence') pointing in both directions (Figure 26).

## Sub-conclusion

In summary, it has been shown that the understanding of factors that promoted to the emergence of partnering relations depends on the individual's perception of different events during the course of the project.

Hereby, it was explained that the individual's perception of explicit and implicit actions of the counterpart, in close feedback with the own understanding of partnering seemed to be determining whether a factor was considered to rather promote or inhibit the emergence of partnering relations.

## 5.2 Revealed factors

As the effect of different components was understood to depend on the individual's perception, it becomes clear that it is difficult, if not impossible, to develop a set of generic factors in the form of certain formal processes or a set of specific words that will always promote the emergence of partnering relations.

Revisiting existing partnering literature, and specifically trust theory developed by Kadefors (2004) (see Chapter 1.2.2), however, a set of rather behavioural and sociological factors could be formulated.

These factors shall be seen as complementary to existing research on formal components (Nyström, 2007) as they might help to better understand under which circumstances respectively why certain factors where considered to promote the emergence of partnering relations.

## 5.2.1 Partnering flower

In Figure 29, a conceptual model of the factors are presented that have been determined to have contributed to the emergence of partnering relations in Dutch UDPs.

**Figure 29: Factors that promoted the emergence of partnering relations (own figure)**

As shown in Figure 27, similar to the introduction of the partnering concept at the beginning of this thesis (Chapter 1.2.2), the chosen conceptual model resembles a partnering flower based on the concept of Nyström (2007) that partnering could be seen as a Ludwig-Wittgenstein's family resemblance concept.

Accordingly, revealed factors can be seen as a set of interrelated characteristics that all belong to one family.

### The individuals understanding of partnering

As explained earlier, similar to the partnering flower of Nyström (2007) from Chapter 1.2.2 (Figure 7), case informants associated partnering relations with relationships between individuals that are based on trust. Next to this common denominator, however, this thesis showed that indeed a shared understanding of partnering might be difficult as its understanding is suspect to the individuals understanding of partnering; which again is based on among others on the project circumstances and expected benefits of partner (4.1 Construction and negotiation of partnering).

Accordingly, in the partnering flower (Figure 29), the core is held rather general as the 'individuals understanding of partnering.'

Based on the individuals understanding of partnering as the defining core of the partnering family, it is understood that the emergence of partnering relations was suspect to a variety of 'soft' sociological aspects and informal processes. These partnering 'leaves', respectively factors that contributed to the emergence of partnering relations in the here investigated Dutch UDPs will be further presented in the following.

### Starting level of trust

The first factor mentioned in the conclusion of this thesis is the starting level of trust of an individual into the prospective partner.

This factor is considered relevant following particularly case analysis A and the cross-case analysis of the interpersonal learning process between individuals towards partnering relations.

Having understood that the emergence of partnering relations is very closely related to individuals learning to trust their new work partners, it is considered that the emergence of partnering relations is much more difficult if individuals have a negative expectation, respectively starting level of trust, in the prospective partner and partnering in the first place.

Accordingly, the selection of individuals for the own team but also the choosing of a prospective partner that has a positive, and at least neutral, expectation about partnering is considered an important factor if partnering relations are to be pursued in Dutch UDPs.

Ultimately, as Kadefors (2004) explains that the starting level of trust has to do with the institutional trust but also the more rational benefits expected from partnering, called 'calculus-based trust' in her study, this thesis understands that there is a difference in the expectations and starting level of every individual when entering a (partnering) UDP.

### *The individual's choice and ability to trust*

The next factor that shall be named in the context of this thesis is the individual's choice and ability to trust.

Whereas being strongly connected to the previously named factor, particularly analysing the construction and negotiation of partnering reveals that much more than a positive expectation, all individuals seem to have undertaken the active decision to engage and pursue partnering relations.

As the here analysed cases were both initiated by the public sector, the case and cross-case analysis herby particularly revealed insights about the opportunities individuals from Dutch municipalities seem to have when it comes to the project design and organisation of respective projects.

Accordingly, and without knowledge of the partnering concept, public managers engaged in the design and organisation of a project that seemed much more intuitive to the understanding of a project that is co-created by equal partners instead of mere associates.

In specific, it appears that the active choice and decision to pursue partnering relations was the catalysator for a variety of decisions such as the putting in place of a bid evaluation process based on soft parameters, an open book system but also more informal and implicit behaviours such as the seeking for intense and direct communication, explaining about the own situation and dilemmas, being willing to find compromises as well as active participation in joint problem solving throughout the project.

In return, however, also individuals working on the private side seem to have reached a point where they actively decided to become and pursue partnering relations and therefore actively participated in the emergence of partnering relations. It is considered, that not unless both parties undertake the decision to try and look through existing misconceptions and reach out a hand in trust, the emergence of partnering relations can commence.

Ultimately, however, as Kadefors (2004) explained that more than a mere choice, different individuals also have a different ability to trust other individuals, it is understood that the ability of individuals to engage in partnering relations is again dependent on the type of individuals selected to work in the projects, for instance, individuals that believe in the goodness of other people and/or the superiority of partnering relations, etc.

### *Abilities (skills, competences, important characteristics)*

The next factor to be discussed is the individuals 'abilities' and is related to a set of important skills, competencies and characteristics of individuals that an individual perceives as crucial in a partner for being able to develop partner relations, respectively interpersonal trust (Kadefors, 2004).

Particularly from analysing the construction and negotiation of partnering, but also the interpersonal learning process and the management of paradoxes, it is understood that the perception of the set of abilities that individuals from the partnering organisation brought to the table were relevant for the emergence of partnering relations.

Whereas common denominators seemed to particularly be abilities related to teamwork, leadership, patience and soft skills, this thesis understands that the abilities perceived as relevant in a partner slightly differ between the interviewed individuals and projects.

### Benevolence (loyalty, receptivity, caring)

The next factor is 'benevolence.'

Introduced by Kadefors (2004) as a further antecedent for interpersonal trust, this term can be understood as the perceived 'willingness to do good' of the partner and has to do with further concepts such as perceived loyalty, receptivity and caring.

Particularly following the analysis of the interpersonal learning process and the management of paradoxes, it is understood that the learning process of individuals towards a partnering was closely related to whether individuals perceived explicit and more implicit actions of the partner as benevolent or not.

As an example, it was shown that the learnings from the first meetings and particularly critical situations were relevant for individuals to understand the intentions of the partner. As an example, this thesis reveals that when individuals cared about resolving partners' problems or the public manager engaged in mentorship activities towards the younger private managers was considered to promote the emergence of partnering relations.

Besides of these more informal and implicit actions, however, also the introduction of formal partnering components, such as the introduction of a partner selection process or an open book system seems to fit the concept of benevolence. Accordingly, the introduction of partnering components as explicit actions gave information on the positive intentions of the prospective partner.

This thesis shows that the positive effect of introduced components, e.g. an open book system, can be outperformed by negative findings about the partner during the process. It is also shown that perceived benevolence is a dynamic and fluid concept.

### Integrity (consistency, fairness, reliability, openness, value congruence)

Closely related to the concepts of benevolence, integrity is the next factor that is considered relevant for the emergence of partnering relations in Dutch UDPs.

Being the third and last antecedent of interpersonal trust after Kadefors (2004), the concept has to do with further concepts such as perceived consistency, fairness, reliability, openness and value congruence.

This factor is considered relevant, particularly given the main findings from the construction and negotiation of partnering, the interpersonal learning process as well as the management of paradoxes between individuals.

As an example, the cross-case analysis revealed that the own behaviour was used as a means to construct partnering relations. Accordingly, in the tender process of case A but also during the weekly meetings on Fridays in case B, the public managers' explained that they actively tried to be open, fair as well as consistent in the promotion of partnering principles in the hope to promote, maintain and further develop partner relations in their projects.

As these aspects can be understood to fall within the wider concept of integrity such as consistency and fairness, a variety of arguments are given why integrity might be an influential, rather soft, 'factor' in the emergence of partnering relations in Dutch UDPs.

Ultimately, as obtaining information about the consistency or reliability of an individual, for example, is understood to be information that requires the intense interaction of individuals over a longer period, integrity might be a factor that takes more effort and time until reached.

### Human preference for reciprocity

Ultimately, the last factor mentioned in the course of this thesis is the human preference for reciprocity in human interaction.

Responding to an action by engaging in a corresponding one, is considered a relevant concept particularly given the analysis of the interaction of formal partnering components and the management of related paradoxes.

Similar to the observation of Kadefors (2004), this thesis determined that when there is an action that is perceived as in dissonance with the own understanding of partnering e.g. the one-sided hiring of a second

opinion, they seemed to anticipate a similar action which further spurred the inhibiting effect to the emergence of partnering.

In contrast, however, the joint solving of challenges, as an example of an action that was widely seen as in harmony with the individuals understanding of partnering, led to individuals anticipating and engaging in similar actions that were intuitive to their own understanding of partnering.

### *A model always has limitations*

Ultimately, it shall be noted that by no means is the portrayed model considered to be complete nor necessarily all factors need to apply to all situations. Instead of pretending to have achieved to capture the complexities of reality, the model shall rather assist researchers and practitioners to better understand where attention might need to be placed if partnering relations are to be pursued by individuals in the construction sector and particularly in Dutch UDPs.

## Sub-conclusion

In this chapter, a conceptual model has been presented that suggests a choice of more informal and sociological factors that are considered relevant for the emergence of partnering relations.

In particular, it has been suggested that the individuals starting level of trust, the individual's choice and ability to trust, the human preference for reciprocity as well as the perceived abilities, benevolence and integrity of an individual should be considered as factors when researching the emergence of partnering.

This model should be seen as complementary to existing research on formal partnering components (Nyström, 2007).

## 5.2 Expert validation

The revealed factors of this thesis were validated by two researchers on partnering (Table 22). Researcher F is from Sweden and has conducted a longitudinal study of a Swedish partnering project. Researcher G currently works at a Dutch university and is interested in the social aspects of the building process.

Firstly, it is important to mention that the final result of this concluding chapter was quite different than prior to expert consultation. By attempting to put observed factors into a coherent model including information on the hierarchical relationship between the different factors, the researchers raised awareness on a variety of aspects that led to the decision to alternate the previous model to the above one.

### *The difficulty of verifying empirical studies*

Researcher F seemed curious about the presented factors. Being aware of the findings of Kadefors (2004), he explains that the visualisation of study results in the light of trust theory is interesting.

Overall, he explained that the identified factors seem logical. Furthermore, he believes that the validation of observations is somewhat difficult as observations are rather unique to the observer.

One particular recommendation he provided was to be aware of  inconsistencies between factors that apply to the entire organisation and the individual. Accordingly, it was decided to consider factors from the perspective of the individual.

### *A blurred border between the 'project' and 'partnering'*

During a different conversation, research F explained further that factors that are relevant to partnering might be difficult to separate from factors that are important for the success of a traditional 'project'. Illustrated in Figure 30, researcher F explained that depending on the local understanding and logic of a 'project', 'partnering' might, therefore, become a merely added layer on top of the existing project.
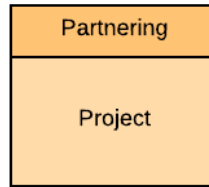
**Figure 30: Relation between the 'project' and 'partnering' (own figure)**

### Potential difference between partnering in Dutch UDPs and partnering in Sweden

Ultimately, as researcher F is from Sweden, a conversation about the potential differences between an understanding of partnering in the Netherlands and Sweden emerged. Researcher F explained that every Swedish partnering project is also different, and it appears that there might be some differences between the understanding of partnering in the projects that he studied and the analysed Dutch UDP projects through this thesis.

### Reality is much more complex

Researcher G also expressed interest in the study results. In contrast to researcher F, however,  he found several limitations and challenges with the attempt to arrange influential factors into a relational model. By explaining about the difficulties of trying to capture the complexities in a single model as well as the threat that practitioners might take a relational model as too literal, his input serves as a major inspiration to reconsider the chosen way of presenting the study results.

Unfortunately, due to time restrictions, the final model could not be further verified.

**Table 22: Expert consultation study findings (own table)**

| Expert | Position | Comment |
|--------|----------|---------|
| A | Researcher | Applying trust theory as an interesting approach, recommendation to watch out for inconsistencies between the individual and organisational level, explanation about the difficulty between separating the project and partnering as well as insights into potential differences between partnering understanding in Swedish projects and the here analysed Dutch UDPs |
| B | Researcher | Interest in the observations, however, explanation about various limitations of the model, suggests being clear on the limitations and relations between factors as well as the main message of the model |

# 6.0 Discussion

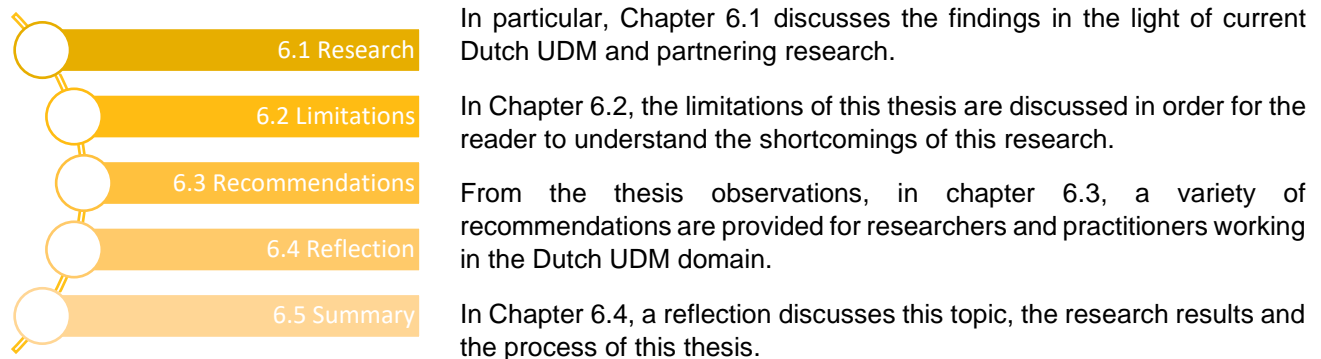This last chapter discusses the findings of this thesis.



**Figure 31: Reading guide chapter six (own figure)**

In particular, Chapter 6.1 discusses the findings in the light of current Dutch UDM and partnering research.

In Chapter 6.2, the limitations of this thesis are discussed in order for the reader to understand the shortcomings of this research.

From the thesis observations, in chapter 6.3, a variety of recommendations are provided for researchers and practitioners working in the Dutch UDM domain.

In Chapter 6.4, a reflection discusses this topic, the research results and the process of this thesis.

Lastly, Chapter 6.5 summarizes this discussion chapter.

## 6.1 Research

In this chapter, the findings of this thesis are discussed in the light of current Dutch UDM and partnering research.

### 6.1.1 Dutch UDM research

In Chapter 1.2.1, it was explained that not much knowledge exists yet on concepts that could help the Dutch UDM domain to better understand and potentially overcome inter-organisational collaboration challenges.

***Complementary knowledge to emerging trends***

Accordingly, it is difficult to discuss the insights from this thesis with existing approaches from UDM research.

After conducting this thesis, however, it can be stated that there seem to be individuals from the public and private side that managed to develop their own approaches and understanding on how an informal collaboration culture (Heurkens, 2012) and 'teaming' between the public and private sector (Deloitte, 2017) can be reached.

One of the recommendations by UDM researchers is to replace traditional tender processes by so-called partner selection processes (van Zessen, 2020; Kersten et al., 2019). Whereas, indeed also project informants of this study named the partner selection method as crucial to the emergence of partner relations, after investigating the respective projects, unfortunately, this study cannot confirm that it was the formal process itself that led to the emergence of partnering relations.

Much more than just implementing formal processes, this thesis understands that it is the type of individuals and dynamics between people expressed in their explicit and more implicit actions surrounding the formal processes that are crucial to the emergence of partnering relations.

Concluding, this thesis does not aim to undermine the emerging trends in the Dutch UDM domain. On the contrary, this thesis suggests that emerging trends in the form of the partner selection process are very positive as respective methods are much more intuitive to how a partner should be selected; particularly given the variety of provided platforms where knowledge exchange and interaction between individuals can take place before entering into a partnership.

However, this thesis understands that not unless the dynamics and behaviours between individuals are aligned with the individuals' understanding of partnering relations, a formal partner selection process can contribute to the emergence of partnering relations in Dutch UDPs.

***Barriers between partnering and the traditional***

Furthermore, this thesis revealed that specifically social complexities between individuals that are interested in pursuing partnering relations and individuals that are used to the 'traditional way of working' can pose barriers to the emergence of partner relations in Dutch UDPs.

Whereas this thesis considers emerging enthusiasm about the partner selection process or 'teaming' as helpful, it is feared that respective efforts might not 'take-off' if the own partnering organisation, but also wider involved organisations in respective projects do not support pioneering individuals.

As a lack of senior management commitment and colleagues is not special for 'partnering', but suspect to a variety of other innovative approaches, this thesis aims to raise awareness that 'partnering' can only be as successful as the underlying 'project' circumstances allow.

### Public managers as initiators of partnering

Ultimately, since the negotiation and construction of partnering, at least until the contract was signed, was led by the public managers, a final comment shall be made with regard contexts where it is the private sector that is seeking a partnership.

This thesis understands that it is not important, who suggests pursuing partner relations as partnering is a process that is based on mutuality between individuals from different organisations.

However, as this thesis showed that a variety of sociological factors might need to be aligned for partnering relations to emerge, this thesis understands that it might be easier for a public management team to find suitable working partners out of a variety of private companies than vice versa.

The latter is considered as private individuals initiating an UDP are usually automatically directed to the responsible individuals in charge at the local municipality. Accordingly, the chances that sociological factors and efforts are aligned, might be much more difficult.

## 6.1.2 Partnering research

Discussing the results of this study in light of current partnering research, the following comments can be made.

### Overemphasis on formal processes

Firstly, this thesis confirms former criticism towards partnering research that there might be an overemphasis in partnering research on formal processes (Bresnen & Marshall, 2002).

Whereas this thesis certainly does not aim to undermine the potential of formal components in the facilitation of partnering relations, this thesis understands that partnering relations can only until a certain degree be facilitated by formal processes.

Much more than the putting in place of formal components, this thesis understands that the emergence of partner relations is subject to a dynamic interplay between a variety of informal processes but also a variety of informal and sociological factors.

Agreeing that ''(…) it is on the interpersonal level partnering endeavours are won or lost (Jacobsson & Wilson, 2014, p. 1907), this thesis herby, however, distances itself from the common notion that the emergence of partnering relations always takes a lot of time (Smith & Thomasson, 2018).

In contrast, this thesis observed that the emergence of partner relations can happen relatively quickly when formal and more informal processes and sociological factors are aligned with each other.

### Partnering flower and trust theory suitable to understand partnering

Secondly, this thesis confirms opinions such as of Bresnen & Marshall (2002) that defining of partnering indeed might not be worthwhile to pursue as the understanding of partnering seems to slightly vary between every individual. This again is dependent on the underlying project circumstances and expected benefits from partnering.

Much more than just written definition, however, in this thesis, it is considered suitable to define partnering as a family resemblance concept (Nyström, 2005). Herby, however, it is understood in this thesis that the 'partnering flower' might consist of both, formal processes, more informal processes and sociological factors.

For the latter, as most individuals in the analysed projects, as well as several researchers (Nyström, 2007; Hosseini et al., 2018) seem to associate partnering with relations between individuals that are based on trust,

this thesis further supports the idea to consult trust theory to better understand the emergence of partnering relations between individuals (Kadefors, 2004).

### *Eriksson's (2010) core partnering components might be worth to consider*

As much partnering research consists of formal partnering components, this thesis aims to also comment on the research of Eriksson (2010) who explained that a bid evaluation process based on soft parameters, an open book system and various core collaborative tools can be considered as most influential to the emergence of partnering relations between individuals.

Speaking from insights from the lived experience of two Dutch UDPs, the potential of these formal processes in the emergence of partnering relations between individuals is widely supported.

However, as it is revealed that the manifestation, as well as the effect of partnering components, can vary substantially across different projects and individuals, it is suggested to take distance from any generalizations.

Instead, again referring to the results of this research, it is understood that whether a component can promote or inhibit the emergence of partnering relations might be highly dependent on how they are perceived by the individual.

Accordingly, this thesis showed that for example, an open book system, can have both a promoting and a temporarily inhibiting effect on the emergence of partnering relations.

### *The success of partnering can't be measured based on a label or applied components*

Ultimately, this thesis also provides several hints why partnering evaluations may not be able to confirm the improved project performance of contractually labelled 'partnering project' or projects that apply a variety of formal partnering components (Nyström, 2008).

Firstly, it may not come as a surprise that this thesis generally questions whether a project can be evaluated only based on a set of formal components without further insights into the more informal processes and sociological factors.

Without respective insights, it is presupposed that existing partnering evaluations might be missing important factors and therefore be skewed towards formal processes.

Accordingly, if partnering project evaluation would apply parameters to account for the underlying project circumstances in terms of social complexities in the wider project organisation or the number of individuals that yet are doubtful about partnering, it is understood that project evaluations would look differently.

In conclusion, the following Table 23 summarizes the findings of this research against the findings of current UDM and partnering research.

**Table 23: Position of project findings in the light of current research (own table)**

| Domain | Researcher | Insights | Position | Comment |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| UDM | Heurkens, (2012) | Inter-organisational collaboration challenges in Dutch UDPs | | |
| | van Zessen (2020); Kersten et al. (2019) | Partner selection method could be a solution to facilitate partner relations | | Had a positive effect, however, enthusiasm could be misleading as further factors are disregarded |
| Partnering | (Bresnen & Marshall, 2002) Jacobsson & Wilson (2014) | Overemphasis on formal processes, the dynamic interplay between formal and informal processes; Partnering endeavours are won or lost at the interpersonal level | | |
| | Smith & Thomasson (2018) | Achievement of partner relations takes a lot of time | | The emergence of partnering relations went considerably fast |
| | Bresnen & Marshall (2002) | Written definition of partnering might not be worthwhile to pursue | | |

| | Nyström (2005); Kadefors (2004) | Partnering as a Ludwig Wittgenstein family resemblance concept; trust theory suitable | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Eriksson (2010) | Core components can help to facilitate partnering | | True, but only if informal and sociological factors are aligned, too |
| | Nyström (2008) | Benefits of partnering might lie in intangible aspects | | There should be both tangible and intangible benefits, however, partnering can only be as effective as the project circumstances and embedded social construct allow |

*green=finding can be confirmed, yellow=finding can be somewhat confirmed, red=finding can't be confirmed*

## 6.2 Limitations

There are several limitations to this research.

### *Case narrative is shaped by the researcher*

This thesis studied two Dutch UDPs through semi-structured interviews. In return, the interviews were analysed using a narrative inquiry analysis that followed an inductive and deductive logic.

Overall, the research method was considered suitable for understanding the emergence of partnering relations in the respective UDP projects. Whereas the suitability of case studies to study partnering was confirmed earlier (Bresnen & Marshall, 2002), the use of a narrative inquiry analysis to research partnering relations has so far not been used in earlier studies.

From the perspective of this novel approach, several opportunities as well as limitations evolved. It was possible to truly dive into the 'lived experience' of individuals (Bresnen, 2009), the narrative inquiry analysis arranged small excerpts of different realities into a puzzle that seems coherent to the researcher. However, the choice of excerpts orchestrated by the researcher's choice of the narrative does certainly only give a small and potentially biased glimpse of the daily business of two Dutch UDPs.

### *Small sample with data collected over a small period*

Furthermore, there are also several limitations concerning the data collected. Due to the small sample of just two cases, the sample of five interviews per case and the very short amount of time for interviews (approximately one hour per individual) during the CoVid-19 outbreak, collected data is considered very little to provide reliable results.

It would be understandable if the generalization of results is questioned. However, as the observations were validated and discussed with selected number of the project informants during the case and project results validated with two researchers, it is understood that the portrayed reality is somewhat coherent to the understandings of project informants.

### *Limited theory*

Ultimately, there are limitations concerning the theory that has been used in this thesis.

With regard to UDM research, limitations particularly result from the fact that there was not much knowledge available yet in the domain that could help to better understand inter-organisational processes between individuals working in Dutch UDPs.

As a result of this lack of information, this thesis turned to partnering research. Here, more information was available to explain the emergence of partner relations.

With the choice of focus to understand partnering as a family resemblance concept by Nyström (2007) while orientating on the formal partnering components of Eriksson (2010) and finding answers for case observations in trust theory (Kadefors, 2004), thesis results are certainly skewed towards the applied concepts.

In particular, the conclusions of this thesis might face limitations as the knowledge on trust theory in this thesis, due to its late discovery, is limited to Kadefors (2004).

Ultimately, this thesis faces limitations as, with the consultation of partnering, it assumes that partner relations are the superior way of working in complex Dutch UDPs.

## 6.3 Recommendations

Several recommendations for further research and practice can be formulated from this thesis.

### 6.3.1 Further research

Recommendations for further research target both, Dutch UDM and partnering research.

***Joining Dutch UDM and partnering research through social studies***

Firstly, it is recommended that Dutch UDM and partnering research join forces.

This recommendation originates from the observation that Dutch UDM research and partnering research seem to somewhat disconnectedly from each other.

As this thesis showed that both the Dutch UDM domain and the partnering research domain seem to face limitations when it comes to knowledge on more sociological factors and informal processes, this thesis suggests merging these two research domains by consulting existing knowledge from social studies.
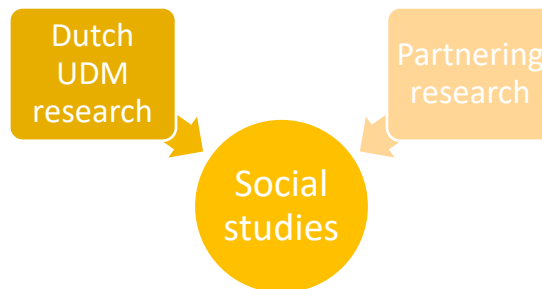
**Figure 32: Joining Dutch UDM and partnering research through social studies (own figure)**

In particular, as this thesis touches upon the impact of different personality types and character traits on the emergence of partnering relations, this thesis suggests investigating existing personality studies to better understand which type of individuals should be recruited if the aim is to achieve partnering relations in UDPs.

***Investigating the collaboration process in further projects***

Secondly, as partnering suggests that the increase of project performance depends on whether humans manage to find better ways of working with each other, this thesis suggests to further develop and verify the findings from this study – by investigating both Dutch but also UDPs in other countries.

As UDPs appear to be slightly more complex than traditional construction projects due to their programmatic perspective (Karrbom Gustavsson et al., 2017), it might be beneficial to create a sub-domain within partnering research to enhance comparability between different contexts.

Moreover, if respective studies are deemed interesting, it is suggested that a bigger sample of projects, particularly projects that are initiated by the private sector, could be investigated to understand further manifestations of partnering in Dutch UDPs.

Ultimately, it is also recommended to research UDPs that report about the achievement of partnering relations without having formal partnering components in place. This is deemed interesting as it might give more information on the ratio of importance between formal and informal and sociological factors that are relevant to the emergence of partnering relations.

***Gathering further factors from construction management research***

Furthermore, it is suggested that similar to research about more formal components, further informal and sociological factors shall be investigated to better understand the range, but particularly the relevance of different factors in the emergence of partnering relations.

As an example, Koolwijk et al. (2020) describes the impact of a no-blame culture on the effectiveness of project-based design teams whereas Zhang & Qian (2017) explains the impact of solidarity to alleviate opportunism in owner-contractor relationships. Accordingly, it might be worthwhile to conduct a literature study to gather the number of factors that have already been revealed from construction management researchers to then conduct a more coherent analysis within the context of Dutch UDPs.

***Cross-cultural study***

In this regard, also assessing the impact of cultural factors might be interesting. With this recommendation, this thesis also touches upon Bresnen & Marshall (2002) who suggest that an overarching cultural study might be interesting to conduct to better understand local differences in the factors, formal and informal, that contribute to the emergence of partnering relations in partnering projects in different countries.

## 6.3.2 Practice

Next to recommendations for research, also several recommendations for practice can be given.

As this thesis investigated Dutch UDP practice, this chapter focuses on recommendations for Dutch practitioners. However, due to the holistic nature of partnering, recommendations might apply to other contexts as well.

### Public sector

Based on the insights of this thesis, several recommendations for the public sector can be given. Herby, recommendations are directed towards public managers that aim to initiate UDPs while pursuing partner relations.

***Educate yourself on partnering***

The first recommendation towards public managers who are interested to pursue partnering relations, is to educate yourself on the topic.

From this research, it becomes clear that the emergence of partnering relations consists of a dynamic interplay between formal, but also particularly informal and sociological factors that might require additional help from an outsider.

As this thesis understood that, yet, knowledge on factors that promote the emergence of partnering relations in The Netherlands is locked up predominantly in practitioners that are working in respective projects, this thesis suggests that public managers who are interested in partnering should connect with fellow practitioners to receive inspiration for their own project design.

Next to asking or visiting respective projects, there might also be the possibility to invite consultants and researchers that have developed knowledge and experiences on inter-organisational partnering processes in Dutch UDPs.

Herby, however, it is understood that there are only very few consultancies in The Netherlands that developed knowledge on partnering yet. Until more knowledge is available, it might, therefore, be advisable to connect with professionals from other countries such as the UK or Sweden where it seems that more knowledge has grown over the past decade.

***Make yourself aware of the responsibilities***

In the course of educating yourself, it is also recommended that public managers make themselves aware of the responsibilities partnering asks from the public management team and further colleagues.

As the idea of partnering is that public and private individuals engage in an intensive collaboration process over a longer period of time, partnering sets new demands in terms of time availability including an overall willingness to engage in the daily challenges and sometimes the life of the project partner.

In addition, public managers should be aware that partnering requires all team members to become an active part in major decision-making processes. This can be difficult if the required expertise is missing, however, it appears that project public managers are able to understand how the private party thinks and operates relatively quickly once individuals start to share instead of protecting their information.

Ultimately, it is also advised that public managers seek support from further (senior) individuals within their own organisation before engaging in respective projects.

This is deemed relevant, as this thesis revealed that a lack of senior management support within the organisation can pose severe barriers to the partnering team and therefore the performance of the project if social dynamics are not managed well before the process.

If possible, it might even be advisable to set up a separate project office within the municipality that is solely designated to the partnering project and led by a somewhat stable senior management team throughout the process.

### Develop a shared understanding of partnering and partner qualities

Furthermore, it is suggested that public managers put effort into developing a shared and specific understanding of partnering as well as respective qualities that they perceive as relevant in a private partner.

Developing a shared understanding of partnering seems relevant as this thesis shows that the emergence of partner relations orients itself strongly according to the individual understanding of partnering; which again is based among others on the individual project circumstances and expected benefits from partnering.

Developing a shared understanding on the qualities that are relevant in a partner, on the other hand, is considered relevant, as it might lead public managers to different priorities than an evaluation based on the lowest price, for example, an assessment based on teamwork qualities and management practices during stressful situations.

### Organize your project and behave accordingly

Moreover, it is suggested that,  public managers make up their mind on the overall organization of their project following their own understanding of partnering.

This is deemed relevant as current Dutch UDP practices have not been developed based on the idea of partner relations between public and private individuals and therefore might require reform in both the formal, but also the more informal as well as the sociological setup.

### Use 'partnering project' in the tender documents to clarify your attentions

Since private individuals might engage with public managers that prefer the traditional way of working, it is suggested that starting with the tender document (*Dutch: Uitvraag*), public managers communicate earlier about their intended way of working and expected behavioural game rules. It would helpful if a 'signal word' was used such as the term 'partnering project' to make private individuals understand the difference of the pursued relationship to traditional projects.

However, public managers should be aware that the intended way of working is communicated daily in the form of every explicit action, such as a decision to opt for a partner selection process instead of evaluating a partnering based on the lowest price, but also with every implicit action, e.g. a late response to an e-mail or an unwillingness to engage in the finding of a solution for a project problem.

As this thesis observed two very different project designs with very different social dynamics, this thesis does not make any general suggestions on the most suitable selection process, project set-up or combination of individuals.

Instead, it is recommended that, based on the needs of the project, the type of public managers, the input and type of private applicants, partnering is organized based on a needs assessment and redefined as the project progresses.

Certainly, it is hereby recommended that public managers let themselves inspire on the variety of formal processes that partnering research has developed over the past decades.

Please note that practitioners should remain aware that projects are social systems that are dynamic in nature. As it is the individual's perception that influences whether partnering practices contribute or inhibit the emergence of partnering relations, public managers should therefore be aware that the simple putting in place of certain elements does not ensure that partnering relations will necessarily emerge.

## Private sector

For private sector parties who are interested in pursuing partner relations with individuals from the public sector, many of the above recommendations apply as well.

As the difference between projects that are initiated by the private sector predominantly lays in a lack of choice to select suitable working partners through a tender process, several additional suggestions can be made to private individuals that would like to pursue partner relations with individuals from a specific department within a local municipality in charge.

### Try to listen

The first suggestion is to try to listen. Seemingly very simple, it is suggested that private individuals pay more attention to the communicated information of Dutch municipalities.

In the here analysed cases, public managers expressed that they are having difficulties to find private-sector parties that are taking their time to listen and engage in the complexities that the municipality is facing.

Certainly, this does not apply to all situations as there will be public managers that are content with the current way of working and therefore simply not interested in pursuing partner relations with the private sector.

However, in other cases it could be that public managers simply stand in front of a very complex project idea, would like to collaborate better, however, are simply not aware of what needs to change.

For these situations, it is suggested that private individuals try to reach out and be proactive, instead of waiting for public managers to undertake the first step.

### Suggest partnering in the tender application

To do so, private individuals could by instance choose to incorporate information on the company's openness to experiment with the concept of partnering as an alternative approach to existing practices.

In Swedish practice (Jacobsson & L. Wilson, 2014) a construction company opted to submit two proposals; one being based on traditional practices and another one suggesting to put competitiveness and secrecy aside and to instead pursue partnering relations by suggesting a variety of procedural and behavioural changes. In the end, it turned out that the public managers were interested in this idea and opted for a different setup of the project and collaboration process.

### Engage in networking activities with public managers

Another suggestion would be that private individuals to try to engage in more networking activities with the public sector. This suggestion might not lead to immediate results as it does not directly secure projects to the own company. However, by engaging in conversations and asking about the dilemmas of the public managers but also by explaining the very own situation and suggestions for improvement, individuals might have more impact than they understand.

### *Ask for interaction*

The next suggestion is very similar to the one for the public sector to 'behave accordingly.'

As this thesis revealed, partnering relations essentially develop when one behaves like a partner himself. Therefore, similar to the public sector, a major recommendation to private individuals is to try and behave as a partner themselves and simply see what happens. With some patience, one might be surprised by the impact the own behaviour has.

In addition to the above, it is also suggested that private individuals simply try to demand more interaction of the public managers when considered useful.

As complaining behind the municipalities back will certainly not help to improve relationships, it is suggested to start with very simple ideas such as asking whether calling is possible over e-mails, asking directly what was meant when misunderstandings occur, asking for additional meetings if the input is considered necessary or suggesting to together join an event to explore interest for more interaction.

Next to that, more concrete suggestions imply to actively speak about and reflect on the collaboration process with the public counterpart. Explaining about the own desire for improved interaction, the public management team might show unexpected interest for process improvements.

For the latter, it might also help to seek inspiration from formal partnering components, but maybe also from the here revealed informal and more sociological factors.

### *Don't generalize all public managers*

Ultimately, the last suggestion is not to generalize. From this thesis, it became apparent that many private individuals made bad experiences in the past and that there are misconceptions towards the public sector.

Learning from bad experiences in the past is certainly something good, however, as this thesis shows, generalizations leading to a negative expectation of the partners' behaviour from the beginning poses a severe barrier to the emergence of partner relations.

Accordingly, it is suggested that private individuals should try not to extrapolate past experiences when it comes to new projects.

As other researcher show (Kadefors, 2004), in most cases, the protective tender systems of public clients are the result of best practice approaches that were built upon protection mechanisms instead of the idea pursue partner relations.

Equipped with this knowledge and the insights from this thesis, it might be possible to better differentiate between the different types of public managers instead of letting misconceptions and misunderstanding to develop a 'we against them' feeling before even getting to know each other.

## *Capacity building organisations*

Ultimately, a few recommendations to institutions that 'build the capacity to build the capacity to build better cities' (Wakely, 1997) such as universities and consultancies shall be given.

### *Introduce partnering to practitioners and students*

Firstly, it shall be said that the author of this thesis is sceptical to which degree it is possible to teach individuals how to 'become good' at developing partnering relations

This conclusion is based on the observations of the analysed cases and more specific the conversations with case informants who seem to widely agree that the ability to collaborate is closely tied to the character and dynamics between different individuals.

Accordingly, much more than trying to force individuals to change their behaviours and work with each other, it is suggested that capacity building organisations are aware of the fact that the pursuing of partner relations might simply require different approaches to human resource management.

As most case informants explained that learning to collaborate happens while doing it, it is recommended that the concept of partnering shall be actively introduced to decision-makers, managers, professionals and technicians but also students that will start to work in the Dutch construction sector.

Giving insights into the range of potential formal components but also the informal and sociological factors that play a role in the emergence of partnering relations might encourage individuals to themselves to pursue partnering relations within their very own project.

Next to the introduction of the partnering concept, it is furthermore recommended that consultancies offer support to existing project coalitions help individuals to better design and understand their collaboration processes.

### *Educate on abilities instead of tangible skills*

If capacity building at an individual level is to be pursued, it is recommended that capacity building organisations consult newer literature on capacity building such as Kaplan (2000) who explains that capacity building is ''(…) less about teaching short-term tangible skills but rather about teaching intangible abilities that will benefit the aggregate sector in the long term'' Kaplan (2000, p. 517).

Kaplan (2000, p. 517) but also other authors (Suprapto, 2016; Chow et al., 2012; Doloi, 2009; Zhang & Qian, 2017) give further insights into a variety of wider abilities that capacity-building organisations practitioners might need to learn if cities shall be co-created collaboratively.

Just to give a few examples, Suprapto (2016) suggest teaching individuals in the appropriate integration of skills, expertise, experiences, views and thoughts of people with diverse background and interests. Kaplan (2000) on the other hand explains that it might be useful to put effort to (re)learn individuals the fundamentals of 'sustainable discourse capacities' such as self-reflection, analytical thinking, integrity, observation, listening and conceptualisation skills as well as creativity and long-term thinking.

From the insights of this thesis, the author widely agrees with the above suggestions. In addition, the topic of inter-cultural management shall be pointed out as The Netherlands increasingly internationalise, yet, cultural integration in Dutch UDP practice could be improved.

### *Funding opportunities*

Ultimately, to build more wide, institutional capacities, it is suggested to look into opportunities of funding.

This suggestion emerges from capacity building recommendations suggested in the course of the Dutch water sector reform in the 1990s (Alaerts, 1999), but also from recommendations of practitioners that were consulted during this study.

In particular, case informants explained that experimenting with partnering requires a considerable amount of time as frequent interaction, the learning of new behaviours, the convincing of sceptical colleagues but also the setting in place of new formal practices require additional hours.

Accordingly, practitioners explain that financial opportunities could help to alleviate financial burdens, at least in the transitional period. Furthermore, with a funding program, potentially more parties would become interested to consciously apply partnering principles e.g. partner selection methods or usage of open-book principles.
As this thesis reveals, however, that much more than formal mechanisms partnering requires behavioural change, an alternated version of the long-term programmatic approach suggested by Alaerts (1999) during the Dutch water sector reform might be useful.

In this approach, a fund would be set up where individuals that are interested to pursue partner relations could tap into if they apply more formal principles of partnering.

To make sure that more informal and sociological aspects are taken care of, capacity-building organisations such as consultants or university researchers would receive a mediating role to guide Dutch UDP practitioners throughout the process.

During the project, these capacity-building organisations could use the gained insights as data to further evaluate the suitability of formal mechanisms in the Dutch UDM domain which then could feed into the development of further capacity-building measures, e.g. formalised partnering contracts or knowledge libraries, until partnering could be declared as 'matured' in the Netherlands.

***Storytelling***

Ultimately, from the interviews with project participants, it became clear that storytelling might be the next step to to promote the emergence of partnering relations in The Netherlands.

This can happen by simply initiating a discourse about collaboration in The Netherlands. This could by instance take place by making public-private collaboration a topic at symposia, by capturing the stories of Dutch PPP collaboration practice in written form such as the 'Rijswijziger Gebiedsontwikkeling' (Kersten et al., 2019) but also through further master students researching collaboration processes in Dutch UDPs.

## *Summary*

In summary, the following suggestion can be made for further research, public and private Dutch UDP practitioners and capacity building organisations  consultancies and universities:
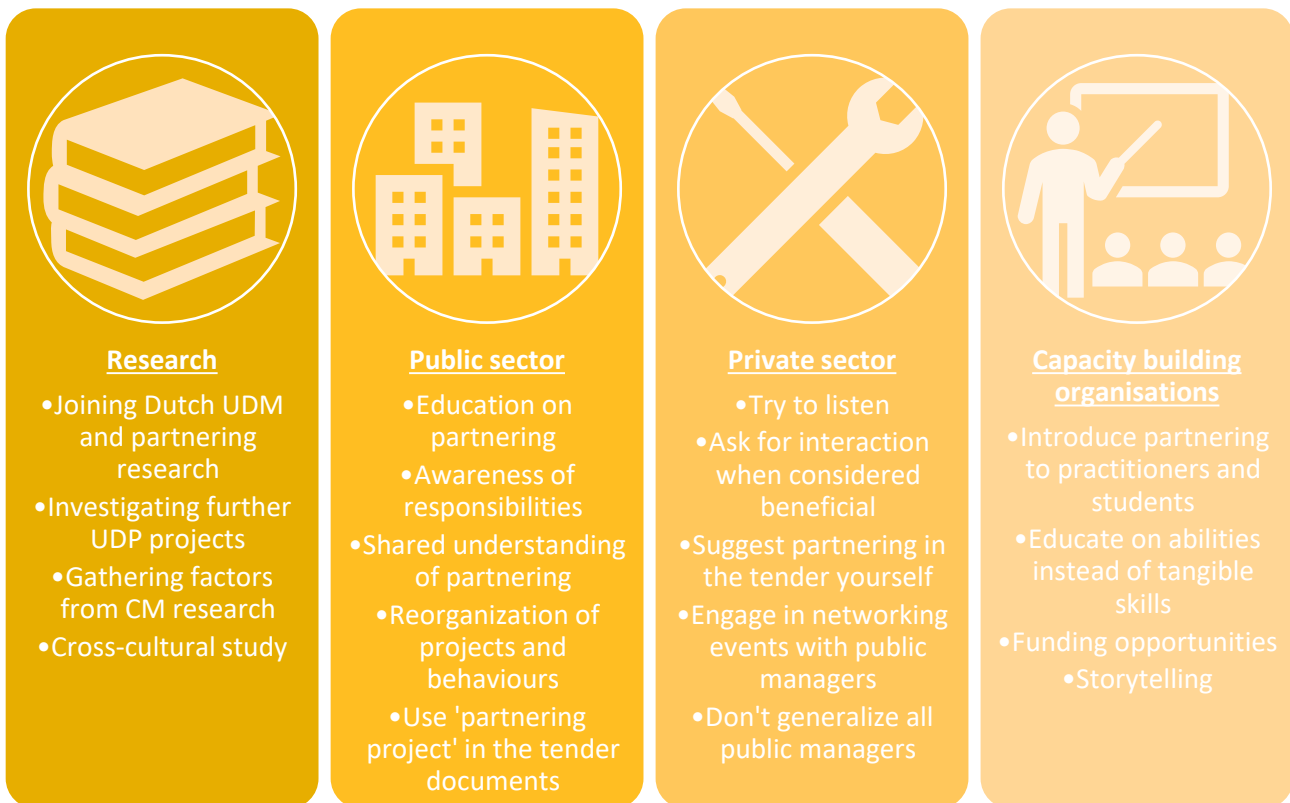


| **Research** | **Public sector** | **Private sector** | **Capacity building organisations** |
|---|---|---|---|
| •Joining Dutch UDM and partnering research | •Education on partnering | •Try to listen | •Introduce partnering to practitioners and students |
| •Investigating further UDP projects | •Awareness of responsibilities | •Ask for interaction when considered beneficial | •Educate on abilities instead of tangible skills |
| •Gathering factors from CM research | •Shared understanding of partnering | •Suggest partnering in the tender yourself | •Funding opportunities |
| •Cross-cultural study | •Reorganization of projects and behaviours | •Engage in networking events with public managers | •Storytelling |
| | •Use 'partnering project' in the tender documents | •Don't generalize all public managers | |

Figure 33: Summary recommendations (own figure)

# 6.4 Reflection

This chapter presents a reflection on the graduation topic and process of this thesis.

Divided into two sub-chapters, the first part of this thesis concerns the graduation topic. Here, the graduation topic is set in relation to the Urban Development Management Department (UDM), the track Management in The Built Environment and the master programme MSc Architecture, Urbanism and Building Sciences (AUBS). In addition, the chapter reflects on the revelations of this study in relation to the wider social, professional and scientific framework.

The second part of this chapter concerns the research process. Here, particularly the strong and weak points of the chosen methodology, problems that occurred during the data collection and ethical issues and dilemmas are discussed.

### 6.4.1 Graduation topic

The topic of this thesis concerns *partnering in Dutch urban development projects* and is written at the department of Urban Development Management (UDM) as a part of the track Management in The Built Environment embedded in the Master of Science program Architecture, Urbanism and Building Sciences. Partnering concerns the development of relationships based upon trust, dedication to common goals and an understanding of each other's expectation and values within construction projects in order to improve efficiency, cost-effectiveness, increased innovation and continuous product and service improvement in the construction sector (CII, 1991).

### 6.4.2 Relationship to UDM, MBE and AUBS

Worldwide, the development of cities is increasingly becoming more complex. One aspect of complexity is hereby the increasing social complexity. With an increasing specialisation of professions, individuals from different disciplines of among others Architecture, Urbanism and Buildings Sciences need to come together and collaborate in the creation of what Yigitcanlar & Teriman (2015) call the sustainable urban development project. While the MBE program taught us the essentials of Project, Process Management and Leadership in the Built Environment, I noticed during my studies, in the end, it is not the knowledge but particularly the social dynamics and complexities of collaboration that pose barriers co-creating high quality project results.

As Bult-Spiering & Dewulf (2008) explain that soft sociological aspects so far have been widely disregarded in the urban development research, I decided to graduate in the department of UDM with the goal in mind to find some concept that could help Dutch UDM practitioners improve inter-organizational collaboration between public and private actors.

From first learning about the concept of 'partnering' during my exchange semester at the KTH in Stockholm, which is when parties want to collaborate closely, I quickly understood that researching this topic could potentially be interesting for current urban development research. However, I anticipated that the topic might be very challenging given the unawareness of researchers with the UDM department, but also the TU Delft on the topic.

### 6.4.3 Scientific relevance

Diving into the topic, it became increasingly clear, that the topic of partnering was not a topic that emerged from the domain of UDM, but that a separate research field had been focusing on partnering in construction projects since considerable time. Being led by UK and Swedish researchers (Hong Yuming et al., 2012), I learned that European partnering research started in the infrastructure sector and is currently slowly finding its way into PPPs in urban development projects (Smith & Thomasson, 2018).

Learning that partnering is a ''(…) potentially complex and dynamic interplay between formal and informal processes'' (Bresnen & Marshall, 2002, p. 504) and finding researchers that seemed more knowledgeable on the complexities and dynamics of partnering (Koolwijk et al., 2018; Jacobsson & Wilson, 2014; Kadefors, 2004) (Bresnen, 2009), almost towards the end of my study I understood how skewed existing research currently is.

Joining different authors (Kadefors, 2004; Hartmann & Bresnen, 2011) on being critical about formal processes and tools and instead trying to understand the dynamic interplay between formal and informal processes in construction projects, it became increasingly clear, that not only partnering had not yet been researched in Dutch urban development projects, but that existing research somewhat disregarded the human factor in partnering research.

Since several authors (Bresnen, 2009; Jacobsson & Wilson, 2014; Smith & Thomasson, 2018) explained that it would be interesting to investigate the applicability of current partnering research in the light of different national context, I therefore decided to try closing this research gap by contributing insights into processes that promote (or inhibit) the emergence of a partnering way of working in two Dutch urban development projects.

### 6.4.4 Social relevance

As explained earlier, social complexities pose major barriers to the creation of sustainable cities of tomorrow. While many public and private parties have understood that they need to work together, they are having difficulties to understand how a partnering way of working emerges in practice. To support professionals in their daily work, and therefore also society in receiving better services and making the construction sector a more

value-based and fun work environment, this thesis tried to provide further insights on the underling processes that might promote, respectively inhibit, the emergence of true partner relations in the urban development domain.

Reflecting on the process, indeed, it is considered that this thesis might have revealed some insights that are novel to individuals in the Dutch UDM domain. However, given the little platform a Master thesis has, it is to wait whether further individuals in the Dutch UDM domain become curious to learn about the partnering movement.

## 6.4.5 Practical relevance

As explained earlier, this thesis should be of interest for both practitioners working in the field of Dutch UDPs but also construction projects in general.

Reflecting on the practical relevance, this thesis hopes to have revealed insights that can help practitioners and capacity building organisations to improve collaboration processes in Dutch UDP practice.

Besides the revelation of influential factors, with the insights from the 'lived experience' of partnering and revealed challenges that individuals face, hopefully, it will become easier to target existing problems in the near future.

Similar to social relevance, however, it is yet to be determined whether there will be further developments as a result of this thesis. As changes to the construction sector implies changes in power dynamics, it is understandable that the process might be rather slow. However, as project and social complexities are only increasing and the Dutch are typically 'hands on' when it comes to solving problems, what the future may bring should not be underestimated.

## 6.4.6 Method

Since partnering is an emergent process that is ''(…) situated in particular (local) circumstances and practices and actively constituted through the collective sense-making activity of those directly involved'' (Bresnen, 2009, p. 932), this thesis attempts to tap into the 'lived experience' of two Dutch urban development projects. By means of semi-structured interviews and the use of a 'narrative inquiry analysis' (Clandinin, 2006), this thesis aimed to to understand reality through the eyes of the individuals interviewed.

This approach proved to be very challenging given the complexities and limitations of designing coherent case narratives based on the social reality of five different informants. Besides these difficulties, however, this approach is considered as very suitable and recommended for the underlying research topic in further studies.

## 6.4.7 Problems during data collection

Several challenges occurred during the data collection of this thesis. Whereas time availability went considerably well given the complex CoVid-19 circumstances, particularly the social complexities surrounding the topic posed a challenge to the data collection. One challenge was that individuals being interviewed were concerned that they might say something that could harm them in the professional lives afterwards. To overcome this barrier, parties received a formal letter, where the process, data usage and anonymisation process of data was explained. In addition, active responsibility was taken by providing a detailed explanation of the thesis process and offering individuals to read their respective project analysis before publicizing it in the TU Delft repository.

## 6.4.8 Ethical issues and dilemmas

As indicated in the previous sub-chapter, the data collection posed several challenges. While these challenges can certainly already be considered ethical issues and dilemmas, it was particularly the data and cross-case analysis that required moral decision-making skills.

As this research aimed to understand formal but also informal processes that promote or inhibit the emergence of partnering, a detailed behavioural study of the different individuals needed to be executed in the analysis part. While ethical considerations of Bell et al. (2018) were adhered to as much as possible, there was a constant struggle between the role of a researcher as well as the moral responsibility to not appear

disrespectful to the informants; if, from a research point of view, certain behaviours needed to be considered as harmful to the emergence of partnering relations.

To limit ethical issues and dilemmas in this aspect, close contact between the researcher and the researched individuals during the case analsysis was attempted. This contact, however, resulted in the dilemma that individuals asked whether it is possible to change quotes or rephrase paragraphs in a few cases.

While active responsibility and the portrayal of the interviewees' social realities was attempted, , in this situation, again a conflict between the role responsibility as a researcher and the moral responsibility of respecting the individuals wishes evolved.

Whereas, according to consequentialism, it might have been morally right to leave the quotes as they are, it was decided to adhere to the principles of virtue ethics and ultimately also the ethical considerations of Bell et al. (2018) to protect individual's psychological safety and therefore implementing the changes in accordance to the individuals suggestions.

## 6.4.9 Personal reflection

When reflecting back on this experience, I would admit that the process of this Master thesis was challenging at times.

Despite the difficulties, however, I am grateful for my first mentor and former second mentor from the UDM department for the curiosity and freedom that I was given in choosing my own research topic and especially for being allowed to start writing my thesis while completing my exchange in Sweden.

As I was determined to find a holistic concept that might help the Dutch UDP practitioners overcome inter-organisational collaboration challenges, self-evidently challenges arose. This was particularly as the scope was not clear and even when it did become clearer, partnering literature was very confusing to understand without any prior knowledge.

Coincidently, I was able to find another second mentor who provided in-depth knowledge on partnering that was used throughout the second half of this thesis process.

With the help from the inspiring case study informants and calming mentoring sessions, I hope to have been able to inspire further individuals to study and pursue partnering.

In hindsight, given the challenges faced, I can just say that I did the best I could. I am grateful for the knowledge I gained as I was able to grow and as it directed me to the path I want to take during my professional career.

## 6.5 Summary

In summary (Figure 34), this chapter discussed the thesis findings in light of current research. It was revealed that the thesis findings can be seen as complementary to existing research on Dutch UDM and partnering.

Furthermore, several limitations of this study were presented including the small study scope and time span that might impact the reliability of results.

Also, this chapter introduced several recommendations for Dutch researchers and practitioners and capacity building organisations that are interested to contribute to a change of culture in the construction sector and more specific Dutch UDP practice such as the introduction of partnering to practitioners and students.

Ultimately, reflecting on this research, it is concluded that with the insights of this thesis and the joint efforts of different parties, the institutionalisation of partnering as an alternative approach to existing practices in Dutch UDPs is not only considered interesting but also within reach.
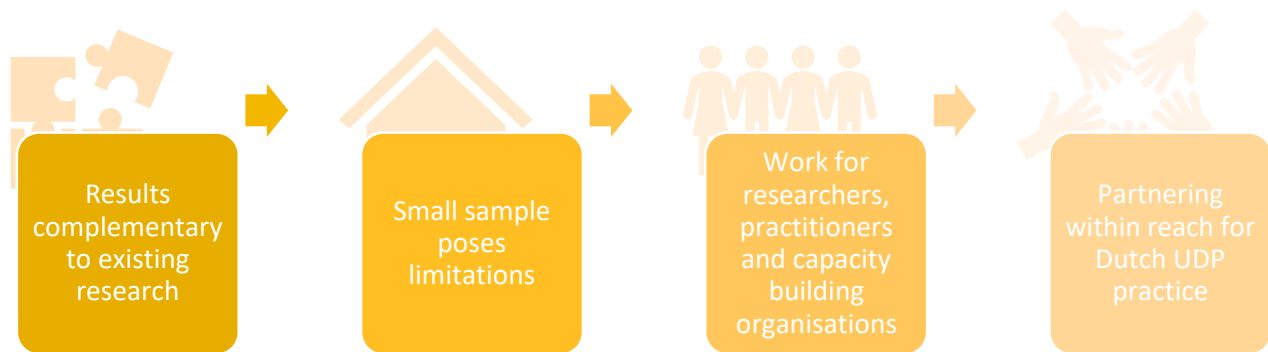


**Figure 34: Summary conclusion (own figure)**

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# 8.0 Appendices

## 8.1 Appendix I: Interview protocol

**Introduction**

**Context/project**
1. Can you tell me something about you and the project you are working in?

**Partnering**
2. Have you heard about partnering before?
4. What is partnering for you? In what way does it differ from other approaches?
5. Why did you choose to partner in your project?

**Team**
6. Who is in your team that manages the partnership? And which roles do different actors take on?
7. Does the team function well?
8. What factors contribute to a good collaboration process? Probing towards:
    a. The team's joint capability
    b. Relational attitudes e.g. senior management commitment and relational norms
    c. Collaborative practices e.g. team integration and joint working
    d. Task-related interaction e.g. communication, coordination, balanced contribution, mutual support, aligned effort
    e. Social interaction e.g. affective trust and cohesion

9. Are there any conflicts?
    a. Probe background of the conflict: What was the conflict about?
    b. Were you able to solve the conflict?
    c. Did the partnering arrangement help you to solve the conflict?

10. How did you/do you plan to overcome them?
    a. Which abilities helped you to overcome them?

**Capacity building and policy recommendations**
11. Are there some suggestions that your organisation could do to improve public-private collaboration processes?

12. Do you have some policy recommendations?

**Closing**

## 8.2 Appendix II: Follow-up questionnaire

**Instructions:** This questionnaire serves the purpose of receiving additional descriptive information on the partnering components used in the investigated case study. In the following Table 1, partnering components are enlisted. The questionnaire is structured chronologically after the partnership formation and partner selection phase, partnership governance and design phase and the post formation partnership management phase. Please indicate whether the component is applied/present in the project that you referred to during the interview. If present, please describe shortly what you associate with the component respectively in which way the component was used. The components are on purpose held general as only with your association they receive a deeper meaning. After filling out the questionnaire, please send it back to c.sander@student.tudelft.nl.

**Name:** Click or tap here to enter text.
**Name of the referred project:** Click or tap here to enter text.

**Table 1: Partnering components**

| Partnering component(s) | Present in your project? | If yes, please describe in what way the component was used/present in your project |
|---|---|---|
| *Partnership formation and partner selection* | *Yes* | *Description* |
| Bid evaluation based on soft parameters | ☐ | Click or tap here to enter text. |
| Early involvement of contractor | ☐ | Click or tap here to enter text. |
| Joint selection and involvement of subcontractors in broad partnering team | ☐ | Click or tap here to enter text. |
| *Partnership governance and design* | *Yes* | *Description* |
| Collaborative contractual clauses | ☐ | Click or tap here to enter text. |
| Joint project office | ☐ | Click or tap here to enter text. |
| Compensation form based on open books | ☐ | Click or tap here to enter text. |
| Compensation form including incentives based on group performance | ☐ | Click or tap here to enter text. |
| Limited bid invitation (*'onderhandse aanbesteding'*) | ☐ | Click or tap here to enter text. |
| *Post-formation partnership management* | *Yes* | *Description* |
| Conflict resolution techniques | ☐ | Click or tap here to enter text. |
| Facilitator | ☐ | Click or tap here to enter text. |
| Follow-up workshops | ☐ | Click or tap here to enter text. |
| Increased focus on contractors' self-control coupled with limited end inspections | ☐ | Click or tap here to enter text. |
| Joint IT tools | ☐ | Click or tap here to enter text. |
| Joint objectives | ☐ | Click or tap here to enter text. |
| Joint risk management | ☐ | Click or tap here to enter text. |
| Collaboration questionnaire | ☐ | Click or tap here to enter text. |
| Start-up workshop | ☐ | Click or tap here to enter text. |
| Team building | ☐ | Click or tap here to enter text. |

**Any remarks?** If this questionnaire raises more thoughts than fit in this additional remark field, please feel welcome to suggest a follow-up call. Click or tap here to enter text.