



MASTER THESIS

# The integration of shared goals and interests within interorganisational collaboration in construction

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# **The integration of shared goals and interests within interorganisational collaboration in construction**

*A master thesis about the challenges of interorganisational collaboration in the construction and their hierarchic web of shared goals and interests*

## **Master Thesis**

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## **Preface & Statement of Originality**

This master thesis is the final part of my master's degree in Educational Science & Technology. In this thesis, I got the opportunity to connect practice and research. The inspiration for this subject came from practice as well, where the added value of this research increases. I am currently working in the field of HR for four different construction companies, that are working continuously in interorganisational teams. My passion lies in team development and with this knowledge I hope to be able to make a good start on deepening my knowledge in this field in practice.

I would like to thank my supervisor Ellen Nathues for the guidance during my thesis. Her feedback, ideas and support enabled me to bring my thesis to a successful conclusion. I would also like to thank everyone who contributed to my thesis in practice. So, the respondents in my research for providing insight into their projects and other people or students who helped me further by sparring about the results. It was a long process, but I got energy from the fact that what I was researching matters. That there are results that I can put into practice after I have finished my master's degree. I get excited about developments in teams and organisations and I can't wait to get on with it.

This document is written by EST Master-student Daphne Borger who declares to take full responsibility for the contents of this document. I declare that the text and the work presented in this document is original and that no sources other than those mentioned in the text and its references have been used in creating it. The Faculty of Behavioural, Management and Social Sciences is responsible solely for the supervision of the completion of the work, not for the contents.

Daphne Borger,

Overijssel, January 2021

## Abstract

Within the construction sector, a growing number of organisations are working together on a long-term basis in the form of partnerships. Within these partnerships, risks are mutually shared and there is mutual cooperation in order to achieve a win-win situation. A challenge in this respect is that the team members need to coordinate and fuse their different goals or interests with as little friction as possible. **The aim of this research is to investigate how partners in an interorganisational construction project achieve a collaboration where goals, interests and coordination between team members are aligned in a hierarchical web of individuals and organisations.** Within this qualitative research, a semi-structured interview technique was applied. In total, thirteen in-depth interviews were conducted with a total of seven different construction partners. This study shows that several important factors can promote or hinder shared goals or interests. It can be seen that although there is an intention to work together, there is no talk about common goals and there is a strong tendency to focus on completing one's own goal first before completing the common goal. At each job level, different interests can be seen, but also different personal characteristics play an important role. To achieve shared goals, communication will have to be organised, but employees will also have to be trained. For future research, it will be interesting to compare the construction sector with other sectors to see where differences exist and where sectors could learn from each other.

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## Introduction

Nowadays, the successes of organisations increasingly depend on working together with other organisations to create opportunities to specialise, to achieve shared goals, to share information, and to continuously improve (Kellog, Orikowski, & Yates, 2006; Turk, 2020). The organisational environment is therefore determined by interdependent groups of various stakeholders working together to achieve a degree of commonality of purpose that could not be accomplished separately (Koschmann & Burk, 2016). Even though interorganisational collaboration shows a significant effect on the successes of organisations, it is complicated and many collaborations or shared projects do not lead to the desired result (Gray, 2000; Hardy, Lauwrence, & Grant, 2005). One of the challenges is that members in interorganisational collaboration need to coordinate and fuse their different goals or interests with as little friction as possible in striving for a win-win together.

In the studies that have been done so far on interorganisational collaboration, four sectors are prominently present: healthcare, science and academia, design and technology (Akkerman & Bakker, 2011). However, one sector, that has a high degree of specialisation and, therefore, a need for interdisciplinary work, is the construction sector. In contrast to the other sectors mentioned, the construction sector has not yet been widely researched. Additionally, in this sector, there is a particular challenge in the area of interorganisational collaboration, because construction is still very focused on traditional collaborations in which there are formal contracts that focus more on the financial aspects than the collaboration itself (Lavikka, Smeds, & Jaatinen, 2015). Therefore, there is a high focus on costs. At the same time, failure costs are enormous and are often mentioned as one of the most frequent issues in construction (Barber, Graves, Hall, Sheath, & Tomkins, 2000; Hwang, Thomas, Haas, & Caldas, 2009; Teo & Love, 2017). Importantly, these failure costs can often be linked to human cooperation errors (Atkinson, 2010). The reason for this is that companies in this sector often work together in a chain, in which they are highly dependent on each other. The lack of coordination between organisations that are part of the chain is one of the reasons for underperformance in the construction sector (Sebastian, 2011).

In addition to the lack of coordination, the construction industry is characterised by the use of formal contracts, in which mainly business relationships are established and where risks are not mutualised. As a result, collaborations in this sector still often lead to mistrust and conflicts (PSI Bouw, 2003). In order to improve collaboration, an increasing number of construction companies are trying to enter into more long-term relationships, in which there

is more focus on working as partners to achieve a win-win situation. However, working with other partners does bring more challenges than collaborating traditionally. Firstly, interorganisational collaborations have the challenge to achieve an outcome together. However, each team member has differences in organisational culture and way of working and eventually, each team member also strives for the goal of their organisation (Akkerman, Admiraal, & Simons, 2012). Furthermore, it could also be difficult to achieve shared goals because there is usually no formal authority in these teams. After all, leadership is often spread over several members. So, when there normally is a leader who can mediate between competing interests and priorities, there are now multiple members who are responsible (Koschmann & Burk, 2016; Lauwrence, Hardy, & Philips, 2002). The challenge here is to establish interorganisational teams that can independently evaluate the various interests of multiple stakeholders and make adjustments themselves where necessary so that in the end a shared goal can be achieved (Lauwrence et al., 2002).

Even though nowadays more and more construction companies are working together in long-term partner contracts, there is still little knowledge about the coordination within these chain collaborations (Kembro, Selviaridis, & Näslund, 2014; Roehrich & Lewis, 2014; Stock, Boyer, & Harmon, 2010). Although construction companies are increasingly moving towards long-term partnerships, the traditional feeling that everyone is striving for themselves rather than creating a win-win situation still persists (Chan, Chan, & Ho, 2003; Lavikka et al., 2015). In this context, the win-win situation is represented as a situation in which several organisations within the long-term cooperation achieve shared goals or interests. If participating partners strive separately for their own interests and their benefits, this will have a more detrimental effect on the result than when carried together (Chan et al., 2003). Therefore, this study focuses on the integration of shared goals, interests and the coordination between them in order to establish that win-win situation. This study examines the following research question:

*How can partners in an interorganisational construction project achieve a collaboration where goals, interests and coordination between team members are aligned in a hierarchical web of individuals and organisations?*

Based on the given research problem, several sub-questions are derived:

- (1) How are the various interests and goals within a partner construction project divided? Which functions/parties are involved and who has what interest or goal in this project?

- (2) Is there a common interest to be found and who can exert influence on this?
- (3) What are the success factors that can stimulate the common interest, and what obstacles can be identified?

The first part of this study provides some literature about interorganisational collaboration in the construction sector and the shared goals in this type of collaboration. After the literature section, an overview will be provided about the research design and methodology. This will be followed by the analysis of the interview data, which are divided into five themes: conflict of interest, personal dependency, bonding, team composition, and communication.

After all, the results of this study contribute to a useful addition to the literature on interorganisational collaboration, as the construction sector has been subject in very few studies. In addition, few recent studies can be found in the field of partnerships within the construction sector. It is clear that there are challenges in achieving a win-win, but this study examines how long-term partners can achieve a collaboration in which there is proper coordination of goals and interests, which will greatly contribute to follow-up and existing studies within this sector.

## **Theoretical background**

### **The concept interorganisational collaboration**

Organisations increasingly work together with other companies, also known as interorganisational collaboration. This type of collaboration can be seen as a process where, ideally, participating organisations are mutually beneficial (Cropper, Ebers, Huxham, & Ring, 2008). Collaboration can be considered as a “network of relationships” (Dyer, & Singh, 1998, p. 660), where organisations can share similar problems, implement changes more effectively, and they may be able to create more innovative solutions than they otherwise could have (Sharma & Kearins, 2011). Also due to the rapid changes that are taking place in the knowledge-based economy, organisations are increasingly forced to cooperate rather than simply having the will to do so (Koschmann & Burk, 2016). In addition to material revenues, cooperations also have intangible revenues. They can, among others, create value, facilitate mutual learning, and improve the relationships with their stakeholders (Adler & Kwon, 2002; Gray, 1989).

Interorganisational collaboration consists mainly of teams from different organisations who work together to reach a certain goal. A useful definition that describes a

team in an interorganisational collaboration is: “a collection of individuals who are interdependent in their tasks, who share responsibility for outcomes, who see themselves and who are seen by others as an intact social entity embedded in one or more larger social systems (for example, business unit or the corporation), and who manage their relationships across organisational boundaries” (Cohen & Bailey, 1997, p. 241). This definition is assumed within this study when talking about interorganisational collaboration

### **Collaboration in construction: A transformation into long-term relationships**

The construction sector is one of the sectors in which the oldest professions can be found and collaboration goes back a long way. Furthermore, construction is also a sector that has the need for interdisciplinary cooperation due to the high degree of specialisation. A construction project is therefore often a complex one, involving many different hierarchical parties that are linked to each other. Think of clients, engineers, architects, contractors, subcontractors, and suppliers, who all have different knowledge and skills (Cheng, Li, & Love, 2000). This results in a complex collaboration, in which the traditional contracts between parties often lead to distrust and conflicts (PSI Bouw, 2003). This is partly because coordination depends on formal contracts rather than proper coordination within the cooperation and between people themselves (Sebastian, 2011). More value is given to business relationships, where contracts are one-sided and where risks are not jointly carried, instead of doing it all together. Especially in this sector, where risks can be high and where it is nearly impossible to bear them alone (Dewulf & Kadefors, 2012).

In order to improve the quality of collaboration, innovation, but also efficiency in time and costs, the construction sector is increasingly being transformed into a long-term form of collaboration, the so-called partnering contracts (Dewulf & Kadefors, 2012). Uher (1999) underlines that this form of collaboration is a transformation from old management practices to a new approach that emphasizes win-win. Aspects such as open communication, trust, and shared goals are paramount in this. However, the success of this depends more and more on the people who are involved in this collaboration (Slater, 1998).

There are many discussions about the meaning and definition of partnership in the construction industry. However, there is unanimity on the basic principles of partnership, which are: trust, respect, commitment, communication, and equality. These are needed in order to strike the right balance between the different goals and interests of the different parties (Cowan, Gray, & Larson, 1992; Uher, 1999). Having a long-term relationship creates

trust that can help prevent problems later on (Moore, Mosley, & Slagle, 1992; Phua & Rowlinson, 2004).

### **Problems in partnering: Why shared goals can be complicated**

The transformation from a traditional form of collaboration to a long-term form of partnership offers benefits for all parties. However, this requires that everyone is committed to this long-term collaboration (Construction Industry Institute, 1991; Packham, Brychan, & Miller, 2003). Thinking in terms of mutual collaboration with shared goals is, therefore, an important aspect of establishing long-term cooperation (Conley & Gregory, 1999). However, in practice, there are still big obstacles and many parties do not trust each other, for example, because of previous experiences (Larson & Drexler, 1997). When there is no trust in others, but especially when there are people who want to win at the expense of the other, it is very difficult to start this kind of long-term cooperation successfully. If partners only strive for their own goals, this will have a disadvantageous effect on the end result compared to when goals are shared (Chan et al., 2003). Parties try to benefit from the partnership by reducing their own risk, but are subsequently unwilling to share the risk and maintain mutual trust (Fisher, 2004; Larson & Drexler, 1997).

In addition, partnering in construction is very important, because of the high degree of specialisation. Due to the high degree of specialisation, organisations are very dependent on each other. However, this dependence leads to a lack of coordination, conflicts, and insufficient communication in construction (Pala, Edum-Fotwe, Ruikar, Doughty, & Peters, 2014). Furthermore, in practice, the commitment of shared goals is far from equal among partners. The complex interrelationships between people and partners ensure that many different goals or interests can be found among the participating organisations (Gardiner & Simmons, 1998; Moore et al., 1992; Packham et al., 2003). If partners do not make an effort to balance the levels of interests, this can lead to misunderstandings and conflicts (Moore et al., 1992).

### **Why having shared goals is important**

The term ‘goals’ can be defined as “the object or aim of an action” (Latham & Locke, 2013, p. 4), or at a team level, the outcome that is aimed for by a team (Van der Hoek, Groeneveld, & Kuipers, 2018). In addition to realizing the desired performance, setting goals in teams is important for effectiveness and efficiency (Kramer, Thayer, & Salas, 2013), and can

stimulate mechanisms that stimulate performance (Van der Hoek, Groeneveld, & Kuipers, 2018). The term ‘goals’ is often used to indicate why collaborations are set up, what needs to be achieved and what benefits are involved (Vangen & Huxham, 2011). Even though goal setting is important, it is essential according to the goal-setting theory that the goals are clear, specific, and challenging rather than vague and unchallenging (Latham et al., 2008; Latham & Locke, 2013; Rainey & Jung, 2015).

Literature from various studies shows that agreement on goals from several organisations ensures success within the cooperation. Despite having an individual goal, it is expected that having shared goals, among other things, reduces uncertainty, but at the same time reduces ambiguity and conflicts. Team members who share similar values and goals find it easier to work and commit together (Greguras & Diefendorff, 2009). However, the prerequisite for achieving common goals is that these goals are recognised and established by all team members (Fleishman, 2009; Thomson & Perry, 2006). A shared goal is described as the agreement of goals at the group level. Employees must see their own goals as congruent with the goals of the team members (Schreuder, Schalk, & Batistic, 2019).

However, practice has shown that it is difficult to obtain the agreement of shared goals (Vangen & Huxham, 2011). Achieving shared goals in practice makes it particularly complex, because different parties may have different expectations, which can lead to conflict (Bryson, Crosby, & Stone, 2006). Besides, parties may take a different view of policy implementation goals (Percival, 2009) and when an agreement is reached, it often goes no further than a rhetorical commitment (Page, 2003). Therefore, the agreement will not quickly go beyond that.

## **Research Design and Methodology**

### **Research design**

#### ***Study setup***

A qualitative interview study was carried out to answer the following research question: “How can partners in an interorganisational construction project achieve a collaboration where goals, interests and coordination between team members are aligned in a hierarchical web of individuals and organisations?” For this qualitative research, two cases were used on two comparable construction projects in the Netherlands, consisting of a renovation project in the east of the Netherlands and a new construction project in the middle of the Netherlands. The before mentioned projects were both bigger projects where the organisations have been

working together for some time, or have the intention to work together in a long-term relationship and can therefore be considered as partners. Considering the researcher worked for four construction companies, there were connections with some companies that participated in large projects with partners. These connections have made it possible to contact the relevant parties and affiliated partners.

### *Interview guide*

Due to the lack of research that has been done on this topic, the in-depth information of the respondents in this study is of even greater importance. Therefore, a semi-structured interview technique was used, so that respondents could provide in-depth information, allowing new theories to be formed. Furthermore, a qualitative method such as interviews ensures a more in-depth understanding of social phenomena than quantitative methods such as questionnaires (Silverman, 2000). The reason for using interviews over questionnaires was being able to ask further questions when receiving answers, and therefore getting a greater insight into the reasoning of the respondents. Within the semi-structured interview technique, an interview guide was followed, while still leaving room for flexibility and the respondents' own interpretation of where the focus lies. This method was therefore more flexible than structured interviews (Farquhar, 2013). The interview guide for this study focused on four parts. The first part was an introduction to the discussion and dealt with the current project, which made for a better understanding of what the current project looked like. Then, in part B, the discussion focused on organisational differences. As an example: 'To what extent are you guided by the interests of your own organisation, and to what extent is this noticeable?'. In part C, the leadership aspect was addressed, focussing on where control and roles were distributed. For example: 'In what way do you or don't you feel free to make your own choices within your own team, or to divide tasks among them?' Finally, in the last section, there was a discussion about shared goals: 'To what extent do you have a clear understanding of the goal of completing the project together? And how does this process run? Who decides what?' The complete interview guide can be found in Appendix III.

### **Data collection: Project information and participants**

This study was conducted in the autumn of 2020 on two comparable construction projects in the middle and east of the Netherlands. A total of thirteen interviews were conducted for this study, spread across seven different companies working on a shared construction project, who are so-called partners of each other. Partnership means that the parties have generally worked

together more often and have the intention of working together for a longer period. Of the total of thirteen interviews that were conducted, twelve were fully recorded and one recording at the device stopped recording after about ten minutes. The latter was an interview with a foreman. The data of all thirteen interviews were processed immediately after the interview was done and several notes were written as well. In addition, the data were transcribed after recording and were made completely anonymous after the interviews had been conducted. The interviews lasted between 45 and 60 minutes per respondent. Only the main part of the interviews was recorded, for example, the introductions were left out, which made the average of the recording about 32 minutes. Per respondent, an average of 13 pages of transcript was needed, with a total number of pages of transcripts amounting to 169. The duration of the interviews and the number of pages of transcript that were written out can be found in Table 1 and Table 2.

### ***Project one: Renovation***

The first project concerned a construction project, in which there have been three main partners with a number of different subcontractors. These main partners consisted of an installation company, a maintenance company, and a building company. The cooperation was unique because of their will to work together, as these three parties have jointly set up a B.V. as a collaborative organisation. Together they have been working on large renovation projects, of which this is one. A total of approximately thirty to forty people were working on the entire project. Within this (large) project, the employees have been renovating seven flats.

For this project, six permanent employees have been interviewed from various function levels. These six team members are spread across the three different organisations. Table 1 gives an overview to clarify the setup.

*Table 1: Overview respondents project one*

<b>Organisation 1</b>		<b>Organisation 2</b>		<b>Organisation 3</b>	
<b>Building</b>	min., pages	<b>Installation</b>	min., pages	<b>Maintenance</b>	min., pages
Coordinator	(30, 13)	Project leader	(32, 14)	Project leader	(40, 17)
Foreman	(31, 13)	Foreman	(35, 16)	Foreman	(22, 12)

As can be seen in Table 1, two people were interviewed per company. Per project, there is often a coordinator who has an overview of all the partners. The coordinator of this project originally works for the construction company, which is why the coordinator was interviewed

for this company. In addition, the two other project leaders of the two other partners were interviewed, as well as three foremen. The foremen have also been working on the construction site of the project, which is why they should be involved in the interviews. In Appendix IV, there is a total overview of the positions that were interviewed as an example, and where these positions are located hierarchically, within the construction sector.

***Project two: New building***

The second project has been a project in which there was a plan for a new building project of 275 homes, in four different phases. Within this new building project, many different partners of the main contractor and its subcontractors worked together. In total, there have been around 50 people working on the project. In Table 2, an overview of the interviewees at the corresponding organisations is provided. These are similar to project one, where the coordinator of the project works for a construction company. Besides, two partners of this construction company were interviewed: the installer, and their subcontractor for the heat pumps. In addition, the opportunity to interview a supplier for more information arose. In conclusion, a total of four different organisations were interviewed on this project, with all a permanent position. The interviewees included the coordinator, two project leaders, three foremen and a supplier. These respondents were chosen considering they are the employees that can provide the most insights into this project from their position in the company. Firstly, the coordinator was the one who has been planning and monitoring the entire project. Also, the project leaders were the ones responsible for their organisation during the project. The foremen were the ones who have been working on the project itself and have been managing all the tradesmen, so they knew what was happening on the work floor. Finally, a supplier was interviewed to gain additional insights as an ‘outsider’.

*Table 2: Overview respondents project two*

<b>Organisation 1</b> <b>Building</b> min., pages	<b>Organisation 2</b> <b>Installation</b> min., pages	<b>Organisation 3</b> <b>Heat pumps</b> min., pages	<b>Organisation 4</b> <b>Supplier</b> min., pages
Coordinator (34, 12) Foreman (10, 4)	Project leader (25, 10) Foreman (27, 11)	Project leader (34, 11) Foreman (24, 10)	Account manager (64, 26)

## **Procedure**

Considering this research involves people and interviews with people, permission was requested in advance from the ethical committee of the University of Twente with the research proposal. After approval, two projects were selected that could be interesting for the research. As a researcher, I have an advantage working for four construction engineering companies. This means that I already know some relations and can check my results in the work field. Before starting the interviews, a pilot interview was held with a comparable person from the field. This pilot interview was held to test whether the questions were clear, sufficiently in-depth, and to estimate the approximate duration of the interview. When the projects were selected, the participants were personally contacted by telephone to ask whether they wanted to participate in the study. After that, a written confirmation was sent containing the option for all participants to withdraw from the study, whenever they no longer wanted to continue. Besides, a brief explanation was given of the subject of the study, how long it lasted, and a notification that if they agreed, an audio recording would be made of the interview. Furthermore, this was stated once again before the interview started. It was also specified that the information is treated confidentially at all times and personal data would be made anonymous during data processing, in which the interviews were transcribed. Finally, respondents were also informed of the timeframe of these interviews. The interviews lasted between 30 and 60 minutes per interview. Each respondent spent approximately one hour with the researcher at the construction location. The interviews were conducted at the construction site itself. This choice was first of all made so that the researcher could visualise the project better and see it for herself. In addition, for the employees it was time-saving and they were in their familiar surroundings where it would be easier to talk about their work. This was especially important as most technical workers are not the biggest talkers, so I tried to make it easier for them by walking around and showing interest in their work.

## **Method of data analysis**

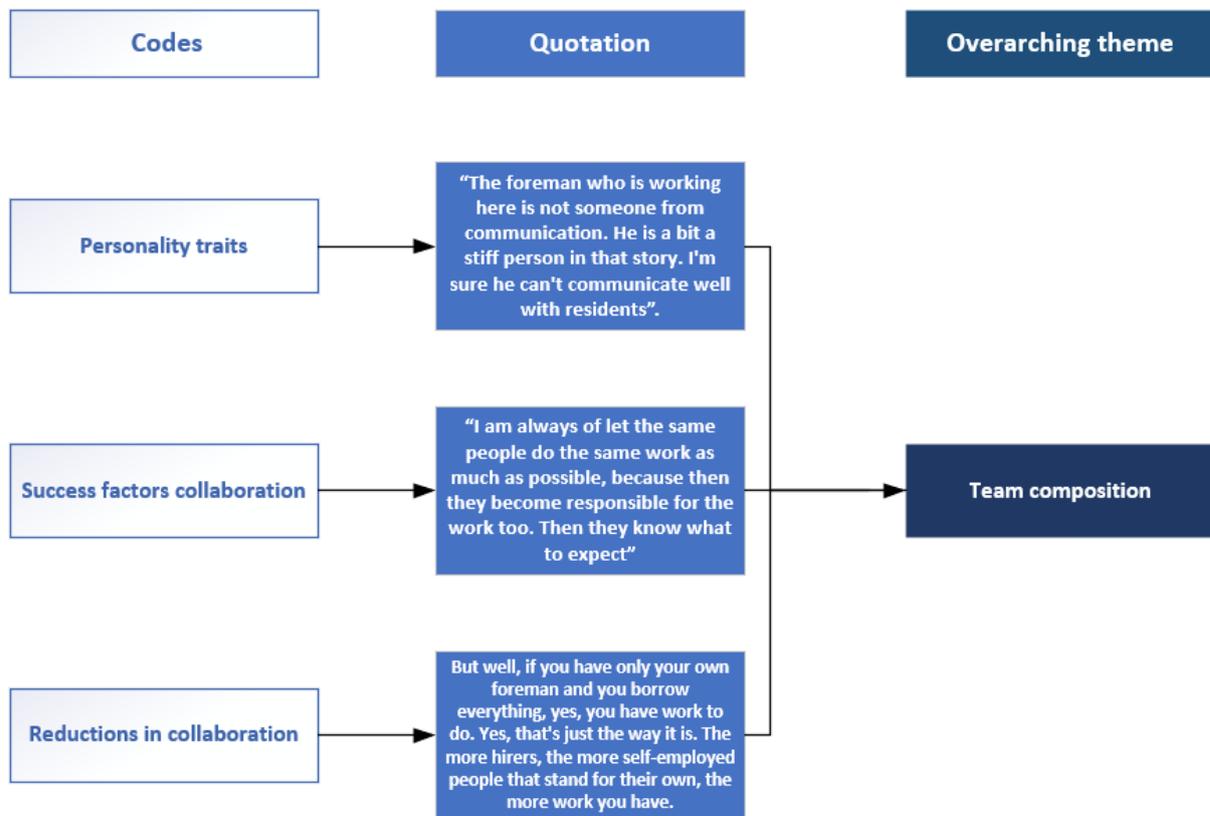
Once the interviews were completed, they were transcribed immediately. The transcripts have all been written out by the researcher herself in order to gain first insight. The transcripts were read through to familiarise with the data, and also to highlight a number of striking aspects that should be taken into account. The striking aspects concern a number of things that were recognisable from practice, but also, for example, quotes that should not be forgotten in the quantity of data available. In addition, because construction can be complex,

a visual overview of the projects and interviewees was created. To keep an overview and avoid mixing up the data, project one was first completed, ranging from the interviews to the summary of the results. Once that had been mapped out, the data collection and analysis for project two started. At the start of project two, some questions were adjusted in the interview guide. For example, a question was added about own goals and another question was changed to a slightly simpler form so that the interviewee could understand it more easily.

In order to analyse the data, the programme Atlas.ti was used. From the transcripts that have been read through many times, a number of core codes have been selectively created. These codes served as labels that divided the obtained information into smaller parts. These codes were applied throughout all the transcripts in form of quotations. Several codes were attached to a number of quotations in order to prevent fragmentation. Example codes are, 'Goals coordinator', 'Function foremen', or 'Success factors'. From the code 'Success factors', an example quotation can be: "It is important that you do something for each other in the construction industry, that you support each other and that you can also speak to each other when things are not working". In total 18 codes were created, which can be found in Appendix I and II. After coding, the 18 codes were extracted via Excel, in which the quotations per code were listed below each other. This way, a total overview of the results per code was created. Next, a first overview was made of the 18 codes that could be combined into categories, for example 'function levels', or 'goals in collaboration'. Subsequently, the results of the first overview were elaborated and compared several times.

When comparing all the quotations that were extracted from the different codes, several overarching themes emerged. The decision was made to use five overarching themes in the results, to show that the data has been compared and to avoid fragmentation. An example theme is team composition, which is elaborated in the findings. In order to show how a theme from the results of the 18 codes was established, one of the five themes is explained below by way of an illustration (see figure 1).

Figure 1: Example illustration of more codes leading to one theme



As shown in figure 1, the content of a code, the quotation, ultimately shows where an overarching theme emerged. The themes, therefore, arose from the quotations that have been compared, placed side by side, and from which comparable subjects have been identified. As an example, answers mentioned by respondents that deal with personal characteristics, success factors or reductions, but all say something substantively about team composition. From all the quotations, a total of five themes have emerged which are discussed in the findings. In Appendix I and II an overview of all codes, a quotation example, and themes can be found. The tool that was used for this is a thematic network analysis, which serves as a method to order the qualitative data. In this thematic network analysis, a visual representation can be used to help convert quotations from a text to an interpretation of the data (Attride-Stirling, 2001).

To ensure validity in this qualitative study, a member check was used. After analysing the data, a large part of the results was transferred back into the field. This transfer was achieved using a brainstorming session with one of the directors and the coordinator of the relevant partners so that the results could be reviewed. The member check provided validation by reviewing the analysis for accuracy and completeness (Johnson & Waterfield,

2004). In addition, a certain degree of credibility can be found in the data, considering the data was also tested for recognisability in practice, by using the member check. Furthermore, the management believed that it was an advantage that the researcher worked for a partner, as it made it easier to make the first contact. Also, there was a belief and trust that connections would help the participants to see the benefits of the research. However, the researcher also did not know many of the respondents either. As a researcher, I am aware that socially desirable answers might be given, so every effort was made to avoid this. It has been emphasised multiply times that all things were treated confidentially. For this reason, the researcher has decided to only specify the function in the quotations in the results. The decision was deliberately made to not also specify the concerned project, as anonymity cannot be guaranteed then. Finally, the other notes, recordings, and transcripts have always been in line with the ethical guidelines (Farquhar, 2013).

### **Achieving the win-win in practice: An illustration of the results**

In order to answer the research question, ‘How can partners in an interorganisational construction project achieve a collaboration where goals, interests and coordination between team members are aligned in a hierarchical web of individuals and organisations’, the results from the interviews can be divided into five organizing themes. A) How conflict of interests complicates shared goals. B) Personal dependency: a crucial collaboration factor. C) Why bonding helps to achieve shared goals. D) Team composition: The right team member in the right place. E) Communication: The influence of the right coordination. Within these five themes, answers are given on how partners could strive for long-term cooperation where the main focus is on how the different goals, interests, and coordination between team members are aligned. Within the first theme conflict of interests, the differences between function levels are described. Subsequently, an explanation is given why those differences cause obstacles in the pursuit of shared goals or interests. Secondly, personal dependency is especially about the importance of individuals within cooperation, and how personal characteristics play such an important role. Furthermore, the noticeable difference between people, and how that can influence other people’s behaviour, is explained. In line with the importance of the individuals themselves, the following theme is bonding. The results show that bonding can play a very important role in the success or failure of a joint project. In team composition, it is described how key persons and the right team member in the right place, can contribute to shared goals, leading to better coordination. Finally, communication is

included as a theme because, when expectations are not communicated with one another, identifying a common goal and coordinating this goal is highly challenging. There are still several areas which need improvement, in the construction sector.

### **How conflict of interests can complicate shared goals**

#### ***What are the function-dependent goals or interests?***

Results reveal that goals are scattered throughout all the function layers (see Table 3 below). A craftsman, a project leader, and an executor each have their own goals on the project which overlap, but can also intersect. Most respondents assume that there are common goals within the project, however, they are not discussed among team members. Standard goals can be seen, but no further discussion takes place. At least, not in all function layers. Project leaders, who possess a higher position, could talk about some goals, as they are, for example, dependent on finances. However, there appears to be a lack of discussion and goal setting. In order to see where goals intersect, an illustration of the most important goals that have been mentioned per function layer has been drawn (see Table 3 below).

*Table 3 Goals per different function layer*

<b>Goals Executor</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➔ Clear planning, where tasks are clarified for all involved</li> <li>➔ Resident communication, to minimise inconvenience to residents</li> <li>➔ Qualitative result</li> <li>➔ Financially, making a profit</li> <li>➔ Customer appreciation</li> </ul> <p><i>"Yes and as a nice incentive we said, if we score an 8 we will go out to dinner with the whole team".</i></p>
<b>Goals Projectleader</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➔ No losses on the project (own business), financially healthy. Project leaders are held accountable for this</li> <li>➔ Work must go on for the workers on the construction side</li> <li>➔ Keeping the work enjoyable and fun for the people at work, little frustration</li> <li>➔ Managing for planning and quality; right people, right place</li> <li>➔ More work together in the future, long-term goals versus short-term</li> </ul> <p><i>"I just think that in the end, you have to do it together, but in the end, you also think: what is best for me".</i></p> <p><i>"Then let us at least make sure that our piece is just right. That is what we can influence"</i></p>

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### Goals Craftsman

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- ➔ Solidarity is important because it shall be completed jointly
- ➔ Residents satisfied, rewarded with dinner from the executor
- ➔ Customer satisfaction, otherwise they will call for complaints
- ➔ Planning must be accomplished
- ➔ Quality, because you are the company's business card

*"No for us is only the planning..., that is the goal. What we have to meet, let's put it that way. Yes and how doesn't matter, that is planning. And at least in my eyes, you can't have a goal that we are going to try to achieve. No, we have to achieve it. No that is just an obligation'.*

*"I like knowing that the residents are happy again. But I think enough of my colleagues also think that I don't care. I think".*

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### ***Where divisiveness of goals comes from***

Considering the function-dependent goals of all function layers, differences, and also some overlap, can be seen. Interviewees show similarities in, for example, having a good customer appreciation, or achieving a qualitative result. However, priorities will be distributed differently per function layer, and some variations can be seen within team members. For example, team members who work on the construction side daily, value cooperation more highly than the progress or expenses of a project. Meanwhile, respondents who exercise on top, see the latter as important. Respondents also indicate that there is a perception that not every team member has the same goals in mind. Team members hope that all will share the same goals, but mostly foremen stated that it is easier to talk behind someone's back than communicate with each other.

Moreover, it is remarkable that when questioned about common goals, even a project leader failed to provide a response.

*I really have no idea what purpose we xxx for this project, so I really would not know. I have never been told, I have never asked" – Project leader.*

Goals are mentioned, usually in the form of money or quality, but do not extend beyond those goals. Therefore, most respondents can give an answer to having goals, but these goals are not more distinguished than other projects.

*"Yes, that kind of goals, but you can stick it on any project. So if that's it, I think okay, I knew that one. But I didn't hear anything specific about it being very important" – Project leader.*

Some partners work according to partner contracts, however, only formal goals are stated. As one of the foremen indicated below, the focus is mainly on money, which makes it almost impossible to help one another.

*"It's always about money. You keep that anyway. But you don't work for that company either. It doesn't matter that you help each other in between, but it's not like we're going to help you for an hour, we're going to help you for an hour. No, it's not like that. No, but anyway, the point is that it's purely a question of money". – Foreman*

### ***Why this divisiveness leads to a conflict of interests***

As described above, a disparity can be seen among the respondents concerning shared goals. While one team member indicates that a common goal is present, the other indicates that this differs. Generally, all respondents express a willingness to work together, but practice shows that this is still challenging. The opinion is divided per function layer.

*"In the end, we are all under the same project, all under xxx. And actually, we are all colleagues of each other. So yes, I think you should help each other as much as you possibly can" – Foreman.*

*"Yes, we have to do it together, but I just see that there are arguments about that, so I think: well that is not that good how we do it together and then I also see that we just don't use the project approach together" – Project leader.*

Remarkably, one foreman, who also does the quality control, indicate that it is often the same organisation that makes the same mistakes. In addition, when it comes down to it, everyone strives for their interests, mentioned by foremen and project leaders. During the interviews, their self-interest proved to be a priority, which leads to these different goals being performed separately from each other. Subsequently, the common goals are simply not implemented together, stated by project leaders. In conclusion, team members prioritize their own goals, before searching for a common goal.

*"And then you see that everyone is thinking of their own again. I can just hear myself say it" – Project leader.*

*"Well no, everyone has their own thing. And everyone sticks to it. At least I think so. The other parties of the other companies too, yes" – Foreman.*

In addition, the prioritization of goals by the various function layers also shows that they can often be formal, especially by the project leaders and coordinators that are mainly driven by costs.

*"Of course, they are partners, so you want to get to the same finish line together, but everyone is in it for his own money. Everyone wants to make money, so of course, you will sometimes find yourself at cross-purposes" – coordinator.*

After all, there is a timetable which must be adhered to by each organisation. In the timetable, there is a high degree of dependency, considering the next phase can only be

started when the previous one is completed. Interviewees indicated that they are willing to help, but each partner is eventually responsible for their own part.

*"Look, it's all very well working together, but you only work for one company. I don't... Look, a construction company is very keen for you to help with a lot of things, but the other way round, of course, is not done. I can't expect someone else to help me all the time. No, we are all our own company" – Foreman.*

To conclude, there is a notion that every team members shares a common goal. However, this common goal has not been defined. In practice, every team member is driven by the interests of their own organisation and focuses on meeting its schedule. Therefore, when team members are guided by only formal goals and have diverse goals themselves, the pursuit of one shared goal becomes quite challenging.

*"You notice that it's more a case of 'OK, how can I get rid of it as quickly as possible? It's more like your own thing over there".*

*Table 4 Success factors and obstacles for conflicts of interests*

Success factors	Conflict of interests	Obstacles
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➔ Some overlap can be found;</li> <li>➔ There is an overall intention to cooperate;</li> <li>➔ Craftsmen on the work floor find solidarity important.</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➔ Prioritizing own goals first;</li> <li>➔ Priorities of goals are distributed in the different layers;</li> <li>➔ No discussion about goals;</li> <li>➔ Driven by standard goals such as money;</li> <li>➔ The project leader cannot even identify the common goal.</li> </ul>

### **Personal dependency: A crucial collaboration factor**

#### ***Why personal factors are crucial***

Strikingly, when asked in the interviews about success factors in cooperation, personal characteristics were mentioned more often by all interviewees. When respondents were asked about differences between organisations and function layers, all named the differences that are truly about cultural or social differences between team members. Many aspects depend on the individuals themselves: how someone communicates, whether there is a connection between team members, does the individual remain calm or does someone start making demands or start shouting.

*"I think of myself that with me, you can go anywhere. I'm not like that when I come in and if I don't like something, I immediately start shouting this or that" – Foreman.*

*“Right. It depends on who you get. Yes, some team members, for example, xxx who also works for xxx. He is a project leader, but he thinks more of himself. You notice that much quicker”- Project leader.*

Working together is particularly important on these projects, as team members are highly dependent on each other. Team members cannot avoid other members, and agreements will have to be made. All respondents indicated that when members get along well, the cooperation automatically runs smoother.

*“Sure, it's always up to the people. You can come up with all kinds of rules, but if the people don't get along it won't work out” – Foreman.*

*"Yes, you know your own people much better, of course, ..... some people just have different abilities and interests than others. Yes, you have to take that into account. Not everyone is the same. Not everyone likes to do the same things" – Project leader.*

In addition, discrepancies can be seen between team members who do, and team members who do not, want to be controlled. This distinction is particularly evident in team members who work on construction sites.

*“Yes, there are people, indeed people who want to be controlled or people who actually think for themselves once in a while, try to point out things or indeed come up with smart ideas” – Foreman.*

All respondents indicated that there is a shortage of well-qualified professionals. Since there is a lack of qualitative professional workers in construction, the differences between the team members are even greater. Both respondents on the construction site and respondents from the top see this as a recurring problem. A common concern is that the diversity in quality leads to insufficient result orientation on the construction site. The lack of such a focus on results also may be challenging to see how team members can take a step forward.

*"We don't have that whole result-oriented thing going on outside. There are just people, they just go home on time. Even if the work isn't ready. Yes, I can't do anything with that, because I think yes, I would never do that myself. Well, and that's also because we have painters, for example, who don't achieve the speed we had in mind. Yes, what to do with it" – Project leader.*

### ***Key persons on the project***

Considering personal characteristics mentioned above are seen by respondents as an important part of how the cooperation proceed, it might also be interesting to focus on the team members that respondents believe have the most influence. Firstly, project leaders can be seen as a link between the management from above and the way they manage the foremen

on the construction site. When foremen have problems with a situation, they go to the project leaders to solve it. Project leaders are at the end responsible for the planning.

*"I have made the agreement with xxx (foreman) that if something happens, an incident, and he can solve it himself he has to do it himself. Otherwise, he has to call me. And then I will help him" – Project leader.*

*"Actually, I do the planning and I manage the workers, so yes, they should listen to me, so to speak. But I would never say it like that" – Project leader.*

Although, project leaders, depend on the foremen who work on the construction site, for they are the ones who are working there daily. On the other hand, the project leader is not present every day, making the foreman a key person on the construction site.

*"But most of the problems on the construction site here: yes we just solve that ourselves" – Foreman.*

As a result, one of the coordinators also stated that it was, therefore, of great importance to have a Dutch-speaking foreman on a project.

*"You need them all, so I .... You are a manager, you don't execute anything yourself. So you have all the people, you need very much to make the project a success..." - Coordinator*

Furthermore, the interviewees indicated that the coordinator also plays an important role. The coordinator plans the entire project, and it seems to make a major difference in how this key person acts towards the other team members.

*"But, you have all different executors. You have those figures and you have figures like xxx. That's just a golden guy you know".*

### ***The influence people have***

After all, it is remarkable to see that one project leader has the idea that they can influence the quality of the work of another organisation or team member, while another project leader does not. Some interviewees do not hesitate to confront others, while some respondents believe they have no influence. All interviewees indicated that they would like the entire project to be of good quality. Although, a project leader wanted at least their part to be good, seeing as that is something they have control over. Team members can exert much more influence on others than is currently believed.

*"I hope that when we walk away we can be proud of what we leave behind. And if we say okay, the xxx that we have made is that bit that we are proud of and the rest of the house looks like crap, then you don't walk away with a good feeling. So we are dependent on everyone for that. I mean we all have to build a nice block of houses and that starts with the builder and ends with the painter".*

“..... No, and that's what I mean an ideal picture, but I'm not going to worry about it. Because if the painter does a lousy job, then I think: yes, that's a shame. It didn't have to be this way, but I can't do anything with it”.

Table 5 Success factors and obstacles personal dependency

Success factors	Personal dependency	Obstacles
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➔ Team members can exert influence;</li> <li>➔ If people get along, team members do more for each other;</li> <li>➔ Awareness of managers that they need everyone.</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➔ Shortages in the construction industry;</li> <li>➔ There are many different team members on the construction site;</li> <li>➔ Lack of result orientation on the construction site.</li> </ul>

## Why bonding helps to achieve shared goals

### *The lack of connection to projects*

One of the biggest obstacles mentioned by interviewees are team members who have no connection with the job or the project. Due to the lack of connection, the motivation to work can be inadequate. The team members who suffer from a lack of connection are mostly temporary workers, mentioned by almost all respondents. However, temporary workers are increasingly hired for projects, necessary due to a lack of skilled employees.

*"Yes, the interests of the temporary workers are often slightly different. Yes, they are less related to this company. They do their own thing and some are better at it than others" – Foreman.*

*"When people are brought in for a couple of weeks, they are not so motivated. Sometimes they think I'll be gone again. It may sound strange, but that's how it happens sometimes" – Project leader.*

Temporary employees often have a different mindset, because they are not permanently employed by one party and therefore may not know their team members well. On the other hand, there is an increase in self-employed workers who may also experience a different bond with shared projects. The difference in bonding is due to them being self-employed and usually being more personally involved.

*"Yes, that is just the way it is. The more hirers, the more self-employed people there are, the more work you have to do. The hirers, the self-employed, generally pay for their own money a meter" – Coordinator.*

Ultimately, interviewees also indicated that the lack of bonding is not limited to temporary workers. In general, several team members prefer to go straight home at four o'clock, whether they have finished their job or not. There appears to be a lack of bonding within the project due to team members not feeling connected to the project.

*"Let it be a quarter past four as soon as possible and then I'll have my money again. Even if I haven't finished, they have no connection with that. You see a lot of building sites where they prefer to go home at four o'clock as soon as possible" – Foreman.*

### ***Partnerships enhance bonding***

All respondents indicated that the long-term collaboration has strengthened mutual bonding. The reason for the increased bonding is that the respondents indicate that they know each other better, which results in more goodwill to another.

*"Again, the advantage is that they know each other very well and know who is in the house and that you are working with the same people, then they know how to find each other" – Foreman.*

Interviewees noted, the importance of team members showing goodwill towards one another. If there is no goodwill and trust, working together on a dependent project will be more challenging. At the start of the project, team members will have to invest more time to get to know each other.

*"I think it's very positive that you really know what you can expect from each other because one contractor expects a certain way of working from an installer. The other contractor thinks again... eh, so it's very nice to have permanent partners because then you know exactly where you stand, say how they expect you to work, what the quality should be" – Project leader.*

### ***Where the bonding is lacking***

Finally, one of the foremen indicated that the level of bonding might also differ by position. For example, a temporary team member who is at the bottom of the hierarchy may have a lower level of bonding, because they may not have such responsibilities as a foreman.

*"...but maybe that's because they feel a little less responsible because they are not the foreman" – Foreman.*

Respondents stated that mostly, foremen have a great sense of responsibility. A project leader stated, in general, recognition and appreciation are essential to every team member and could perhaps make a difference. Therefore, the extent of involving and encouraging temporary workers by the organisation is of even greater importance according to the project leader.

Momentarily, there is still an insufficient effort made to ensure the inclusion of all team members. More often the feedback is negative, instead of providing positive reinforcement.

*"Yes, you sometimes have companies that are purely financially oriented. And they only think about their own interests and that's difficult to manage. And of course, you can't get those guys enthusiastic, because they are not taken along by their manager" – Foreman.*

*"I think that is important. Of course, everyone wants to be considered important. Or at least that they are appreciated. That is important. I think if you are appreciated for your work you automatically go the extra mile or at least make an effort" – Project leader.*

Table 6 Success factors and obstacles bonding

<b>Bonding</b>	
<b>Success factors</b>	<b>Obstacles</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➔ The more bonded team members are, the more they will give to each other;</li> <li>➔ Many already know each other through long-term collaborations;</li> <li>➔ Appreciation and recognition.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➔ The difference in bonding between temporary workers/regular own workers and self-employed workers;</li> <li>➔ Lack of focus on results, off at 4 o'clock, ready or not;</li> <li>➔ The difference in sense of responsibility.</li> </ul>

### **Team composition: The right team member in the right place**

#### ***The need for fixed teams***

Nowadays, Covid-19 is currently one of the reasons that make team composition even more difficult, for example, in limiting the maximum number of team members that can be present simultaneously.

*"An additional factor is that covid-19, so no more than three people per house are allowed inside, so this also requires a bit of fine-tuning and sometimes we really have to move things along" – Coordinator.*

In addition, as mentioned by project leaders and foremen, team members who work on construction sites have a strong need to work in fixed teams. When team members work in fixed teams, they get to know each other, which improves expectations. All respondents are increasingly willing to work together when they are familiar and have a connection with their colleagues.

*"So that's how you get differences sometimes and why it's nice to work for fixed partners. Then you know exactly what you can expect from each other"*

*"...And that's just important that you have a fixed team right from the start" – Foreman.*

***What does this team look like?***

Due to the shortages in the construction sector, it is presently almost inevitable that an increased flexible layer will be found in organisations. Nonetheless, these shortages will make it even more important to get the right team composition. The team composition should include at least one Dutch foreman serving as the key person for communication with the other partners.

*“Uhm, Dutch-speaking. That's also stated on our contracts. They are obliged to put a Dutch-speaking foreman on the job. And what a foreman is, thinking, communicating, being able to work together, communicating well” – Coordinator.*

The results regarding bonding, reveal differences can be found between the levels of connection by several professionals. The divergence of bonding can especially be observed between temporary workers versus permanent staff mentioned by interviewees. Hence, it is even more important to look at the right team composition, which includes a combination of the various personalities that exist. In conclusion, project leaders noted that the right team members in the right place are crucial. For example, the team composition should include a Dutch foreman. Besides, having increased flexibility of temporary workers is inevitable. Nevertheless, the coordinator indicated that it is vital to find the right balance between permanent and temporary staff.

*“Sure, you have that on every building. And the trick is to have that, yes not too much. I have that here, the tiler for example. I have a number of 2 regular guys with whom I did the previous project in xxx. I asked them: 'these are good guys, I would like to have them here again. The guys who are here now, I know what kind of quality I can expect from them. So yes, the better you know the boys. That is super” – Coordinator.*

*“As long as you have permanent guys here on the construction site. Keeping a permanent team is also important. Own boys are important. Several freelancers are allowed” – Foreman.*

*Table 7 Success factors and obstacles team composition*

<b>Team composition</b>	
<b>Success factors</b>	<b>Obstacles</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➔ The right person in the right place;</li> <li>➔ Good Dutch-speaking foreman;</li> <li>➔ Positive working in long-term collaboration as partners;</li> <li>➔ Fixed teams as possible.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➔ Shortages in the construction sector;</li> <li>➔ Covid-19 restrictions;</li> </ul>

## **Communication: The influence of the right coordination**

### ***Communication goes through many layers***

In general, the construction sector is still considered to mainly be a masculine work field.

Within this work field, communication is not at the forefront.

*“But communication is just a thing. Everyone... sometimes people just assume. Oh, people know that. Yes, you notice that that's one of the biggest things that cost you money, that's communication and especially in such a man's world. We don't like to talk as much” – Project leader.*

Within construction projects, there sometimes are as many as ten different parties working simultaneously, amounting to a large number of team members. All the different parties are highly dependent on each other. Especially project leaders indicated that the communication between parties has to go through many different layers. Sometimes, team members, therefore, assume that things have been completed, although they are not. For instance, project leaders coordinate and control the professional workers, but are not present daily. Project leaders and foremen, often wonder whether the other team members know how things are done and why certain choices are being made. Furthermore, a project leader noted that communication is currently not organised enough, even though it should be. There may be meetings between project leaders or a so-called ‘day start’ that can promote communication, but Covid-19 also presents an additional challenge.

### ***Differences in communication***

Interviewees indicated that communication is still one of the biggest obstacles when challenges arise. Especially in projects involving many team members, communication remains perhaps one of the most critical issues according to respondents. As described before, when many team members are involved, distinctions between individuals are visible, as are the differences in how team members communicate. For instance, variations can be seen, in that one team member can remain calmly, while another can make immediate demands or be shouting. In the communication area, key persons such as foremen, the project leader and the coordinator are again relevant. Besides, as mentioned before, the mix of permanent and temporary staff is also of great importance. This mix is essential because the shortages in the sector are also causing an increasing number of foreign staff to work in the construction industry. As a result, there is an additional challenge because many team members do not speak the language.

*“They are generally foreigners anyway, plasterers are foreigners, so yes, in terms of communication, that is, of course, more difficult. And yes, that is always a bit annoying I think”. – Foreman.*

In the beginning, there is always a period of adjustment, but as team members get to know each other better, communication also goes smoother. Interviewees, therefore, consider that investing time in this initial phase is necessary, but also see the added value of permanent teams.

*“After months you get to know each other and in the beginning, it was not easy and now it is going very well” – Foreman.*

Respondents also mentioned that internal communication with their organisation has to be right before communication with the others also runs smoothly.

*“We have a foreman for each subcontractor or partner. And that's who you have the most contact with. So if you have a good foreman, things will run smoothly. And if those foremen also communicate well with each other outside, then you have as little work as possible” – Project leader.*

### ***Communication needs to be organised***

Finally, foremen stated that planning is also a factor that can affect communication, as time pressure can cause tunnel vision. This tunnel vision might lead to team members only focusing on their work instead of the other team members' work.

*“That they then lose communication with each other. That they concentrate only on their own work for a moment but don't think about the painter or the installer or an xxx that has to follow. That you get tunnel vision for a while and only focus on your own work” – Foreman.*

Interviewees expressed the need for good preparation, whereby actions are taken and organised together. One of the most important demands in this respect is planning that is made together and communicated together, according to a project leader.

Furthermore, it is also critical that communication does not only take place by e-mail or telephone, but that the team members have joint meetings. Important reasons, mentioned by project leaders and coordinators, for joint meetings is that things may no longer run past each other through the various layers and you better know each other.

*“Yes by agreeing on a location. We also went to xxx to sit at the table for a while. Yes, there were some uncertainties. It's not always easy to resolve them by e-mail or telephone. Then you can just plan an hour together. Then you can get together and you can see each other. That makes a difference. Then you know what the person is like” – Project leader.*

At present, communication still gets scattered, because it is not organised, which means it can easily get lost. Team members all have different expectations of each other and when it

comes down to it, there is still an enormous challenge to operate together from a common perspective.

*"Yes, the reason is that I didn't make it myself, I wasn't involved in it and they say yes, we made it, xxx will say that, because he does that together with xxx, and they say yes, you can think anything you want about it. But if you think something, they don't like it. You notice that from everything".*

*Table 8 Success factors and obstacles communication*

<b>Communication</b>	
<b>Success factors</b>	<b>Obstacles</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➔ Organised communication;</li> <li>➔ Communication improves with long term cooperation;</li> <li>➔ Organise communication internally as well.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➔ Many different subcontractors, resulting in many layers;</li> <li>➔ Communication is not yet consciously seen as a point of attention;</li> <li>➔ Planning can affect communication;</li> <li>➔ People assume that things are done, but do not check.</li> </ul>

### **Achieving shared goals within partnering: Summarising insights**

First of all, as can be seen in the results, goals are varied and there is also a lack of discussions about these goals. Team members all have certain priorities that they consider to be important, but they do not discuss them with each other across the different functional levels. In parallel, no common goal can be found which has been established and committed by every team member. Interviews showed that there is an intention to work together. However, when it comes down to it, the focus is on achieving the goals for the organisation itself rather than on working together. Derived from the core principle, why conflict of interests can complicate a shared goal, it seems that, secondly, successes of collaboration are also enormously person-dependent. Dependency on how team members communicate with each other, but also the value of having a connection between team members is emphasised. As stated, if there is a connection between team members, the cooperation will also run more smoothly. In addition, the respondents mentioned several team members who are the most crucial on a project. The coordinators, project leaders and foremen are very valuable. Foremen, in particular, are frequently named as the ones who can influence how a collaboration proceeds on the construction site.

Moreover, differences are mentioned between the bonding of permanent team members and the bonding of temporary team members. Especially in the latter group, a lack of bonding can be found. However, it is true that through long-term cooperation, more issues are tackled jointly. For instance, meaning that team members know each other better, which in turn has a positive effect. Interviewees showed that professionals on the construction site, in particular, has the need for security, stability, and a good working environment among them. Following this, it is therefore important to have the right team composition. The foreman is crucial in this composition and it all comes down to having the right person in the right place. There should be clear expectations and the communication of these expectations is ultimately important as well, mentioned by respondents. The construction world is a masculine world, in which it is sometimes expected throughout the various layers, that actions will get done but are ultimately not. Communication should, therefore, be organised, especially in this sector, where elements should be tackled jointly.

## **Discussion**

This study aimed to investigate how partners in an interorganisational construction project achieve a collaboration where goals, interests and coordination between team members are aligned in a hierarchical web of individuals and organisation. Based on qualitative research, an outline was developed of how the various interests and goals within a partner construction project were divided, whether common interests can be found, and who can influence these common interests. Finally, the success factors and obstacles that could promote or hinder shared goals were identified. By identifying these success factors and obstacles, the current problems of long-term cooperation can be transformed into new solutions and further research directions.

### **Importance of the study**

This study is particularly important, because there is currently a lack of research on interorganisational collaboration in the construction sector. In the studies that have been conducted, four other sectors are prominently present, which are healthcare, science and academia, design, and technology (Akkerman, & Bakker, 2011). Nevertheless, the construction sector also has a strong need to work together due to the high degree of specialisation and is, therefore, an important sector, which should be added to the research field of interorganisational collaboration. This study is unique and adds to the existing literature by adding a new sector, while simultaneously not only examining the outcome of

collaboration, but includes also the process of how collaboration could be improved. In this study, the different goals, interests and coordination between them are combined. Many other studies that have been done on interorganisational collaboration, focus mainly on sociocultural differences, experiences, and cultural backgrounds rather than the whole process (Akkerman, & Bakker, 2011).

### **Theoretical implications**

#### ***A precondition for achieving shared goals***

As can be seen, many construction companies intend to move towards long-term partnerships to be mutually beneficial. However, it is challenging to coordinate and fuse their different goals or interests with as little friction as possible. In the literature on shared goals, it is argued that common goals do indeed lead to success, but with the precondition that these goals must be recognised by all participants, otherwise, they cannot be pursued (Fleishman, 2009; Page, 2003; Thomson & Perry, 2006). In this study, it is remarkable, that there is some willingness to cooperate and to work on goals together, but that there is no active discussion on goals with each other yet. Consequently, if there should be a condition that goals must be recognised and discussed by all employees, but this condition is not present, then achieving and coordinating goals on a large project in construction becomes very difficult. There is an idea among some team members that sometimes goals are self-evident, but reflecting on them is more important than currently believed. Team members assume that they know the goals of each other, but when questioned, many different answers are given.

In addition, it can be seen that there is a scatteredness of goals within all functions, in which overlap and differences can be seen. Priorities of goals are spread across all function layers, but strikingly, more team members play an important role in how the cooperation proceeds. These team members are not only from management, but can also be team members lower down in the hierarchy. This is interesting, as leadership is spread over several layers. There are therefore more people who can exert influence and who should be more involved. This study illustrates the relevance of all layers by also considering the layers from below.

Having common goals is essential as it increases, for example, the commitment of the cooperation, but also reduces uncertainty (Page, 2003; Thomson, & Perry, 2006). When there is too much difference, as can be seen in practice, it results in contradictory outcomes, where everyone strives for their own successes (Vangen & Huxham, 2011). Although shared goals are crucial, it is also acceptable that different goals can be found (Vangen & Huxham, 2011).

Having different goals, as seen in this study, is not uncommon given the fact that there are many different team members and organisations on the construction site. However, when there is too much homogeneity in goals, the benefits of cooperation can also be hampered. When only common goals are considered, this can also inhibit organisations from sharing information and working together (Provan & Kenis, 2008). In conclusion, it is good to keep in mind that striving for common goals is beneficial, with the precondition to discuss them together, but that a right balance has to be found between own and common goals (Moore et al., 1992).

*Where personal influence can play a role*

Another interesting aspect is to see to what extent the personal aspect becomes important when working together on larger projects. Every team member may work for their organisation, but all team members still have to deal with each other daily. How a team members acts are, therefore, crucial factors for how the cooperation proceeds. It is noteworthy that this study emphasises the fact that it is the person-dependent factors that can strengthen the collaboration and shared goals, considering that this is still a challenge in the construction sector. A challenge was given that the construction sector still focuses extensively on the formal business aspects of collaboration (PSI Bouw, 2003; Sebastian, 2011).

When talking about working together in interorganisational teams where no single formal leader is present, ‘personal leadership’ becomes even of greater importance. Personal leadership is not indicated in this way as a direct form of leadership, but a term used to indicate how individuals themselves can take more control of their actions. “Leadership is also very personal, in terms of how you treat yourself and influence those around you to behave” (Oxtoby, 2018, p. 724). Within personal leadership, there is a certain awareness of own actions, but also to what extent these actions may influence others. Within the Seven Habits of Highly Effective People of Covey (1993), the influence that people have is referred to as the ‘circle of influence’. In this study, team members claim that their result does not go beyond their part and that they have no influence on the work or actions of other team members, which is a remarkable result that deserves attention.

Covey (1989) describes that thinking win-win is a prerequisite for being mutually beneficial in collaborations, such as partnerships. To achieve a win-win, team members not only have to be friendly, but have also to be courageous. To achieve a win-win, therefore, more is required than just an intention to work together. Goals must be explicitly discussed (Fleishman, 2009), but also means that the partners jointly bear the risks and take the trust

(Fisher, 2004). If partners will not bear risks together or trust each other, they may be able to win in the short term, but in the long term, the cooperation will lead to friction and mistrust (Covey, 1989). According to Covey (1989), win-win is the only viable alternative, because if collaboration does not produce a win-win in the longer term, it results in a loss situation. Especially in partnerships that consist of dependent relationships, which this study was also shown to be the case in the construction industry. This study shows how the integration of common goals and interests occurs, which are necessary to create win-win thinking and ultimately establish that win-win situation.

### *Temporary workers in a long-term partnership*

The bond that team members have with other team members, but also with their job, is seen as an important factor in how people act on a collaboration project. The greater the commitment, the more interviewees are willing to do things together and to get the job done. Within this bonding, motivation becomes an extension. Motivation can be seen as an extension, as results show that there is a lack of commitment among some team members. These team members will not experience motivation to work towards one common goal if they are not connected. Motivation can be seen as a fundamental principle, because motivation can determine individual behaviour in organisations (Donovan, 2001). When someone is intrinsically motivated, he or she also needs to finish the job, but is also more process-oriented instead of only outcome-oriented (Grant, 2008). However, large differences within this study can be found. These differences are particularly noticeable between permanent employees and temporary workers, where the latter are more extrinsically motivated because they are only temporarily assigned to a project. In addition, problems can be found in the increased amount of temporary workers among regular staff in the fact that regular staff might consider temporary staff as inferior. This may therefore create status differences (Byoung-Hoon & Frenkel, 2004). However, this cannot benefit the motivation and quality of temporary workers, because every employee also needs a certain amount of recognition and appreciation (Herzberg, 1968). For this reason, it is important to be aware that individuals need to be valued, recognised and intrinsically motivated. Temporary team members should, therefore, also be involved in the job they do and be treated equally. Surprisingly, the ambition is to set up long-term cooperation in which subsequently temporary employees are then placed. In follow-up studies, therefore, more attention will be paid to this temporary type of employee and how this team member could be more involved.

## **Practical implications**

In practice, many interviewees stated that there is an intention to cooperate, but that, in practice, this is often problematic to achieve. This study provides guidance on how construction companies can stimulate this type of collaboration to achieve collaboration, in which goals and interests are aligned and coordinated. It seems to be important that partners may be able to convert their formal contracts into more relational contracts that enable them to trust each other so that they can bear the risks together. For further implementation in practice, the recommendations for managers can be divided into three phases.

The first phase of a collaboration project can be seen as the start-up phase, which takes place before the start of the work. In this phase, as a researcher, I recommend, to organise a meeting for all team members who are involved. In this meeting, goals are explicitly discussed with every team member and in which every job level counts. It is impossible to achieve a win-win without first having a full commitment to shared goals. Here is a challenge, where it is advisable to let every team member name their goals, including those on the construction site itself, the craftsmen, the temporary work, and the foremen. It is particularly noticeable among craftsmen that they need recognition, but also that they become acquainted right from the start. Important in this meeting is that management's support is key for its success (Aanvuur & Kumaraswamy, 2007). There could, for example, rewards be attached to the goals as an incentive. In addition, it could be interesting to train key people, in which personal leadership is discussed. This training may include, for example, how team members can influence each other's work and how to persuade others to follow their plan. Training can be important to get all team members acquainted with the win-win principle, but also the consequences of people acting in their own interest, which is transferring into a lose-lose situation (Phelps & Wooldridge, 2013).

In the second phase, the project itself, it would be recommended to organise communication on the construction site itself. In addition to the daily phone calls, it can also be recommended to have meetings together and go through what is going on and who is responsible for what. When organising communication, it can be essential to have regular meetings with all team members and ensure that the project leader is present at the construction site at least once a week. Next, it would be recommended in practice to look at the team compositions. For instance, making sure that there are not too many changes, and look at the right balance between permanent staff and temporary workers, so that there are sufficient bonding and appreciation. Team building may help to strengthen the team spirit.

Finally, as a research, I recommend managers to make fixed agreements with each other that go beyond formal matters, such as planning and costs and organise things bottom-up instead of top-down as well.

The last phase can be seen as an evaluation phase. It can be recommended to explicitly evaluate the goals with all partners. These evaluations could perhaps also be linked to rewards. Besides, managers should involve all function layers in this evaluation. In this evaluation, agreements are made ahead of the next project, which also concerns the process and the coordination among them. Managers should be able to make a plan that is then available and repeated at each project for each team member.

### **Limitations and directions for future research**

This qualitative study was carried out within the construction sector, where the participating organisations entered into a long-term cooperation in the form of partnerships. Through semi-structured interviews, an in-depth understanding was obtained, in which it is clear how various interests are divided, who can influence a common goal, and which success factors and obstacles enhance or hinder shared goals or interests. Although this study used a reliable number of interviews, which were tested beforehand and were brought back into practice afterwards, this study does not use triangulation which could promote further improvement of the instrumentation. Furthermore, results have been shared within the work field, but have not yet been fully tested within a new project. For further research, it will be important to test these findings in practice, as they have not yet been widely researched (Roehrich & Lewis, 2014). Within this research, two similar projects were taken from the construction industry. However, it may be interesting for further research to take two different projects, or two projects that differ in long-term cooperation, or non-long-term cooperation, to see if more explicit differences can be found here. Finally, this study focuses specifically on the construction sector, so it would be appropriate to compare it with other sectors in further research or to expand it further to see if a generalization can be made about partnerships.

To conclude, achieving shared goals within construction is a complex process, in which several factors play a role and which deserve more attention. The results that have been presented, are a combination of literature, the experiences and thoughts of the researcher, and the findings of the respondents at different levels. I hope that this research will encourage more partnerships, but will also generate more interest in this sector. There are potentially rich opportunities within this sector, which deserves attention, but is also ready for improvement to achieve ultimately a win-win situation.

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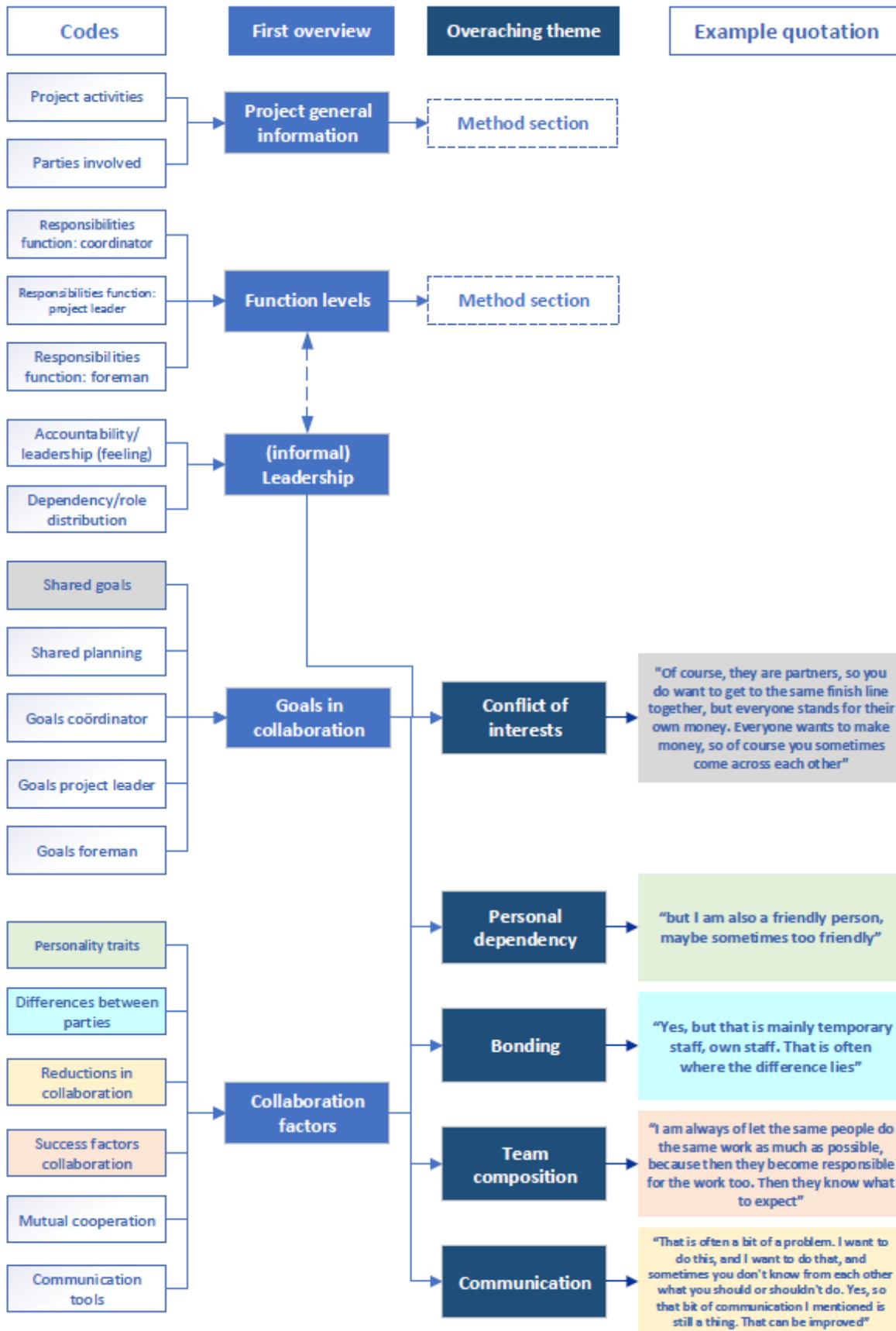
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### Appendix I) Thematic Network Analysis



## Appendix II) Overview used codes

<b>Code</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Example Quotation</b>
Project activities	The activities mentioned that explain what is being done on the project	“we are renovating seven flats, so we are improving the energy efficiency of these”.
Parties involved	The listed partners participating in the respective project and their specialities	"The installer, xxx that of the roof, uhm cementing company. Yes, then I think I've had most of it, say a demolisher. We also have a ... company. I think it could be as many as ten to 15 companies at any given time".
Responsibilities function: coordinator	The responsibilities mentioned belonging to the coordinator	"I am actually the coordinator here on the entire project. I am the point of contact for the foremen of all subcontractors. The parties then".
Responsibilities function: project leader	The responsibilities mentioned belonging to the project leader	“That means, for example, that I have to respond to a schedule today as it is and that, if things go wrong, I consult with the executor”. “I am the foreman at xxx, so
Responsibilities function: foreman	The responsibilities mentioned belonging to the foreman	I basically have to manage all the painting inside and outside”.
Accountability/leadership (feeling)	The degree of responsibility is mentioned by team members. The extent to which team members do or do not assume responsibility.	“..but maybe that's because they feel a little less responsible because they are not the foreman”.
Dependency/ role distribution	De mate waarin teamleden afhankelijk van elkaar zijn en hoe rolverdeling tussen teamleden wordt beschreven	"And yes, he does consult with them. And that is fine up to a point, of course. If it is within the agreements then it is possible”.
Shared goals	The goals mentioned by team members that are common to all	“And everyone has one goal indeed at the end of the number of days you have for it. That the door is closed

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		and that we get the next pack of cakes and that people are satisfied”
Shared planning	Aspects mentioned in relation to the joint planning that is used	“And in the end you have lean planning for that as well, so in the preliminary stages you often do lean planning again that you want to check with all parties that this is the most convenient for everyone. But you always notice that the contractor, the main contractor, has the planning to his own advantage”.
Goals coördinator	The goals that are mentioned that relate to the coordinator's function	“The most important thing is that the residents have as little inconvenience from us as possible. And as long as they know when we enter that house”.
Goals project leader	The goals identified that relate to the function of the project leader	"We steer on the planning and the quality, say during interim deliveries. Well, that's also where you find out that things are not good, that's what I steer for and I try to keep it a bit fun and pleasant for the people, that's important".
Goals foreman	The goals identified that relate to the function of the foreman	" We just have as a goal, as xxx goal to just work well and the housing association that is xxx who is very positive and very satisfied with us. And that is important".
Personality traits	Matters that are mentioned that relate to the personal characteristics of someone	“But I am also a friendly person, maybe sometimes too friendly”.
Differences between parties	The differences that are visible between parties mentioned.	“Can be different, it's not a bad judgement or anything, but I think that at xxx level - management is actually

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		<p>talking about it. Only in the execution it is not like that. And I think that within xxx we are really ahead of the game. I think that's really the way we are, also in terms of behaviour at xxx it's different”.</p>
Reductions in collaboration	Aspects mentioned that have a negative influence on the mutual cooperation, or that could further hinder it	“And then you see again that everyone is thinking a bit about their own. I can just hear myself say it”.
Success factors collaboration	Aspects mentioned that have a positive influence on the mutual cooperation, or that could further enhance it	“Again, the advantage is that they know each other very well and know who is in the house and that you are working with the same people, then they know how to find each other”.
Mutual cooperation	Other aspects mentioned that tell something about how they cooperate with each other	“But then again it is a bit of a team effort, because the moment I finish something early I walk over to my colleague. And then it's like oh xxx can I do something for you?”
Communication tools	Resources mentioned in terms of communication. Which means are used to communicate with each other?	"It's mostly face to face, that's always nice, but especially on the phone.

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## Appendix III) Interview Guide

### Interview Guide

#### Introduction: Welcome and explanation of the interview session

1. Welcome the interviewee and thanking them for participation and tell them that the interview will take about 30-60 minutes
  
  2. Informing them about their rights and the audio-recording:
    - **Right to withdraw** from the interview at any time without giving a reason
    - **Audio-recording** via small device, audio-recorded will later be **transcribed**
    - In transcription, the data will be completely **anonymized**
    - You will talk about your team members today, but it doesn't matter if you mention their names. These names will be made anonymous later so that's no problem at all (same for company names, places, etc., so for all identifying information)
    - **Confidentiality**, because nothing that is said here will be shared with anyone outside of the research team, in a way that it points to a certain person, company, etc.
- 

#### 3. Introducing the topic to the interviewee

“In dit interview vandaag gaan we kijken naar project X waar je werkzaam bent op dit moment. We zullen voornamelijk kijken hoe jij en je teamleden samen tot het eindresultaat komen van dit totale project, waarbij het uiteindelijke streven is dat jullie gezamenlijke belangen boven je eigen belangen komen te staan. Dus hoe kunnen jullie dit project gezamenlijk aanvliegen, waarbij er een win-win situatie zal ontstaan in plaats van alleen eigen belang. Er zal dus gekeken worden naar welke doelen jij hebt, maar ook die van andere personen en organisaties waarmee je samen werkt. Waar vindt misschien wat of wie bepaald wat binnen dit project. Er zal met name gekeken worden hoe jullie met elkaar communiceren en hoe jullie samen tot het optimale resultaat komen met de verschillende partners waarmee je werkt. Lukt dit al in jullie samenwerking, of misschien nog niet...?”

Het is belangrijk om in je hoofd te houden dat verschillen in werkwijzen of organisatieculturen niet perse negatief of positief zijn. Dit kan de samenwerking soms lastig maken, maar ze kunnen ook erg waardevol zijn. Dus het is belangrijk dat je er niet direct een negatieve of positieve zin aan geeft, maar de antwoorden puur baseert op je eerste ingaven en eigen observaties en gevoel hier bij”.

## Interview Guide Project 2

**1. Deel A: Werkzame Project** – In het eerste deel van dit interview ontvang ik graag wat meer informatie over de werkzaamheden die jij doet binnen je werk, maar ook binnen het project waarin je nu werkzaam bent

- Zou je wat meer kunnen vertellen over de organisatie waar je werkzaam bent en de functie die je daar doet?
- Hoe ziet het project er uit waar je nu werkzaam voor bent? (doorvragen, zodat project goed in beeld is)
- Hoe ziet je jouw functie in binnen dit project waarin je nu zit? Waar bestaan jouw werkzaamheden uit in relatie tot jouw collega's?
- Met hoeveel zijn jullie op dit moment bezig op dit project?

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**Deel B: Organisatie verschillen** – Dit project waarin jij werkzaam bent doe je samen met andere organisaties. Ik kan me daarom voorstellen dat jij en je mede collega's een andere manier hebben van werken of dat deze verschillen zichtbaar zijn in de samenwerking

- Hoe verloopt de samenwerking tussen jouw en je collega's op dit moment binnen het project? Waarom verloopt deze goed/ niet goed? Voorbeelden?
- Delen jullie dezelfde doelen en waarden met zijn allen?
- In hoeverre merk je wel/niet dat jullie allemaal werkzaam zijn bij diverse organisaties? Kan je hier een voorbeeld van geven (werkwijze, cultuur)?
- Als je kijkt naar de verschillen, hoe denk jij dat deze verschillen bijdragen aan het succes of juist de 'mislukking' van de samenwerking in dit project
- In hoe verre word jij aangestuurd van het belang van jouw eigen organisatie en in hoeverre is dit merkzaam dat dit kan botsen met andere aanwezige partijen?

*Hierop goed doorvragen, belangrijk om dit in kaart te hebben*

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**Deel C: Autoriteit** – In dit soort projecten waarin jij werkzaam bent zie je vaak dat leiderschap enigszins verdeeld kan zijn en dat er mensen zijn met bepaalde vormen van leiderschap. Bijv. een voorman die verschillend per organisatie ook bepaalde vrijheden krijgt of een projectleider die 'officieel' autoriteit heeft of wellicht wel een projectcoördinator. Ik ben benieuwd hoe autoriteit is verdeeld binnen dit project en in welke mate jij vrijheid hebt om keuzes te kunnen maken en dingen samen te kunnen doen. Dit is belangrijk om te bepalen waar de gezamenlijke doelen zich bevinden en wie dus 'bepaald' hoe er wordt samengewerkt op dit project.

- In hoeverre verschilt jouw functie van jouw medecollega's in dit project? In welke mate is het duidelijk welke rol iedereen heeft binnen het team?
- Wie is verantwoordelijk voor de uitvoering van jouw taken? In hoeverre voel jij je verantwoordelijk voor wat je doet op de werkvloer?
- In hoeverre ben jij afhankelijk van andere collega's?
- In hoeverre hebben jullie een leidinggevende binnen dit project, of is dit iemand met natuurlijk leiderschap zonder formele positie? Delen jullie misschien met z'n alle leiderschap (iedereen gedeelde manager)?

- Wie pakt de leiding op wanneer er zich problemen voor doen of wanneer dit nodig is?
  - Op welke manier heb je wel of niet het idee dat je vrij bent om zelf binnen je eigen team keuzes te kunnen maken of taken onderling te verdelen?
- 

**Deel D: Communicatie en gedeelde doelen** – Goals of doelen zijn eigenlijk de gewenste uitkomst of performance die jullie als team zouden moeten bereiken, ik ben benieuwd hoe jullie samen tot deze doelen komen en hierover communiceren met elkaar gedurende het proces

- In welke mate hebben jullie duidelijk inzichtelijk met welk doel het project **gezamenlijk** afgerond moet worden? Hoe verloopt dit proces? (wie bepaalt dit doel? Het team of de organisatie?)
- Wat zijn jouw doelen binnen dit project? Wat vind jij belangrijk?
- In welke mate staan jullie achter de doelen die gesteld zijn (door anderen)?
- **Heb je het idee dat iedereen meewerkt aan hetzelfde doel? Waar merk je dit wel/niet aan?**
- Op welke manier houden jullie de vordering in dit doel bij of evalueren jullie dit?
- Wanneer jullie afwijken van het doel of op een verkeerd spoor komen hoe word dit dan opgepakt?
- Wanneer er dingen niet volgens plan lopen of wanneer er zich conflicten voor doen, waar ontstaat dit dan veelal door?

*Ook dit deel doorvragen, belangrijk*

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#### Debriefing: The end of the interview

“We zijn nu aan het einde gekomen van dit interview en ik wil je heel erg bedanken voor dit interview en voor alle informatie die je met mij hebt willen delen. Zou je niet over dit interview willen praten met je andere teamleden, of andere collega’s, omdat voorkennis van dit interview of iets dergelijks de betrouwbaarheid van dit onderzoek zou kunnen verminderen? Ik interview namelijk ook je andere collega’s. Dus we moeten hier een beetje voorzichtig mee zijn nu we nog midden in het afnemen van de interviews zitten.

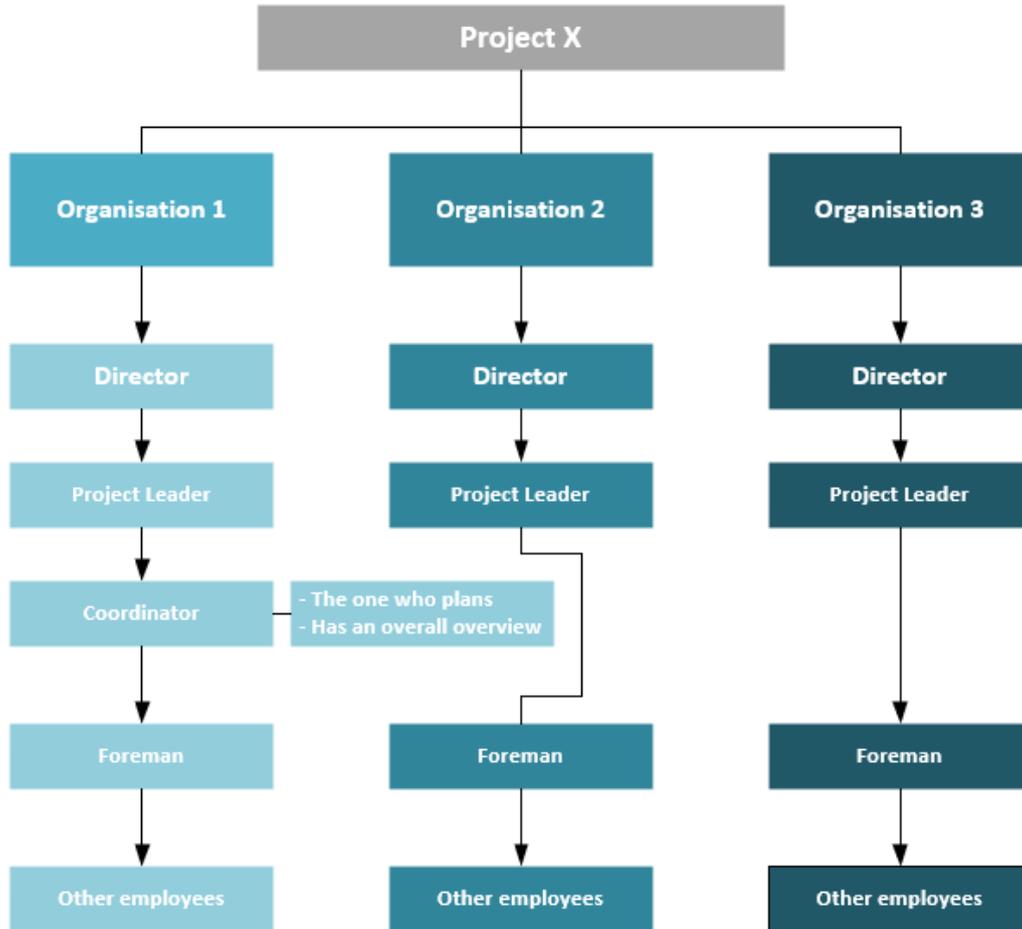
Zoals ik al uitgelegd heb, zal mijn volgende stap zijn dat ik de interviews nu ga transcriberen, of terwijl uitwerken, om vervolgens mijn analyse te kunnen maken. Tijdens het transcriberen zal het gehele interview anoniem gemaakt worden. Er zijn namen gevallen van organisaties en collega’s, maar alles wat gezegd is zou niet terug geleid kunnen worden naar individuen, organisaties etc. dus ook jij niet uiteraard. De informatie zal verder niet verspreid worden buiten het onderzoeksteam om.

Heb jij verder nog vragen aan mij? Mocht je later toch nog een vraag hebben dan kan je mij bereiken.”

Extras: probes, reflective questions, etc.

- Can you say more about that?
- What do you mean by ...?
- Have you ever experienced other ...?
- Do you have specific experiences in mind, or is this a general opinion?
- Can you tell me about ...?
- Could you give me an example?
- If I were watching such a situation, what would I see?
- Why is that important to you?
- Why does that stand out in your memory?
- Why do you think you noticed that?
- Why does that matter?
- I'm beginning to get the picture but some more examples might help.

**Appendix IV) Example overview hierarchy construction sector**



## Example Project 1 – Responsibilities and project overview

