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University of Edinburgh Business School

Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

**Examination of Political Behavior by Middle Managers in
International Partnerships: A Strategy Process approach**

By

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Abstract

The strategy process is viewed as a result of deliberate and emergent events, affected from different factors. Existing research in strategy making and implementation has suggested different micro-level factors affecting strategic decision making, mainly through research in single companies. Some factors include cognition, organisational learning and the roles of the top managers. This thesis attempts to gain a better understanding of the strategic decision making process through the investigation of the impact of middle managers' politics in the strategy process within international partnerships of the high tech sector.

An abductive research approach is used, to investigate four case studies, combining different qualitative research methods. The research focuses on the formal and informal activities that middle managers engage in, in order to affect strategic decisions before, during and after these are made, through the different phases of a partnership. The organisational context of the study, this being international partnerships, enables the investigation of 35 decisions, 15 of which are in intra-organisational level, and 20 in inter-organisational.

Findings suggest that the impact of political activity, between individual employees and groups of them in the intra-organisational environment, can be either integrative or fractious. This however appears to depend on three different factors: firstly, the tactics being applied during the decision making period; secondly, the phase of the partnership in which these decisions are being made; thirdly, the level of autonomy that middle managers enjoy during the formal and informal communications surrounding the decision making process.

This study contributes in the strategy area as it suggests a coherent framework on investigating the causes and impact of political processes in organisations. Rather than using the criticised as abstract notions of ‘positive/negative’ impact of politics, it focuses on the way they integrate or fragment decision makers. This impact however appears to depend on the three aforementioned factors. The study contributes in strategy research, as it stretches the need for inquiry in the emerging strategic relationships area, by focusing on firm partnerships. Moreover, it stretches the need for abductive approaches, having as a departing point existing theoretical suggestions, in order to test theories and irregularities, and offer alternative explanations. The study concludes by suggesting two different frameworks to investigate the middle manager politics in firm partnerships, offering a meticulous way in investigating them through a processual approach.

The heaviest penalty for deciding to engage in politics is to be ruled by someone inferior to yourself. - Plato

Even a purely moral act that has no hope of any immediate and visible political effect can gradually and indirectly, over time, gain in political significance. - Václav Havel

Therefore, the good of man must be the end of the science of politics. - Aristotle

The control of a large force is the same principle as the control of a few men: it is merely a question of dividing up their numbers. - Sun Tzu

The hero is commonly the simplest and obscurest of men. - Henry David Thoreau

I'd rather die for speaking out, than to live and be silent. - Confucius

No one is more hated than he who speaks the truth. - Plato

True wisdom comes to each of us when we realize how little we understand about life, ourselves, and the world around us. - Socrates

Death may be the greatest of all human blessings. - Socrates

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Declaration of Originality

I declare that this thesis has been composed by myself, and it embodies the results of my own work.

No portion of the work referred to in the thesis has been submitted in support of an application for another degree or qualification of this or any other university or other institute of learning.

Following academic conventions, I have made due acknowledgement of the work of others.

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Chapter One: Introduction to this research

1.1. Background of research

This thesis investigates the impact of middle managers' politics in the strategy process surrounding firm partnerships. Research has focused on different factors affecting the strategy process (Mazzola and Kellermans, 2010; Chia and Mackay, 2007; Hutzschenreuter and Kleindienst, 2006) and strategic decision making (Sminia, 2009; Noorderhaven, 1995; Langley, Mintzberg, Pitcher, Posada and Saint-Macary, 1995; Hagedoorn, 1993; Rajagopalan, Rasheed and Datta, 1993; Eisenhardt and Zbaracki, 1992; Argyris, 1976). Different models attempt to capture strategic decision making, regarding it as *rational* (Butler, 2002; Papadakis, Lioukas and Chambers, 1998; Dean and Sharfman, 1996; Eisenhardt and Bourgeois, 1988; Becker, 1962; Baumol, 1959; Alchian, 1950; Barnard, 1938), *political* (Canales, 2012; Child and Tsai, 2005; Dean and Sharfman, 1996; Pfeffer, 1981; Pettigrew, 1973; Allison, 1971) and *garbage can* (Townley, 1999; Anderson and Fischer, 1986; Kreiner, 1976; Olsen, 1976; Cohen, March and Olsen, 1972) process. The strategy process however is not yet well understood. This has resulted in calls for different research methods (Huff, Neyer and Möslein, 2010; Nutt, 2008; Hutzschenreuter and Kleindienst, 2006; Pettigrew, 1997), more holistic approaches (Mackay and Chia, 2013; Tsoukas, 2010; Chia and Mackay, 2007; Eisenhardt and Graebner, 2007; Eisenhardt, 1989) and investigation in different organisational contexts (Canales, 2012; Teulier and Rouleau, 2010; Carr, Kolehmainen and Mitchell, 2010; Mazzola and Kellermans, 2010; Nutt, 2008; Hutzschenreuter and Kleindienst, 2006; Elbanna, 2006).

Investigation of strategic processes can enhance existing knowledge in strategy making, as it is increasingly gaining research interest. Partnerships have been increasing in the last twenty years, used as a tool to enter new markets (Dyer and Singh, 1998; Johanson and Vahlne, 1977) and acquire knowledge (Madsen and Servais, 1997; Coviello and Munro, 1995). Their failure rates however remain high across different industries, between 50 and 80% (Walter, 2010; Kale, Dyer and Singh, 2002; Dyer, Kale and Singh, 2001). As a result, further research is required on

their mechanics and the underlying processes during their creation, operationalisation and resolution. This research aims to increase knowledge on decision making by focusing on the way it impacts firm partnerships through their different phases.

A detailed review of the research suggests different factors which affect strategic decision processes. These include *cognition* (Narayanan, Zane and Kemmerer, 2011; Hodgkinson and Clarke, 2007; Hough and Ogilvie, 2005; Calori, Johnson and Sarnin, 1994; Hurst, Rush and White, 1989) the *top management team* (TMT) (Canales, 2012; Hambrick, 2007; Miller, Wilson and Hickson, 2004; Haleblian and Finikelstein, 1993; Hambrick and Mason, 1984), the use of *discourse* (Kwon, Clarke and Wodak, 2009; Samra-Fredericks, 2003), *organisational learning* and *logical incrementalism* (Mintzberg and Waters, 1985; Quinn, 1980; 1978), the impact of *sensemaking* and *sensegiving* during change (Balogun and Johnson, 2005; 2004; Weick, 1995; Gioia and Chittipedi, 1991), the roles of *middle managers* (Canales, 2012; Teulier and Rouleau, 2010; Balogun and Johnson, 2005; 2004; Floyd and Wooldridge, 1997; 1992) and *politics* and *power dynamics* (Eisenhardt and Bourgeois, 1988; Pettigrew, 1975). Even though research has been made on how these factors affect strategic processes, it is only recently that micro-level explanations on the way they develop have started being provided (Teulier and Rouleau, 2010; Schmidt, Wooldridge and Floyd, 2010). Politics and middle managers specifically, who are strongly related to emergent strategising, are regarded as areas where further micro and meso-level research is required to better understand the ‘black box’ of decision making.

The first factor that this study investigates is organisational politics. They were firstly researched in the management literature in the 1960s and 1970s, when the rational models, who regarded decision making as a logical process, started accepting that real world decisions are imperfect. Politics were regarded as a prominent characteristic of modern organisations, resulting from the scarcity of resources which characterises them. They often had a negative meaning, regarded as non-legitimate

activities aiming to advance self-interests, against organisational interests. Politics research however, has been criticised over its findings, as its nature is not clearly defined, resulting in subjective understandings in both researchers and research participants (Elbanna, 2006; Ferris, Fedor and King, 1994; Mayes and Allen, 1977). Their informal nature is one more obstacle in their investigation, as it is a sensitive topic, making difficult the participation of managers in qualitative data collection processes. As a result, politics is an area needing further exploration. Specifically, researchers have made calls for a better understanding of politics, their mechanics and their relation to emergent strategies (Elbanna, 2006; Hutzschenreuter and Kleindienst, 2006; Vigoda-Gadot and Drory, 2006; Ferris *et al*, 1994). By adopting a micro-focus within the meso-level of organisational strategy making, this study will try to gain a better picture on the impact of politics in modern organisations.

The second factor that this study attempts to understand better has to do with middle managers. Existing research has recognised the strategic roles that organisational actors 'in the middle' have (Schmidt *et al*, 2010; Balogun and Johnson, 2005; 2004). Traditional strategy research regards the top management team as responsible for the planning and implementation of strategic management (Mackay and Chia, 2013; Hambrick, 2007; Miller *et al*, 2004; Wiersema and Bantel, 1992; Hambrick and Mason, 1984). Through the work of Mintzberg (Mintzberg, 1990; Mintzberg and Waters, 1985) however, it was made clear that strategies in the real world are not deliberate and instead, they are a combination of planned and emerging events. Within this environment, middle managers have a crucial role because of their intermediary position, between the top and the lower management, and the operational knowledge they possess (Teulier and Rouleau, 2010; Pappas and Wooldridge, 2007; Balogun and Johnson, 2004; Floyd and Wooldridge, 1992; 1997). They are well aware of intra-company relations, while their technical, up-to-date knowledge helps them know which decisions will benefit more their departments. As a result, they are regarded crucial for strategy implementation (Rouleau 2005; Floyd and Wooldridge, 1997; 1992), the facilitation of change management (Canales, 2012; Rouleau, 2005; Balogun and Johnson, 2005; 2004) and for communications across

different managerial levels (Teulier and Rouleau, 2010; Schmidt *et al*, 2010). Their roles however are still not well understood, and further research is required in their activities during strategy implementation (Wooldridge and Canales, 2010; Pappas and Wooldridge, 2007; Balogun and Johnson, 2005; 2004; Canales and Vilà, 2005), and their behaviour in different organisational areas, such as boundary spanning positions (Schmidt *et al*, 2010; Teulier and Rouleau, 2010; Hutzschenreuter and Kleindienst, 2006; Rouleau, 2005). This study, in order to address these gaps, will try to get a sound understanding of their micro-activities in firm partnerships.

Research in partnerships is crucial, as they have been researched only partially within the strategy literature. Research has focused, through the use of quantitative research approaches mainly, on the investigation of strategic changes, their relation with firm-level characteristics and the way they affect company behaviour during partnerships (Cui, Calantone and Griffith, 2011). Other research focuses on factors which affect the duration (Xia, 2010) and the performance (Lavie, Haunschild and Khanna, 2012) of cross border alliances, and the role of networks for partnership formation (Goerzen, 2007), among others. Even though some of the aspects of partnerships have been investigated, rich qualitative approaches, investigating strategic decision making within this organisational form are still missing (Santos and Eisenhardt, 2009). This makes clear that it is an emerging area for scientific inquiry within the strategy literature, where theory needs to be tested and extended.

1.2. Research objectives and questions

This research aims to extend knowledge by investigating middle managers' politics, and the impact they have on decision making during partnerships. Politics, even though they have received a large amount of interest, their nature and mechanics is not well understood. This has resulted in ambiguity over the findings of many studies. In addition, the importance of middle managers across different organisational roles and positions appears to be an area where research interest is reviving.

This means that the investigation of firm partnerships can contribute in strategy research in two different ways: on the one hand, it can help the validation of the findings from strategic decision making studies from single companies, which have received the most interest in strategy research. On the other hand, it can be regarded as a relatively unexplored organisational context: through its investigation, previously ignored phenomena might be observed. In order to satisfy these targets, this research combines core concepts of the strategy process literature, with some insights from the international business literature. It does so by following an abductive research approach, as discussed in the next section, aiming to investigate the following research question:

‘What is the impact of middle managers’ political processes in firm partnerships?’

A further breakdown of the main research question can lead to the following subquestions:

1. What are the *roles* of middle managers in firm partnerships?
2. In which *tactics* do middle managers engage in order to exhibit their political behaviour?
3. How do these roles inform strategic decisions, in the *different phases* of partnerships?

1.3. Research approach

This study uses a qualitative case study approach to investigate strategy process during partnerships (Chia and Mackay, 2007; Van de Ven and Poole, 2005; 1995; Langley, 1999; Van de Ven, 1992; 1990). As made clear earlier, different theories have been developed about the roles of politics and middle managers. However,

further research is needed to provide alternative hypotheses and explanations for their better understanding. This study uses an *abductive* research approach, aiming theory extension and testing of irregularities, by investigating the nature of these two factors in firm partnerships (Mantere and Ketokivi, 2013; Shepherd and Sutcliffe, 2011; Yu, 2006). Through the use of a comparative case study methodology (Yin, 2009; Eisenhardt and Graebner, 2007; Ghauri, 2004; Eisenhardt, 1989), the verification of patterns which have been observed in previous studies is enabled; simultaneously, the identification of emerging themes and ideas is facilitated

The case study companies belong in the high tech industry, as it is regarded appropriate for this research for several reasons. Firstly, the high tech industry is a dynamic environment. The constant change and the associated uncertainty result on political behaviour being exhibited with high frequency (Santos and Eisenhardt, 2009; Papadakis *et al*, 1998; Nutt, 1998; Hagedoorn, 1993; Eisenhardt and Bourgeois, 1988; Beamish and Banks, 1987; Allison, 1971). In addition, the high tech industry is a knowledge-intensive industry. The combination of technical knowledge and the need for constant updates means that middle managers will have greater participation in strategy making, compared to less knowledge intensive industries. Moreover, this industry has a high number of partnerships, compared to others, because of the constant change required. All these facts imply that the investigation of middle managers' politics within this context can provide fruitful insights.

Four case studies are selected, using specific sampling criterias (Yin 2009; Jarzabkowski and Balogun, 2009; Silverman, 2000; 1993; Patton, 1990; Eisenhardt, 1989). All companies belong in the high tech industry, as the use of this specific environment will help focused investigation within this highly dynamic environment. They all are of similar size and have some previous partnering experience, in order to enhance cross case comparisons. They share similar institutional backgrounds, in order to avoid variance due to institutional factors. Through the examination of some of their past partnerships, the most suitable for this study were chosen.

As made clear, the goal of this thesis is to provide theoretical and practical insights into the political activity of middle managers during the different phases of partnerships. These are increasing, but have not been researched adequately in the strategy literature. As a result, a micro-level focus in strategic activities can improve the understanding of strategy making. It is important to notice that the researcher, through the several data collection and verification phases, was able to understand the practical implications of this study. This was done through the dissemination of its results in both academic and professional audiences, in academic conference and within corporate environments. The high interest exhibited about this issue made the researcher understand well the increasing importance of research within firm partnerships, for different parties. The next section presents the structure of this study.

1.4. Outline of the thesis structure

This thesis consists of seven different chapters. Their content is described below:

Chapters 2 and 3: Literature review and research gap identification

These chapters provide an overview of the existing research in strategy process and partnerships, and the need for micro-level investigation of strategic processes within firm partnerships. Chapter 2 focuses on describing existing research in strategy making within organisations. Starting with the overview of content-related search, it overviews different research streams and concludes by suggesting factors which have been regarded as crucial in the strategy process. From these factors, the literature in politics and middle managers is investigated in more depth, presented in chapter three. This overview enables the researcher to present existing gaps in the ways that these factors inform strategy making, concluding that firm partnerships is an area which has been under researched, but whose investigation could provide useful insights for theory and practice. This happens because partnerships, whose existing

research is overviewed in chapter two, have been investigated thoroughly in familiar research areas, but has recently started emerging within the strategy process and practice literature. Partnerships occur in all industries and are frequent in the high tech industry. For this reason, some information on the context of the high tech industry is also provided. The literature review concludes with the necessity of process research within firm partnerships, by adopting a micro-level focus in middle manager politics. This is also established in the theoretical framework and the research questions of this study, presented at the end of chapter three.

Chapter 4: Research methods

This section starts by providing an overview of the philosophical considerations concerning ontological and epistemological choices made for this study. It then overviews the research approach, which is abductive, as it is appropriate to address the theory extension objectives of this project, and to enable the research of irregularities from existing theories. The presentation of the qualitative multiple case study design used follows. Specifically, the case studies selection criteria are presented, followed by specific information for each case selected. The section continues by presenting the data collection methods used, and it concludes by addressing some issues related to the quality of the findings and ethical issues which need to be resolved, especially in the case of sensitive research topic, such as politics.

Chapter 5: Findings from first and second-order analysis

This chapter presents the data analysis, which was conducted in different phases. Initially, the data collected was rearranged, to help the researcher eliminate large amounts of data in order to conduct focused data analysis. Case studies were reconstructed, based in the decisions made through the life of each partnership. This *first-order* analysis enabled the researcher to have a better comparative basis for observation of patterns and themes across all case partnerships.

The observation of patterns and themes surrounding the research questions of this study took place in the *second-order* analysis. The decision stories enabled the researcher to identify four research themes. The first had to do with the impact of politics: rather than being positive or negative, as the majority of research in politics has suggested, it can be based on the way it affects managers and decision teams: its impact can be either integrative or fractious. This impact however appears to depend on three different factors, which are the remaining three themes of this study. These are the tactic being applied, the roles and activities of the middle managers, and the phase of the partnership in which a decision is made. The chapter concludes by overviewing the ways that these factors are related to the impact that middle manager politics can have.

Chapter 6: Discussion of findings

In this chapter the findings that emerged and were corroborated through the previous rounds of data analysis are presented. These consist of two different theoretical models. The first focuses on the roles of middle managers, depending on the autonomy they have in their jobs and their formal job focus. The second model combines all the themes of this study, suggesting a coherent framework on analysing the ways that different factors affect the impact that political behaviour can have during strategic decision making. The remaining chapter discusses the importance of the micro-level focus of these frameworks, in explaining better the impact of these two factors in strategy making.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

This chapter summarises and concludes the findings of this study, and the way they extend previous knowledge in the process of strategy making. It starts by introducing the contributions of this study, which are theoretical, methodological and practical. Then, the description of the way that they address the research question follows. The limitations of this study are then presented. The chapter concludes by providing an

agenda for future research concerning factors affecting strategic processes in firm partnerships, as this area appears to be able to extend existing knowledge in strategic processes and practices.

Chapter Two: The strategy field and the strategy process

2.1 Introduction

Research in organisational strategy making has attempted to explain the ways that different factors affect its process and its implementation. Many studies have focused in single companies, investigating top managers, among other organisational actors, as they are regarded the key decision makers within the strategic management process. Surprisingly, only a few studies investigate more recent organisational forms, such as firm partnerships. This essentially means that focused research in specific factors which are regarded as crucial in the strategy process of single firms is required, in order to further understand the ways that they impact firm relations and partnerships.

The current research aims to investigate factors that impact strategic management in the different phases of firm partnerships. Specifically, it attempts to understand *what* happens during strategic decision making, *who* are the main actors, and *how* their activities impact strategy implementation across the different phases of firm partnerships. The strategic management literature has a tradition in investigating why outcomes occur and how processes and interactions develop through time (Chia and Mackay, 2007; Langley, 1999; Dawson, 1997; Pettigrew 1997). Different researchers have focused in the *content*, *process* and *practice* of strategy making (Mackay and Chia, 2013; Canales, 2012; Golsorkhi, Rouleau, Seidl and Vaara, 2010; Mazzola and Kellermans, 2010; Hutzschenreuter and Kleindienst, 2006; Canales and Vilà, 2005; Eisenhardt and Zbaracki, 1992). Through the strategy process focus, different factors affecting decision making have been identified, including political behaviour (Vigoda-Gadot and Drory, 2006; Papadakis *et al*, 1998; Eisenhardt and Bourgeois, 1988; Allison, 1971) and the roles of middle managers (Schmidt *et al*, 2010; Teulier and Rouleau, 2010; Balogun and Johnson, 2005; 2004). Even though a large number of studies has been conducted, decision making within organisations is not yet well understood (Hutzschenreuter and Kleindienst, 2006; Elbanna, 2006). This thesis

attempts to investigate strategic decision making by focusing on the way that these factors affect the strategy process within an emerging area of research in the strategy literature, this being firm partnerships.

Partnerships have been researched extensively in the familiar international business literature (Ariño and Ring, 2010; Ness, 2009; Roijackers and Hagedoorn, 2006; Todeva and Knoke, 2005; Wright and Lockett, 2003; Hagedoorn, 2002; Spekman, Kamauff and Myhr, 1998), with their failure rates being very high (between 50 and 80% in different industries). This results on calls for more qualitative studies in their underlying processes (Walter, 2010; Kale *et al*, 2002; Dyer *et al*, 2001; Park and Ugson, 1997; Dacin *et al*, 1997). The fact that there is an extensive amount of literature in partnerships in international business research, implies that some of the existing concepts can be used to help the investigation of strategy making in this relatively unexplored context, through the use of an abductive research strategy.

In order to understand the existing literature gaps in current research, the literature review is divided in two different chapters. In the current one, an overview of existing research in strategic management is provided, describing the different research streams and advocations of strategy process and how they are used in this study. It then presents an overview of existing research in partnerships, and explains how the existing frameworks and concepts from international business literature help their investigation through a processual approach. In the next chapter, the existing research in two specific factors within the strategy process literature is presented and discussed, these being political behaviour and middle managers, in order to help their investigation within firm partnerships, which is the focus of this study.

The current chapter starts by introducing the roots of the concept of strategy and its relation with modern corporations. The different approaches in strategy making within modern organisations are then presented, focusing on the different streams,

the impact they had in the strategy domain, and the way that they informed current research. Different factors that have been identified as crucial in organisational strategic processes are then presented, followed by an introduction in existing research in firm partnerships, explaining the reasons for which a process approach is required. The chapter concludes on the necessity for further research in these factors in different contexts, in order to help advance knowledge in strategy making.

Strategy initially appeared in military operations, to denote the alignment of groups in order to achieve the targets required within battlefields. Historically, its concept is attributed to ancient Chinese and Hellenic military readings (Sun Tzu, 500 BC and Aineias, 450 BC), and the more recent works of Machiavelli (1500), Napoleon, Tzu and Phillips (1940), Von Clausewitz (1776), Lenin (1917) and Mao Tse-Tung (1967). In the last century, it became increasingly popular, being advocated from business leaders, including Alfred Sloan (Sloan, 1963) and Chester Barnard (Barnard, 1938). Rumelt, Schendel and Teece (1994) suggest that it was in 1960 when the concept of firm strategies was ‘born’ (Rumelt *et al*, 1994:15), through the works of March and Simon (1958), Cyert and March (1963), Stalker (1961) and Woodward, Dawson and Wedderburn (1965). The first concepts of strategic management are attributed to the works of Chandler (1962), Ansoff (1965) and Christensen, Andrews, Bower, and Learned (1978), who pioneered the use of frameworks and analytical tools for the development of corporate long term goals. Despite the large amount of work which has been conducted since these days, a universal agreement on the definition of strategy is still missing (Whittington *et al*, 2003; Rumelt *et al*, 1994). Modern academic research in the area of strategy is divided in three areas, introduced in the next section.

2.2 Strategy research in the modern era

Strategy research can be classified in three streams (Azar and Brock, 2010; Bourgeois, 1980; Andrews, 1971), these being the *strategy content*, the *strategy process* and the *strategy practice*. All these distinctive areas are characterised by

differences in their research focus, and the way they have assisted the development of the strategy domain. They are presented in the following paragraphs.

2.2.1 The ‘prescriptive’ Strategy content approach

Early strategy research regarded strategy as consisting of two phases, these being *formulation* and *implementation* (Andrews, 1971). Strategy formulation (Prahalad and Hamel, 1990; Rumelt, 1987; Mintzberg, 1978; 1975; 1973; Andrews, 1971), and the ‘outcome’ of implemented strategies was the main area of inquiry (see table one). The concept of ‘fitting’ the company competencies to its external environment was regarded as crucial for successful performance (Webb and Pettigrew, 1999; Bettis, 1991; Porter, 1980; Henderson, 1979; Ansoff, 1965; Chandler, 1962; Selznick, 1957), where the main purpose of strategy was prediction and preparation (Ackoff, 1970). This stream produced a large amount of content-related research, studying organisations from distance, by relying on secondary data provided from organisations (Chia and Mackay, 2007; Chakravarthy and Doz, 1992). Issues regarded as crucial for the strategic positioning included diversification, portfolio management, mergers, and the alignment of the firm with its external environment (Elbanna, 2006). These studies are criticised as being descriptive and static, resulting on typologies which focused only in the internal organisational environment (e.g. Ansoff, 1987; Porter, 1985; 1980). Consequently, research interest shifted from *what* characterises successful strategies to *how* strategies emerge and develop, described in the following section.

2.2.2 The Strategy process approach

Strategy process can be defined as ‘a sequence of individual and collective events, actions and activities unfolding over time in a specific context’ (Pettigrew 1997:338). Strategy is not a deliberate process, where the future is predicted, and the ‘fit’ of the company with its external environment leads to success. Rather, strategy results from deliberate and emerging planning, where several factors impact decision processes

(Langley, 1999; Mintzberg and Waters, 1985; Pascale, 1984) especially as external environment is increasingly turbulent, and thus, difficult to predict (Mackay and Chia, 2013; Santos and Eisenhardt, 2009; Eisenhardt and Bourgeois, 1988) (see table one). Through the process approach, researchers attempt to capture strategy ‘in flight’ (Chia and Mackay, 2007:220). The focus of this area is the *formation* rather than the *formulation* of strategy, which had dominated early strategy research (Mintzberg, 1987a; Quinn, 1978).

Strategy process research focuses on specific factors, the way they develop through time and how they affect corporate strategising. These include human cognition (Narayanan *et al*, 2011; Hodgkinson and Clarke, 2007; Calori *et al*, 1994; Hurst *et al*, 1989), organisational learning (Mintzberg and Waters, 1985; Quinn, 1980; 1978), the top management team (Canales, 2012; Hambrick, 2007; Miller *et al*, 2004; Halebian and Finikelstein, 1993; Hambrick and Mason, 1984), discourse, sense making and organisational communications (Kwon *et al*, 2009; Balogun and Johnson, 2005; 2004; Samra-Fredericks, 2003; Gioia and Chittipedi, 1991), middle management (Teulier and Rouleau, 2010; Pappas and Wooldridge, 2007; Rouleau, 2005; Currie and Procter, 2005; Floyd and Wooldridge, 1997; 1992) and politics (Eisenhardt and Bourgeois, 1988; Pettigrew, 1975). Even though this area has produced a large amount of qualitative studies (Azar and Brock, 2010), in the recent years it has been relatively ignored, leaving researchers with further inquiries on the ‘black box’ of organisational strategising (Mintzberg *et al*, 2009).

2.2.3 The Strategy practice approach

This approach in strategy research results from the increased interest in human practices in social sciences (Johnson, Melin and Whittington, 2003; Schatzki, 2001; Bourdieu, 1990a; b). The word ‘practice’ derives from the ancient Hellenic word *prassein*, which means ‘to do, to realise’. This turn has been adopted in management research, through a focus in the strategic processes and practices of individuals and their interactions (Jarzabkowski, 2008; 2005; Rouleau, 2005; Balogun and Johnson,

2004; Johnson *et al.*, 2007; 2003; Whittington 2007; 2006a; 1996) and the way they affect organisations. The focus of this area is the micro activities of the humans which comprise organisations and the ways that these practices relate to performance (Jarzabkowski and Spee, 2009; Chia and Mackay, 2007; Rouleau, 2005; Balogun and Johnson, 2004; Johnson *et al.*, 2003). Strategising is defined as comprising ‘those actions, interactions and negotiations of multiple actors and the situated practices that they draw upon in accomplishing that activity’ (Jarzabkowski, Balogun and Seidl, 2007:7-8). Such an approach shifts the research focus from the competencies of the corporation, which were proclaimed from the content and process research, focusing in the actual competencies of strategic decision makers, stretching the importance of individuals within organisations (Johnson *et al.*, 2003; Whittington, 2006; 1996a).

The parameters researched in this area comprise of practitioners, who do the work of strategy, practices, which are the social and material tools through which strategies are conducted and praxis, which are the activity flows through which strategic decisions are implemented (Johnson *et al.*, 2007; Jarzabkowski *et al.*, 2007; Whittington, 2006a). Through such approaches, the success of strategy appears to be related in the everyday practices that comprise organisations. As in the strategy process area, the focus here is the way that practices develop through time and the impact they can have in organisations. It appears however that clear distinctions between these two interrelated research areas are still missing.

The result of the affinity of strategy process research with strategy practice and the similarities of the inquiry methods applied has resulted in a live debate on whether it constitutes an independent research area or if it is actually a subdivision of the wider strategy process domain (Tsoukas, 2010; Sminia, 2009; Chia and Mackay, 2007; Johnson *et al.*, 2007; Whittington, 2007; Langley, 2007a; Hodgkinson and Wright, 2006). Hodgkinson and Wright (2006) regard practice research as an extension of process, while Chia and Mackay (2007), make clear that both areas share the same

philosophical presuppositions, which results in lack of clarity on how practices are related to processes.

This means essentially that the practice area contains residual philosophical concepts from process research. For example, the philosophical approaches developed by Sztompka (1991), Bourdieu (1990a;b) and Giddens (1984) along with concepts of activity theories, such as the works of Leontiev (1978;1975) and Vygotsky (1978) can be found as building philosophical blocks in both areas, with the one of the few methodological differences of the two areas consisting mainly of the use of interpretive sociology methods from practice researchers (Sminia, 2009), such as the concepts of Garfinkels' (1967) work on ethnomethodology and Goffman's work on symbolic interactionism (1983; 1974; 1959). Further elaborating on this critique, Carter, Clegg and Kornberger (2008) regard the term 'practice' as being used interchangeably with the term 'process', while Langley (2007) suggests that the practice approach is a subdivision of the wider process area, aiming to enrich it. In a similar fashion, Jarzabkowski and Wilson (2002) regard practice research as an extension of the process tradition. All these suggestions make clear the strong links between research in strategy process and practice.

On the other hand, Tsoukas, (2010), Jarzabkowski, (2008), Johnson *et al* (2003) and Whittington (2007; 2006a) suggest that the fundamental difference of this approach is its focus, its openness in innovative research methods, and the way that it views agency. This results from its research focus in the production and repetition of strategic activities, actions and interactions, enabling the understanding of strategy perspectives on multiple levels of action, rather than the firm level and its higher managerial levels, which had dominated strategy process research. Through this focus, strategy practice research attempts to gain insights beyond the narrow focus on organisational processes during organisational change (Chakravarthy and Doz, 2007; Pettigrew, 2007; 1975; Balogun and Johnson, 2004). Even though clear distinctions exist, the 'overarching goals' (Paroutis and Pettigrew, 2007:101) of these areas are similar, implying a complementary relationship between each other.

Three research streams in the strategy area
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Approach	Fundamental concepts	Main authors	Contributions	Limitations
Strategy Content	Organisational strategy is deliberate; It is when there is a 'fit' between the company's competencies with the external environmental	Prahalad and Hamel, 1990; Porter, 1980; Henderson, 1979; Andrews, 1971; Ansoff, 1965; Selznick, 1957	Recognition of the formulation/ implementation dyad; Provided frameworks which stretch the importance of internal and external fit for successful performance	Prescriptive and static; Ignoring the importance of emergent events and their consequences for organisations
Strategy Process	Recognition of the importance of context for strategy making; strategy is not a rational process but non-linear, affected by internal and external factors	Mackay and Chia, 2013; Canales, 2012; Mazzola and Kellermans, 2010; Garcia-Pont, Canales and Noboa, 2009; Chia and Mackay, 2007; Chakravarthy et al, 2003; Langley, 1999; Pettigrew 1997; 1992; 1975; Van de Ven 1992; 1986; Ring and Van de Ven, 1989; Hickson et al, 1987; 1986; Mintzberg and Waters, 1985; Mintzberg, 1985; 1973; 1972; 1968; Hambrick and Mason, 1984; Burgelman, 1983a; b;c; Quinn, 1980; 1978; Mintzberg et al, 1976	Recognition of the importance of the emergent events which affect strategy and performance; Decisions are not always rational; Instead, they are affected from many factors, including human behaviour, and environmental dynamism; 'Humanasition' of the strategy research field	Extensive use of second-hand retrospective research methodologies, ignoring ethnographies, which result in methodological individualism; Focus on managerial agency, ignoring other organisational actors; Confusion between research on processes, and organisational actors; Lack of practical advice towards professionals
Strategy Practice	Strategy can be better understood through a breakdown in praxis, practices, and practitioners; The importance of the human factors is clearly demonstrated and investigated thoroughly; focus on activities	Tsoukas, 2010; Jarzabkowski and Spee, 2009; Jarzabkowski, 2008; 2005; Chia and Mackay, 2007; Whittington 2007; 2006a; 1996; Johnson et al., 2007; 2003; Balogun and Johnson, 2005; 2004; Rouleau, 2005	Micro-level focus on organisational actors; Investigation of social processes, practices and interactions within organisations; Use of previously ignored research methods	Unclear distinction with the strategy process research; Strong qualitative approach which is still lacking large sample empirical studies

Table one: The three different research streams within the strategy area are presented, along with their fundamental suggestions on which they are based, their main representatives, their contributions and their limitations.

The current thesis regards strategy practice as a stream investigating individual, micro-level activities within meso- and macro-level organisational processes (Jarzabkowski and Spee, 2009; Sminia, 2009; Chia and Mackay, 2007; Paroutis and Pettigrew, 2007). This effectively means that practices are embedded in strategic processes, and they can only be studied within wider organisational perspectives, concerning processes, interactions in department- or organisation-wide levels, and their outcomes. A clear differentiation of these two areas is difficult, as strategy practice research has not been able yet to establish itself as ‘a unique perspective on its own right’ (Chia and Mackay, 2007:219). This view is in accordance with the recent ‘revival’ of strategy process research (Mazzola and Kellermans, 2010; Elbanna, 2006; Hutzschenreuter and Kleindienst, 2006) and the turn to processual inquiry in other subdivisions of management research (Walter, 2010; Sminia, 2009; Kale and Singh, 2009; Vigoda-Gadot and Drory, 2006; Langley, 2009). The differentiation between these two research schools is even less clear in areas of emerging research interest, such as firm partnerships (Walter, 2010; Teulier and Rouleau, 2010; Santos and Eisenhardt, 2009). This thesis uses a process ontology, whose basic theoretical underpinnings are presented in the next sections.

2.3 Schools of strategy process research and their relevance to this study

Strategy process started gaining research interest in the late 1970s, when academics and professionals started realising the emergent nature of strategy. Among the most influential academics was Henry Mintzberg and his group, known as the McGill school, who started tracking strategy making from his PhD thesis (Mintzberg, 1968). The result of his initial research were several publications on managers’ everyday activities (Mintzberg, 1985; 1978; 1975; 1973). This school focuses in organisational learning, known as logical incrementalism (Camillus, 1982; Quinn, 1980; 1978; Hedberg, Nystrom and Starbuck, 1976), and organisational structure and power dynamics (table two). Organisations are regarded as *political arenas*, with strategy being mainly a change process, rather than a well informed choice process (Canales, 2012; Langley *et al* 1995; Mintzberg, 1985). Strategy, in a large extent is influenced from other organisational levels, creating implications that it is a meso- and bottom-

up process. This school supported the use of configuration in management theory and practice, and suggested typologies of different configurations which occur within organisations (Mintzberg, 1983). Moreover, it advocated the use of detailed case studies, which has resulted on it being classified in empirical realism (Sminia, 2009). The use of metaphorical descriptions is favoured, for the conduct of strategy making, regarding, for example, strategists as *craftsmen* (Mintzberg, 1994c), and strategy as a 'beast which needs to be tamed' (Mintzberg *et al*, 2009:8). The approach of this school is strongly related to the power dynamics examined in the current thesis. In addition, the recognition that strategy is mostly a bottom-up approach has also implications for the research approach of this study, as it helps the researcher accept the non-rational nature of decision making, affected from a number of factors, including political processes from managers positioned across organisational levels.

The next research stream which provided fruitful insights consists of the work of Van de Ven (1992; 1990; 1986) and his colleagues, who conducted the 'Minnesota Studies' (Schroeder, Van de Ven, Scudder and Polley, 1989; Ring and Van de Ven, 1989; Dornblaser, Lin and Van de Ven, 1989)(table two). Their focus was not the strategy process per se, but innovation management, and how organisations achieve and sustain innovation over time (Van de Ven, 1986). Innovation is regarded as a change process (Garud and Van de Ven 2002; Poole *et al* 2000; Van de Ven and Poole, 1995) which can provide competitive advantages to those who engage in it successfully, thus making it an inherent element of the strategic direction of companies.

Similar to the research approach of McGill school, the research methodologies of the Minnesota school consist of large qualitative case studies, even though, through the course of the years they started leaning more towards the use of statistical methods (Das and Van de Ven, 2000; Dooley and Van de Ven 1999; Cheng and Van de Ven, 1996). One of its main contributions is the clear focus on the sequence of events as they unfold over time and space (Poole *et al*, 2000; Van de Ven and Poole, 1990;

1989; Glick, Huber, Miller, Doty and Sutcliffe, 1990; Abbott, 1990). Simultaneously, this school suggested different types of process theory (Van de Ven 1995; Van de Ven and Poole 1992), while simultaneously it classified the research focus as falling in three categories (Van de Ven, 1992). The contribution of this school and its relevance to this study lies on the fact that it offered a framework for the different phases of processes, applied to single organisations, across different countries and industries. This essentially implies that processual frameworks can be constructed through empirical data, and then, through testing, be modified, in order to accommodate contextual differences. This will guide the design and the research approach of this study, as it has direct implications about the context-specific nature of strategy making, which can help the understanding of firm partnerships.

The next important contribution in the strategy process area was made from Pettigrew (1997; 1992; 1990; 1979) who stretched the importance of *context* in strategy process. He criticised the change theories which existed until this time as ahistorical, aprocessual and acontextual (Pettigrew, 1990). He supported that through a study focusing in the context and process of change in a British Chemical company (1985a). The result of these studies is the creation of a research cluster at the University of Warwick, which produced a large number of studies, without however an explicit focus in the strategy process area (Pettigrew *et al*, 2003; Pettigrew and Fenton, 2000; Whittington *et al* 1999; Pettigrew and Whipp, 1991), as seen on table two. The main contribution of this school consists of the recognition and popularisation of contextualism, a concept firstly introduced from Pepper (1979; 1942).

Contextualism regards truth as having a local character, occurring in specific time and space, which shall be acknowledged, with specific findings being corroborated with qualitative evidence. An inherent weakness of contextualism is that it entailed worries for the internal validity of research, as findings are ‘true’ only for the specific participants in the process being investigated (Pettigrew, 1985). An example of the

importance of context is the high tech industry, regarded as turbulent, experiencing discontinuous change, which implies that strategy making in these settings will have distinctive characteristics compared to other industries. Studies have used qualitative case study methodologies, which however include quantitative measures (Pettigrew, 1990; 1985). The significance of this approach lies on the recognition that processes occur within specific time and space. This has implications for this research, as it signifies the importance of contextual factors, such as company size, industry characteristics, national context and other macro-level characteristics, which need to be taken into consideration in the framing and design of the research approach. The importance of context is further signified in abductive studies (Mantere and Ketokivi, 2013; Yu, 2006), such as the current one, as different macro characteristics can trigger the raising of hypotheses, which can then be tested through empirical methods.

One more strategy process research stream consists of the studies that Hickson (1987) and his colleagues conducted (Cray, Mallory, Butler, Hickson, and Wilson, 1991; Hickson, Butler, Cray, Mallory, and Wilson, 1986), as this school made explicit the importance of individual managers within strategy making. They studied the top management teams and the impact that factors such as power dynamics and demographic differences can have in the outcome of decision making. The contribution of this school is crucial as it stretches the importance of the micro activities of decision makers; such an approach, following Barnard (1938), enables researchers to consider better heterogeneity in individuals' intentions and dispositions and the way they affect the strategic direction of the companies.

In the same period, Hambrick and Mason (1984) suggest the *upper echelons* theory, which also focuses on the role of the top management, regarding strategising however as a top-to-bottom process. Because of the insights that such micro-approaches within strategic groups offer, more researchers focused on top management teams (Hambrick, 2007; Miller *et al*, 2004; Finkelstein and Hambrick, 1996; Halebian and

Finikelstein, 1993; Eisenhardt and Bourgeois, 1988) as well as other organisational groups within companies, such as the middle managers (Rouleau, 2005; Floyd and Wooldridge, 1997; 1992). As a result, a large number of research of this period focuses in the micro activities and the way they affect the strategic direction of organisations. This school can also be regarded as the first steps towards the strategy practice approach, which focuses in the activities of individual within organisational contexts (Jarzabkowski and Spee, 2009; Paroutis and Pettigrew, 2007; Rouleau, 2005). This school informed the researcher concerning the importance of the activities of specific groups within organisations, and the way they affect the strategic direction of corporations.

The four streams of strategy process research		
Research Stream	Main authors	Contributions
McGill school	Langley <i>et al</i> 1995; Hedberg, Nystrom and Starbuck, 1982; 1976; Camillus, 1982; Quinn, 1980; 1978; Mintzberg, 1973; 1985; 1973; 1972; 1968	Organisations are political arenas; strategy is a continuous change process; Research in the everyday practices within different organisational levels; extensive use of metaphors to describe the strategy process
The Minnesota Studies	Garud and Van de Ven 2002; Poole <i>et al</i> 2000; Van de Ven and Poole, 1995; Van de Ven, 1992; 1990; 1986; Schroeder <i>et al</i> , 1989; Angle, 1989; Angle and Van de Ven, 1989; Ring and Van de Ven, 1989; Dornblaser <i>et al</i> , 1989	Focus in the management of innovation, and how organisations achieve and sustain it over time; Innovation is a process of change; competitive advantages belong to those companies who engage on it successfully; Explicit focus on the sequence of events as they unfold over time and space; Combination of qualitative and quantitative research methods
The Warwick studies	Pettigrew <i>et al</i> , 2003; Pettigrew and Fenton, 2000; Whittington <i>et al</i> 1999; Pettigrew 1997; 1992; 1990; 1979; Pettigrew and Whipp, 1991	The importance of context in strategy process; Strategies can be understood through a detailed investigation on why, how, when and where activities and actors affect it
The Bradford studies, top and middle management focus	Floyd and Wooldridge, 1997; 1992; Finkelstein and Hambrick, 1996; Haleblan and Finikelstein, 1993; Cray <i>et al</i> , 1991; Eisenhardt and Bourgeois, 1988; Hickson, 1987; Hickson <i>et al</i> , 1986; Hambrick and Mason, 1984;	Top managers are the dominant coalitions within organisations, and strategy is a top-to-bottom process; Investigations of their micro practices enhance the understanding of strategy making; Factors such as power dynamics, demographic differences and individuals intentions and dispositions seem to explain the strategy process; The importance of other managerial groups within companies, such as the middle managers, is acknowledged

Table two: The four research streams of the strategy process domain, their main research advocates, and their main theoretical and methodological contributions explained (adapted from Sminia, 2009)

The several schools which exist in the strategy process research had different impact in the growth of the field, and in the development of the research approach of the current thesis. The different factors which have been regarded as affecting strategic processes are presented in the next section.

2.4 Strategy process: Factors affecting strategic decision making processes

Strategy process research has focused in different factors and the way they affect organisations (table three). These factors have not been explicitly categorised in existing research. The next section discusses these factors, focusing in their links and the way that they relate to the current thesis.

Organisational learning (related to *logical incrementalism*) is related to the emergent nature of strategy, investigating incremental improvements in organisational knowledge and skills concerning strategy making. Moreover, it makes clear the importance of organisational adaptation in environmental changes (Easterby-Smith, Crossan, and Grant, 2002; Sadler-Smith, Spicer, and Chaston, 2001; Lane, Salk and Lyles, 2001; Hamel, 1991; Mintzberg and Waters, 1985; Burgelman, 1983a; Quinn, 1980; Bower, 1970). Quinn (1982; 1980), while investigating strategic change, stretched that successful learning in different steps of organisational adaptation is crucial for its performance. Mintzberg and Waters (1985) focused in the importance of emergent events, and the implication that these can have in for differential corporate performance. Learning and adaptation is crucial for emergent strategising, as it can help organisations be better prepared for unexpected events.

Cognition is another factor which has been investigated in organisational decisions (Narayanan *et al*, 2011; Hodgkinson and Healey, 2007; Hodgkinson and Clarke, 2007; Hough and Ogilvie, 2005; Calori *et al*, 1994; Hurst *et al*, 1989; Schwenk, 1988) (table three). Research has attempted to identify linkages between cognitive structures and decision outcomes (Narayanan *et al*, 2011; Hough and Ogilvie, 2005; Porac and Thomas, 2002). In this fashion, Hurst *et al* (1989), investigated managers'

roles in organisational change, suggesting a typology for top managers, based in their cognitive characteristics, concluding that successful strategies are exhibited by organisations with managers sharing distinctive cognitive characteristics. Hodgkinson and Clarke (2007), drawing on theories from cognitive psychology and social cognition, suggested a two-dimensional framework concerning the individual differences in cognitive styles of decision makers, further stretching the importance of individual characteristics in strategic processes, which can be attributed to strategic actors within organisations.

Cognition is shaped by *organisational discourse*, a concept closely related to organisational communications (Vaara, 2010; Kwon *et al*, 2009; Laine and Vaara, 2007; Forman and Argenti, 2005; Sminia, 2005; Forman and Argenti, 2005; Vaara, Kleymann and Seristö, 2004; Samra-Fredericks, 2003) (table three). Samra-Fredericks (2003), through the investigation of the everyday practices of six strategists, offered insights about the impact that their linguistic skills have in their information gathering and decision making. Having a stricter focus in strategic decision making, Laine and Vaara (2007) suggested that organisational discourse result in deviations on the subjectivity of strategic decisions. The strategic importance of discourse is clear, from both top- and middle-managers. Moreover, it is strongly related to politics and power dynamics, as it is one of the basic ‘ingredients’ of political behaviour (Pettigrew, 1992; 1973; Mintzberg and Waters, 1985; Mintzberg, 1973). The contribution of this school can be seen on table three.

Organisational discursive practices are strongly related to the processes of *sense making* and *sense giving*, as they affect common beliefs and corporate culture in individuals. These are crucial, especially during periods of change (Rouleau, 2005; Balogun and Johnson, 2004; Schwarz, 2003; Weick, 1995; Gioia and Chittipedi, 1991), as they appear to have a crucial role in its implementation. Sensemaking is conceptualised from the Carnegie School, which investigate their relations with organisational routines (Huff *et al*, 2010; Johnson *et al*, 2007). Gioia and Chittipedi (1991), who introduced the concepts of sense making and sense giving in the strategy literature, suggest that the roles, the actions and interactions of the CEOs in

organisational becoming are crucial. Elaborating on the importance of sense making and sense giving, Balogun and Johnson (2004) focus in the roles of middle managers in organisational restructuring, concluding that change schemas after organisational change are strongly related to the change processes followed. The contributions of this school can be seen on table three.

Crucial role in the sense making and sense giving process is attributed to the *top management team* (TMT), which has been a traditional focus of the strategy process area (Mackay and Chia, 2013; Canales, 2012; Miller *et al*, 2008; Hambrick, 2007; Haleblian and Finikelstein, 1993; Eisenhardt and Bourgeois, 1988; Hambrick and Mason, 1984)(table three). The unitary actor model that initial process researchers offered (Mintzberg, 1975; 1973; Andrews, 1971) resulted on Hambrick and Mason (1984) focusing in the importance of the TMT, and the impact that it can have on corporate strategy, organisational design and financial performance. They suggest an *upper echelons perspective*, which emphasises the primary role of the top managers in the formation and implementation of strategies, suggesting that executives act on the basis of their subjective interpretations of the strategic choices they face, which are highly dependent on the decision makers' values, experiences and personalities. Miller *et al* (2008) attempt to advance knowledge on the activities of the top management team and the impact they can have, by ranking them according to the influence they can have, further stressing the importance for focus in the activities of individual organisational actors. Further details about the contributions of this school can be seen on table three.

As it is evident, a large amount of research has focused in different factors in the organisational strategy process. Within turbulent environments however, such as the high tech sector, where the strategy process tends to be largely affected from emerging events, two factors have been regarded as having a crucial roles in the company responsiveness (Andersen, 2004): these are the political processes and the way they impact strategy making, and the middle managers, who are those who are mainly responsible for the everyday operations of organisations.

The first factor which is crucial for bottom up strategies are *politics* and *power dynamics*, which consist of the informal activities which occur within organisations, aiming in advancing personal agendas rather than organisational interests. Pettigrew (1975), while investigating purchases of computer equipment, suggested that withholding of the information flow within the organisation was a popular political tactic, among others, with negative implications for the company, while Eisenhardt and Bourgeois (1988) suggested that politics within top management teams tend to have negative effects in organisational performance. Politics exist in all the different levels of organisations. Apart from the extensive research conducted in the early years of strategy research, this area has been neglected in the last two decades, leaving however several unexplored areas for research (Azar and Brock, 2010; Sminia, 2009; Hutzschenreuter and Kleindienst, 2006; Vigoda-Gadot and Drory, 2006; Elbanna, 2006).

Emergent strategies often appear to result from the activities of the *middle managers*, who have been regarded as having crucial role in the strategy process (Canales, 2012; Teulier and Rouleau, 2010; Rouleau, 2005; Balogun and Johnson, 2005; 2004; Floyd and Wooldridge, 1997; 1992). Middle managers are strategic actors within organisations, who contemplate the top management, whose objectivity and achievement of unambiguous goals has been questioned extensively (Santos and Eisenhardt, 2009; Eisenhardt and Bourgeois, 1988; Lindblom, 1959).

Their importance lies mainly on the fact that they are those who are involved in the everyday operations of the companies, while simultaneously they have up-to-date information about events occurring in the internal and the external environment of the firms, resulting on them being regarded as strategic leaders (Floyd and Wooldridge 1997; 1992; Nonaka, 1988). Floyd and Wooldridge (1992) stretch the importance that middle managers have in organisational strategising, as, through the different activities in which they engage, they can have serious impact in the advancement of their organisations or the facilitation of strategic change. They offer a typology on the strategic roles that middle managers have in modern corporations,

focusing in the upward and downward influence they exhibit. Similarly Samra-Fredericks (2003) by focusing in the activities of managers in subsidiaries, show the crucial roles that middle managers can have in decentralised strategy making, making clear their importance in both non-boundary and boundary-spanning positions within organisations.

Factors influencing the strategy process		
Factor	Authors	How it influences the strategy process
Human cognition	Narayanan, Zane and Kemmerer, 2011; Hodgkinson and Clarke, 2007; Hodgkinson and Healey, 2007; Calori, Johnson and Sarnin, 1994; Hurst <i>et al</i> , 1989; Schwenk, 1988;	Explanatory linkages between cognitive structures and decision outcomes; The scope of a firm's activities are related with the complexities that characterise the cognitive maps of CEOs; the role of managers in organisational change is affected by their cognitive limitations; Different kinds of managers, depending on their cognitive limitations; In highly centralised organisations informal processes and interactions are of small importance; information gathering and decision making is conducted by a few persons in the top hierarchy, which can result in organisational and structural inertia, in organisations which power is more centralised, then the cognition of the top management as well as of the whole organisation is subsumed within the cognition of the CEO
Organisational learning/Logical Incrementalism	Easterby-Smith <i>et al</i> , 2002; Sadler-Smith <i>et al</i> , 2001; Lane <i>et al</i> , 2001; Grant, 1996; Mintzberg 1991; Hamel, 1991; Mintzberg and Waters, 1985; Burgelman, 1983a; Quinn, 1978; 1980; Bower, 1970	Strategy is a learning-by-doing process, and is clearly affected by emergent events; Incremental improvements are crucial in organisational knowledge and skills for strategy making; Organisational adaptation in environmental changes is key for success, especially in dynamic environments
Top management team	Mackay and Chia, 2013; Canales, 2012; Hambrick, 2007; Miller, Wilson and Hickson, 2004; Haleblan and Finikelstein, 1993; Eisenhardt and Bourgeois, 1988; Hambrick and Mason, 1984	Top managers are the dominant coalitions within organisations, and are mainly responsible for forming and executing strategies. Different factors which affect strategy and performance include the top management team size, the team heterogeneity, and the power of the CEO. Different top managers appear to have varying levels of influence in decision making
Organisational discourse	Kwon <i>et al</i> , 2009; Laine and Vaara, 2007; Forman and Argenti, 2005; Sminia, 2005; Vaara, Kleymann and Seristö, 2004; Samra-Fredericks, 2003; Hendry, 2000; Barry and Elmes, 1997; Knights and Morgan, 1991	The linguistic skills of managers can affect information gathering; the strategic development of corporations is strongly related to organisational discursive practices; discourses can result in deviations on the subjectivity of strategic decisions; middle managers can exhibit resistance in organisational changes, through discursive practices and political games; discourse is strongly related to power and political processes
Sense making and sense giving	Kaplan, 2008; Stensaker and Falkenberg, 2007; Balogun and Johnson, 2005; 2004;	Common beliefs and corporate culture seem to inform strategy formulation and implementation; roles, actions and interactions of the CEOs in

	Rouleau, 2005; Schwarz, 2003; Weick, 1995; Gioia and Chittipedi, 1991;	organisational becoming are crucial for its success; when the senior management is absent, formal and informal communications are crucial for the success of the schema change; the ways that middle managers 'sell' change in the everyday operations are crucial for its success; Interactions between individual and group level sensemaking crucial for strategy implementation
Politics and power dynamics	Mintzberg and Quinn, 1991; Eisenhardt and Bourgeois, 1988; Mintzberg, 1985; 1983; Porter <i>et al</i> , 1983; Pfeffer 1981; Quinn, 1980; Madison <i>et al</i> , 1980; Gandz and Murray, 1980; Bacharach and Lawler, 1980; Mayes and Allen, 1977; Pettigrew, 1975; Dowling and Pfeffer, 1975; Allison, 1971	Organisations are political arenas, and strategies are the result of the strongest political groups Informal activities which occur within organisations are crucial for corporate performance; Personal agendas can oppose organisational interests; Uncertainty can increase political behaviour
The middle management	Canales, 2012; Teulier and Rouleau, 2010; Mantere, 2008; 2005; Sillince and Mueller, 2007; Rouleau, 2005; Balogun and Johnson, 2005; 2004; Samra-Fredericks, 2003; Floyd and Wooldridge, 1997; 1992	Middle managers are crucial for the facilitation of change management; They have strategic roles within companies, as they are those who are involved in the everyday operations of the companies, while simultaneously they have up-to-date information about events occurring in the internal and the external environment of the firms; Their role is crucial in boundary spanning positions; Subsidiary managers are crucial in decentralised decision making

Table three: Factors regarded as crucial in the strategy process, their main research advocates, and their theoretical and practical contributions

The importance of the strategy process in the development of the wider strategy field is made clear in this section. Strategy is not regarded as a deliberate, top-down process. Instead, it is strongly affected from emergent events. As made clear, emerging areas of research interest attempt to investigate the nature of strategic decision making by investigating the roles of different organisational actors in the creation and implementation of strategy making. Moreover, there is an increasing research interest towards firm partnerships, as firms appear to use them as a strategic tool.

The *context* of strategy making appears to be crucial, with the Pettigrew (1992; 1990; 1975) being a pioneer in this concept, as mentioned in section 2.3. Emergent

strategies appear more often in dynamic industries, as it will be discussed in section 2.9 and in chapter three.

In dynamic environments, characterised by constant and discontinuous change, the prediction about future patterns is even more difficult, thus creating further obstacles in strategic decision making (Santos and Eisenhardt, 2009; Robert Baum and Wally, 2003; Scherer and Ross, 1990; Eisenhardt and Bourgeois, 1988; Bourgeois and Eisenhardt, 1988; Dess and Beard, 1984; Aldrich, 1979). The increased risk that dynamic environments such as the high tech industry possess, combined with the importance of knowledge exchange in order to achieve competitive performance, results in the creation of a large number of partnerships, making them highly important for the modern corporate strategists (Das and Bing-Sheng, 2002; Anderson and Narus, 1990; Kogut, 1988; Anderson and Gatignon, 1986; Williamson, 1985; Axelrod, 1984; Porter 1980; Stern and Reve, 1980).

Research in partnerships is gaining increased interest within the strategy area. International business researchers have devoted a considerable amount of interest in their structural characteristics and their performance (Ariño and Ring, 2010; Faems, Janssens, Madhok, and Van Looy, 2008; Luo, 2007; White and Lui, 2005; Douma *et al*, 2000; Kumar and Nti, 1998). In such dynamic environments, strategy tends to be a result of the middle and lower managerial levels, who are involved in the everyday operations of corporations, and possess the required technical and operational knowledge for fast reaction. In addition, the importance of informal communications and activities is crucial for the development of strategies from the middle and the lower organisational levels. Their activities however in partnership formation and implementation are yet to be explored. The next section presents the existing literature on international partnerships, in order to inform the abductive research approach and the research design of this study.

2.5 Firm Partnerships: Strategic reasons for their formation and factors affecting their performance

Research on partnerships started during the 1980, mainly from international business researchers (Kale and Singh, 2009; Hagedoorn, 2002; Gulati 1998; 1995). They are regarded as interfirm strategic agreements, aiming to help each partner achieve specific competitive advantages (Das and Bing-Sheng, 2002; 1997). The number of partnerships has increased in the recent years (Kale and Singh, 2009; Schilling, 2008; Hagedoorn, 2002; Freeman and Hagedoorn, 1994), with their frequency being different across industries (Hagedoorn, 1993). Dyer *et al* (2001) found that the top 500 global business engage on average in 60 partnerships every year, while the 80% of top managers regard partnerships as a strategic tool for growth for their companies, and, as a result many firms find themselves embedded in dense alliance networks (Walter, 2010; Gulati, Nohria and Zaheer, 2000). Their failure rates however are high, between 50 and 80 percent (Walter, 2010; Dyer *et al*, 2001; Yan and Zeng, 1999; Park and Ugson, 1997; Dacin *et al*, 1997; Geinger and Hebert, 1991; Bleeke and Ernst, 1991; Harrigan, 1988; Kogut, 1988) and they often result in shareholder value destruction (Kale, Dyer and Singh, 2002). This has resulted in the following paradox: on the one hand, firms engage in partnerships, as part of their strategy, in order to be able to compete successfully. on the other hand, this choice appears to be risky, as failure rates are high. Subsequently, further research in this area is required in order to shed light in this paradox (Walter, 2010; Kale and Singh, 2009).

The *formation* of partnerships has been explained under several theoretical frameworks (Das and Bing-Sheng, 2002; Anderson and Narus, 1990; Kogut, 1988; Anderson and Gatignon, 1986; Williamson, 1985; Axelrod, 1984; Porter 1980; Stern and Reve, 1980). The most commonly cited framework include the transaction cost theory, developed by Williamson (1985) and Hennart (1988). Under this framework, the main reason for engaging in partnerships is the economies of scale and the strategic cost reduction in transactions and operations which occurs, which helps them overcome market failures and pursue long term strategies. Another reason for partnership formation is related to organisational learning and its strategic

importance for firm performance and growth. Under this category falls the research of Axelrod (1984) and Hamel and Prahalad (1989), who, based on social exchange theory, suggested that firms through partnering gain access and knowledge in their partners' operations.

A next suggestion for the rationale of partnership formation focuses in the strategic nature of the resources that each partner has. Under this perspective, Das and Bing-Sheng (2002; 1997) base their framework in the resource base view of the firm, suggesting that partners can have four types of alignment, depending on resource similarity and resource utilisation. Other writers regard alliance formation as a method to accrue power within the industry they operate in (Hagedoorn, 1993; Porter, 1985), while Sampson (2007), Rothaermel and Deeds (2004) and Shan *et al* (1994) suggest that it can increase its innovation rates. As a result, several factors which affect the success of partnerships have been suggested, deriving from these frameworks.

The majority of the factors which exist in the literature however are investigating content-related issues (Walter, 2010; Kale and Singh, 2009). These include the strategic 'fit' between partners (Douma *et al*, 2000), the governance structure and the way it affects the performance of the partnership (Faems *et al*, 2008), the role of fairness in alliance formation (Ariño and Ring, 2010), the impact of industry uncertainty (Luo, 2007), the learning skills of the organisation and the way it affects performance (Kumar and Nti, 1998) and the experience in partnering (White and Lui, 2005), *inter allia*. Despite the plethora of theoretical frameworks however, partnerships remain 'high-risk' strategies (Das and Bing-Sheng, 1997; Bleeke and Ernst, 1993; Kogut, 1988; Harrigan, 1985) with a robust processual approach, focusing in the dynamics occurring within partnerships still missing (Ariño and Ring, 2010; Ness, 2009; Wright and Lockett, 2003; Spekman *et al*, 1998).

2.6 Different kinds of partnerships

The word ‘partnerships’ is an umbrella term, used to cover the several different kinds of strategic inter-organisational relationships between companies under contractual agreements, who however remain independent economic agents (Santos and Eisenhardt, 2009; Roijakkers and Hagedoorn, 2006; Todeva and Knoke, 2005; Hagedoorn, 2002; Ring and Van de Ven, 1992). These relationships take place in different organisational contexts, and are characterised by different extents of technology sharing and unequal potential economic consequences for the participating companies (Hagedoorn and Schakenraad, 1994). Other factors which differentiate them include their duration, their extent and the scope of obligations of each partner (Kale and Singh, 2009). They can be categorised in two groups, namely contractual partnerships and equity-based agreements (Kale and Singh, 2009; Hagedoorn, 2002; Yoshino and Rangan, 1995).

Within these two categories several different kinds of partnerships exist. These include strategic alliances, coalitions, joint ventures, franchises, research consortia, different forms of network organisations, contractual agreements, licensing, franchising, and more recently different kinds of collaboration (Roijakkers and Hagedoorn, 2006; Todeva and Knoke, 2005; Vonortas, 2000; Maloni and Benton, 1997; Smith and Van de Ven, 1992). Recent research suggests that among these different kinds of partnerships, contractual partnerships have been increasing in the recent years, while equity investment partnerships have been decreasing (Kale and Singh, 2009; Hagedoorn, 2006). Even though research has focused in the different kinds of partnerships and the way that different factors affect their performance, there has not been any work done addressing how all these different kinds of alliances are formed and develop through time. This results on a knowledge gap over the underlying processes and practices before, during and after the partnership, and the impact they can have in the company’s performance. This thesis however advocates that a process ontology might be able to help understand better partnerships and their dynamics. The fundamentals of process research are introduced in the following section.

2.7 The underpinnings of process ontology and its value for partnership research

As mentioned in section 2.5, the majority of research within partnerships has focused in content-related issues. Qualitative approaches, focusing in partnership dynamics through time and the way that they affect them is still missing (Walter, 2010; Ariño and Ring, 2010; Ness, 2009; Santos and Eisenhardt, 2009; Spekman *et al*, 1998). However the importance of processual research has been recognised widely in the strategy domain (Langley, 1999; Dawson, 1997; Pettigrew, 1997; 1992). Process can be central in managing the different kinds of partnerships (Ring and Van de Ven, 1994; 1992). Through its use, the underlying dynamics affecting negotiations, execution and modification of inter-organisational relationship can be revealed (Langley, 1999; Pettigrew, 1997; Patton, 1990). This is enabled from the abductive research strategy of this study, which, as discussed in section 4.2.2, allows the combination of different theoretical frameworks and approaches in order to make hypotheses over emerging areas of research interest. Moreover, a process approach can enhance the understanding of the roles of individual managers through a focused study in the interactions taking place between managers with active roles in partnerships, as it has been suggested that these ‘may cast a positive, neutral, or negative overtone to the relationship, influencing the degree to which parties settle disputes arising out of the inter-organisational relationship’ (Ring and Van de Ven, 1994:91).

Process research is a result of the need of researchers to focus in explaining the development of phenomena through time (Chia and Mackay, 2007; Langley, 1999; Pettigrew, 1997; Dawson, 1997; Tuttle, 1997; Van de Ven, 1992; Quinn, 1980; Cohen *et al*, 1972; Mintzberg *et al*, 1976). It focuses in the investigation of strategic change (Van de Ven and Sun, 2011; Van De Ven, 1990; Johnson, 1988; 1987; Pettigrew, 1985), decision making (Santos and Eisenhardt, 2009; Cohen *et al*, 1976; Mintzberg *et al*, 1972) and strategy formation (Mintzberg, 1987a; Pascale, 1984; Quinn, 1978). Through its investigation in contextual issues such as the ‘time, agency, structure, emergence, and development’ (Pettigrew, 1997:337) can help understand strategy making within firm partnerships, which is an area of increasing

research interest. Such an approach, through a focus in distinctive events during partnership strategy making (Langley, 1999; Van de Ven, 1990), accompanied by iteration between data and theory (Orton, 1997) can help researchers investigate in depth strategy making. This can be done through the focus in process dynamics, which can facilitate the provision of causal explanations concerning strategy making inputs and outcomes (Mohr, 1982). Because of the broad area that the concept of 'process' covers, different research approaches have been proposed.

Van de Ven and his colleagues (Van de Ven and Poole, 2005; 1995; Poole *et al* 2000; Van de Ven, 1992; 1990) have affected in large extent the ontology of process research, as they were among the first to offer a clear distinction of process-related streams in strategy research. The first category is similar to an 'input-process-output' model, where decision outcomes consist of a variance approach, with their underlying processes not being clearly observed. Rather, using variance theory (Mohr, 1982) independent variables are expected to have a causal relationship with dependent variables (i.e. Eisenhardt and Bourgeois, 1988), which can help the understanding of the development of processes over time. An example here can include the process of strategic change, and its relation with performance (Pettigrew, Woodman and Cameron, 2001; Gioia and Thomas, 1996). Process however here is not the actual object being researched. Instead, it is used to help focus in the cause and effect relationships between the input and output variables of different decision processes (Sminia, 2009). This thesis regards the first category as a process research stream which is developed through empirical testing, following the establishment of theoretical frameworks. This category seems to share the characteristics of a 'variance theory' (Langley, 1999:693). Since research in firm partnerships is emerging within the strategy literature, this first stream has little relevance; when more studies will have been conducted, then empirical testing for the establishment of causal relationships might be a more appropriate process approach.

Another category of researchers regards process as a category of concepts attempting to investigate and describe individual and organisational actions within wider contexts, in a given point of time (Langley, 1999; Van de Ven, 1992). These actions can include the frequency of communications, decision making and strategy formulation and implementation (i.e. Gioia and Thomas, 1996; Hambrick and Mason, 1984). The wider concepts being captured through the word process include departments within companies and the whole corporate environment, attempting to understand their structure, and their performance. Processes however here are not directly observed (Van de Ven, 1990), but are supposed to provide causal explanations through a qualitative focus. This category helped researchers make clear the importance of context (Pettigrew, 1997; 1987), as this appeared to be able to provide explanations on why and how decisions are made. This is done mainly through a focus on the explanation of actions of specific individuals within the organisation and the company (Chia and Mackay, 2007). This approach however is static, not able to capture the ‘changeable nature and transience of the research object’ (Sminia, 2009:99). This means that this process approach is also not suitable for this thesis, which attempts to understand decision making processes as these develop over time, in different phases of firm partnerships.

Another stream has regarded it as many different processes, consisting of different sequential events and activities which develop through time (Tuttle, 1997; Van de Ven, 1992). Studies using these process ontology elements, can be regarded as longitudinal case studies (Dawson, 1997), where issues of how and why are addressed (Pettigrew, 1997; Patton, 1990). This approach, rather than regarding the process as an explanation of input and output variables, as in the first definition, or as categories of static concepts, affecting the actions of organisations and individuals, it adopts a ‘historical developmental perspective’ (Van de Ven, 1992:3). This can enable researchers to examine in detail sequences and incidents focusing on the unit of analysis of the study (individuals, teams, and their activities during strategic processes), and form robust process theory (Langley, 1999). Moreover, it enables the combination of different research methods and helps data analysis, because of its

longer duration (Orton, 1997; Fox-Wolfgramm, 1997). This area has arguably helped the advancement of process research through a strong qualitative focus in processes, actions and outcomes of individuals within teams and organisations, resulting in a large amount of research (Langley, 1999; Peterson, 1998; Gioia and Chittipedi, 1991). Similarly, this thesis seems to be in a agreement with this process ontology: partnerships can be investigated through a dynamic approach, focusing in the interrelations of decision processes with the activities of individuals, in order to understand firm outcomes.

In summary, the definition of processual research is not clear (Langley, 1999; Ropo, Ericksson and Hunt, 1997). In the existing literature, three different definitions which are mostly used can be found (Van de Ven, 1992), as discussed in the previous paragraphs. This research uses a process ontology to investigate strategy making within partnerships. Specifically, it focuses in processes as sequences of different events and activities which develop through time. Through the use of a historical perspective, this approach focuses in explaining activities, interactions and results, centering research around the importance of contextual characteristics, in order to shed light in strategic process within firm partnerships (Pettigrew, 1997; 1992).

A focus in clearly distinguished events which develop over time, and the way that underlying factors investigating affect their development (Langley, 1999; Pettigrew, 1997; Patton, 1990) can help understand better strategy making. Being in agreement with the framework that Van de Ven (1992) suggests, actors are investigated through their involvement in these events. Of particular focus is the way that their activities, which develop through time, impact organisational events and their outcomes, as these occur within companies. The use of a process ontology is permitted from the abductive nature of this study (Mantere and Ketokivi, 2013; Shepherd and Sutcliffe, 2011; Yu, 2006), as discussed in section 4.2.2.2. Such an approach, which distinguishes events through time, enables the focus on the way that interactions and activities develop in the different phases of partnerships. Through this approach, the underlying alliance dynamics and the way they can affect partnerships success can be

understood better. Subsequently, this approach examines the events as they occur over time, the activities of the related actors across organisational levels, and the way that these activities impact the strategic direction of organisations.

2.8 The different phases of partnerships

In order to investigate the sequence of the different events which constitute the development of interactions within partnerships, through the use of a process ontology, (Pettigrew, 1992; 1997; Van de Ven, 1992), partnerships are regarded as consisting of different phases. Such an approach, strongly related to the abductive nature of this study, enables a deeper focus in the interactions occurring in each different phase of a partnership (Ness, 2009). The synthesis of the different phases, as these are suggested from existing researchers in the international business area, will enable the conceptualisation and the testing of this framework from a strategy process perspective (Langley, 1999). This approach is enabled from the abductive research strategy followed (Mantere and Ketokivi, 2013; Shepherd and Sutcliffe, 2011), while simultaneously responding to recent calls for separation and further research on each phase of partnerships (Walter, 2010; Santos and Eisenhardt, 2009).

Existing research is in disagreement concerning the different *phases of partnerships* (Das and Kumar, 2007; Das and Bing-Sheng, 2002; Ariño and De La Torre 1998; Kumar and Nti, 1998; Doz, 1996; Ring and Van de Ven, 1994; Murray and Mahon, 1993; Lorange and Roos, 1993). All phases are characterised from different challenges (Ness, 2009; Spekman *et al*, 1998; Larson, 1992). The main focus of the different phases has been the governance mechanisms, and the way they are modified through the life of a partnership (Hagedoorn and Heslen, 2007; Ness and Haugland, 2005; Mayer and Argyres, 2004). The ‘on-going negotiations’ (Ness, 2009: 452) which occur in the life of partnerships have also received research interest, as they are regarded as a result of the inability to plan all the aspects of a partnership in advance (Ness, 2009; Brouthers, Andriessen and Nicolaes 1998; Ring and Van de Ven, 1992). A third area of research focus in the different phases of partnerships has

been the impact of learning in the coordination and the interactions of the participants as partnerships develop through time (Holmqvist, 2004; Koza and Lewin, 1998, Doz, 1996). The disagreement over the precise numbers of phases and the ‘limits’ of universally accepted activities which constitute each phase make the detailed investigation of partnerships more complicated.

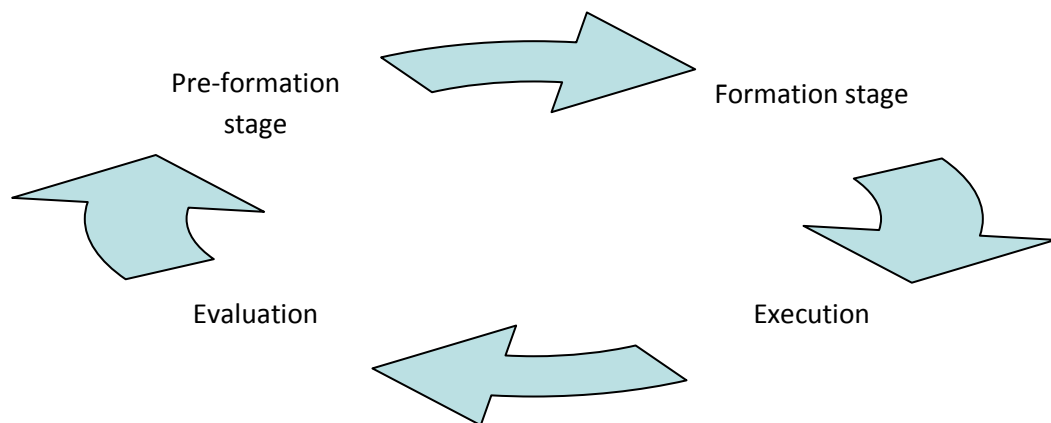


Figure one: The different phases of firm partnerships

For the needs of this thesis partnerships are regarded as consisting of four different phases. They start with the *pre-formation* stage, where companies identify their need for a partnership and start searching for candidates (Das and Bing-Sheng, 2002; 1997)(figure one). With the term pre-formation phase of an alliance, clear distinction from the actual negotiations between the partners is drawn. Specifically, this phase includes the business opportunity identification, the environmental scanning concerning the project, and the partner selection (Brouthers *et al*, 1998; Doz, 1996; Spekman *et al*, 1996).

The next phase is the *formation* phase, consisting of negotiations between the partners, concluding with written agreements on the governance structure of the

partnership (Ness, 2009; Das and Bing-Sheng, 2002; Brouthers *et al*, 1998; Maloni and Benton, 1997) (figure one). In this phase, the alliance is ‘set up’ (Das and Bing-Sheng, 1997) and the companies ‘commit’ or ‘engage’ in the implementation of the project (Spekman, 1996; Kanter, 1994; Ring and Van de Ven, 1994) through intense interaction and official documentation (Landeros, Reck and Plank, 1995; Mac Beth and Ferguson, 1994; Ellram, 1991). A number of existing papers suggests that partnerships initiate in the negotiations phase (Ring and Van de Ven, 1994), while other suggest that negotiations simply emerge (D’Aunno and Zuckerman, 1987). In this thesis however negotiations are regarded as a result of the first phase, were the need for a partnership has already been identified.

In the following phase the partnership is implemented, according to the terms agreed in the formation stage (Teulier and Rouleau, 2010; Ness, 2009; Das and Bing-Sheng, 2002; 1997) (figure one). This post formation management phase entails activities such as alliance management (Brouthers *et al*, 1998), learning how the partners should collaborate’ (Kanter, 1994) and investment and coordination. The effectiveness of coordination mechanisms, the conflict resolution techniques, the boundary personnel and the way that the trust develops here are crucial for the success of the project (Kale and Singh, 2009, Maloni and Benton, 1997, Landeros *et al*, 1995). Simultaneously, issues over the risk of sharing important information and each partner’s appetite of control can lead to the resolution of the partnership (Hagedoorn, 2002). This phase ends when the project is ready to be handed to the client.

Once a project has been completed, then the *evaluation* of the project follows, where the performance of the partnership and its results for the company are assessed (Brouthers *et al*, 1998; Das and Bing-Sheng, 1997). This evaluation can lead to modifications within the company (Das and Bing-Sheng, 1997; Ring and Van de Ven, 1994; Kanter, 1994). Moreover, it will also end up in a decision whether the partnership was a success and whether the company should develop stronger ties with the partner (Spekman, Isabella, MacAvoy, and Forbes, 1996).

Recently, research started focusing in the dynamics and the processes occurring within partnerships (Teulier and Rouleau, 2010; Happonen, Teerikanas and Laamanen; forthcoming, Ariño and Ring; 2010, Ness, 2009). Ness (2009) investigated the impact of negotiations between the two firms and the way that governance mechanisms develop through time, while Mainela (2007) and Mainela and Puhaka (2008) focusing on the types of the occurring social relationships, researching the way that international partnerships are organised. Walter, Lechner and Kellermanns (2008) focus on the implementation of partnerships and the impact of decision making processes in alliance performance. Using another unit of analysis, Teulier and Rouleau (2010) suggest four different processes through which middle managers, acting as inter-organisational translators, implement collaborations between French engineering firms. Even though some work has started developing however, there is still space for further inquiry in the dynamics occurring in the different phases of partnerships.

In the previous section the existing research on interfirm partnerships was presented. The current thesis however examines partnerships within the high tech sector. As an industry, it has specific characteristics, which resulted in its choice, for the purposes of this study. An overview of the context of the high tech industry is presented in the next section.

2.9 The high tech industry context

The high tech industry has been regarded as an important site for the study of strategic activities from the early days of strategy research (Santos and Eisenhardt, 2009; Eisenhardt and Bourgeois, 1988; Sutton, Eisenhardt and Jucker, 1986; Dess and Beard, 1984). As it is known, influences from the industrial environment that firms compete within have a serious impact in the situations that corporations face (Scherer and Ross, 1990). This is more intense within dynamic industries, where their instabilities influence the expectations and the decisions of managers (Luo,

2007; Porter, 1985). Subsequently, the turbulent industrial context that the companies of this study compete is crucial and is expected to affect their strategic behaviour.

The high tech industry has been often regarded as *high velocity environment* (Meyer, 2009; Judge and Miller, 1991; Eisenhardt and Bourgeois, 1988; Dess and Beard, 1984), where the creation of long term, deliberate strategies is not feasible (Mintzberg, 1985). The need for organisational change is urgent in such environments, as there is quick market saturation (Mackay and Chia, 2013; Fraker, 1984), which makes adaptation to the external environmental a requirement for firm survival and success. The extent of change depends on three factors, these being its rate (Fines, 1998; Williams, 1992; Bourgeois and Eisenhardt, 1988) its turbulence (Fombrun and Ginsberg, 1990; Dess and Beard, 1984; Duncan, 1972) and its magnitude (McGahan, 2004; Brown and Eisenhardt, 1997; Tushman and Anderson, 1986; Tushman and Romanelli, 1983). Emergent strategies dominate this sector, because of environmental unpredictability, making difficult the creation of long-term plans (Robert Baum and Wally, 2003; Dess and Beard, 1984; Aldrich, 1979). The opinions of middle managers and other experts, who follow current trends in the industries can be crucial (Canales, 2012; Wooldridge *et al*, 2008), in order to develop rapid-response capabilities (Fine, Vardan, Pethick and El Hout, 2002). Within such environments, fast decision making has been regarded as leading in superior performance (Meyer, 2009; Robert Baum and Wally, 2003; Judge and Miller, 1991).

The discontinuous and constant change that characterise the high tech industry result often in inaccurate, unavailable or incomplete information, which creates uncertainty in the decision makers (Santos and Eisenhardt, 2009; Scherer and Ross, 1990; Eisenhardt and Bourgeois, 1988). Managers may exhibit political behaviour to avoid the costs of wrong decisions, whose probability is higher in uncertain environments (Nutt, 1998; Eisenhardt and Bourgeois, 1988; Allison, 1971). In addition, it appears that managers might take decisions under intuition, based on judgement, experience and gut feeling, rather than pure, rational economic facts, resulting from the unavailability of information (Elbanna, 2006; Sadler-Smith and Shefy, 2004; Miller

et al., 2004). Middle managers, who follow current trends and are aware of organisational everyday dynamics, are crucial for rapid decision making in such environments (Kuratko, Ireland, Covin and Hornsby, 2005; Floyd and Wooldridge, 1997; Nonaka, 1994), and they remain an ‘underused resource’ (Canales, 2012: 2). The need for further investigation on the ways that politics and key organisational actors develop and affect strategy and performance in such industries, through the life of partnerships, is clear.

2.10 The increased uncertainty of the high tech industry leads to creation of partnerships

Companies, in order to minimise the risks associated with highly turbulent environments, adopt a strategic response through engagement in partnerships (Santos and Eisenhardt, 2009; Folta, 1998; Mitchell and Singh, 1992; Harrigan, 1988; Beamish and Banks, 1987). As a result, a large number of global partnerships come from companies belonging in the extended high tech sector (Hagedoorn, 1993). This is mainly because partnerships are created in order to mitigate risk, while facilitating resource-sharing, targets that are directly served through their formation (Luo, 2007; Williamson, 1985). Risk-sharing reduces the possibility that the company might lose the total amount required in an investment (Osborn and Baughh, 1990; Contractor and Lorange, 1988). On the other hand, pooled complementary resources strengthen the position of the partners, especially in turbulent markets (Parkhe, 1991; Buckley and Casson, 1988).

The benefits of the risk-sharing and the resource pooling of partnership appear to be traded off however with the opportunistic behaviour that firms exhibit when they engage in partnerships (Luo, 2007; Brown, Dev and Lee, 2000; Gulati, Khana and Nohria, 1994). This is mainly related to lower anticipated profits because of the partnerships, further enhanced by the environmental uncertainty (Luo, 2007). In such turbulent environments companies might need to supervise their partners in order to avoid opportunistic behaviour, which can result in further costs for the company (Folta, 1998; Gulati, Khana, and Nohria, 1994). Even though several factors have been regarded as crucial in identifying and preventing such behaviours, there is a

lack of research on the way that such behaviours develop through time and how they actually affect companies.

In the previous paragraphs, the existing literature in firm partnerships is presented, followed by an introduction of the high tech industry and its unique characteristics. As mentioned in section 2.5, international business research has focused in investigating performance through content-related research approaches. The current study however attempts to extend existing knowledge in such contexts by adopting a processual approach. A process ontology can help focus in explaining how partnerships develop through time and the impact that activities and processes can have in such turbulent environments.

2.11 The need for strategy process research within international partnerships

The current section makes clear the importance of the different kinds of partnerships (Kale and Singh, 2009; Roijakkers and Hagedoorn, 2006; Todeva and Knoke, 2005; Hagedoorn, 2002; Vonortas, 2000; Maloni and Benton, 1997; Yoshino and Rangan, 1995; Smith and Van de Ven, 1992), and the different factors which affect their performance (Ariño and Ring, 2010; Faems *et al*, 2008; Luo, 2007; White and Lui, 2005; Douma *et al*, 2000; Kumar and Nti, 1998). With their failure rates remaining high, there is need for their further investigation (Ariño and Ring, 2010; Santos and Eisenhardt 2009; Ness, 2009; Wright and Lockett, 2003; Spekman *et al*, 1998). As mentioned in section 2.7, strategy process research has focused in investigating environments characterised by constant change and unpredictability (Canales, 2012; Mazzola and Kellermans, 2010; Hutzschenreuter and Kleindienst, 2006; Eisenhardt and Bourgeois, 1988; Pettigrew, 1975). The high tech industry is such an environment (Meyer, 2009; Robert Baum and Wally, 2003; Hagedoorn, 1993).

Companies in such environments have to learn how to adopt in their external environments, following emergent strategies (Mintzberg, 1985), with partnership formation being a risk-reduction strategy (Das and Bing-Sheng, 2002; Anderson and

Narus, 1990; Kogut, 1988; Anderson and Gatignon, 1986; Williamson, 1985; Axelrod, 1984; Porter 1980; Stern and Reve, 1980). The need for investigation in the underlying processes through a process ontology, focusing in distinctive events during the strategy making surrounding partnerships is clear. Within the strategy process literature however, specific factors have been identified as important in shaping strategies (Andersen, 2003). The next chapter focuses in the presentation of two factors that have been crucial in organisational strategising within turbulent environments: the politics occurring during decision making and the strategic roles that middle managers have during such processes.

Chapter Three: Political processes and the middle management perspective

3.1 Introduction

The previous chapter presented the existing literature on firm partnerships and the high tech industry, concluding that knowledge in strategic processes can be improved through the use of a process ontology in decision making during partnerships. As discussed in chapter two (section 2.4), real world strategies result from emergent and unpredicted events. Two factors appear to be strongly related with bottom-up strategies, especially in dynamic environments: politics and middle managers, which are overviewed in this chapter. Initially, existing research on politics during strategic decision making is presented. Then the middle management roles in shaping and implement decision are discussed. The chapter concludes with the research framework and the research gap that this thesis attempts to investigate.

3.2 Politics research in management

Politics have received extensive research interest from the early days of strategy process research (Eisenhardt and Bourgeois, 1988; Narayanan and Fahey, 1982; Pettigrew, 1975; Allison, 1971). Being suggested as an alternative of the rational decision making model, able to partially explain the emergent nature of strategy (Eisenhardt and Zbaracki, 1992; Pfeffer, 1992; 1981; Quinn, 1980), it is regarded as a more realistic representation of reality (Allison, 1971). Their complicated nature however led to disagreements on their definition, their legitimacy, and the effect they have within organisations (Windsor, 2010; Cropanzano and Li, 2006; Kacmar and Carlson, 1997; Cropanzano *et al*, 1997; Dean and Sharfman, 1996; Pfeffer, 1992; Eisenhardt and Bourgeois, 1988; Hickson *et al*, 1986; Madison, Allen, Porter, Renwick, and Mayes, 1980; Gandz and Murray, 1980; Dowling and Pfeffer, 1975; Pettigrew, 1973; Parsons, 1960). In addition, political behaviour is expressed through tactics well documented in the literature (Zanzi and O'Neill, 2001; Yukl and Tracey, 1992; Mintzberg, 1989; Kipnis *et al*, 1980; Allen, Madison, Porter, Renwick and Mayes, 1979). These studies however do not provide micro-level knowledge of these

tactics (Jarzabkowski and Spee, 2009; Chia and Holt, 2009; Nutt, 1989). Concepts concerning the direction of the tactic and the way that they are applied between different organisational levels have not been well understood. The majority of research however consists of studies in individual companies, and the research in different contexts, such as firm partnerships between companies, is emerging.

In the next paragraphs existing research in politics is presented. Starting by a brief overview of the existing research in political processes, a working definition of politics for this study is provided. The next section focuses in the political tactics that individuals apply, followed by a presentation of the political behaviour and its structural characteristics. The section concludes with the presentation of the literature on the negative and the beneficial aspects of political behaviour within organisations, before the introduction of the *middle management perspective* in strategy research.

3.2.1. Political versus Rational decision making

Political behaviour was introduced as a representation of real-life organisational decision making in the 1960s and 1970s (Pfeffer, 1981; Pettigrew, 1973; Allison, 1971). It suggests that decisions in companies, rather than being made under value maximising criteria, as the rational decision making model suggests, is a result of several interactions occurring between the decision makers. This is further supported from research of this period which suggests that human decisions are governed by specific cognitive limitations, which are somehow related to the emergent nature of strategy (Simon, 1978; 1947; Kahneman and Tversky, 1973; Cyert and March, 1963; March, 1962; Lasswell, 1958; Papandreou, 1952). Simultaneously, it has been observed that decision makers often act according to their personal interests and against the interests of their organisation (McAlpine, 2000; Eisenhardt and Bourgeois, 1988; Buskirk, 1974), and, rather than focusing in maximising the value of the company, they attempt first to satisfy their own interests, by engaging in political tactics.

The result of political processes is that decisions are not products of *rational* and *analytical* processes (Sminia, 2009; Elbanna, 2006; Elbanna and Child, 2007; Noordehaven, 1995; Eisenhardt and Zbaracki, 1992; Narayanan and Fahey, 1982; Allison, 1971). Sub-optimal decisions are made, representing the *preferences of the most powerful coalition* within organisations (Pfeffer, 1992; Hickson *et al* 1986). This behaviour is evident in every organisation, public and private (Mintzberg, 1989; Bower and Weinberg, 1988) where ‘managers of today’s multinationals are not so much economic decision makers as they are governors of a social and political strategic management process’ (Bower and Doz, 1979: 165). In addition, this behaviour is strongly related to uncertainty: individuals often engage in coalition building and support the views of their group, in order to avoid the potential risks which arise by adopting and persuading individual perspectives (Eisenhardt and Bourgeois, 1988). Most, if not all, of the research work however in this area has mainly focused in single companies. In this thesis however, political behaviour will be explored in different organisational contexts, this being firm partnerships. Before the introduction of the aspects of political behaviour, an operational definition of politics is required, as researchers have not yet agreed in a single one, which has resulted in further confusions and ambiguities.

3.2.2 Definition of politics

Several definitions have been provided about politics and political processes (Cropanzano and Li, 2006; Kacmar and Baron 1999; Eisenhardt and Bourgeois, 1988; Porter *et al*, 1983; Pfeffer 1981; Bacharach and Lawler, 1980; Quinn, 1980; Mayes and Allen, 1977)(table four). A universal agreement on the nature of politics however is still missing, which has largely affected the data collection of existing studies, resulting in ambiguities about existing findings (Elbanna, 2006; Ferris *et al*, 1994; Mayes and Allen, 1977). This section attempts to provide an operational definition of politics, by discussing the ‘grey’ areas of the existing definitions, which result in these ambiguities.

Examples of definitions of politics	
Researcher(s)	Definition
Frost and Hayes (1977)	Political behaviour (is) the activities of organisational members... when they use resources to enhance or protect their share of an exchange... in ways which would be resisted, or ways in which the impact would be resisted, if recognized by the other party(ies) to the exchange
Mayes and Allen (1977)	Organisational politics is the management of influence to obtain ends not sanctioned by the organization or to obtain sanctioned ends through non-sanctioned influence means
Porter, Renwick, Allen, Madison and Mayes (1979)	Organisational politics involve intentional acts of influence to enhance or protect the self-interest of individuals or groups
Quinn (1980)	Political behaviour consists of activities undertaken primarily to increase an individual's or group's referent or legitimate power. Achieving increased political power may or may not make more people dependent on the manager, but it does give the executive a greater capacity to influence events
Bacharach and Lawler (1980)	Politics is the process whereby individuals or interest groups use power to obtain or retain control of real or symbolic resources
Pfeffer (1981)	Organisational politics involves those activities taken within organisations to acquire, develop, and use power and other resources to obtain one's preferred outcomes in a situation in which there is uncertainty or dissensus about choices
Porter, Allen, and Angle (1983)	Organisational political behaviour is defined as: (1) Social influence attempts, (2) that are discretionary, (3) that are intended (designed) to promote or protect the self-interests of individuals and groups (units), and (4) that threaten the self-interests of others (individuals, units)
Eisenhardt and Bourgeois (1988)	Politics are the observable, but often covert, actions by which executives enhance their power to influence a decision
Kacmar and Baron (1999)	Organisational politics involves actions by individuals which are directed toward the goal of furthering their own self-interests without regard for the well-being of others or their organisation

Table four: Definitions of politics

3.2.2.1 Politics, power and influence

The first area which creates ambiguity is the relationship of politics with the concepts of *power* and *influence*. Some researchers regard influence as result of political behaviour (Eisenhardt and Bourgeois, 1988; Quinn, 1980), others regard politics and influence as the same thing (Porter *et al*, 1983; Pfeffer 1981), while others totally ignore it (Bacharach and Lawler, 1980). Being in agreement with Eisenhardt and Bourgeois (1988) and Quinn (1980), however, this study makes explicit that politics and influence are not the same concept. Rather, politics are activities through which individuals attempt to increase their influence.

Further confusion arises from the fact that power is an ill-defined term (Coffey, Holbrook and Atkinson, 1996; Wrong, 1995; Clegg, 1989; 1979). Power, however,

as a construct, is an elusive concept, just like electricity or gravity, where their effects are known, but its nature remains unclear (Shen and Cannella, 2002; Fiol, 2001; Barnes, 1988). As Silva (1997) suggests: ‘we are all familiar with military, political and even physical power, but its nature and essence escapes us.....it is very difficult to establish whether our actions are determined or not by external forces’ (Silva, 1997: 15). The fact that its nature is unclear further complicates its relation with politics. For this study however power is regarded as the mechanism through which other humans will act according to the ways that other require them to do so. Subsequently, the definition that Weber (1947) provided is used:

‘Power is the probability that one actor within a social relationship will be in a position to carry out his own will despite resistance’. (Weber, 1947:152)

The quest for power is regarded as something natural. In other words, political behaviour is a phenomenon which occurs in everyday organisational life, aiming to increase the power that individuals have. It is the increase of their power that will enable individuals to influence others, and make them behave in ways they want to. The next element of the definition of politics that creates confusions in their understanding is this of legitimacy, presented in the next section.

3.2.2.2 Political behaviour and legitimacy

Another concept which has created confusions on the definition of politics is concerned with their *legitimacy* within organisations (Mintzberg and Quinn, 1991; Mayes and Allen, 1977). Political activities have been regarded as illegitimate; this viewpoint is strongly related to the nature of the formal authority systems, which depend on the use of legitimate power and influence in different hierarchical levels, in order to achieve organisational performance (Dowling and Pfeffer, 1975; Parsons, 1960). Unlike national governments, where political influence is clearly defined and accepted, within organisations political influence is not formally authorised or widely accepted (Mintzberg, 1983; Allison, 1971). As a result, politics have been regarded as negative phenomena, which intend to advance personal interests, against the

interest of individuals, groups, or the organisation as a whole (Ferris and Judge, 1991; Drory and Romm, 1990).

The current study however attempts to overcome such confusions which result in biased findings through the adoption of a neutral definition, as discussed in the current and the following sections. Being in agreement with existing definitions which stretch the illegitimate nature of political processes (Mintzberg and Quinn, 1991; Mintzberg, 1985; Mayes and Allen, 1977), political processes are regarded as not being organisationally sanctioned, aiming however legitimate goals. In other words, even though politics do entail the use of illegitimate means, their final target is to achieve legitimate goals. Through such a definition, the illegitimate nature of political behaviour is made clear. However, even though their nature is 'obscure', this does not imply that their targets are necessarily negative to the firm. The next issue of the definition of politics has to do with the level of formality of their nature, discussed in the following section.

3.2.2.3 Politics as formal and informal processes

A third issue with the existing definitions of politics is that researchers tend to include both *formal* and *informal* processes that attempt to affect the strategy process (Eisenhardt and Bourgeois, 1988; Porter *et al* 1983; Pfeffer, 1981; Bacharach and Lawler, 1980; Allen *et al*, 1979). It is only recently that researchers have attempted to make this important distinction (Vigoda-Gadot and Drory, 2006; James 2006; Gunn and Chen, 2006; Rouleau, 2005). Through the term 'informal' behaviours which 'either occur outside of the official governance apparatus and procedures of an organization, or are aimed at gaining power over that official apparatus' (James, 2006:1) are implied. It is all these confusions however that have resulted in misunderstandings and the 'negative' biasness towards political behaviour.

This study regards politics as an informal process (Vigoda-Gadot and Drory, 2006; James 2006; Gunn and Chen, 2006; Rouleau, 2005), resulting from the fact that they are neither expressed in the job description nor requested from the higher levels of authority. This makes clear that politics have an unofficial nature. By making clear this distinction, the ambiguities which exist as a result of the mixed definitions in the literature are further eliminated.

3.2.2.4 An operational definition of politics

In the previous section a series of issues concerning the relationship between politics, power and influence was addressed, while simultaneously their illegitimate and unofficial nature was clarified. A more clear definition of politics can enhance the quality of the findings, while simultaneously eliminating their ambiguity, an issue for which other studies have been accused.

The operational definition of politics for this study is the following:

'Politics are the unofficial tactics used by purposeful individuals in order to increase their power, further than the legitimate influence resulting from their official position. The increase of their legitimate influence however is beneficial for the organisation, as long as their primary interests are in alignment with the organisations' interest'

Such a definition makes clear that politics are unofficial activities, which aim to increase the power of individuals. The final destination of these activities however is the increase of their power, and the subsequent influence, resulting from the position of those who engage in such behaviours. Moreover, politics are presented as a neutral phenomenon, as long as the interests of those exhibiting this behaviour, are the same with the organisational interests.

As mentioned earlier, the definition of politics will enable the better understanding of the political environment and avoid definitional problems which have occurred in the past. In the next sections, different critical aspects of political behaviour are presented. The section starts by presenting the political tactics which have been observed in the existing literature.

3.3 Politics and political tactics

Political behaviour is expressed through the use of several *tactics* (Zanzi and O'Neill, 2001; Hurrell, Nelson and Simmons, 1998; Yukl and Tracey, 1992; Mintzberg, 1989; Kipnis *et al*, 1980; Allen *et al*, 1979). They can be regarded as strategic activities which occur unexpectedly, especially in the case where organisational strategies are not well understood from all actors (Jarzabkowski and Wolf, 2013; Chia and Holt, 2009; Nutt, 1989; Kipnis *et al*, 1980). Through such tactics, which have been also called 'games' (Mintzberg, 1989) individuals attempt to increase their power and subsequently their influence within organisations. The majority of the existing research however has focused in single organisations. In the current thesis these will be explored in firm partnerships, expecting that such an approach might provide fruitful results.

Existing research has described a number of different tactics, which can be classified in two categories. The first category is related to the final target that a tactic has. This can include either the higher or the lower level of management. The notion of the target of the tactics was indirectly implied in Mintzberg *et al* (2009), as most tactics exhibited, such as the insurgency game or the young Turks game, have a clear intention to affect the higher level of management, while some others, such as support seeking from the top managers, can aim the lower managerial levels. In their second category, tactics are classified depending on the origination of these tactics. As Allen *et al* (1979) classifies them, they can be either organisationally sanctioned or not. The 'obligation creation' tactic, for example, is a non-organisationally sanctioned tactic, aiming, to create a future obligation to someone who receives the

assistance (Allen *et al*, 1979). According to the definition adopted in this study however, political behaviour is from its definition non-organisationally sanctioned. Subsequently, in the next paragraph, political tactics are clustered according to the direction of the influence they have, in order to help their more detailed investigation in the following phases of collection and analysis.

3.3.1 Tactics directed to higher managerial levels

A number of tactics targets the higher managerial levels. These are exhibited from employees of lower levels of hierarchy, aiming to advance their position. These upward influence tactics are divided in four categories: Image building, personal requests for support, ingratiation-related tactics, and ‘appealing’ tactics.

Through image building and successful impression management, employees expect to benefit in their career prospects (Zanzi and O’Neill, 2001; Allen *et al* 1979). One of the most frequent activities that employees engage in this activity consists of supervisors who are ‘stealing the ideas’ of their subordinates and present them as their own in the higher levels of hierarchy. Expressed in different terms, this behaviour can be exhibited by giving the impression that someone is a necessary part of all important and successful events (Zanzi and O’Neill, 2001). This tactic, even though it aims to advance the personal interests of an individual without having an actual impact in the organisational level, it can result in conflict and tension between individuals.

A tactic relevant to image building has to do with personal appeals requesting help and other benefits for the higher managers (Yukl and Falbe, 1990; Erez *et al*, 1986; Kipnis *et al* 1980). In this tactic, individuals appeal to their personal relationship with a manager, such as friendship and loyalty, before asking for a favour. Relevant to these tactics is the mentoree tactic, where new employees in the company, based in the fact that they are not aware of the processes, might start appealing to personal feeling of managers, seeking help and advice, in order to start building their power

base (Zanzi and O'Neill, 2001). Such behaviours can be exhibited in the case of new projects, or in changes within specific projects.

Managers from lower hierarchical level often engage in ingratiation (Zanzi and O'Neill, 2001; Yukl and Tracey, 1992; Allen *et al* 1979)(table five). This consists of flattering and praising to create positive feelings towards themselves, with the final target being to increase the potential of a success in the target of the manager who is engaging in this behaviour. This game is also related to what Mintzberg *et al* (2009) call 'strategic candidate game', where individuals do everything possible to 'win' a place in important projects.

Some more rare tactics aiming higher managerial levels include the networking game (Zanzi and O'Neill, 2001), where employees might seek to ask for favour through the personal networks and links they might have with their subordinates, with low probability of success. Rule-evading tactics, where special exceptions might be made, are evident as well, especially between male and female employees and between family members. Moreover, Yukl and Tracey (1989) suggest that individuals might engage in political behaviour by seeking legitimisation of their activities from their managers, especially in activities which are not usual and there are doubts about their legitimacy (Yukl, 1990). In a group level, employees, when they have a team request, might engage in what Mintzberg (1989) calls 'insurgency game', where individuals will team up in order to ask for group benefits. In an extreme case, they can be aggressive and have revolutionary attitude, where they would fall in the Young Turks category. All these methods however appear to have a low probability of success, in single companies, as existing studies have shown (Yukl and Tracey, 1989; Mintzberg, 1989)

Tactics targetting higher levels of management		
Tactic	Nature and final target	Authors
Image building	The creation of a strong image will help the advancement within the company	Zanzi and O'Neill, 2001; Allen <i>et al</i> 1979
Ingratiation	Through the engagement in flattering and praising, positive feelings will be created towards the employee who applies it, with the final target being to increase the potential of a beneficial decision for their career	Zanzi and O'Neill, 2001; Yukl and Tracey, 1992; Allen <i>et al</i> 1979;
Personal appeal	Through the appeal to the personal relationship of an employee with a manager, such as friendship and loyalty, in order to ask for a favour	Yukl and Falbe, 1990; Yukl and Tracey, 1989; Erez <i>et al</i> , 1986; Kipnis <i>et al</i> 1980
Networking	Employees ask for favours through the personal networks and links they might have with their subordinates	Zanzi and O'Neill, 2001
Insurgency	Middle and lower level employees teaming up to ask for group benefits	Mintzberg, 1989

Table five: Tactics targetting higher managerial levels

As made clear, all these tactics are targeting the higher level of hierarchy. Very often however tactics aim lower managerial levels. These are presented in the following section.

3.3.2 Tactics targetting lower managerial levels

The second category includes tactics aiming to achieve downward influence. These are mostly exhibited from higher to lower managers, and are highly related to future reciprocity, rather than current. These tactics can fall in three categories, these being related to support-seeking, to the way that rules are applied, and a third more general category, presented in the next paragraphs.

The first category of tactics aiming lower managerial levels is related to building of support (Zanzi and O'Neill, 2001; Yukl and Tracey, 1992; Mintzberg, 1989; Kipnis *et al* 1980; Allen *et al*, 1979)(table six). Here managers from higher organisational levels make favours or provide support to people from lower managerial levels, expecting future support. This happens when they are building their own 'empire' (Mintzberg, 1989), expecting that managers from lower level will exhibit 'piggybacking' (Zanzi and O'Neill, 2001). This tactic is often implemented through formal ceremonies, where symbols of power are offered, resulting in the enhancement of one's position, and is highly related to the influence of

organisational placements, also regarded as ‘sponsorship’ of employees. This tactic is one of the most frequently occurring within single companies, and has been regarded as having high probabilities of success (Zanzi and O’Neill, 2001; Mintzberg, 1989).

The second category of downward influence tactics is related to the way that company rules are applied and the way they can benefit or threaten subordinates (Zanzi and O’Neill, 2001; Mintzberg, 1989; Yukl and Tracey, 1989; Kipnis *et al*, 1980). Kipnis *et al* (1980) and Yukl and Tracey (1989) suggest that managers can attempt to initiate sanctions in order to press employees of lower levels to do things that they request them, which is regarded as a ‘lording game’ (Mintzberg, 1989). Zanzi and O’Neill (2001) suggest however that such tactics might be applied only in case where these activities are ‘unpopular’, and not for the personal benefit of top managers. If the pressure that managers put however is too intense, then the result, rather than commitment, can be the opposite, where employees feel dissatisfaction with their managers, and in extreme case, their job (Yukl and Tracey, 1989). Related to this category are rule-oriented tactics, concerning the selective application of procedures, in order to support or oppose another party or the provision of resources which are difficult to be accessed (Zanzi and O’Neill, 2001). These tactics appear to be successful, with higher rates of success in companies with clear hierarchy, rules and processes (Yukl and Tracey, 1989; Erez *et al*, 1986).

The third category includes downward influence tactics which are less frequently exhibited (Zanzi and O’Neill, 2001; Yukl and Tracey, 1992; Mintzberg, 1989)(table six). These include the ‘inspirational appeal’ (Yukl and Tracey, 1989), where managers ask support from lower managerial levels, with knowledge exchanges (Zanzi and O’Neill, 2001). In a group level, top managers can exhibit a counterinsurgency game, where managers team up, as a response to the teaming up of a group of subordinates (Mintzberg, 1989). These tactics however appear to be least successful, as compared to the ones described in previous paragraphs.

Tactics targetting lower levels of management		
Tactic	Nature and final target	Authors
Support building	Managers from higher organisational levels make favours or provide support to people from lower managerial levels, with the exchange of future support	Zanzi and O'Neill, 2001; Yukl and Tracey, 1992; Mintzberg, 1989; Kipnis <i>et al</i> 1980; Allen <i>et al</i> , 1979;
Lording	Stressing the company rules and official procedures in order to oblige employees to fulfil their work and satisfy personal benefits	Zanzi and O'Neill, 2001; Yukl and Tracey, 1989; Mintzberg, 1989; Kipnis <i>et al</i> , 1980
Inspirational/leadership appeal	Top managers requesting support from the lower management, without any clear exchange	Yukl and Tracey, 1989
Counterinsurgency	Higher managers teaming up, in order to fight back a group of subordinates	Mintzberg, 1989

Table six: Tactics targetting lower managerial levels

The previous section presented the upward influence tactics, while the current one described these aiming to influence the lower managerial levels. Existing literature however has also suggested tactics which aim employees located at the same organisational levels, discussed in the next section.

3.3.3 Tactics directed to horizontal levels

The third category includes tactics aiming employees at the same hierarchical levels. These are mostly exhibited in higher managerial levels, where the quest for power is more intense and the expected benefits of such behaviours are higher (Mintzberg *et al*, 2009; Yukl and Tracey, 1989; Eisenhardt and Bourgeois 1988; Pettigrew, 1975) (table seven). These fall in four categories, related to the presentation of information, alliance building, blaming and threatening, and a fourth more general category, which are all presented in the next paragraphs.

The first category of tactics related to the way that information is presented. Managers from higher levels often hide information (Allen *et al*, 1979) or use it selectively (Zanzi and O'Neill, 2001) or manipulate it (Zanzi and O'Neill, 2001; Pettigrew, 1975) to support decisions they want. This is often combined with rational argumentation, which focuses in the shared objectives of the decision makers (Yukl and Tracey, 1989; Eagly and Chaiken, 1984). Shared objectives can be exaggerated through the presentation of superordinate goals (Zanzi and O'Neill, 2001), resulting

in rationalisation of arguments otherwise regarded as extreme. Another tactic falling in this category consists of individuals who possess unique knowledge, enabling them to persuade others towards their interests (Mintzberg *et al*, 2009). The use of external experts, acting in the interests of those who invited them is frequent. The same target can be achieved through the exhibition of associations with influential people, as this creates a status and provides guarantees about those exhibiting this tactic (Allen *et al* 1979). Such tactics are among the most frequently exhibited, having high success rates (Yukl and Tracey, 1989; Kipnis and Schmidt, 1988; Pettigrew, 1975).

Another category has to do with alliance building (Zanzi and O'Neill, 2001; Mintzberg, 1989; Eisenhardt and Bourgeois, 1988) (table seven). Here alliances are created in order to provide support in every decision that the allies will be interested in (Eisenhardt and Bourgeois, 1988). This tactic is related to coalition building, as it entails the notion of a constant mutual support, with the only difference that it refers to the horizontal hierarchical levels. The frequency and the success rates of this tactic, as in the case of coalition building, are high.

The third category involves blaming and threatening (Zanzi and O'Neill, 2001; Kipnis *et al*, 1980; Allen *et al*, 1979)(table seven). These tactics are similar to threats aiming to exhibit downward influence, with the difference that they exhibited in the same hierarchical levels, mostly evident in lower hierarchical levels (Kipnis *et al*, 1980). These include blocking (Kipnis *et al*, 1980), where employees engage in threats and arguments in order to complete their project. Such threats can include intimidation and bullying (Zanzi and O'Neill, 2001) while they can also be related to blaming and creation of bad reputation (Zanzi and O'Neill, 2001). Such tactics are frequent, characterised however with a lower rate of success (Kipnis *et al*, 1980).

The fourth category includes tactics with a more general application. Such tactics are often initiated in order to cope with uncertainty in an interpersonal level (Zanzi *et al*, 2001). This can consist for example by building inventories, even though it would be required, in order to appear as 'preventive', in an extreme case. In an intergroup level,

such tactics can be exhibited between departments, or ‘rival camps’ (Mintzberg, 1989), where they will engage in a competition concerning resource allocation. The second tactic appears to be of a frequent use, characterised with a high rate of success (Mintzberg, 1989).

Tactics targetting same levels of management		
Tactic	Nature and final target	Authors
Information-related tactics	Hiding of information, or selective provision, or manipulation, to affect decision makers	Zanzi and O’Neill, 2001; Allen <i>et al</i> , 1979; Pettigrew, 1975;
Use of rational argumentation	Through the use of rational arguments, which focus in the shared objectives of the decision makers, achieve desired outcomes	Yukl and Tracey, 1989; Eagly and Chaiken, 1984
Use of expert knowledge	Use of special and unique knowledge, often with the use of external experts or influential people, in order to persuade others towards personal interests	Mintzberg <i>et al</i> , 2009; Zanzi and O’Neill, 2001; Allen <i>et al</i> 1979
Blaming and threatening	Aggressive tactics, such as blocking, intimidation, innuendoes and bullying, in order to be preferred in employee choice, and/or creation of bad reputation	Zanzi and O’Neill, 2001; Kipnis <i>et al</i> , 1980
Rival camps	Interdepartmental argumentation in order to advance the interest of the strongest groups within a company	Mintzberg, 1989

Table seven: Tactics targetting horizontal managerial levels.

The current section presented tactics aiming managers within the same levels of hierarchy. In the next section, tactics which can aim all organisational levels are presented.

3.3.4 Tactics targetting all organisational levels

The fourth category includes tactics which can be targeting all hierarchical levels. Tactics here fall in three categories, these being classified as the budgeting game, ‘whistle blowing’ and co-optation tactics, which are all presented in the next paragraphs.

Budgeting (Mintzberg *et al*, 2009) is one of the most often exhibited tactics within organisations (table eight). This game consists mainly of requests towards the funds which will be allocated in specific departments, making it similar to the competition

concerning resource allocation, in an interdepartmental level, presented in the previous section. The main difference however in that tactic is that it would refer to quest which can be aiming higher and lower levels. Instead of requests for extra resources, which can have implications for the power and the influence of the group, the use of the budgeting tactic has strong financial implications, and can result in success or in total failure and further negative reactions (Mintzberg *et al*, 2009).

Another tactic is related to whistle blowing (Mintzberg *et al*, 2009). This occurs when individuals who are aware of the secrets of other individuals within the company, use them in order to enhance their position or serve their own interests (table eight). The timing of these tactics however is crucial, as it can trigger further complications (Mintzberg *et al*, 2009). Such tactics are often exhibited, mainly from lower level managers, revealing secrets of higher managers, or even in a horizontal level, being regarded as low success tactics.

One more category of tactics is related to co-optation (Zanzi and O'Neill, 2001). In this category, individuals attempt to control or silence an individual or a group by inviting or incorporating another power to overview their practices. An example includes the creation of quality control group into a manufacturing company (Zanzi and O'Neill, 2001). This tactic is often exhibited, however it is difficult to be observed, as such incorporation as the one described in the example might be a result of the actual requirements of the company.

The current section presented the tactics through which political behaviour is expressed in modern organisations. In the next section however the way that these tactics are related to the current research approach is discussed.

Tactics targetting all levels of management		
Tactic	Nature and final target	Authors
Budgeting	Competition over the allocations of resources between whole departments and subsidiaries of a company	Mintzberg <i>et al</i> , 2009
Whistle blowing and blackmailing	Blackmailing from individuals who are aware of the secrets of other individuals within the company, in order to enhance their position or serve their own interests	Mintzberg <i>et al</i> , 2009
Co-optation	Attempts to control or silence individuals or groups by allocating a supervisor, a group or a new department to overview and control their practices	Zanzi and O'Neill, 2001

Table Eight: Tactics targetting all managerial levels

3.3.5 An existing gap in political tactics within organisations

A large number of tactics, through which political behaviour is exhibited exists. Research however has focused in single companies, having ignored more recent forms of organisational structures, such as firm partnerships. Political behaviour however is evident in all kind of organisations, and this implies that there is a gap in our existing knowledge. This is one of the research areas that the current thesis aims to contribute: by focusing in partnerships, the ways that tactics are applied and their potential impact in a different environment are explored.

As made clear from the definition provided, political behaviour has been regarded in a large extent as having a negative impact within organisations, with a weak support on its benefits. In the next section the literature surrounding the consequences of political processes is presented.

3.4 Impact of politics within organisations

Political processes have been regarded as having several consequences within single organisations, as they can potentially be either functional or dysfunctional for companies and managers (Allen *et al*, 1979). This has resulted in a live debate on the impact of political behaviour in organisations. Eisenhardt and Bourgeois (1988) and Vredenburg and Maurer (1984) for example suggest that they create tensions and

delays in decision making. Corroborating this view, Christiansen, Villanova and Mikulay (1997) suggested that they are major source of work discontent, while Curtis (2003) suggested that they result in decreased job satisfaction, increased anxiety and stress, increased turnover and reduced performance. Contrary, some researchers have regarded them as positive phenomena: Mintzberg *et al* (2009), for example, has suggested that through their existence its ensured that the most skilful employees will be in the higher levels of hierarchy within organisations, while Perrewé, Ferris, Funk, and Anthony (2000) suggested that they are beneficial, because of their informal nature, as they are the main route of communication, permitting individuals to cope with stress more efficiently.

As stated previously however, the majority of studies has been conducted in individual companies, having ignored different organisational contexts, such as firm partnerships. The current study however focuses in the impact that such processes can have in partnerships. In order to do that however, the positive and negative aspects of political behaviour are presented in the next section, as these have been documented in the existing literature.

3.4.1 'Positive' politics

A number of researchers suggest that political processes affect organisations in positive ways (Bacharach, 2006; McFarland, 2004; Pfeffer, 1992; Burns, 1978; Sapolsky, 1972; Jay, 1967). Their impact can fall in four different categories, these being related to the triggering of organisational change, its successful implementation, the symmetrical representation of the different interests of organisational groups, and the benefits that they can have in organisational leadership. These are discussed in the next paragraphs.

A first positive aspect of political processes within organisations is that they stimulate executives for organisational change (Bacharach, 2005; Pfeffer, 1992;

Mintzberg, 1983; McClelland, 1970). This is done through the flow of ideas and concepts through informal communication channels, from lower organisational levels, which are involved in the everyday operations, to the higher managerial levels (Pfeffer, 1992). Within an organisation which accepts political behaviour, 'bottom-up' change will be initiated faster, as a result of the alternative channels of information and communication (Mintzberg, 1983; McClelland, 1970). However, absence of political behaviour can be a threat in authoritative organisations, as information and feedback from lower levels of hierarchy is suppressed (Coda and Mollona, 2010).

Another benefit of politics is that they can facilitate organisational change (Miller and Friesen, 1983; 1982; 1978; Mintzberg, 1979; Pettigrew, 1973). Sapolsky (1972) suggested that the successful change was accelerated from managers' politics, which resulted on successful adaptation of the organisation to its external environment. Similarly, Wainwright and Waring (2004) suggested that their good understanding accelerated the integration of new information systems. This was supported from Peled (2000) who regarded politics as a requirement for good implementation of IT projects, characterised by higher rates of complexity, thus creating high uncertainty. This argument was also supported by Pfeffer (1992), Pascale (1984), Mintzberg (1983) and Borum (1980).

A third positive effect that political processes can have in organisations is that through their existence, it is assured that all things have been debated and all the individual- and group- level interests are being represented (Hartley *et al*, 2007; Butcher and Clarke, 2006a;b). As Allison (1971:145) suggests, political processes oblige 'responsible men....to fight for what they are convinced is right' which will ultimately encourage discussion and debate between decision makers in order to reach consensus. In this context politics can be regarded as pluralistic interactions between individuals, groups and organisations, which assist them to express their real interests. Decisions here will be through contestation, negotiation or cooperation

(Leftwich, 2004). Corroborating this view, Hartley and Branicki (2006) regard politics as an effective resource distribution mechanism. This results from the fact that they help specify the actual demands of different departments. Systems of authority tend to collect information and direct to a central hierarchy which results in the advancements of only single points of view. The risk however in such organisations is that managers with specialization and expertise, might be excluded from new ideas. Because of politics though, individuals engage in fights in order to persuade about their suggestions (Mintzberg, 1983). This is in agreement with the view that conflict within organisations can be utilised as an information seeking and sharing tool, resulting on more pluralistic decision making, where issues which they could otherwise be ignored are considered (Eisenhardt, Kahwajy, and Bourgeois, 1997). Through political processes, a live debate can be created within organisations, ensuring that conflicting interests are represented, creating the feeling of a more 'fair' organisation.

A last positive impact is related to the fact that politics lead to stronger leadership (McFarland, 2004; Khurana, 2002; Mintzberg, 1989; Burns, 1978; Jay, 1967). This happens because through their occurrence there is a climate of constant negotiations and competition; At the end, this Darwinian way of selection will ensure that the most able will survive and ascend in leading positions (Cropanzano *et al*, 1997; Mintzberg and Quinn, 1991; McClelland, 1970). This stands true because authority systems tend to favour one chain of hierarchy which results on weak leaders suppressing stronger individuals which are in lower levels of hierarchy, thus preventing their ascendance. With politics, however, several alternative information channels are created, and stronger individuals in lower levels are enabled to show their abilities and their leadership potential. This in turn will ensure that those with the strongest skills will be promoted to higher hierarchical levels (Mintzberg and Quinn, 1991).

The current section described the positive impact that politics can have within organisations. This impact however is debatable. As mentioned, existing literature has also stretched the negative impact that they can have, discussed in the following section.

3.4.2 'Negative' politics

Having presented the positive impact of political processes in organisations, this section focuses in their negative aspects. Existing research has regarded them as a negative phenomenon, related to manipulation and factional behaviour. As a result they have been 'analogised to warfare and organised crime' (Windsor, 2010:49). In the next paragraphs the different categories of negative impact they have is presented, including lower information quality, loss of time and impact in the decision speed, the shift of focus that they create, and the impact they have in innovation rates.

A first negative impact of political behaviour is related to information quality (Elbanna and Child, 2007; Elbanna, 2006; Noorderhaven, 1995; Pfeffer, 1992; Pettigrew, 1973). This occurs when the information which is required concerning strategic decisions, is manipulated or misrepresented, in order to persuade others (Mintzberg *et al*, 2009; Pettigrew, 1973). This however has negative effect in decision quality (Elbanna, 2010; 2009), as decisions are made using incomplete information, which results in disappointing outcomes (Dean and Sharfman, 1996).

In addition, the time and the speed of decision making can be affected (Elbanna, 2006; Eisenhardt and Zbaracki, 1992). From their nature, political processes tend to cause disagreement or dissension, thus being time-consuming (Elbanna, 2006). Subsequently, they delay the strategy process, resulting in loss of opportunities and profits, which affects performance (Pfeffer, 1992; Zahra, 1987). Delays become more important in high velocity environments, as they can be detrimental to firm

performance (Child, Elbanna and Rodrigues, 2010; Gunn and Chen, 2006; Dean and Sharfman, 1996; Eisenhardt and Bourgeois, 1988).

A highly politicized environment can create dissatisfaction and affect the attitudes of employees (Witt, 1998; Cropanzano *et al*, 1997; Voyer 1994; Sharfman and Dean, 1991; Kumar and Ghadially, 1989; Gandz and Murray, 1980; Madison *et al*, 1980). This happens because the work place becomes an unpleasant environment, where employees feel threatened and can suffer corporate bullying (Ferris, Treadway, Perrewé, Brouer, Douglas and Lux, 2007; Ferris, Treadway, Kolodinsky, Hochwater, Kacmar, Douglas, and Frink, 2005). This situation can result in a corporate political arena (Mintzberg, 1985), or 'jungle' (Klein, 1988), where employees might have to 'sabotage' the activities of their colleagues (Münster, 2007). The result is job dissatisfaction and loss of time, which ultimately affects corporate performance (Cropanzano *et al.*, 1997; Ferris, Frink, Bhawuk and Zhou, 1996; Parker, Dipboye and Jackson, 1995; Ferris *et al*, 1994; Nye and Witt, 1993; Drory and Romm, 1990; Gandz and Murray, 1980).

Another negative impact of political behaviour is that they shift the focus of decision makers (Zanzi and O'Neill, 2001; Dean and Sharfman, 1996; Baum, 1989; Madison *et al.*, 1980). This can happen in two ways (Elbanna, 2006). On the one hand, political behaviour directs decision making towards 'the interests, power bases and positions inside the organisations' (Elbanna, 2006:8). Individuals focus on scanning the internal environment in order to pursue their interests and establish their power bases, ignoring external forces, and environmental constraints might be ignored. Politics can also result in ignoring alternative solutions, as they might be in conflict to the interests of the most powerful, even in cases where such alternatives would be optimal for organisations (Baum, 1989), resulting in suboptimal organisational performance.

Moreover, organisational innovation rates decrease (Zanzi and O'Neill, 2001; Miller and Friesen, 1983; 1982; 1978; Hedberg, Nystrom, & Starbuck, 1976). This might lie in the desire to sustain the old power structures, because innovation might be against the 'vested interests' of top managers (Mintzberg and Quinn, 1991; Mintzberg, 1983). This happens because through political processes a status quo is created, where individuals try to 'secure' themselves from the uncertainty and ambiguity included in a change process (Pettigrew, 1973; Carter, 1971), which however might result in organisational paralysis (Mintzberg and Quinn, 1991). This is further supported by empirical findings that show that frequent changes of corporate leaders can lead to constant innovation and assist drastically the environmental adaptability of the organisation (Miller and Friesen, 1982; 1978; McGuire, 1963).

3.4.3 A research gap on the positive and negative political processes

As made clear, there is a lively debate on whether politics are positive or negative for organisations. A number of existing studies focuses in single companies, which has resulted in findings which somehow ignore the modern organisational reality, characterised by different forms of organisations, including firm partnerships. This study will investigate the impact of politics in firm partnerships, which might provide fruitful insights on their impact within organisations.

This section started by providing a definition of politics, focusing in their relation with power, formality and legitimacy. The main tactics were then presented, followed by a discussion on the positive or negative impact they can have in organisations. Politics are important, especially in emergent strategising, acting as alternative channels for information flows and communications. Existing literature however suggests that there is one more factor which, along with politics, is crucial in emergent strategies: this is the middle managers, whose strategic roles are reviewed in the section which follows.

3.5 Research in middle managers

One more factor which is crucial in emergent strategies is the middle managers (Canales, 2012; Teulier and Rouleau, 2010; Pappas and Wooldridge, 2007; Balogun and Johnson, 2005; 2004; Floyd and Wooldridge, 1997; 1992; Burgelman, 1983a,b; Mintzberg, 1978; Bower, 1970). This happens because they combine deep knowledge of everyday operations, up-to-date technical knowledge and they have access to higher managerial levels, compared to employees from lower and non-managerial levels (Schmidt *et al*, 2010; King, Fowler and Zeithaml, 2001). Because of these skills, a large number of studies which focuses in their micro-level activities has been produced, with research focusing in organisational change (Rouleau, 2005; Balogun and Johnson, 2005; 2004) and corporate entrepreneurship (Kuratko *et al*, 2005; Kuratko and Goldsby, 2004; Hornsby, Kuratko and Zahra, 2002).

Recently however there have been calls for research in their roles in the organisational interface (Teulier and Rouleau, 2010; Kodama, 2002). Their strategic roles in different organisational contexts, such as firm partnerships, are yet to be explored. Moreover, the literature has focused mainly in middle managers as a broad category, failing to recognize the different roles of middle managers across organisations, and the importance that 'boundary spanning' (Teulier and Rouleau, 2010; Santos and Eisenhardt, 2009; Pappas and Wooldridge, 2007; Rouleau, 2005; Floyd and Wooldridge, 1997) roles might exhibit. Moreover, existing research has based its suggestions in the formal roles and activities they exhibit, ignoring by and large the importance that informal processes and interactions might have when middle managers execute their organisational tasks.

This section starts by presenting the building blocks of the middle management perspective and its definition. The characteristics which make middle managers crucial are then discussed, followed by their important roles in emergent strategising. The chapter continues with the presentation of their strategic roles and the influence

that they exhibit, concluding with the identification of existing research gaps which lead to the research questions investigated in this thesis.

3.5.1 The middle management perspective

The importance of middle managers' involvement and the way they affect strategy outcomes were recognised in the 1980s' (Westley, 1990; Wooldridge and Floyd, 1990; 1989; Guth and MacMillan, 1986). Middle managers contemplate top management, whose objectivity and abilities, especially in ambiguous environments, has often been questioned (Eisenhardt and Bourgeois, 1988; Lindblom, 1959). Guth and Macmillan (1986), focus in middle management behaviour, showing that their activities during strategy implementation might be driven from personal interests. Similarly, Wooldridge and Floyd (1990; 1989) suggest that the involvement of middle managers in the strategy process results in increased performance and leads in stronger consensus during decision making. Research focuses in their importance during organisational change (Canales, 2012; Pappas and Wooldridge, 2007; Kuratko *et al*, 2005; Hornsby *et al*, 2002; Huy, 2002; Floyd and Wooldridge, 1997; 1992; Dutton and Ashford, 1993), their importance in emergent strategies (Mintzberg and Waters, 1985), the micro-activities in which they engage and their upward and downward influence (Floyd and Wooldridge, 1997) and their roles in the organisational interplay (Wooldridge and Canales, 2010). Their importance however was ignored in the first years of strategy process research.

During the 1960s and 1970s the strategic actors within companies were the top managers and senior executives, regarded as 'heroic' or 'extraordinary' individuals who were running companies (Andrews, 1971; Mintzberg, 1968; Chandler, 1962). Research linked top manager characteristics and firm performance, resulting in the 'upper echelons theory' (Hambrick, 2007; Miller *et al*, 2004; Carpenter, Geletkanycz and Sanders, 2004; Hambrick and Mason, 1984). The concept of top down, deliberate strategies however started being accused of ignoring the actual industrial environment, and the increasingly important rate of organisational changes within

modern companies (Eisenhardt and Bourgeois, 1988; Mintzberg and Waters, 1985; Pascale, 1984). The increased environmental turbulence implied that decision making was not a rational approach (Allison, 1971) but it was influenced from different factors, including politics and middle managers (Guth and Macmillan, 1986; Pettigrew, 1975). Discontinuous change rates resulted in difficulties for executives to follow and implement strategies, especially in knowledge intensive industries (Eisenhardt and Bourgeois, 1988; Burgelman, 1983a). Within this ‘bottom-up’ strategy process, actors from middle organisational levels, started gaining importance (Wooldridge and Floyd, 1989; Burgelman, 1983a,b; Mintzberg, 1978).

3.5.2 Definition of middle managers

Middle managers are the ‘actors who combine access to top management with knowledge of operations’ (Schmid, Wooldridge and Floyd, 2010: 143). They have access both to the top management and the lower managerial levels, which enables them to exhibit influence in both directions (Floyd and Wooldridge, 1992). They are involved in the everyday operations of organisations, which enables them to be aware of the processes occurring within companies, and different interactions taking place between employees (Huy, 2002). This is contemplated by the fact that they possess up-to-date technical knowledge (Burgelman, 1983a;b). Within organisational charts, middle managers include general line managers, functional line managers, and team or project-based executives, among others (Wooldridge *et al*, 2008). The next section discusses in details the reasons for their importance within organisations.

3.5.2.1 Middle manager position

The position of middle managers is crucial, because it enables them to communicate and influence different organisational levels (Huy, 2002; Floyd and Wooldridge, 1997). On the one hand, they exhibit upward influence, through issue selling and agenda control to the top managers (Dutton, Ashford, O’Neill and Lawrence, 2001). They can be motivated from their personal interests (Dutton and Ashford, 1993) and

group interests (Laine and Vaara, 2007), which can have positive (Kodama, 2002; Burgelman, 1983a;b) or negative (Laine and Vaara, 2007; Marginson, 2002) effects in organisations. On the other hand, their position enable them to good knowledge of the company operations (Burgelman, 1983b) and employees' relationships (Huy, 2002). As a result, they can affect lower level employees in different ways (Balogun and Johnson, 2004). Such influence however has only been investigated in single organisations, focusing in the internal environment, examining their formal activities and practices.

3.5.2.2 Middle manager knowledge

Middle managers possess extensive knowledge, which makes them crucial for the development of organisational knowledge (Kodama, 2002; Schilit, 1987; Burgelman, 1983a; Bower, 1970). On the one hand, they know well the dynamics and the relationships which develop between employees (Huy, 2002), which enables them to know strategic actors and their motivations, which are crucial, especially in cases where organisational change is required (Rouleau, 2005; Balogun and Johnson, 2004). Similarly, they have extensive knowledge of the existing competition and current technological advancements (Burgelman, 1983a,b), enabling them to identify the need for organisational change, which they can then advocate to the top management (Mintzberg and Waters, 1985), making their roles crucial in bottom-up strategising processes.

The combination of these factors enables them to act as mediatators (Burgelman, 1994; Nonaka, 1994; Bartlett and Ghoshal, 1993). They can communicate in different horizontal and vertical levels, combining tacit and explicit knowledge (Wooldridge and Canales, 2010; Nonaka, 1994). Their role in the distribution of knowledge resources within organisations is crucial (Bartlett and Ghoshal, 1993). These roles become even more crucial in fast-changing environments (Eisenhardt and Bourgeois, 1988). Burgelman (1994) stretches the importance of middle management because of their intermediate role between higher and lower managerial levels, during the

development of core competencies in an IT company. This meditative role however has been stretched only within single companies, with the impact that it can have in different environments largely ignored.

3.5.2.3 Middle managers and emergent strategising

The combination of knowledge and everyday involvement that middle managers exhibit is crucial for bottom-up strategies (Canales, 2012; Pappas and Wooldridge, 2007; Boyett and Currie, 2004; Mintzberg and Waters, 1985). Their importance in this process is two-fold. They have the advantage of grasping a change they did not design and negotiating the details with others equally removed from the strategic decision making (Balogun and Johnson, 2004:543). By engaging in sense making and sense giving activities (Gioia and Chittipeddi, 1991), they can perform and manage organisational changes (Lüscher and Lewis, 2008). Even though sometimes role conflict might be created, organisations can overcome it through the use of the appropriate control mechanisms (Floyd and Lane, 2000). They are highly important during organisational change, where traditional research has proven that employees from different organisational levels tend to exhibit resistance to change (Laine and Vaara, 2006).

Their importance in emergent strategies is also a result of the fact that they can engage in corporate entrepreneurship activities. Hornsby *et al* (2002) focus in the internal environment of corporations, suggesting the crucial role that companies' internal environments have for the development of entrepreneurial initiatives. Similarly, Kuratko *et al* (2005) suggest a conceptual model which shows the relation of organisational antecedents with their entrepreneurial behaviour and the impact it has in individual and organisational outcomes. Their activities here are again a result of their access to the top management and the strong knowledge they possess on companies' resources (Birkinshaw, 1997; Burgelman, 1983a, c). Even though their importance in entrepreneurial activities and emergent strategies has been recognised, studies in this area tend to be content-related, having largely ignored the way that such opportunities are uncovered and the way they are implemented.

It is clear that middle managers have an important role in the crucial processes of organisational change and corporate entrepreneurship. This however is a result of the influence they exhibit in both horizontal and vertical directions, which is developed in the next section.

3.5.3 The strategic influence of middle managers

The organisational position that middle managers have, combined with the strong knowledge of current issues in the industry they belong, and the strong relations they develop with middle and lower level managers results on them having the ability to exhibit upward and downward influence (Canales, 2012; Wooldridge and Canales, 2010; Laine and Vaara, 2007; Dutton, Ashford, O'Neil and Lawrence, 2001; Floyd and Wooldridge, 1997; 1992). This influence however can have both positive (Sillince and Mueller, 2007; Kuratko and Goldsby, 2004; Dess, 1987) and negative (Westley, 1990; Guth and MacMillan, 1986) effect in company performance. The existing research has stretched the importance of these activities, which result on them having specific roles, presented on the next section.

3.5.3.1 Reasons for their importance

As it is evident, middle managers, because of their positions, they have crucial strategic roles within companies. Floyd and Wooldridge (1997;1992), based in the organisational typology that Miles and Snow (1978) suggest, they classified these roles, according to the direction of the influence of the activities of middle managers, and the impact that their cognitive aspects have in their behaviour. The direction of their activities can be either upward or downward (Floyd and Wooldridge, 1997). Their cognition however is crucial, as it drives their activities (Sillince and Mueller, 2007; Ketokivi and Castaner, 2004). The combination of these factors resulted on four different strategic roles of middle managers. These roles include championing, implementing, facilitating and synthesizing strategic directions. The next section analyses these roles in depth.

3.5.3.2 Implementation

Implementing strategic activities according to the directions and the choices of the top management is a key activity of middle managers (Nutt, 1987; Hambrick and Mason, 1984; Schendel and Hofer, 1979; Andrews, 1971). These are part of their everyday obligations, and they are assigned the organisational power and resources to implement them (Balogun and Johnson, 2004; Child and McGrath, 2001). Such activities include supervision of subordinates towards and translation of goals into action plans (Floyd and Wooldridge, 1992).

Though the years however, researchers recognised that their roles extend further than a simple implementation of strategic directions (Canales, 2012; Rouleau, 2005; Balogun and Johnson, 2005; 2004; Beatty and Lee, 1992; Burgelman, 1983a; Bower, 1970). Balogun and Johnson (2004) focusing in the roles of middle managers during organisational change, suggested that the way they implement strategies is affected from by the engagement in sense making in sense giving activities (Gioia and Chittipedi, 1991). Rouleau (2005) suggested that middle managers engage mainly in four micro practices during change: they translate orientation of the change to their subordinates, they overcode the strategy, the discipline clients and they justify changes. In a similar fashion, Huy (2002) stretched that importance that middle managers can have in balancing employees' emotions, while implementing strategic changes. Moreover, Vilà and Canales (2008) found that the implementation of strategies from middle managers could be greatly enhanced through their participation in strategic planning, as this inclusion resulted in higher appreciation of the organisational priorities and goals. Meyer (2006) focusing in the post-integration phase of a merger, suggesting that the successful implementation can depend in tensions created between intrafirm middle managers, which the top management is unable to mediate. All these studies make clear their strategic roles, which extend further than strategy implementation. Further research focusing in their micro-

activities and practices is required, as knowledge in their informal practices and in different organisational contexts is limited.

3.5.3.3 Facilitating

Apart from the implementation of strategy, middle managers have been also crucial in facilitating organisational change (Rouleau, 2005; Balogun and Johnson, 2004; Huy, 2002; Beatty and Lee, 1992). This results from the strong knowledge of organisational structures and processes that they have, which enables them to advance organisational learning through sense making and sense giving (Balogun and Johnson, 2004). This results from the good understanding of the emotions of their subordinates, which they can use to facilitate the change process, by focusing in 'emotion balancing' (Huy, 2002). In such environments the transformational leadership they might exhibit can be more effective as compared to leaders who focus more in the technical aspects of strategic change (Beatty and Lee, 1992).

Existing research has focused in change management within single organisations (Balogun and Johnson, 2004; Burgelman, 1991) focusing in the formal practices of middle managers during this process (Teulier and Rouleau, 2010; Rouleau, 2005; Jarzabkowski, 2003). Burgelman (1991) researches the roles of middle managers in organisational change in a high tech company, while Teulier and Rouleau (2010) research the micro activities of middle managers in a large engineering company. Similarly, Jarzabkowski (2003) investigates organisational change by focusing in formal strategic practices, linking them with the continuity of strategic activity. Recently however, Balogun and Johnson (2004) observed that middle managers engage in informal activities to fulfil their facilitation role. Moreover, Teulier and Rouleau (2010) through the investigation of boundary spanning position of middle managers, suggest that further research should be conducted in non-traditional organisational settings to understand better their formal and informal activities.

3.5.3.4 Synthesizing

Another role that middle managers exhibit is this of synthesizing information to transmit it to the higher managerial levels (Dutton, Ashford, O'Neil and Lawrence, 2001; King *et al*, 2001; Floyd and Wooldridge, 1992; Westley, 1990; Nonaka, 1988; Thompson, 1967). Within this role, managers collect information from the lower managerial levels, and transmit it to the higher levels, as part of their daily activities (Nonaka, 1988). Their importance in collecting and evaluating information is a result of their intermediate position, their up to date knowledge of technical issues and the high awareness they depict concerning organisational dynamics (King *et al*, 2001). As result, they can transmit information to the higher organisational levels, by translating its meaning to subjective interpretations, which are heavily dependent in their cognitive characteristics and their personal agendas (Laine and Vaara, 2006; Ling, Floyd and Baldrige, 2005; Dutton, Ashford, O'Neil and Lawrence, 2001; Ranson, Hinings and Greenwood, 1980).

This activity of middle managers is highly related to internal and external environmental scanning activities (Kuratko *et al*, 2005; Birkinshaw *et al*, 2005; Burgelman, 1994). In the internal environment, these activities involve mainly collection from the lower managerial levels, which is crucial during periods of strategic change (Rouleau, 2005). This activity is crucial as in such contexts middle managers can respond to the change recipients' need for continuity (Huy, 2002). Similarly, Currie and Procter (2001) showed that the activities of middle managers are highly dependent on the information they possess and the way they perceive that stakeholders expect them to behave, making clear their significance in the internal company environment.

In the external environment of corporations however, these activities are highly related to the creation of organisational knowledge (Burgelman, 1994). The importance of information collection activities appears to increase in distant organisational subdivisions, such as subsidiaries (Laine and Vaara, 2007; Samra-

Fredericks, 2003) and decentralised organisations (Mangaliso, 1995). Moreover, it can be crucial for the creation of emergent turnaround strategies (Burgelman, 1994). Research has starting focusing in the discursive practices that middle managers exhibit during information transmission (Laine and Vaara, 2007). These studies have focused in single organisations, having ignored the importance that middle managers can have. Moreover, clear distinctions between formal and informal information collection activities are missing. This research gap can be attributed to the research assumptions that this activity is under the formal obligations that middle managers engage (Nonaka, 1988), which however creates space for inquiry on the informal activities they engage and their outcomes.

3.5.3.5 Championing

The extensive information collection activities, as a result of their synthesizing role in which middle managers engage enables them to champion ideas and business opportunities to the higher levels of organisations (Kuratko *et al*, 2005; Mantere, 2005; Marginson, 2002; Floyd and Woodridge, 1992; Bower, 1970). A main activity within this role has to do with information and ideas gathering from lower operating levels. This information, combined with creativity and detailed knowledge of technological advancements (Bower, 1970) can result in the development of business ideas to the top managerial levels (Floyd and Wooldridge, 1992).

Championing is related to the corporate entrepreneurship activities that middle managers exhibit (Kuratko *et al*, 2005; Hornsby *et al*, 2002; Marginson, 2002), which however depends on several factors. Kuratko *et al* (2005) based in their earlier works (Naffziger, Hornsby, and Kuratko, 1994; Hornsby, Naffziger, Kuratko, and Montagno 1993), suggested the roles that middle managers can have in corporate entrepreneurship. They did so by linking organisational antecedents (e.g. management support, time availability, level of autonomy), their entrepreneurial actions (endorsing and refining of opportunities, resource concentration and deployment) and individual (e.g. career advancement) and organisational outcomes

(e.g. creation of entrepreneurial culture, economic success or losses). Similarly, Hornsby *et al*, (2002) identifies five factors which affect entrepreneurial activities: top management support, work discretion and autonomy, rewards and reinforcement and time availability and organisational boundaries. Both studies however had specific restrictions: the former paper was conceptual, lacking empirical evidence, while the later was content-related study, missing the dynamics and the processes that underlie corporate entrepreneurship activities. This however meant that more qualitative focus would be required in order to understand better the corporate entrepreneurship activities in which they engage.

As the research in their championing roles has been developing however, recent papers have used different theoretical lenses, such as the network theory (Pappas and Wooldridge, 2007; Kodama, 2002; Floyd and Wooldridge, 1999). Research here focuses in the use of the personal networks of subsidiaries in the development of opportunities. Floyd and Wooldridge (1997; 1992) conceptualise corporate entrepreneurship as a process where middle managers have a central role in building knowledge domains, extending social networks and acquiring resources. Kodama (2002) enhances the important role that middle managers have been attributed in entrepreneurship, by developing a case study which was showing their importance in leading informal strategic networks for open innovation in the IT industry. Having recognised the middle managers potential in corporate entrepreneurship, Kuratko and Goldsby (2004) conceptualise the organisational barriers that middle managers can face in developing such behaviours. In addition, they suggest that in order to overcome these barriers they should exhibit behaviours over the official roles they possess, which could raise ethical issues, concluding that firms should endorse such behaviours by establishing the required flexibility in order to make employees engage in innovation and risk taking, without exhibiting unethical behaviour. Even though the paper is largely conceptual, it makes clear that middle managers have the potential to shape the strategic direction, through formal and informal activities, which however would embed an ethical risk. This concept however remains largely unexplored, while the roles that boundary spanning middle managers might exhibit in seizing corporate opportunities is somehow ignored.

The crucial roles of middle managers in influencing and implementing strategies are clear. The majority of existing research in these roles however has focused in their activities, ignoring distinctions between formal and informal practices. With the term 'informal', the 'behaviours which occur outside of the 'official' governance apparatus and procedures of an organization, or are aimed at gaining power over that official apparatus' (James, 2006:1), as mentioned in section 3.2.2.4. Informal activities seem to be strongly related to political behaviour within organisations (Laine and Vaara, 2007; Eisenhardt and Bourgeois, 1988) which has implications about their impact in corporate performance. Kodama (2002) suggests that informal activities can enhance creativity in new product development during an inter-organisational collaboration. Similarly, Balogun and Johnson (2004:546) recognise the importance of informal interactions during strategic change, where 'stories, gossip and rumour; behaviours and actions; discussions and negotiations; and sharing of personal experiences and interpretations of change' are crucial for its success. It is clear that a distinction between formal and informal activities might provide fruitful insights in middle management research.

Moreover, existing research has ignored the roles of middle managers in the *organisational interface* (Teulier and Rouleau, 2010; Santos and Eisenhardt, 2009; Pappas and Wooldridge, 2007; Kodama, 2002; Floyd and Wooldridge, 1997). The importance of boundary spanning positions as a source of influence has been recognised from the early days of sociology and management (Brass, 1984; Jemison, 1984; Tushman and Romanelli 1983; Aiken and Hage, 1972). Having identified the emerging need for research in such positions, Rouleau (2005) focuses in their roles in the organisational interface and activities they engage to 'sell' organisational change to customers. Pappas and Wooldridge (2007) showed the crucial roles that boundary spanning managers can have in idea generation and with activities that can challenge 'the dominant logic' of organisations. Such positions are crucial however as they enable them to have a mediating role in balancing environmental uncertainty and organisational arrangements, which result on these roles turning to sources of power

(Floyd and Wooldridge, 1992; Astley and Sachdeva, 1984). Most studies however have been conducted within single companies, and it is only recently that the focus of research has shifted in different organisational forms (Teulier and Rouleau, 2010; Santos and Eisenhardt, 2009; Kodama, 2002). Firm relationships have different shapes and organisational structures however, and it is expected that research in different organisational contexts can provide fruitful insights about the strategic roles of boundary spanning actors in different environments.

3.5.4 Middle management literature summary

The previous section made clear the different strategic roles that have been attributed to middle managers. The importance of middle managers results mainly from the intermediary position which they have, which can help them be crucial in the information transmission of between different organisational levels. Moreover, the fact that they have active role in strategy implementation makes them gain crucial technical knowledge. Though their direct involvement in the everyday operations of companies however, they have also a sound knowledge of the relations between employees and can be crucial in resolving conflicts and balancing emotions, especially in periods of organisations change. All these activities however have been mainly researched in the environment of single organisations. This study however will attempt to advance theory by focusing in the strategic roles that middle managers exhibit in the organisational interface. This will be contemplated through a clear distinction between their formal and informal activities, which has not yet been researched explicitly in the strategy literature.

3.6 Synthesis, research questions and theoretical framework

The previous sections investigated in depth the impact of politics and the roles that middle managers have, as these have been documented in the existing literature. These two factors have been identified as crucial in emergent strategising within the strategy process literature, as this was developed in chapter two. The importance of

these two different factors have not yet been explicitly identified in firm partnerships, as these have been investigated up to this date in the International Business literature (section 2.5). The convergence of all these different research elements leads to the creation of the theoretical framework of this study (figure two).

As it can be seen from figure two, several factors have been identified as affecting the strategy process. These include individual perceptions, the role of the top management team, the role of discourse, the impact of politics and the strategic roles of middle managers, among others. However, there are still gaps in strategy research concerning the way that these factors impact strategy making, especially concerning emerging strategies. Specifically, there is still a disagreement over the nature and the impact of politics. On the other hand, the importance of middle managers in boundary spanning positions has been recently recognised, with further research required in this area. Research however has been conducted in single organisations mainly, implying that studies in different contexts might be able to provide further insights about these factors.

This can be done through research in partnerships, which have been widely investigated in the international business literature. The percentage of partnerships which are characterised from failure is still very high. The majority of the research however has been content-related, and as a result there have been calls for the use of more qualitative studies in order to understand better partnership dynamics. The current study will attempt to fill these research gaps, through use of an abductive research strategy, to explore the impact of politics and middle managers in the strategy process. Simultaneously, it will investigate the processes and activities surrounding the different phases of partnerships, attempting to obtain a better understanding of their dynamics (figure two). Moreover, from a strategy perspective, the fact that partnerships are increasing constantly, makes necessary their further research in order to understand the emerging corporate environment (Kale and Singh, 2009; Santos and Eisenhardt, 2009; Schilling, 2008; Hagedoorn, 2002; Freeman and

Hagedoorn, 1994). As a result, research on this area is important, as it can enhance the understanding of the changing competitive environment, which appears to be increasingly based in company relationships.

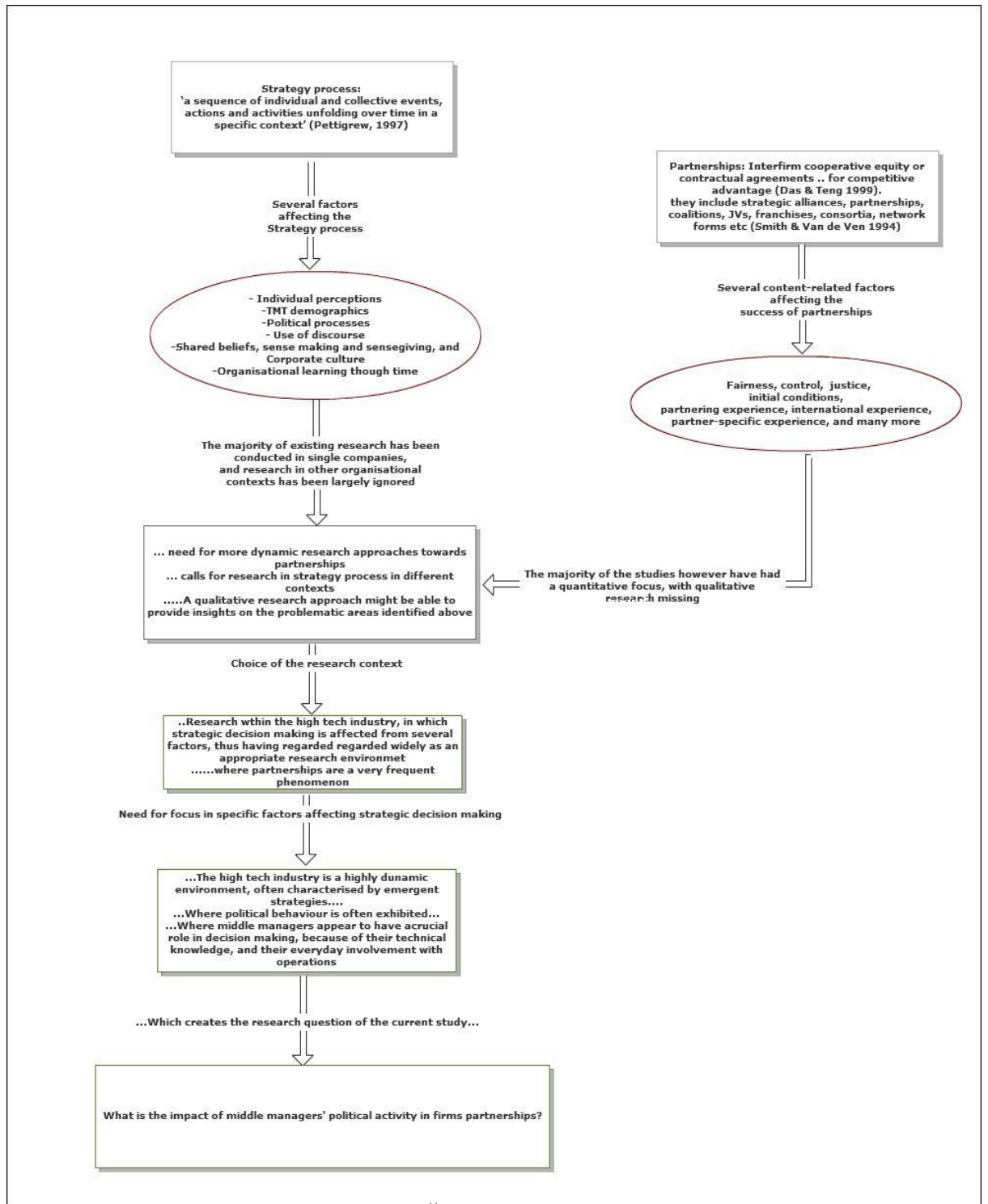


Figure two: The theoretical framework of the current study. Different factors affect strategic processes. These include, among others, the top management, organisational learning and the use of discourse, mainly investigated in single firms. Partnerships have been increasing in the recent years, with their failure rates remaining high, and calls are made for more qualitative research approaches. Partnerships occur more often in highly dynamic and constantly changing industries, such as the high tech industry. This leads to the research gap of this study: The micro-aspects of strategy process are not well understood, and their focused investigation within partnerships might provide fruitful results on their nature and their impact. The specific focus will be in two factors, these being middle managers and politics, as these appear to be of higher importance in emergent strategies which occur often in uncertain environments, such as the high tech industry.

The research question of this study is:

‘What is the impact of middle managers’ political processes in firm partnerships?’

A further breakdown of the main research question can lead to the following subquestions:

1. What are the *roles* of middle managers in firm partnerships?
2. In which *tactics* do middle managers engage in order to exhibit their political behaviour?
3. How do these roles inform strategic decisions, in the *different phases* of partnerships?

3.7 Chapter conclusion

The current study aims to fulfil research gaps in the strategy process, through its investigation in firm partnerships. In order to do so, this chapter reviewed two factors which are crucial for strategising. These are the political processes and the middle managers. The current chapter reviewed existing literature on these two factors. Specifically, it reviewed the findings on the impact of politics, followed by an overview of the roles of middle managers within companies. The impact of these factors can be investigated in strategic decisions within firm partnerships, as these appear to be an emerging area of interest in the strategy process. Such an approach

aims to improve understanding in strategy dynamics and firm performance, while simultaneously investigating the underlying process of firm partnerships, which are characterised by high failure rates. The following section overviews the research methods used in this study.

Chapter Four: Research Methodology

4.1 Introduction

The current section presents the methodology used to research the impact of political processes and the roles of middle management in firm partnerships. In the beginning, the philosophical considerations which underpin the selected research approach are discussed, followed by a presentation of the case study method. The case companies and partnerships of this study are then introduced, followed by a presentation of the data collection methods used. The chapter continues by explaining the analytical techniques used in the different phases of data collection. In the last section, the research design evaluation criteria and the ethical considerations of this study are addressed.

4.2 Research Philosophy

The current section presents the research philosophy of this study. Research philosophy is crucial, as it has implications for the design of the data collection and analysis methods, as explained on figure three. The section starts by introducing different research paradigms, followed by a discussion of different research strategies. The notion of abductive research is then explained in more depth, and the section concludes with an overview of case study research.

4.2.1 Research paradigms

A paradigm is a group of beliefs and assumptions, which varies across disciplines, dictating the objects being studied, the ways that studies are conducted and the methods used for the interpretation of findings (Guba, 1990; Ritzer, 1975; Kuhn, 1970). The ontological paradigm followed in this research is constructivist, regarding social phenomena and their symbolic meanings being created by social actors. These are not only affected from the social interactions of different agents; They are constantly being revised by the agents using them, through space and time. In other

words, social phenomena do not exist independently from social actors. As a result, an external examination of an organisation, assuming that all people regard reality in similar ways, which could be used under an objectivist paradigm, is not appropriate for this study.

Constructivist paradigms accept that similar situations can be described differently from different agents, because of the subjective nature of truth. Instead, strategic processes are regarded as being deeply embedded in constant processes and structures which occur and affect the phenomena being studied. Specifically, the researcher attempts to investigate political processes and middle managers in companies' strategic relationships, by examining individuals in the internal side of organisations. The chosen paradigm, which will guide the epistemology of this study, and other research choices (figure three), helps the researcher to explore in depth the development of interfirm strategic relations, as this is regarded as a socially constructed product. This means that some of the data which will be obtained might differ, due to individual characteristics of the respondents, and the contextual aspects of each situation being discussed. However through use of multiple participants, who are directly involved in the different phases of a partnership, the researcher will be able to identify the evolution of informal processes, and the way they affect firm relationships, having on mind that the way they view decisions and situations will differ.

The constructivist approach stretches the relativism of agents in shaping social reality, who understand facts based in socially constructed categories within specific realities of a local level (Lincoln and Guba, 2000). This view opposes objectivism, which assumes that social phenomena and the meanings that they are attributed are independent of the existence of social agents, as they can not influence them. Political processes however have been regarded as both positive and negative phenomena in the existing literature, which makes clear the different interpretations that have been attributed to them (Pettewe *et al*, 2000; Eisenhardt and Bourgeois,

1988; Pfeffer 1981; Bacharach and Lawler, 1980; Mayes and Allen, 1977). In a similar fashion, the roles of middle managers have been attributed different importance within organisational contexts (Teulier and Rouleau, 2010; Rouleau, 2005; Floyd and Wooldridge, 1997; 1992). It is clear that reality is constantly affected by subjective perceptions and evaluations of different agents; Actions and roles will be strongly influenced by the personal constructions of each social agent, who will then construct personal meanings and interpretations through their –formal and informal- personal interactions. For the current study, political processes and middle management activities are expected to be heavily influenced from the social interactions and meanings that actors attribute to these phenomena. The knowledge of this fact will enable the researcher to isolate, to an extent, subjective social constructions concerning political processes and the roles of middle managers from objective representations of reality, and examine their occurrence in more depth.

The separation of the subjective constructions of actors, and a better understanding of the real impact of political processes and the strategic roles of middle managers, will result from the use of an interpretivist epistemology (Schwandt, 2000; Fay, 1996). *Interpretivism* assumes that the object of sociological research –these being individual actors and institutions- are different from the research objects of natural sciences, and as a result they require to be researched with different ways (Schwandt, 2000; Silverman, 2000; 1993; Patton, 1990; Schultz, 1962). This approach is based on the assumption that understanding is based on the interpretation of information on events, activities and interactions, by the people experiencing them (Langley, 1999; Gioia, and Chittipedi, 1991; Rabinow and Sullivan, 1979). The interpretivist paradigm, which will guide the choices over the research design (figure three), stems from the ontological view that reality is created and given meaning by individuals, often restrained by the goal that individual actors want to achieve (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Lowe, 1991).

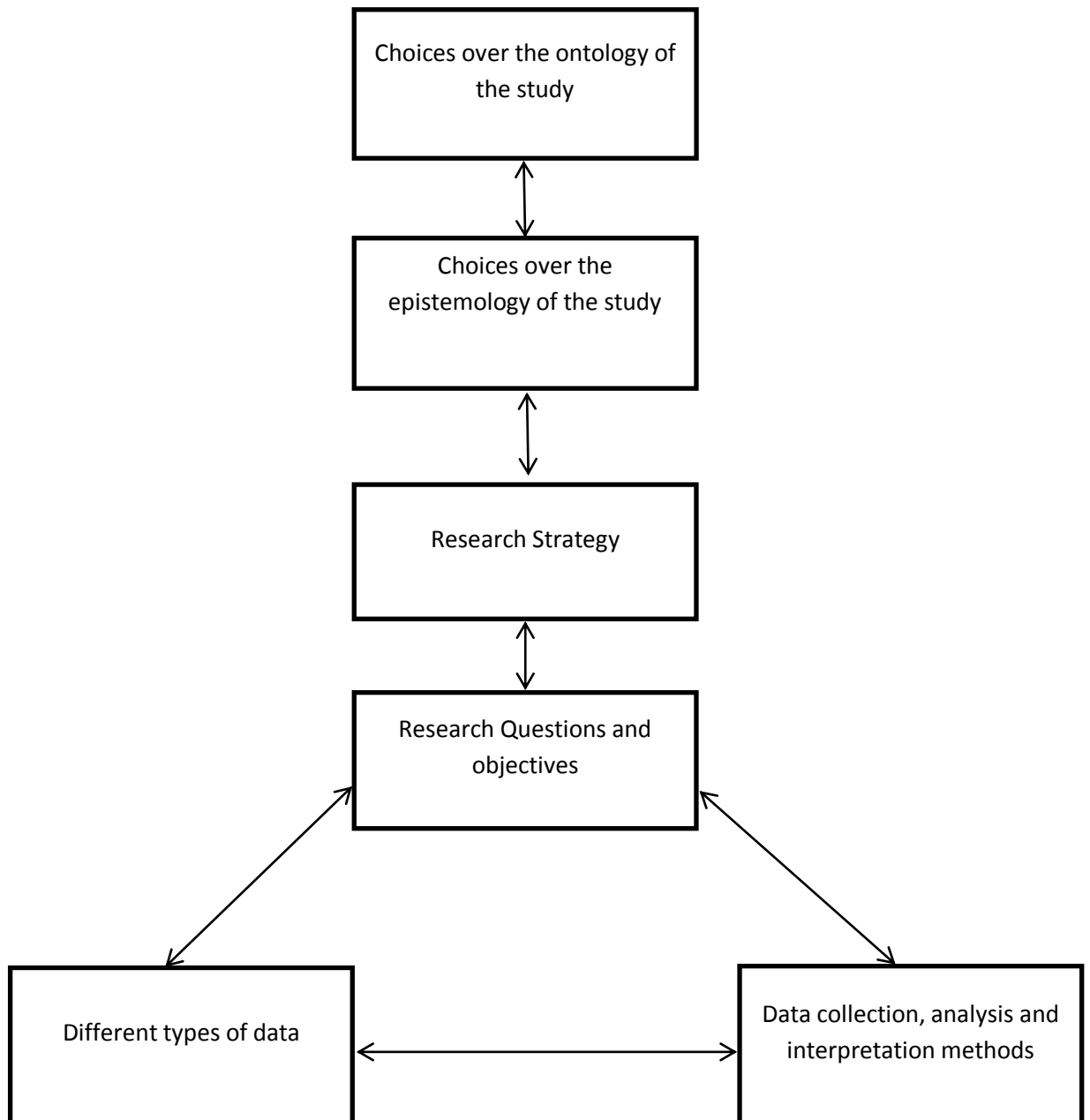


Figure three: The interdependence between the Ontology, Epistemology, Research Strategy, and the data collection and analysis methods of a study. Adapted from Andersen and Skaates (2004)

An alternative epistemological paradigm is *positivism*, where social world exists independently of the meanings and the actions that individual agents provide to structures (Flick, 2009; Schwandt, 2000), based in the early works of Comte (1844) and Durkheim (1895). As a result, findings can be interpreted through the use of scientific methods used in natural sciences (Guba, 1990), which can help the revelation of patterns and themes which tend to be covered by the complex

interactions and structures of the real world (Moses and Knutsen, 2007). At this point it is important to make clear that these two schools are not ‘polar opposites’ (Silverman, 1993:22). Instead, they shall be regarded as two alternative paradigms, which complete the gaps that each has, through their similarities and differences. Table nine offers detailed insights on the fundamental similarities and differences of the two paradigms.

Positivism is regarded as a prescriptive research approach on the ways that science shall be conducted (Delanty and Strydom, 2003). This is in opposition with interpretive epistemological worldviews, as social phenomena are regarded as difficult to be objectively determined. The difficulty in determining them creates obstacles in the calculation of its properties and characteristics, which is the case in natural sciences. In such cases, prescriptive research approaches do not seem able to uncover the deep relations and interactions which are evident in the real world. As a result, interpretivist research approaches, which accept that there is no single real world, but instead that truth is subjective, is more appropriate for underexplored research areas. Findings of such a research approach will be the result of complex processes and interactions which involve different interpretations and meanings though time and space, making the application of naturalistic methods of inquiry insufficient.

Moreover, interpretivist approaches seem to be more appropriate for context-rich qualitative research projects (table nine). Such projects tend to be characterised by subjectivity in all their different phases. Interpretivist approaches however enable the separation of subjective interpretations of reality, as they focus in the totality of each situation, by gathering information through many different sources, bearing in mind that individual perceptions affect worldviews. Researchers here can focus in the observation of patterns between different respondents, which enable the focus on deep meanings and embedded processes, in order to make theoretical suggestions (Silverman, 2000; 1993; Easterby-Smith *et al.*, 1991). Research has proven that

organisations consist of several embedded processes and structures, operating in turbulent competitive environments. Therefore, interpretative research approaches are regarded as suitable to investigate the political processes and the roles of middle managers occurring within partnerships.

In the current research, an interpretive approach is the most, as it will assist the understanding of activities of strategic actors, across space and time. Essentially, this implies that the roles of middle management and the impact of political processes are to be derived from the framework of interpretations and meaning provided by the members of the organisations being examined. Through the combination of the interpretations provided from different actors, a better understanding on middle managers politics might be enabled. A basic comparison of these two research philosophies is presented in table nine.

Research philosophy and approaches		
Paradigm	Interpretivist	Positivist
Scientific underpinnings	Sociological methods of inquiry	Naturalistic methods of inquiry primarily, with a few also related to sociological methods of inquiry
Ontology	Person (researcher) and reality are interrelated	Person and reality are independent
Epistemology	Scientific knowledge is created through the lived experiences of researchers	Reality is objective and extends beyond the human conscience and mind
Basic assumption	Reality and knowledge of the world is influenced by the subjective evaluations of researchers related to their lived experiences	Reality, knowledge, phenomena and science are objective, independent and measurable
Concepts	Social constructions and subjective meanings	Social structures and social facts
Final research aim	Provision of broader versions of theory	Relationships between variables
Research Focus	Individuals and groups	Large groups and the society primarily. Focus on individuals and small groups where required

Reporting	Long, interpretive case studies with focus on context and case-specific attributes	Scientific reporting
Approach	Qualitative, theory-building research approach, where researcher can end up in directions and findings which were unexpected	Quantitative, theory-deductive research approach. Researchers use research methods from natural sciences in order to draw conclusion, which will be limited as the data analysed is restricted within specific contexts
Characteristics	<p>Flexible, less structured</p> <p>Target is to understand the meaning that humans attach to events, as well as to the research context</p> <p>Theory-building</p> <p>Researcher is a part of the research process</p> <p>Generalisation less important, in favour of exploration</p> <p>Data can offer analytical generalisation mainly</p> <p>Qualitative and Quantitative data</p>	<p>Structured, target is operationalisation of concepts, to ensure clarity of definitions</p> <p>Based on natural sciences research methods, testing, fact and reasoning needed to explain causal relationships</p> <p>Theory testing</p> <p>Researcher is independent of the research object</p> <p>Sample sizes shall be enough to justify generalisations</p> <p>Data can offer statistical generalisation</p> <p>Quantitative data mainly</p>

Table nine: Differences between positivism and interpretivism. The table describes the differences of two main research paradigms. It compares them in different aspects, concerning their ontology, epistemology, the use of basic assumptions, the way they are reported, the research approaches which are associated with them, and some of their general characteristics. Adapted from: Bryman and Bell, (2007); Denzin and Lincoln, (2000); Silverman, (1993)

The current section explained in depth the research philosophy that will govern the design of this whole study. Specifically, the research follows an interpretive paradigm, accepting that reality can be regarded in different ways and it can largely

contextual, thus having a strong subjective nature. This will help the understanding of the middle management political activities, and the impact they can have within partnerships. In the section, the research strategy of this study will be discussed.

4.2.2 Research strategy

The previous section made clear that an interpretivist research philosophy is followed in this study. The current section presents in more depth the different research strategies that can be used in social research, and justifies the choice of these which were deemed more appropriate for the current study.

4.2.2.1. Qualitative and quantitative research

This research paper adopts a qualitative approach to investigate organisational politics and the roles of middle managers in the different phases of firm partnerships. Such approaches are required when the researcher wants to investigate in depth context-rich phenomena (Shepherd and Sutcliffe, 2011; Weber, 2004; Cassell and Redman, 2001; Van Maanen, 1983) and have a holistic perspective for the phenomena being investigated (Patton, 1990). Qualitative research has its base in the sociological work of the Chicago school in the 1920s and 1930s (Denzin and Lincoln, 1998). It can be defined as ‘...an array of interpretative techniques which seek to describe, decode, translate and otherwise come to terms with the meaning, not frequency of certain...phenomena in the social world’, (Van Maanen, 1983: 9). Here the researcher acts as *Bricoleur* (Denzin and Lincoln, 1998; Nelson, Treichler and Grossberg, 1992; Weinstein and Weinstein, 1991; Lévi-Strauss, 1966), aiming to provide solutions and responses to pragmatic situations, by the combination of ‘pieced together, close-knit set of practices’ (Denzin and Lincoln, 1998a:3). In the current study, through the use of a qualitative strategy, the informal processes and the roles that different managers possess within partnerships can be identified and traced through the time. Moreover, the use of different qualitative methods of data

collection can enable the researcher to shed light in the unofficial processes and the mechanisms which affect these two factors.

Qualitative methodology is used frequently in the strategy process field (Golsorkhi *et al*, 2010; Langley 2010; Chia and Mackay 2007; Balogun and Johnson, 2004; 2005; Chakravarthy *et al*, 2003; Langley, 1999), as it enable the exploration of areas which could not be captured through quantitative techniques, who mainly focus in relationships between variables, attempting to explaining phenomena through numerical differences along different dimensions, activities or backgrounds (Flick, 2009; Ghauri, 2004; Guba, 1990). Quantitative research approaches often require large sample sizes and are characterised by a difficulty in understanding and interpreting their statistical results because of the complexity of multivariate research methods (Cepeda and Martin, 2005; Ragin, 1997; Van Maanen, 1988). As a result, they ignore postmodernist sensitivities about different ways of knowing the truth and acquiring knowledge (Lincoln and Guba, 2000; Denzin and Lincoln, 1998). On the other hand, qualitative research is ‘...capable of providing meaningful insight into the complex, dynamic, interrelated nature of social systems and the processes by which they are produced and reproduced’(Westwood, 2004:74), and enables researchers to get much deeper insights on the phenomena being researched.

Another feature of quantitative techniques is that they eliminate researchers on the information which will be acquired, as it is all known in advance (Bryman and Bell, 2007; Becker, 1993). This fact restricts researchers from the observation of patterns which they would not have asked for, and as a result, they eliminate the probabilities of unexpected findings. Qualitative methods however enable researchers to capture opinions and thoughts of individuals (Wengraf, 2001; Denzin and Lincoln, 1998), and be open to ‘surprises’ which can lead to unexpected findings and theory creation (Silverman, 2010; 1993; Miles and Huberman, 1994). The exploration of strategic processes in firm partnerships is such an area. The use of qualitative approaches can

help the exploration of this area, being open to different and unexpected insights, which will help the better understanding of this phenomenon.

One more difference between qualitative and quantitative approaches is the objectivity that each of the two methods involves (Flick, 2009; Patton, 1990; Krenz and Sax, 1986). Qualitative methods have been long accused of subjectivity, with several implications for its generalisability (Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Mitchell, 1983). Contrary, quantitative methods have been regarded as more objective, because of the use of positivistic, value-free approaches (Denzin and Lincoln, 1998). This is not always true however. The human researcher intervention in the design and the construction of the research tools can also result in subjectivity (Patton, 1990). According to the constructivist ontology and the qualitative epistemological view of this study however, reality can not be perceived similarly from all actors. Being in agreement with the interpretivist paradigm, multiple truths and realities exist, depending on the time and the context of the object being examined. This means that a qualitative approach is more suitable for the current study, as it can enable uncover political processes and their outcomes in strategy making during partnerships.

4.2.2.2 Abductive research strategies

The choice of the research strategy followed is crucial as it affects the way that researchers regard theory and its relations with their findings (Van Maanen, 1988). The different research strategies which exist attempt to overcome the disparities between qualitative and quantitative techniques. The disagreement of these two techniques, which are centred around the disagreements for clear prescriptive answers, descriptive findings, and the difference between a single and objective reality versus several subjective interpretations of reality (Shepherd and Sutcliffe, 2011; Yu, 2006; Cepeda and Martin, 2005; Langenbach, Vaughn and Aagard, 1994; Erlandson, Harris, Skipper and Allen, 1993) have implications about the research strategies that can be used.

Broadly speaking, sociological and management research has suggested three different relations between data and theory (Denzin and Lincoln, 1998a;b; Patton, 1990). *Inductive* research strategies occur when researchers want to explore in depth new phenomena, which have been ignored or not well researched in the past, aiming to provide general or universal propositions in order to build theory (Bryman and Bell, 2007; Decoo, 1996). It has been used extensively in the strategy process research (Mackay and Chia, 2013; Shepherd and Sutcliffe, 2011; Jarzabkowski and Balogun, 2010; Balogun and Johnson, 2005; 2004; Langley, 1999). It starts with specific statements about the objects being studied, aiming to conclude through the proposition of universal theories. These theories will most possibly attempt to explain the phenomena being observed through the provision of logical statements, supported by real-world data. The theory building process is interlinked with the data collected based on experiences and senses, and their roles with the object being studied.

Deduction however has as departing points existing theories and suggestions (Staat, 1993; Quine, 1982). It has been used widely in the strategy research (Sminia, 2009; Nutt, 2008; Hutzschenreuter and Kleindienst, 2006; Eisenhardt and Bourgeois, 1988). Researchers in this area focus on specific aspects of established theories, which are tested, often through the use of quantitative methods, in order to see their validity in different samples and context. Such research approaches tend to conclude with specific statements concerning the objects being investigated. This is done through the use of hypotheses which are developed at the beginning of the research, which are then tested, in order to be deduced, through the use of empirical scrutiny and rigorous tests. These two strategies however have received critique because they tend to ignore details which should be better understood, and they can often appear inappropriate to generate new knowledge (Yu, 2006; Thagard and Shelley, 1997). Similarly, these strategies do not seem to be appropriate for the current study, as it neither attempts to research a totally new field, nor to deduce existing theoretical suggestions.

The research approach adopted in this paper is *abductive*, aiming to understand and contribute to the conceptualizations of existing theories (Mantere and Ketokivi, 2013; Shepherd and Sutcliffe, 2011; Thomas, 2010; Yu, 2006; Staat, 1993; Hausman, 1993). Abduction, is a relatively newer logic of exploratory data analysis, as compared to induction and deduction. Further information about the different research approaches can be seen on table ten. Widely claimed by Peirce (1900/1960; 1883; 1878a;b; 1877), it is a kind of logical inference attempting to provide explanatory hypotheses. Through the identification of unobserved patterns within existing theories, it can help the generation of explanations for more recent developments within well-grounded theories, through their rigorous testing. Rather than having a deductive nature, it attempts to add up to existing propositions, by extending in different contexts. It represents a reconstruction of causes and inventions, while in another form, it can involve creative construction of theories (Hoffman, 1997).

Abductive approaches can result in generalizability within specific contexts (Thomas, 2010), and help understand irregularities on established theories (Mantere and Ketokivi, 2013). This limited generalizability contemplates the universal generalizability of inductive research approaches, which might not be able to grasp contextualised truths (Shepherd and Sutcliffe, 2011). By focusing in expanding theories through their contextual testing, these approaches can enhance the understanding of the phenomena being studied. Concerning the current study, political behaviour and middle management theory have already been developed within single companies. This however has not been well understood within partnerships. An abductive approach subsequently is appropriate to reconstruct existing theories for different contexts.

This research strategy corroborates inductive and deductive research approaches (table ten). Inductive research strategies require doubt from researchers, which can result from the fact that there has not yet been well developed literature in the area

where the research takes place. Through such a strategy, the theory on the area being researched is expected to further develop, accompanied with the provision of generalizable findings (Descartes, 1641/1964). Deductive approaches on the other hand require the existence of prior theoretical concepts and frameworks. Studies following such strategies will focus in specific aspects of existing theories, and, by testing them, they will attempt to see the extent that they are representing the reality (Eisenhardt and Graebner, 2007).

Abductive research strategies however have as a departing point existing conceptualisations, which aim, through theory reconstruction, to guide research about already known phenomena, which however develop in different environments (Mantere and Ketokivi, 2013; Thomas, 2010; Wirth, 1999; Staat, 1993). As a result, they can provide new insights based on existing theories, which would not be enabled through the strict use of either inductive or deductive research strategies. In other words, the current thesis investigates the impact of informal processes and the roles of the middle managers in the evolution of firm partnerships, which would be characterised as *theory developing* rather than *theory building* or *theory testing*. If the research aimed pure theory building, then an inductive research approach, accepting that the literature on this area is not yet well defined, would be most appropriate. If the research wanted to test specific aspects of existing, then deduction is more appropriate. This however is not the case for this study, which attempts to extend the understanding of established decision making factors in an emerging area of research. Subsequently, an abductive research strategy is regarded as most appropriate. A comparison of the three research strategies is presented on table ten.

Comparison of research strategies			
Exploratory logic	Inductive	Deductive	Abductive
Nature	Unexplored areas which require scientific inquire	Established theories which require to be rigorously tested	Combination of existing theories and creative/innovative thoughts in order to lead to hypothetical explanations for different contexts
Principle	World is real, and it can be known through the use of human senses	World is real, however our knowledge about existing phenomena is preliminary	World is real, and it can have different realities, which can be known through the acknowledgements of others on it
Aim	To provide theories, generalisations, conceptualisations and pattern explanations	To express ideas as hypotheses and test these hypotheses with data	To understand irregularities, provide hypothetical explanation and extend knowledge about already researched phenomena
Philosophical underpinnings	Bacon, Mill	Popper	Peirce

Table ten: Comparison of research strategies. The characteristics of different research strategies are presented. Their comparison is based in their nature, their principles, their aim, and their philosophical underpinnings. Adapted from Thomas, 2010; Bryman and Bell, 2007

In summary, through the use of qualitative methods, this paper adopts a constructivist ontological paradigm, and an interpretive epistemological paradigm, attempting to investigate the impact of politics and the roles of middle managers in the different phases of international partnerships, through the use of an abductive research strategy. An abductive research strategy can provide fruitful insights, as the project aims to extend theory in a well-researched area. The next section overviews specific important steps followed through the phases of data collection, starting by a discussion of the case study method and its relevance to the current study.

4.2.3 The case study method

The current paper adopts a *case study approach*, focusing on firms which belong in the high tech industry. Case study is defined as ‘an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context, especially

when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident' (Yin 2003:13). Such a method enables researchers to investigate in depth practice-based phenomena and events, in their natural settings (Benbasat *et al*, 1987). In such settings, the individuals' experiences and activities are crucial, and the separation from the context in which they occur, facilitated through the case study method, is also critical (Buck, 2011; Eisenhardt and Graebner, 2007; Ghauri, 2004; Eisenhardt, 1989; Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Bonoma, 1983; Mitchel, 1983). Different dimensions of case studies include the number of the cases being used, the amount of data which will be collected for each case, the kind of data to be collected and the objectivity of the findings (Gomm, Hammersley and Foster, 2000). All these are discussed in the next section. It is clear however that such an approach enables the researcher to separate the impact of the factors being investigated, in a specific context, this being international partnerships of the high tech sector, for the needs of the current study.

Case studies are appropriate to provide responses in *why* and *how* questions for the phenomena being investigated (Buck, 2011; Yin, 2009; Gomm, Hammersley and Foster, 2000; Ghauri, 2004; Eckstein, 1975). This is even more necessary when complex interactions of peoples, processes and technologies within organisations are involved (Cepeda and Martin, 2005). This is a consequence of the good knowledge that the researcher develops through the in-depth focus of the case study method. It can be used for theory building, development and testing, especially when theory is in its early, formative stages (Roethlisberger, 1977). Before theoretical suggestions get shape and become formal theoretical suggestions, they are documented in case studies as experiences from practice (Cepeda and Martin, 2005; Benbasat *et al*, 1987). These characteristics make them appropriate for this study, as they will enable the researcher gain deep insights for processes and practices, in order to gain wider understanding about middle manager politics.

Single case studies enable researchers to gain deep insights in specific phenomena, ignoring however variation which can be resulting from unique characteristics that

the case phenomena poses. This happens because the studies are not verified through their replication, which can have specific implications about their reliability (Eisenhardt and Graebner, 2007; Eisenhardt, 1989). The way to overcome this deficiency of single case study designs is to use multiple cases. The use of many cases allows researchers to follow a replication logic, searching for cross-case patterns and minimise variation between cases, resulting in accurate and reliable data collection (MacIntosh, Maclean and Seidl 2010; Yin 2009; Pauwels and Matthyssens, 2004).

Once a multiple case study research design has been decided, the identification of the required number of cases studies becomes a crucial decision (Buck, 2011; Eisenhardt and Graebner, 2007; Charmaz, 2003; Stake, 2000; Gomm, Hammersley and Foster, 2000; Ragin and Becker, 1992). The ideal number of case studies can be finalised during the data collection process, when *theoretical saturation* is achieved (Eisenhardt 1989; Glaser and Strauss, 1967). This occurs when the analysis of data from the cases does not contribute any new insights on the issues being analysed. The case studies participating in a study shall be chosen using *theoretical sampling* procedures (Buck, 2011; Jarzabkowski and Balogun 2009; Gobo, 2004; Regnér, 2003; Strauss and Corbin 1990; Eisenhardt, 1989). The research design and the sampling criteria of this research are presented in the following section.

4.3 Research Design

The previous section presented the research philosophy of this study, while the current one focuses on the way that this research was designed. The case selection criterias are presented, followed by the presentation of the intended unit of analysis. The section concludes by providing detailed information of the case companies and the case partnerships of this study.

4.3.3 Selection criteria for the case studies

The current research uses specific selection criteria to investigate middle managers and political processes in international partnerships (Yin 2009; Jarzabkowski and Balogun, 2009; Dey, 2007; Ghauri, 2004; Gobo, 2004; Jarzabkowski 2003; Gomm, Hammersley and Foster, 2000; Silverman, 2000; 1993; Stake, 1998; Patton, 1990). Firstly, the companies should have engaged in an equity agreement, rather than a contractual one, as contractual agreements tend to be of less duration and for projects of lower values (Kale and Singh, 2009; Hagedoorn, 2002; Yoshino and Rangan, 1995), making them less appropriate for the study of politics in firm- and partnership- levels. This focus enabled the researcher to avoid other kinds of partnerships, which could result in variation in the analysis and ambiguous findings (Gomm, Hammersley and Forster, 2000). In addition, equity partnerships occur frequently in the high tech sector (Patzelt and Shepherd, 2008; Hagedoorn, 1993) making somehow larger the sample of potential case companies.

Secondly, the companies should operate in similar contexts in order to avoid variation due to institutional factors (Chang, Van Witteloostuijn and Eden, 2010). This implies that the national contexts in which these companies are headquartered shall be similar (Garcia-Pont, Canales and Noboa, 2009; Hamel, 1991). In addition, the high tech industry has several subcategories, and the need for fast decision making differs in these subcategories, depending on whether the company belongs in the fast-moving high tech industry or in subcategories where the speed of change is slower (Santos and Eisenhardt, 2009; Meyer 2009; Hatzichronoglou, 1997; Eisenhardt and Bourgeois 1988). For that reasons, companies operating within the fast moving subcategory of the high tech industry were selected. These are companies from the wireless communication, the software, the digital games and the broadband services industries.

In addition, all partners from the case studies were from countries with similar national contexts, these being countries of South Europe. Moreover, they all had

similar sizes, between 800-1200 employees, as research has proven that partnerships can be affected from the firm size (Patzelt and Shepherd, 2008; Alvarez and Barney, 2001). In addition, they shall have a relatively similar internationalisation and partnership experience, measured through the countries they operate and the number of partnerships in which they have engaged, as these factors can also affect attitudes towards firm partnerships. The use of similar case companies also helped avoid variation occasioned by the different nature of operations or by intersectoral comparisons (Mtar, 2010; Jarzabkowski, 2003).

Third, there was required assistance from someone within the company, as access is an acknowledged obstacle of qualitative research (Bryman and Bell 2007; Cooper, 1984). Access tends to be even more difficult when the investigation focuses in 'sensitive' issues, including politics (Regnér, 2003; Lee and Renzetti, 1993). The combination of these two factors limited the data collection from companies headquartered in one country only, as this helped the researcher to gain trust and develop the required contacts in order to investigate in-depth political process. This was also a result of the limited financial resources, required to conduct such studies (Ghauri, 2004). Four retrospective case partnerships were selected from the high tech industry, regarded as appropriate to address the topic (Jarzabkowski 2003). The cases provided a large amount of data to fulfil the requirements stated above.

4.3.4 The empirical unit and the unit of analysis

One of the basic philosophical presuppositions of the strategy process field is that while processes are important, they are ultimately reducible to individuals and organisations (Chia and Mackay 2007; Rescher, 1996). This means that findings can be drawn about the roles of middle managers and the impact of political processes in strategic relationships by using as empirical units individuals from different organisational levels. These *empirical units*, through different collection methods, will provide the information about processes and roles, while the specific focus on different units of analysis will then follow.

The *unit of analysis*, also termed as ‘case’ (Yin 2009; Stake, 1998; Patton 1990; Kemmis, 1980), is derived from the research questions and affects the way that the findings of a study are related to the existing theory. It is a crucial decision, as it implies the focus of the researcher on different aspects of the phenomenon being investigated. Once a unit of analysis has been decided, it will attract the primary focus of data collection and analysis and the way that settings, context and agents related to the phenomenon affect it. This focus will help the researcher obtain a holistic perspective about the units, which is one of the strengths of case study method (Patton, 1990), making however its choice even more crucial.

The current paper uses an *embedded multiple case study* design, where there are more than one unit of analyses (Yin 2009; Bryman and Bell 2007; Bourgeois and Eisenhardt 1988). The three non-mutually exclusive units of analyses (Patton, 1990) are the company, who engages in a inter-organisational relationship (Ariño and Ring, 2010; Patzelt and Shepherd, 2008; Dyer and Singh, 1998), the individuals (Teulier and Rouleau, 2010; Rouleau, 2005; Gioia and Chittipedi, 1991), who participate in the different steps of an inter-organisational relationship, and the decisions made in the different phases of a partnership (Nutt, 2008; 2005; Bell, Bromley and Bryson, 1998; Eisenhardt and Bourgeois, 1988). It should be mentioned here that the sensitivity of the current research, which involves questions about informal practices and power dynamics (Lee and Renzetti, 1993), and the difficulty which characterises the data collection access in qualitative research (Silverman, 2010; 1993; Gray, 2009; Fontana and Frey, 2000; Denzin and Lincoln, 1998a), in general, and in international partnerships (Mohr and Spekman, 1994), in particular, resulted on the empirical units being only from the one side of the partnership. Dyadic data would have been desirable, but access and time issues necessitated the focus on one side of the dyad for data collection. Through the three different units of analysis, different perspectives can be provided about the informal part of an inter-organisational relationship.

4.3.5 The case companies

The following paragraphs get into more details concerning the case studies finally selected, satisfying the selection criteria specified earlier. Because of the complicated nature of this research approach, which focuses in the investigation on dyads (partnerships) having however information only from the one side of the two companies, the next section starts by providing contextual information about the case companies, followed by information for the case partnerships. In addition, in order to ensure confidentiality, pseudonyms, in the form of letters from the Greek alphabet, are used to represent each company (Mackay and Chia, 2013; Grinyer, 2002; Eisenhardt and Bourgeois, 1988).

4.3.5.1 Alpha

Alpha is a global leader in the lottery industry, offering an extensive number of services for different customers. The services it offers include integrated gaming and lottery transaction processing systems, lottery and casino games content, sports betting management platforms and interactive gaming services. Its clients include individual organisations and states, while it has strong presence in both traditional, high tech and online gaming and lottery products.

Founded in 1992, it has experienced a rapid growth. This has resulted on being placed third among its global competitors, according to its sales turnover, with the other two competitors coming from more technologically advanced countries. As a result of its success, it is listed in two different stock exchanges. Everyone from the 1100 employees has met in person the CEO. Employees are encouraged to bring ideas and suggestions to the top management, which is reflected in the company's annual report:

‘Alpha promotes academic knowledge, backing thus the leading role it has on a global level and creating the preconditions for stable, long-term development’ [2009 Annual report, Alpha]

Its successful performance has resulted on it having a strong international presence, with completed projects in 89 countries, while it currently has offices in 32 countries. The majority of its projects have been completed through partnerships, which are formed for different purposes, depending on the project size and scope, and the different national environment in which it operates. The combination of the company’s partnering experience, its industry focus, and its size make this company an ideal case study for this project.

4.3.5.2 Lamda

Lamda is a large international telecommunications company, headquartered in South East Europe. Its strong performance has resulted on it ranking second between other telecommunications companies in its home country, in both terms of sales and employees numbers. It offers an array of services, these being landline telephony, internet, video services and IT installations in both individuals and companies of the private and the public sector. The result of the large number of projects it has been involved into is that it has developed a large knowledge and expertise in different technologies used in the telecommunications and broadband services industries.

The company was founded in 1993, prior to the creation of the global mobile phone industry. While its initial purpose was the mobile phone market, the decision to enter the regular telephone market came as a result of the deregulation of the national phone company services in Greece in 2003. As a result, its mobile phone services arm was sold later on to an international mobile telecommunications company who wanted to enter the South East European markets. Simultaneously, the company started getting involved in different areas of technological projects, which helped the

company increase its knowledge in telecommunications technologies, while improving its partnering experience.

Its rapid development has resulted in a strong presence in its home country, having captured 31% of the national land phone market, having 950 employees. Moreover, its shares started being traded publicly in 2008, while since 2004 it has focused extensively in emerging economies. As a result, it has engaged in a series of partnerships, with companies of different sectors, for both national and international projects. The large number of partnerships that Lambda has formed, along with its size and its strong technological focus makes clear that it fulfils the case selection criteria for this study.

4.3.5.3 Delta

Delta is an international and global telecommunication systems vendor, offering an array of services, including wireless networks and geographical positioning systems. Moreover, it offers a large number of support services related to the development of such networks, these being software development, consulting services, content management delivery and enforcement solutions. As a result, it has developed a large knowledge base in wireless technologies.

The company was founded in 1981, following the global development of the high tech sector. It was initially involved in the development of public sector projects in South European countries. It diversified its services however rapidly, following the global technological advancements in wireless technologies. The company has experienced a rapid in the last two decades, being in par with the global development of the telecommunications and wireless industries. As a result it has a strong international presence, with 16 subsidiaries, mainly located around Europe, and it has completed projects in more than 100 countries. It currently has 1050 employees,

while its successful performance is reflected by the constant sales for the last twenty years. The result of its strong performance resulted in its IPO in 1994.

In the recent years, the company has focused in its international presence, especially in developing economies. As a result, it has developed a large number of projects through international partnerships, in Eastern European, African and Asian countries, with the formation of partnerships being a prerequisite for its entrance in these markets. Its success in specific technological sectors has resulted in a series of mergers throughout the world. Delta is one more company which seems appropriate for the case study, as its size, industry focus and partnering experience fulfil the case selection criteria of this project.

4.3.5.4 Psi

Psi is an international software development company, offering an array of software-related services. These include software development for organisations, states and individuals, communication services, outsourcing and application development and integration services. Its wide knowledge base has enabled the company to engage in a large number of public and private sector technology projects.

Founded in 1994, it has been characterised by an organic growth, where constant sales increase and innovation are evident. As a result, it now has a strong international presence, with 10 subsidiaries, mainly located around Europe, having completed projects in 35 countries. It employs 860 people. Its successful performance is reflected by the constant sales growth since its inception. It has been a publicly listed company since 1999.

In the recent years, the company has focused in expanding its international operations. It has done so through focusing in European Union projects, as well as

projects from developing economies within the Eurozone, which were less technologically advanced. Because of the nature of the software development industry, the majority of the projects that the company has completed involved partnerships, often with companies of different industry focus, working complementary with Psi. All international projects were completed through partnerships. Psi's partnering experience, along with its size and its software industry focus, fulfil the case selection criteria of this study.

Further descriptive information about the companies and their appropriateness for this study is provided in table 11 below.

Descriptive information for the case companies					
Case company	Main activity	Year of inception	Employees ^a	Sales ^a (€ m.)	% Overseas ^b
Alpha	Integrated gaming and lottery transaction processing systems, lottery and casino games content, sports betting management platforms and interactive gaming services	1992	1100	256	73%
Lamda	Telecommunications, broadband and internet services	1993	950	335	56%
Delta	Telecommunication systems vendor, wireless networks, global positioning systems	1981	1050	262	62%
Psi	Software development and applications	1994	860	468	78%

Table 11: Descriptive information for the case companies. Specific case selection criterias were used for this study: the companies had to belong in the high tech industry, they had to be of medium size (in terms of sales and employees), and they have to have engaged in international partnerships. The table provides information about these criterias, by informing about their specific industry focus, their year of inception, their sales and number of employees (2011 annual reports), and the percentage of their overseas sales.

a. Information based in the 2006-2011 annual reports

b. 2011

The current section examined the suitability of the case companies, in order to be used for data collection. As mentioned earlier however, a distinctive characteristic of

the current project is that, while data will be collected from the case companies, it will be related mainly to the different phases of the partnerships being investigated in this project. This means that further contextual information should be provided for the case partnerships used in this study, which is done in the following section.

4.3.6 The case partnerships

The current section presents contextual information about the case partnerships being researched in this study. While the case selection happened before the conduct of the pilot study, the choice of specific partnerships for which information shall be collected was done after the first interviews, when the researcher was able to gather some more project-specific information, which would not be available publicly. This information helped the researcher verify that the case partnerships would fulfil specific criteria in order to be chosen.

Several criterias were used for the case partnerships selection (Buck, 2011; Yin, 2009; Eisenhardt and Graebner, 2007; Ghauri, 2004). The first one had to do with the partners which participated in the project. The participation of many companies within a project would make difficult the accurate data collection and analysis, because the case companies' involvement would be smaller. As a result, international partnerships between two and four companies were chosen. The extent of participation would be better understood after further discussions with the top managers of each company during the pilot study.

Another important selection factor had to do with the fact that all projects had to have been completed. This was important, as the investigation of the different phases of partnerships would not be possible, as its last phase involves the evaluation of the project, which can only be done upon its completion. It was equally important that the project would not have been initiated and completed many years ago, as this could make more difficult the accurate recollection of data through interviews. This

meant that completed partnerships, which however had occurred recently, shall be used for the selection of the empirical units. In addition, the case partnerships shall have ended in successful completion, in order to enhance generalisation between the cases investigated. If some of them had been unsuccessful, then the data collected could be based on contrasting evaluations, affected from the non-successful outcome of the partnerships. Overall, only partnerships which have been ended, with the project successfully completed, were chosen.

In addition, the partnerships selected, should have had duration between two and four years, and should involve equity agreements (Kale and Singh, 2009; Hagedoorn, 2002; Yoshino and Rangan, 1995). This was important, as it could have implications about data collection and analysis. On the one hand, duration of less than two years, or simply contractual partnerships, could possibly provide insufficient data to construct case stories. On the other hand, partnerships which lasted more than four years could result in large amounts of data which would not help the focused data analysis. As a result, equity partnerships which lasted between two and four years were regarded as appropriate.

The size of the projects and the associated number of the employees participated in the different phases of the partnership were one more criterion used for the selection of cases. The importance of the number of the employees, which would be strongly related to the size each project, resulted from the empirical units which would be available for data collection. Ideally, projects in which 20-50 employees had participated, in all the different phases of the partnerships shall be selected, as this would assist the conduct of interviews from many respondents, which would enhance the data quality. The identification of such projects was greatly assisted through the initial interviews with the CEO of each case company, as they would have a much more holistic knowledge and experience of the projects that the companies have been mainly involved in the recent years.

The current section presented the selection criteria were used for the partnerships selection. Through the fulfilment of these criterias, partnerships able to provide the data required for the investigation of politics and middle managers would be selected. In addition, the fact that internal company data was required for the case partnerships selection made clear the need for the conduct of a pilot study, discussed in a later section (sections 4.4.8 and 4.4.9, and appendix one). The next section provides more information on the context of these partnerships.

4.3.6.1 Alpha-Beta partnership

The partnership between Alpha and Beta was established in the beginning of 2004 and it lasted three years and four months. The companies had similar size, employing 1100 and 850 employees respectively, while the geographical and cultural distance of the countries where the companies had their headquarters was small. The business opportunity was initially identified by Alpha, who then came in touch with Beta, and other companies offering similar services.

The partnership, which was formed as an international joint venture, involved the digitalisation of two of the main lottery games in a national level, which were then provided by a public company. The partners had a complementary role within the project. Alpha was responsible, among others, for the provision of the hardware and the new terminals to the client, while it would also offer an array of different consulting services to the customer. Beta, on the other hand, would be responsible for the creation and design of the software of the online lottery games, in which Alpha had only recently started gaining experience and know how.

Overall, around 45 managers from both companies had a direct involvement in the project, while the employees involved in the project from all different hierarchical levels were around 100. Moreover, the companies used the services of around eight more local companies, chosen during the life of the project, for the accomplishment

of smaller tasks within the project. These tasks included market research, advertising, purchasing of materials and accommodation and entertainment services for the employees residing in the customer's country for the completion of the project. From the final revenues of the project, 70% was allocated to Alpha and 30% to Beta. This case partnership was regarded as appropriate for research, as it was recent, with a few partners, while the number of the managers who were involved and the partnership's duration implied that there would be sufficient data available to the researcher for collection and analysis.

4.3.6.2 Lamda-Omega partnership

The partnership between Lamda and Omega was established in 2004, and lasted four years. Lamda was a South European land telecommunications company which had started internationalising in surrounding countries the recent years. Omega, on the other hand, was the subsidiary of a global mobile telecommunications company. The initial form of this subsidiary however was a private company, created with the introduction of the mobile telephony technologies in 1996. As a result, Omega had kept its old management board and its relative independent status within this country, even though it is part of this global group. Omega, as a whole it has around 12000 employees, while in Greece only it has around 900. The business opportunity was suggested from Lamda to Omega, following the advancements and trends being observed in more technologically developed countries.

The project involved the creation and the provision of a triple play services network within the South European country where Lambda was headquartered, which could possibly be extended to quadruple play services. A triple play service is an umbrella term used to imply the provision of two bandwidth-intensive services. The first one is internet access with high speed and television, combined with a less bandwidth-demanding service, this being the landline telephone, all provided through a single broadband connection. Quadruple play services would also include the provision of mobile phone services. Within the joint venture, Lamda was responsible for the

provision of its extensive knowledge of the national landline telecommunications industry. Omega would offer its expertise in high tech telecommunications projects, including the offering of cable TV, high speed internet and mobile telephony, in which it had gained extensive experience through a number of partnerships in technologically advanced countries.

Through the course of the partnership around 35 managers from both companies had a direct involvement in the project, while the employees from all hierarchical levels who worked in different aspects of it were around 300. In addition, through the life of the partnership the companies had to cooperate with nine more local and international companies, for the provision of first raw materials, and consulting and accommodation services, among others. Upon its completion, the triple play services network was acquired from another telecommunications company provider, who also acquired the subsidiary of the mobile telecommunications company. The size, duration and number of companies fulfilled the criteria in order to select it and gather data for further analysis.

4.3.6.3 Delta-Theta partnership

The joint venture between Delta and Theta was established in 2005, and it lasted two years and two months, until the end of 2007. Delta is a European telecommunications vendor, with extensive experience of international technological projects. Theta is an international telecommunications and large project infrastructure provider company. Delta has 1050 employees, while Theta has around 700, most of them characterised with high levels of knowledge and expertise. The business opportunity was identified from Delta, who then came in contact with several potential partners, including Theta.

The project involved the creation of the national wireless network within an Arabic country. This was a result of the global trend for the development of wireless technologies, which however was in its early phases in Arabian and African

countries. Within the partnership, Delta would offer its knowledge and expertise in wireless technologies and communications, while Theta would be responsible for the creation of the land infrastructure for the wireless satellites. Their complementary relationship implied that the companies would work together towards the achievement of this difficult goal, mainly related to the extreme local weather conditions, and the appropriate use of the appropriate materials.

Through the course of the partnership around 40 top and middle managers from both companies had a direct involvement in the project, while 200 employees from different levels of hierarchy worked on it. Moreover, during the project, the companies had to cooperate with twelve more local and international companies, for the provision of market research, technical information, supply of materials and consulting services in different areas. When the project was completed, Delta received the 40 % of the agreed price, and the rest went to Theta. The size of the project, along with its duration and the number of companies involved made it appropriate for further investigation, according to the research objectives of this thesis.

4.3.6.4 Psi-Epsilon partnership

The partnership between Psi and Epsilon was established in 2004, and it lasted for two years and four months, until the middle of 2006. Psi was a leading software development company, ranking high in sales in a European level. Epsilon was a smaller software company, based in Romania, employing 550 people. The business opportunity was identified and suggested from Psi to Epsilon, even though Psi had already presence in the Romanian market.

The joint venture which was formed was responsible for the development of a large scale software program, which would be used to inform, control and supervise the different educational institutions, such as schools and universities, across the home

country of Epsilon. Even though the activities of both companies were not too distant, within the partnership they had a complementary role: Psi would provide its knowledge and expertise for large software development projects, while Epsilon, because of the fact that it had strong local knowledge, it would be able to provide knowledge and expertise concerning the country and specific requirements which could arise during the life of the project.

Around 25 managers were directly involved in the different phases of the project. In addition, around 120 employees from different hierarchical levels were involved. Through the life of the partnership the companies had to cooperate with four more local and international companies, for the provision of knowledge, and marketing and consulting services, among others. From the value of the project, 60% was received from Psi, and 40% from Epsilon. The number of the partners, the project's size, and its duration fulfil the required criteria in order to make the researcher centre data collection around this partnership.

The previous paragraphs described the context of the partnerships being investigated, explaining in details the way they fulfil the partnership *selection criterias*. Further descriptive information about the partnerships is provided in the table 12 below.

Descriptive information for the case partnerships							
Name	Partner company name	Originating partner business	Partner business	HQ location of the partner	Motivation for partnership	Project value^a	Duration (Years)
Alpha	Beta	Online lottery network development	Lottery operator	Italy	Technical and local market knowledge of territory to offer online lottery as part of their internationalisation strategy	14 mn Euros	3.4

Lamda	Omega	Mobile/ land telephony services	Provision of phone/ internet/ TV packages	France	Technical and local territory market knowledge to offer triple play service as a part of the overseas expansion strategy	11 mn Euros	4
Delta	Theta	Wireless networks development	Infrastructure provision: large tech. projects	Italy	Companies require each other in order to complete the international project as part of their internationalisation strategy	27 mn Euros	2.2
Psi	Epsilon	Contract software development	Software development for niche markets	Romania	Knowledge exchange, and elimination of competitors to win bid in a new territory and enter a new market	9.3 mn Euros	2.4

a. Information provided through internal documents

Table 12: Descriptive information about the case partnerships, around which the data collection will be centred. The specific information concerns the partners' company business focus, the motivation for the partnership, its duration, the project value, and the number of top and middle managers involved in the project completion.

4.3.7 Section conclusion

The current section described in details the research design of this study. It started by pointing out some choices that had to be made concerning the application of the case study method, concluding that multiple exploratory cases would be ideal for the better investigation of politics of middle managers. It then explained that the research will have an embedded case study, with three units of analysis, these being the individuals, the companies and the decisions made in the course of the partnerships. The selection criterias were then presented. The section concluded by providing background information about the case companies and partnerships, making clear the way they fulfil the aforementioned selection criterias. The next section focuses in the implementation of the data collection.

4.4 Data collection methods

The previous section presented in detail information concerning the research design of this study. It concluded that the data collection will be centred on decisions made in specific partnerships, with managers who had a direct or an indirect involvement

to be used as the empirical units. The current section presents in detail the data collection methods used in the different phases of this study, concluding by stretching the importance of the sequence of data collections methods, providing an overview of the different phases of data collection used in this study.

The data required was collected through several different methods, which is one of the basic aspects of the case study method (Yin, 2009; Eisenhardt and Graebner, 2007; Hurmerinta-Peltomäki and Nummela, 2004; Stake, 2000). As Yin (2009) stated, there are six possible sources of evidence in case study research designs. Using most of them offers better validity for the data collected, in order to counteract potential bias which can occur if there is reliance in only one collection method (Laine and Vaara 2007; Clark 2004; Jarzabkowski and Wilson 2002; Denzin, 1989; Eisenhardt, 1989), particularly where retrospective analysis is being used (Chia and Rasche, 2010; Mtar, 2010; Jarzabkowski 2003; Golden 1997).

Multiple sources of evidence are regarded as providing sufficient information in order to capture a holistic picture of the decision making processes (Jarzabkowski 2003), by gathering information through collective individuals. Through the use of individuals in different levels, the researcher aims to achieve *Verstehen*, or, in other words, a better understanding of actions and interactions, from employees who participated in different phases of the partnerships (Eckstein, 1975). Moreover, the use of a range of research methods is the norm in the strategy process field (Maitlis and Lawrence, 2003; Regnér, 2003).

The use of different data collection methods help avoid ‘survivor bias’, which refers to overrepresentation of either successful or unsuccessful cases within a sample (Kijkuit and Ende 2007; Singleton and Straits 2005). Interviews were the main data collection method, while the rest methods were used to anchor and inform the data collection process, and to develop extensive analyses of decision making processes

(Yin, 2009; Jarzabkowski and Wilson, 2002; Seale, 1999). Prior to the actual data collection, a pilot study (sections 5.4.9 and 5.4.10) helped the researcher refine the data collection methods and instruments, and optimize the result of the whole collection process (Yin, 2009; Stake, 2000). Data was gathered in a period of two years, and it consisted of retrospective narration of activities and processes on recently terminated partnerships, which lasted between two and four years.

4.4.1 Interviews

The research involved sixty three semi structured in-depth interviews (10 were second round interviews, discussed in section 4.5.4) with employees of the case study firms (Gray, 2009; Rapley, 2004; Balogun and Johnson 2004; Jarzabkowski and Wilson, 2002; Orlikowski, 2002; Stake, 2000; Atkinson and Silverman, 1997; Doz 1996). These interviews were conducted in a period of two years (2010 and 2011), in the case companies' offices. Different persons from several organisational levels were interviewed; key informants, involved in the strategic decision making process and the implementation of partnerships provided insights in the partnership development process (Paroutis and Pettigrew 2007; Maitlis and Lawrence 2003).

The relation of the research project to the respondents is crucial for the quality of the data collected (Wengraf, 2001; Seale, 1999; Easterby-Smith *et al*, 1991; Rabinow, 1977). This means that for the current study, only persons identified as relevant participated. These persons had a direct involvement in the projects, which means that they had participated in at least one of the different phases of the partnerships, as these were described in the literature review. Such managers were suggested from the CEOs, who were firstly interviewed for each case, and from corresponding departmental directors, as the data collection process was unfolding (Wengraf, 2001; Stake, 2000; Morse, 1999; 1998; 1986). The empirical units included executives and middle as well as lower management (appendix six).

Participants were approached through an informed consent (appendix eight), which enhanced the reliability of the case study design (Danniels and Cannice 2004; Grinyer; 2002; Fontana and Frey, 1998). This would inform them about the confidentiality of the study and the preservation of their anonymity. Where required, information was collected in advance, in order to avoid confusions during the interviews. This had to do with the official roles had during the partnership, and the extent of their participation.

The interview questions were clear, and the use of complicated terminology was avoided (Patton, 1990). Questions were designed in order to capture real world facts and behaviours from the past, rather than intentions and beliefs of the respondents on the topic being researched (Mtar, 2010; Wengraf, 2001; Golden 1997). Special attention was paid to the sequencing of interviews (Wengraf, 2001; Patton, 1990), intending to explore politics and middle managers in all different phases of international partnerships. Each interview lasted between one and two hours, and all of them were digitally recorded, as suggested in the literature (Wilkinson and Young 2004; Fontana and Frey, 1998). During the interviews, probing, follow-up questions and most suggested interview techniques were used (Rubin and Rubin, 2011).

In addition, further information was obtained from informal discussions following the end of the interview time, with the recorder being switched off. All interviews were recorded and transcribed within 24 hours (Eisenhardt, 1989), while comments and ideas having arrived to the researcher during the interview process were written down immediately after the end of each interview (Miles and Huberman, 1994). It has to be mentioned that from the 63 interviews, 10 were second time interviews, with the companies' CEOs and some key managers in each partnership, in order to gain deeper insights where required.

The interview context is crucial, as several factors can affect the quality of the data collected (Bryman and Bell, 2007; Marschan-Piekkari *et al*, 2004; Reinharz and Chase, 2002). These include: the mood of the respondents, the settings where the interviews take place, the time pressure which can be imposed on a participant and the number of interruptions. All these factors can result in the 'intersubjective character of interviews' (Marschan-Piekkari *et al*, 2004; Kvale, 1996). In order to overcome such problems, interviews were conducted with rapport, where interviewers attempt to establish a relaxed atmosphere which enhances communication, trust and reassurance (Rapley, 2004; Wengraf, 2001; Fontana and Frey, 2000; Ackroyd and Hughes, 1992).

The interviews were conducted in Greek language. The fact that the data collected requires translation in order to be analysed is crucial (Marschan-Piekkari and Reis, 2004; Birbili, 2000). Birbili (2000:31) suggested that: 'In those cases where the researcher and the translator are the same person the quality of translation is influenced by factors such as: the autobiography of the researcher-translator; the researcher's knowledge of the language and the culture of the people under study', making clear the translating problems in collected data. In order to overcome problems related to the researcher's autobiography or existing language, back translation was applied, which involves looking for equivalents with different methods (Bryman and Bell 2007; Freeman, 1983). Moreover, where required, there was consultation and collaboration with experts (Fontana and Frey, 1998), which involved the use of a translator who reviewed 30% of the translated interview transcripts. Moreover, where required, verifications of specific statements involved communications with the respondents who were asked whether the translated meanings were the same with the original.

The similar cultural background of the interviewer and the respondents was another important factor facilitating the data collection process, as the 'costs in contextualising fieldwork with respect to national background' (Michailova, 2004: 365), such as the existence of untranslatable words (Rheingold, 1988), are minimised.

Moreover, the fact that the researcher is mastering the language of the field is of a critical importance, as people's understandings will tend to be uniform, and concepts, ideas and terms will be in a vacuum, while unnecessary different associations with unrelated environments are avoided (Michailova 2004). Moreover, Greek culture is characterised by deep cultural division, short-termism, defensive attitudes vis-à-vis change, and vertical and familiar links (Lyberaki, 2000; Diamantouros, 2000), while the country's turbulent political history has resulted in an incomplete state-society separation, where social values are much less affected by market rules (Tsoukalas 1993). The result is an attitude and ethos characterised by abstract and internalised moral codes, while responsibilities and duties are expressed in non-expropriated social links of personified reciprocity and solidarity. All these links, instead of fostering trust between individuals, it forestalls it, resulting on doubting the quality of the statements (Kalogerisis and Labrianidis, 2010). The researcher however, even though was sharing the same cultural background, making interviews and their understanding easier and more homogenous, was well aware of such unique characteristics, which enabled the avoidance of specific bias in the conduct of this research.

4.4.2 Questionnaires

In order to gather more data, and triangulate the possible findings, each person interviewed was asked to complete a questionnaire consisting of 20 close ended questions (Bryman and Bell, 2007; Eisenhardt and Bourgeois, 1988). This facilitated the researcher, as some crucial information concerning logistical details of the actual interviews were resolved (Bryman and Bell 2007). The requirement of the questionnaire completion was made clear in the case study protocol, while its completion lasted between 10 and 15 minutes. This process assisted data collection and analysis as it clarified contextual details about the roles of the respondents during the decisions being analysed, while simultaneously helping validate findings, which could not be clarified through the semi structured interviews. The questionnaire was in the same language in which the interviews happened. All the data collected from the questionnaires is codified and aggregated in a Microsoft Excel file.

4.4.3 Documentary analysis

Further data was gathered through the collection and analysis of specific documents (Ariño and Ring, 2010; Johnson, Smith and Codling, 2010; Paroutis and Pettigrew, 2007; Wilson, 2004; Maitlis and Lawrence, 2003; Regnér, 2003; Jarzabkowski, 2003; Orlikowski, 2002; Hodder, 2000). The documents utilised were both public and organisational, also known as company and archival documents, respectively (Prior, 2004; Regnér, 2003; Folster, 1995; Lincoln and Guba, 1985). All documents were reviewed in detail in order to help the identification of information which could be crucial on the partnerships timelines and potential factors which affected their occurrence and performance.

All reports were written in the same language used in the interviews. The public documents involved the annual reports for a series of years, for both partner companies, and data from newspapers and economic magazines. The private documents were confidential minutes of the meetings of the companies during decision making towards the specific partnerships. The public documents were analysed in the researchers office, while the private documents in each company's offices. Detailed notes were taken during their analysis. The private documents had to be returned to the companies' secretaries as they were regarded as confidential. One of the most common pitfalls in analysing organisational documents is *representativeness biases*, because documents can be either hidden or destroyed (Folster, 1995). In order to overcome such issues official approval was taken from the top management of each case company that all, or most, minutes from the relevant meetings would be provided to the researcher.

4.4.4 The role of the researcher- Reflexivity

The researcher and the way he reflects during data collection, depending on the method used, affects the quality of the research findings (Smith and Deemer, 2000;

Seale, 1999; Altheide and Johnson, 1998; Steier, 1991). This is even more clear during interviews, as in many cases, reflexivity has been neglected or ‘skilfully avoided’ (Westwood, 2004; Chia, 1996). Reflexivity however is a sine qua non for good qualitative research (Westwood, 2004), and the researcher tried to be as much reflexive as possible through different ways. Ghauri and Grønhaug (2002) suggested that in order to be a good researcher, while conducting interviews in the international business field, it is required to be a good listener and to be able to understand and ‘filter’ what others say. An interview schedule was sent prior to the interview, which helped the researcher to gain ‘control’ of the interview environment. Simultaneously, the interview schedule would help the respondents to start ‘thinking’ about the content of the interviews, while simultaneously enhancing the trust between the researcher and the respondents (Fontana and Frey, 1998; Frey, 1993; Rasmussen, 1989).

In addition, each interview was prepared in advance, in order to use the appropriate language and avoid complications with terminologies (Easterby-Smith *et al.*, 1991). The researcher started gaining confidence and experience during the two year process, which enabled the appropriate use of interview techniques while confirming the trends identified through the whole iterative process. Moreover, the use of semi-structured questions, with extensive use of probes and follow-up questions, enabled the researcher to overcome making participants give responses according to the researchers’ reference frame, which is a common interview bias (Easterby-Smith *et al.*, 1991).

The role of the researcher is even more crucial in interpretive studies, as compared to positivistic research approaches. This happens because the researcher adopts an ‘empathetic stance’ attempting to exhibit ‘empathetic neutrality’ (Patton, 2002:49; Moore, 1989). This ultimately means that research is not objective and value-free, but the researcher is seeking an internal perspective of an organisation, using its own judgements, which results in subjectivity (Ackroyd and Hughes, 1992; Douglas,

1985). In other words, the positivistic principle of objectivity does not hold, as researchers are getting involved into organisations, affecting and being affected by social structures, processes, interactions, and meanings that agents attribute to them. The use of several analytical methods however, as these have been described in this section, assisted the researcher to overcome the limitations that subjectivity might create, enhancing the quality of the collection and analysis phases.

4.4.5 Triangulation

The use of different methods ultimately enhances the validity and reliability of research findings, which is known as *triangulation* (Eisenhardt and Graebner, 2007; Ghauri, 2004; Seale, 1999; Denzin, 1978). Triangulation is an approach where many observers, theoretical perspectives, sources of data, and research methodologies, are used (Denzin 1970), and it was originally conceptualised from Webb, Campbell, Schwartz, and Sechrest (1966). It can be achieved by combining different methods or using different kinds of data, and it can be used for both qualitative and quantitative research projects.

Four different ways of triangulation have been suggested (Yin 2009; Denzin, 1978). The first is data triangulation, achieved through the use of different sources of data. These were described earlier, and the way they were applied and corroborated is described in figure four. The next category is researchers' triangulation (also known as investigators triangulation) (Bryman and Bell, 2007), which refers to the case when different researchers see the data collected without having prior information, and then make some suggestions, and compare them to see if they are in accordance. Methodological triangulation refers to the use of different research methods (i.e. quantitative and qualitative), while theoretical triangulation refers to the application of a previously examined theoretical framework in a different context, in order to identify the validity of the theoretical suggestions (Flick, Kardorff and Steinke, 2004; Seale, 1999). Researchers' triangulation is achieved with the intercoder reliability test described in next paragraphs (section 5.5.7). Theoretical triangulation was

partially achieved, when some concepts concerning politics and middle manager within single companies appeared in partnerships as well. The current research project utilises several different data collection sources in order to identify and validate variation in the findings and data triangulation is achieved, thus avoiding subjectivity (Yin 2009; Yeung, 1995; Denzin 1978). Through the use of the same codes across the different kinds of data collected, the corroboration of the emerging findings was enabled.

4.4.6 Sequence of data collection methods

The sequence of the data collection methods was similar for all the interviews which were conducted (Wengraf, 2001). The data collection process was initiated with one-to-one semi structured interviews, as it can be seen from below in figure four. During the interviews, information was collected about the informal processes and the roles of middle managers in strategic relationships. Upon the completion of the interviews, participants were required to complete a questionnaire (appendix five). It included questions concerning the things discussed during the interviews, concerning for example the actual participation of the participants in a partnership or a specific decision. In addition, further background information was provided, concerning demographic characteristics of the respondents. Through their use, the appropriateness of the use of specific participants was verified. In addition, the questionnaires would be potentially used to verify findings and identify conflicting points, during the data analysis. Overall, their use would compensate the counterbalancing weaknesses that interviews as a single tool of data collection could include (Ghauri, 2004; Wengraf, 2001; Jick, 1979).

The last source of data collection were documents, as it can be seen in figure four. As mentioned earlier (section 4.4.3), these included public documents such as newspapers, magazines, and annual reports. Their use offered further insights on the results of the specific strategic relationships. Moreover, private organisational documents (minutes of meetings) provided further insights on the actual decision

making processes before and during these partnerships. All these sources offered a holistic perspective on the topic being investigated. Simultaneously, they assisted the corroboration of the data, which further enhanced the validity of the emerging patterns and trends, offering a ‘near talismanic method of confirming findings’ (Miles and Huberman, 1994: 266). The different sources of data collection would enable the observation and identification of the observed patterns, while these tools would be continuously evaluated and improved throughout the life of the research project. The use of all these different sources would enable the triangulation of the findings, as discussed in the previous section.

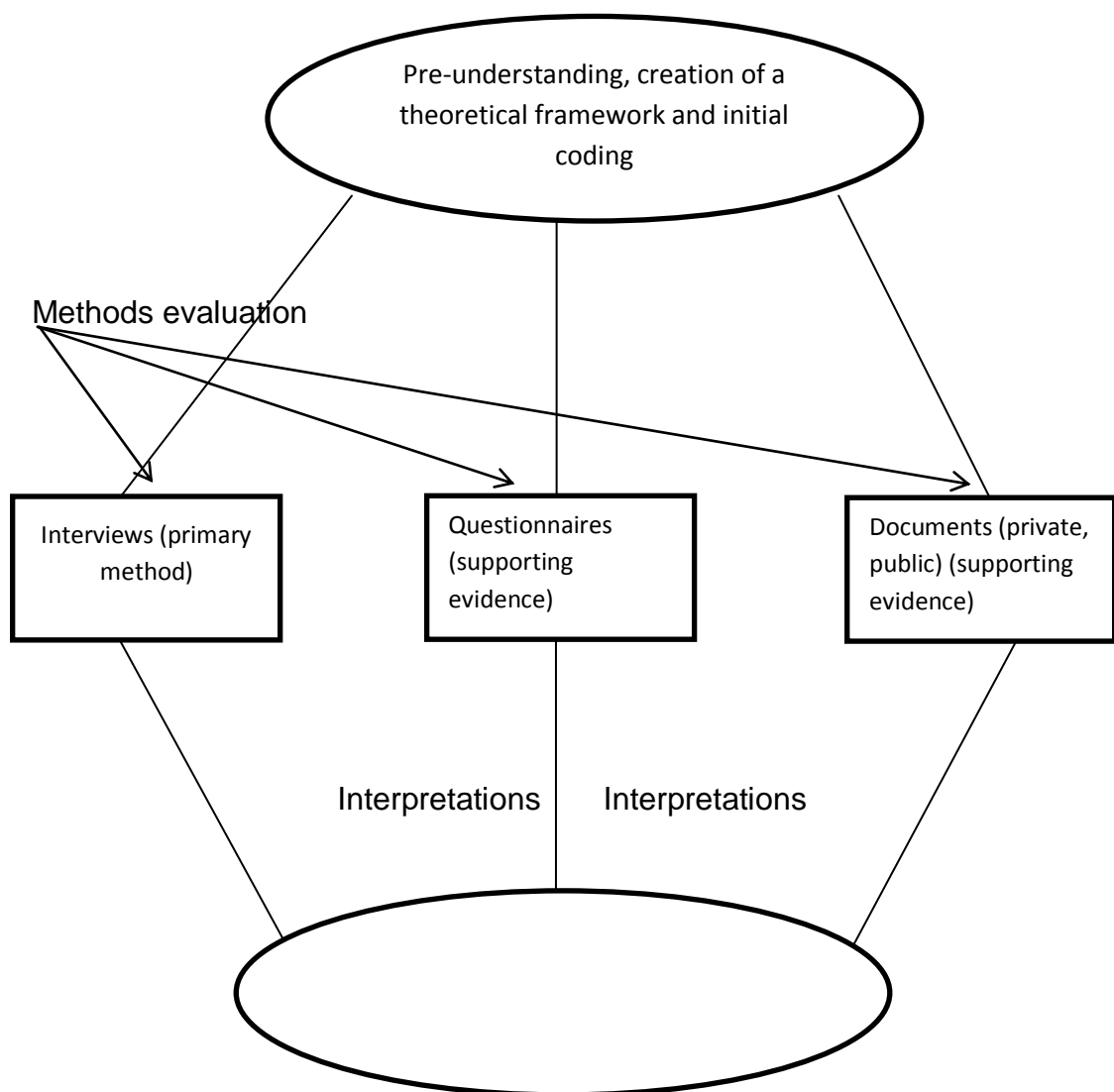


Figure four: Sequence and corroboration of data collection methods. Adapted from: Yin (2009); De Geer, Borglund and Frostenson (2004)

4.4.7 Data collection process

The following section presents the different steps through which data was collected, and the changes made as the data collection was developing. This overview strengthens the validity and the reliability of the research methods applied, as they present in detail all the steps that the researcher followed in the development of this study, enabling their better evaluation (Wengraf, 2001; Denzin and Lincoln, 1998; Janesick, 1998). The process is summed and presented below in figure five.

<p>Stage I: Case companies identification and initial communications</p>	<p>Case companies identification from secondary sources. Checking of fit to research frame through secondary sources. Establishment of support for the study.</p>
<p>Stage II: Pilot study and initial analysis</p>	<p>Case partnerships identification through primary sources. CEOs of firms initiating the partnerships interviewed. Data confirming suitability of study and highlighting key issues. Support for study solicited.</p>
<p>Stage III: First round of Interviews</p>	<p>60 to 120 minute interviews and short questionnaire completion from 16 managers in Autumn 2010. Public and Private documents as well as short questionnaires were used to enhance the validity of the findings.</p>
<p>Stage IV: Archival data collection</p>	<p>Public and, where available, private data archives retrieved and searched to achieve data triangulation.</p>
<p>Stage V: Primary Data coding</p>	<p>Coding of data to categories from the theoretical frameworks, search for emergent patterns, iteration between the literature and the data to better understand and relate emerging patterns</p>
<p>Stage VI: Second round of Interviews</p>	<p>60 to 120 minute interviews of 27 managers in Spring 2011. Public and Private documents as well as short questionnaires were used to</p>

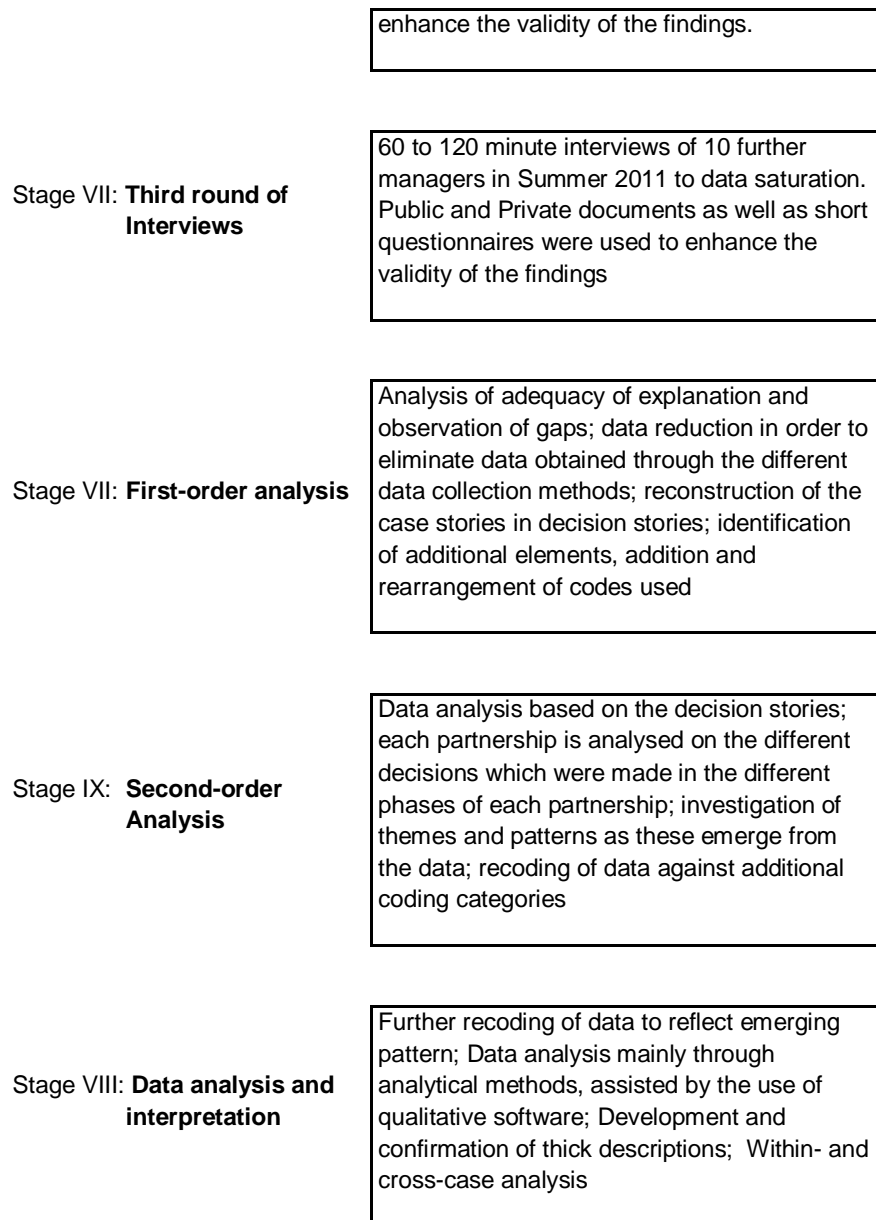


Figure five: The data collection and analysis process followed in this study.

4.4.8 Pilot study

In order to improve the data collection process, a *pilot study* was conducted (Yin 2009; De Rond and Bouchikhi 2004; Robert Baum and Wally 2003; Numella 2000; Janesick, 1998) (figure five). A pilot study can be regarded as a mini version of a large scale research project, also known as *feasibility studies* (Danniels and Cannice, 2004). As Van Teijlingen and Hundley (2001: 35) state, ‘it might give advance

warning about where the main research project could fail, where research protocols may not be followed, or whether proposed methods or instruments are inappropriate or too complicated'. Its importance is even higher in cases where translation of the collected data is required, as in the current case, where interviews had to be translated from Greek to English, as it helped clarify whether the an official translator would be needed (Bryman, 2008a;b; Marschan-Piekkari and Reis, 2004; Birbili, 2000).

Through its use, practical problems of the research procedure can be uncovered. Moreover, it can help the revelations of *local politics* and *problems*, which could create further confusion during the actual research process (Van Teijlingen and Hundley, 2001). In addition, their use can help improve the *face validity* of the research, as they can help understand the appropriateness of the research questions (Yin, 2009; Cavaye, 2008; Patton 1990). In cases where the questions are regarded as not appropriate, especially concerning sensitive issues, they would then need to be readjusted and redefined in order to capture the intended outcomes (Farrell, Bannister, Ditton and Gilchrist, 1997).

4.4.9 Pilot study analysis and its contribution

The pilot cases for this study were selected based on convenience, access and geographic proximity (Yin 2009). Two pilot studies were conducted in May and June 2010. The case companies were two of the four case studies later used in the whole study. Ten interviews were conducted, starting from the CEOs of each company, who then indicated other employees from different hierarchical levels which would be suitable to respond questions about the partnerships being investigated. The obtained data was transcribed within 24 hours (Eisenhardt, 1989). The data was analysed based through the use of notes, memos and documents, as well as through the use of qualitative software. More details about the pilot study and the ways it contributed to the current research are provided in appendix one.

The data obtained from the pilot study was crucial for the subsequent rounds of the data collection, as it resulted in several changes in the research approach and even in the actual research topic. First of all, the study confirmed the existence of politics, and helped the researcher gain a better understanding of their shape and the way they are observed in modern organisations. They appeared to affect the decision teams, by creating some times harmony, and other times conflict. However, it made clear that as a concept they are too vague, and a more focused approach would be required for their in-depth investigation.

The study however revealed that while top managers engage in politics, they are not the only organisational actors who can shape strategic decision. Middle managers, who also engage in politics, appeared to affect strategic decisions, especially through informal interactions and processes. This observation was crucial for this research, as it actually changed its focus. Rather than investigation politics during partnerships, a more focused approach was chosen. This consisted of the investigation of political behaviour from specific organisational actors, these being the middle managers of the case companies. Through this approach, two different factors in the strategy process were being investigated, in a detailed way.

The pilot study resulted also in a methodological shift, concerning the data collection methods. It was made clear that the use of observation as a data collection tool would be rather infeasible. This was strongly related to the sensitivity of the topic, and access and time requirements for such an approach. Moreover, the pilot made clear that further focus on the different structural aspects of politics, in order them to be understood and investigated better would be required. This could involve a focus on the actual tactics being applied, or on the specific decisions being made. This however was not yet clear for the researcher, and was expected to be further considered in the next phases of data collection and analysis. Furthermore, the pilot cases enabled the researcher to make the required adjustments in the research

questions. Simultaneously, they aided in improving the time schedule of each interview and helped in determining the adequacy of interview and case study protocols.

A last contribution of the pilot consisted of the identification of the first patterns which would eventually form the themes of this project. The first theme had to do with the actual impact of politics: while their existence was acknowledged between the participants, it appeared that its impact was not clear enough; simultaneously, it appeared to be able to affect decision making teams, which even though it has been acknowledged in the existing literature, there were only a few research projects focusing on how they actually do that. Moreover, the importance of middle managers for shaping and informing decisions was observed. Simultaneously, the different phases of partnerships, as these were regarded from the participants, were identified. One more theme had to do with the observation of old and new political tactics. The identification of these themes were a crucial contribution of the pilot study, as they offered the first for the research focus which would be followed in the next phases of this research. In addition, they helped the researcher conclude on whether other research methods shall be used in order to provide findings of higher quality.

4.4.10 First round of interviews

The second round of data collection occurred in September and October 2010 (figure five). Middle managers and employees from the two case companies used in the pilot study participated, while data collection started from the two remaining case companies. As in the previous cases, data collection started from the CEOs, who then identified other executives and middle managers suitable to provide information about the partnerships being investigated (Rabinow, 1975). In all interviews, the researcher probed into managerial processes, as partnerships were developing through time and the way that politics were being exhibited. This was further corroborated with the use of short questionnaires which were used upon the

completion of the interviews, in order to clarify specific responses and/or ask questions which could be technically difficult to be asked through interviews.

The result of the first round of data collection was that the relationships of the interviewees with employees of different companies and countries, the roots of such relationships, and uses and outcomes of three relationships were determined. The lines of communication between the partnership employees and managers were ascertained, while the archival data collection and analysis was then permitted from the CEOs of the companies. Moreover, the important roles of middle managers started emerging.

4.4.11 Archival data collection

Once the first round of interviews was completed, the researcher started researching corporate documents. These included external official documents such as publicly available annual reports, the firms' own internet sites and their firm histories, and written and visual media documents such as newspaper reports. Internal documents and archival data were also made available, including minutes of several meetings conducted during the period when the partnerships occurred. Further research was done online and on newspapers in order to assess specific events. Simultaneously, industry reports enabled the researcher to further understand the nature of partnering within the high tech industry and the similarities and differences of the partnerships being analysed. This source-source data triangulation augmented the case-case triangulation achieved from the multiple interviews (Sharpe, 2004). This analysis also confirmed the suitability of the cases in terms of the study's objectives. The next section presents the next phases through which data was collected and analysed, focusing in the coding and pattern matching which emerged from the data.

4.5 Data analysis

The data analysis occurred simultaneously with the data collection, after some initial data was collected. This is made clear in the next paragraphs, where coding and analysis is described as it occurred after the first round of interviews. The overview of the coding process is followed by the description of the case stories construction, and the use of the intercoder reliability check for the case stories. The section then concludes, followed by an overview of research ethics and validity checks in social research.

4.5.1 Primary coding

Initial data coding involved analysis of interview notes and secondary data, as seen on figures five and six. The initial analysis aimed to identify the decisions the firms addressed, and the outcomes that they had in the operations of the firms. Data triangulation involved evidence from the CEOs' transcripts, and secondary data (Yin, 2009; Huberman and Miles, 1994; Silverman, 1993). Coding categories, through use of hand written displays and tables (Huberman and Miles, 1994), helped the detailed observation of causality among different factors. The length of the data collection and analysis helped the iterative process involving moving back and forth between data and existing theories (Bazeley, 2010; Eisenhardt and Graebner, 2007; Suddaby, 2006; Yanow, 2004), which helped inform and further improve subsequent interviews. After each interview, all data was transcribed within 24 hours, and was then stored in the computer, from where it could be easily retrieved and further analysed.

The examination and analysis of the political processes however revealed the crucial roles that middle managers had within the different phases of these international partnerships of the high tech sector, as it was also implied from the pilot study. This meant that a potential change of focus could shed further light on the strategy process of international partnerships and the factors which affects them. Through the constant iteration between literature and existing codes, the inclusion of a new

theoretical perspective in the examination of international high tech partnerships was finalised, this being the roles of the middle managers in the different phases which constitute them. This meant that new categories of codes and themes would be created. Further patterns and ideas about potential themes were emerging at this point. The management of ideas consisted initially from the use of memos, which was then facilitated through the use of qualitative software, which enabled the creation of comments and notes next to different themes, nodes and codes. Moreover, the observation of patterns was facilitated, as each interview question could be investigated in isolation, which also made easier the comparison of different responses, and the query over their differences.

4.5.2 Second round of interviews

The next round of interviews took place in January, February and March 2011, where 27 more interviews were conducted, with employees from the marketing departments, the operations departments, and different executive directors. In addition, some middle managers were examined, as the addition of the new theoretical perspective required, as a result of the first round of data coding. The relations of the different themes of the study were graphically modelled, which was facilitated through the use of the qualitative software. These subsequent rounds of interviews had a different structure. Respondents were acknowledged in advance, through an informed consent, as to the specific partnership they would be interviewed (without being informed of the purpose of the research), to be better prepared for the interview process (Punch, 1986; Oakley, 1981).

The interviewees were first requested to recall the whole partnership, through their own memories, to yield an 'unfiltered' version of the story, to help triangulation of findings and patterns (Wengraf, 2001; Fontana and Frey, 1998). Then the interview was conducted in a semi-structured fashion. From a number of the participants, further information was obtained once the formal interviews had finished, through unofficial discussion over a drink or dinner. This created a freer environment for interactions between the researcher and the respondents, and yielded a much richer

and nuanced picture of the management processes and the perceptions of those interviewed.

4.5.3 Case stories construction and secondary coding

Once the second round of interviews had been collected, the researcher started creating ‘think descriptions’ of the case studies. These were based in the narratives that the respondents provided, the questionnaires completed, and the notes from the documentary analysis of the previous phase. The case stories construction was facilitated from the use of qualitative software, as all data could be easily retrieved and further investigated, if required. Four different case stories were constructed, and upon their completion, a second round of data coding and analysis was initiated.

Coding went further than the previous time, as two factors were now being investigated, these being political processes and middle managers. The use of new codes and the thorough investigation of their interrelation was assisted through the use of computer software. The coding process provided fruitful insights on the roles of middle managers and the impact of political process in the different phases of international partnerships, confirming the patterns and the necessity of shift of focus which resulted from the first round of interviews.

4.5.4 Third round of interviews

Data was collected until theoretical saturation was achieved, where the identification of new or contradicting patterns was hardly evident. The last round of interviews was in summer of 2011, where 10 more interviews were conducted, four of these being follow up interviews (Patton, 1990) with the CEOs of the firms who had been interviewed during the pilot study, as seen on figure five. This gave the opportunity to probe into constructs and issues that had emerged inductively in the previous

stages. As in the previous rounds, wall interviews were transcribed within 24 hours, and all interview data was processed through the use of qualitative software.

All the interviews were face-to-face, and out of 63, 54 were recorded. All respondents were sufficiently close to the partnerships and the management processes occurring within them to provide useful data, even though some of the issues and processes discussed were not always within their operational responsibilities (Mainela, 2007). All of them lasted between one and two hours, and were conducted in the Greek language.

4.5.5 Case stories verification

Upon the completion of the third round of interviews, the researcher completed the ‘thick descriptions’ of the case studies, based on the information gathered from all the different data collection methods used. The use of computer software assisted the management of the large data required for each case study. In order however to avoid possible biases and enhance the construct validity of the case study, as it will be discussed later, summaries of the case stories were sent to key informants of the case studies, these being the CEOs of each company plus some managers from different hierarchical levels who had agreed to do so when the interviews were conducted (Yin, 2009; Jarzabkowski and Wilson, 2002; Seale, 1999; Morse, 1999; 1998; Miles and Huberman, 1994; Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Reason and Rowan, 1981; Glaser, 1978), in order to enhance the credibility of the studies. Once the case stories were received, some minor changes were made, which were not related to neither of the two factors being investigated in the study.

Once the case stories were confirmed, the researcher initiated the first-level analysis, which is a method of analysis which has been used widely in the strategy practice area (Jarzabkowski and Balogun, 2009; Paroutis and Pettigrew 2007; Balogun and Johnson, 2005; 2004; Siggelkow 2001; Gioia and Chittipedi 1991; Eisenhardt 1989)

in order to eliminate data (figure six). This intermediate phase of analysis helps researchers eliminate large amounts of data and be more focused in the actual data analysis. The ultimate target of this early phase of analysis was to create case stories based in the different decisions made in each partnership (section 5.2 and appendix 11). Figure six below summarizes the data collection and analysis processes followed in this research through the different rounds of data collection. The first-order analysis is presented in the next chapter of this study.

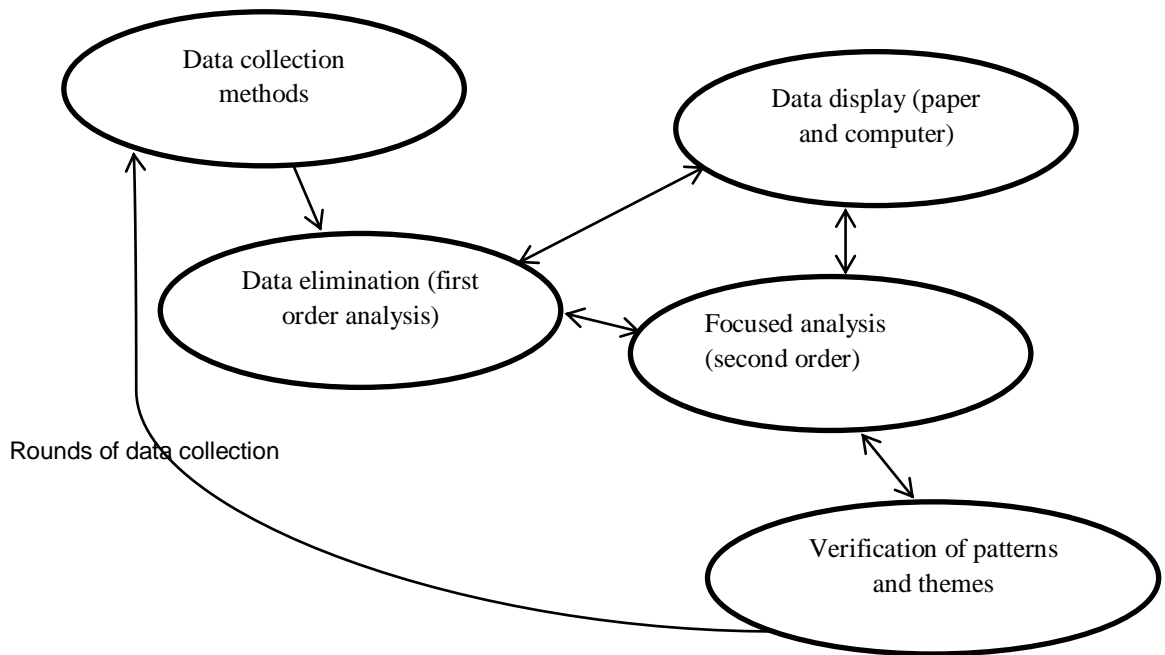


Figure six: The different components of the data analysis process of this study. Adapted from Miles and Huberman (1994)

4.5.6 Final coding

Once the final case stories were prepared, a second-order analysis followed, as it can be seen on figure five. The second-order analysis involved detailed investigation of political processes and the roles of the middle managers, as these were unfolding in the different sequential steps of partnerships. This analysis was mainly based in the decisions made through the partnerships, as these were developed in the first-order analysis. The second-order analysis consisted from codes, patterns and themes, which are emerging from the data. As in the previous phases, data analysis was

conducted through the use of analytical tools, such as diagrams, tables and frameworks, in a handwritten form mainly. In this round, the partial use of the software facilitated the inclusion of new codes and the management of research ideas and patterns across the data. Information about the final codes used in this study is provided throughout chapter seven, with some more information concerning their analysis in appendix eight, while the first and second-order analyses are presented in the next chapters of this thesis.

4.5.7 Intercoder reliability check

Once the data was collected and analysed, an *intercoder coder reliability test* was performed, in order to control the consistency of the coding schemas (Fox-Wolfgramm, 1997; Miles and Huberman, 1994). The intercoder reliability check belongs in the category of multiple rater testing (Morse, 1999; 1998). It is used in order to see the extent of the agreement of the codes used from different people, which helps improve the reliability of a study. This is done through the use of external researchers, who analyse a sample of the data provided, in order to see the extent of similarity with the approach followed from the researcher who analysed all the data.

The derived trees with the codes and their definitions were provided to a doctoral student in management, who was unfamiliar with the data and the particular research area. After the introduction of the basic concepts, and, specifically, the politics and middle managers, as factors influencing strategic decision making, a data sample was retrieved from the case study database, in a paper form, which was in no way changed from the text that investigator used. The sample represented the 10% of the complete data set (Jarzabkowski, 2003; Miles and Huberman, 1994). Effort was put from the researcher in order the sample to include all themes and codes used in the study. In addition, the seven interviews used included all case studies, in order the intercoder check to avoid case-specific biases. The codes, along with the sample, were then provided to the fellow doctoral researcher. Their similarity would be

calculated through the number of coding agreements, divided by the sum of code agreements and disagreements (Miles and Huberman, 1994: 64).

The comparison between the coding of the researcher and the intercoder appeared to have a similarity between 93% and 100%, excluding some minor differences in terms of the words and the sentences included in the code symbols. This percentage meant that the coding process was coherent, confirming the reliability and the robustness of the analysis. Once the inter coder test had finished and the coding approach was regarded as reliable, the researcher was able to further focus in analysing the codes and themes and focus in the interrelations of all the themes of this study.

4.5.8 Section conclusion

The current section overviewed the data analysis approach used in this study. The next sections discuss quality and ethical issues in qualitative researcher and the way they were addressed in this study.

4.6 Quality and Ethics in Research

The previous section described in details the different steps followed in data analysis. What is still missing however in this research design chapter, is the presentation of the evaluation criteria used for the appropriateness of the methods and the analysis applied. These are presented in the following paragraphs.

4.6.1 Criteria for evaluating the quality of a research project

Qualitative and case studies researchers have been accused of ignoring the importance of the different kinds of validity in their research (Morse, Barrett, Nayan, Olson and Spiers, 2008; Flyvbjerg, 2006; Johnson, Buehring, Cassell and Symon, 2006; Hartley and Branicki, 2006; Cepeda and Martin, 2005; Andersen and Skaates

2004; Healy and Perry, 2000; Langley, 1999; Miles and Huberman, 1994). Several criteria have been suggested for the evaluation of social research methods (Seale, 1999; Janesick, 1998; Denzin and Lincoln, 1994; Miles and Huberman, 1994; Wolcott, 1990; Eisenhardt, 1989). The current thesis uses different validity tests, all described in the following paragraphs.

4.6.1.1 Construct validity

In order to improve the *construct validity* of the current study, the questions used in the interviews were tested and changed several times, across the first phases of data collection, as described in section 4.5. Their operationalisation was improved through extensive communications with other researchers who have experience in using interviews and questionnaires as data collection tools, in familiar research areas. This was further facilitated through the different sources of evidence used, which enabled the researcher to adopt a 'holistic' perspective of the different methods applied (Yin, 2009; Eisenhardt, 1989). The corroboration of the different data collection methods consisted of the initial analysis of the interview data which was then followed by the use of questionnaires, which helped the verification of contextual information, and the use of public and private documents. This enabled the researcher to construct a 'chain of evidence' (Yin, 2009: 43), through the use of the appropriate qualitative software (Jarzabkowski and Wilson, 2002; Weitzman and Miles, 1995) where data was collected through different methods, where patterns were identified, while the weaknesses and advantages of each data collection method were counterbalanced. In addition, a series of memos and notes were created and kept safely, in order to capture ideas and the way they developed through the course of the study.

All the data collected along with the memos and the notes was then transferred to the case study database, and where then compared with existing theoretical suggestions and the way they were linked with these theories (Yin 2009; Altheide and Johnson, 1998; Miles and Huberman, 1994). The whole iterative process was completed by detailed notes, concerning the way that potential ideas were linked with existing

theories and findings until that specific point of time. This chain of evidence was maintained through the whole data collection and was also used in the analysis process. In addition, the CEO of each company, and some more key informants were asked to review case study summaries before the coding, which was also known as respondent validation, which further improved the data obtained from the interviews (Yin, 2009; Jarzabkowski and Wilson, 2002; Altheide and Johnson, 1998; Miles and Huberman, 1994).

4.6.1.2 Internal validity

Internal validity refers to the efforts of the researcher to establish causal relationships, and make them clear in the case study analysis, which will ultimately lead to the creation of clear and coherent case study findings (Denzin and Lincoln, 1998; Patton, 1990). Data analysis consisted of extensive patterns matching, through the within and cross-case comparisons, in the form of hand written notes and schemas constructed from the researcher, which were later kept in the case study database (Miles and Huberman, 1994), as it can be seen on table 13. The establishment of causal relationships was further facilitated through the different theoretical frameworks used, in the early phases of research and the final one, as the way that relationships between different factors developed are made clear through data analysis (section 4.5). The partial use of qualitative data analysis software (Bazeley, 2010; Edhlund, 2008; Kelle, 2004; Weitzman and Miles, 1995; Richards and Richards, 1994), enhanced the aggregation and analysis of different sources of information and the use of complementing research methods, helping the further validation of the patterns and the relationships observed, as the same codes were corroborated across different data sets. All these different factors helped the establishment of chains of evidence for the different themes of this thesis (Yin, 2009). The internal validity was further improved through the longitudinal character of the study, which helped the better investigation of conflicting explanations for the events occurring in the different phases of partnerships. In such cases, these events were researched further, in order to identify any possible factors being ignored, while in case of ambiguity, the

researcher contacted the respondents to clarify statements and the way they were related to specific incidents.

4.6.1.3 External validity

The next test is *external validity*, which refers to the extent that findings can be generalised beyond specific case studies and whether its linked to existing theories (Seale, 1999; Hammersley, 1991; LeCompte and Goetz, 1982). In order increase the generilisability of case research, thick descriptions of events and phenomena is required. These can provide sufficient details in order to enable the researcher gain sufficient understanding and experience of the real phenomena as they were unfolding (Seale, 1999). In the current thesis, there are four different case studies, concerning the development of interfirm strategic relationships from companies of the high tech industry. The findings of each case study was compared with these from the other case studies; Ignoring possible variations between the cases, the common patterns identified can be generalised for most medium to large corporations belonging in high velocity environments. This however might not be true for studies which belong in other sectors, as the impact of politics and middle managers seems to be affected from the rate of change of the industry in which corporations belong.

4.6.1.4 Reliability

The last test used is this of *reliability* (table 13). This concept refers to the expectation that the findings from the case study shall be the same, if another researcher did research on the same topic, using similar procedures (Seale, 1999; Antaki and Rapley, 1996; LeCompte and Goetz, 1982). This is essentially a control on the quality of the study, concerning the consistency of the research processes used over time and across researchers (Miles and Huberman, 1994). In the current study, reliability was enhanced by the use of the intercoder reliability test, (Jarzabkowski, 2003; Fox-Wolfgramm, 1997). This was conducted in the 10% of the collected data.

A similarity of findings between 93% and 100% per analysed interview validated the reliability of the data analysis that the researcher conducted (sections 4.5.3 and 4.5.6). The reliability of the study was further enhanced through the use of the informed consent for the interviews (appendix eight), as this helped the clarification of the information required from all participants. In addition, the interview questions and the questionnaires which were created through detail examination and were revised after the pilot study, are provided in appendices three, four and five. Table 13 presents a summary of all tests used to evaluate the research.

Research methods validity tests		
Validity tests	Suggested processes	How it was implemented in this project
Construct validity	Use of different sources of evidence	Interviews, documentary analysis, use of questionnaires for collection of contextual and demographic information
	Creation of chain of evidence for the case studies	Case study database, use of notes and memos for emerging themes and ideas, construction of trees
	Pilot study	Early pilot study, which helped clarify the feasibility of the research approach, the appropriateness of the research questions, and the suitability of the data collection and analysis methods
	Reviewing from key informants	Case study summaries reviewed by a limited number of case participants
Internal validity	Analytical techniques for data manipulation	Notes, memos, trees, creation of initial and modified theoretical framework, which helped the detailed observation of the emerging causal relations
	Data storage	Data stored in case study databases, which helped the establishment of chains of evidence
	Data verification	Recording of most data, transcription within the same, use of respondent validation in cases of ambiguity
	Pattern matching	Extensive pattern matching through the use of analytical methods (handwritten), facilitated through the use of

		qualitative software as well as other software programs for transcriptions and analysis (MS Word, Excel)
External validity	Replicability of the study	Some findings could be generalised for medium and large companies, while some others might be specific for medium and large companies of high tech (and other equally dynamic) industries
	Fit to existing theories	Clarification of some existing theoretical suggestions, but the different context in which the case study takes place (partnerships) resulted to theory extension
Reliability	Development of a case study database	A large database including information on the case companies, the participants, and the decisions analysed for each case
	Use of protocols	Provision of informed consent to participants
	Inter researcher check	Conducted in the 10% of the collected data, concerning all cases in this study, which had a 93-100% similarity.

Table 13: Validity checks for the research methods applied in this research. These include construct validity, internal validity, external validity and reliability of the study. The way that each of these were improvised in this study is described in the last column of the table. Adapted from Yin (2009)

4.6.2 Ethics in qualitative research

Research ethics are related to the rules of conduct that a researcher follows in order to carry out research in moral ways (Gomm, 2004; Wengraf, 2001; Bulmer, 1982). Ethics in social research are having an increasing importance in the conduct of the studies. Ethical qualitative research is crucial, and deceitfulness and manipulation of participants has been widely recognised as a harmful practice (Punch, 1986; Oakley, 1981). Such practices include interviewing without acknowledging participants and the secret use of interviewing devices (Fontana and Frey, 1998). These practices however are regarded as unacceptable, as can seriously harm the respondents, while simultaneously resulting on the use of data without their permission. Ethical considerations in organisational research can be divided in four categories, depending on whether there is harm to participants, whether there is a lack of informed consent, whether privacy is invaded and whether deception is involved (Fontana and Frey, 1998; Diener and Crandall, 1978).

This research followed specific procedures to avoid problems that such ethical issues could create. Concerning the conduct of interviews, all participants were informed about the nature of the research topic before the actual interviews. An informed consent was provided in advance, containing all the required information about the research topic (appendix eight), informing participants about the confidentiality and anonymity through the destruction of all the data after it would have been analysed. Moreover, they were acknowledged about the choice to opt out during the interviews, in case they will feel uncomfortable with the process. The participants were reassured that all their details would remain private and confidential, and that only some excerpts of their quotations could be used in the final study, where their anonymity would be preserved. In addition, the research was conducted according to the ESRC Research Ethics Framework, which provides an ethical framework for the ethics in social research in the UK, corroborated by the ethics guidelines of the Hellenic Ethics in Research Institute, as the data collection occurred in Greece. Overall, significant effort was put to avoid any possible ethical issues, especially given the sensitive nature of the research topic (Regnér, 2003; Mohr and Spekman, 1994; Lee and Renzetti, 1993) of this study.

4.6.3 Section Conclusion

The current section overviewed the validity tests and ethical issues involved in this study. Specifically, it presented the different validity checks within scientific research, and the way activities followed in order to ensure their application in this study. This was followed by an overview of the ethical issues which can arise during qualitative research, and the ways that these were taken into consideration for this study. The following chapter presents the analysis phases of this study.

4.7 Chapter Summary

The current chapter presented the research methods and the choices that had to be made on the ways that the data would be collected. This study has used an interpretivist paradigm, accepting that people see truth subjectively. As a result, they end up constructing subjective realities, which can be context and role-specific. This constructivist approach implies that the construction of an objective perspective on the ways that politics affect decision making can be better understood through a qualitative approach, which permits researchers to isolate activities and processes and gain a better understanding on the way that these are regarded during decision making in firm partnerships. Given the fact that middle manager roles and the impact of politics have already been investigated in management, then an abductive approach is appropriate for theory extension. All these choices can be seen in table 14 provided below.

The following section described the case study and the data collection tools used in this study. Specifically, in order to ensure generalisability, four case studies were selected (sections 4.3.5-4.3.6). The data collection methods involve interviews mainly, which are supported with questionnaires, for collection and verification of demographic and contextual information, and the use of public and private documents. The different kinds of data were collected in different rounds between 2010 and 2012.

The next section overviewed the analytical procedures followed during data analysis (section 4.5). Specifically, it presented the coding process, and the way that the codes changed and improved, as the research was progressing. This was followed by a presentation on the validity tests for this research approach, and the way that ethical issues, which are becoming increasingly important for social science, were addressed in this study.

Summary of research methods	
Paradigm	Constructivist/Interpretivist
Approach	Abductive, with elements of induction and deduction through the whole study
Design	Pilot study, four case studies in medium-sized high tech companies
Methods	Interviews, Questionnaires, Documents (private and public)
Analysis	Several rounds of coding, constant iteration between theory and data, use of analytical procedures (notes, memos, qualitative software)

Table 14: Chapter summary: An overview of the different research choices made in this section, concerning the choice of a paradigm, the specific approach to theory development, the research design, the data collection methods applied, and the way that the data was analysed

The following chapter present in detail the data analysis of this study, as this occurred in two different phases.

Chapter Five: Data analysis and findings

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the data collection and analysis of the case stories of the partnerships being investigated in the current study. Data analysis is conducted in two levels (Mackay and Chia, 2013; Jarzabkowski and Balogun, 2009; Paroutis and Pettigrew 2007; Rouleau, 2005; Balogun and Johnson, 2004; Siggelkow 2001; Gioia and Chittipedi 1991; Eisenhardt 1989). The initial stage of the data analysis entailed the development of a *first-order* analysis of the companies being examined. This approach is appropriate for the understanding of the contextual characteristics of the case studies. Upon the creation of case stories and the data elimination, extensive second-order data analysis is conducted, focusing in the investigation of the questions of the study. This chapter introduces the first-order analysis and the break down of the case stories in decisions, which help the second-order analysis, where the main questions of this study are investigated.

5.2 First-order analysis and data elimination

First-order analysis is used for the elimination of large datasets, in order to help the focused investigation from a researcher (Mackay and Chia, 2013; Jarzabkowski and Balogun, 2009; Balogun and Johnson, 2004; Gioia and Chittipedi 1991). A large amount of data, such as the current, coming from 63 interviews conducted throughout this study, can make the creation of rigorous case stories infeasible, because of the large amount of information collected (Eisenhardt and Graebner, 2007). Data elimination however helps the researcher to reduce the ‘staggering volume of data’ (Eisenhardt, 1989:540) which can result from longitudinal studies, and help avoid the danger of ‘death by data asphyxiation’ (Pettigrew, 1990: 281). The goal of the researcher through this process is the familiarization with the historical, environmental and organisational characteristics of the partnerships, and the way they developed over time. Hence, the case study descriptions, as these can be seen in appendix 11, should provide the required background information to enhance the interpretation of the interviewees’ responses in the next level of analysis.

All case partnerships shared similar characteristics, which enabled their comparison, in order to identify themes and patterns in the second-order analysis. As mentioned in the methods chapter, all partnerships are from companies belonging in the high tech industry, meaning that they operate in an environment of continuous change, where rapid decision making is required and decisions might often be affected from political behaviour, making the industry choice appropriate for the focus of this study (Andersen, 2004; Eisenhardt and Bourgeois, 1988). In addition, all partnerships took place in countries with small cultural and geographical distance (Hamel, 1991). They all had a similar duration and were of similar size, employing between 800-1200 employees, as mentioned in the case selection sections (4.3.5 and 4.3.6). All these selection criterias could enable the researcher to analyse the data, while having minimised potential variation which could result from less relevant to the study data collection sources (Mtar, 2010; Chang, Van Witteloostuijn, Eden, 2010; Ghauri, 2004; Jarzabkowski 2003; Whitley 1999; Langlely, 1999; Eisenhardt 1989).

In order to better understand the contextual characteristics of the cases being studied, the case descriptions focus on describing distinctive events which occurred through the life of the partnership (Santos and Eisenhardt, 2009; Paroutis and Pettigrew, 2007; Langlely, 1999; Ariño and De la Tore, 1998; Van de Ven, 1992) in the form of decision stories (Maitlis and Lawrence, 2003). These distinctive events are, for the needs of the current study, strategic decisions taken through the life of the partnerships. Crucial for the selection of the decisions to be included (Nutt, 2008; Maitlis and Lawrence, 2003; Langlely, 1999; Eisenhardt and Bourgeois, 1988), is that they should have participation of middle managers on the time they were being made or during their implementation. This resulted from the pilot study, which pointed out that their political behaviour can shape the partnership through different phases. As a result, the decisions which would be investigated should somehow have their participation, because if this was not true, then the investigation of the decision would not provide any further insights on their specific activities.

The actual case stories, focusing on the way that partnerships developed through time, are described in appendix 11. The decisions which result from the first-order analysis, which help the researcher center his focus during the investigation of the research questions, are described in the following section.

5.3 Decisions in the partnerships being studied

As mentioned earlier, some decisions were taken within the single organisation, while some others were made from both organisations. The separation of these two different kinds of decisions has implications for the actors involved in political processes, and the impact that these activities can have, as it is discussed in the next paragraphs. In addition, it has to be mentioned that all the companies included in the current study, belong in the same industry, this being the high tech industry. These companies however belong in different sub-sectors of the high tech industry, which might have implications about the phenomena being observed in the study (Kilgour and Eden, 2010; Andersen, 2004; Hatzichronoglou, 1997). For this reason, contextual information on the nature of the specific sub industry is provided, where required. The decisions investigated in all partnerships are presented below, on table 15, while a description of the initial patterns and observed through the this first level of analysis follows

Decisions analysed from the cases of this study				
Decision number	Decision content	Level of decision	Managers involved	Phase of the partnership in which the decision occurred
Case partnership one: Alpha-Beta				
1	Creation of team which will be researching the external environment	Intra-organisational, with marketing and operational directors responsible for the final choice	Operations and Regional Marketing director, disagreeing on the synthesis of the team	Before the project was announced, this team would be formed to carry out general research

2	Who will be in the committee for the partner evaluation	Intra-organisational, with the regional operations director responsible for the final choice	Technical and regional Marketing director, having disagreement on the synthesis of the committee.	After the official bidding process had started, and before the negotiations with the potential partner
3	Which middle managers will participate in the next rounds of negotiations	Intra-organisational, with the vice president of operations responsible for the final choice	Operational, Sales and Digital lotteries director having disagreement on the managers' choice	After the potential partners was identified, and before the companies made their offer to the client
4	Selection of the employees who will go to work for the project	Intra-organisational, with the regional operations director responsible for the final choice	International business development director and project manager having competitive behaviour on the choice of employees	In the beginning of the implementation of the project
5	Allocation of further financial resources to the project	Inter-organisational, with the Operational Directors of both partner responsible for a joint final decision	Technical and Finance Directors disagreements with project managers and others working on the project	During the implementation of the project
6	Choice of the employee(s) who would carry out the evaluation	Intra-organisational, with the operations director responsible for the final choice	Disagreement between the Marketing director and the project manager on the choice of the employee	Upon the successful completion of the project
Case partnership two: Lambda-Omega				
7	Environmental scanning team	Intra-organisational, with both the operations director and the technical director responsible for the final choice	Disagreement between the technical director, who wanted the team to comprise only from engineers, and the operations, who wanted to have employees from more departments	Before the communications with the potential partners would start
8	Partner selection	Intra-organisational, with the operations director responsible for the final decision	Disagreements between several directors (technical, marketing, operations, networks) on the members of the shortlist	Before the negotiations with the partners would have started
9	Budget allocation	Inter-organisational, with the operational directors of both companies responsible for the final decision	Disagreement between the directors of both companies (Technical, Finance, Operational) on the money which should be allocated to each partner	During the negotiations with the chosen partner
10	Location for the working place of	Inter-organisational, with the COO of	Disagreement between the COO of Lambda	During the negotiations for the

	employees	Lambda and the International Business Director of Omega responsible for the final agreement	and the International Business of Omega on the choice of the location	planning and the operations of the partnership, once the initial contracts had been signed
11	Customer service cut down	Inter-organisational, with the operations directors of each partner, along with the customer service director of Lambda responsible for the final decision	Disagreement between the customer service director of the partnership, who was an employee of Lambda, and the international business operations director of Omega, who suggested automated customer service department	During the implementation of the partnership
12	Cash flow management	Inter-organisational, with the COO of each partner, along with each project manager responsible for the final decision	Disagreement between the COO of each company, who, using also arguments supplied from the representative-project manager was trying to persuade each other	During the implementation of the project, when the reinvestment of the cash flows was discussed
13	Change of pricing policy/profit distribution	Inter-organisational, with the marketing director from Lambda and the operational director from Omega responsible for reaching a final agreement	Disagreement between the project managers, telephone/broadband and operational directors on the way that cash flows would be reinvested in the company	During the implementation of the partnership
14	Purchase or in house development of information system	Inter-organisational, with the operational directors of both companies responsible for a final decision	Disagreement between the technical director of Lambda and the information system director of Omega, who, supported by the project managers of each company had different suggestions on the development of the required information system	During the implementation of the partnership
15	Extent and participants of the evaluation process	Inter-organisational, with the operational director of both companies responsible for a final decision	The operational directors along with the project managers were disagreeing on the method and the extent of the evaluation	Upon the partner had agreed to finish their partnership
Case partnership three: Delta-Theta				
16	Who will be researching the external environment	Intra-organisational, with the technical director and the regional director, responsible for a	Disagreement between the technical director, the regional director, on the choice of employees, which was resolved through the	Before the project was announced officially and a list of potential partners was

		decision	intervention of operational director	created
17	Partner selection	Intra-organisational, with the wireless director and the international operations director responsible for the final decision	Disagreement between the suggestions of the wireless director and the international operations director, who, both supported from employees of the research team, had different opinions on the choice of the partner	Before the negotiations team who would communicate with the partner was formed
18	Negotiations team	Intra-organisational, with the regional operations director responsible for the final decision	Disagreement between the international business director and the wireless director on the choice of employees who would carry out negotiations	Before the negotiations with the potential partner would start
19	Budget allocation	Inter-organisational, with the international operations directors of both companies responsible for a final decision	Disagreement between directors of both companies (wireless, regional operations from Delta and software operations from Theta) on the final budget to be allocated	Before the company would make their offer. Decision had to be made under time pressure, as the deadline for offer submission was approaching.
20	Dropping of weekend work	Inter-organisational, with the regional and the technical directors of both companies responsible for the final decision	Disagreement between the engineers and the project managers working on the project and managers of both companies, on their working schedule	During the early implementation of the project
21	Modification of bonus policy	Inter-organisational, with the regional operation director responsible for the final decision	Disagreement between the operational directors of both partners and the engineers and the project managers from both companies, who were complaining about the very difficult working conditions	During the implementation of the project, after the continued complains of employees who were carrying out the project
22	Creation of TQM team	Inter-organisational, with the quality assurance directors of both companies responsible for the final decision	Disagreement of the quality assurance directors of both companies on the number of employees from each company, as well as on the overall number of employees and their position	After the project costs had started being much higher than what originally estimated
23	Substitution of project managers	Inter-organisational, with the operational directors responsible	Disagreement on whether one (from Delta) or both project managers should be	At the last phase of the project, during the period which should be

		for the final decision	substituted, because of the fact that their management had resulted in delays in the project completion	originally handled, according to the revised plans of the partners
24	Extent and participants of the evaluation process	Inter-organisational, with the operational directors and the project managers responsible for the final decision	Disagreement on the evaluation method and the freedom that the employee who would carry out the evaluation process would enjoy	Upon the completion of the project, in order to help the partners improve their future operations
Case partnership four: Psi-Epsilon				
25	Who will comprise the Eastern European Strategic Analysis team	Intra-organisational, between the head of the subsidiary and international operations director, who were both responsible for a final decision	Disagreement on the choice of the engineers who would carry out the strategic market analysis	Once the potential for projects in the neighbouring markets was brought to the top management
26	Partner short listing	Intra-organisational, with the regional operations director and the head of the subsidiary responsible for the final decision	Disagreement between the regional director, the strategic analysis team and the head of the local subsidiary on the choice of the appropriate partner	Once the projects were announced from the client
27	Synthesis of the negotiations team	Intra-organisational, with both software and international operations directors responsible for the final decision	Disagreement between the software and international operations directors, who wanted to promote specific employees in the negotiations team	Before the initial communications with two potential partners
28	Final partner selection	Intra-organisational, with the international business director and the technical director delegated from the CEO to make the final decision	Disagreement between the regional operations director and the rest managers from the negotiations team on the partner choice	Before the initiation of further negotiations with the potential partner
29	Budget allocation for the project	Inter-organisational, with the regional director of Psi and the operations director of Epsilon responsible for a final decision	Disagreement between the operations and technical directors of both partners on the evaluation of the contribution of each partner	Before the partners have made their offer to the client
30	Location for the working place of employees	Inter-organisational, with the operations director of the partners responsible for a final decision	Disagreement between the regional operations and technical directors on the choice of the location where the project would be	After the partners had won the bid, and before they had started working on the

			completed	project
31	Selection of programming language	Inter-organisational, with the head software engineers from both companies responsible for the final choice	Disagreement between the project managers and software engineers on the choice of the programming which will be used in the project	After the negotiations had finished, simultaneously with the development of the hardware from Epsilon
32	Selection of distribution partner	Inter-organisational, with the operations officers responsible for the final decision	Disagreement between the project managers and the operations director on the choice of distribution partner	After the first terminal were ready to be distributed for testing in different areas of the country
33	Allocation of further financial resources to the project	Inter-organisational, with the operations officers responsible for the final decision	Disagreement between the project managers, the head software engineers and the operations director on the choice of distribution partner	When a large part of the project was completed, during the initial testing of the products of the partnership
34	Agreement on the way that the evaluation of the partnership would be carried out	Inter-organisational, with the operations director of both companies responsible for a final agreement	Disagreement between the project managers, the technical directors and the operational director on the extent and depth of the visit	Upon completion of the project
35	Who will go to offices of the other company to gather information for the evaluation of the partnership	Intra-organisational, with the operations director of Psi responsible for a final decision	Disagreement between the regional operations manager and the software development director, who were trying to influence the decision of the operations director	Before the evaluation process would start

Table 15: Decisions from the cases being studied, level of decisions and key participants, nature of the conflict between different parties and partnership phase that these decisions occurred.

5.4 Level of decision and employees involved

As it can be seen, from the third column of table 15, a number of decisions were made within the company (intra-organisational level), while some others were made between both partners (inter-organisational level). This categorisation is important, as it can have implications about the individual and the group-level political tactics and informal activities which might be exhibited during a strategic decision, as it will be analysed in the next chapter of this thesis. In decision one, for example, the choice

of the employees who would form a research team and gather strategic information for the company would be characterised by tactics of different nature and focus, compared to decision 11, where the radical change of the customer service department was discussed in an inter-organisational level.

This separation is crucial, because, the level that the decision is taken can affect the interests of the parties involved. As it will be discussed in the next chapter, this ultimately affects the tactics being applied from those involved in the decision making. As it can be seen from table 15, from the 35 decisions of the study, 15 were in intra-organisational level, while 20 in inter-organisational level.

5.5 Phase of the partnership

Another crucial aspect of the decisions of the current study is the phase of the partnership in which they were made (last column of table 15). As described in the literature review, partnerships consist of four phases: pre-formation, formation, implementation and evaluation. The phase in which the decision is made is important because the political processes surrounding can have an impact in the whole life of the partnership, while some others can affect only the specific in which they are being made. The fact that these decisions have a differential impact on the partnership means that it will also affect the tactics employed from all the related managers. For example, decision 12 concerning the investment of cash flows in either R&D or in Marketing was taken during the implementation of the partnership, which could create a political environment only in this phase of the partnership. On the other hand, decision 24, concerning the method of the evaluation which would be carried, had a longer term impact in the company, as it could benefit or freeze the relationship between the two companies.

Overall, as it can be seen from table 15, from the decisions included in the study, nine were in the pre-formation phase, seven in the formation, 14 in the

implementation and five in the evaluation. This categorisation is crucial in order to better understand the nature of political processes within partnerships, analysed in the next chapter of the study.

5.6 Employees involved

One more crucial factor in the decision making process which is included in the tables is the positions and the roles of the managers who are being involved in them. The importance of this factor lies on the fact that given that decision makers apply tactics in order to reach a final decision, then the nature of these tactics will be different, according to the personality of the manager, his skills and the extent of his involvement in the decision. The managers, who are involved in the decisions being studied, are described in the fourth column of table 15.

The participation of the managers investigated in these decisions can be either direct or indirect. Managers who participate actively in the decision making process, suggesting alternative option, and providing the final choices are regarded as those having direct participation. On the other hand, managers who offer some simple advices and suggestions, without participating actively in the decision process, are regarded as having indirect participation. This differentiation helps the better contextual understanding of the decisions made, as it helps the better understanding on the actors and the activities through which they affect decision making.

A large amount of the managers who are described in table 15 come from middle managerial levels, since the focus of the study are middle managers politics. Given however that many decisions required participation from top managers, then their roles and activities are described in this table as well, were required. This will enhance the understanding of the political processes in international partnerships, which is analysed in the following chapter

5.7 Summary and conclusion of first-order analysis

In the previous section, the decisions being researched in the current study were discussed. This was done through a within case first-order analysis. The focus in each case individually helped the researcher start forming some first insights on recurring decisions, and the way that competing interests appeared during these decisions. The isolation of each decision was crucial, as it helped the researcher examine it in depth, and gain better understandings of its different aspects, where required. The different phases of data collection, and the relation with the first and second-order analyses, are described in figure seven provided below.

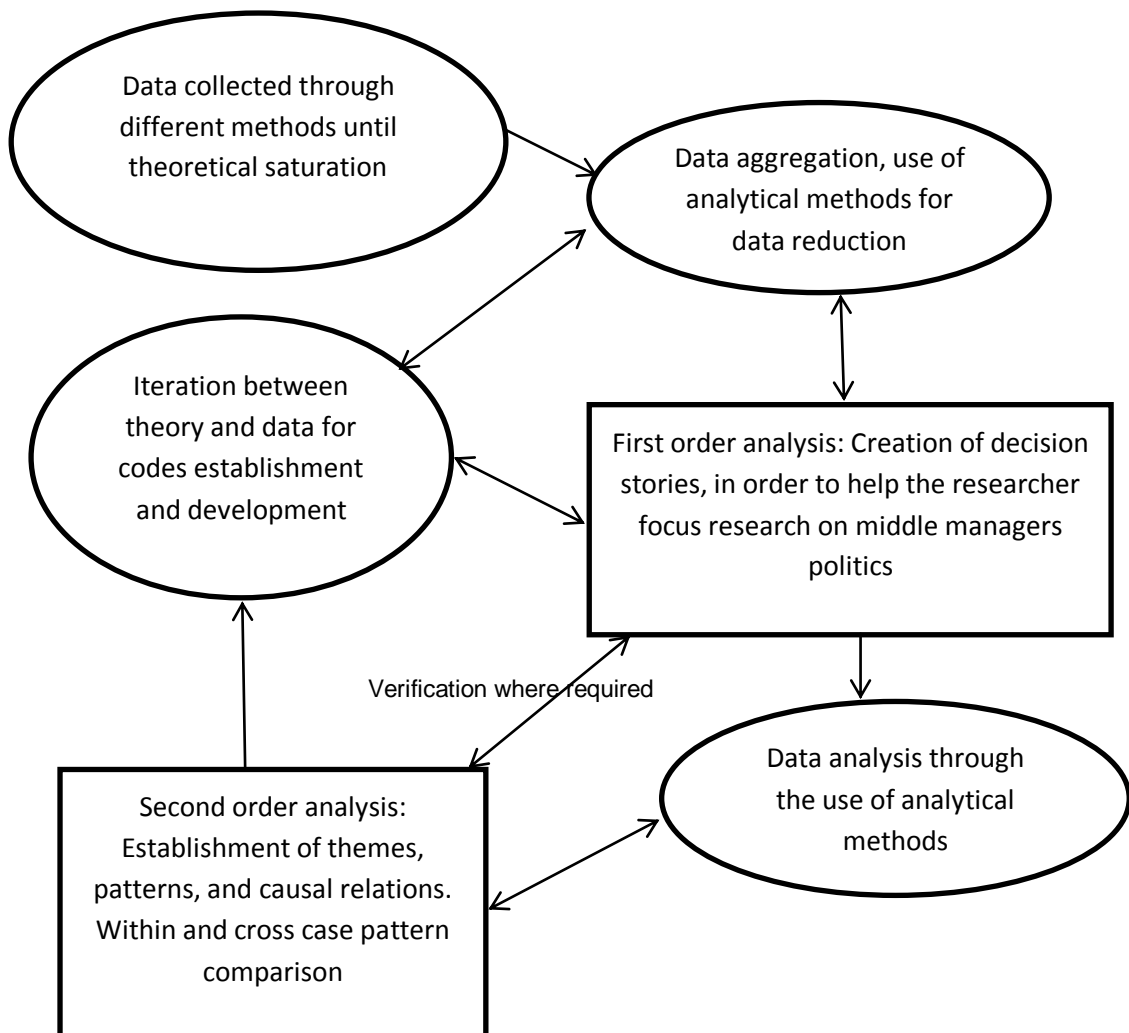


Figure seven: The different phases of data analysis and the surrounding activities and processes

Initially, data was collected through the use of different methods, including interviews, questionnaires and documentary analysis. This resulted in a large amount of data, which was then disaggregated through the use of analytical methods. These include first and second-order (provided in the following section) analysis, which involve coding and identifications of patterns. This process is corroborated with constant iteration between theory and data, to result in the creation of more robust codes. Through several rounds of collection and analysis, patterns which seem able to provide responses in the research themes of this study start to become more clear. This whole analytical process is described in figure seven.

Through the first-level of analysis, some initial insights on the contextual characteristics of the decisions were gained. Firstly, it was made clear that the phase of the partnership when they were made can affect their intensity. In addition, the different behaviours that managers participating in each decision were exhibiting were also clearly observed. Moreover, it appeared that decisions can be affected from the way they are related with others made earlier or later in the life of the partnerships. These initial patterns, briefly explained in the previous paragraphs, are analysed in much more depth in the following chapter. It is clear however that these contextual aspects can help the explanation of the activities and the interactions which surrounded them.

Overall, the decision stories were developed in order to help their focused investigation. Through each case story presented earlier, the content of each decision, along with the events occurring before and after these, were made explicit. The first-order analysis also helped the researcher to gain a better understanding of the context of each decision. In the next chapter, the underlying processes surrounding each decision are analysed, in order to enhance the understanding of middle managers political activity in international partnerships, which is the focus of this thesis.

5.8 Second-order analysis: focused analysis to investigate the research questions

This section presents the themes of the data analysed in the current study. As noted in earlier chapters, the focus of this thesis is the investigation of political processes exhibited by middle managers in firm partnerships. Their behaviour is investigated by focusing in one of the two partners, this being the case companies, and the decisions being made within the company and between the partners, as a unit of analysis. The second-order analysis progressed in two different phases, described in the following sections.

The first phase of the second-order analysis consists of within-case analysis. This involves the deeper understanding of what happened within each case in isolation, attempting to develop explanations and causality for the different political activities exhibited in the different strategic decisions presented earlier, following the data analysis process described in section 4.5. Within case analysis is central for the generation of insight (Eisenhardt and Graebner 2007; Miles and Huberman, 1994; Eisenhardt 1989) as it helps the researcher further narrow down the data obtained, while simultaneously enabling the identification of ideas and patterns in each case. The final target of this analysis is the familiarisation of the researcher with the data until he is able to investigate each case as a 'stand-alone entity' (Eisenhardt, 1989). As a result, researchers are able to observe the emerging patterns and categories within each case, while simultaneously accelerating the generalisation of the data in the next step of analysis, because of the familiarity that the researcher has obtained (Miles and Huberman, 1994). The actual within-case analysis is not included in the thesis, however the template used for within-case analysis is provided in appendix ten.

The within-case analysis helped the observation of patterns and codes in each case partnership investigated. The agreement of patterns across different cases was then investigated. Conflicting patterns were further investigated, while the observation of common patterns over the cases lead to the conceptualisation of the corresponding

codes. The whole data comparison and analysis process within and across cases is described in figure eight provided below.

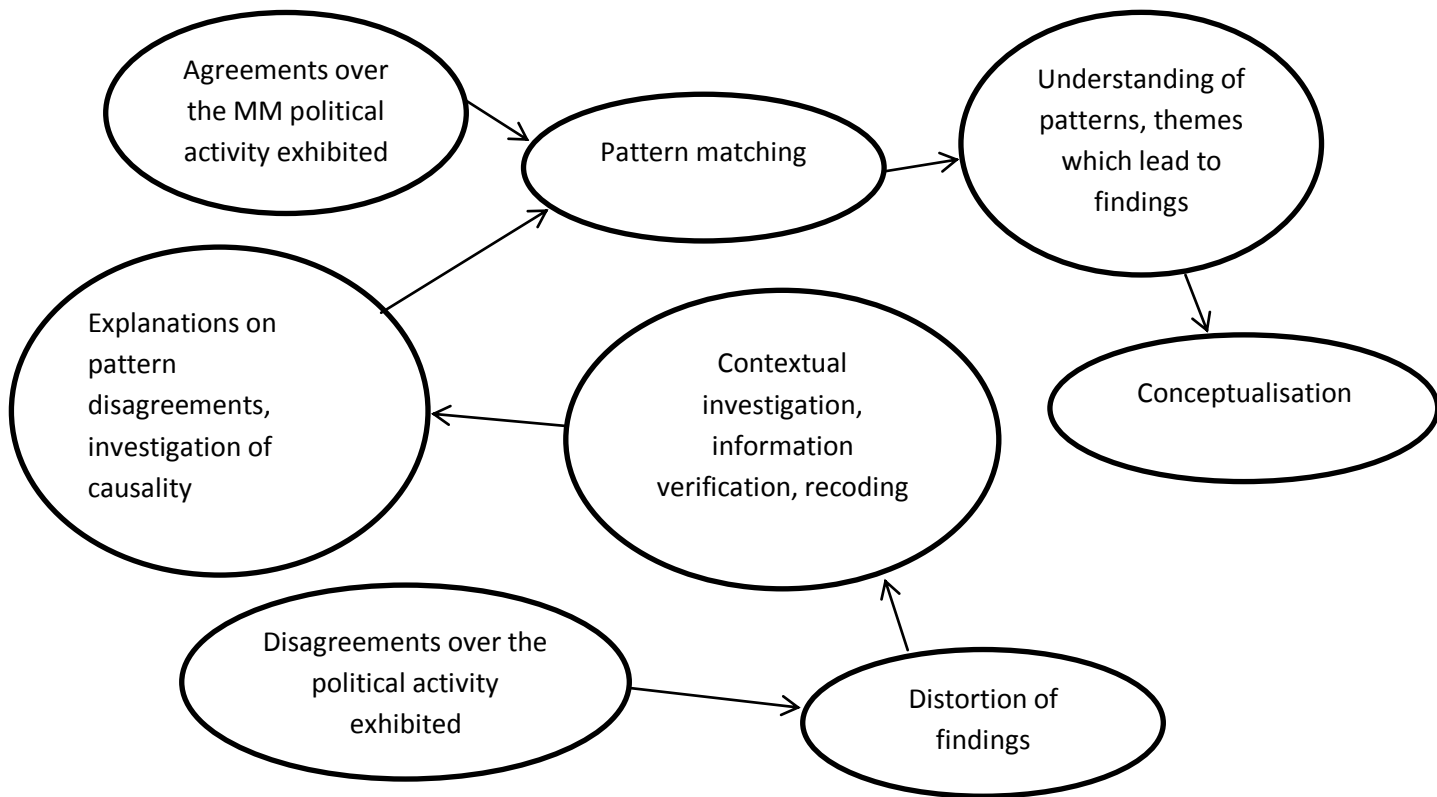


Figure eight: Pattern matching during data analysis. Source: Miles and Huberman, 1994 (amended)

This section focuses on the cross-case comparison of the patterns and the concepts resulting from the data collected. This eventually leads to the creation of the themes concerning the impact of political processes that middle managers engage before, during and after strategic decisions within partnerships. The case comparison enhances the generalisability of the findings, enabling the researcher go beyond ‘initial impressions’ (Eisenhardt, 1989:4), thus resulting in more robust and reliable theory. In order to enhance the analytical generalisability of this study, the construction of the codes follows an analytical approach. This approach consists of questions focusing on different dimensions (Pauwels and Matthyssens, 2004; Fredrickson, 1983), in order to establish relevant and meaningful codes for each different theme (appendix nine).

The remaining section starts by presenting the impact of middle managers' politics within organisations during strategic decision making, which can be either integrative or fractious, as this emerged from the pilot study. The ways that different factors can affect the impact of political behaviour are then presented. Upon their presentation, the integrative or fractious impact that political processes can have during international partnerships is analysed in more depth, by being linked with the three different factors affecting them, which are the themes of this study. The chapter concludes by offering a summary of the findings.

5.9 Integrative and fractious politics: An introduction

As described in the literature review, politics research has been criticised for a series of misunderstandings on their basic concepts, which results on difficulties on the understanding of its impact (section 3.4). These misunderstandings include the lack of agreement on a common definition between the researchers, which creates further complications on qualitative data collection processes, from both the researchers and the respondents (Sminia, 2009; Vigoda-Gadot and Drory, 2006; Ferris *et al*, 1994; Bourgeois and Eisenhardt, 1988; Pfeffer 1981; Bacharach and Lawler, 1980; Quinn, 1980; Mayes and Allen, 1977). This results on ambiguity towards the findings of many studies. This ambiguity has created disagreements over their overall impact. Politics have been regarded as having a positive or negative impact, which however remains an elusive and general term (section 3.4). As the findings of the pilot study showed however, the impact of political processes appears to be either integral or fractious (section 4.4.9). These terms which can help the creation of a more clear classification on the way they affect partnerships, while simultaneously capturing what existing research has labelled as 'positive' and 'negative' impact.

With the term *integrative* impact of political processes, the creation of a positive and more pleasant environment is implied (Jarzabkowski and Balogun, 2009). Such an

environment helps decision making, as trust and commitment between decision makers is developed. Because of better relations between the decision teams, they end up having much better cooperation. This integrative impact that political processes can have was firstly observed in the pilot study, as mentioned in the methods chapter:

‘The informal communications and activities ended creating us a much stronger team feeling’ [Project Manager B, Delta]

‘Because of the fact that we then knew how they might behave...and because we did all that for a common target...We ended up trusting each other much more, and our cooperation became better as well’ [Software Engineer B, Psi]

On the other hand however politics also had a *fractious* impact between employees of the case companies. As observed in the pilot study, the fact that politics occur in the ‘dark’ and many times are happening in order to fulfil personal interests against the interests of other colleagues, can result in the creation of a conflicting environment. Such an environment is characterised by intensive competition and distrust between employees. This situation can end up dividing managers and employees, as it creates obstacles in their relations, which in turn slows down decision making, which require more bureaucratic communications in order to ensure trust between managers, and can even impact the company’s operations:

‘Different groups were created in the company....and you had to choose your team...and be careful when talking to others’ [Supplies Director, Delta]

‘We could not trust each other....We were uncertain on the ways each one would try to influence the managers’ [Operations Director, Psi]

This different approach in categorising politics, which emerged from the data analysis, can potentially help the better understanding of political phenomena. Such a categorisation gains further support by the fact that it is only the recent years that research in the human resource literature has focused on the positive and negative effective of politics in employees' psychology and feelings, emphasising the impact they have in their relations and the unity of the management teams, which in turn can impact decision processes, as these end up requiring more time and more formalised communications, to ensure trust. However, even though this categorisation can offer an improved perspective on their impact, an explanation on the way that this impact was caused was still missing.

As the pilot study data was being analysed, it arrived that the impact that politics have in decision making within international partnerships appear to be related to three different factors. Firstly, the specific political tactic being applied. Secondly, the phase of the partnership in which the decision causing the political behaviour occurred, and thirdly, the level of autonomy of the middle manager who exhibited this specific behaviour. The next section of this chapter is structured according to these three themes, presenting their nature and their relation with the impact of political processes surrounding each decision, as these are described in the first-order analysis. In the last section, the notion of integrative and fragmenting politics is presented again, accompanied by an in depth analysis on the relation they have with these three factors, as the data analysis showed.

5.10 Theme one: Political tactics

The data analysis revealed that several tactics were used from middle managers. These were used either simultaneously with other tactics, or on their own (see table 16 for an overview) understanding. The analysis of the tactics exhibited helped the researcher gain a better understanding on the causes of politics, and their in the

decision teams. The next section discusses each tactic observed in the study and its impact. The section concludes by providing a summary on their impact.

5.10.1 Coalition building

Coalition building refers to the development of stronger relationships with managers of the same hierarchy (see table 7.3 in appendix 7). It was exhibited in several intra-organisational decisions, concerning employee choice, for different purposes, such as formation of a research group or a negotiations team, and manager substitution. Moreover, this tactic was observed during the partner company choice. Further information about the frequency of the tactic is in appendix seven.

Coalition building was evident in several decisions. In decision two for example (table 16), during the creation of a partner evaluation committee, the marketing director attempted to influence the decision, aiming to place employees from his department in the partner selection process, in order to be able to influence it later on. He attempted to achieve that by focusing in the support he could offer and receive from the operations director, whom he could substitute in the future. Similarly, in decision 17, concerning partner selection, both decision attempted to influence other managers, by stretching the stronger relationships they had with some of them, and the fact that they would ‘pay back’ their support in the future:

‘I would stretch my position and the fact that I would support him in future decisions...as long as he would enable me to suggest some people I wanted...’ [Regional Marketing Director, Alpha]

‘The wireless director was supporting the choice of a different partner...Managers were seeking support in order to choose their preferred partner’ [Regional Operations Director A, Delta]

The impact of this tactic, when applied in the internal environment of the company, was fractious. These coalitions, could be easily identified, because of their repetition, and the communications surrounding them, occurring in both working and non-working hours. This would result on the ‘freezing’ of development of relations with these managers, as they were aware of the existence of a group with ‘competitive interests’, targeting to make the managers favour their coalition through their decision. Simultaneously, other managers would be ‘obliged’ to also engage in this tactic, in order to avoid staying ‘out of the game’. The result was the creation of a fractious environment:

‘Different alliances had been created in the company...managers had to be careful with their words and deeds, this created a conflicting environment, where honest cooperation was difficult [Regional Director, Lambda]

‘The stronger relations between managers and their subordinates was clear...Such strong relations were being criticised from others...It was a very hostile environment’ [Regional Operations Director, Psi]

In summary, coalition building tactic was observed in decisions made within the case companies. Applied mainly during partner or employee selection, it appeared to create ‘cliques’ of managers and employees, from different levels of hierarchy, in order to advance specific interests. Personal interests could include the choice of specific employees which would help increase the influence in later phases of the partnership, or the selection of a specific partner to carry out the project. The formation of these support groups however was easily observable, which created fragmentation. Moreover, the fact that some managers were involved in a specific group of interest made necessary the participation in such groups from other managers, in order to protect and promote their interests. The result of this tactic was highly fractious, as conflict between different groups was created. Within this environment intensive and unfair competition was easily observable, creating

obstacles in communications, and affecting the level of reliability that managers belonging in different 'cliques' had between them. An overview of the decisions in which this tactic was applied and its impact can be seen on table 7.3 in appendix 7.

5.10.2 Support seeking

Support involves the creation of stronger relations for mutual support during decision making processes. It was observed in decisions made in intra-organisational level. In decision 17 for example, concerning the choice of the partner in order the company to submit their offer for the bidding process, as seen from table 15, the international operations director engaged in this tactic. Further information about the frequency in which support seeking was used can be seen in appendix seven. This is a result of the conflict it had with the wireless director over the partner choice. As a result, he was attempting to create stronger relations with managers from lower hierarchical levels, especially with a technical background, to help support his choice. The support was created through informal discussions as the partner selection process was developing, before final choice was made, to help find support for his preferred partner:

'In order to be able and support my suggestion, I had also support from some subordinates...something like followers who would help me to persuade the rest decision makers towards my suggestions' [International Operations Director, Delta]

'...He had created a support group of wireless engineers, in order to be able to defend his choice, against the suggestion of the wireless director' [Regional Operations Director B, Delta]

This tactic was observed in similar decisions that the coalition building tactic was observed. As mentioned above however, its difference was that it involved creation of support groups between different hierarchical levels. This meant that, in the decisions that it was applied, the support groups expanded between different

hierarchical levels. This meant that the potential impact of the tactic could be larger, because of the larger scale of its application:

‘I wanted to have an important role in the expansion to a new market...So I informed people from my team about this possibility...They would then support me’ [International Business Director, Psi]

‘The Business Development Director could support the selection of the partner company of his choice, through the support he had from employees from other departments’ [Digital Marketing Director, Lambda]

The impact of the creation of the groups of support within the company appeared to be fractious. Similar to coalition building, the groups created were clear within the company. Their main difference was that it was applied in different hierarchical levels, with a manager from the higher levels of hierarchy to appear the ‘leader’ of the group, resulting in interdepartmental conflict and argumentation. Within this environment, cooperation between different departments was made difficult, while extensive negativity would be expressed towards the face of the manager-leader of the group. As a result, employees following another leader, would then avoid following his requests, or, in other cases, would apply them in weak ways, creating fragmentation within the company:

‘The fact that support teams were created was negative...Other top manager also had to create their team in order to gain support...time was being wasted’ [Operations Director A, Lambda]

‘The result was the creation of two competitive teams...with two top managers being their leaders...’ [Software engineer B, Psi]

‘The communications were done in unpleasant ways...I remember the secretary closing the phone and swearing about her colleague, who was among the <<children>> of the international operations director’ [Project Manager B, Delta]

The support seeking tactic involved the creation of support groups from different hierarchical levels within the case companies, during intra-organisational decisions concerning partner and employee choices, (table 7.4 in appendix seven presents an overview of the decisions in which this tactic was applied and its impact). The conflict resulting from the competitive support groups following the manager-‘team leader’ would expand between different departments, making cooperation more difficult. Within this environment, trust between managers and employees would be negatively affected, while in many cases, requests from managers of different support teams would be applied loosely, making clear the fractious effect that this tactic had in a company-wide level.

5.10.3 Ingratiation

Ingratiation is one more tactic which is related with the creation of stronger ties between employees. It was evident in intra-organisational decisions, as the possibility for creation of stronger ties with managers from the partner company could appear suspicious and as a result it was almost non-existent. By engaging in such activities, those managers from lower hierarchical levels attempted to create a positive relationship with top managers. Through such an approach, they could later on advance their interests:

‘The best way to approach a top manager was to create a positive environment...which could then be able to help you be included in the project’ [Network Engineer, Lambda]

‘I wanted to go on with my career...and I thought that the best way to do that would be to approach a target focusing on his achievements...when having a break with a cigarette’ [Wireless Networks Engineer, Delta]

In the cases studied it was observed in decisions concerning intra-organisational employee choice. In decision six for example, the use of ingratiation was observed from employees of the marketing department (see table 15). These employees, in order to be chosen to carry out the evaluation process, which could benefit their future careers, would attempt to start building a strong relation with a decision maker. The building of this relationship would be initiated through the use of the appropriate words which would complement the top managers’ skills and abilities:

‘We had to choose some employees to carry out the evaluation...Some from the marketing department would try to increase their possibilities by using nice, kind words and appraising top managers’ [Operations Director B, Alpha]

‘Some managers and employees from the headquarters would use informal approaches...stretching how I have helped the company’s international expansion...in order to make me distinguish them and recommend them for the strategic analysis team’ [International Business Director, Psi]

The impact of this tactic appeared to fragment managers. This was a result of the fact that it was regarded as an unfair tactic between employees, where the proper use of language could substitute the criterion of efficiency in carrying out projects and tasks. This impact was mainly taking place in lower managerial levels, compared to the tactics mentioned earlier. This was resulting from the fact that it is initiated from such levels, which is not the case with the support seeking tactic, which is initiated from a higher level. The unfair treatment exhibited between employees of the same level, resulting from this tactic, would seriously harm their relations, and the feeling of reliability and trust they had between them:

‘I am sure that he was not that good, and he was only chosen because of surrounding the director and making all his favours...’ [Procurement Director, Alpha]

‘When I show the way that he approached the operations director I felt that I could not trust him any more...he could easily betray his mother to advance his career!’ [Software engineer B, Psi]

Data analysis also showed is that the success of this tactic appeared might be gender-related. In the cases where this tactic would be applied from female employees, then the possibilities for its success would be higher. Again, the unfair treatment resulting from the application of this tactic would create a highly fractious environment within the companies:

‘I am sure that she used her attractiveness and sexuality to be chosen in the team’ [Software Engineer A, Psi]

‘She approached the technical director and promoted herself...within some months she was included in the project development’ [Regional Marketing Director, Alpha]

Its impact however had a more permanent nature in the managers’ relations, compared to the tactics mentioned earlier. This resulted from the fact that a favourable decision resulting from the successful application of their tactic could have a crucial impact for the professional lives of the lower-level employees. Because of the fact that their choice could be crucial for their career, it made obligatory the intensive self-promotion in the eyes of key-decision makers, which however created a competitive environment, were complains about unfair treatment, and a general environment of distrust was clear:

‘Some of the employees of my department who wanted to be chosen would get angry between them, because this would be a radical change for their careers [Operations Director A, Alpha]

‘One of the engineers got really angry with a colleague of him...because he really wanted to be transferred and work in this new market....[Project Manager, Psi]

Overall, the ingratiation tactic, initiated from managers and employees from lower hierarchical levels, targeting top managers, created fragmentation within the lower managerial levels. This resulted from the fact that it was regarded as unfair, as it could have a serious effect in the employees’ career. Interestingly, it appeared to be gender-related, with female employees having more possibilities in applying it successfully. The highly competitive would make work less pleasant, as they would feel a constant threat, impacting their relations. The fact that some employees would get rewarded, because of the effectiveness of the tactic, rather than their general work effectiveness, would result in discouragement towards their actual work, making clear the negativity in the work output that this tactic could have. Further information about the decisions in which this tactic was applied and its impact is provided in table 7.5 in appendix seven.

5.10.4 Strategic candidate/personal brand building

The strategic candidate tactic consists of activities helping the managers appear more appropriate to carry out tasks of a specific decision. It was observed within the case companies, as employee selection was an intra-organisational decision. In decision four, concerning the choice of the project manager who would ‘run’ the implementation of the lottery network, this tactic was evident from the regional operations director A and the digital lotteries director. Both wanted this position, as the project involved a very high payoff. Moreover, this would give them an important role in a market which was new for Alpha, while simultaneously this project was occurring in a small geographical distance, which was part of the strategic expansion of the company, in which they could have an important role, if

chosen, making it a desired project to work in. Similarly, in decision 25, concerning the creation of a 'European Strategic Analysis team', as seen from table 15, the software manager and a regional director engaged in brand building in order to enhance their choice from Psi's operations director. Further information about the frequency in which the strategic candidate tactic was used can be seen in appendix seven. By being included in this team, they would possibly be responsible to form the next department of the company. This would benefit their careers, as they could have primary roles in building this department and expanding it. As a result, they would do everything possible to be included in the team:

'...The two main candidates would try, informally mostly, to persuade me and the others that they were the most appropriate for this position' [Operations Director A, Alpha]

'They would use any argument to persuade on how appropriate they were in order to belong in the research team' [Technical Director, Psi]

The impact of this tactic appeared to have a fractious effect between the employees of the case companies. The fractious effect of the tactic was resulting from the competition exhibited between the managers, who wanted to be chosen, as they would attempt to differentiate themselves from others in formal and informal discussions. For example, fragmentation was evident in decision 25 (table 15), which resulted in a temporary 'freezing' of the communications between the candidates:

'The fact that they were competing by marketing themselves, resulted on them stopping every interaction-formal and informal-until a final choice was made' [International Business Director, Psi]

‘They both wanted to work in the project...They were putting constant pressure to those responsible for the decision by stretching their skills and experience...which resulted on them having a very negative relation’ [Operations Director A, Alpha]

An important pattern which started appearing from the data however was that the fractious impact of this tactic lasted for a short time period only. This was evident in all cases, where, upon the manager selection, their relations would then easily recover. This was a result of the fact that the personal ‘brand building’ was regarded as a healthy way of competition and self-marketing between them. For example, in decision 16, during the choice of the manager who would head the external environment research team, the two candidates for this position had been attempting to ‘market’ themselves to the technical director and the regional operations directors who were the main decision makers. Upon the final choice however, the fragmentation in their relationship would disappear, which was also the case in other decisions from the case studies:

‘They were both putting constant pressure to persuade us for their suitability of this position...They ended up by having a very loud argument’ [Technical Director, Delta]

‘Any time we were being chosen we have to present ourselves in best way...the competitive environment would then be fast changed’ [Project Manager B, Alpha]

The strategic candidate tactic, which involved the ‘self-marketing’ of lower level employees towards managers from higher hierarchical levels, appeared to have a fractious effect within the cases being studied. The fractious effect was a result of the fact that this tactic was applied between candidates, who were competing, in order to be chosen to carry out a project. The fragmentation consisted of elimination of communications between the competitors. An interesting pattern which was observed was that this tactic was regarded as being a regular and fair persuasion method within the employee selection process. This resulted on being applied from almost all

candidates. The fact that it was regarded as ‘normal’ gave a short-term character on its fractious impact, which would disappear short after the final employee selection. Further information about the decisions in which this tactic was applied and its impact can be seen on table 7.6 in appendix seven.

5.10.5 Use of specialised knowledge

The use of specialised knowledge and experience was exhibited in almost all cases of this study. In decision 12 for example (table 15), concerning the reinvestment of cash flows, the partners were disagreeing on whether these amounts should be invested in marketing or in R&D. The operations director and the project managers, who were responsible to reach a final agreement, both applied this tactic in order to persuade the rest decision makers. The employees of Lambda, who preferred the investment in marketing purposes, attempted to use primary market data, which the employees of Omega could not verify. Similarly, in decision 31, concerning the programming language which would be used for the software development, the project manager and the software engineers, who were responsible to reach a final agreement with the managers of Epsilon, used programming information that Epsilon’s employees would not possess, in order to persuade them, towards their preference on the choice of programming language:

‘We had to persuade them about our suggestion, concerning the...So we agreed on the use of some local market data’ [Project Manager, Lambda]

‘We would use specific arguments to persuade them about the appropriateness of the programming we were suggesting...’ [Software Engineer B, Psi]

The impact of this specific tactic appeared to have a largely fractious effect, in inter-organisational decisions. This resulted from the distrust which was created between the partners in the information being transmitted:

‘They knew that we would use technical arguments to persuade them about the budget allocation for the project...So they did not really trust everything we told...’ [Wireless Director, Lambda]

‘They wanted to be sure about every extra cost we claimed...They did not trust us because we would intentionally use technical arguments to further confuse them’ [Digital Lotteries Director, Alpha]

Its impact however was crucial. This was resulting from the fact that it would be used in areas where the one of the two partners would have specialisation, making verification from each partner difficult. The fractious effect that this specific tactic would have could end up creating delays in decision making and use of independent third parties, in order to help the verification of the information provided:

‘They did not trust our arguments which were of a technical nature, and they wanted to use an external consultant, before their final agreement’ [Software Engineer A, Psi]

‘Final agreement took much longer, because they wanted to make their own research on the costs we claimed’ [Wireless Networks Director, Delta]

Within the case companies, the use of technical knowledge in inter-organisational decisions would have an integrative effect. This was resulting from the cooperation in which the employees of the case companies would develop, because of the common target they had in persuading their partners. The companies’ employees would have to cooperate in formal and informal ways, in order to persuade, or in other decisions, defend, the partner company. As a result, the team would be much more unified:

‘We worked together in order to find the appropriate technical arguments to persuade them over the programming language choice...we then trusted much more each other’ [Project Manager, Psi]

‘In order to appear more prepared for our suggestion, we had to communicate instantly... I would ask questions through SMS, then go to the toilet to get a response...we had a much stronger team feeling’ [Operations Director A, Lambda]

This tactic however was also evident in intra-organisational level decisions. Similar to inter-organisational decisions, managers would use complicated arguments to persuade towards their choice. Such choices included partner selection, and employee selection, as it can be seen from table 7.7 in appendix. For example, in decision 27 (table 15), concerning the employee selection who would carry out the partner evaluation, the technical director wanted to promote the choice of a specific employee, by focusing in his technical skills, which would make him more appropriate to carry out the process:

‘He was using technical information to persuade us to choose the partner he suggested’ [Regional Operations Director, Alpha]

‘He claimed that a specific wireless engineer was more appropriate to carry out the evaluation, because of a series of technical skills he had...we could not really follow him at that point!’ [International Operations Director, Delta]

The impact of this tactic within the case companies would be fragmenting. This was a result of the distrustful environment created within the companies. This would create a conflicting environment. Simultaneously, more costs would be created until a final decision was reached:

'I wanted to make sure that what he was saying was truth...and I did not trust him...so I had to get opinions from other tech guys' [International Business Director, Psi]

'He always used complicated information to persuade others...so we had to filter this information before we would make a final choice' [Regional Operations Director A, Delta]

The use of the specialised information tactic involved the use of complex argumentats based in specialised knowledged, concerning equipment or operations, in order to persuade towards the support of specific decisions. It was evident in both inter and intra-organisational decision making (table 7.7 in appendix 7). In decisions made jointly by the partner companies, it appeared to have a different effect: while it would create distrust between the two partners, having a fractious impact, this would not be the same within the case companies, as the cooperation towards the persuasion or the defence of partners' arguments would make the relations of the case companies' employees stronger. In decisions within the case companies however, the impact was different. Here, the use of complex arguments, often focusing on technical aspects would create confusions and affect the level of trust between decision makers, making clear the fractious effect that this tactic within the case companies can have.

5.10.6 Information manipulation

One more tactic which was observed in decision making was related to information manipulation. In its first version, this activity involves the transmission of the information with a delay, in order to help the manager who is applying it, or other parties related to the decision making process, to gain some time. Within the cases being studied, this tactic was often observed in decisions in the early phases of the partnership, before some of their information was communicated to the rest of the managers. For example, in decisions seven and 25 (table 15), where the company had decided to form a team in order to make further research over the possibility of a

project, some of the managers participating in the decision making process would delay the information transmission to other related managers, in order to gain some time and benefit himself by either helping the better preparation of some of the managers and employees he had a coalition with, or even by contacting companies which could be potential partners. Through the delay, other managers, for whom the potential competitive interests would be already known, would delay start 'making their moves' towards their preference over the decision being made:

'The technical director did not update me on research team synthesis, and I was waiting his response...He informed me at the last moment.' [Operations Director A, Alpha]

'I discussed the research team topic with the marketing director with a delay. I did that on purpose, to advantage my suggestion' [Technical Director A, Lambda]

In the second form of the information manipulation tactic, the decision makers would attempt to hide information, often by faking it, in order to gain time and knowledge advantages towards other decision makers. The faking of the information could concern issues are either difficult to be verified, or the effort to verify would not justify the value of the information obtained. Similarly to the delaying of information, it would be exhibited when informal communication channels would be used:

'The software director office would communicate meeting information selectively...' [Marketing Director, Psi]

'While he knew that the partner research would start, he claimed the opposite...in order to help some of the employees' [Operations Director A, Alpha]

The impact of the information manipulation tactic, through the two different ways it was expressed, was fractious. This was resulting from the mistrust it created in managers' communications. The fact that informal communication channels were used, for decisions of secondary importance, implied the existence of trust between the interested managers. The information manipulation however would affect the trust exhibited between higher level management and the middle managers. The loss of trust in communications would lead to suspicions and conflicts between managers, creating obstacles in future communications. Its fractious impact would be cured when higher level managers would be aware that such tactic was applied, and they would then require that all future communications concerning decision making would be conducted through official means of communications, thus preventing future use of this tactic, eliminating the impact it had:

'I did not want any similar delays in information in the future...The only way to secure that would be more formal communication channels..' [Regional Operations Director A, Delta]

'The delay he made intentionally on informing me about the evaluation process disappointed me...I did not want to trust him again...' [Technical Director B, Lambda]

The information manipulation tactic was evident in decisions made within the case companies. It consisted of two different generic activities, the one being delaying the information transmission and the other its faking, or its loose interpretation. By engaging in this tactic, decision makers could gain a time or knowledge-advantage, in order to influence others towards the decision they would favour. Once the application of this tactic would be revealed, then the trust and the reliability that the related decision makers would have to each other would be negatively affected, making clear the fractious impact of this tactic. Its fractious impact would be restored in the cases where changes in the communication channels would be made, to ensure that all required information would be transmitted to the interested parties, helping them regain their trust towards the communication flows. Further information about

the decisions in which this tactic was applied and its impact can be seen on table 7.8 in appendix 7.

5.10.7 Blaming, threatening and accusing others

The blaming and threatening tactic has to do with the accusation of other managers, in order to advance the interests of the manager applying this tactic in issues being currently discussed. Within the case companies, this tactic was often observed in decision making concerning employee or partner choice, as the cross case comparison showed. Through the application of this tactic, managers could end up being preferred towards those being blamed. In decision 17 (table 15), concerning the choice of the partner that Delta would bid with, the wireless network director was accusing the regional operations director for a previous partner choice he had done. Through the accusation, he attempted to persuade the decision makers to support his suggestion, by appearing as more appropriate to make a suggestion, as he had disagreed with the faulty suggestion of the regional operations director:

‘The wireless networks director did not agree with the regional operations director at all...He also was accusing him of lack of technical knowledge..’ [International Business Development Director, Delta]

‘He accused me and my non-technical background, in order to appear more experienced and appropriate to make the final decision’ [Regional Operations Director A, Delta]

An interesting aspect of this tactic is that it could be applied with a time delay, from managers’ whose suggestions were not finally preferred in the decision making. This was mostly used when a decision made was facing some obstacles in its implementation. For example, this tactic was applied during the life of the partnership between Psi and Epsilon, as a result of the decision 28 (table 15), where

the final partner was chosen. During the decision making process, the regional operations director was in disagreement with the rest of the negotiations team concerning the final partner choice, which blaming during the implementation:

‘The final decision did not favour his suggestion...so for every problem which would appear, then he would accuse the business development director’ [CEO, Psi]

‘He would not miss a chance to link any project-related problems with the international business development director, who the suggestion was followed...’ [Marketing Director, Psi]

The impact that this tactic had within the company appeared to be fractious. It needs to be mentioned however that, as the data analysis showed, the frequency of this tactic was crucial on defining its impact. In the cases it was used only in specific decisions, then it would have a short term fractious effect. An example includes manager selection decision: when a final choice was made, then the competitors would forget soon the application of this tactic and proceed with the project implementation:

‘After a while since business lead was chosen, all arguments stopped’ [Project Manager A, Alpha]

‘Once the team which would carry out the negotiation was formed, then all argumentation and blaming stopped’ [Project Manager A, Delta]

This however was not the case when this tactic was applied with a higher frequency, in the cases where more strategic decisions were made, such as the choice of a partner. The disappointment of some decision makers, over a decision made, would make them ‘complain’ over it, by engaging in repetitive blaming towards those

responsible for the final decision. This tactic could be observed in several phases upon the final decision, thus having a longer term fractious effect than it had when applied towards employee selection. In some cases, the fractious effect of the tactic could even include blackmailing between decision makers, which would lead in further weakening of employees' relations in the company, resulting to the establishment of groups with specific competitive interests:

'The wireless network director wasn't happy that the regional operations director suggestion was followed...So he kept accusing him' [Regional Operations Director B, Delta]

'The regional operations director was not happy at all with the partner chosen...He kept accusing the negotiations team...' [Technical Director, Psi]

This tactic however was also observed in inter-organisational level decisions made during the implementation of the partnership. Through the analysed data, it arrived that this tactic was mostly observed when mistakes during the implementation of the project had been created, where managers would request those who were responsible for these mistakes. For example, this tactic was used in decision 23, where the large delays in the project were being discussed. Here Delta, who was mainly responsible for the project delays, started accusing Theta for some delays. Through the use of several arguments, Delta was able to protect its interests, as the responsibility for the delays was distributed between the two partners, resulting on both changing their project managers, rather than having a one-side change only. The same was used upon the result in decision 32, where a problematic distribution partner was chosen, suggested from Epsilon (further information about the frequency of the blaming tactic can be seen on table 7.2 in appendix seven). As a result, in the next phase of the partnership, during a local marketing partner choice, they wanted to support their own choice, attempting to weaken Epsilon's team by accusing them for their previous faulty decision:

‘We were discussing the delays in the project...We ended up accusing them for real and non-real thing in order to protect ourselves’ [Project Manager A, Delta]

‘We had even to create fake accusations in order protect ourselves, as we knew that we had a large share of these delays...Which could cost us a lot’ [Project Manager B, Delta]

The impact of this tactic during inter-organisational decisions within the case company appeared to be highly integrative. As another tactics applied in inter-organisational level, the managers of the same company here would unite against the common threat, in order to protect their interest. As a result, the managers and employees of the case companies would have an increased feeling of reliability between them. This would ultimately result in stronger relationships between the employees, even though some accusations towards the partner could be fake:

‘In order not to follow their suggestion concerning the money reinvestment, we kept blaming them...we ended up more united.’ [Network Engineer, Lambda]

‘We had to find any possible argument to accuse them and make them substitute their project manager as well...This made us much stronger’ [Wireless Networks Engineer, Delta]

The blaming, threatening and accusation tactic consisted of attacking others responsible for decisions made, based on their past suggestions and activities. It was evident in both intra and inter-organisational decisions. In intra-organisational decisions, its effect depended on the frequency it was being used. In some decisions, it could be used only once, concerning for example employee selection, having a short-term fractious effect. This was not the case however when decisions with a longer-term character were made. In such decisions, accusations could end up being

repetitive, and could reach more extreme levels, including blackmailing between decision makers, having as a result a largely fractious effect. Its impact however was reversed in inter-organisational decisions. In these decisions, the tactic was used to defend their company in order to enhance its influence in decision making. This required efficient cooperation between the employees of the case companies, which enhanced the feeling of unity and the trust they had between them, having ultimately an integrative effect in their relations.

5.10.8 Budgeting

The budgeting tactic, as its name implies, involves the use of arguments in order to persuade the decision makers over the allocation of resources between interested parties. This technique was mainly observed during the negotiations between the partners, as seen on table 7.10 in appendix seven, as it arrived from the analysed data. The fact that it was observed in the early phases of the partnership was resulting from the fact that resource allocation, where this tactic is exhibited, always occurs before the initiation of the project implementation. Such argumentation was observed in all cases, as negotiations are an essential part of each partnership:

‘We had to use our best arguments...and stand their pressure, in order to achieve better budget allocation’ [International Business Development Director, Delta]

‘It’s always a matter of negotiation skills, combined with economic knowledge...You have to use the best arguments, and insist, to make the most from negotiations’ [Technical Director, Psi]

The application of this tactic was expected from the managers participating in the negotiations, as a natural consequence of the fact that resources allocation is an essential part of partnerships. As a result, they did not regard it as having a fractious impact between the case companies. Instead, the way that this tactic was applied

from the potential partners was regarded as an indicator of the skills of its managers. In the cases that these skills were strong, then this could have an integrative effect in an inter-organisational level, as it would show a strong team to cooperate with. The opposite could be though in the case of a 'weak' application of this tactic:

'The way they would negotiate would show us their skills' [CEO, Lambda]

'Their persuasiveness could show us their skills...and the opposite could hold true as well'
[International Business Development Director A, Lambda]

The fact that this tactic was applied in an inter-organisational level meant that it would also have an impact within the case company. In the cases analysed, it arrived that the application of this tactic from the partner resulted in the creation of a unified environment within the case companies. This resulted from the fact that those having direct and indirect participation in negotiations were obliged to cooperate in efficient ways in order to make the most from the negotiations process and achieve a better budget allocation. As a result, the negotiation teams would end up having a much stronger team feeling between them:

'We needed to find ways to persuade them....which made us a stronger team' [Project Manager, Lambda]

'We would cooperate in several unusual ways, such as sms and phone calls from the toilet, which built trust between us' [Operations Director A, Alpha]

This tactic also appeared to be applied in later phases of the partnership, for example in cases where the budget was being negotiated again. Renegotiation of resource allocation, as it can be seen from decisions 21 and 33 (table 15), could result from real unexpected costs, or it could be a result of just a will of the partner to increase its profit share. The identification of the application of this tactic in later phases of the partnership, and not on its beginning, was directly related to the unique context of the study:

‘Because of the fact that the partner wanted to make the most from this project they would come later and ask for more money to be allocated’ [Operations Director, Lambda]

‘They requested more money, because of the unexpected costs...Allocation of money is much more different in a partnership than it is within one company...as it can happen several times during the project’ [CEO, Psi]

This tactic however appeared to have a different effect in an inter-organisational level, when applied during the life of the partnership. The reason for it being applied in a later phase was mostly related to the extra costs which would arise in the projects, mainly because of their large scale and their long-term horizon, which made more difficult accurate estimations, which were made in the initial negotiations between the partners (table 7.10 in appendix seven). In the cases where budget renegotiation happened however, it appeared to have a highly fractious effect between the partners. This was resulting from the fact that such renegotiation was not expected, so it was regarded as unfair way to extract more money from the partner:

‘These discussions made us lose our trust towards them...they did not fulfil the contract’ [CEO, Delta]

‘We regarded it as unfair....it was like blackmailing us’ [Project Manager B, Delta]

‘We did not know whether their claims were real or not....we did not want to make business with them anymore, however we had to finish the project’ [Technical Director, Psi]

The fact that the partners were exhibiting such behaviours however resulted on this tactic having a rather integrative effect within the case companies. Similar to the impact of this tactic in budget negotiations during the partnership formation, those participating in the negotiations would have to cooperate in efficient ways in order to protect their interests and make the most though the re-negotiations process. The fact that such a renegotiation was not always expected made the managers having a stronger engagement in the process of persuading the partner company’s’ decision maker. The efforts for persuasion resulted on the creation of stronger links between the managers and employees of the case companies. The integrative effect of this tactic was clear:

‘We did not expect that....we lost trust to them, but gained confidence about our team’ [Operations Director, Lambda]

‘We now had to cooperate in even better ways to protect our interests....which was beneficial for us, as a team’ [Project Manager B, Delta]

The budgeting tactic involved the argumentation and pressure in order to persuade the partner company over the allocation of resources, in inter-organisational decision making. Because of the fact that allocation tends to be conducted during partners’ negotiations, this tactic was mainly observed in the early phases of the partnerships. This resulted from the fact that it would be regarded as an indicator of the skills of

the partner company. In case that the company's managers were regarded as creative and skilful in persuading the manager of the case companies', then their expectation about their skills and their commitment would be increased. During negotiations however, the managers of the case companies would also have to cooperate in order to persuade the partner companies. The cooperation would lead to stronger relations between the employees of the case companies, enhancing their trust between them.

The impact of the use of this tactic however was not the same when it was applied in later phases of the partnerships, during for example renegotiations of the allocated budget. The renegotiation of the budget would be attributed to the complication of the project and its long term horizon. This however would have a fractious effect in inter-organisational relations, as it would be regarded as 'breaking the contract rules'. Within the case companies however, employees would engage with more passion in order to persuade the managers of the partner company, which would increase their unity, as trust and reliability would be required in order to cooperate efficiently, making clear the fractious effect that this tactic can have within the case companies.

The tactics mentioned in this section have been already identified in the existing literature. As the data analysis showed, they can have a different effect that they have in single companies. The different organisational context of the study however enabled the identification of political tactics which have not been observed yet in the existing literature. The newly identified tactics and their integrative or fractious impact in relations within the case companies is presented in the following section. Table 7.10 in appendix 7 provides further information about the decisions in which this tactic was applied and its impact.

5.10.9 Political tactics unique in a partnership setting

The unique organisational setting of the study assisted the researcher to identify some tactics which have not been observed in the existing literature. Initially

observed in the pilot study, their existence was increasingly evident, during the subsequent rounds of data collection and analysis. These tactics, namely the information stealing, relationship building/key employee stealing, partnership within a partnership and information gathering for accusation expectation, are described in the following paragraphs.

5.10.10 Information stealing

Information stealing was a tactic which was observed in all cases being investigated. It consisted of gathering crucial information from the partner, concerning either technical knowledge or organisational processes in which the partner appeared to be superior, and which the case company did not have. As it can be implied, it is only applied in an inter-organisational level, as it aims information collection about the partners' skills and competencies. Through the information that the company gathered, the company could use it for its own benefit, which this could be the creation of a new department within the company or its entrance in a new market. The second column of table 7.11 in appendix seven presents a summary of the decisions in which this tactic was applied.

Information gathering concerning the technical knowledge of the partner was observed in decision 14 (table 15), where the partners were discussing the possible development of an information system for triple play customers. Omega here had a long experience in the development of such systems, as it had presence in several markets, and could develop this system within its department. Lambda however, was regarding the construction of this system from Omega as inappropriate for the partnership, as it would create budget re-allocation. Simultaneously, it could provide Omega with the advantage of information controls, as, given the fact that they would develop the system, then it would be their employees who would most possibly be responsible for operating it as well, leading to a possible increase of the influence of Omega within the partnership. Despite their rejection however, the project manager of Lambda kept gathering strategic information concerning the operating mode, the

technical requirements and the managers who had active roles in its creation and operation, during his visits to Omega. This information was then passed to the technical director, in order to be stored for future use. Through this information, the company could use it for its own benefit, in case it wanted either to develop in-house information systems, or even to be used for their future negotiations with other partners:

‘During the whole negotiation about the information systems I was trying to get as much information as possible from Omega, to use it for the future...’ [Project Manager, Lambda]

‘During negotiations we always tried to steal information in other phases of the partnership as well, as it is a very efficient way for the company to <<learn>>, and be better prepared, for the future’ [Technical Director, Lambda]

Information gathering concerning organisational processes was observed in decision 32. Psi and Epsilon were discussing the choice of a distribution partner. As mentioned in the first-order analysis, one of the reasons that Psi had chosen Epsilon as its partner was because it wanted to offer its knowledge and expertise on the location market. As mentioned earlier, the project was taking place in an Eastern European country, where Psi regarded it as an environment where there was not sufficient trust in business relationships. As a result, Psi had to gather as much information as possible concerning the development of business relations in this market. This was done during the whole implementation of the project, and especially during this specific decision. By gathering information on the creation of business relationships with the chosen distribution partner, and the ways that negotiations were conducted, Psi would be much better prepared in case it wanted to continue working on this market independently. Moreover, it would be much better prepared, in case that the partnership between the two companies would be dissolved in the future:

‘We were targeting to expand on this market, so we wanted to learn as much as possible from our partner’ [Software Engineer A, Psi]

‘By learning the business culture there....and by learning the ways to identify to identify stronger local partners compared to others, we could operate on our own, within this market’ [Project Manager, Psi]

As it can be seen from the third column of table 7.11 in appendix seven, the impact that this tactic had was mostly integrative within the case companies. This was resulting from the fact that the tactic applied was marginally illegal, which required enhanced trust between the managers involved. Managers had to cooperate in non-conventional ways, in order to collect and transfer this information in their companies. The use of non-conventional methods of communications had an integrative effect in the managers’ relations:

‘We had to develop ways to communicate faster, even with eye contact.....We ended up knowing each other much better’ [Technical Director A, Lambda]

‘We gathered information from the negotiations. in case they would go well, we could then use this information and enhance our negotiations with our next partner...’ [Regional Operations Director, Psi]

This tactic was strongly depending on the awareness of the partner on the possibility of the application of this tactic. In some cases, the partners were aware about the possibility of strategic information stealing from their partner, which resulted on them having provided clear guidance on the managers carrying out the project to be careful and not discuss anything more during the project implementation. This guidance was equally provided in some of the case companies. As a result, ‘information hiding’ was a response to the information gathering exhibited from other partners:

‘We knew that they wanted to enter the market, so we were afraid that they would try to steal info... We were very careful’ [Head of R&D, Lambda]

‘We were in similar industries, and we were afraid they would steal information concerning our skills and our operations...’[Software engineer B, Psi]

This tactic, which was observed in many cases during the negotiations and the implementation of the partnerships, was of a crucial importance for the case companies. Apart from the fact that it offered them strategic information for their partner, which could be used for its future operations, it also created a much more integrated team of managers, who wanted to make the most for their company. Efficient information transmission however would require their perfect cooperation. As a result, the management teams would end up being much more unified, towards a ‘common target’, showing that this political tactic, when applied within a partnership, has an integrative effect in the managers of the company:

‘The fact that we had to gather information which could help improve the position of our company, made us be more confident about each other....Relations within the team where stronger’ [Digital Lotteries Director, Alpha]

‘We were working for a common target...the fact that we had to cooperate <<quietly>>, for targets which were almost illegal....made us having a much stronger sense of trust between us’ [Project Manager, Psi]

The information stealing tactic consisted of the gathering of strategic information from managers and employees of the case companies concerning technical

knowledge and organisational processes of the partner companies. Through the gathering of this information, the company could be able to use it for its future plans. The gathering of information involved the use of informal communications channels, through which the collected information could be stored and used later on from the company. The informal communications included the secret communications within the case companies' headquarters and sometimes even role playing, during the time or after decisions are made, through which valuable information could be used from the company in the future. Because of the highly informal and confidential nature of the tactic, it would have a largely integrative effect between the employees of the case companies, as it would help the development of trust between them.

The success of this tactic however, could depend on the information hiding that the partner company could exhibit. In many cases, the partner companies would be aware of the possibility of information stealing. As a result, they could engage in activities in order to protect such information. In such cases, the application of the tactic towards the partner company could be less effective within the case companies. However, because of the fact that information hiding would be also exhibited from the case companies, then it would make them come closer in order to protect their interests, making clear the integrative effect in the employees' relation that the application of this tactic could have.

5.10.11 Relationship building/key employee stealing

The 'relationship building' tactic, consists of creating stronger ties with key managers and employees of the partner. These employees, once identified, are regarded as crucial, in order to help the company in its future operations. It consists of attempts for informal meetings and gatherings between managers of the case companies and the partner companies, where possibilities for extension of their cooperation are discussed. In other words, this tactic involves all the activities in order to attract key managers of the partner companies, which could help the case

companies in their future expansion. As implied, this tactic can be only observed in an inter-organisational level.

Within the cases being studied, this tactic was observed mostly in the implementation phase, where managers within the case companies would have identified key managers and employees of their partner, as it can be seen from table 7.11 in appendix seven. Once these key employees were identified, extended formal and informal interactions would occur, resulting from the project implementation. These intensive interactions would permit the targeted development of stronger relationship with key employees of the partner. The informal communications could consist of a dinner, a drink or a coffee out of the working environment of the companies. A clear suggestion for potential cooperation could arrive upon the end of the project, resulting from the gradual development of stronger ties with the key managers, whose will would have been identified at that point:

‘We wanted to expand in the software development...that’s why I attempted to understand what could make the software director of Epsilon to be attracted to our company..’ [Wireless Networks Director, Delta]

‘We wanted to expand on this market..so we thought that we could get closer to the managers and we offer a higher payment, to come work with us’ [Regional Operations Director, Psi]

In some cases, an instant communication upon the completion would be avoided, if this would be regarded as a more appropriate method to keep good ties with specific key employees. In these cases, a good relationship could be kept for months or even years upon the end of the partnership. The efforts for the attraction of the key employee could take place when the timing would be regarded as more appropriate from those responsible within the case companies. These could include periods when

the employees would be disappointed from their companies or when the case companies would be ready to invest much higher amounts in order to attract them:

‘We kept having dinners and night outs with him...he told me that he was worth more...I thought that this was the best time to attract him’ [International Business Director, Psi]

‘Once we won a second project within this company...We had the amounts to give him a much higher payment and take him to our company’ [Regional Marketing Director, Alpha]

The impact of this tactic appeared to be integrative within the case companies. Having a similar ‘non-fair’ nature with the information stealing tactic, it required that purposeful informal communications would take place between managers of the partners, with the managers of the case companies being well informed about the roles and the needs of their potential colleagues, in order to make them an attractive work suggestion. The final target of this tactic, which would be applied through time, and would require a very careful planning, as it could have a largely negative impact between the partners, was the attraction of the key manager to the case companies. Because of the high requirements of this tactic, the managers would have to cooperate in efficient and informal ways, which ended up enhancing the trust they had between them, and the speed of their communications. The ultimate result of this tactic within the case companies, as the data analysis showed, was a much more integrated team, working passionately towards the achievement of common targets:

‘The fact that we wanted to take some of Omega’s managers for a possible expansion in the market brought us closer, and made our team more united’ [Project Manager A, Alpha]

‘We were working together to attract more employees in the company...’ [International Business Development Director A, Lambda]

‘We wanted to attract their business development director, for the local subsidiary we were planning...we had to cooperate between people who were reliable..’ [Subsidiary Manager, Psi]

The relationship building and key employee stealing tactic involved the creation of stronger relations with managers and employees from the partner companies. Through the relations that they would develop, then managers from the case companies could communicate with them upon the completion of the partnerships, and attempt to recruit them to work for the case companies, as they could help the company with its future expansion plans, concerning the entrance in a new market or a new industry. Such communications were made informally, and would be based in the knowledge of the requirements that these employees would have.

This tactic had a marginally illegal nature, as it involved the purposeful development of relationships with employees of the partner company, which would extend beyond the formal partnerships rules. In order to be conducted, it required the use of skilled managers, which were also regarded as reliable from the case companies. This whole process required high dependency on specific managers and employees of all the case companies, as the data analysis showed. Upon tis successful application however, the unity between the employees of the case companies, as expressed from the feeling of trust they would have, was improved, making clear the integrative effect that this tactic can have in employees’ relations. Further information about the decisions in which this tactic was applied and its impact can be seen on table 7.10 in appendix seven.

5.10.12 Partnership within a partnership

During the data analysis, the use of a rather unexpected tactic was identified. The ‘partnership within a partnership’ tactic involved the creation of an alliance between the managers and employees carrying out the project. Similar to coalition building, but with an inter-organisational character, the final aim of this tactic would be the increase of the benefits that those carrying out the project would enjoy. It can be regarded as inter-organisational alliance between managers and employees of similar hierarchical levels, aiming the higher managerial levels of both partners.

This tactic was observed several times during the case studies. It was resulting from the fact that, even though the two companies were essentially different organisations, the long term orientation of the project permitted the development of stronger relationships between those working in the project, as a result of their everyday formal and informal communications and activities. In the Alpha-Beta case, for instance, when a large part of the project had been completed, the managers and the working team who were carrying out the project, requested a further allocation of the financial resources to the project, partially because a high volume of unexpected living costs had arrived (Decision five, table 15). The amount requested however was regarded as relatively high from the top management of both partners, who started having suspicions about it. Similarly, in the Delta-Theta partnership, the managers were together requesting the allocation of further amounts to the project, partially due to the extreme working conditions, and partially due to the geographical distance in which the project was being carried out, which however was inflated from the employees carrying out the project, in order to have higher amounts to spend for their personal expenses (Decision 21, table 15):

‘They were requesting more 40% money from the budget, which was very high...this made us suspicious on the reasons they wanted these higher amounts’ [Operations Director A, Alpha]

‘In order to persuade them to give us bonus payments he provided them with forms with our expenses, and project expenses....We had actually increased them to have stronger arguments for our claims’ [Software Engineer B, Psi]

Two factors appeared to influence the way that the tactic was applied: the technical nature of the project, and the distance of the working place of the managers carrying out the project. Similar to the ‘specialised information’ tactic, in the case where the project involved complicated information of a technical nature, the request of allocation for further resources was made based on the use of complicate arguments which were difficult to be verified. In addition, in the cases where the projects were being developed from distance, the same tactic was easier to be applied. This would happen because of the fact that control of the project progress and the everyday processes occurring in the project was difficult to be conducted efficiently:

‘It was easy to falsify some of the cost numbers we gave them....Technical information is not that easy to be verified in details...’ [Project Manager A, Delta]

‘The fact that we were carrying out the project far away from the headquarters made the control of our activities very difficult...’ [Software Engineer, Alpha]

The impact that this tactic had was depending on the organisational level being analysed. Within the middle level managers, who were responsible for the implementation of the project, it appeared to strengthen their relationships. This was resulting from the fact that they were cooperating in order to achieve a common target. Having the form of a temporary alliance, the joint effort of the working teams of both partners in order to achieve their self-interests would enable them to develop trust and confidence on each other. The creation of such an environment would ultimately have an integrative effect in these teams:

‘Because of the fact that we had the same target, we ended up feeling much closer, even though we belonged in different companies...we were happier to work together’[Software Engineer B, Psi]

‘The sense of a common target, which would benefit everyone, was crucial on improving our relations and making cooperation better’ [Project Manager A, Alpha]

This was not the same in the relationship between top and middle managerial levels however, as it resulted in the creation of distrust from the top managers of both companies. The top management appeared to be unhappy with the fact that the costs of the project were much higher than expected, as this would impact the profitability of the partners. The sense of mistrust would be even more intense in the cases where the justification of the extra costs was unclear, such as in the cases where some receipts of the extra costs were not kept, thus creating fragmentation in the relationship between the management, and the middle managers developing the project. The end result of this distrust process would be the use of methods which could ensure that such tactics would not be observed in the future, such as the use of more formalised book keeping and the imposition of external control teams:

‘They requested more money to be allocated...and they did not have the exact proofs for that...we were blackmailed, which made us to create an independent Total Quality Management team to control them...and later substitute project managers’ [Regional Operations Director A, Delta]

‘Because of the fact that they were requesting this extra money, we then requested analytical bookkeeping in all their expenses...we had decided to be much stricter’ [Operations Director A, Alpha]

The partnership within a partnership political tactic involved the creation of an 'alliance' between the managers and employees of the partner companies carrying out the project, in order to request further financial resources to be allocated to them. This request would be initiated by actual needs arising from unpredicted costs within the project, which however would be 'inflated' from the employees of both companies, who would cooperate to make their requests to the management team. The two factors which appeared to influence the impact of this tactic were the technical complications of the project, and the distance from the companies' headquarters, which would make difficult the verification of the information provided from the working team.

The impact of this tactic appeared to be different, depending on the organisational level being analysed. Between the project completion teams, the fact that they would be working together towards a common target, which would serve their self or group- interests, would enhance their relations, improving the trust between them, helping overcome the 'different organisation' barriers and be able to rely more between each other, making clear its integrative effect in the same hierarchical levels between the different companies. This impact however was not the same between different organisational levels, as the top management would appear to lose its trust towards the employees in these groups. In order to control them better, the top management would then take activities which would fix the 'trust deficit' which would result from their inflated requests. Activities that the top management would take in order to regain trust would be the substitution of the project managers, and the imposition of stricter controls, such as the creation of a special committee or a Total Quality Management team, making clear the fractious effect that this tactic had within the case companies. An overview of the decisions in which this tactic was applied and its impact can be seen on table 7.13 in appendix seven.

5.10.13 Information gathering for accusation expectation

One more tactic which was observed in the cases studied involved collecting and writing down the mistakes and the wrong choices exhibited from the partner, which could be later used in the case of a conflicting situation. Such mistakes and wrong choices, which would not have large impact at the time they occurred, because in this case they would be immediately brought up and discussed between the partners, could help the company secure itself against the arguments that the partner company would use. Related to the 'blaming' tactic, its main difference is that it refers to preparedness for a conflicting situation, rather than the political act of blaming *per se*, which could also involve the use non-existent accusations. This tactic, which had a strong inter-organisational nature, was evident in all cases:

'We were actually very well prepared for accusations...we knew that the project delay could create problems, and for this reason, we had collected information from several delays and incidents in order to accuse them.' [Regional Operations Director B, Delta]

Between the different phases of the partnerships, this tactic was mainly observed during their implementation. Even though the information would be gathered during the whole life of the partnership, starting from the negotiations between the two partners, it would be used during the uncovering of a problematic situation, which would oblige the manager and the working team to defend themselves. In the Delta-Theta partnership, for example, during the discussion on the delays of the project and the substitution of Delta's project manager (decision 23, table 15), the team, by using evidence collected during the project implementation, was able to defend itself sufficiently and oblige Theta to substitute their project manager as well. Similarly, in the partnership between Lambda and Omega, the information that the working team had collected enabled them to be well prepared to argue against the allocation of further financial resources to Omega, as some of the extra costs was associated to faults of their working team:

‘We were arguing which of the two sides had greater share of responsibility for the whole delays... We used facts, which we had written down during the implementation of the partnership’ [Regional Operations Director B, Delta]

‘We had collected enough accurate information to have strong arguments about small delays caused by them... which could created these extra costs’ [Operations Director, Lambda]

The impact of this tactic within all the case companies appeared to be highly integrative. This was resulting from the fact that the managers and the working teams would have to constantly regard the partner as a potential threat, obliging them to unite, against the risk that this threat could impose. Through the process of information collecting and gathering, which could be used for a potential accusation, the ties between the working groups were strengthened. Moreover, the commitment of the employees and the project manager to their company was made clear. The result was a more unified team working along with the partner, where the team had to be constantly alerted about the potential threat that the activities of the partner could impose:

‘We knew that something could occur...we were cooperating being always however aware of the threat, which could be overcome by us being prepared to fight it through factual information’ [Digital Lotteries Director, Alpha]

‘The fact that we had to work together, through formal and mostly informal communication channels, in order to be ready to accuse others, if required, brought us much closer’ [Wireless Networks Engineer, Delta]

The information gathering for accusation expectation tactic involved the collection of information from the case companies' employees, concerning small and medium-scale 'mistakes' of the partner company, which could be used as arguments in future decision making. Through this tactic, the case companies would be much better prepared to defend themselves, especially during the creation of problematic situations during the project completion, such as delays or faults in the functions of the products. This tactic required the close cooperation of the case companies' employees, who had to cooperate in information collection and storage, in order to be used later on. The fact that the information collection was made concerning future 'threats' which could arise from the partner company resulted on a more passionate cooperation between the case companies employees, making them to be more committed to their company, making clear the integrative effect that it had in the employees' unity.

This section described the use of political tactics which have not been yet identified in the literature. Their observation resulted from the unique organisational context of the study, this being international partnerships. These tactics, which would target the partner company, would have an integrative effect mostly within the case companies. The only exception was the 'partnership within a partnership' tactic, which would have a rather integrative effect within the case companies. The impact of these tactics, along with the tactics which have been identified in existing research, however have not been examined within partnership, is the focus of the next section of this chapter. An overview of the decisions in which this tactic was applied and its impact can be seen on table 15.

5.11 Political tactics used in the partnerships and their impact within the case companies

As described in the previous section, the use of several political tactics was observed in the partnerships being studied. Through the data analysis, it arrived that the impact of these tactics within the case companies can be either integrative or both integrative

and fractious, depending on its focus. The overall impact of the tactics being investigated is described on table 16 provided below, while the codes used in data analysis can be seen on table 7.1 in appendix seven. The next sections are summing the impact the tactics, according to whether they appeared to have integrative effect, fractious effect, or both.

Overall impact of the tactics identified in this study	
Tactic	Overall impact
Tactics previously identified in the literature	
Coalition building	Applied in intra-organisational decisions, it appeared to have a fractious effect in the managers and the support groups belonging in similar hierarchical levels
Support seeking	Exhibited in intra-organisational decisions, it appeared to have a fractious effect between different hierarchical groups, between the higher level manager who was seeking support during decision making, and the lower managerial level employees who were supporting another top manager
Ingratiation	Evident in intra-organisational decision making, it appeared to have a fractious effect between managers of lower hierarchical levels, who engage in competition between them, attempting to influence decision makers through the use of nice words in order to create positive feelings towards them
Strategic candidate/personal brand building	Observed in intra-organisational decisions, it had a fractious impact, mainly between middle and lower managers, who wanted to increase their influence in decisions, by building a strong image between other candidates, by stretching their skills and achievements
Use of specialised knowledge	Evident in both intra and inter-organisational decisions. In intra-organisational decisions it had a largely fractious effect, creating distrust in the claims of specialists, mainly in the long term, which can be further related to delays in decision making. In inter-organisational level however it had an integrative effect within the companies, as those applying this tactic had to engage inefficient cooperation on the efficient use of technical arguments in order to persuade towards their preference
Information delaying and hiding	Used in intra-organisational decisions, it appeared to have a fractious effect as, it would create mistrust towards those responsible for transferring crucial information and those expecting to receive it, as those expecting it would not be able to trust them and would require the use of formal channels of communication and bureaucratic processes in to feel safe for the information provided
Budgeting	Evident in inter-organisational decisions, where it was expected as a tactic, thus functioning as a 'test' of the political skills of the partner, within the case companies it would have a rather integrative effect, as it resulted on managers of the same companies cooperating on different ways in order to persuade towards their preferred budget allocation
Blaming,	Observed in both intra and inter-organisational decisions. In intra-organisational

threatening and accusing others	level, it would be evident before, during and after decisions, having a rather fractious effect, as it would create tensions and conflict between managers and employees of the same company, because of the use of real and fake accusations. In inter-organisational levels however, it would be applied upon the revelation of a problematic situation, such as a delay or quality problem, as it would be used to help managers avoid responsibilities for wrong doings.
Tactics which were first time identified	
Information stealing	Exhibited in inter-organisational decisions, it would have a fractious effect on the employees within the case companies, as they would have to cooperate in efficient and secretive ways in order to gather information which would benefit the future of their company as a whole. Its integrative effect would be increased from the expectation that the partner could also appear to apply this tactic , resulting on them protecting crucial information concerning their company
Relationship building/key employee stealing	Evident in inter-organisational levels, it would have an integrative effect on the employees of the case companies, which would be responsible to gather information and establish relationships with strategic employees of the partner company, in order to possibly attract them in the future, creating a strong team spirit I the case companies
Partnership within a partnership	Evident in inter-organisational decisions, it would have different effect in the two managerial levels of the companies. In middle managerial levels, it would have a rather integrative effect, as managers and working teams from both partners would have to form an alliance and engage in a series of activities in order to persuade towards their requests. This was not the same in the relations between higher and middle managerial levels, as, concerns about the trustworthiness and objectivity of the project would have been created, which could be resolved through the substitution of middle managers or the use of external control teams in order to fix the fractious effect that this tactic in inter-organisational levels.
Information gathering for accusation expectation	Observed in inter-organisational level, it had an integrative effect on the employees within the case companies, as they would have to work consistently through the life of the partnership collecting information from the partner, creating a long term cooperation between those in the project ream, enhancing trust between the their commitment to the case company, because of the long term character of the activity

Table 16: Tactics identified in the study and impact they had in the decision teams of the case companies

5.11.1 Tactics within partnerships having an integrative effect

Some of the political tactics which were used from the middle and lower managers described in the previous section appeared to have an integrative effect in the employees' unity. These included budgeting, information stealing, relationship creation/key employee stealing and the information gathering for accusation expectation (see table 16). They required cooperation between the employees of the case companies, mainly conducted in informal ways, often requiring the use of unconventional methods of communications, such as instant messaging during

decision making. Some of the methods, such as the information stealing and the relationship creation with key employees, were marginally illegal, requiring their application under high secrecy, from managers and employees which were already regarded as reliable. All these activities however, because of the strong cooperation they required within the case companies, and the fact that they created a feeling of cooperation against the partner company, resulted in stronger relations within them, with an increased feeling of trust and reliability, making clear the integrative effect they had within the case companies.

5.11.2 Tactics within partnerships having a fractious effect

Other tactics exhibited during the partnerships appeared to fragment the managers and employees unity in all cases being studied. These included coalition building, support seeking, ingratiation, strategic candidate/personal branding and information manipulation (see table 16). They were mainly used in intra-company decisions, and were often related to potential partner selection, before the negotiations between the partners would start, and employee selection, for team creation in different partnership phases. Through their application, managers attempted to satisfy their self-interests. This created intra-company conflict, characterised by tensions and instability, which would harm the employees' relations, by affecting the honesty governing their communications, thus affecting the trust they had. This could end up in open expressions of hostility between the managers or groups with the competitive interests, which caused delays and increased costs in decision processes, making clear the intra-company divisions they created in all cases.

5.11.3 Tactics within partnerships having a differential effect

Other tactics appeared to have both an integrative or fractious effect in the company's' unity. These included use of specialised knowledge, blaming, threatening and accusations, and partnership within the partnership tactics (see table 16). The focus of the first two tactics would be the partner company, while the third

would have intra-company focus. The different focus however appeared to be crucial on analysing their impact.

The first two tactics, these being the use of specialised knowledge, and the blaming and threatening of other employees, would often be exhibited in the intra-organisational environment. Through their application, the managers would attempt to convince others either by using technical information or through accusing others concerning their past actions. These actions however would create fragmentation in the within-company relations. When these tactics were targeting the partner company, their impact appeared to be the opposite. Through their use, they would attempt to attempt to persuade managers and employees from the partner company, defending their company's interests. This would signal their devotion to the company, while simultaneously would oblige them to engage actively in the persuasion process, through the use of different methods and techniques. This however would make clear their loyalty to the company and their will to advance its interests, strengthening their relations and their feeling of reliability between each other, having an integrative effect in their relations.

The partnership within a partnership tactic however appeared to have a more idiosyncratic nature compared to the previous two tactics, as its target would be within the case companies, this being its top management. Through the inter-organisational alliance created with employees of the partner companies, some managers and employees belonging in the project implementation groups of the case companies would attempt to request from the higher management of both companies further funds to be allocated to the project, which they could possibly use for their personal expenses, rather than the actual project expenses. This tactic however was highly based on the trust that the companies' management had to the project teams, which appeared to diminish because of the geographical distance in which the projects was taking, and their technological complications. The relations between the working groups would end up highly improved, because of the cooperation towards a

common target, which was further enhanced by the long term period that they would have to work together, resulting in further improvements in their relations. Within the individual companies the impact however would be the opposite, as the top management would often lose its trust towards the project completion group, which could lead to the creation of an environment governed by mistrust and suspicions. The top management would attempt to fix the fractious effect that this tactic had in their attitude and their reliability towards the project implementation teams by substituting the project managers or by increasing their controls, often by their formalisation or by the imposition of a Total Quality Management team.

This section analysed the impact that the specific tactics applied during decision making within partnerships had in the case companies. This theme made clear that the different tactics applied, as a means of expression of political behaviour, according to the definition used in the current study, appeared to be strongly related with its impact within the case companies' unity. This however was only one of the factors which emerged from the data analysis. The next factor which appear to affect the impact that politics had within the case companies was the organisational autonomy of the middle managers engaging in this behaviour, which constitutes the second theme of this thesis, described in the following section.

5.12 Theme two: Middle managers' autonomy and job focus

A second theme which emerged from the study was concerned with the autonomy that middle managers have from their jobs. The concept of autonomy of managers has not been investigated explicitly in the strategy area. Few researchers have been concerned with concepts familiar to autonomy, which are mainly related to issues of centralised and decentralised planning and decision making (Garcia-Pont, Canales and Noboa, 2009; Pappas and Wooldridge, 2007; Andersen, 2004; Bartlett and Ghoshal, 1993), issue selling from heads of subsidiaries (Ling, Floyd and Baldrige, 2005) and corporate entrepreneurship (Kuratko *et al*, 2005; Birkinshaw *et al*, 2005). Within these research areas, independence in middle managers activities has shown

that it can help them enhance their strategic roles within the companies. As a result, middle managers have emerged as strategic leaders (Canales, 2012; Floyd and Wooldridge, 2000).

Still however, an explicit investigation of middle managers' autonomy and the way it impacts their activity was largely missing. During the data analysis however, the concept of autonomy emerged as a crucial concept for explaining and predicting political behaviour. The emergence of this factor led to a further iteration with the existing literature. Autonomy in middle management is crucial, because of the emergent nature of strategic decisions, and the fact that these managers tend to have a much better technical and operational knowledge (Rouleau 2005; Balogun and Johnson, 2004; Floyd and Wooldridge, 1997; 1992). Autonomy refers to the extent that middle managers have the freedom to engage in the required activities independently, and make decisions without having to report in details to their supervisors or the top management team.

The extent of their autonomy can be understood either from their job description or from the description of their colleagues over their job focus. Middle managers, through their active involvement in strategic decisions, which can be triggered through the provision of extended autonomy, they can develop decision capabilities (Andersen, 2004; 2000). This will result in companies being more responsive to constant changes in the external environment, which can be even more important in complex and dynamic environments (Santos and Eisenhardt, 2009; Andersen, 2004; Hagedoorn, 1993). This will happen not only because of the fact that the companies will be better prepared for any changes, but also because middle managers will have a stronger knowledge on the strategies required in order to adapt.

The concept of autonomy however was not studied in isolation within this study. Instead, the impact of political activity of middle managers within the employees'

relations would also be highly affected by the focus of their job activities, as these would be explained in their official job description, as the pilot study and the iterative data analysis showed. It has to be mentioned that the official job description, could not be provided from the case companies. As a result, the job focus is identified from the descriptions of the study participants, and not from any official company documentation.

Even though the duality between internal and external environment has been investigated in familiar research areas (Garcia-Pont, Canales and Noboa, 2009; Birkinshaw *et al*, 2005), its importance has yet to be recognised within the strategy literature (Walter, 2010; Teulier and Rouleau, 2010; Pappas and Wooldridge, 2007). The second theme of this study is described in the following paragraphs, while the codes used for the analysis of this theme can be seen on table 7.1 in appendix seven.

5.12.1 Low level of autonomy/Internal job focus

Middle managers with low autonomy and internal job focus, appeared to engage in fractious political behaviour mostly. This behaviour was exhibited through informal discussions and meetings between middle managers, which could end up in the formation of political groups within the company. Through the formation of such groups, the middle managers would be able to increase their influence within the company:

‘...My position did not give me enough space to make moves, so meetings during lunchtime were the way to increase my space of activity’ [Wireless Networks Engineer, Delta]

‘The activities of my job were specific within the company...a way to improve my position would be a transfer to their department, which I would constantly request during dinners and evenings with our colleagues’ [Software Engineer A, Psi]

The autonomy of middle managers was crucial for the creation of such behaviours. The use of politics would be a way to express real wills and targets within their companies, because of the fact that they enjoyed low autonomy, which eliminated the space of the activities they can engage in, and their creativity. The elimination in their activities created from the low autonomy they enjoyed was also further mitigated by their internal job focus. By exhibiting political behaviour, middle managers would create a safer, more ‘independent’ environment, where they could also protect their group-level interests:

‘The fact that groups of support were formed was easily observable...the only way that other employees would be able to protect themselves would be also to join groups of similar interests...’
[Digital Lotteries Director, Alpha]

‘We would often discuss during cigarette breaks what was going on within the company...the creation of teams of support were a natural result of these discussions’ [Regional Operations Director A, Delta]

This behaviour however would be highly fractious, as it would lead in the formation of groups from similar hierarchical levels, which had competitive interests. These groups were easily recognised by the managers of the same levels, as they would be accompanied by frequent formal and informal gatherings, as the data analysis showed. The fact that they were observable would lead to the creation of similar groups from other employees, in order to be able to protect their interests as well. The result of political behaviour would be the creation of an environment where trust was missing between similar-level managers and employees, making clear the overall fractious impact that political processes from middle managers with a low level of autonomy and with an internal job focus can have:

‘The creation of teams and support groups could help a faster advancement in the hierarchy...this however would create a conflicting environment within the company’ [Procurement Director, Alpha]

‘They were not able to act independently, as other employees would do...the only way they could that was the use of informal discussions and creation of alliances...other colleagues, would then want to compete with them using the same methods’ [Project Manager, Psi]

In some cases however, middle managers with low autonomy and with an internal job focus would exhibit political behaviour which could have an integrative impact in employees’ unity. This would be concerned with the accomplishment of complicated tasks, which would require smooth cooperation between managers and employees. Within such cases, politics could be regarded as a necessary ingredient of organisational life, which could help prove that those who are the best will be able to win in this ‘game’ as well. When such complicated tasks would be completed successfully, under time or cost-related limitations, then this would create a much stronger ‘team spirit’ between those involved in the project. As a result, managers and employees would be more integrated as a team:

‘The allocation of tasks on the software development was certainly a political process...during the project completion their relations were much stronger, they could trust better each other’ [Regional Operations Director, Psi]

‘Even though some of those chosen to be in the committee were complaining about their roles...the complexity of the project made them have much better working relations’ [International Operations Director, Delta]

Middle managers with a lower level of autonomy, and whose job focus tends to be internal mainly, appeared to engage in activities which can in large have fractious effect. Such middle managers could include project managers, R&D directors, and technical directors, among others, as it can be seen from table 7.18 in appendix seven, which summarises the findings on this theme. Through the activities they would engage, concerning decisions on partner selection, employee selection and organisational change, they would often create a conflicting environment within their companies, where the use of political tactics would help the division of employees. Trust and communications between them would be further interrupted within a highly politicised environment, making clear the fractious impact that political behaviour could have within their relations.

5.12.2 Low autonomy/External job focus

The second category of middle managers were those with a low autonomy, whose activities focus in the external company environment. Such managers engaged mainly in political behaviour with an integrative effect. This was evident in cases where formal relationships were formed with companies, in partner selection, and in external data collection. Through such activities, they enhanced managers' unity, helping the company build a stronger corporate culture:

‘Through the data collection for the new market, I had informal interactions with several key people...all information was transferred back to the company, to use it and make further acts concerning the project’ [Strategic Analyst, Lambda]

‘My position enabled me to gather information and create official relations with other companies...which helped my company, to be better prepared for negotiations’ [Software Engineer A, Psi]

The integrative effect would be highly explained from the fact that their job focus was external. This would happen even though their autonomy was low, as implied from the fact that they had to follow specific guidelines during their job, for example during their external data collection or the formal communications. The overall impact of their political activity however would be highly integrative. This was resulting from the fact that they were responsible for crucial company activities, where their freedom to act was not necessarily eliminated.

‘Even though his obligations were clear, he would have freedom on the way he would carry out his tasks....which helped new business ideas to the company’ [Marketing Director, Lambda]

‘The relative freedom I enjoyed was very beneficial because it meant that through my work, I could be able to bring ideas, and improve my position within the company..’ [Subsidiary Manager, Psi]

Political activities in which they would engage included informal communications with potential partners through phonecalls or physical meetings, which would help them to gain better knowledge and be better prepared for negotiations. Moreover, through informal communications, they would also be able to gain crucial information about other partners, and about the local market, helping their company gain better market and project- related information. Through the freedom they had, and the fact that they were not concentrated in the internal company environment, they were able to act for their company as a whole, which was resulting on an improved company environment, expressed by stronger unity from its employees:

‘Through his research, he was able to follow the market and bring new business ideas...which meant more money, and, clearly, better relations’ [Regional Marketing Director, Alpha]

‘His position gave him the freedom to create links with other companies...he would collect important information, which helped us to be better prepared to negotiate with our partner’ [Technical Director, Delta]

On the other hand, in some cases, the activities in which they would engage could have a fractious impact in employees’ relations. This would occur in the cases where ambiguity could be created from their suggestions. The ambiguity could result in the creation of distrust towards them, which could end up harming their relations. This could be evident when potential partners would be evaluated, or when their work would be related to the processing of highly specialised information. In the first case, ambiguity could result from the subjective evaluations of potential partners, while in the second case, because of the complicated nature of the information provided. In these cases, a conflicting political environment could be created, where accusations and blaming between employees could create serious obstacles in their unity, making clear the fractious impact that their political activity could sometimes have:

‘He disagreed with the choice of Omega as a partner, while most others agreed...even though I am not sure whether he was writing or wrong, the fact that he had done some communications with another partner, created conflicts within the partner selection committee’ [Operations Director A, Lambda]

‘The appraisal of our technical skills and the extent that we would be able to complete the project in extreme conditions was complicated...which eliminated the trust we had towards the face of the wireless engineer’ [International Operations Director, Delta]

Overall, middle managers with a low autonomy, who however enjoyed a relatively high level of autonomy appeared to engage in political activity which could have an integrative impact within the employees’ unity. These managers, whose positions could be within research teams, and in negotiations teams, among others, could benefit their company through their activities. Further information can be seen from table 7.19 in appendix seven, which summarises the findings on this theme. The way

they could benefit it would be through correct identification of business opportunities or better choices concerning potential partners, which could be facilitated through the communications they would conduct. As a result, within the company there would be created a better environment, characterised by trust, facilitating cooperation within the company, making clear the integrative effect it can have in their unity.

5.12.3 High autonomy/Internal job focus

The middle managers with a high level of autonomy, whose activities have an internal focus, appeared to engage in activities with a highly fractious behaviour. Middle managers falling in this category included heads of groups and departments, who, in order to protect their interests, would form coalitions and support groups against other groups and departments. The fact that they had a higher autonomy however was largely negative, as it allowed them to engage in activities through which they could harm their companies, especially concerning decisions on employee selection, departmental change, and budget allocation:

‘The customer service director had power and freedom on the way he would complete the departments’ targets...’ [Regional Director, Lambda]

‘The head of digital lotteries wanted to promote specific employees, from his department, as it was made clear later on’ [Regional Marketing Director, Alpha]

The fractious behaviour of their activities was highly related to the autonomy they enjoyed, because of their –usually- ‘higher’ middle management position. Because of their higher ranking in the hierarchy, they would attempt to advance specific employees, in order to create support groups, and advance their self or group interests. Moreover, in decisions concerning budget allocation, they would even

distort the information they provided, in order to support their claims, having a negative impact in the trust they had between them:

‘The only way we could react when we understood that our head wanted to promote specific employees, who did not necessarily deserve it, was to try and create coalitions with other managers and employees’ [Project Manager A, Alpha]

‘The software director could easily increase the money allocated to the project, by claiming higher expenses in the budget, in order to benefit his department.’ [Technical Director, Psi]

All these activities were observable from managers with competitive interests. As a result, the formation of competitive groups of opposition was much easier, while the open expression of distrust was clear. These ‘political reactions’ targeted those employees who were benefiting from the political behaviour of the middle managers who enjoyed a higher autonomy, and even these specific middle managers:

‘...I personally did not want to trust those benefiting from the head of our department, I disliked them...and I also dislike the department head, as he treated us unfairly’ [Software Engineer, Alpha]

‘He would support the choice of some employees with which he had better relations, even though they did not deserve it...I felt I was treated unfairly, and created my own team to be supported... [Software Engineer A Psi]

In addition, such middle managers would even be able to turn their whole departments against the top managers, when large-scale decisions would be taken, during organisational change. This would create even larger conflicts within the company, as top managers could end up seeing whole departments being ‘against them’. The overall fractious impact in employees’ unity that political process

exhibited from middle managers enjoying high autonomy, with an internal job focus, was clear:

‘The customer service department was against the operations director...the customer service director had a great amount of responsibility for that’ [Operations Director, Lambda]

‘The fact that his department was allocated more money, based mainly on his claim...and –I am sure- his family relations with a top manager, had created arguments within the company’ [Software Development Director, Psi]

In a few cases, their political activity could have an integrative effect. This could result when it was made clear that the final result of a decision, even though it was not the best for everyone interested, it had resulted from the efforts of these specific middle managers, and it was regarded as ‘fair’. This for example could include the creation of a TQM team, which was the first time that such a team was created for Delta, and budget allocation, when the distribution discussed between managers, was regarded as appropriate from everyone. In these cases, the employees’ unity would be improved, because the acceptance of decisions made in fair ways would be much easier. This would result in increase of the trust they had within their relations:

‘Most employees had declared that they were not aware of TQM methodology... As a result, the employee selection was made in very transparent ways, and was accepted from everyone...’ [Project Manager B, Delta]

‘Well the way that the budget was re-allocated was fair enough...most employees happily agreed with this decision’ [CEO,Psi]

Overall, middle managers who had a relatively high autonomy, having however an internal job focus, would engage in political behaviour which would in large have a fractious effect. These middle managers would often be heads of departments or middle-level directors. The decisions in which they would participate could include organisational change, re-allocation of budget within the company, and employee selection, as it can be seen from table 7.20 in appendix seven, which summarises the findings on this theme,. In these cases, specific employees could advance their interests, while the head of them departments would often attempt to increase their influence within their companies by advancing their favoured employees. The result would be the creation of an uncertain climate, characterised by conflict and distrust, making clear the fractious impact that their activities could have.

5.12.4 High autonomy/External job focus

The last category of middle managers observed in the study where those with a high autonomy, with activities focusing in the external company environment. Such middle managers would engage in political activities which benefitted their company as a whole. These included informal communications and relationship building with other companies and their employees. Such activities could result to business opportunity identification, development of stronger relations which could advance the possibilities of winning the bidding of a project, and employee and information stealing from the partners. Such activities created a ‘heretic’ role for middle managers, having however an integrative impact within their companies:

‘The director enjoyed large freedom from his position....the freedom he enjoyed had a very positive effect in our company’ [Operations Director A, Alpha]

‘His extensive technical knowledge, and the freedom he enjoyed from his position, made him bring a number of different business ideas to the company...’ [Technical Director, Psi]

The integrative impact of their activity was highly related to their boundary positions, which was obliging them to make the most for their company. Through the autonomy they enjoyed, they would engage in informal activities towards the partner company, such as information gathering and ‘stealing’ of employees, which were marginally illegal, as also mentioned earlier (sections 5.10.10 and 5.10.11). Such tasks, even though they involved high risk, as they could harm the partners’ relations, required high independence in the way that middle managers would fulfil their tasks. The high autonomy that they enjoyed however was often resulting, from their seniority in the company, and the strong links which would have been developed through time, which however resulted in activities which would greatly benefit the company:

‘...I visited the offices of the partner company and create stronger relations with some employees.....this created a better climate within our company, as we felt stronger against our competitors...’ [International Business Development Director A, Lambda]

‘After he would have collected information because of his position, he would then transmit it to our company... we would trust him more...’ [Technical Director, Alpha]

The benefits of the non-conventional behaviour that middle managers with high autonomy and an external job focus would be mainly concerned with information gathering and relationship building. In addition, they would be responsible to bring up business ideas, often from their personal networks. In other cases, during the bidding process, they would sometimes be able to persuade the potential clients to choose them for the project completion. Such activities, which made clear the high responsibilities they had, allowed them to include increased expenditures, and have independence on choosing the methods they would achieve their targets. Such activities were crucial however in helping the company to achieve strong performance:

‘The fact that I have local knowledge and many friends has helped the company in winning past projects’ [International Business Development Director, Delta]

‘It was actually an engineer who brought up the idea...which resulted from the knowledge and the contacts he had in neighbouring countries’ [Head of R&D, Lambda]

The high autonomy they enjoyed enabled them to benefit their company greatly, as described in the previous paragraph. The identification of new business opportunities, and information gathering and employee stealing, helped the companies expand their operations. In such an environment, the existing managers felt much happier, as they would see their company grow, which meant better opportunities for almost everyone. This enabled the development of trust, especially towards the middle managers who were carrying out such difficult tasks. Overall, their activities lead in stronger within-company relations, making clear the integrative effect they can have:

‘Such activities...were important, especially if we would then want to enter this new market on our own...these are the rules of business’ [International Business Development Director A, Lambda]

‘My responsibilities were very high.... I gathered very important information on several key players in the market ...this helped our company be better prepared for the future’ [Technical Director, Psi]

In a few decisions, the political behaviour they exhibited from their boundary positions could have a fractious effect. This could be the case when their suggestions could be in disagreement with the preferences of powerful actors within the company. These could be other managers, which, by disagreeing in the middle managers’ suggestions, could work towards the fulfilment of their own tasks. This however would result in argumentation and conflict within the company, as the trust towards the middle managers with the heretical roles would be in doubt, having a fractious impact in the employees’ unity:

‘Some higher level managers were in disagreement with my business suggestions...they would support their preferences passionately...this lead to a short term conflict’ [International Business Development Director A, Alpha]

‘We always had to be suspicious over his new business suggestions...the fact that he grew there did not mean that we should trust him blindly’ [Regional Operations Director B, Delta]

Overall, middle managers with high levels of autonomy and with an external job focus appeared to engage in political behaviour which would improve the employees’ unity within the case companies. This was resulting from the importance of their activities for the company as a whole: they would help the identification of new businesses and of business partners, while simultaneously they would help their company in its future expansion, through information gathering and relationship creation, as it can be seen from table 7.21, in appendix seven, which summarises the findings of this theme,. Such activities would appear to have company-wide benefits, which would result in better cooperation and communications between managers and employees of the case companies. This in turn would often help the increase of trust and reliability within the case companies, as the cross case data analysis showed. Their heretical political activity would ultimately have an integrative effect in employees’ unity.

5.13 Autonomy of middle managers, and its impact in their political behaviour

The current section presented the second factor which can affect the impact that political behaviour can have within organisations. This is the autonomy of the middle managers who are directly or indirectly related to the decision making process. Even though different versions of the concept of autonomy have been mentioned in the existing literature, an explicit investigation of their impact had been largely missing. As the data analysis was progressing however, it was made clear that there was a

relation between the level of autonomy and the impact of political behaviour. Further data analysis showed that also the job focus (section 5.12), as this was resulting from the official job description, could also have implications about the political behaviour being exhibited. While an internal job focus could result in the creation of fractious political behaviour, which however could help the advancement within the companies' hierarchy, an external job focus seemed to help avoid the engagement in within-company politics. Overall, the combination of these two factors would result in the creation of four different roles for middle managers, each of whom would exhibit political behaviour which would have a different impact within the case companies.

In the first category middle managers with relatively low autonomy, and with an internal job focus would be included. This category could include different technical directors (wireless, software), project managers, research managers, operations managers in divisions with a strict internal focus, and human resource managers. Such managers would enjoy a lower level of autonomy, as they would fulfil their tasks would be clearly defined, in a large extent. Moreover, their tasks would tend to have a strict internal focus, without having any interactions with the external environment. These managers would exhibit frequent political behaviour, which would consist of the creation of within company support groups and alliances, tactics of unfair competition between their colleagues, and open expression of conflicts during the work, as it can be seen from table 17 provided below.

These activities however would tend to have a fractious effect, as they often created competitive 'cliques', while simultaneously creating feelings of 'unfairness'. These in turn would harm the trust between employees, while simultaneously it could create an unfair environment, with dissatisfaction being expressed openly within the case companies. Overall, their activities would have the most fractious effect, in terms of frequency of conflict creation between middle managerial levels, compared to the remaining combinations of middle managers.

The next category resulting from the study would include middle managers with a low autonomy, with an external job focus. Within this category middle managers from the different technical departments, business development directors, the marketing/procurement department, and the research and development departments would be included. These managers would have specific guidance in fulfilling their tasks, whose job focus however, in large, would extend further than the organisational boundaries, as it would involve research in the external environment of the company and several communications with potential partners through the different phases of a partnership, among others.

The political activities they would engage, such as information collection and relationship creation, would often target other companies, which however would end up benefiting their company. Their beneficial role towards their company would tend to be recognised from most of their colleagues, which would lead to the development of trust and reliability towards the middle managers carrying out these tasks. As a result, the managers' and employees' unity would be strengthened, implying that their behaviour could have an integrative effect within the case companies.

In the next role identified from this study, middle managers who enjoyed a higher level of autonomy, who however had an internal job focus, would be included (table 17). Middle managers which were heads of departments or divisions, such as human resource, technical, customer service and production director and their associates would be included. These middle managers would often exhibit political behaviour which could be observed easily from their subordinates, during for example employee selection, which they could promote employees of their preference, which however could create feelings of unfair treatment within the company and result in argumentation and blaming.

In other cases, these middle managers, because of the influence they had within their departments, they could create groups of support in order to exhibit their disagreement to management decisions, acting as political leaders within the case companies. All these activities however would result in the creation of conflicting environments, dominated by argumentation and fights between employees. These would harm the employees' unity, as cooperation and communication would become more difficult, while simultaneously competition within the company would be expressed with unfair means. As a result, their role appeared to be associated with political behaviour having a fractious impact within all the case companies.

The last category would include middle managers who enjoyed a large extent of autonomy, and whose job focus would be mostly external. Middle managers falling in this category would be sales managers, technical, marketing, relationship, business development and operations directors, and project managers. Such managers would engage in political activities targeting the external environment of the company, including partner companies and potential clients, would end up benefit in large their companies, as they would often result in the identification of business opportunities. Their personal networks appeared to be crucial in defining such opportunities and developing strategic relations with partners and employees, which often involved exchange of favours which could be marginally illegal.

Other activities could consist of information gathering concerning operations and processes from the partner company, and creation of stronger ties with specific strategic employees of the partner company, which could help their company's further expansion in the future (table 17). These activities, which were again marginally illegal, would end up benefiting greatly their companies. The fact that their positions, were 'loose', in terms of organisational limitations, as they had a large autonomy, with an external job focus, and the fact that they engaged in activities, which even though were marginally illegal, could benefit greatly their company, gave them a 'heretical' role within their companies. Their activities would

help the company's growth, through new ideas or collection of crucial information, which in turn resulted in creation of trust towards their face. This would then be interpreted to greater working harmony between employees and managers, as they would all develop a common feeling on working towards the organisations' targets, drawing a clear picture on the integrative impact that their activities can have.

Middle managers' autonomy and job focus and associated impact of their political behaviour		
Level of autonomy enjoyed, and focus of job activities (internal/external)	Political behaviour exhibited	Relation between level of autonomy, and political behaviour exhibited
Low level of autonomy with internal job focus	Creation of alliances and groups of support, manipulation of information, blaming and accusation towards other employees	Low autonomy eliminating creativity and freedom in fulfilling tasks would lead to the creation of support groups which could help the within-company advancement
Low level of autonomy with external job focus	Information collection from potential partners, relationship creation	The negative impact of the low level of autonomy would be mitigated from the external job focus, involving external data collection and establishment of formal relations, as through such activities middle managers would be able to benefit in defined ways their companies
High level of autonomy with internal job focus	Information manipulation, advancement of preferred employees, request of funds towards others departments, creation of support groups against top management's decisions	The high level of autonomy would permit departments of groups to help sometimes the development of unfair feelings within their departments, while in other cases it could help the department-wide expression of resistance towards the top management, creating divisions within the company
High level of autonomy with external job focus	Informal communications with partners and clients, strategic information gathering, relationship creation	The high level of autonomy would enable managers to help the expansion of their company, by engaging in activating targeting the external environment. As a result, the company's unity would be much stronger, working towards common 'threats' existing in the external company environment.

Table 17: Middle managers' autonomy and job focus, political behaviour which they would often exhibit, and relations of their autonomy with the impact that their political activity had within the case companies

This section analysed the impact that the middle manager autonomy can have on the political behaviour they exhibit in the case companies. The relationship of the level of autonomy, which can be high or low, and the job focus of the middle managers, which can be internal or external, was presented, as the findings of the study

suggested. This however was the second factor which emerged from the data analysis. One more factor which appeared to affect the impact that politics had within the case companies was the phase of the partnership in which decisions were being made, which is the fourth theme of this thesis, described in the next section.

5.14 Theme three: Phase of the partnership and relation with the politics exhibited

One more crucial factor in analysing the impact that political processes can have had to do with the phase of the partnership that decisions are being taken. As mentioned in the literature review (section 3.5), a combination of the existing literature from international business research, enabled from the abductive approach from this study (Mantere and Ketokivi, 2013; Shepherd and Sutcliffe, 2011; Gholsorki *et al*, 2010), suggest four phases in partnerships. The first is the pre-formation phase, which includes the several activities related to project research and partner identification. The next is partnership formation, which involve negotiations with the partners before until an agreement has been reached. The third phase is the implementation, where the partners start working on the project completion, followed by the evaluation, where the partners tend to measure the success of the partnership, close to the end of the of the project or after it has been completed. All different phases are governed from different dynamics, which however have not been explored yet in the existing literature.

As the pilot study and the data analysis pointed out however, the different phases in which the strategic decisions were made appeared to be related to the political behaviour that middle managers would exhibit before, during and after the decisions were made. Moreover, the impact of their activities appeared also to depend on whether the decision being analysed was surrounded by political activity targeting managers within the company or the partner company. The differing impact that their political activity had within the case companies will be described in the next sections of this theme.

The fact that firm partnerships is an emerging area of research interest meant that a robust processual framework which would assist the data analysis was missing. The abductive research strategy of this study however permitted the researcher to borrow concepts from familiar research fields, such as the international business research, in order to facilitate research in strategic decision making within partnerships. This implied that the current section had a two-fold research target: On the one hand, it investigated the relation of the partnership phase in which a decision is being made, with the political behaviour that middle managers would exhibit. On the other hand, it would help the clarification of a sequential framework, consisting of four partnership phases, which would enable their deeper investigation in future studies. The codes used for the data analysis of the current theme are provided in table 7.22 in appendix seven. The third research theme of this study is presented in the following paragraphs.

5.14.1 Pre-formation

In the pre-formation, the decisions taken appeared to be surrounded by tactics which could have both integrative and fractious effect. What appeared to be crucial on defining the impact that politics would have was the focus of the decision being taken: while in most decisions focusing in the internal environment of the company were surrounded by tactics creating a fractious environment, the opposite would occur when similar behaviours would have an external focus:

‘Before the official project bid was announced, there were several activities which had to carry out... The creation of this team created arguments within the company’ [Project Manager, Psi]

‘We created a team which would gather information for the triple play industry...everyone seemed excited with the possibility that the company would enter a new market, and grow’ [Operations Director, Lambda]

The decisions with an internal focus in this phase would mainly be related with employee selection concerning the formation of research teams. Such decisions were surrounded by tactics targeting other employees and groups, creating a highly conflicting environment. Middle managers here would engage in a series of activities, including blaming and argumentation, in order to persuade others for their choice. These activities would create a conflicting environment between the employees competing for the specific positions:

‘The employees which would be chosen would have crucial roles... arguments and blaming were exhibited between them’ [Project Manager, Psi]

‘I wanted to be included in the research team...I had to fight with others for this position’ [Wireless Networks Engineer, Delta]

Moreover, middle managers with selection power would sometimes exhibit preferential treatment towards specific employees, which could be chosen to carry out tasks in this project phase and also in the next, which could have specific implications for their careers. This meant that the preferential treatment they enjoyed in this phase could largely affect their specific roles for the next phase of the partnership. For example, if some middle managers were chosen to form a research group for a new market, as in decision 25 (table 15), then these employees would possibly be chosen to form the subsidiary for this market, in the case that the company would decide to do so. As a result, middle managers responsible for the employee selection would often promote employees they favoured, affecting trust and communications between both the candidates, and other middle managers which had stronger links with candidates which were disadvantaged:

‘There was competition, and informal communications...many employees wanted to be included in the team, which created further complications’ [Technical Director, Alpha]

‘He was well connected in the company...he used that against me...which affected our relations’ [Regional Operations Director, Psi]

In some cases, the result of decision making within the case companies could also have an integrative impact. This would be the case when the outcome of decision making would be regarded as not of high importance from the employees, and in the cases that it was regarded as ‘fair’, towards the rest candidates. In these cases, political behaviour could be regarded as a routine, where a fair decision outcome would enhance the feelings of unity and trust within the cases companies:

‘The formation of the team was not of the importance, as it did not mean that all these employees would necessarily work for the project...it was more important to be fair...which helped us remain focused to our targets’ [Software Engineer A, Psi]

‘The fair selection concerning the research group helped the creation of a more positive climate between us, and especially within the team’ [Project Manager A, Alpha]

This however would change when political activity would focus in the external environment. Activities here would involve informal communications before the actual project announcement, establishment of relations with potential partner companies, and information gathering about the markets which the companies were entering. All these activities required strong cooperation within the company, including the use of flexible ways of communication, and the use of creative ways in order to cooperate effectively and collect information about potential projects or partners, which resulted on the enhancement of trust and commitment between employees. The only case where argumentation was created was during partner

suggestion, where some middle managers would attempt to suggest partners that they preferred. The majority of the activities focus the partner company however would end up creating a company-wide benefit, as they could result in the winning of a new project or a new client. In case that a partnership would be formed, then it would be that these activities in this early phase would have brought the project opportunity within the company, as the cross case comparison showed. The integrative effect that the politics surrounding the decisions had was clear, before negotiations with potential partners would have been initiated, in the next phase of the partnership:

‘...The creation of relations with other companies was regarded with warmth from our employees...they would start preparing with more passion for the actual project’ [Regional Operations Director, Psi]

‘They were happier to work...they regarded the entrance in a new market as an opportunity to advance their careers, as the company was growing rapidly’ [Technical Director, Alpha]

The political activity surrounding the pre-formation phase appeared to have a fractious effect within the case companies. This was resulting from the nature of the decisions being made, which involved employee selection, characterised by intensive and unfair competition between employees, expressed with blaming and preferential treatment towards other employees. In some cases however, when decisions had an external focus, the activity surrounding them appeared to have an integrative focus in the employees’ unity. This, as it can be seen from table 7.26 in appendix seven, included communications with partners and clients, and use of informal networks, which would help the development of trust and reliability between those conducting them. Nonetheless, it was made clear that this phase appeared to be dominated with political behaviour having a fractious impact within the case companies.

5.14.2 Partnership formation

Upon the initial market research, and once the required information for the project size and aspects would have been gathered, the case companies would start negotiations with potential partners, in order to make their official offer to the potential client. An agreement of the terms and conditions between the companies was required before the partners would start developing the project. This phase involved mainly decisions made by both partners, and were related to agreements concerned their payments and the profit shares. Other important decisions would involve operating decisions, such as the use of specific technologies and the working place in which the project would be implemented:

‘During negotiations, a series of informal activities occurred’ [Technical Director, Psi]

‘We started negotiations with Beta...which were characterised from informal activities’ [International Business Development Director B, Alpha]

The decisions taken from both partners appeared to have an integrative effect in the unity of the employees of the case companies. This integrative effect was mainly resulting from the nature of the decisions, which, as mentioned above, would involve allocation of resources. The more resources that would be allocated to the case companies, the higher the benefit for each individual employee of the company. As a result, the political activities exhibited, which included information stealing from the partners, which could be used with other potential partners, in the case that negotiations would fail, use of technical information in order to persuade for the higher allocation of the resources, and instant communications with managers and technical staff during negotiations, in order to make the most concerning the resource allocation between the two partners:

‘Informal activities during our negotiations included the gathering of technical information...in case our negotiations with Epsilon would fail...to be able to negotiate better.’ [Project Manager, Psi]

‘We had to communicate rapidly, and gather information, concerning things being negotiated’ [Technical Director, Delta]

This kind of cooperation required efficient working modes between the employees of the case companies. The activities mentioned above, required secrecy and trust in the communications of the companies’ employees and managers. Simultaneously, a stronger need for the achievement of common targets would be created, making them more passionate for their job, while enhancing the development of team spirit. As a result, the companies’ employees would have stronger links between them, in order to achieve their targets, having an integrative effect in their unity:

‘...The fact that we had to use informal ways to communicate, and make it under confidentiality, made us a much more united team....we had much more trust on each other’ [Technical Director, Delta]

‘The team spirit was stronger after negotiations...we worked together...which made us a stronger team’ [Project Manager, Psi]

The political activity exhibited in the formation phase helped the improvement of the team feeling within the employees of the case companies, as the data analysis suggested. The decisions studied in this phase were made between the two partners, and were mainly related to choices which would have implications about the budget allocation between the partners. Table 7.27, in appendix seven, summarises information about specific decisions in different partnerships phases, political activity surrounding them, and their impact. The activities in which the companies’

middle managers would engage included use of technical information in order to persuade the partners, instant communications with managers and technical staff during negotiations in order to improve their negotiating position, and in some cases information stealing from the partners, in order to be used in their negotiations with others, in case these would fail. All these activities however would lead to the development of the relations within the company, by increasing the trust and reliability that managers and employees had, while simultaneously strengthening the team spirit, making clear that decisions in this phase tended to be surrounded by political activity with an integrative effect within the case companies.

5.14.3 Implementation

When the negotiations would have been completed, then the project would start being implemented. This phase was governed mainly from operational level decisions made in their majority in an inter-organisational level. Most decisions would include choices on technological aspects of the project. Other decisions included choice of local partners, and, in many cases, a renegotiation of the profit shares was discussed, which were directly related to the long-term horizons and the complicated nature of the projects:

‘During the project completion, many decisions were made...all of them were characterised from many informal activities, from both sides’ [Project Manager, Lambda]

‘It was actually during the project completion that a huge number of political tactics and informal communications were used’ [Wireless Networks Engineer, Delta]

During the decisions being made in this phase, the employees of the case companies would have to work to make joint decisions. This resulted on the decision makers

attempting to make the most for their companies. Similarly to the negotiations phase, a constant competition seemed to exist with the managers and employees of the partner company, aiming to benefit their companies, and, subsequently, their personal interests:

‘When we were completing the project, decisions were like a constant competition between the two companies’ [Project Manager A, Alpha]

‘In every decision being made, we always had to make the most for our company....and we knew that the same was the case for our partner’ [Software engineer B, Psi]

As a result, the members of the project implementation of the case companies would engage in a series of activities in order to help their companies’ interests. Such activities would include information gathering, observation of technologies and processes of the partner company, and development of informal relations with key employees, as seen on table 7.28(appendix seven). In order to make these activities effectively, then the employees would have to communicate the information they gathered through flexible channels:

‘Some of the employees were gathering information concerning mistakes made from the partner..it written down daily and stored...’ [Regional Operations Director, Alpha]

‘He would tend to write down and send me SMS with every possible mistake they made...to accuse them later on’ [Project Manager B, Delta]

Moreover, some managers of the case companies would be obliged to find creative ways to persuade their partners, while simultaneously many times they would be assigned with tasks, which were not easily evaluated, but required high levels of trust, such as the development of stronger relations with specific employees. As a result, the feeling of caring about their company would be enhanced, making them more committed to their tasks, while simultaneously enhancing the confidence that the members of the project implementation teams had to each other. The result was an overall integrative effect in the employees of the case companies:

'The gathering of information required confidentiality and trust between the employees carrying out the project, which made them trust each other more...' [Project Manager A, Delta]

'...This decision required the proper use of arguments from our side...we had to cooperate.....which resulted on us having stronger team-feeling' [Software Engineer A, Psi]

An exclusion of the integrative impact of political activities on this phase were the decisions concerning further allocation of resources, were this was demanded from the employees of the case companies. This activity, which was referred as the 'partnership within a partnership' tactic in an earlier section of the findings (section 5.10.12), involved the creation of support groups between the employees of both companies, in order to persuade the top management for the need of this further allocation.

'The employees who were carrying out the project, from both companies, started requesting more money, because of some unexpected expenses which had occurred' [Regional Operations Director, Alpha]

‘Both project managers started claiming extra money to be allocated, which however appeared to be suspicious to us’ [CEO, Delta]

This tactic appeared to have a two-fold effect within the case companies: the relationships of the employees of the project completion team would be strengthened, as they were working jointly towards the same targets, this being the allocation of further amounts for them. This request however did not have the same impact in the members of the top management, who would be in disagreement with this request, and they would regard it with suspicion. As a result, even though this activity would create stronger relations between employees on middle managerial levels, this was not the same with the top management, which would have lack of trust with those employees implementing the project, and would be forced to exercise stricter control and substitute employees in order to regain trust, making clear the fractious effect that this specific activity within the implementation phase can have:

‘We felt blackmailed....we could not trust them at all after that’ [Regional Operations Director, Alpha]

‘The fact that they were working in extreme weather conditions...made them request more money....employees of both companies requested that... we decide to be much stricter in our controls’[International Business Development Director, Delta]

5.14.4 Evaluation

Upon the project completion, the case companies would tend to assess the result of the partnership, and see how this had benefited their company. This phase would involve the communications with the partner company in order to gather information for the evaluation, and the actual discussions and evaluation within the case

companies. As a result, it involved decisions within the company and between the partners:

‘...During the evaluations we did specific things to help our company’ [Project Manager A, Alpha]

‘During project wrap-up... many informal activities to help our company...were used’ [Software Engineer B, Psi]

When communications would be carried out with the potential partner, then this would involve phone contacts and physical visits to the partners’ office. During the collection of the information, those carrying it out would engage in a series of activities, attempting to create stronger relations with specific employees of the partner company, who could then be attracted to the case companies. Moreover, such manager would gather also strategic information concerning the partner company, which could then be used from their company, for their future plans, as the data analysis showed:

‘...I arranged informal dinners with two of their employees...in order to know better their expectation...and bring them to our company in the future’ [Regional Operations Director, Psi]

‘...A visit to their headquarters...was good opportunity to learn more about their organisation and their operations’ [Technical Director B, Lambda]

The two activities described above, which could be also regarded as marginally illegal, required efficient communications between employees of the case companies. Moreover, they required high level of independence towards the employees who were carrying them out, which meant that they should be regarded as reliable enough

to carry out such sensitive activities. As a result, they had an integrative effect in the relation of the employees of the case companies, as it helped the development of trust and confidence between them, in order to achieve their common targets:

‘We trusted him...Every night he would email with some of his observations..’ [Regional Operations Director B, Delta]

‘I can imagine that he pretended he was listening to others’ opinion...while writing down important points about the company’ [Project Manager A, Alpha]

Moreover, during the evaluation phase, similar activities were expected to be applied from the partner companies, as the data comparison revealed. This made the case companies’ employees to create alliances in order to protect their company against any potential threat which could result from communications between the employees of the partner company, and employees of their company. Again, this resulted in stronger employee relations, as they would work together, to protect their interests:

‘We were certain that they would also try to do the same thing...that’s business...so all employees had a clear line on not allowing any information not related to the project not to leak out’ [Regional Director, Lambda]

‘We were very careful not to give them any market information...or any other information which they could use on their own after the end of our partnership’ [CEO, Alpha]

The choice of the employees however, which is a decision made within the case companies, would create tensions and conflict. This was resulting from the fact that the employee who would carry out the evaluation would often have increased role in

the future operations of the company, depending on the nature of his tasks during the actual evaluation. For example, the fact that the subsidiary manager was carrying out the evaluation for Psi, and he was attempting to create relations with some managers and employees from Epsilon, meant that he could have an important role in the case that Psi would decide in the future to enter this market. As a result, this decision was often resulting in fragmentation within the case companies:

‘I really wanted to be chosen to visit Epsilon’s offices, as this would certainly help my career...so I did everything possible to be chosen’ [Subsidiary Manager, Psi]

‘The person who would carry out the evaluation had to be a person of trust...someone who wanted to be included was blaming others and claiming he was the best to carry out the task...the choice was very difficult’ [Regional Operations Director, Psi]

The evaluation phase consisted of an appraisal of the result that the partnership had for the case companies. In order to conduct it, the partners had to agree on the method and the extent of the evaluation, while within the case companies, employee selection who would be responsible for carrying it out would take place. The evaluation process would tend to be characterised from political activity targeting the partner company, aiming to collect information and establish strategic relations with key employees from the partner company, who could possibly help the case company in its future plans, as it can be seen from table 7.29 in appendix 7. The cooperation between employees in order to make the most for their company would end up having an integrative effect in their unity. This however would not be always the case, as in the intra-organisational decision concerning the employee choice antagonism would create conflict having a fractious effect in their relations.

5.14.5 Partnership phase and impact of middle managers' politics

In the previous paragraph, the relation that the phase of the partnership in which a decision occurs with the impact that the political behaviour surrounding it can have was presented. Partnerships appear to consist of four phases, these being the pre-formation, the formation, the implementation and the evaluation. As the data analysis showed, each of these involves different decisions within the single companies and between both partners, which has also implications about the interested parties' political behaviour being exhibited.

The pre-formation phase involves mainly decisions within the case companies, concerning the company's interest on potential project, the identification of business partners, and the choice of managers and employees to carry out these tasks. These decisions tend to create very competitive environments, where political behaviour consists of blaming and preferential treatment towards specific employees or business partners. All these result to the creation of an unfair working environment, governed by arguments and conflict, having a fractious effect in the employees' unity, as it can be seen from table 18. This phase is not characterised only by fractious political behaviour, as the decisions concerning new business ideas tend to create company-wide positive feeling and enhance cooperation, having an integrative effect in their relations.

The formation phase involved mainly decisions over the financial resources allocation which were related to the tasks that each partner would fulfil within the project. Such decisions would make the case companies' employees work together and cooperate, often in informal and creative ways, in order to persuade the partner company through the use of specialised knowledge, and make the most for their organisation. As a result, the team feeling would be enhanced upon the completion the partners negotiations, implying that this phase would tend to be mostly characterised from integrative political behaviour.

In the implementation phase, a series of decisions on operational issues were made. These decisions included choices over technical aspects of the project, business partner choices, and budget renegotiations. Similar to the decisions made in the negotiations phase, they appear to be a 'win-lose' game. This would make the middle managers engage in political behaviour consisting of argumentation, blaming and use of specialised knowledge, in order to persuade the partner company's decision makers. These activities required efficient communications and strong cooperation from the employees of the case companies. This would enhance the team's unity, while simultaneously help the establishment of feelings reliability and trust in the case companies (table 18). The integrative effect that characterised political behaviour within this phase would not be evident in the case were the working groups would require the allocation of further financial resources, which have negative effect in the case companies' top management confidence towards the project completion teams.

The evaluation consisted of physical visits and communications between the partner companies in order to appraise their result for the case companies. During the evaluation process, the employees responsible for carrying it would engage in information gathering from the partner company concerning its organisation and its operations, while simultaneously they would attempt to establish relations with key employees. Such activities would be of high importance for the case companies, as it could help its future development and growth. Because of their difficulty and their marginally illegal nature, they would require effective cooperation within the case companies. This would result in the creation of more coherent working teams, characterised by a strong cooperative culture and confidence over the other employees' intentions and creativity in fulfilling tasks, having an integrative effect in their unity.

Partnership phase and impact of political behaviour exhibited		
Phase	Middle managers' political activity	Impact of political behaviour in the company, and why
Pre-Formation	Competition through creation of alliances and blaming in order to advance preferential employee and business partner choices. During new business ideas, trust and cooperation would be enhanced	The political activity would tend to have a largely fractious effect, because within-company relations would diminish, resulting in establishment of competitive working groups, which could harm communications and trust
Formation	Resource allocation would make decision makers to engage in constant argumentation and use of specialised knowledge in order to persuade towards budget allocation	Managers and employees working together towards the achievement of the best possible result for their company. The cooperation would enhance trust and reliability, having an integrative effect within the companies
Implementation	Operational decisions would make middle managers to support decisions which would maximise their company's benefits, through these of constant argumentation, specialised knowledge and information manipulation	The within company cooperation towards the achievement of the desired targets which could be the opposite than those of the partner company would enhance within company relations, trust and reliability
Evaluation	The evaluation process would tend to be characterised from information stealing from the partner company and relationship creation with some of its key employees	Improvement on the employees relations and unity, resulting from the confidentiality under which the strategic importance activities were conducted

Table 18: Phases of the partnership, political behaviour being exhibited and its impact within the companies

This section presented the way that the phase of the partnership in which a decision is made can impact the political behaviour being exhibited. As mentioned earlier in this thesis, there are two more factors affecting the impact the political behaviour can have within the case companies during partnerships, these being the specific political tactics being applied and the autonomy of middle managers who exhibit these activities. All these factors are summed up in the next section, before the theoretical model resulting from the findings of this study is presented in the next chapter.

5.15 Conclusion: The three factors affecting the impact of middle managers' political behaviour within partnerships

The current chapter presented the way the different factors can define the impact political behaviour can have within case companies during partnerships, as these emerged from the data analysis. These different factors, appeared to have an either integrative or fractious impact in the employees within the case companies. As a result, the researcher attempted to break them down and investigate them thoroughly, through all the four cases, in order to be able to compare and contrast the patterns emerging from the data.

The first factor affecting the impact of politics within the case decision groups unity was the specific tactic through which the political behaviour was exhibited (figure nine). Some political tactics being exhibited in intra-organisational decisions, such as the creation of alliances, or the information manipulation (table 16), appeared to fragment the employees' relation. Other tactics focusing in the partner companies, such as relationship creation and information gathering appeared to integrate them better as teams. Some other tactics, such as the blaming and argumentation or the use of technical knowledge appeared to have a different effect, depending on their focus: when they would focus on managers within the case companies they could have a fractious effect, and the opposite could result when they would focus the partner companies (table 16). What was made clear however was the fact that the tactic through which political behaviour is being exhibited is crucial in defining the potential impact it can have.

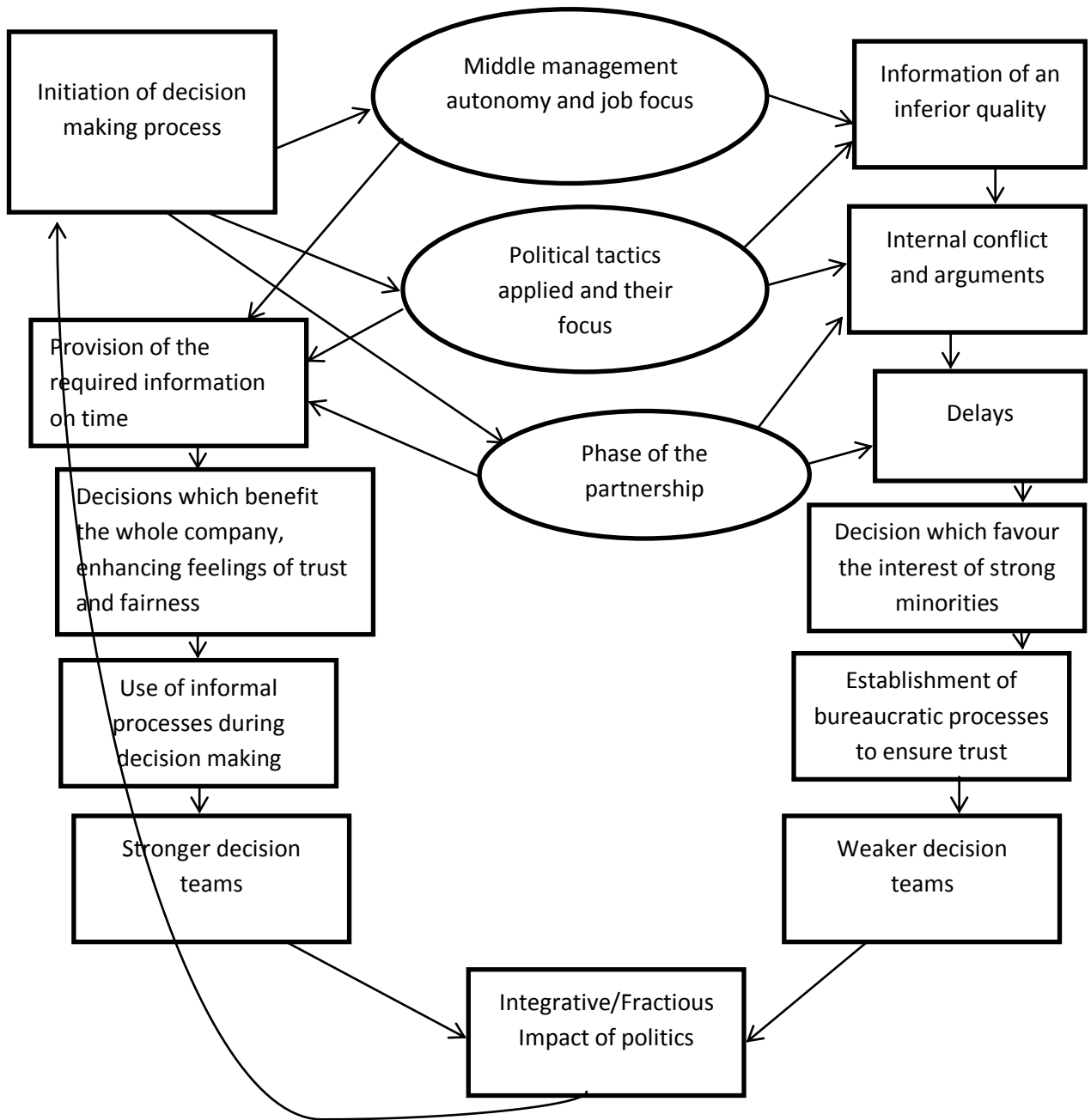


Figure nine: Chain of evidence supporting the findings for the different themes of this study

The second factor which emerged as important in defining the impact that political behaviour can have was the autonomy of the middle managers exhibiting the political behaviour. This factor was not studied in isolation however; instead, their official job appeared also to be affecting the political behaviour that exhibited (figure

nine). The combination of these two factors resulted on the creation of four different categories of middle managers, with each one being characterised from political behaviour with a different impact. Middle managers with low autonomy and an internal job focus engaged in politics to help their advancement within the case companies, which created fragmentation in the employees' unity. On the other hand, a low managerial autonomy with an external job focus would result in activities helping the company's engagement in new project, which would end up enhancing the within-company unity.

Middle managers with high autonomy and an internal job focus would be heads of groups and departments. They often acted as political leaders, creating intra-company support groups, often favouring employees of their preferences, which result in deterioration of employees' unity. The last category identified includes managers with an external job focus who would enjoy a high level of managerial autonomy. Their position enabled them to develop informal relations and often bring ideas through their personal networks. Moreover, during the project completion, they would often create relations with key employees of the case companies, while they would also engage in strategic information stealing from the partners. All these activities helped the companies' future growth, having a largely integrative effect within the case companies.

The last factor which appeared to affect the impact of the politics was the phase of the partnership in which decisions were made as it can be seen on figure nine. Decisions made in the pre-formation phase appeared fragmenting decision makers. Negotiations would enhance the team feeling within the case companies, as their employees would be competing towards the best possible resource allocation. The implementation phase would tend to be characterised by integrative political behaviour, as operational decisions would make the case companies' employees unity towards the protection and the advancement of theirs' and their companies' interests. The evaluation phase would be characterised by both integrative and

fractious political activity. Integrative effect of political activity would result during the actual evaluation, as some of the companies' employees would engage in activities in order to advance their companies' interests. On the other hand, the choice of the employee who would carry out the actual evaluation would tend to be characterised from competition and conflict, which would fragment their relations. Figure nine summarises the factors presented in this chapter along with the chain of events and activities surrounding decision making findings is presented on, which is the basis for the frameworks of this study, described in the next chapter.

This section described the different factors affecting the impact of political behaviour, as these emerged from the data analysis. In addition, a different approach in investigating the impact of politics was suggested, as these emerged from the data. The different findings of this study, along with its implications for existing research, are presented in the next chapter of this thesis.

Chapter Six: A holistic understanding on the impact of middle managers' political activity during international partnerships

6.1 Introduction and Summary of findings

This chapter starts by overviewing the different themes analysed in the previous chapter, in order to introduce the theoretical models which result from this study. In addition, it aims to make clear the way that this thesis contributes to strategy theory and practice. It consists of two parts, one for each theoretical model resulting from this study. In the first section, each theoretical model is introduced and explained. In the second, each model is discussed within the existing literature. Before the development of the theoretical models, a summary of the research questions and the findings of the study are provided, to help the reader with their understanding.

The research question of this study is:

‘What is the impact of middle managers’ political processes in firm partnerships?’

A further breakdown of the main research question can lead to the following sub questions:

1. What are the *roles* of middle managers in firm partnerships?
2. In which *tactics* do middle managers engage in order to exhibit their political behaviour?
3. How do these roles inform strategic decisions, in the *different phases* of partnerships?

The data analysis made clear that political behaviour affects decision making through the impact it has on decision teams. In many cases, the political behaviour which middle managers exhibit strengthens the relations of decision teams, which in turn results in better cooperation and less 'noise' during decision making. As a result, decision teams will be more integrated.

The data shows that the integrative effect of the political behaviour tends to be related to its focus. When it targets the partner company, it will most possibly result in stronger intra-company relations, having accordingly a positive impact on the decision making teams. On the other hand however, political activity can also create conflict and intensive competition within decision makers. This creates obstacles in communications and efficient cooperation, which in turn has a fractious effect on the relations of the employees, as the data analysis showed. In many cases, its fractious impact can have crucial effect on the project completion, as it creates delays and results in non-optimal choices. The fractious impact of political behaviour is clearer in intra-organisational decisions. Examples of such decisions include employee selection or potential partner identification, where conflict and competition result in a highly politicised environment. Such an environment can in turn result in delays and suboptimal decisions, as the analysis shows.

This study also confirms the application of specific political tactics from middle managers, as these have been identified in single organisations. The identification and examination of the tactics within partnerships is enabled from the abductive approach of this study, which advocates hypothesis construction and testing through combinations of existing concepts. Such tactics include alliance creation between employees of different organisational levels, the use of information in order to advance specific interests and blaming and accusation, among others.

Apart from the confirmation of the existence of these already known political tactics in a different organisational context, this study expands existing knowledge by revealing the application of previously ignored political tactics. These were mostly targeting the partner company, making clear the importance of a different organisational context for their identification. These tactics include information stealing, relationship building with key employees of the partner company and gathering of information for possible accusation of the partner, as table 16 (section 5.11) shows. One more previously ignored tactic, identified during data analysis, is the creation of inter-organisational alliances between the employees implementing the project, in order for the employees to promote their interests to the top management of the partner companies. The identification of these tactics is crucial, as it enhances the understanding of strategy 'on the move', as discussed in the following sections.

The application of the political tactics appears to be related to the autonomy of middle managers and the focus of their job. The combination of these two different parameters enabled the identification of different organisational roles. An internal job focus seems to be characterised from different levels of political behaviour: managers with low levels of autonomy, engaging in job tasks mainly in the internal organisational environment, tend to engage in political activity which harms intra-organisational relations. Similarly, managers with a larger autonomy, who still have an internal job focus, such as heads of groups or departments, can engage in activities which attempt to advance personal or group-level interests, creating disunity within the case companies. This indicates clearly the strong association of a strictly internal job focus and low job autonomy with decision making processes of inferior quality.

This impact however tends to be reversed in the cases where job focus is mostly external. In cases where the managers enjoy a limited autonomy, having clear instructions and limitations on the ways that they have to carry out their tasks, which

however can involve interaction with the external company environment, the employees tend to be more integrated. Such external interactions can include interactions with company other than the current partner or with other organisations. The intra-organisational integrative effect of their activities is even larger in the cases where such managers enjoy larger autonomy, and still have an external job focus. Positions falling in this category include business development and sales managers, and heads of research departments. Such managers often bring new business opportunities to the case companies, or provide solutions in unorthodox ways. Their external job focus enables them to engage in behaviours advancing the interests of their company as a whole, strengthening the relations and the cooperation towards achievement of common targets.

One more finding of the current study has to do with the identification of the differing impact that political behaviour can have, through the different phases of the partnerships. The fact that partnerships can be broken down in different phases is a concept borrowed from the international business literature (Das and Kumar, 2007; Ariño and De La Torre 1998; Doz, 1996; Ring and Van de Ven, 1994). Frameworks and methodologies can be borrowed from familiar research environments and be used through different ‘lenses’ in order to investigate irregularities and help theory development (Mantere and Ketokivi, 2013; Golsorkhi *et al*, 2010), which is facilitated from the abductive research strategy of this study. The existence of different phases within partnerships is confirmed from this study. The impact of politics however varies, depending on the focus of each decision and the parties being involved in each process.

In the early phases of a partnership, during the project identification and the potential partner shortlisting, politics tend to occur within the case companies, creating fragmentation in the internal environment. Upon the start of the negotiations with potential partners however, in order for the partners to make their official offers to the clients, political behaviour tends to focus in the partner companies, in order to

advance the within-company benefits, enhancing the employees' unity and helping the creation of stronger decision making teams. Similarly, as the data analysis shows, once the project is won from the bidders and its implementation is initiated, the political activity tends to focus on the partner company again, strengthening the ties in the internal environment of the case companies.

As expected, there were some exceptions in this phase. These include the cases when political behaviour targets the top management of the case companies in order to advance the middle and lower management's interests, having a fractious effect on the relations between different organisational levels. Upon the project completion, managers often engage in activities targeting the partner company, such as development of relations with key employees and information stealing, which can help the future performance of their company by expanding its capital and knowledge bases. Through these activities, the within-company relations can be strengthened, as stronger decision making teams are created, characterised by higher trust and efficiency.

Through the investigation of the research questions provided above, the understanding of the political activity during partnerships is enhanced. This is done by establishing a different way to regard their impact and stretching the importance of managerial autonomy, partnership phase and political tactic applied during decision making. Specifically, a different way to investigate the impact of politics is suggested. Politics are regarded as having an integrative or fractious effect on decision making teams, which in turn will affect their choices. Furthermore, the confirmation of the use of previously identified political tactics in single companies is enabled, however suggesting the existence of previously ignored tactics in this different organisational context, resulting from the abductive research approach followed in this study. Moreover, specific roles for the middle managers are suggested, depending on the autonomy they enjoy and their job focus. Lastly, the differing impact that politics have through the partnership phases is made clear. The

investigation of these research questions led to the creation of two different models, discussed in the following sections.

6.2 Theoretical models resulting from the findings

In the current section, the two models resulting from this research are presented. Each of them is related to the research questions of this study. However, in order to explain them clearly to the readers and enhance their understanding, these are described in different sections. Upon the presentation of each model, the discussion of the way that each of the two models contributes to the existing theories follows.

6.2.1 The roles of middle managers during strategic decision making in firm partnerships

Existing research on the strategy process has already identified the strategic roles of organisational actors during strategic decision making in both top (Mackay and Chia, 2013; Canales, 2012; Nielsen, 2010; Hambrick, 2007; Carpenter, Geletkanycz and Sanders, 2004; Jarzabkowski and Wilson, 2002; Hambrick and Mason, 1984) and middle (Wooldridge and Canales, 2010; Kuratko *et al*, 2005; Balogun and Johnson, 2005; 2004; Floyd and Wooldridge, 1997; 1992; Westley, 1990; Guth and MacMillan, 1986) managerial positions. The data analysis of the study identified two factors which appear to affect the middle managers' behaviours during partnerships. These two factors are the autonomy they enjoy in fulfilling their tasks and their job focus. Through their combination, four different roles are created, described on figure ten provided below.

		Middle Manager Autonomy	
		Low	High
Middle Manager Job Focus	Internal	<p>Classic Middle Managers</p> <p>Through the limited freedom they have from their positions, engagement in political behaviour appears to be a way through which they are able to express their self interests and help their advancement within the company. Their engagement in political behaviour is facilitated from their strictly internal job focus.</p>	<p>Political Middle Managers</p> <p>Managers within this category enjoy a high level of independence, being heads of departments or groups. Because of their internal job focus, they seem to engage frequently in political behaviour with their subordinates and managers of other departments, acting as 'political leaders', which however results in the creation of conflict and unfair competition within the company.</p>
	External	<p>Hegemonal Middle Managers</p> <p>Middle Managers here enjoy a partial independence, concerning the freedom they have to make choices in order to carry out their tasks. Through the activities they engage, such as communications with other companies and formal and informal information collection, they assist their company, by bringing new ideas and concepts into the company, which can be used in its future direction.</p>	<p>Heretical Middle Managers</p> <p>Middle Managers within this category enjoy a large amount of independence, with their job having mainly an external focus. Roles in international operations, business development, research and sales belong to this category. Through their position they engage in a series of activities-often non-conventional and marginally illegal-which however are crucial for the advancement of their company. Through the gathering of strategic information, creation of strategic relations, and the suggestion of business opportunities, they shape the company's direction and help its growth</p>

Figure ten: Middle Managers' strategic roles during partnerships. The different roles of middle managers within partnerships depend on two parameters: the extent of the autonomy that the managers enjoy when fulfilling their tasks and their job focus, which can be internal or external, as provided in their official job description. Their combination result in four different roles for middle managers, analysed and described in each box of the framework.

The autonomy that a middle manager can enjoy has to do with the extent of freedom that he has in order to carry out his tasks (Kuratko *et al*, 2005; Anderesen, 2004; 2000 Regnér, 2003; Castells, 1996). This appeared to be affecting their engagement in politics, as it emerged as an explanatory variable during the data analysis (sections 4.4.9 and 5.12). It has to do with the freedom that middle managers have to engage in

activities related to decision making without reporting to the top management, and it can be observed and understood through the job description. In many cases, a manager can enjoy a low level of autonomy, having to follow specific processes in order to fulfil organisational tasks, while possibly being supervised from others. On the other hand, a manager can also have a higher level of autonomy, which means that the organisation does not provide him with specific guidance and limitations on the way that the tasks will be carried out. Rather, his evaluation will be based on his actual work result, enabling him to have a relative freedom on fulfilling his tasks.

The second factor which appears to influence the impact of the middle managers' political behaviour is their job focus, as this is presented on the official job description, which can be either internal or external. It needs to be mentioned at this point that the case companies were not able to provide official job descriptions, as there involved partnerships which have finished a few years. As a result, the internal/external job focus is defined from data provided from the empirical units of the study (participants and documents).

An internal job focus involves mainly activities related to the organisational processes within the different departments of the organisation, having a very limited interaction with the external company environment (Teulier and Rouleau, 2010; Rouleau, 2005). Such activities involve most of the 'classic' middle managers tasks, such as product development, employees' supervision, and implementation of organisational change (Rouleau, 2005; Balogun and Johnson, 2005; 2004; Huy, 2002; Floyd and Wooldridge, 1997; 1992; Westley, 1990). An external job focus however involves an array of activities characterised by interactions which go beyond the organisational boundaries. Activities focusing on the external company environment include communications and meetings with potential clients and partners, organisation of events, and physical visits to the partner company offices (Pappas and Wooldridge, 2007; Rouleau, 2005).

The combination of these two different factors enabled the identification of four different middle management roles (Teulier and Rouleau, 2010; Floyd and Wooldridge, 1997; 1992). These different middle management roles are labelled through the use of different words, following the tradition of strategy researchers to use labels, acronyms and symbols to denote major patterns, roles and concepts emerging from data analysis (Teulier and Rouleau, 2010; Jarzabkowski and Ballogun, 2009; Paroutis and Pettigrew, 2007; Floyd and Wooldridge, 1997; 1992; Mintzberg, 1990).

The first category on the upper left side of figure ten involves the so-called classic middle managers, who enjoy limited autonomy while having simultaneously a more internal job focus. The word *classic* results from the fact that such managers correspond to the traditional roles which they have been attributed in the early phases of strategy research (section 3.5.3.1), where they are mainly responsible for strategy implementation, with less importance in strategic decision making (Canales, 2012; Wooldridge *et al*, 2010; Schmidt *et al*, 2008). Such middle managers often engage in intensive political activities, targeting employees of different organisational levels within the case companies, in order to advance their own self-interests, as the data analysis showed.

The combination of low autonomy and strictly internal job focus imposes great limitations on the way they can actually differentiate themselves, through their work. These restrictions can eliminate their creativity, making political behaviour a strategic tool to use in order to advance their careers. The activities of such middle managers often have a fractious effect within the case companies, as they create an environment of conflict and unfair competition. As a result, information withholding, manipulation and blaming and accusations of others, can become everyday phenomena, having a negative impact on organisational choices.

In the second category, on the upper right side of figure ten, belong the *political* middle managers. The term 'political' results from their frequent involvement in internal political processes, as discussed in the data analysis and in the following paragraphs. These managers also have an internal job focus, however enjoying a large level of autonomy on the way they carry out their tasks. Such middle managers tend to head departments or teams within organisations, whose activities do not often involve interactions with the external company environment, such as technical directors, total quality managers and heads of production. The relatively narrow job focus seems to make the engagement in political activity prerequisite for the advancement of their careers within their organisations. The fact that they enjoy autonomy on the way they carry out their tasks, which often involves the management of several employees, enables them to be able to influence more people, when they want to. This influence can aim to affect decisions in order to advance individual or group- level interests, often related to resistance to organisational change and budget allocation between different departments. As a result, such managers are regarded as small-scale political leaders, being able to create conflicts and disunity between whole groups of employees.

In the next category suggested from figure ten belong *hegemonal* managers, who even though they have specific guidance and instructions on the way that their tasks will be fulfilled, their job tasks tend to focus on the external company environment. The word 'hegemonal' is used to depict the less clear, but still formal and important level of influence that such managers possess. Such managers tend to have technical expertise, such as software, engineering or compliance directors, human resource managers and communications managers. Managers in this category are relatively restricted, because of the low level of autonomy they enjoy while carrying out their tasks. Their external job focus however, will benefit them a lot as they will be able to differentiate the way they contribute in their organisation because of the result of their job tasks. This essentially means that political activity is not important for the

advancement of their careers. Instead, the combination of low autonomy with an external job focus, results in these managers engaging in activities advancing organisational interests. This happens because they mainly carry out tasks related to new business initiatives, such as data collection and opportunity recognition, which can be translated into better future performance for their company. Such managers tend to have a hegemonic role, being able to help their companies and get recognition for it from the intra-company environment, making their importance in carrying out complicated yet vital organisational tasks clear.

In the last category of figure ten, a managerial role which has been ignored in the existing research can be found: the *heretical* middle managers. The word 'heretical' is used to denote the non-conventional ways they use, which can be often informal and difficult to observe, but they can end but having material impact in a company's strategy, as discussed in the data analysis and in the following paragraphs. Such managers enjoy a large extent of autonomy on the way they fulfil their tasks, while simultaneously having a job focus involving frequent interactions with the external environment. Business development and expansions directors, international and regional managers, as well as lead project managers within partnerships belong in this category. Such middle managers enjoy freedom on the way they fulfil their tasks, being evaluated on the results they produce through their work, with the organisations they belong often ignoring the details on the way that their tasks are carried.

As a result, such managers often bring new business ideas in their companies and establish business relations through personal networks. Moreover, during the project implementation, they engage in activities beyond organisational boundaries. They often collect information from the partner company, and they also establish relations with key employees, who can possibly come and work for their companies in the future, as the data analysis showed. Such activities, which can often be marginally illegal, can benefit their company as a whole. This happens because they end up

helping their expansion in new industries and markets, which is done through the identification of new business opportunities or the formation of strong relationships with key contacts, as the data from the cases of this study showed. As a result, such managers are of strategic importance for their companies.

This section presented the first theoretical model resulting from this study, focusing on the strategic roles of middle managers in international partnerships. The way that this framework contributes in the existing literature is analysed in the following paragraphs.

6.2.1.1 The strategic importance of middle managers in firm partnerships

Existing studies on middle managers have focused on investigating the importance of their activities and their strategic roles in single organisations (Balogun and Johnson, 2005; 2004; Huy, 2002; Floyd and Wooldridge, 2000; 1997; 1992; Burgelman, 1994; Bartlett and Ghoshal, 1993). The current study however extends existing theory on the middle management perspective (Wooldridge et al, 2008) by offering insights on their roles during strategic decision making in a different organisational setting, which is enabled from the abductive research strategy used in this study. This approach is in agreement with calls for further investigation of the different positions they have, including boundary spanning roles (Teulier and Rouleau, 2010; Pappas and Wooldridge, 2007; Balogun and Johnson, 2005; Rouleau, 2005), and for focus on the ‘individuals as a fundamental level of analysis’ (Schmid, Floyd and Wooldridge, 2010:142). As made clear in figure ten, their strategic roles appear to be linked to two different characteristics of their actual positions within their companies, this being the autonomy in the way they fulfil their tasks, and their job focus.

Research in the strategy process has made clear their importance, resulting from their intermediary position within organisations (Wooldridge, Schmidt and Floyd, 2008;

Nonaka, 1994), and their deep knowledge of the everyday operations of their companies concerning strategy making (Pappas and Wooldridge, 2007; Currie and Procter, 2001), strategy implementation (Rouleau, 2005; Balogun and Johnson, 2004; Huy, 2002) and organisational learning (Nonaka, 1994; Kanter, 1982). The combination of these two characteristics makes them strategic leaders, contemplating the top management, through the enhancement of objectivity and the facilitation in decision making, especially in ambiguous environments (Santos and Eisenhardt, 2009; Floyd and Wooldridge, 2000; Eisenhardt and Bourgeois, 1988; Lindblom, 1959). Even though their importance has been acknowledged, a clear understanding of the actual positions of middle managers in different contexts and the associated impact with their different activities has been missing (Teulier and Rouleau, 2010; Wooldridge, Schmidt and Floyd, 2008). As the data analysis showed however, two different parameters appeared to have an explanatory power over their roles and the political activity which they exhibit.

The first of the two parameters is the autonomy they enjoy, as this was introduced in the data analysis (section 4.4.9 and 5.13). Autonomy refers to the extent of freedom that middle managers have in gathering information and making decisions without reporting to the top management (Andersen, 2004; 2000). It appeared to have an effect on the extent and the frequency of the political behaviour they exhibit. The importance of their autonomy is even more crucial in dynamically changing environments (Meyer, 2009; Andersen, 2004; 2000; Robert Baum and Wally, 2003; Hagedoorn, 1993).

The middle managements' influence and political activity has been investigated in existing studies (Canales, 2012; Mantere, 2008; 2005; Pappas and Wooldridge, 2007; Floyd and Wooldridge, 1992; 1997). These studies however have focused more on presenting specific characteristics of the political behaviour being exhibited. They have done so by analysing the tactics which they apply, and by attempting to see how these can affect organisational performance (Mair, 2005; Wooldridge and Floyd,

1990) and strategy formation (Mintzberg and Waters, 1985). However, they have ignored contextual and micro-level explanations on the causes and results of their political activity; further insights on the causes and their actual effect need to be provided (Windsor, 2010; Wooldridge, Schmidt and Floyd, 2008; Gunn and Chen, 2006).

An explicit recognition of the notion of autonomy, which is familiar with some concepts in existing strategy and international business research (Kuratko *et al*, 2005; Andersen, 2004; Regnér, 2003; Castells, 1996), but is still missing in strategy research, seems to provide an explanation on the reasons that middle managers engage in such behaviours. As the findings of this research show, in many cases, low autonomy can lead to increased informal communications and activities (section 5.12.1 and 5.12.2). This can help middle managers advance their self-interests. On the other hand, higher autonomy enhances creativity and helps the achievement of differentiated results.

The analysis of political behaviour through the filter of autonomy appears to explain to a large extent the reasons it is being exhibited: in the case where middle managers have freedom to engage in activities without reporting to top managers, then they will often engage in activities which can advance their personal interests, but which will be aligned with the organisational interests. This however is not the case when they have restricted autonomy, as in such case they will tend to face obstacles in any independent move they attempt to engage. These findings make clear that a micro-perspective, focusing on the contextual characteristics of the jobs of middle managers and specifically, the freedom they can have when implementing their tasks, can offer deeper insights in the examination of their behaviours.

The concept of autonomy enhances the understanding of the middle managers activities, as it offers a clear understanding on the reasons of their behaviours in decision making processes. A similar concept to the autonomy is related to the decentralisation of decision making processes, whose effectiveness, especially in dynamic environments has been recognised (Garcia-Pont, Canales and Noboa, 2009; Andersen, 2004; 2000; Regnér, 2003; Castells, 1996). However, the autonomy concept is much different from the notion of decentralised decision making, as the former has an explanatory power on micro-levels, contrary to the latter, which appears to explain organisation-wide behaviour. While the latter concept refers to independence and delegation for decision making, the concept of autonomy refers to the freedom that individual managers can have in fulfilling their tasks. Even though both contain the notion of upward influence (Andersen, 2004; Floyd and Wooldridge, 1997), the concept of autonomy extends much further than decision processes and is role-specific, rather than decision-specific. This means that their autonomy can enable them to develop decision-related capabilities, as they will have freedom to act independently in several decisions. As a result, through an increased freedom, middle managers can bring in the company new ideas and potential projects.

By focusing on micro-level contextual factors, manager-specific practices can be interpreted in conjunction with macro-level organisational characteristics, being in agreement with calls for research utilising both levels of analysis through different organisational levels (Schmid *et al*, 2010; Jarzabkowski and Spee, 2009; Wooldridge, Schmidt and Floyd, 2008; Rouleau, 2005). Similar to the notion of centralisation is also the power concentration, which has been also regarded as affecting political behaviour on decision making, as more concentration means effectively less freedom (Andersen, 2004; Eisenhardt and Bourgeois, 1988). Existing studies however have focused in explaining the way that power concentration affects the behaviour of the top managers, ignoring the reactions of middle managers in the long term.

The findings of this study however draw a clear picture on the relation of middle managers' autonomy and their potential impact on the strategic direction of the companies: through their activities, which are associated with lower or higher organisational autonomy, they can engage in different kinds of political behaviour. Through their political activity, which appears to be affected from micro-level factors, such as their autonomy, they affect strategic decisions, concerning for example partner choice, employee choice and new business development. Through the involvement in all these activities, they end up shaping actively the long term strategy and performance of their organisations.

The data analysis, combined with the intention of the researcher to gain a deeper contextual understanding in specific job positions, enabled the observation of one more pattern within the data, related to another micro-aspect of the middle managers jobs, this being their specific job focus. Being in line with existing studies on strategic management investigating their activities based in dualities (Jarzabkowski and Balogun, 2009; Hodgkinson and Clarke, 2007; Paroutis and Pettigrew, 2007; Floyd and Wooldridge, 1997; 1992), the addition of this second factor, as it emerged from the patterns observed, appeared to help the better understanding of their activities. This factor has to do with their actual job focus, which can be internal or external; the identification and investigation of these two different job focus levels were enabled from the abductive nature of this study, which allowed the use of existing partnerships frameworks for strategy research.

The focus of their positions, always defined on the official job description, seems to affect the kind and extent of politics that middle managers exhibit. The job focus essentially refers to the time spent, according to the job description, on activities focusing on the internal or the external environment. The division between internal and external job focus is in accordance with previous research in managerial roles, which has categorised organisational activities in two-directional frameworks, with mutually exclusive areas of impact [for example, upward/downward influence from

Floyd and Wooldridge, (1997; 1992), internal/external communications from Teulier and Rouleau (2010)]. Internal job focus is concerned with jobs and activities within the companies, while an external job focus is related to activities going beyond organisational boundaries.

In many cases where their job focus is internal, a political behaviour creating internal conflict and a climate of argumentation can be observed, as the data analysis showed (sections 5.12.1 and 5.12.3). The creation of such a climate seems to result from the pre-determined work choices when fulfilling tasks, because of the internal focus. Examples here include managers working on technical departments, product and software development, employees' supervision and implementation of organisational change, whose job activities are mostly following clear guidance from the higher levels of hierarchy. Their narrow job focus combined with daily interactions and development of relations with other workers make politics an easy tool for ascension within the corporate hierarchy. In the cases where the job focus is external however, the impact of their activities seems to be different. Such focus can involve more interactions with actors outside organisations, while simultaneously permitting the middle managers to bring back new ideas and concepts in the company, thus making engagement in politics a time consuming activity for them. Managers belonging in this category include business development directors, communications managers, procurement directors and human resource managers, as the case study analysis showed.

The importance of allowing middle managers with technical knowledge to have an external job focus has already been observed in the opportunity recognition literature (Kuratko *et al*, 2005; Kodama, 2002; Burgelman, 1983a;b;c). These studies however have been ignored from strategy researchers, as they were content-based, lacking a strong contextual understanding on the way that these can emerge, and their association they can have with the firm's strategy process. Within the strategy literature, their importance as information processors has been made clear through

their roles as synthesizers (Floyd and Lane, 2000; Floyd and Wooldridge, 1997), which however includes all different areas of job focus (internal and external), ignoring the way that each one can affect the actual middle managers behaviour. However, the notion of internal and external job focus has recently received research interest within the strategy area, as part of the turn to the boundary spanning positions of middle managers (Teulier and Rouleau, 2010; Pappas and Wooldridge, 2007; Rouleau, 2005). Being in agreement with the recent developments, this study suggests a clear differentiation between internal and external job focus. Such a differentiation appears to enhance the understanding on the position-specific behaviour they exhibit, thus improving the knowledge on their practices (Jarzabkowski and Spee, 2009; Rouleau, 2005).

The combination of these two previously ignored factors in the strategy process research results in figure ten, which indicates middle managers' roles in a different organisational context, this being firm partnerships. The middle management perspective has offered important insights on the way that actors 'in the middle' contribute in the everyday life of organisations (Wooldridge, Schmidt and Floyd, 2008; Rouleau, 2005; Floyd and Wooldridge, 1997; 1992; Dutton and Ashford, 1993). The recognition of their importance has resulted in the attribution of different strategic roles which they can possess, related to the upward and downward influence they exhibit (Floyd and Wooldridge, 1997; 1992). These roles –namely synthesizing, championing, implementing and facilitating- refer mainly in single organisations.

However in the recent years, different forms of organisations, such as partnerships, have increased exponentially (Kale and Singh, 2009; Schilling, 2008) creating the need for further research in such environments (Azar and Brock, 2010; Teulier and Rouleau, 2010; Santos and Eisenhardt, 2009; Pappas and Wooldridge, 2007; Hutzschenreuter and Kleindienst, 2006). This study, through the abductive research strategy it followed, is among the first to investigate middle management activity within two-company partnerships, suggesting a specific framework, composed of

two different parameters. Through this framework the way that their roles differ is explored, while their importance in self-renewal and future performance, through their hegemonal and heretical roles, make clear the need for further research in their activities and roles in non-traditional organisational forms.

One way that this framework extends existing knowledge, has to do with the guidance that it can provide. Existing models on the strategic roles of middle managers result from large-scale quantitative studies, using abstract notions for their categorisation, such as the extent of upward and downward influence, depending on the way they process information and the extent of tasks they are assigned to implement (Pappas and Wooldridge, 2007; Floyd and Wooldridge, 1997). This model however consists of clean cut parameters, which can be clearly defined, to a large extent, leaving small space for ambiguity. Because of their distinguishable nature, and the fact that they can be possibly observed from a detailed organogram within a company, the suggested framework can act as a guide on the possible behaviours that managers might exhibit. Apart from its potential predictive ability, this model can also function as a diagnostic tool on organisational behaviours. This can help overcome the problem of narrowly developed prescriptive and descriptive theoretical models, that strategy as process researchers have been accused for (Sminia, 2009; Chia and Mackay, 2007; Whittington, 2007; Hutzschenreuter and Kleindienst, 2006).

This study also attempts to shed light on the micro-level practices of organisational actors (Golsorkhi *et al*, 2010; Santos and Eisenhardt, 2009; Rouleau, 2005; Johnson *et al*, 2003; Jarzabkowski, 2003) in boundary positions, which is an emerging area of research in the strategy literature (Teulier and Rouleau, 2010; Jarzabkowski and Spee, 2009; Pappas and Wooldridge, 2007; Jarzabkowski, 2003). Managers who work on the implementation of a partnership have boundary positions, which existing studies have shown can be important in the activities concerning the renewal and growth of the firm (Teulier and Rouleau, 2010; Rouleau, 2005; Kuratko *et al*, 2005) and in the

implementation of communications between two companies (Mainella and Puhaka, 2011; Teulier and Rouleau, 2010).

Through the findings of this study however a more strategic role is made clear for these managers: they indirectly help companies develop strategy, thus shaping their future direction. This results from the activities in which they engage. These include new business opportunities recognition, development of relationships with key employees from other companies, protection of strategic information during physical visits from partner companies and gathering of strategic information from the partner company. All these activities appear to help them utilise their strong technical and operational knowledge to inform strategy making and improve performance.

The findings of this thesis also highlight the need for further research in non-traditional organisational forms. The importance of managers, other than those in the top levels, in the shaping of strategy in a non-traditional organisational context, is clear: they bring business opportunities and gather strategic information. Even though someone could argue that their strategic importance can be highly contextual, as this study took place in a knowledge intensive industry, characterised by constant change (Andersen, 2004; Eisenhardt and Bourgeois, 1988), it also shows how important is the investigation in more recent organisational forms, which have recently received an explicit focus in the strategy research agenda. Given the constant increase of partnerships (Kale and Singh, 2009; Schilling, 2008) in different industries (Hagedoorn, 1993) and with different forms (Todeva and Knoke, 2005; Smith and Van de Ven, 1992), such research focus can enhance the recognition of their important role in shaping strategy within emerging areas of research interest.

The current section discussed the first framework of this study, related to the strategic roles of middle managers in firm partnerships. The investigation of their

activities in this different context can help reconcile the way that they are treated from the traditional strategy literature, as the middle management perspective appears to have an active role in shaping strategy through different ways. In the next section the second framework resulting from the data analysis of this study is presented, which focuses in specific factors affecting the impact of political behaviour within partnerships.

6.2.2 Impact of political activity in international partnerships

The second framework resulting from the current study focuses on investigating different elements of political behaviour and their impact within a company. As discussed in the literature review, a detailed investigation of the different elements which constitute political behaviour and their impact in strategic processes are still missing (Windsor, 2010; Gunn and Chen, 2006; Vigoda-Gadot and Drory, 2006; Elbanna, 2006; Cropanzano *et al*, 1997; Eisenhardt and Bourgeois, 1988). Moreover, their impact has been widely regarded as either 'positive' or 'negative', creating confusions in researchers and participants during data collection and analysis (sections 3.4.1 and 3.4.2). The weak understanding of their nature has caused ambiguity for the findings of several studies (Windsor, 2010; Elbanna, 2006; Vigoda-Gadot and Drory, 2006; Ferris *et al*, 1994; Mayes and Allen, 1977).

The data collected in this study however enabled the researcher to investigate in depth different elements of political behaviour and the way they affect its impact. Moreover, the data analysis made clear that their impact can be conceptualised from a different perspective, focusing on the intra-company relations and the way they affect the strategy process. This new perspective can help overcome some of the existing 'grey' areas of the politics and decision making research. The theoretical framework describing middle managements' political behaviour during strategic decision making in partnerships can be seen in figure 11.

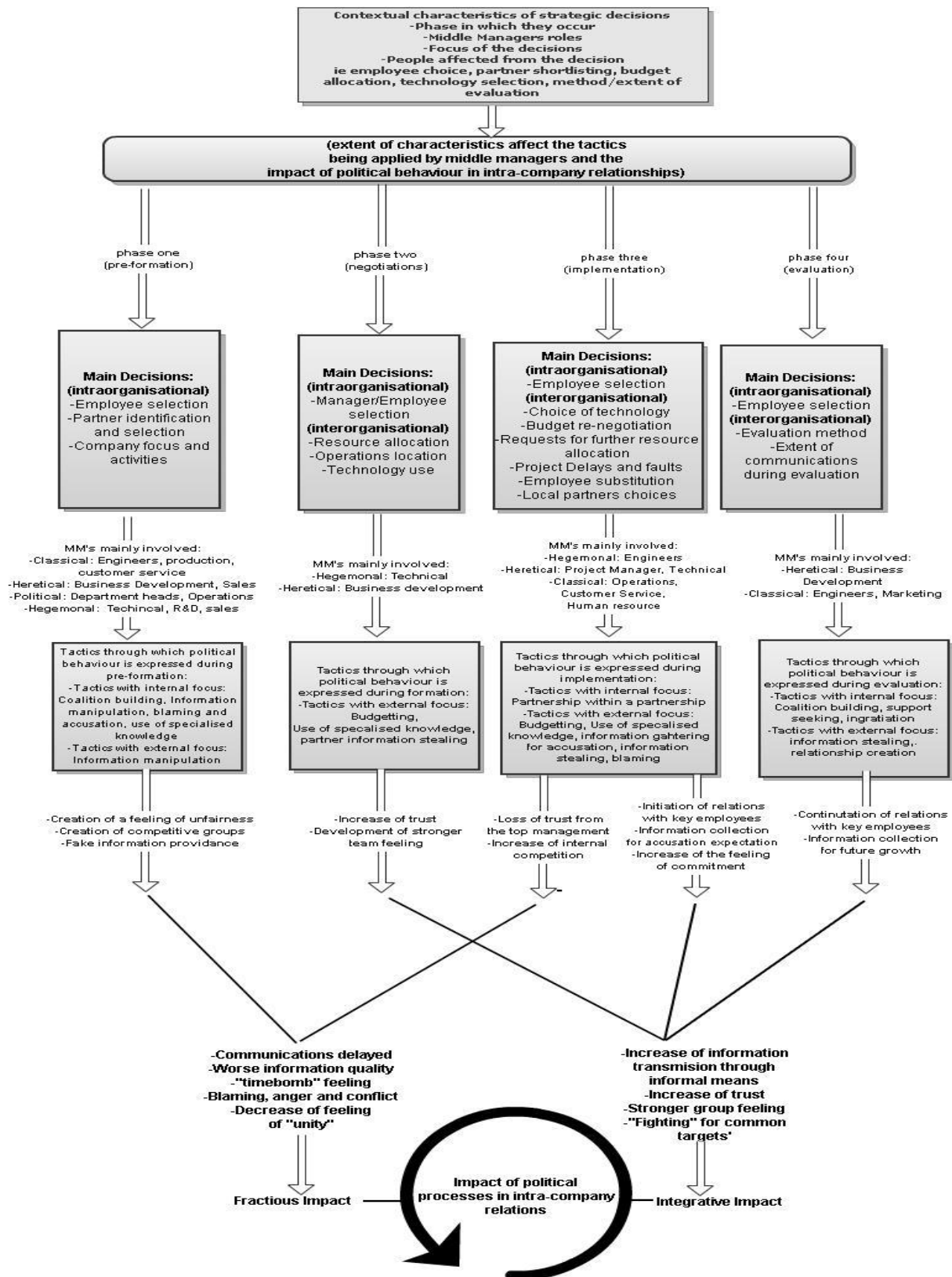


Figure 11: Factors affecting the impact of political behaviour within partnerships. Political behaviour in decision making appears to depend on several factors, including the phase of the partnership where a decision is made, and the roles of the managers who are involved in the process. Each of the four phases of firm partnerships includes different decisions, based on the focus of the

decision (intra and inter-organisational). Each decision requires participation from different middle managers. These managers and the groups in which they belong express their political behaviour through specific tactics, which focus either within their company or the partner company. The application of these tactics however will have a differing effect on the intra-company relations, affecting communications, trust, commitment and the frequency of conflict. This in turn leads to the impact that politics can have, being integration or fragmentation in employees relations.

Political activity within organisations seems to be initiated during strategic decision making. As seen in figure 11, many different decisions can be taken during partnerships, in both intra and inter-organisational levels. Such decisions include employee and partner selection, budget allocation, decisions on organisational change, agreement on evaluation methods and use of specific technologies. The common factor of all decisions however is the fact that specific individuals or groups within companies will naturally benefit more through their preferred outcome of a decision process, given the widely recognised problem of scarcity of resources within organisations (Windsor, 2010; Inderst *et al*, 2007; Eisenhardt and Zbaracki, 1992; Bower, 1986; Porter, Allen and Angle, 1983; Baldrige, 1971).

This means that all decisions will tend to 'trigger' political behaviour. For this reason, they are regarded as the starting point of the framework. It needs to be mentioned that competitive behaviour will clearly exist between the partner companies, because of the natural competition resulting from two different organisations. This however does not constitute political behaviour *per se*, but it is more related to the nature of competition within companies. For this reason, competition over resources, and the impact that political behaviour has, is investigated in the intra-organisational environment.

Upon the initiation of strategic decision making, managers within the companies attempt to influence the key decision makers through formal and informal activities, in order to maximise their gains in an individual or a group-level basis. The fact that they attempt to influence the decision makers results in political (rather than rational)

decisions. The importance of middle managers results from their intermediary position within organisations, between the top and the lower management, and their deep knowledge of the everyday operations of a company, aspects which have been already recognised in the existing literature (Wooldridge and Canales, 2010; Kodama, 2002; Huy, 2002; Floyd and Wooldridge, 1997; Burgelman, 1983a; Bower, 1970).

Their crucial role is confirmed from this study, as seen in figure ten. The findings make clear that through their position they can frequently enhance or eliminate political activity within their organisations. This happens even in a non-singular organisational context, such as firm partnerships. Specifically, managers responsible for business development, research, and project implementation, through their activities, appear to affect their organisation as a whole, by shaping decisions initially, and implementing them, in a later phase.

What was unclear however were the different factors which appear to influence the impact of political behaviour. This made the researcher believe that a stronger link between micro-level activities combined with macro-level characteristics might be able to shed light in this still emerging area of research (Windsor, 2010; Jarzabkowski and Spee, 2009; Hutzschenreuter and Kleindienst, 2006; Vigoda-Gadot and Drory, 2006; Johnson *et al*, 2003). However, as it will be analysed in the next paragraphs, the data analysis enabled the observation of a different pattern on the actual impact of political behaviour, which in turn helped the investigation of politics through previously ignored factors. In order to help the understanding of the reader on the way that different factors affect the impact of political behaviour, and its actual impact, the next paragraphs describe the lower section of figure 11, referring to the impact that politics have within organisations.

The findings of this study suggest a different approach on investigating the impact of politics within companies by focusing on the decision teams' unity. Contrary to the

classic politics research, which suggests that their impact can be 'positive' or 'negative', politics often appeared to strengthen the working teams relations, which in turn resulted in less 'noise' during decision making, as the data analysis showed. In these cases, as seen in the lower level of figure 11, the result of political activity is better communication and cooperation between the companys' employees. This can mean enhancement of trust and commitment from those involved in the project, with stronger relations enhancing the organisational effectiveness, and the actual work output. This is the integrative impact of political behaviour. Here managers and employees work in decision teams which have information of higher quality and are characterised by trust, which in turn enables better decisions for the company as a whole.

On the other hand, in many cases, political behaviour tends to have a fractious effect. This results because of the creation of an environment characterised by intensive competition and argumentation. Within this environment, unfair treatment between employees and complaints are frequent. In some cases, such behaviours lead to large arguments and create competitive teams within the companies. The fractious impact of politics means that teams come out with weaker relations, having a negative effect on their intra-company unity, and lead less informed decision making processes. This results from the 'war' feeling that is created within highly politicised environments, which affects negatively trust in both employees relations and information quality. As a result, decision outcomes might be less beneficial for companies.

These two different ways to regard the impact of political behaviour appear to depend heavily on three different elements of politics within partnerships (figure 11). These elements are the tactics being applied, the specific roles of the middle managers applying the tactics, and the phase of the partnership in which the political behaviour is being exhibited. Their relation with the final impact of political behaviour is described in the next paragraphs.

The first element of the model is the phase of the partnership in which a decision is taking place. International business research has suggested that partnerships consist of different phases, in which clear limits can be drawn (Das and Kumar, 2007; Ring and Van de Ven, 1994) (section 2.5). The use of this broad concept from a familiar research area (Golsorkhi *et al*, 2010), enabled from the abductive research strategy followed, helped the focused investigation of this study. The different phases of partnerships were confirmed, these being pre-formation, formation, implementation and evaluation, as seen on figure 11. Each of these phases however involves decisions with a varying scope and impact.

Examples of different decisions observed during firm partnerships include employee or partner choice or the allocation of resources. Due to the conflicting interests between managers and employee groups, they result in different interactions in an intra and inter-organisational level. The content of decisions can then affect the impact of the political activities which is observed. For example, in the pre-formation phase, where decisions with an intra-company focus occur (specific decisions can be seen on figure 11), political activity seems to create conflict and argumentation within the companies, having a clear fractious effect.

In the next phase however, where negotiations between the potential partners take place, activities will most possibly tend to target the partner company, in an attempt to maximise the company's benefits from the negotiations process, having an integrative effect on its employees. As the partnership evolves however, during its implementation, political activity seems to have a mixed effect: while in many cases the majority of politics will tend to target the partner company, enhancing intra-company unity, in some cases, the effect will be the opposite. This is true when political activity will tend to target other managers from the same or higher hierarchical levels, in order to advance group-level interests. As a result, it can often

have a fractious effect, by decreasing inter-organisational trust and the quality of cooperation.

Similarly, in the last phase of the partnerships, where evaluation takes place, political activity will tend to have both integrative and fractious impact, depending on the decisions taking place: whilst some decisions concerning employee selection will tend to create conflict, the remaining times politics will tend to target the partner company. Politics in these cases consist of creation of stronger ties with key employees and information stealing, which result in further integration between the middle managers and the employees of the companies, and in turn better decisions for the company.

As seen from the previous paragraphs, even though the phase of the partnership in which a decision occurs appears to explain to an extent the political behaviour being exhibited, there seems to be ambiguity over its potential impact, especially in the negotiations, implementation and evaluation phases. This happens because these phases involve decisions in both intra and inter-organisational levels. The data analysis however made clear that a second element improves the understanding on the impact that politics have: these are the roles of the middle managers involved in the process.

As mentioned earlier, the first findings of this study confirmed the strategic roles of the middle managers in a different organisational setting, such as firm partnerships. As seen however in figure 11, various middle managers are associated to the different decisions which take place through the phases of the partnerships. The roles and the associated activities of these managers however, can provide further insights in the behaviour exhibited and its potential impact.

Classical middle managers, characterised by limited autonomy and an internal job focus, which appear more often in the pre-formation and the evaluation phases (figure 11), tend to exhibit political behaviour with a fractious impact. This results from the limited space they have to differentiate themselves through their activities, making politics a necessary path for their ascendance within their companies. Similarly, political middle managers, mostly involved in the pre-formation and the implementation phases, will also tend to create disunity and conflict through their activities. In this case however, even more disunity can be created within organisations, as such managers will have the opportunity to influence whole groups of people, creating conflict between whole teams of managers and employees. In the phases where hegemonal middle managers are mostly involved, however, the impact of political behaviour starts changing. Mostly involved in the pre-formation and formation phases, and with participation in a few decisions in the implementation phase, these managers, because of the external focus of their jobs, end up advancing the interests of their companies as a whole. This in turn enhances trust and unity, resulting in more integrated teams.

The integrative impact of political behaviour is even greater in the case of heretical middle managers. Mostly involved in the pre-formation and the implementation phases, these middle managers engage in activities resulting in new business opportunities, development of strategic relations, and collection of crucial information, during strategic decision making, which all help the growth of the company. As a result, they enhance trust and enable the establishment of strong ties between employees, as they are regarded as benefiting their companies as a whole, making clear the integrative effect of their activities.

The attribution of different roles to the middle managers, even though it enhances the understanding of the political behaviour which can be exhibited, still leaves some space for uncertainty over the impact of politics. This results from the fact that these roles are not entirely clear, as they are not separated by clear boundaries. Moreover,

many roles appear in more than one phase. As a result, even though the understanding of the impact of politics is improved, some ambiguity remains. This however is improved through the identification of a third element explaining the impact of politics.

The last element which seems to be associated with the impact of political behaviour is the specific political tactic being applied from the managers involved in the process. As discussed in section 3.3, tactics are the means through which political behaviour is being expressed. In the absence of clearly communicated strategies, tactics are regarded as their alternative (Chia and Holt, 2009; Santos and Eisenhardt, 2009; Nutt, 1993). The current study confirmed the existence of some of the tactics already observed, in a partnerships context. These are the 'classical' tactics in figure 11. A crucial finding of this study was that the classical tactics, which had been previously observed in single organisations, appeared to have a differing effect, depending on whether they would target their company or the partner company. This was enabled from the abductive research strategy followed, which enabled hypotheses and theory testing of established frameworks in a different organisational environment.

Tactics such as coalition building, use of specialised knowledge and information manipulation, applied mostly in the pre-formation phase and less often in the implementation, can often create fragmentation within the companies, when having an internal focus. This happens because they tend to promote their interests against the interests of their colleagues, creating conflict, as the data analysis showed. The result however is the opposite when the same tactics target the partner company. Such tactics are observed mostly during negotiations and in a less extent during the implementation of the partnership. This results from the fact that when such tactics are applied, colleagues regard it as cooperation towards a common target, this being the maximization of the benefit against the partner company. As a result, trust and

commitment develops, helping the better integration between employees of the same company.

Apart from the classical tactics however, a number of different tactics were identified, because of the relatively unexplored area of this study, in the strategy domain. These tactics, seen on figure 11, include partnership within a partnership between employees of the partner companies, information stealing from the partner, information collection for potential accusation expectation, and building of relationships with key employees from the partner company. Mostly applied in the partnership implementation and in a less extent during its evaluation, they tend to strengthen the within company unity, as they can be regarded as attempts to maximise the benefits of the organisation as a whole. An exclusion is the formation of informal alliances between employees implementing the project, as they do that in order to demand further resources from the top management of both companies. Once this tactic is observed within the companies, trust from the top management is negatively affected, as the data analysis showed (section 5.10.12). Top management will then engage into substitution of employees or stricter controls. As a result, fragmentation is caused within the case companies, making clear the negative effect that this specific tactic can have.

The application of political tactics from middle managers in the different phases of the partnerships ends up having a differing effect in their relations (bottom of figure 11). Based on the three elements analysed in the previous paragraphs, political activity in the pre-formation phase and to an extent in the implementation phase, will often end up having a fractious effect, creating conflict and intensive competition within the companies. The working environment can become dominated from informal communications during decision making, where the interested managers and employees attempt to affect the decision making process in order to achieve outcomes which favour their interests. In such cases, the feeling of unfair treatment is

often created, especially to those who have not engaged in political activity. This harms the intra-company relations, as trust diminishes and arguments often occur.

In a few cases, relations between individual employees and even whole groups can be interrupted, creating a highly fractious environment. Often, as a reaction, employees might produce work of inferior quality, because of their disappointment from their working environments, and the lower quality of communications. Because of the domination of distrust, communications will tend to be more bureaucratic, in order to ensure that all interested parties are equally informed. This in turn might end in lengthier organisational processes. The result of all the fragmentation in the employees' unity can impact negatively work output, resulting in its lower quality, delays, and higher costs in the organisation.

On the other hand, political behaviour exhibited during firm negotiations, partnership implementation and its evaluation, can strengthen the intra-company relations, making managers and employees more integrated as teams. This can result from the fact that politics are used as a tool towards the achievement of their companies' targets. As a result, the intra-company trust is enhanced, with the employees creating a more pleasant working environment. Moreover, their confidence about fair treatment within their companies will further improve their unity. In these cases, communications tend to be faster and efficient, resulting in an increased feeling of unity, which often results in the establishment of informal communication channels. This in turn results in faster information flows, which can help the identification of new business opportunities and the acquiring of crucial information, which ends up having a positive impact in both current performance and future growth.

The current section presented the second theoretical model that this study suggests, seen on figure 11. Within this model, the factors explaining middle managers'

political behaviour during strategic decision making process in the different phases of the partnerships are investigated. The three different factors are the phase of the partnerships in which the decision occurs, the roles of the middle managers engaging in politics and the tactics which they apply. All these different factors help the understanding of the impact of politics and the way they cause integration or fragmentation in the intra-company relationships. In the following paragraphs, the way that this framework contributes and extends the existing strategy literature is described.

6.2.2.1 The value of the investigation of the impact of political activity in international partnerships

Earlier research on political behaviour during strategic decision making processes has investigated the way that it is expressed through the use of specific tactics (Windsor, 2010; Mintzberg *et al*, 2009; Zanzi and O'Neill, 2001; Nutt, 1987; Kipnis *et al*, 1980; Allen *et al*, 1979; Pettigrew, 1975), the reasons which result in its exhibition (Eisenhardt and Bourgeois, 1988; Bourgeois and Eisenhardt, 1988; Porter, Allen and Angle, 1983), its differences with other decision making models (Elbanna, 2006; Papadakis and Barwise, 1997; Dean and Sharfman, 1996; Noorderhaven, 1995; Eisenhardt and Zbaracki, 1992) and its impact (Bacharach, 2005; McFarland, 2004; Pfeffer, 1992; Burns, 1978; Pettigrew, 1973; Sapolsky, 1972; Jay, 1967). The majority of existing research was conducted two decades ago, but micro-politics, their nature, and their mechanics are yet to be understood (Windsor, 2010; Azar and Brock, 2010; Elbanna, 2006; Vigoda-Gadot and Drory, 2006; Eisenhardt and Zbaracki, 1992).

The current study extends knowledge on micro-political behaviour within organisations (Gunn and Chen, 2006), by offering insights on the different factors which affect the impact of political behaviour, and by suggesting a novel way of regarding their impact, focusing mainly in an intra-organisational level, this being the decision makers and their teams. As seen on figure 11, the impact of political

behaviour appears to be affected by the phase of the partnership in which a decision is being made, on the specific middle managers exhibiting political behaviour and the tactics which they apply, while its impact can be either integrative or fractious, as described in the previous section.

The theoretical model of this current study enables the focused investigation of micro-political processes. A focused approach enables the researcher to draw safe conclusions on their impact and factors affecting it, which has been problematic in the past, resulting in subjective perceptions and understanding of this phenomenon (Windsor, 2010; Vigoda-Gadot and Drory, 2006; Gunn and Chen, 2006; Elbanna, 2006; Ferris *et al*, 1994; Lee and Renzetti, 1993; Mayes and Allen, 1977). As a result, even though several studies investigating their nature and impact have been conducted, their findings were depending highly on subjective understandings of the meaning and impact of politics (Vigoda-Gadot and Kapun, 2005; Ferris *et al*, 1998;1996), and were context-specific, as they involved investigation of top managers strategic processes, in single companies mainly (Sminia, 2009; Elbanna and Child, 2007; Miller *et al*, 2004; Eisenhardt and Zbaracki, 1992; Pfeffer, 1992; Pascale, 1984; Sapolsky, 1972), while both researchers and respondents did not appear to have a common understanding of politics (Elbanna, 2006; Gunn and Chen, 2006; Eisenhardt and Zbaracki, 1992).

The confusion over the common understanding of the phenomenon, is reflected on the wide disagreement over the actual definition of political processes (Windsor, 2010; Cropanzano and Li, 2006; Gunn and Chen, 2006; Kacmar and Baron 1999; Eisenhardt and Bourgeois, 1988; Porter *et al*, 1983; Pfeffer 1981; Bacharach and Lawler, 1980; Quinn, 1980; Mayes and Allen, 1977), which makes it a high priority research issue (Windsor, 2010; Gunn and Chen, 2006). Its deeply informal/alegitimate nature make their investigation even more difficult (James, 2006; Eisenhardt and Bourgeois, 1988; Porter *et al* 1983; Pfeffer, 1981; Bacharach and Lawler, 1980; Allen *et al*, 1979; Dowling and Pfeffer, 1975; Parsons, 1960)

which is also evident from the different definitions which have been suggested. In the current study however, the researcher made clear choices over specific 'grey' areas of politics. These choices include their relationship with power (humans will constantly attempt to increase it through their engagement in such activities), the use of tactics in order to express them, their neutral nature and the fact that they occur on the informal side of the organisation, as seen from the definition used (section 3.2.2).

These choices made a clear difference in all phases of data collection and analysis for two reasons. On the one hand, respondents appeared to have a thorough understanding of the data collection process in which they are participating. On the other hand, the actual narrowing down of the obtained data and the isolation of the different factors affecting the impact of politics was further facilitated, which helped the clear observation of patterns from the researcher. The result was the construction of a coherent decision making process model. In this model, the analytical investigation on the probabilistic impact of different crucial factors is clear; this has been largely missing in strategy process research, where a large number of existing studies which have been mainly descriptive and prescriptive (Whittington, 2007; Hutzschenreuter and Kleindienst, 2006; Elbanna, 2006; Jarzabkowski, 2003; Eisenhardt and Zbaracki, 1992).

The fact that a lot of existing research consists of quantitative research approaches has resulted on papers attempting to provide responses on 'why' politics exist, with further calls for studies investigating 'how' politics are initiated and develop through time (Windsor, 2010; Hutzschenreuter and Kleindienst, 2006; Elbanna, 2006; Gunn and Chen, 2006; Eisenhardt and Bourgeois, 1988). However the strict qualitative nature of the current study attempted to overcome this gap, by breaking down and suggesting specific factors affecting their impact. In other words, even though existing research has focused on suggesting theoretical frameworks on how the actual process of decision making is affected from political behaviour, most of them have ignored specific processual aspects concerning time, space, history, reasons and

consequences of politics (Pettigrew *et al*, 2001; Pettigrew 1997; 1992). Moreover, a thorough investigation of micro-political activity is still missing (Whittington, 2007; Gunn and Chen, 2006; Jarzabkowski, 2003). The current study however adopts a strict micro-level focus on the different actors involved (Rouleau, 2005; Johnson *et al*, 2003; Jarzabkowski, 2003). This enabled the thorough investigation of their activities and interactions over time, which in turn helped the observation of patterns in a micro or a meso-organisational level (individual managers or groups and departments).

This specific focus was in contrast with many political decision making studies and even with the rest decision making research, which have used extensively quantitative research approaches, within single organisations (Vigoda-Gadot and Drory, 2006; Elbanna, 2006; Eisenhardt and Zbaracki, 1992). Existing studies have mainly focused on investigating decision processes outcome, for example decision quality (Elbanna, 2010; 2009; Elbanna and Child, 2007; Noorderhaven, 1995; Pfeffer, 1992; Pettigrew, 1973), impact in organisational environment (Ferris *et al*, 2007; 2005; Witt, 1998; Cropanzano *et al*, 1997; Eisenhardt and Bourgeois, 1988; Mintzberg, 1985) or even impact in performance (Child, Elbanna and Rodrigues, 2010; Pettigrew *et al*, 2001; Cropanzano *et al*, 1997; Haleblian and Finikelstein, 1993; Eisenhardt and Zbaracki, 1992; Pfeffer, 1992; Mintzberg and Quinn, 1991; Zahra, 1987; Vredenburg and Maurer, 1984).

The findings of this study suggest that changes need to be made on the way they are investigated. Specifically, research should combine research across levels, focusing on the micro and meso- level impact, within macro-level factors (such as the company or the partnership as a whole), which can yield fruitful results on the understanding of this phenomenon (Jarzabkowski and Spee, 2009; Rouleau, 2005). As a result, the more focused observation on micro-activities can potentially offer further contingency frameworks, such as this suggested in figure 11, concerning the impact of political decision making, and even of the rest decision making models.

Such approaches can shed light on how individual and their practices can shape the process characteristics (Sminia, 2009; Jarzabkowski and Spee, 2009; Hutzschenreuter and Kleindienst, 2006).

Following this narrowing down logic, this research focuses on politics as an informal phenomenon (Windsor, 2010; James, 2006), rather than a phenomenon consisting of both formal and informal process, as existing research has suggested (Vigoda-Gadot and Drory, 2006; Eisenhardt and Bourgeois, 1988; Porter *et al* 1983; Pfeffer, 1981; Bacharach and Lawler, 1980; Allen *et al*, 1979). The inclusion of both formal and informal practices under the 'politics' label has created confusions over existing findings, similar to other elements of politics mentioned earlier in this section (Ferris *et al*, 1994; Mayes and Allen, 1977). This inclusion has made researchers regard their informal nature as more obscure, extending beyond the official organisational procedures and power dynamics (Ferris, *et al*, 1994; Ferris and Judge, 1991; Drory and Romm, 1990).

This study however made a clear division between formal competitive organisational activities, such as employee competition, and informal politics. This division enabled a research focus on their informal side, an area where robust data collection and findings has been missing. This division is opposing the views of researchers who have made associations of their informal nature with illegitimate results, which tend to serve self-interests against those of the company (Mintzberg and Quinn, 1991; Mayes and Allen, 1977; Dowling and Pfeffer, 1975; Parsons, 1960). This negative view of politics however has been long accused of affecting all stages of data collection and analysis (Windsor, 2010; Elbanna, 2006; Macmillan and Jones, 1986; Mintzberg and Waters, 1985; Gantz and Murray, 1980). In order to avoid the biased research that such a preoccupied approach would have, politics were regarded as neutral phenomenon, which have from their definition an informal nature.

The adoption of a neutral stance over this phenomenon helps this research avoid the fallacy of having a pre-determined attitude over the potential findings and affect the respondents' perception, for which existing researchers have been accused of (Vigoda-Gadot and Drory, 2006; Eisenhardt and Zbaracki, 1992). Through this approach, data analysis showed that the impact of political activity can have a different effect, depending on the timing of its application (section 5.14 and appendix seven).

In addition, their focus seems to further help the understanding of their impact. Being in agreement for further research in the micro-macro strategy area, and more specifically on the antecedents' impact on the actual process and decision outcome, as well as strategic agenda building (Hutzschenreuter and Kleindienst, 2006), this research identifies specific ways that the phase of a partnership and the actual roles of the middle managers affect the political behaviour to be exhibited. This makes clear the importance of a more contextual understanding of this phenomenon, which has been ignored in recent years (Vigoda-Gadot and Drory, 2006; Gunn and Chen, 2006).

One contribution of this study is the fact that it stretches the need for research in partnerships, rather than single organisations, which is an emerging research area within the strategy domain (Walter, 2010; Santos and Eisenhardt, 2009; Elbanna, 2006; Hutzschenreuter and Kleindienst, 2006). Research within a different organisational context however is crucial, as it can clarify existing findings, help the further understanding of ambiguous studies and help the identification of previously ignored patterns. As a result, the context of the study also helped gain deeper insights on the phenomenon of political behaviour, suggesting the importance of its focus (internal/external), as an explanatory factor for its impact, as well as the actual role of the manager applying it.

The importance of the focus in order to interpret activities has been previously recognised in the strategy literature, however having ignored the fact that it can often lead to contrasting behaviours. Floyd and Wooldridge (1997) and Teulier and Rouleau (2010) made clear different ways that middle managers can exhibit upward and downward influence by engaging in similar activities. In their study however they provided descriptive accounts of the ways that managers influence organisations through their activities, ignoring why and how this influence occurs. Other studies however have stretched the impact of context in planning characteristics (Paroutis and Pettigrew, 2007; Papadakis *et al*, 1998; Ashmos and McDaniel, 1996; Veliyath and Shortell, 1993, Eisenhardt and Bourgeois, 1988), and the way that strategies and decisions tend to be shaped by both external (environmental) and internal (organisational) characteristics (Garcia-Pont, Canales and Noboa, 2009; Washington and Ventresca, 2004; Isabella and Waddock, 1994; Lant, Milliken and Batra, 1992).

The current study however, being one of the first processual studies within partnerships, makes explicit that the potential effect of behaviours can be predicted from their focus: in decisions creating intra-company competition, the engagement in politics can often lead to internal division, because the final target of some political tactics will be internal. On the other hand, when similar decisions occur in inter-organisational levels, then they can have a unifying impact within each company, as the final aim of these tactics will be beyond organisational boundaries. This finding, which introduces the concept of the focus of the decision outcome, is crucial in understanding the actual impact that process characteristics can have across different macro-level settings (Hutzschenreuter and Kleindienst, 2006; Papadakis *et al*, 1998; Kim and Mauborgne, 1998; 1995).

In a similar way, other micro-level contextual aspects, such as the autonomy of middle managers and their official job focus, can help understand better role characteristics, and in turn act as a guide concerning their potential political activity. Traditionally, politics research has suggested different models of politics, concerning

power concentration (Windsor, 2010; Haleblian and Finikelstein, 1993; Eisenhardt and Bourgeois, 1988), decentralisation of decision making (Andersen, 2004; Regnér, 2003) and the speed under which decision making agents have to act (Meyer, 2009; Elbanna, 2006; Robert Baum and Wally, 2003). Most of these variables however have a macro-level focus, referring to the top management team activities within the whole organisation. In other cases, decision making research has focused on specific aspects of the decision making process such as procedural justice (Kim and Mauborgne, 1998; 1995), complexity of decisions (Dutton and Ashford, 1993) or even the prioritisation of decisions (Mintzberg, Raisinghani and Theoret, 1976). All these studies however have ignored micro-level aspects, which are increasingly used to enable better understanding of organisational processes and practices (Jarzabkowski and Spee, 2009; Whittington, 2007; Rouleau, 2005; Johnson *et al*, 2003).

The different roles identified in this study, which can be informed from either an official job description or informally from the opinions of other employees, can be applied to guide the examination of micro-level political behaviours across different organisational contexts. Middle managers can be assigned specific roles, and some insights of the risk of the behaviour they might exhibit can be generated: managers who enjoy a limited autonomy, such as the classic ones, seen on figures ten and 11, will most possibly exhibit fractious political behaviour. When managers with limited autonomy will have an external job focus, then they might actually engage in politics which integrate the employees of the company. When the job focus is internal however, they might engage in fractious behaviour, even though they enjoy a large autonomy, such as the political middle managers. The combination of high autonomy and external job focus can make managers benefit their company, resulting in integrative political behaviour.

One more crucial finding of this study has to do with the phase of the partnership that political behaviour is exhibited. Even though studies have stretched the importance

of time in the adoption of company strategies, concerning for example the adoption of different strategies within the life of an organisation (Withane, 1997), detailed divisions of the different phases of organisational processes and the associated managerial behaviours that might be exhibited are missing. The recognition of the different phases of partnerships however has been researched in the international business literature (Das and Kumar, 2007; Ariño and De La Torre 1998; Doz, 1996; Ring and Van de Ven, 1994). The current study, utilising concepts from this familiar research area in order to develop theory, enabled from its abductive research strategy (Mantere and Ketokivi, 2013; Shepherd and Sutcliffe, 2011; Gholsorki *et al*, 2010), divides partnerships in different phases, namely pre-formation, negotiations, implementation and evaluation.

By analysing the focus of the decisions being made, this research is able to provide some insights over the timely evolution of political behaviour. Specifically, data analysis suggests that individuals can have more possibilities to affect decision making in the early phases of the partnerships. As the partnerships develop however, the organisational interests appear to have an increasing importance for each individual organisational actor. This implies that the incorporation of time aspects can also help the explanation of the impact political behaviour. This elaborates and contributes to the framework that Langley *et al* (1995) suggested concerning the different kinds of interdependence that decisions can have and their different implications within organisations (Langley *et al*, 1995; Radford, 1988; McCall and Kaplan, 1985).

Moreover, existing studies have investigated political behaviour mainly in a top management level, regarding them as the most 'powerful coalition' within organisations (Windsor, 2010; Hambrick, 2007; Miller *et al*, 2004; Amason and Sapienza, 1997; Bourgeois and Eisenhardt, 1988; Eisenhardt and Bourgeois, 1988), having ignored the engagement of politics from other organisational actors. Middle managers however have been regarded as crucial organisational actors (Canales,

2012; Teulier and Rouleau, 2010; Wooldridge, Schmid and Floyd, 2008; Pappas and Wooldridge, 2007; Rouleau, 2005; Balogun and Johnson, 2005; 2004; Floyd and Wooldridge, 1997; 1992), and further research on their political behaviour is required.

The current study focuses on the middle management political behaviour specifically, revealing their roles in decisions concerning employee selection and partner shortlisting. Choices over partner companies and employees however are crucial, as they shape an organisations' strategic direction. As the findings of this study suggest, new business ideas can be actually a result of middle managers informal activities and communications, drawing a clear picture about the strategic importance of these organisational actors in the organisational boundaries, where researchers have made calls for deeper investigation (Teulier and Rouleau, 2010; Pappas and Wooldridge, 2007).

The unique context of the study also enabled the identification of different phases of international partnerships, leading to the construction of a generic processual model for the partnership process. The strategy process tradition consists of different process-based models, where the boundaries of each phase and the events and actors participating in them tend to be clearly distinguished and analysed (Van de Ven and Sun, 2011; Van de Ven and Poole, 2005; 1995; Poole *et al* 2000; Langley, 1999; Pettigrew, 1997; Van de Ven 1992; 1990). These models however are more of a descriptive nature, having a strict methodological conceptualisation, which is prohibiting their use for empirical research. The fact that process research has offered models which are of a descriptive nature, lacking of practical implications, has been acknowledged (Tsoukas, 2010; Whittington, 2007; Jarzabkowski, 2003).

The partnership processual model that this study suggests, whose testing is enabled from the abductive research strategy of the study, fulfils this gap, as it can be easily

understood and operationalized from researchers and practitioners. Consisting of four different distinctive phases (pre-formation, negotiations, implementation, evaluation) with specific characteristics, it offers a clear framework for observing, analysing and explaining the underlying phenomena of the emerging partnership process research. This in turn can help overcome the accusations over the prescriptiveness which has characterised process research.

The current study has also offered insights on the specific tactics being applied from the actors engaging in politics. Tactics are crucial for the investigation of organisational processes, as they seem to substitute strategy, especially in cases where this is not well understood, or it is characterised by increased ambiguity (Jarzabkowski and Wolf, 2013; Chia and Holt, 2009; Santos and Eisenhardt, 2009; Mintzberg *et al*, 2009; Nutt, 1987; Kipnis *et al*, 1980). Different political tactics include information withholding (Pettigrew, 1975; 1973), alliance building (Mintzberg, 1989) and image building (Zanzi and O'Neill, 2001; Allen *et al* 1979) among others.

The organisational context of the study, and the use of comparative case study methodology, enabled the researcher to observe which of the tactics seem to be applied in such contexts, seen on figure 11. Some previously unidentified tactics were observed. These tactics, which include relationship creation with key employees, strategic information gathering, information collection for accusation expectation and partnership within a partnership, extend knowledge on the mechanics of political behaviour in different contexts. Moreover, they make clear that the investigation of decision making in different partnerships, such as partnerships between more than two partners, or between companies with material size differences, can result in the revelation of even more political tactics, currently underexplored.

This study also makes a contribution on the impact that politics can have within organisations. Existing research, through the focus of investigation on the organisation as a whole, and in some cases the specific decision processes (Santos and Eisenhardt, 2009; Nutt, 2008; Papadakis *et al*, 1998; Dutton and Ashford, 1993; Bourgeois and Eisenhardt, 1988) has tended to regard politics as having a dichotomous effect, which can be either positive or negative. This categorisation however has been regarded as vague, creating confusion and misunderstandings over the actual results of existing studies (Windsor, 2010; Vigoda-Gadot and Drory, 2006; Eisenhardt and Zbaracki, 1992; Allen *et al*, 1979). The current study however reveals a different way to investigate them, by focusing on their impact in team unity, through the conflict and the delays created during information transmission.

The focus in the way that politics affect the unity within companies, can be much better understood and described from both participants and researchers, thus facilitating data collection, analysis and interpretation. Even though references on the psychological impact of politics have been made in the familiar organisational behaviour area (Vigoda-Gadot and Drory, 2006; Vigoda-Gadot 2003; Witt, 1998; Cropanzano *et al*, 1997; Voyer 1994; Sharfman and Dean, 1991), decision making models within the strategy process research which incorporate such factors have not been suggested yet. This study however establishes a model which depicts the impact of politics in employee relations, which in turn can affect decision processes, making clear their importance during decision making.

In other words, the findings of this research make explicit that a categorisation of political processes in integrating and fractious, as the analysis shows, seems to have specific advantages over the previously used dichotomies. Through this approach, they can be easily observed and understood from individual organisational actors. This makes the investigation based on subjective perceptions, which has been the norm in politics research, (Windsor, 2010; Elbanna, 2006; Vigoda-Gadot and Drory, 2006) more clear.

Even though the precise measurement and quantification of the impact might be difficult, it can eliminate the ambiguity over its nature and impact resulting by the previously used notions (Mintzberg *et al*, 2009; Gunn and Chen, 2006; Bacharach, 2005; McFarland, 2004). In addition, it helps the better investigation of the micro-aspects of strategy making, with specific focus on politics, for which recent calls have been made (Jarzabkowski and Spee, 2009; Hansen and Küpper 2009; Chia and Mackay, 2007; Gunn and Chen, 2006; Rouleau, 2005; Jarzabkowski, 2003; Johnson *et al*, 2003) as it focuses on individuals' relationships, rather than more macro-concepts, such as groups or organisations, that existing research has done. Moreover, it helps the incorporation of the human side of strategy making in organisations, which appears to be of an increasing importance in the understanding of the everyday organisational processes and practices (Schmid *et al*, 2010; Whittington, 2007; Hambrick, 2007).

6.3 Summary-conclusions of discussion

The previous sections presented the findings of the current study, and two theoretical models which result from the pattern analysis. These findings, focusing in the micro-practices related to political behaviour, extend existing knowledge on the factors affecting strategic processes during firm partnerships. These models have a different approach on the way they contribute to the existing strategy literature.

The first theoretical model of this study focuses on the strategic roles of middle managers in partnerships, an increasingly important organisational form. Through a focus on two variables, which are the autonomy they enjoy and their job focus, spanning from internal to external, specific organisational roles are suggested. Even though this study is not the first to recognise their strategic roles (Canales, 2012; Teulier and Rouleau, 2010; Pappas and Wooldridge, 2007; Floyd and Wooldridge, 1997;1992; Dutton and Ashford, 1993), it is the first to signify their strategic

importance in firm partnerships, offering unique insights over the future research direction of both the specific middle management perspective (Teulier and Rouleau, 2010; Wooldridge, Schmid and Floyd, 2008; Pappas and Wooldridge, 2007), and the general micro-level research on the practices across organisational contexts, levels and specific roles (Windsor, 2010; Santos and Eisenhardt, 2009; Jarzabkowski and Spee, 2009; Paroutis and Pettigrew, 2007; Chia and Mackay, 2007; Gunn and Chen, 2006; Hutzschenreuter and Kleindienst, 2006; Rouleau, 2005; Johnson *et al*, 2003; Jarzabkowski, 2003).

Moreover, this study offers a different approach to the investigation of classical organisational phenomena, such as political behaviour in decision making processes, through their investigation in modern organisational forms, such as firm partnerships. Their investigation is enabled from the abductive nature of this study (Mantere and Ketokivi, 2013; Thomas, 2010; Yu, 2006). The findings suggest that when a decision process is initiated, then, because of the fact that political behaviour is inherent in human nature (Windsor, 2010; Mintzberg *et al*, 2009; Eisenhardt and Zbaracki, 1992) the ways that the middle managers' activities will affect the outcome of the intra-company process seem to depend on three factors: the phase of the partnership in which the decision is being made, the specific tactics in which the middle managers will engage, and the specific strategic roles which they possess.

Apart from the extension of strategy literature on the way that specific factors can determine the impact of political behaviour, the findings of this study also suggest a novel way to categorise it. Under figure 11, the impact of political behaviour is determined by the way it affects relations within companies, having an effect which can span from integrative to fractious. By regarding the impact of politics in this way, the ambiguity caused by the majority of studies in political decision making, is eliminated (Windsor, 2010; Gunn and Chen, 2006; Vigoda-Gadot and Drory, 2006; Allen *et al*, 1979). In addition, the emerging need of further research in micro and meso-level of analysis, in order to understand organisation-wide phenomena, is made

clear (Azar and Brock, 2010; Jarzabkowski and Spee, 2009; Paroutis and Pettigrew, 2007; Hutzschenreuter and Kleindienst, 2006; Johnson *et al*, 2003).

The current section summarised the two models of the study, and the ways they extend existing knowledge in the strategy process. The next chapter concludes this research by making clear the several contributions of this study in different areas, and offering suggestions for future research.

Chapter Seven: Conclusion

7.1 Introduction

The purpose of the current chapter is to present the different contributions that this research does in the theory and practice of strategy making. The findings of the data analysis and the frameworks resulting from them, are presented in the previous chapter. As discussed, different factors appear to affect the impact that political activity has. These are the political tactic applied, the middle manager applying the tactic and the phase of the partnership in which the political behaviour is exhibited. The final intra-company impact, depending on these factors, can be either integrative or fractious. The current chapter relates these findings with existing studies and introduces the way that they extend research in middle management politics during strategic decision making processes. In order to do so, it is divided into two sections. The first section presents the contributions of this study in the theory, research methods and practice of management, respectively. In the second section, its limitations are presented, followed by suggestions for a future research agenda.

7.2 Contributions

The abductive research approach of this study and its findings yield a number of different contributions. These are developed in the next paragraphs. At the beginning, the theoretical and methodological contributions are presented. The section concludes by presenting contributions to the management practice.

7.2.1 A framework for extending analysis of political processes in international strategic partnerships

The current study offers a framework for analysis of political processes and the impact they have in companies during partnerships. The nature, causes, mechanics and impact of politics is not well understood, which causes disagreements between researchers, resulting in calls for further research on this phenomenon (Windsor,

2010; Hansen and Küpper 2009; Elbanna, 2009; Vigoda-Gadot and Drory, 2006; Gunn and Chen, 2006; Elbanna, 2006; Whittington *et al*, 2003; Cropanzano *et al*, 1997). In addition, an in-depth exploration of their relation with the tactics that surround them and the ways that different factors affect their impact is missing in the strategy literature, with a general suggestion that they are resulting from the scarcity of resources which characterises modern organisations (Inderst *et al*, 2007; Gunn and Chen, 2006; McFarland, 2004; Pfeffer, 1992; Eisenhardt and Zbaracki, 1992; Bower, 1986). The lack of established models, able to explain micro-level political behaviour means that further research is required in this area (Walter, Lechner and Kellermans, 2008; Whittington, 2007; Gunn and Chen, 2006).

Through the data collected and analysed in this study, a coherent framework on the impact that political processes have is suggested, seen on figure 11. According to this figure, the impact that political processes can have within a company can be either integrative or fractious. This however depends on three different factors: the tactic through which political behaviour is expressed, the level of autonomy and the focus of job activities that middle managers enjoy, and the phase of the partnership in which the political behaviour is exhibited.

Through this framework, a clear and detailed breakdown on the causes and the potential impact that political behaviour can have is suggested. By examining political behaviour, according to the tactic applied, the level of autonomy combined with the job activities of the middle managers and the phase of the partnerships in which the decision creating politics occurs, the potential impact that this behaviour can have in decision makers, their teams and in turn, in decision outcomes, is examined. The framework concludes by suggesting that the impact can be either integrative or fractious, which in turn can facilitate or make slower, more expensive and bureaucratic all decision processes. All these will most possibly lead to non-optimal decisions. This framework is clear to be used and communicated. Rather than having a normative and prescriptive nature, for which strategy process research

has been accused of (Tsoukas, 2010; Whittington, 2007; Chia and Mackay, 2007; Jarzabkowski, 2003), it is able to act as an analytical tool for the improvement of strategic decision processes. Such micro-level approaches are still missing from the existing literature. Its holistic and clear approach however makes it a useful analytical tool.

7.2.2 A different way to regard the impact of politics (integrative/fractious)

This study suggests a different way to regard the impact of political processes. As described in the review of the literature (sections 3.4.1 and 3.4.2), the majority of existing strategy research has used the abstract notions of ‘positive’ and ‘negative’ impact of political processes (Windsor, 2010; Mintzberg *et al*, 2009; Bacharach, 2005; Burns, 1978; Sapolsky, 1972; Jay, 1967). A few other studies have described their impact in individual events affecting the company's performance, such as delays, information quality, increased costs or creation of a conflicting environment (Elbanna, 2009; Eisenhardt and Zbaracki, 1992; Pfeffer, 1992; Eisenhardt and Bourgeois, 1988; Mintzberg and Waters, 1985; Pettigrew, 1973). The different categories of impact that have been suggested are lacking of common understanding and agreement, which has prohibited the generalisation of their findings. These approaches however are somehow problematic, as they are abstract or difficult to be observed and/or measured. As a result, further research is needed to provide a more sophisticated picture on the impact of politics across organisational environments.

The themes of this study however draw a clearer picture on the impact that politics have. Through a focus on the way that they affect decision teams, as recent studies have done (Paroutis and Pettigrew, 2007; James, 2006; Cropanzano and Li, 2006; Shen and Cannella, 2002; Fiol, 2001; Zanzi and O’Neill, 2001), the data analysis showed that the impact of these activities can be either integrative (Jarzabkowski and Balogun, 2009) or fractious, as these were defined and explained through examples from the collected data, in section 5.9. The integration or fragmentation in decision

making refers to the time consumed, the managerial levels involved, the costs, and the general working environment within a company. This in turn can affect decision outcomes, as the data analysis showed. This finding is in line with calls for stronger focus on the human factor as the most crucial element in strategic planning (Tsoukas, 2010; Chia and Mackay, 2007; Hambrick, 2007) and the need for incorporation of the decision makers psychology and activities within this process (Schmid *et al*, 2010). The impact of political processes is integrative, when the activities of middle managers result in strengthening the relations of the managers and employees implementing the partnerships and fractious, when the teams' unity is weakened.

The categorisation of the impact of political processes improves the understanding on the way they affect organisations, while simultaneously offering a much more clear approach in observing and analysing their impact. This is done through the focus in explaining their impact on decision making in the different phases of partnerships. This enables the researcher to have a clear basis of comparison, while investigating their impact. Moreover through the integrative/fractious dichotomy, a clear way to differentiate their impact is suggested. This categorisation leaves small space for ambiguity, contrasted with the previously used abstract notions of 'positive' and 'negative' impact, which have caused disagreements between researchers. As a result, this way to regard their effect helps their deeper understanding, while simultaneously enabling the better comparison of their differing impact, in both theoretical and practical terms.

7.2.3 Political tactics in single firms and partnerships

The research in a relatively unexplored context, guided by the abductive research strategy adopted, resulted in the identification of a number of different tactics through which political behaviour can be exhibited. Tactics are crucial in strategy implementation, as, in the absence of well-communicated strategies, they can substitute planning and be conceptualised as strategy 'on the spot' (Windsor, 2010;

Chia and Holt, 2009; Mintzberg *et al*, 2009; Nutt, 1987). The classic literature on political behaviour has suggested the existence of several tactics (Zanzi and O'Neill, 2001; Hurrell, Nelson and Simmons, 1998; Yukl and Tracey, 1992; Kipnis *et al*, 1980; Mintzberg, 1989; Allen *et al*, 1979). These include: coalition building, support seeking, ingratiation, the strategic candidate tactic, use of specialised knowledge, information manipulation, budgeting, and blaming, threatening and accusing others (section 5.10). These tactics however have been researched mainly in single organisations.

However, the current study took place in a different organisational setting, currently emerging in strategy process research, this being firm partnerships. Investigation of strategy making was enabled through the abductive research strategy of the study, where existing theoretical concepts are combined to form hypotheses for theory testing in unexplored areas. The investigation of political behaviour within this different kind of organisation enabled the verification of the existence of some of these tactics. Moreover, a number of different tactics were identified, these being information stealing, relationship building, partnership within a partnership, and information gathering for accusation expectation.

The identification of these different tactics helps the better understanding of political behaviour, as the tactics are the means through which the targets of those exhibiting the political behaviour are expressed (Chia and Holt, 2009; Mintzberg *et al*, 2009; Nutt, 2009; 1987). By identifying the existence of these tactics, the different aspects of political behaviour are better understood. Specific tactics might not be only applied within single organisations, but they can also be applied between organisations and serve the interests of specific managerial levels (i.e. the 'partnership within a partnership' tactic). Moreover, the fact that political tactics can be marginally illegal is identified (i.e. the information stealing and relationship building tactics). In addition, the fact that some political tactics can have a differential impact, depending on their focus (within or between organisations) is

made clear. As a result, the understanding on the use of tactics as a means of expression of political behaviour is more coherent, in both single organisations and partnerships.

7.2.4 Importance of the micro and meso-level focus of the tactics for their better understanding (i.e. internal/external, higher/lower hierarchy)

The in-depth investigation of micro-political tactics in a different environment makes clear the importance of their focus, for their better understanding. Research has identified a number of different tactics, through the use of quantitative research approaches mainly (Zanzi and O'Neill, 2001; Kipnis *et al*, 1980; Mintzberg, 1989; Allen *et al*, 1979). However, these studies suggest that further research is required to understand their mechanics and provide insights on questions concerning why, how, when and where each tactic is applied (Gunn and Chen, 2006). As a result, existing literature has offered descriptive accounts focusing only on their nature and has ignored their deeper contextual understanding (Windsor, 2010; Santos and Eisenhardt, 2009; Vigoda and Cohen, 2002; Pettigrew, 1997; 1992). This in turn makes difficult the understanding of micro-political behaviour (Walter *et al*, 2008; Gunn and Chen, 2006). Tactics however are crucial, as they can represent instant strategy making (Chia and Holt, 2009; Nutt, 1987), which can be more frequent in uncertain environments (Jarzabkowski and Wolf, 2013; Santos and Eisenhardt, 2009; Meyer, 2009; Judge and Miller, 1991; Eisenhardt and Bourgeois, 1988; Dess and Beard, 1984). However the data analysis made clear that a 'break down' on the different aspects of tactics was required, as research on the mechanics of the tactics enhance the understanding on the way they operate.

Through the study, the importance of the focus of these tactics is clear. The so-called 'classical' tactics (section 5.10), these being the ones who have been already identified in the existing literature (Mintzberg, 1989; Kipnis *et al*, 1980; Allen *et al*, 1979), in the current study were 'tested' in a different context. Their testing was

enabled from the abductive research nature of the study. The tactics appear to have a somehow similar impact during strategic decision making, which however is largely depending on their focus. While a tactic applied within a company can have a fractious effect, the opposite happens when it targets the partner company. This is evident in all cases of this study, making clear the moderating role of the focus of a tactic and the way it can enhance understanding in the way they impact an organisation. Additionally, in tactics which were observed for the first time in this study, their focus is also crucial. While most of the tactics target the partner company (section 5.10), in some cases they can also focus on different managerial levels, such as in the ‘partnership within a partnership’ tactic. This additional explanatory factor concerning a tactics’ focus enhances the better understanding on the application of tactics in this different context.

The identification of the focus of the tactics is crucial, as it enables the more clear and sophisticated explanation on the currently ambiguous understanding of political processes. This is done by making clear the necessity for the understanding of the focus of the tactic for its better interpretation. Their understanding becomes even more crucial, when these are regarded as micro-activities, occurring ‘in the move’, with strategic aims (Chia and Holt, 2009; Gunn and Chen, 2006; Kipnis *et al*, 1980).

A tactic with an internal focus targets managers and decision makers within a company’s’ boundaries. When it has an external focus, it goes beyond the organisational boundaries, and it can target external actors, companies, and organisations. The same tactic, when being applied within a company, can have the opposite impact on decision makers and their relations, compared to when applied targeting the other company, during a partnership. Through the clear description of the factors which create ambiguity within the phenomena being investigated, such as the focus of the tactic being applied, a better understanding of them is achieved. In addition, it makes clear that the impact of the tactics can be highly contextual, thus

making clear that researchers within this area should bear this characteristic in mind, while investigating political processes within organisations.

7.2.5 The importance of middle managers autonomy

Through the current study, the concept of autonomy of middle managers in affecting their activities is suggested. The strategic importance of middle managers has been recognised in recent years (Teulier and Rouleau, 2010; Pappas and Wooldridge, 2007; Rouleau, 2005; Balogun and Johnson, 2004; Floyd and Wooldridge, 1997; 1992), with research calling for better understanding on the factors affecting their behaviours across the different positions they have within organisations (Canales, 2012; Teulier and Rouleau, 2010; Wooldridge *et al*, 2008; Pappas and Wooldridge, 2007). Autonomy, which can be understood from their job description, refers to the extent that middle managers have the freedom to engage in the required activities independently and make decisions without having to report in detail to their supervisors or the top management team (Kuratko *et al*, 2005; Andersen, 2004; Regnér, 2003; Bartlett and Ghoshal, 1993). Its strong relation with the activities of middle managers and the way it can inform them, make their investigation crucial within the research agenda which stretches the importance of the individuals and their practices across organisational levels (Teulier and Rouleau, 2010; Jarzabkowski and Spee, 2009; Whittington, 2007; Chia and Mackay, 2007).

Autonomy in the strategy literature has received minor research interest, with a small number of studies only focusing on the different ways that organisational autonomy is expressed. These include the notions of centralised and decentralised planning (Garcia-Pont, Canales and Noboa, 2009; Pappas and Wooldridge, 2007; Andersen, 2004; Regnér, 2003; Bartlett and Ghoshal, 1993), the issue selling that heads of subsidiaries might engage in organisations (Ling, Floyd and Baldrige, 2005; Dutton and Ashford, 1993) and corporate entrepreneurship (Kuratko *et al*, 2005; Birkinshaw *et al*, 2005; Burgelman, 1994). Within strategy research, it is only recently that an

explicit recognition of the importance of autonomy has been introduced, albeit in a conceptual basis (Andersen, 2004; 2000). This meant that empirical studies focusing exclusively on managers' autonomy and its crucial impact have the potential to enhance understanding of the strategy process.

The data analysis however makes clear that the explicit notion of autonomy, especially in middle managerial levels, is crucial in understanding organisational processes. As the findings suggest, middle managers enjoying a smaller degree of autonomy might be more inclined to engage in fractious political behaviour because of the limitations imposed from their official role. Middle managers with higher levels of autonomy might exhibit more integrative behaviour because higher autonomy allows them to use their creativity and not to suppress themselves within their organisational roles, as the data analysis suggests (sections 5.12.3 and 5.12.4). This makes the expression of their self-interest easier and clear, compared to their expression explicitly through informal means. Autonomy appears to be crucial in affecting the use of formal and informal means for the expression of self-serving behaviours.

The notion of autonomy which emerged during the data analysis, makes clear the need for research on formal limitations, which appear to increase the exhibition of informal processes, such as political behaviour. With a large amount of research having focused on formal strategic practices (Golsorkhi *et al*, 2010; Jarzabkowski and Seidl, 2008; Paroutis and Pettigrew, 2007; Jarzabkowski, 2003), the inclusion of this variable can enhance the understanding between context, activities and outcomes (Pappas and Wooldridge, 2007; Regnér, 2003). Through the identification of this factor, a better understanding of behaviours during strategic decision making is suggested, as they can partially be explained from the levels of managerial autonomy that those related in the decision making process enjoy. Simultaneously, autonomy seems to have explanatory power for middle management behaviour in boundary spanning positions, which has recently attracted research interest (Teulier and

Rouleau, 2010; Santos and Eisenhardt, 2009; Pappas and Wooldridge, 2007; Rouleau, 2005). Moreover, the understanding of the potential impact that managers' behaviour can have is improved, as this can be highly dependent on the levels of autonomy they enjoy, making the use of this factor suitable to gain a better understanding of political behaviour within organisations.

7.2.6 The strategic roles of middle managers within partnerships

The findings of this study suggest new strategic roles for middle managers, further than those suggested in the existing literature (Teulier and Rouleau, 2010; Mantere, 2008; 2005; Sillince and Mueller, 2007; Pappas and Wooldridge, 2007; Rouleau, 2005; Dutton *et al*, 2001; Floyd and Wooldridge, 1997; 1992). Their strategic roles within organisations result mainly from the intermediary position they have within companies (Wooldridge and Canales, 2010; Huy, 2002; Floyd and Wooldridge, 1997) which makes them crucial in communications between top management and lower level employees. Moreover, they are responsible for having a large participation in 'running' organisations, resulting in them knowing the organisational processes and the mechanics of relationships within the companies' employees better (Kodama, 2002; Schilit, 1987; Burgelman, 1983a; Bower, 1970). However, the majority of existing research on middle managers roles has been conducted in single companies and it is only recently that researchers have made calls for investigation of such processes in different organisational settings, in order to enhance knowledge and understanding of their strategic roles (Teulier and Rouleau, 2010; Pappas and Wooldridge, 2007).

The current study, following an abductive approach, takes place in a non-traditional research setting within the strategy-as-process literature, attempting to 'put the manager back in the picture' (Schmid *et al*, 2010:142). This enables the identification of different activities of middle managers, resulting in the suggestion of a framework concerning their strategic roles, as these are described in section 6.2.

This typology is based on the extent of autonomy that middle managers enjoy from their position, which can be high or low, and the focus of their job activity which can be internal (within the company) or external (outside). The combination of these two factors results in the identification of four strategic roles, observed through the cross case analysis of the partnerships. Being in agreement with many strategy researchers for the use of labels and acronyms to denote and facilitate the conceptualisation and representation of the findings resulting from studies (Teulier and Rouleau, 2010; Jarzabkowski and Ballogun, 2009; Paroutis and Pettigrew, 2007; Floyd and Wooldridge, 1997; 1992; Mintzberg, 1990), different labels are used for each of these different strategic roles, as these are defined in section 6.2.

Classic middle managers are characterised by low autonomy, with activities focusing on the internal company environment, concerning for example data collection and supervision (for specific examples see section 6.2.1, for all managerial roles described in this section). Such managers tend to exhibit fractious behaviour, resulting from the limitations that their job activities impose them. The limitations make necessary the development of stronger relations, often of an informal nature, in order to improve their position and ascend hierarchical levels.

The next category of figure ten includes the hegemonal middle managers. They have low autonomy, and an external job focus. These managers tend to exhibit political behaviour with an integrative effect within the company, making them part of the company's strong external competitive behaviour. This is achieved through the development of market research skills and strong formal company relations. Through the development of these skills, they become important for decision making, as they are responsible for providing insights and input for alternative strategic options, thus affecting the future direction of their company.

The next category includes the political middle managers. They have high autonomy and an internal job focus. Such managers might be inclined to exhibit fractious political behaviour, as they tend to act more as political leaders. They do so by creating groups and coalitions within the case companies, which however often has a negative effect on their unity. This happens because of the influence they have within the company. This influence results from their position; even though they provide them with autonomy, their internal focus eliminates the opportunities for stronger relations and career advancement through interactions in the external environment, which can often help career development. As a result, they often result in political behaviour with an integrative effect. Their intra-organisational autonomy however enables them exercise group-level political behaviour, which can fragment decision makers.

Next are the heretical middle managers, characterised from high autonomy, with their activities focusing on the external corporate environment. These middle managers can have a highly integrative political behaviour. This happens because through their activities, which include, among others, acquisition of strategic information and development of strategic relations with other employees and companies, the whole company can benefit. This results from the identification of business opportunities from informal networks and the strategic information gathering from the partner companies, as the data analysis showed.

All these different roles identified enable the researcher to have a deeper understanding of middle managers' strategic importance within modern corporations. Through the enhancement of specific roles, which are somehow different from those previously identified, the companies' performance might be drastically improved. Moreover, the need for changes in the factors which cause fractious political behaviour from managers, especially within the classic and political roles, are highlighted. Additionally, the importance of the middle managers' roles in boundary positions within organisations is highlighted (Teulier and Rouleau, 2010; Pappas and

Wooldridge, 2007). With partnerships having received minor research interest in the existing literature, the current study showed that because middle managers have a much better knowledge and understanding of the internal company environment, they can end up having a crucial role by engaging in activities in the external company environment. Through this recognition, a different perspective on the ways they can end up benefiting their company, through both their boundary and non-boundary roles in partnerships (figure ten), is identified.

7.2.7 Shedding light in the ‘grey’ areas of the definitions of political processes

This study attempts to improve the definition of politics. As described in the literature review, there is wide disagreement on the nature of political processes (section 3.2.2), resulting in the use of several different definitions (Windsor, 2010; Cropanzano and Li, 2006; Vigoda-Gadot and Drory, 2006; Gunn and Chen, 2006; Kacmar and Baron 1999; Ferris *et al*, 1994; Eisenhardt and Bourgeois, 1988; Pfeffer, 1981; Bacharach and Lawler, 1980; Quinn, 1980; Mayes and Allen, 1977). However, the majority of these definitions tend to be confused around the different ‘building blocks’ of political behaviour. Elements of the different definitions used which create confusions, as described in the literature review, include the relation of politics with power and influence, their legitimacy, and their formal and informal nature.

The current study, having identified the problematic areas through the several definitions used in decision making politics research, suggested a different definition. For the needs of this study, politics are defined as ‘the unofficial tactics used by purposeful individuals in order to increase their power, further than the legitimate influence resulting from their official position. The increase of their legitimate influence however is beneficial for the organisation, as long as their primary interests are in alignment with the organisation’s interests’.

This definition helps the solution of the problematic areas of the existing definitions, as there were described in section 3.2.2. Concerning their relations with power and influence (Hansen and Küpper 2009; Lord, 2003; Porter *et al*, 1983; Pfeffer 1981; Quinn, 1980), political behaviour is a phenomenon which occurs in everyday organisational life, aiming to increase the power that individuals have. By increasing it, individuals will then be able to influence others, and make them behave in ways they want to. Concerning their legitimacy, they are regarded as ‘neutral’.

Through this definition, it is made clear that even though politics do entail the use of illegitimate means, their final target is to achieve legitimate goals (Mintzberg and Quinn, 1991; Mintzberg, 1985; Mayes and Allen, 1977). However, even though their nature is ‘obscure’, this does not imply that their targets are necessarily negative to the firm. Moreover, they are regarded as having strictly an informal nature (James, 2006; Morill, Zald and Rao, 2003), rather than activities which can have both formal and informal nature (Vigoda-Gadot and Dryzin-Amit, 2006; Eisenhardt and Bourgeois, 1988; Porter *et al* 1983; Pfeffer, 1981; Bacharach and Lawler, 1980; Allen *et al*, 1979).

This definition is used throughout the whole study. Through its use, the confusions arising from the definitions provided from the existing literature, related to the notion of politics and its components, were addressed. This is done through the clear distinctions made on the way it regards politics, and their relation with power, influence, and legitimacy, as discussed in detail in the literature review (section 3.2.2). This enabled their investigation in the subsequent rounds of data collection and analysis. As a result, a more coherent view of the impact of politics is identified, eliminating any objections resulting from their unclear nature, which is a critique that has been often made to researchers (Vigoda-Gadot and Drory, 2006; Elbanna, 2006; Ferris *et al*, 1994; Mayes and Allen, 1977), helping the conduct of more effective research within this area.

7.2.8 Research in strategy during firm partnerships

The current study also contributes in the literature by making clear the need for focus in different organisational settings, in order to enhance knowledge about formal and informal organisational processes, and their mechanics. Existing research, in a large extent, has investigated processes within single organisations (Azar and Brock, 2010; Mazzola and Kellermans, 2010; Elbanna, 2006; Hutzschenreuter and Kleindienst, 2006). As a result, the research methods used have been criticized, and several calls have been made for research in different organisational settings (Mackay and Chia, 2013; Teulier and Rouleau, 2010; Schmidt, Floyd and Wooldridge, 2008; Pappas and Wooldridge, 2007; Pettigrew *et al*, 2001; Langley, 1999).

However, this study focuses on investigating processes within partnerships, which as a form of organisation, is gaining increasing importance in the strategy literature (Walter, 2010; Santos and Eisenhardt, 2009; Ness, 2009; Walter *et al*, 2008). By focusing on investigating processes within the case companies, which occur in their internal environment, but also between their partner companies, specific findings which would not be otherwise identified emerged. For example the fact that the impact of political activity can differ, depending on its focus, was a pattern that emerged. While some activities can have a fractious effect within companies, the opposite can be true when they target their partner. Another crucial finding, resulting from the focus on this specific organisational setting, was the identification of political tactics which were observed for the first time, as these are described in sections 5.10.10-5.10.13.

Through the focus in a different organisational context, enabled from the abductive research strategy followed, the understanding of the nature of politics and their impact is extended, especially in aspects of politics whose investigation is highly

context-specific. For example, the internal or external focus of political behaviour would not be able to be identified through a sole focus on single companies. Through a partnership focus, the importance of the research not only within, but also outside of the companies, is made clear. While the importance of the external environment for strategic processes has been acknowledged in a macro-level, detailed micro-level investigation on the ways that managers' activities affect them, is missing.

Moreover, because of the fact that existing research, in a large extent, has been conducted in single companies, this has resulted on identification of tactics which tend to be governed by 'single company' mechanics. Through this study however, a number of new tactics is suggested, making clear that such tactics can also have an inter-organisational character. This was evident in specific tactics, for example concerning alliance formation and coalition building, which were evident in both intra and inter-organisational levels. The need for focus on this particular organisational setting, and the investigation of concepts which have not been researched within it, is clear, in order to enhance the understanding of organisational processes, and develop existing theories.

7.2.9 The emerging relational view of strategy

This study is also contributing to the emerging relational view of strategy. Existing literature has suggested specific views for strategy research, including the Industry and Competitive Analysis (Porter, 1985; 1980; Caves, 1984; 1980) and the resource based views (Barney, Wright and Ketchen, 2001; Hart, 1995; Wernerfelt, 1995; Peteraf, 1993; Mahoney and Pandian, 1992; Barney, 1991; Rumelt, 1991; 1987; Penrose, 1959). These approaches however regard strategy as the main concern of the top management teams (Mazzola and Kellermanns, 2010).

While the strategic roles of other managers have been acknowledged in the last two decades, in a large extent, their roles have been investigated in single companies, with modern forms of organisations, such as partnerships, gaining increasing research interest (Walter, 2010; Azar and Brock, 2010; Soousa, 2010; Teulier and Rouleau, 2010; Santos and Eisenhardt, 2009; Ness, 2009; Walter *et al*, 2008; Pappas and Wooldridge, 2007; Dyer and Singh, 1998; Smith, Carroll and Ashford, 1995; Axelsson, 1992). Even though a number of studies published in strategy journals, which also tend to cover international business research, have investigated strategic relationships (Cui, Callantone and Griffith, 2010; Xia, 2010; Patzelt and Shepherd, 2008; Goerzen, 2007), this is mainly done through quantitative research approaches. It is only recently that the underlying processes and mechanisms occurring within partnerships have started gaining research interest (Walter, 2010; Teulier and Rouleau, 2010).

The current study however, by focusing on company partnerships, stretches the importance of inter-company relations for the strategic direction of the company. In a company level, the appropriate use of information gathering political tactics can help the company prepare better for its future, while simultaneously preparing its 'defence', in the case that problematic situations occur in the life of the partnership. Simultaneously, the use of micro-level relations can be crucial, especially between managers and employees of the partner company, as they can result in the attraction of employees of strategic importance for the companies.

In addition, this study stretches the importance of partnerships, through which companies can unite their forces, and bid simultaneously against other partnership, or complement each other, by offering knowledge on the different phases of a project. All these different combinations help understand the link between micro and meso-level activities with the wider macro-environment, which is an emerging area of research (Jarzabkowski and Spee, 2009). In addition, such facts make clear that

company relations can be crucial, especially when they are formed to complete large-value, complex projects, such as those in the high tech industry.

The recognition of the importance of the relational view of strategy is important, as it can suggest a future direction of research within this area. While the previous approaches have been widely researched in the existing literature, the investigation of inter-organisational relationships in the general form of firm partnerships is currently emerging. Partnerships are increasing worldwide (Kale and Singh, 2009; Schilling, 2008; Walter *et al*, 2008; Hagedoorn, 2002; Freeman and Hagedoorn, 1994), as the competition becomes increasingly global, with their formation being more frequent in knowledge-intensive industries, such as the high tech industry (Andersen, 2004; Eisenhardt and Bourgeois, 1988). All these facts make clear that through a research focus in partnerships, the understanding of such strategic choices within companies can be greatly enhanced (Walter, 2010). This however, will require further research in company relations, through the conceptualisation of a ‘relational view of strategy’, as this study advocates.

Methodological Contributions

7.2.10 A process framework to study partnerships

Through the current study, a framework for studying organisational processes within partnerships is suggested. Several researchers have provided critique on the methods used to study processes (Chia and Mackay, 2007; Poole *et al* 2000; Langley, 1999; Dawson, 1997; Van de Ven and Poole, 2005; 1995; Pettigrew, 1997; 1992; Van de Ven 1992). As mentioned in section 2.7, different categories of process studies have been suggested (Langley, 1999; Dawson, 1997; Van de Ven, 1990). One of these regards processes as consisting of different sequential events and activities which develop through time. These can be investigated through the adoption of a ‘historical developmental perspective’ (Van de Ven, 1992:3).

This approach enables researchers to examine in detail sequences and incidents, focusing on the unit of analysis of the study. Still, this specific process model, and even other he has suggested, have not been able to provide universally applied tools for phase-to-phase analysis of organisational development and change. As a result, strategy process research has been regarded as having a descriptive nature, with limited abilities to inform real-world strategy making (Tsoukas, 2010; Whittington, 2007). Simultaneously, processes and practices beyond the organisational boundaries are yet to be understood (Teulier and Rouleau, 2010; Santos and Eisenhardt, 2009; Ness, 2009; Walter *et al*, 2008; Pappas and Wooldridge, 2007).

The current study however, through the adoption of an abductive research strategy, uses findings from the relevant international business literature, to suggest and test a different approach in researching organisational processes within partnerships, in order to enhance theory and research methodology (Mantere and Ketokivi, 2013; Golsorkhi *et al*, 2010). Specifically, partnerships appear to consist of four different phases (figure eleven). The first is the pre-formation phase, where a series of internal and external formal and informal activities occur, ending up with a potential partner identification. This is followed by the partnership formation, where formal negotiations with the potential partner take place, accompanied with a series of informal activities. In the implementation phase, the project starts being implemented and is eventually completed, according to the initial planning made by the partners, characterised by a series of political activities between the partners throughout its completion. In the last phase, the partners make an internal and external evaluation of the partnerships, which often happens through communications, and physical visits to the partners' offices.

This approach can help improve process studies within partnerships, as it helps the micro-level investigation of practices, through their breaking down in different

phases (Ness, 2009; Paroutis and Pettigrew, 2007; Gunn and Chen, 2006; Rouleau, 2005; Johnson *et al*, 2003; Jarzabkowski, 2003; Chakravarthy and Doz, 1992). This breaking down enables the deeper understanding of the dynamics of each phase, concerning, for example, the different kinds of decisions which occur (Walter, 2010). Through its use, a better focus in distinctive events is facilitated, which is essential for theorisation from process data (Santos and Eisenhardt, 2009; Langley, 1999).

Clear limits for each phase of each partnership investigated are drawn, while the observation and the cross-case comparison of themes and patterns are facilitated. Their isolation, characterised by specific intra and inter-organisational activities, help the better understanding of internal company processes. This is in accordance with the historic-developmental method of investigation, which stretches the importance of investigation of historical processes as these develop through time, as Van de Ven (1990) suggested. What is different however is that this specific framework can be used within partnerships, and is able to capture practices, interactions and activities *in vivo* (Chia and Mackay, 2007; Langley, 1999). This approach can help improve the understanding of organisational processes in the future, as it facilitates the deeper focus on each phase of the partnership, and the mechanics surround it.

7.2.11 Use of abductive research strategy in strategy process

The current study adopts a philosophical stance which has not been used widely in the strategy process and in the general strategy literature. The majority of existing studies have adopted either inductive or deductive approaches. The use of these philosophical stances however has caused critique over methodological issues and has resulted in demand for innovative methodological approaches (Mackay and Chia, 2013; Tsoukas, 2010; Sminia, 2009; Chia and Mackay, 2007; Hutzschenreuter and Kleindienst, 2006; Balogun, Huff and Johnson 2003; Chakravarthy and Doz, 1992).

The abductive methodological approach used in the current study offers a different approach in the study of an old phenomenon. By choosing to follow this stance, this research attempts to extend existing theory, through the investigation of an already identified phenomenon, in different organisational settings, with the use of different empirical units and units of analysis (Mantere and Ketokivi, 2013; Thomas, 2010; Wirth, 1999; Hoffman, 1997; Hausman, 1993). As a result, findings concerning the application of political tactics, the roles of middle managers, the phase of the partnership in which the phenomenon being studied occurs, and the impact that politics can have on managers relations emerge, making clear the potential that such a ‘theory extending’ philosophical stance can offer.

The use of this philosophical approach within the strategy literature is crucial. The wide adoption of strictly inductive and deductive approaches has resulted in monolithic research approaches (Mackay and Chia, 2013; Shepherd and Sutcliffe, 2011; Chia and Mackay, 2007; Hutzschenreuter and Kleindienst, 2006; Van Maanen, 1988), where ‘out of the box’ innovative thinking has been missing. However such a philosophical stance can help resolve this problem, as it can broaden research horizons, through the investigation of already identified phenomena in different organisational environments and managerial roles. Rather than using inductive strategies to investigate new areas, or deductive, attempting to ‘test’ existing theories, the use of an abductive approach extends knowledge, by stretching the need for theory testing, in different environments. This is done through the use of qualitative approaches, rather than quantitative, which is often the case in deductive research strategies. An abductive approach can help the construction of solid theoretical models, according to specific contextual characteristics, such as politics in partnerships, enhancing the understanding of organisational phenomena in emerging areas of research.

7.3 Contributions to the management practice

7.3.1 The strategic roles of middle managers within firm partnerships

The research has made the strategic importance of middle managers in partnerships clear, extending the argument of Balogun and Johnson (2004: 545) that ‘the important roles of middle managers in developing new organisational structures...needs to be acknowledged’. Even though their important roles because of their operational knowledge, and their intermediary position, has been recognised (Wooldridge and Canales, 2010; Pappas and Wooldridge, 2007; Rouleau, 2005; Balogun and Johnson, 2004; Huy, 2002; Burgelman, 1994; Bartlett and Ghoshal, 1993; Floyd and Wooldridge, 1997; 1992; Lindblom, 1959), this research showed a different picture, highlighting the importance of middle managers in strategic decisions, that can have wider ramifications for the development of the firm. Their importance is made clear through the several different activities they can engage, such as business opportunity recognition, information gathering and creation and continuation of relations with key actors.

Existing research tends to regard middle managers as those who implement decisions made in the higher levels of hierarchy (Rouleau, 2005; Balogun and Johnson, 2004; Floyd and Wooldridge, 1997; 1992). Recently however there have been calls for research on their active roles in shaping strategy and their relation with performance (Pettigrew *et al*, 2001; King *et al*, 2001; Hart, 1995). The findings of this study, support this perspective, and extend it: middle managers are also involved in activities which actively shape the strategic direction of their companies. In practical terms, this means that their contribution in the growth of their companies needs not only to be acknowledged from top and middle managers, but also to be enhanced, as this seems to have implications about the future performance and sustainability of a firm.

7.3.2 A framework to guide middle management behaviour

Apart from the explicit recognition of their roles, figure ten can indicate ways that the top management can motivate the middle managers within their working environments. This can be done through the appropriate use of the parameters included in the diagram, which can guide top manager behaviour. This can help overcome accusations for the provision of descriptive frameworks with small practical value, that strategy process has received (Tsoukas, 2010; Whittington, 2007; Chia and Mackay, 2007; Jarzabkowski, 2003). As this study suggests, the extent of autonomy (high/low) and the specific job focus of the middle managers (internal/external) appears to affect their engagement in politics and the potential impact that it can have. This is in agreement with suggestions that increased decision authority seems to affect positively economic performance (Andersen 2004; Denis, Lamothe and Langley, 2003; Regnér, 2003). Top managers aiming to maximise the performance of their companies through the effective use of middle managers (Whittington *et al*, 2003; Weick and Robert, 1993), can use these factors to enhance or eliminate the activities within their associated roles, in order to benefit their organisations.

7.3.3 A diagnostic tool on the impact of politics

The second framework of this study (figure 11) can act as a tool of diagnosis and prediction concerning political behaviour in decision making in the whole life of partnerships. The majority of existing research in the strategy field has produced frameworks which are prescriptive (Farjoun, 2002; Mintzberg, 1994b,c; Porter, 1985; 1980; Andrews, 1971) or descriptive (Paroutis and Pettigrew, 2007; Lovas and Ghoshal, 2000; Floyd and Wooldridge, 1997; 1992; Quinn, 1980), with relatively low value for real world situations. Figure 11 however was built to a large extent in correspondence with practitioners, through verification of the case stories and the underlying processes (Yin, 2009; Sminia, 2009; Whittington, 2007; Eisenhardt and Graebner, 2007; Hutzschenreuter and Kleindienst, 2006; Whittington *et al*, 2003; Pettigrew *et al*, 2001; Huff, 2000; Miles and Huberman, 1994). As a result, it appears

to have a high explanatory power concerning the investigation and the interpretation of interactions between organisational actors during the life of partnerships. In addition, through the guidance of this tool, the impact of politics associated with fractious behaviour and organisational conflict can be minimised, if the decision makers pay attention to the factors which seem to affect them. This can be done through the tailoring of this framework according to the needs of an organisation at a given time, in order to help understand and enhance or prevent political processes being observed.

7.3.4 A better understanding of the informal side of organisations

This research also extends existing knowledge on the informal side of organisations, especially in issues concerning strategic agenda building and the way that strategic processes are initiated (Melander, Melin and Nordqvist, 2010; Vigoda-Gadot and Dryzin-Amit, 2006; Gunn and Chen, 2006; Hutzschenreuter and Kleindienst, 2006; James, 2006; Morill, Zald and Rao, 2003; Dutton, 1997). The formal procedures concerning strategy making have gained increasing research interest in recent years (Golsorkhi *et al*, 2010; Paroutis and Pettigrew, 2007; Balogun and Johnson, 2004; Townley, 1999). Their informal side however has received less research interest, as it offers limited space for investigation, because of the methodological obstacles in the way it can be researched. This is further mitigated if the research is related to sensitive issues, such as politics.

The findings of the study however, support the bottom-up emergence of entrepreneurial ideas, and the information flows in the different phases of partnerships, mainly channelled through informal routes. Specifically, it signals the strategic importance of the observation and interpretation of informal processes and practices within managerial levels, through the activities they engage in roles characterised by high autonomy and external job focus (section 6.2.1). As made clear in the data analysis (section 5.12.4), a large number of events which affect decision makers consist of informal interactions and communications. Managers, by reading

between the lines and interpreting behaviours and actions in order to understand political behaviour, can engage in activities which will benefit their organisations as a whole, rather than specific individuals or group. This in turn can help them become good ‘political leaders’ within their companies, which is an increasingly important skill for modern managers (Hartley, Fletcher, Wilton, Woodman and Ungemach, 2007; Kurchner-Hawkins and Miller, 2006; Vigoda-Gadot and Dryzin-Amit, 2006).

This study has also provided insights on the debate around the informal nature and the morality and legality of political behaviour. In principle, its morality, has been questioned (Windsor, 2010; Provis, 2006; Lee, 1998), with this topic relatively neglected from researchers. Due to its informal and self-serving nature, it has been attributed a ‘negative’ status, benefiting individual interests while being unfair to group-level interests (Ferris and Judge, 1991; Drory and Romm, 1990), being accused as ‘Machiavellic’ behaviours (Jay, 1968). In some cases, its obscure nature makes managers feel uncomfortable morally and psychologically to comment on their existence (Windsor, 2010; Lewis, 2002). Moreover, research around the legal status and the limits of political activity has not been researched adequately (Provis, 2006).

This study however revealed some important insights concerning the moral and legal status of political behaviour, which is strongly related to their informal nature (Melander *et al*, 2010; Vigoda-Gadot and Dryzin-Amit, 2006; James, 2006; Gunn and Chen, 2006). Contrary to existing suggestions, politics do not appear to be immoral; rather, they appear to be of a low-moral level, however they are widely accepted within modern organisations. This results from the fact that they do not necessarily serve self-interests, but often they can serve the organisation as a whole, as the analysis of specific tactics showed (sections 5.11 and 6.2.2). In addition, they often appear to be marginally legal, in organisational activities concerning the emergence of business ideas from lower and middle managerial levels, the short listing of potential partners, the gathering of strategic information from partner

companies, and the creation of relations with key organisational actors. This study, through the explicit recognition of the activities in which the employees engage, has implications about the activities of managers and employees. Some of these activities, even though they are immoral, they benefit to a great extent their company. This recognises that in some cases the moral issues surrounding political behaviours shall be overcome, as it can be a key component of strategic planning processes (Behnam and Rasche, 2009; Rasche and Behnam, 2009).

7.3.5 The need for political leaders in modern organisations

The study also stretches the importance of political leadership within organisations, in different managerial levels. Even though the importance of political leaders within organisations has recently started gaining importance, especially in applied research (Sminia, 2009; Hartley *et al*, 2007; Kurchner-Hawkins and Miller, 2006; Vigoda-Gadot and Dryzin-Amit, 2006; Charlesworth, Cook and Crozier, 2003; Ammeter, Douglas, Gardner, Hochwater, and Ferris, 2002), an explicit recognition of their importance in strategy research has been long missing. Under this perspective, given the inherent political nature of organisations, companies can be regarded as democracies with competing interests (Windsor, 2010; Butcher and Clarke, 2006a;b; Bower, 1986; Mintzberg, 1985; Bower and Doz, 1979).

Within these environments, characterised by scarcity of resources, successful leaders have to possess skills in order to balance competing interests and achieve maximum performance. Such leaders do not only come from the top management, but they also include middle managers, as their strategic roles in figures ten and 11 show. Such leaders will have to balance interests and allocate resources accordingly, while simultaneously engaging in activities which aim to advance their organisation. Modern firms do not only need managers, but they actually need leaders, who can help their future development and growth through the strategic use of politics within organisations.

7.3.6 Ways that managers can overcome highly-political situations

The labelling of the impact of politics as integrative or fractious can signal the ways that top managers can deal with highly-political situations within their companies. Politics should not be regarded as 'positive' or 'negative', as traditional research has classified them, as a result of theoretical and applied research being focused in expressing the impact of politics in terms of organisational performance (Windsor, 2010; Sminia, 2009; Gunn and Chen, 2006; Eisenhardt and Zbaracki, 1992). Instead, this study attempts to classify their impact by focusing on decision team interactions, which can then affect the final outcome. This in turn means that politics can be regarded as activities which either integrate or fragment organisational actors, which then affect the project development. This effect can have strategic implications for the firms, as the data analysis showed.

By using this approach, managers who are well aware of the impact of politics in intra-organisational relations, should pay attention in mediating relations, as well as fixing product-related inefficiencies. In more practical terms, this study suggests that through the development of more unified working teams, the long term performance of organisations can be largely improved. This can be done by requiring managers to focus on enhancing behaviours with an integrative impact, through the development of political competencies (Hartley *et al*, 2007; Hayes, 1984). Moreover, through the explicit guidance that the framework can offer to professionals, it helps overcome the highly prescriptive and descriptive nature that characterises strategy process research (Tsoukas 2010; Whittington, 2007; Jarzabkowski, 2003).

7.3.7 A competitive environment characterised by increasing complexity

This study has also highlighted the high complexity which characterises modern forms of organisations, being in agreement with calls for research in strategy making in new spheres (Mackay and Chia, 2013; Hutzschenreuter and Kleindienst, 2006;

Gunn and Chen, 2006; Andersen, 2004; 2000; Whittington *et al*, 2003; Teese, Pissano and Shuen, 1997; Smith, Carroll and Asford, 1995) and a stronger focus on the foundations of the strategy process and its foundations in social complexity (Mackay and Chia, 2013; Paroutis and Pettigrew, 2007; Regnér, 2003). This study made clear the fact that more recent forms of organisations can advance the roles of organisational actors in the middle, who however have not received adequate research interest. Such actors however, as existing theories suggest, and the findings of this study further corroborate, require different managerial approaches. This means that the complex and constantly changing modern competitive environment requires a good filtering of the suggestions of existing research, concerning processes and actors, through abductive research approaches, as these studies come mainly from single organisations. Strategic activity tends to be context-specific (Teulier and Rouleau, 2010; Paroutis and Pettigrew, 2007; Jarzabkowski and Wilson, 2002); its application and interpretation from modern managers thus requires careful filtering and thinking, before its implementation. This is even more important given the increasing presence of different organisational forms and the emerging importance of inter-firm relationships.

7.4. Limitations of this study

As most qualitative studies in management research, this thesis has a number of limitations. These are described in the following paragraphs.

Firstly, because of the sensitive nature of the topic being investigated, specific methods were used, namely interviewing, documentary analysis and questionnaires. The sensitive nature of research in the informal side of the organisations has been recognised in existing research, with special difficulties in the area of research in politics and power dynamics (Windsor, 2010; Melander *et al*, 2010; Gunn and Chen, 2006; Lewis, 2002; Lee and Renzetti, 1993). As a result, the use of these methods can involve the classic limitations for which they have been accused, such as the respondents feeling uncomfortable to talk about politics openly (Lewis, 2002). This

can create reflexivity from the respondents, as they might attempt to avoid discussing honestly their activities, and instead provide inaccurate however satisfactory responses (Yin, 2009). Another category of biases which can occur include the case that private documents are provided selectively to the researcher (Yin, 2009; Bryman and Bell, 2007). The researcher, however, being aware of these limitations during the design of this research (section 4.6.1), attempted to minimise their effect during all the phases of data collection and analysis. This was done through the use of different research methods, the use of the appropriate technology, including recording devices and qualitative software, the use of memos, in order to write down all research ideas during the analysis, and the use of an intercoder reliability test (Jarzabkowski, 2003; Fox-Wolfgramm, 1997; Miles and Huberman, 1994), in order to validate the appropriateness of the coding system and the data analysis.

In addition, as mentioned in the literature review, the majority of the research in partnerships has been conducted in the one side of the dyad, because of the difficulty in getting access in both sides (Mohr and Spekman, 1994). The fact that the current research involves the investigation of a sensitive topic (Windsor, 2010; Gunn and Chen, 2006; Lewis, 2002; Lee and Renzetti, 1993), makes research in both sides of the dyad even more difficult. The investigation of such an issue from the one side of the dyad can be biased towards the objectivity of the data and, in turn, on the findings of the thesis. Being in agreement with existing studies, and the fact that an investigation from both sides of the partnerships would mean a much larger project, given the extensive company access, time and resources required, this research attempted to minimise this effect by gathering data from many different empirical units, these being managers from the top, middle and lower hierarchical levels (Hart, 1995). Coupled by the use of public and private documents, this approach could maximise the level of triangulation achieved.

The empirical unit of the study were managers from different levels of hierarchy, which however were only a small number of all the actors with direct or indirect

involvement in the activities investigated. This data collection method is in agreement with many researchers who base their research approaches in the retrospective narration of the strategy processes and practices from key strategic actors (Mackay and Chia, 2013; Ness, 2009; Walter *et al*, 2008; Paroutis and Pettigrew, 2007; Maitlis and Lawrence, 2003; Jarzabkowski, 2003; Orlikowski, 2002; Langley, 1999). During the different phases of partnerships however, apart from managers and employees of the other company, a number of other parties are involved before, during and after decisions. These include organisational actors from the lowest managerial levels, external consultants, and even those companies with whom discussions were initiated but never resulted in an actual partnership (Santos and Eisenhardt, 2009; Nordqvist and Melin, 2008; Golembiewski, 2006; Schwarz, 2004; Whittington *et al*, 2003; Hendry, 2000; Langley, 1999). Due to the fact that the participation of all these parties implies a much larger project, then their inclusion was purposefully omitted.

In addition, this study was conducted in specific institutional contexts, meaning the national culture and the specific industry. Following the case study sampling criteria (sections 4.3.5 and 4.3.6), the national culture of most companies and their partners had a small cultural distance, being mainly South European (Mtar, 2010; Garcia-Pont, Canales, and Noboa, 2009; Kalogeresis and Labrianidis, 2003; Pettigrew *et al*, 2001; Clark, 1999; Pollock, Porac and Wade, 1999; Hamel, 1991). In addition, the high tech industry is a high velocity environment, characterised by constant and discontinuous change (Meyer 2009; Robert Baum and Wally, 2003; Eisenhardt and Bourgeois, 1988). These similarities can affect the findings of this thesis, as these can be biased towards specific kinds of firms and industries (Mtar, 2010; Jarzabkowski, 2003). This however is justified by the fact that the study took place in an emerging area of interest in strategy process research, making the use of 'polar types' of case studies (Eisenhardt and Graebner, 2007; Jarzabkowski, 2003; Pettigrew, 1990), a certain future research requirement for the investigation of strategic process within partnerships.

One more limitation of this study has to do with the fact that the investigation took place in companies with medium size (800-1200 employees), with an existing internationalisation and partnering experience. The company size has been regarded as having an impact on the findings of studies (Yin, 2009; Eisenhardt 2007; 1989), which seem to be even larger in cases where size is associated with issues of power and influence (Pollock *et al*, 1999). In addition, within the international business literature, where partnerships have been well-researched, the internationalisation experience has also been found as affecting partners' behaviour (Kale and Singh, 2009; Hagedoorn, 2006; Doz, 1996). Being aware of these limitations, this research attempts to minimise their effect, by using companies with similar levels of internationalisation (section 4.3.5), while simultaneously sticking strictly to companies of similar sizes, in order to avoid variance due to institutional factors (Chang, Van Witteloostuijn, Eden, 2010; Jarzabkowski, 2003; Whitley 1999). The investigation of the similar phenomena in companies of different sizes, and with varying levels of internationalisation and partnering experience, is an area for future exploration.

Research in partnerships within the strategy literature is an emerging area of interest, making the use of qualitative research approaches through multiple case studies appropriate for their exploration (Yin 2009). The relatively small number of cases however (four), is in accordance with existing research publications, which have used small number of case studies, spanning from one (Jarzabkowski and Balogun, 2009; Paroutis and Pettigrew, 2007; Maitlis and Lawrence, 2003; Jarzabkowski and Wilson, 2002), to three (Ness, 2009; Jarzabkowski. 2003) or four (Regnér, 2003) cases. In terms of generalisation, different case study designs have different advantages in terms of depth and comparison (Eisenhardt and Graebner, 2007; Whittington *et al*, 2003; Eisenhardt, 1989). What is most important however is the identification of lessons from the cases which can be generalised in other contexts; the use of eight to ten cases is a certain future direction within the strategy process within partnerships area (Yin, 2009; Eisenhardt, 1989), in order to enhance understanding across different contexts and between different industries.

The current study, in order to overcome the problems arising from the many definitions of politics (Windsor, 2010; Cropanzano and Li, 2006; Eisenhardt and Bourgeois, 1988; Porter *et al*, 1983; Pfeffer 1981; Bacharach and Lawler, 1980; Quinn, 1980; Mayes and Allen, 1977), which create a major ‘conceptual and empirical difficulty’ (Windsor 2010: 59), has used an operational definition, based on its different problematic areas (section 3.2.2.4). These confusions result from the unclear nature of the phenomenon, and the difficulty in defining the causal relations between power, influence and self-interest, which all surround politics (James, 2006; Lewis, 2002; Ferris *et al*, 1994; Mintzberg and Quinn, 1991; Eisenhardt and Bourgeois, 1988; Porter *et al*, 1983; Pfeffer, 1981). Through the use of this definition, based on a deep investigation and synthesis of the existing literature, which however remains subject to the inherent human nature of the researcher, the ambiguity over the phenomenon being investigated to the respondents is minimised. The use of other definitions from the existing literature however, could also generate further insights on knowledge in politics, by including for example specific formal activities as political.

7.5 Suggestions for future research

The previous section described the limitations of the current research. This section presents specific suggestions for a future research agenda, attempting to overcome the limitations of the current study. These suggestions are aiming to extend the theoretical models and the findings of this study, while simultaneously setting a direction for future research challenges. These are:

7.5.1 Research in partnerships with different structural characteristics

As it happens with many exploratory studies when making early research steps in new areas of scientific interest, this research took place in research subjects with similar characteristics, these being partnerships between two entities. Future research

shall focus in partnerships with different contractual and equity characteristics, in order to enhance knowledge on this emerging area of research (Santos and Eisenhardt, 2009; Ness, 2009; Walter *et al*, 2008). These can include different types of partnerships, such as strategic alliances, coalitions, joint ventures, franchises, research consortia, different forms of network organisations, contractual agreements, licensing, franchising, and more recently different kinds of collaboration (Roijackers and Hagedoorn, 2006; Todeva and Knoke, 2005; Vonortas, 2000; Maloni and Benton, 1997; Mohr and Spekman, 1994; Smith and Van de Ven, 1992). The understanding of processes and practices can also be extended with further abductive studies, using further concepts, methodologies and findings from the familiar international business literature (Golsorkhi *et al*, 2010). These include several factors which have been regarded as crucial in defining partnering behavior in the relevant international business literature (Walter, 2010; Ariño and Ring, 2010; Kale and Singh, 2009; Luo, 2007), such as number of employees involved, technical complexity of the project, company size and internationalising experience, among others.

7.5.2 Partnerships between more than two companies

Multi-partite alliances are increasing global, especially concerning large scale and complicated projects, making it an area of particular interest (Kale and Singh, 2009; Santos and Eisenhardt, 2009; Van Kolk, Tulder and Kostwinder, 2008). Research in these organisational forms can create different streams, making similar contributions in theory and practice that the current thesis has offered, as they can constitute individual categories of organisational environment with unique characteristics. Through the investigation of politics in such environments, further insights can be provided on the complex settings under which modern strategising takes place.

7.5.3 Research in different macro-environments

Research agenda should also consider investigating partnerships in different industries and countries. Being in agreement with calls for comparative studies

across international contexts (Jarzabkowski and Spee, 2009; Whittington *et al*, 2003; Pettigrew *et al*, 2001; Clark, 1999; Judge and Zeithaml, 1992), such research would improve the understanding of how strategy making and its inherent elements, one of which is politics, vary across nations, and what are its implications, in micro, meso and macro-levels (Jarzabkowski and Spee, 2009). Moreover, research in different contexts will help the verification and further advancement of the frameworks that the current study suggests, as well as other strategy making frameworks which exist in the strategy literature.

7.5.4 Research with focus in different managerial levels within partnerships

The current study focuses on the investigation of the roles of middle management within international partnerships. The focus of investigation in specific managerial levels has been a tradition of the strategy research, with top managers and their roles and activities having dominated the literature on specific organisational actors (Nielsen, 2010; Hambrick, 2007; Hart, 1995; Hambrick and Mason, 1984). This study however investigated strategic activity in a different context. Given the fact that it focused in middle managers, it is clear that research on the top management activity within partnerships would advance understanding and knowledge on strategising processes and practices.

This is in agreement with calls for research on the interplay between top and middle management actions and the organisational context (Wooldridge and Canales, 2010; Paroutis and Pettigrew, 2007; Jarzabkowski and Wilson, 2002), the way that characteristics of strategists affect processes and outcomes (Hutzschenreuter and Kleindienst, 2006), and the general need for multi-level research approaches in strategy process research (Schmid *et al*, 2010; Yang, Sun and Eppler, 2010; Jarzabkowski and Spee, 2009; Schwarz, 2003). Future research should focus on the roles and activities of managers in lower managerial levels, whose roles has been underexplored (Hart, 1995), but similar to middle managers, are those who are actively implementing partnerships.

7.5.5 Research on the views of external specialists

In the recent years the importance of external specialists has been increasingly recognized in the strategy literature, as these are part of the multidivisional form of organisations (Golembiewski, 2006; Whittington *et al*, 2003; Langlely, 1999; Guillén, 1994). Specifically, research on external consultants can contribute to existing research, by offering a different point of view in processes and activities. Their view and the collected data can be more objective, because they have much less self-interests, compared to intra-company organisational actors. In addition, they have extensive experience in different kinds of partnerships, so they can provide data through more experienced and knowledgeable viewpoints. This can make them invaluable sources of knowledge, especially concerning informal practices, like politics in partnerships across different industries.

Apart from consulting professionals (Golsorkhi *et al*, 2010; Santos and Eisenhardt, 2009; Nordqvist and Melin, 2008; Golembiewski, 2006; Schwarz, 2004), such experts include professors of strategic management (Whittington *et al*, 2003; Hendry, 2000) and policy makers and representatives from regulatory authorities (Jarzabkowski *et al*, 2007). Other external sources can include short term partners, companies with which disagreements during negotiations prohibited the actual partnering, and even the clients of the project. All these sources will further enhance the understanding of political behaviour in firm partnerships, by extending knowledge on processes and practices beyond organisational boundaries.

7.5.6 Research in partnerships which have failed

As mentioned in the methods section, all the partnerships investigated had a successful performance (section 4.3.6). This however can result in survivorship biases, as data will be only based in successful firm partnerships (Kijkuit and Ende 2007; Singleton and Straits, 2005). Further biasness can be created because interview

participants might be inclined to present events and activities with a more positive perspective, as these partnerships ended having achieved their initially planned targets. The failure rates of partnerships however are high, with researchers suggesting that they are between 50 and 80 percent (Walter, 2010; Walter *et al*, 2008; Dyer *et al*, 2001; Yan and Zeng, 1999; Park and Ugson, 1997). This makes necessary research in the processes and activities in partnerships which have failed. Such a focus will enable researchers to have a holistic perspective on partnerships which have had different results in companies' performance, and eliminate the survivorship biases which result from the investigation of successful partnerships only.

7.5.7 Further research in the relational view of strategy

In recent years, the rate of partnerships as a strategic option for organisations in order to enter new markets or industries has been increasing (Walter, 2010; Walter *et al*, 2008; Dyer and Singh, 1998). As a result, researchers have started making calls for further investigations of the importance of firm relations for their development and growth (Wilson, 2010; Teulier and Rouleau, 2010; Soousa, 2010; Santos and Eisenhardt, 2009; Nutt, 2008; Smith, Carroll and Ashford, 1995; Axelsson, 1992). This research enhances the view of strategy-as-relations: partnering can become a dynamic capability of modern organisations (Hutzschenreuter and Kleindienst, 2006). This can be done by building external competencies on the establishment and continuation of strategic relations, where companies can create 'relational advantage' towards their competitors. Future research however should focus on the micro-activities which can help the partnering skills of the firms, as well as the implications they can have in their performance, in order to have a holistic perspective of these characteristics and the mechanics of the modern competitive environment (Jarzabkowski and Spee, 2009; Walter *et al*, 2008; Rouleau, 2005; Pettigrew *et al*, 2001).

7.5.8 Stronger focus in the micro-aspects of political behaviour

The current research provides useful insights about micro aspects of political behaviour, such as the aims and the focus of the political tactics being applied, and how these can change and differentiate over time. Future research however should focus on providing further details on the nature of the micro-aspects of politics and help the better understanding of individuals as strategists (Schmid *et al*, 2010; Gunn and Chen, 2006). A differentiation between activities which are purposeful or are resulting from the organisational context, can enhance the understanding of micro-level behaviours (Windsor, 2010; Whittington, 2007; Chia and Mackay, 2007; Gunn and Chen, 2006), and the extent that such behaviours result from external and environment constraints (Jarzabkowski and Spee, 2009; Whittington, 2007; Hutzschenreuter and Kleindienst, 2006; Johnson *et al*, 2003).

Research should focus on the identities of the strategists, such as their gender (Rouleau, 2005) as these appear to affect strategic behaviour over time (Beech and Johnson, 2005), which in turn can explain how these can inform their strategic activities and their political behaviour. In addition, future research can link managerial personalities and political tactics (Rosen, Chang and Levy, 2006). The investigation of the different tactics applied, in cases of ambiguity or weak understanding of strategy, can further enhance the understanding of strategic behaviour as it emerges (Chia and Holt, 2009; Nutt, 1987). Furthermore, future research should also focus on the shape and form of political activity through time, and how processes, practices and interactions are affected from the 'learning' which occurs between different partnerships of the same firm through time.

7.5.9 Large-scale quantitative studies and large, multiple case designs

In terms of methodological suggestions, future research shall focus on the conduct of longitudinal multiple case designs (Huff *et al*, 2010; Yin, 2009; Sminia, 2009; Eisenhardt and Graebner, 2007; Pettigrew *et al*, 2001; Eisenhardt 1989) and even

turn to the investigation of historical events which shaped strategic practices within organisations (Ericson and Melin, 2010; Golsorkhi *et al*, 2010). Such research designs can help the creation of more scientifically grounded theories of strategic processes within partnerships (Teulier and Rouleau, 2010; Smith, Carroll and Ashford, 1995). Research in strategy making in cross national levels can also help the investigation of patterns across different cultures (Golsorkhi *et al*, 2010; Walter *et al*, 2008; Pettigrew *et al*, 2001; Clark, 1999), which can even lead to partial convergence between the strategy and the international business literatures. In addition, large scale quantitative studies must be conducted with the different actors involved in partnerships, in order to establish more robust theoretical models and provide insights on the factors affecting strategic processes in international partnerships. Through the conduct of both multi-case qualitative and large-scale quantitative studies, coherent frameworks on the development of strategic processes and practices can be built.

7.5.10 Use of alternative research methods

The current study employed interviewing, questionnaires and public and private documents for the collection of data. The understanding of political processes however can be enhanced through the use of ethnography (Rasche and Chia, 2009), which only a small number of researchers in the strategy domain have employed (Samra-Fredericks, 2010; Teulier and Rouleau, 2010; Jarzabkowski and Balogun, 2009; Jarzabkowski, 2003; Maitlis and Lawrence, 2003). Other methods which have not yet been employed in politics research, but which can enhance understanding include focus groups, self-reporting diaries of strategists (Rouleau, 2010; Johnson *et al*, 2003; Jarzabkowski, 2003) and the investigation of the historical developments which shaped strategy within organisations (Ericson and Melin, 2010; Golsorkhi *et al*, 2010; Pettigrew *et al*, 2001). The use of these methods individually or in combination, resulting in multi-method approaches (Schmid *et al*, 2010), can enhance the understanding on the micro-processes and their impact in the different phases of firm partnerships.

7.5.11 Use of alternative empirical units

Future researchers should also focus on obtaining data from both sides of the partnerships, rather than one. The recognition of the difficulties in obtaining data from both sides of the dyad has been widely acknowledged (Mohr and Spekman, 1994). Future attempts however should focus on overcoming this obstacle. This would help the observation of patterns from both sides of the dyad, thus achieving a new form of data triangulation (Turcan, Mäkelä, Sørensen, and Rönkkö, 2010). In this case, where data is collected from managers from both companies, who will potentially have conflicting interests, objectivity is reached to the extent where recollection of the events that the strategists suggest are in agreement.

The roles of different kinds of managers shall be investigated, to ensure a more holistic understanding of processes and practices (Paroutis and Pettigrew, 2007; Pettigrew *et al*, 2001; Langley, 1999). Associations between roles, political behaviour and tactics exhibited can be better understood (Chia and Holt, 2009; Gunn and Chen, 2006; Ferris, et al, 2002; Nutt, 1987; Kipnis *et al*, 1980). Moreover, this approach can potentially create new research streams, focusing on the way that the same events are described from actors from different organisations, which can then affect the discourse that is being used in a later time (Hendry, 2000). This in turn can have implications about the ways that their interpretations construct subjective realities, which can affect both their activities in the life of the partnerships, and the data being obtained from the researchers. This can be even more useful in partnerships with more than two partners, despite the high costs of such a project.

The importance of the activities of individuals in the strategy process, and the importance of the context on shaping their activities has been recognised. The current research attempted to investigate individual strategic behaviour and the associated political activity, in a context which is having increasing importance, this being firm

partnerships within the high tech industry. The findings of this study reveal strategic roles for the middle managers, while simultaneously drawing a framework on the factors affecting political behaviour. Contrary to the categorisation of the impact of politics of existing research in 'positive' or 'negative', this study suggests that it can be better understood when its impact is investigated in terms of the way it affects intra-organisational strategic interactions, being either integrative or fractious.

Further research however is required in partnerships of various forms and shapes, through the use of different methodological approaches, in order to shed light on the way that firm relations can create a competitive advantage for companies operating in modern complex environments. The current study attempts to make a clear step towards this direction, where competitive advantage is directly related with a firms' capability in establishing long, lasting relations with other firms, making clear the importance of the relational view of strategy in modern managerial practices.

In the words of Mackay and Chia (2013:20): 'Process studies of change and management need to be reoriented'. The findings of this study corroborate this statement: the increasing importance of strategic relations needs to be further researched. This can be achieved through longitudinal studies, across different organisational levels, within different macro environments. The incorporation of broader philosophical and sociological theoretical concepts, the engagement in abductive research strategies, and the use of different methodological approaches can further improve understanding of processes and practices surrounding firm relationships. All these different approaches can incorporate emerging challenges of modern strategising, as environmental ambiguity and unpredictability seems to increase. This study has made one step towards the reorientation of strategy research.

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Appendix one: The pilot study

Introduction

This chapter presents the way that the pilot study was conducted and its findings. As mentioned in the methods section, ten pilot interviews with the two case companies' CEOs and some middle managers who had active roles in the partnership took place on May-June 2010. These would help to create a robust research design and check the suitability of the intentioned data collection methods and tools to be used in the main study (Nummela, 2003a;b; Van Teijlingen and Hundley, 2001). The chapter starts by explaining the usefulness and the stages of the study. The primary results from these interviews are then presented and briefly discussed. The chapter concludes summarising the learning points of the pilot, stretching the importance of analytical and focused themes, which could yield useful findings concerning political processes in international partnerships. Following an inductive approach, the iteration between theory and data resulted in further refinements during the main data collection stage.

Justification and stages of the pilot study

In the initial stages of this research, apart from the literature review, the researcher's participation in the Scottish Doctoral Management Conference 2010, and the informal communications with practitioners during a two week winter internship (on Winter 2009), along with the academic supervisors advice, made clear the need for a pilot study before the main data collection stage. The pilot would contribute in two different ways: In a theoretical level, it would help the researcher to investigate the existence of political processes in a partnerships context, as it was an area which had not been investigated in the past. Simultaneously, it would help the development of an initial set of analytical codes and/or themes which could then guide the main stage of data collection. The pilot study would then be an integral part of the study's research strategy, as it would have increased its face validity (Farall *et al*, 1997; Patton 1990). In a practical level, the pilot study would enable the researcher to establish initial contacts within the case companies' CEOs and managers who could then assist in gaining access for the main study.

The companies which would be used in the pilot were chosen based in the selection criteria described in the methods chapter. Two companies were selected, these being Alpha and Lambda, who could constitute the potential sites for the pilot study. A total of eight pilot interviews were conducted with top and middle managers. In order to make the interview focused and increase their reliability and validity (Yin, 2009; De Rond and Bouchikhi, 2004; Nummela, 2003a;b; Robert Baum and Wally, 2003; Janesick, 1998) all interviews were semi-structured, while an interview template was used, which contained general and more focused questions. Moreover, an interview protocol was used in order to help the participants prepare better for the data collection process, while simultaneously avoiding the creation of any possible ethical issues which could be related by the non-use of such a protocol. As mentioned earlier, the pilot would enable the conceptual clarification of the research approach, while simultaneously enabling the creation of analytical categories to guide the main data collection phase.

During the pilot data collection, an exploratory methodology was followed, as compared to structured hypothesis testing. Such an approach was appropriate as it enabled the discovery and identification of emerging themes, categories and concepts, which is the essence of inductive approaches, and can lead to robust theory building (Strauss and Corbin, 1998; 1990; Miles and Huberman, 1994). This does not to imply that the study was lacking a theoretical basis. The aim however here was to explore political processes in international partnerships without having any theoretical presuppositions, rather than producing descriptive data through well-defined categories. Through the use of this approach and the guidance of the initial analytical framework, which was based purely on a comprehensive literature review the interviews were transcribed, followed by line-by-line and axial coding through the use of analytical methods (handwritten tables and diagrams).

The coding of each interview resulted in the identification of emerging patterns, represented in the form of texts. In the next stage, the relationships between the codes which had emerged were further analysed through the use of analytical tables

and matrices (Miles and Huberman, 1994). The comparison of the emerging patterns from two pilot studies resulted in refinements of the original research design. The use of tables and matrices was critical in the development of broad categories of analysis which could be followed in the main case studies.

In addition, the pilot made clear the elements on which the data collection should focus in order to yield useful findings. In the next section, the implications and the shift of focus of the research design which occurred after the pilot is described, followed by a presentation of the impact that the study had in the three broad and interrelated themes of the study.

Implications of the pilot study for the research design

As mentioned earlier, the pilot study was conducted in order to improve the research design of the study. As a result, once the pilot study was conducted and the data collected was analysed, then three major elements of the study were affected. These had to do with the confirmation of the existence of politics in international partnerships, the need for focus on strategic decisions during each partnership, and the use of specific political tactics, as a part of the political behaviour exhibited. These three crucial elements are described in the next section.

Existence of politics

The pilot study made clear that political processes, as much as they exist in single companies, they also exist in international partnerships. This was a clear pattern, which was observed and confirmed by most participants of the pilot, clarifying the existing theoretical suggestions that political processes exist in all organisations (Eisenhardt and Bourgeois, 1988; Pfeffer, 1981; Pettigrew, 1973; Allison, 1971). Moreover, it was made clear that managers were aware of the existence of politics, which however regarded as a routine, rather than a widely negative phenomenon, as it has been regarded in the existing literature (Windsor, 2010; Elbanna, 2009; Noorderhaven, 1995; Pfeffer, 1992; Pettigrew, 1973). In addition, managers did not

appear to be aware of the fact that political processes can have impact not only in single companies, but in international partnerships as well.

‘Well, I have both studied and experienced politics in real life...But I had never really considered the fact that politics can actually impact partnerships. It looks like a really interesting investigation’
[International Business Development Director A, Alpha]

Focus in strategic decisions

The pilot made clear that political processes were not individual phenomena occurring within the organisations. Rather, they were based in social relations which were expressed in much more intensive ways before, during and after strategic decision making. This is in agreement with the existing theoretical suggestions that politics result from the scarcity of resources which characterises modern organisations (Pfeffer, 1992; Hickson *et al* 1986). Moreover, the pilot made clear that, in order to have a robust research approach, a focus on strategic decisions, in either the intra or the inter-organisational level was required. Focusing in these decisions, and the activities in which interested employees engaged, during the decision process, would enable the researcher to collect useful data which could help the investigation of the phenomenon.

Political tactics and middle managers roles

The pilot made clear that the focus in the strategic decisions and the interested managers would enable the identification of the tactics that those who exhibit political behaviour engage in order to satisfy their targets. Subsequently, in order to investigate the different aspects of political behaviour, a focus in these tactics was required. The existence of political tactics has widely been documented in the existing literature (Zanzi and O’Neill, 2001; Hurrell, Nelson and Simmons, 1998; Yukl and Tracey, 1992; Kipnis *et al*, 1980; Mintzberg, 1989; Allen *et al*, 1979; Ezzioni, 1968). The majority of research however has ignored the way that such

tactics are applied in middle and lower managerial levels, even though the important roles of middle managers has been documented (Teulier and Rouleau, 2010; Floyd and Wooldridge, 1997; 1992). In addition, these tactics have been investigated within single corporations; the fact that the units being researched here were new and unique meant that an open approach to the tactics and the way they inform managerial roles was required. This was clarified from some of the managers who participated in the pilot:

‘Yes of course I see politics and informal processes in our company. in all levels...But I think that it’s possible that you might observe different kinds of such behaviours in a partnership...because these are one-off relationships, and people and companies might have different gains by following this behaviour...’[Supplies Director, Lambda]

Principal Themes from the Pilot Interviews

In the current, section, the initial findings related to the principle themes of the study are presented. These are: a) Political processes and their impact in employees’ relations, b) the strategic roles of middle managers in international partnerships and c) the impact of political processes in inter-organisational communications. In each theme, a number of subcategories are presented, which helped the researcher further narrow his focus during the data collection process.

A) Impact of politics in partnerships

Integrative/Fractious politics

As mentioned above, the existence of political processes was made clear from the first interviews of the politics:

‘Politics exist in business and will always exist. Politics IS business...and business IS politics’ [CEO, Alpha]

What appeared to be interesting however was that, in both cases, instead of politics having a 'negative' or 'positive' impact in partnerships (Curtis, 2003; Christiansen, Villanova and Mikulay, 1997; Eisenhardt and Bourgeois, 1988; Vredenburg and Maurer, 1984; Allen *et al*, 1979), which is difficult to measure with precision, the notion of 'integrative' and 'fractious' politics started emerging from the data, as more descriptive concepts concerning their impact within organisations. In the case of Lambda, especially, a decision concerning the downsizing of the customer service department resulted in the fragmentation of two groups of employees, those who supported the downsizing and those who were against it, with subsequent impact in their relations. Overall, the integration and fragmentation of employees, resulting from political processes, had to do with the way that individuals and groups were exercising their personal tactics in other interested parties, in order to advance their own interests:

'I think that a negative impact that informal discussions and meeting can have is to divide the company into different teams of people...It's there where the rest of the problems begin' [CTO, Alpha]

'We came out stronger from politics. I mean that we learn each other, we learn what we want, we learn what's possible to happen...so after learning, we can then become more united' [CSO, Lambda]

The differentiation between integrative and fractious impact of political processes was a crucial decision to be made by the researcher. This differentiation however could provide fruitful insights: Politics is a phenomenon which is ill-defined in the existing research, because of their complicated nature (Elbanna, 2006; Ferris *et al*, 1994; Eisenhardt and Bourgeois, 1988; Porter *et al*, 1983; Pfeffer 1981; Bacharach and Lawler, 1980; Quinn, 1980; Mayes and Allen, 1977). Their misunderstanding was made clearer in both pilot cases. This meant that the focus in the abstract notion of 'positive' and 'negative' impact of politics within partnerships could result in further confusions; This approach however could facilitate data collection in its main phase, as the separation of politics, depending on the way they affected the teams'

unity is much easier to be observed. In addition, such an approach, it could be an innovative way to view the impact of politics in the strategy process literature.

Internal/external

Another important aspect that the pilot study made clear is the fact that, through its unique approach, focusing in political processes in a different context, these being international partnerships of the high tech sector, it was made clear that all current research has focused in the internal side of companies. This meant that political processes in the organisational interface and the external side of the organisation have been ignored. With the term 'external environment', the actors and the organisations occurring out of organisational boundaries are implied. Even though the activities of managers in the external environment of the organisational interface have been researched in familiars to the strategy process areas, such as the corporate entrepreneurship (Kuratko *et al*, 2005; Kuratko and Goldsby, 2004; Hornsby *et al*, 2002) and the environmental scanning (Puhakka 2007; Ardichvili *et al*, 2003) literatures, such an approach was still missing in the politics research. In the case of Lambda, for example, there was much stronger political activity in the external environment of the company, during the potential partner choice. This was a result of the relative consolidation of the industry, which resulted in many employees having work experience and relations with some of the partners, whose choice could advance their personal agendas.

Similarly, upon the completion of the partnership between Lambda and Omega, there was intensive politicality in the external environment concerning the hiring of employees from the previous partner. The research focus of political processes in the internal and external environment of companies could further facilitate the focus of the data collection, by making explicit its impact in different aspects of organisations, while simultaneously enabling the researcher to offer an innovative data analysis approach.

B) Strategic roles of middle managers

The strategic roles of middle managers have been already researched in the strategy process literature (Floyd and Wooldridge, 1997; 1992). Simultaneously, research in the internationalisation of SMEs (Chandra *et al*, 2009; Liu and Comer, 2007; Shane, 2003) has made clear the importance of middle managers in firms of the high tech industry, because of the specialised skills and knowledge which are required for everyday operations (Kodama, 2002; Huy, 2002; Floyd and Wooldridge, 1997; Schilit, 1987; Burgelman, 1983a;b; Bower, 1970). The partnerships context however was offering the potential for research in an area which had been ignored. The clarification of the importance of middle managers also came from the EGOS 2010 conference in Lisbon, where a working paper from Teulier and Rouleau (2010) made calls for research on the organisational interface, which had been ignored until this time. This meant that the separation of internal and external focus of activities, as described in the previous section, could provide an interesting starting point.

The analysis of the data however resulted in the creation of another emerging pattern between the pilots, this being the level of autonomy that middle managers who were participating in the study had in their work. The autonomy that middle managers have was proven crucial in the political activity they exhibit, and the associated roles that their activities can have. In both Alpha and Lambda cases for example, the business opportunity identification was related to the autonomy that the firms' middle managers had, which enabled to carry independent research and bring ideas to the top management. Similarly, in the Alpha case, because of the extended autonomy that middle managers had during the implementation of the project, they were enabled to form a coalition with the managers of the other company and request the allocation of further financial resources from the top management. Similar patterns of a strong relation between managers autonomy and the exhibition of political behaviour were observed in the different phases of the partnership. Their prominence made clear that a theme was emerging which, through its investigation,

could provide strong insights on the occurrence of politics within international partnerships.

Even though the extent of autonomy is of crucial importance within organisations, it has not been investigated explicitly in the strategy process literature. Rather, the familiar concepts of 'power' (Shen and Cannella, 2002; Fiol, 2001; Hardy and Clegg, 1997; 1996; Wrong, 1995; Coffey *et al*, 1994; Clegg, 1989; 1979; Barnes, 1988) and decentralised strategic decision making (Andersen, 2004; Regnér, 2003) have been investigated, suggesting that decentralisation can enhance decision making and creativity, especially in large corporations (Andersen, 2004; 2000). Within partnerships however, governed by a different set of principles, compared to individual organisations, interactions and processes can differ. This meant that middle managers autonomy could be of a crucial importance, in the terms of political tactics they can engage, and the association that these tactics can have with their strategic roles. As a result, a focus in their levels of autonomy could potentially enhance our knowledge towards the exhibition of political behaviour.

C) Impact of politics in communications

The impact of political processes in organisational communications has been investigated from the early days of strategy research (Elbanna, 2009; Noorderhaven, 1995; Pfeffer, 1992; Pettigrew, 1973). This research was mainly content-related, having ignored in large the ways that politics can impact communications. Organisational communications is a crucial element of organisational life, and as a result, recent research has turned in the discourse of organisations (Kwon *et al*, 2009; Laine and Vaara, 2007; Forman and Argenti, 2005; Samra-Fredericks, 2003). A detailed investigation on why and how political processes affect communications is still missing however.

The analysis of the pilot made clear that political processes can impact organisational communications in different ways. The tactics through which politics are expressed can often involve information manipulation and hiding. In the Alpha case, for instance, it was found that monthly cost controlling forms included inflated data, in order to facilitate the allocation of further resources from the top management. Even though these facts have been researched, their specific focus in different directions has been ignored. Though the pilot however it was made clear that, these tactics can have specific impact within the organisation and between the partners. Within the organisation, such tactics could be either targeting top or middle managers, with different tactics expressed, depending on the organisational level. Simultaneously, within partnerships, these tactics could be seeking satisfaction of benefits within the company or within the partnerships, making the focus in these different organisational levels a promising area for the current study:

‘It’s impossible to see managers doing the same activities in order to pursue their agendas, in different levels...middle managers can engage in different games that top managers can..’ [CMO, Alpha]

‘I think that politics can be very much different within one company, and a partnership...Within the company they can be usual ones, very much to tactics that real politicians follow...Within a partnership however I think that they might be strongly related to information issues...They would probably be similar with the tactics that politics within coalition government follow!!’ [CEO, Lambda]

Key Points of Learning for the Main Case Studies

Shift of research focus

The pilot study had crucial impact in the research focus of the study. While the initial intention of the researcher was the investigation of political processes in international partnerships, the pilot made clear that in order to investigate in depth such processes, the researcher should focus in the middle managers and the political behaviour they exhibit. This was resulting from the interviews conducted, which were making clear that, even though the top management exhibits political behaviour, which has been

documented in the existing literature (Elbanna, 2006; Eisenhardt and Bourgeois, 1988; Hambrick and Mason, 1984), it is the middle managers who actually implement these partnerships. This fact made the investigation of their roles a possible area for research contribution, as it could help understand better the 'black box' of strategy processes in international partnerships (Teulier and Rouleau, 2010). Even though their importance as those managers who possess technical knowledge and actually implement strategic decisions has been recognised (Huy, 2002; Floyd and Wooldridge, 1997; Burgelman, 1983a; Bower, 1970), this has not yet been investigated in international partnerships. As a result, a shift of the research focus to the political behaviour that these managers can engage in the different phases of the partnership was made.

Methodological shift

The initial intention of the researcher was the investigation of political processes in international partnerships through the use of a mix of different methods. Specifically, the methods which would be used would be interviews in middle and top managers, accompanied by official and unofficial documents. Moreover, questionnaires would be used to help collect demographic data and help validation of the findings from the interviews. The whole methodological approach would be enhanced by the use of ethnographic methods, where real meetings within the organisations and between partners would be observed. The pilot however made clear that the use of long questionnaires and the observation of politics were rather infeasible. The reason that the use of questionnaires was infeasible was that, the interviews conducted were long, between one and two hours, resulting in the respondents feeling tired upon their completion, while they felt that they were required to respond in similar things. These could result on them losing their interest in the study, and providing responses of a lower quality. Instead, however, the researcher had decided that the questionnaires could be actually responded during the interviews, through the use of graphical methods.

In addition, the pilot made clear that the researcher could not use observation, as a research method, because of the sensitivity of the topic, and the documented

difficulty in accessing both sides of the dyad when researching international partnerships (Kale and Singh, 2009; Mohr and Spekman, 1994). On the other hand, the pilot made clear the appropriateness of interviews as a data collection tool, because of the flexibility they provide and the fact that they enable the researcher to remain open in the emergence of new sub themes.

Moreover, through the pilot, it was made clear that both case companies were willing to permit the use of private documents, such as internal memos and minutes, in order to help the researcher with the validation of the findings from the interviews. Overall, the combination of interviews, questionnaires and private and public document could provide the basis for robust data collection methods in the main phase of the study.

Focus in the different phases of the partnerships

The conduct of pilot interviews helped the improvement of the data collection tool, by making clear that the interview questions should follow a chronological approach. A chronological approach during the interviews would help in avoid confusions which could be created due to the rich data provided, which was observed in the pilot. The fact that the partnerships literature has suggested a number of different phases, these being the pre-formation, the formation, the implementation and the evaluation of the partnerships (Das and Kumar, 2007; Das and Bing-Sheng, 2002; Ariño and De La Torre 1998; Kumar and Nti, 1998; Doz, 1996; Ring and Van de Ven, 1994; Murray and Mahon, 1993; Lorange and Roos, 1993), assisted the structuring of chronological interviews. Through this approach, a much more focused data collection was achieved, as respondents were enabled to isolate thoughts and ideas which could make them confuse the actual events which occurred in the partnership. Moreover, the clear distinction between phases assisted the correction of the information provided as the interviews were developing, as the researcher could recall events in a later time, having a more robust picture of the actual processes which occurred, as the partnerships where developing through time.

Focused Researchable Questions

The analysis of the data obtained through the pilot interviews provided a flavour of the processes and the underlying phenomena occurring in international partnerships. However, apart from enabling the researcher to gain a better understanding of the phenomenon being studied, these interviews enabled the iteration between the data and the emerging themes and sub themes, acting as a mini laboratory. The iteration between the emerging themes and the data was done in order to enable the openness of the researcher in the possible emergence of new themes and sub themes (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). The ultimate result of the iteration between the pilot data and the literature led to fine-tuned research themes enabling the researcher to have clear focus in the next phases of the data collection. The aim was the conduct of the main phase of the study with clear research questions, which would have been identified through the review of the existing literature, and would be improvised through the pilot study. In order to do so, the themes and sub-themes which emerged from this exploratory part of the study were integrated to offer a focused set of research questions, which would guide the main part of the study. The focused research question for this study is:

‘What is the impact of middle managers’ political processes in firm partnerships?’

A further breakdown of the main research question can lead to the following sub questions:

1. What are the *roles* of middle managers in firm partnerships?
2. In which *tactics* do middle managers engage in order to exhibit their political behaviour?
3. How do these roles inform strategic decisions, in the *different phases* of partnerships?

Limitations recognised and the lessons gained from the Pilot Study

As every study, the pilot had a number of limitations. Firstly, only two cases were examined, through the use of a limited number of interviews. This meant that, during the actual data collection, were a higher number of cases and respondents would be used, could result in further modifications. Similarly, the small number of interviews offered a limited space for comparison of emerging patterns. Only the cross case comparison of the evidence over time can result in the creation of satisfactory themes and categories in the study. In other words, the researcher realised that the pilot was only a first glimpse of political processes and international partnerships, and further refinements would be required during the main data collection and analysis, in order the study to yield fruitful insights over the phenomenon being investigated.

Importantly, the insights obtained from these interviews helped refine the categories of questions, and their content and structure, during the main case interviews. Moreover, these interviews stretched the practical relevance of the intended research topic. While the managers interviewed were aware about the existence of political processes within companies, the fact that the respondents were lacking clear understanding about what politics is, and, moreover, their interest in their existence within partnerships, made clear that this topic was of particular interest for managers interested in the strategy making process and practice. Moreover, the pilot findings were presented in the EGOS 2010 conference, which further helped the researcher with the clarification of the relevance of the research topic.

Overall, the pilot, while enhancing the researchers' understanding of politics in international partnerships, and assisting the creation of focused researched questions, it illustrated the need for empirical work to investigate these variations and offer further theoretical and practical insights. As a result, the research progressed in its main phase through the identification of two more case partnerships to be investigated, while data collection in the two pilot cases would be continued, as it could further assist the understanding and refinement of themes and sub themes. These initial themes formed the basis for the first and second-order analysis of the main cases used in this study.

Appendix two: Initial Theoretical Framework

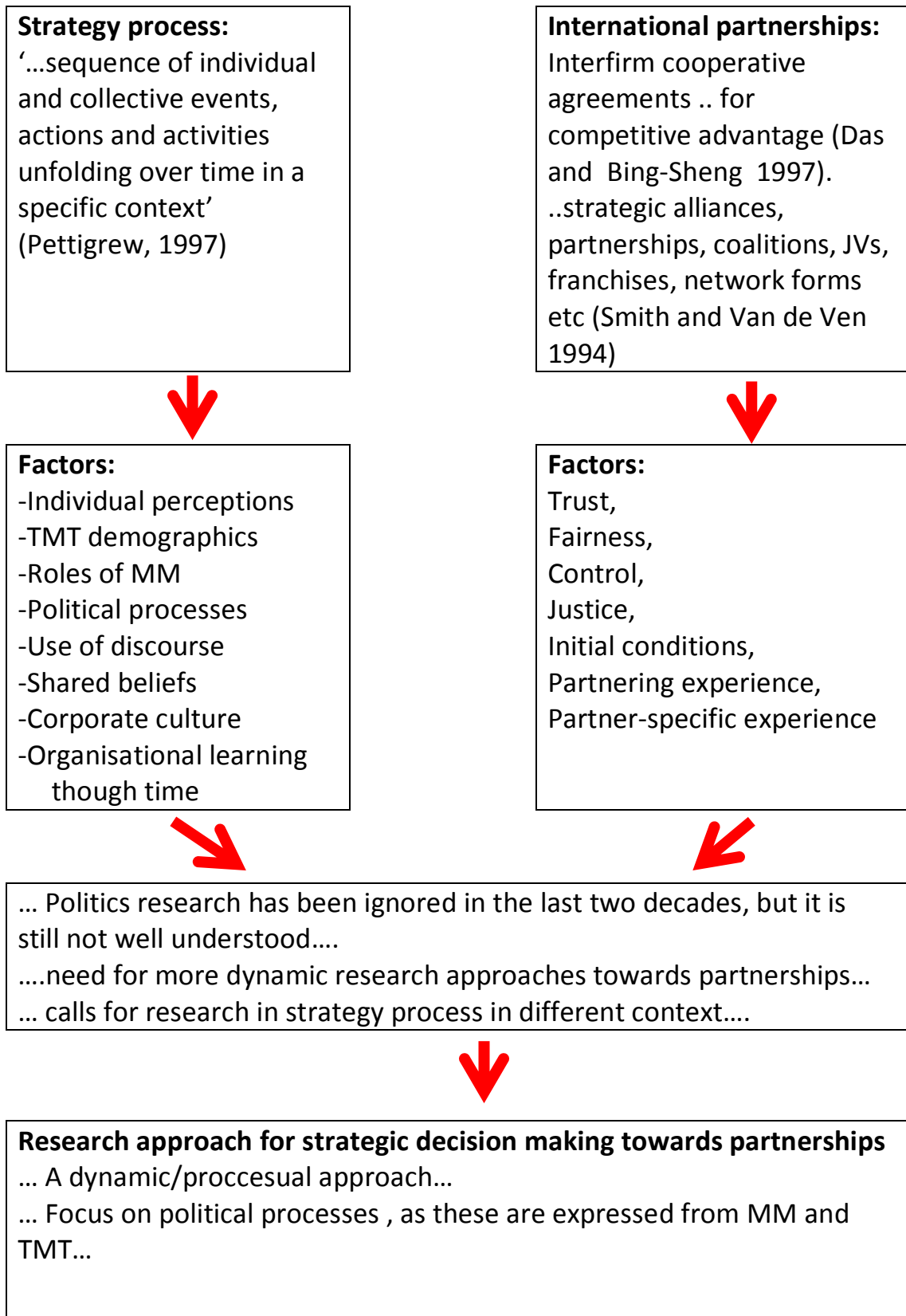


Figure 2.1: The initial theoretical framework of this study

Appendix three: Initial interview questions

The following interview template was used in the pilot study. After the study was conducted, the framework and the focus of the study was changed, which lead to modifications on the interview questions, presented in appendix four.

Research objectives:

1. To understand whether politics exist
2. To investigate how they are expressed
3. To investigate which are the main political actors and why
4. To investigate how this behaviour shall be researched

1) Can you describe a decision in which you participated in the last five years? (ie how did the idea arrive in the company, how many meetings were conducted until the agreement and initiation with the partnership, who were the key actors on the whole decision making process and how they conclude on that, how long did the meeting last on average).

What was its outcome?

Do you believe all decisions are optimal/fair/rational within your company?

In general, which persons tend to affect decision making within the company? How do they do that? Why do you think that happens?

Which managers tend to identify opportunities for partnerships out of the company? Why do you think that happens?

Can you please think of any other decisions you have participated?

What was its outcome?

Do you believe the decision was optimal/fair/rational within your company?

Which persons affect decision making?

How do they do that?

Why do you think that happens?

Can you please think of any other decisions you have participated?

What was its outcome?

Do you believe the decision was optimal/fair/rational within your company?

Which persons affect decision making?

How do they do that?

Why do you think that happens?

2) Have you participated in a partnership with another company?

Could you summarise for me the partnership, from its inception to its end?

Would you say that politics and informal communications are different in the different steps of a partnership?

During the different steps of the partnership (ie before the formation, during negotiations, during the implementation, and at the evaluation period) did you observe unofficial processes and discussion between the employees of your company as well as from the employees of the other company? How were they expressed?

Do you believe that their impact was positive or negative, overall, in the relationship? On what way?

From the four different steps of the partnership, which I will describe you, I would like you to inform about the frequency, the intensity, and the impact of unofficial process in the partnership.

What was the frequency/intensity/impact of unofficial gatherings and discussions in:

The pre-formation period (when there had been some initial thoughts and discussions about the cooperation with)

The formation period (where the decision for the partnership has been taken, and negotiations have been with the –future- partner)? Please make separate reference in the unofficial processes occurring in your company, as well as in the other company.

The implementation period (where the partnership is being implemented, according to the rules agreed in the negotiations period)? Please make separate reference in the unofficial processes occurring in your company, as well as in the other company.

The evaluation period (where the results of the partnership are being evaluated)? Please make separate reference in the unofficial processes occurring in your company, as well as in the other company.

3) Can you please describe the impact that unofficial processes have on the following factors, during the partnership?

-The “trust” between your and the partnering company?

How do you come to that conclusion?

-The way that your company perceives the “commitment” that the partnering company has?

How do you come to that conclusion?

-The feeling that your company has about the “control” over the partnership?

Were the rules applied as agreed?

Or, through unofficial processes, there a feeling of increase/decrease on the control over the partnership?

-The feeling that the employees of your company, as well as from the other company had, about the fairness and justice, on the allocation of resources?

And what about the processes agreed to be followed during the partnerships?

How unofficial processes did affect them?

And what about the rules of interaction and the conflict resolution rules agreed?

Did unofficial processes have a positive or a negative impact on them?

4) Which managers are important in decision making?

Which managers are important for the creation and continuation of partnerships?

What is role of the Top Management Team?

And what is the role of Middle Management?

Do they engage in different kinds of political behaviour?

Do their roles change during the partnerships?

Appendix four: Interview guide and interview questions

I. Lead in

Thank you for accepting to participate in my research.

Project Description

I am examining strategic decision in international partnerships within the high tech sector. I am trying to understand the formal and informal factors which can affect the decision outcomes.

Importance

Partnership failure rates remain high; Informal aspects of decision making/politics are not yet well understood; The roles of organisational actors other than middle managers are not yet well understood

Implications

Informal processes and politics can affect the performance of firm partnerships. The same is true for the roles of the middle managers

Appreciation

Your help will be very important, through the provision of executive/middle managerial level information over specific events and experiences. Analysis will consist of comparison of patterns and themes emerging from the data, which in turn will help theory building. This will be facilitated through the use of analytical tools. Through your help international management theory and practice will be developed.

Interview focus on specific decisions

Make clear the company knowledge and general partnership knowledge to acknowledge the participant that I am aware of background information.

Ethical considerations

Research follows specific ethical guidelines. These are guided from the ESRC Research Ethics Framework which provides an ethical framework for the ethics in social research in the UK, corroborated by the ethics guidelines of the Hellenic Ethics in Research Institute, as the research is conducted in another country.

If you will feel uncomfortable at any time we can stop the interview. If you will not want to respond in a question you do not have to do so. You are free to withdraw from the interview at any time. If you want to cancel your participation after the end of the interview you can do so.

In order to facilitate data analysis and increase the quality of the findings, a recorder shall be used during the interview. If you do not feel comfortable with that, I can switch it off.

Confidentiality statement

Your responses will remain anonymous. Data will remain stored for research purposes from the current research team only. Upon the analysis of the data the data will be destructed. Excerpts of this interview maybe included in the thesis, but under no circumstances will your name or other identifying characteristics will be included in this report.

II. Agenda

1. Ask to reflect on the whole partnership, and personal role and participation
2. Will ask you about 20 open and semi-structured questions, about the partnerships and the decisions made through their life.

3. Will also complete a short questionnaire (around 15 minutes) with close ended questions

Part 1. Please describe the partnership of your company with XXXX. What was your role? Did you participate in the whole partnership? In which decisions did you participated? Which were the main participants from your company in this partnership?

Part 2.

1) Pre-formation phase (OR before the partnership had started)

1.1 What were the roles of the top management of your company, as well as of the middle management, in this phase? How do you conclude on that?

1.2 How long did the scanning of the environment last?

1.3 Did you observe informal discussions, and attempts to influence decision making, in this phase? Which were these? How do you conclude on that?

1.3.1 If yes, how were they expressed?

1.3.2 What was the role of the top management?

1.3.3 What was their impact on the decision making of your company? How do you conclude on that?

2) Formation phase (OR during negotiations)

2.1 What were the roles of the top management of your company, as well as of the middle management, in this phase? How do you conclude on that?

2.2 How long did negotiations last?

2.3 Did you observe informal discussions, and attempts to influence decision making, in this phase? Where they often? Which were these? How do you conclude on that?

2.3.1 If yes, how were they expressed?

2.3.2 What was the role of the top management?

2.3.3 What was their impact on decision making?

2.4 And what was their impact on trust/unity between the two companies?

2.5 And what was their impact on the feeling to the project commitment from your understanding?

2.6 What about their impact on the feeling of fairness in the distribution of the resources involved in the partnership? How do you conclude on that?

2.7 What about their impact on the feeling of fairness in official decision making processes and procedures, in the current phase? How do you conclude on that?

2.8 What about their impact on the feeling of fairness in the interaction between the company's representatives? How do you conclude on that?

3) Implementation phase (OR during the partnership)

3.1 What were the roles of the top management of your company, as well as of the middle management, in this phase? How do you conclude on that?

3.2 Did you observe informal discussions, and attempts to influence decision making, in this phase? Which were these? How do you conclude on that?

3.2.1 How were they expressed?

3.2.2 Did the TMT have any reaction concerning the political processes involved in the partnership?

3.3 What was their impact on the implementation of the partnership? How do you conclude on that?

3.4 And what was their impact on trust/unity between the two companies?

3.5 And what was their impact on the feeling to the project commitment from your understanding?

3.6 What about their impact on the feeling of fairness in the distribution of the resources involved in the partnership? How do you conclude on that?

3.8 What about their impact on the feeling of fairness in official decision making processes and procedures, in the current phase? How do you conclude on that?

3.9 What about their impact on the feeling of fairness in the interaction between the company's representatives? How do you conclude on that?

4) Evaluation phase

4.1 What were the roles of the top management of your company, as well as of the middle management, in this phase? How do you conclude on that?

4.2 Did you observe informal discussions, and attempts to influence decision making, in this phase? Which were these? How do you conclude on that?

4.3 How were they expressed?

4.4 What was their impact on the evaluation of the partnership? How do you conclude on that?

4.5 Was the partnership a ‘success’ after all? How do you conclude on that?

4.6 And what was the overall impact of the political OR informal activities in the partnership? How do you conclude on that?

Part 3. Questionnaire administration

Part 4. Closing

Any further information/documentation?

Could you refer me to other executives who participated in this partnership, within the firm?

Many thanks for your help. Upon the finalisation of the thesis, I will send you a brief summary with the findings of this project.

(Note: The interview guide was informed from Yin 2009; Bryman and Bell, 2007; Daniels and Cannice, 2004; Cannice, 1997; and was then amended)

Appendix five: Questionnaire

Participant name:

Date:

Please recall the partnership for which we spoke about in our interview earlier.

1) How “fair” do you believe that distribution of resources was, during the partnership?

- It was unfair
- It was somehow unfair
- It was neither fair nor unfair
- It was fair most of the times
- It was absolutely fair

2) How “fair” do you believe that the procedures followed were, during the partnership?

- They were unfair
- They were somehow unfair
- They were neither fair nor unfair
- They were fair most of the times
- They were absolutely fair

3) How ‘‘fair’’ do you believe that the conflict resolutions techniques were, during the partnership?

- They were unfair
- They were somehow unfair
- They were neither fair nor unfair
- They were fair most of the times
- They were absolutely fair

4) Was the importance of the ‘‘trust’’ that the one company had to their partner?

- It was the most important thing in our cooperation
- It was an important factors, among others
- It was not important at all

5) How often did unofficial processes (such as discussions between employees, political processes etc) occur within the partnerships?

- Always
- Very often
- Not really often
- Rarely
- Never

6) What was the impact that unofficial processes had in the partnership?

- They had a very positive impact

- Their impact was somehow positive
- Their impact was neither negative nor positive
- Their impact was somehow negative
- Their impact was absolutely negative

7) What was the impact that unofficial processes had in the trust of the partnership?

- They had a very positive impact
- Their impact was somehow positive
- Their impact was neither negative nor positive
- Their impact was somehow negative
- Their impact was absolutely negative

8) What was the impact that unofficial processes had in the feeling of ‘‘control’’ in the partnership?

- They had a very positive impact
- Their impact was somehow positive
- Their impact was neither negative nor positive
- Their impact was somehow negative
- Their impact was absolutely negative

9) What was the impact that unofficial processes had in the feeling of ‘‘commitment’’ in the partnership?

- They had a very positive impact

- Their impact was somehow positive
- Their impact was neither negative nor positive
- Their impact was somehow negative
- Their impact was absolutely negative

10) What was the impact that unofficial processes had in the feeling of “fairness” in the distribution of resources within the partnership?

- They had a very positive impact
- Their impact was somehow positive
- Their impact was neither negative nor positive
- Their impact was somehow negative
- Their impact was absolutely negative

11) What was the impact that unofficial processes had in the feeling of “fairness” in the official procedures followed within the partnership?

- They had a very positive impact
- Their impact was somehow positive
- Their impact was neither negative nor positive
- Their impact was somehow negative
- Their impact was absolutely negative

12) What was the impact that unofficial processes had in the feeling of ‘‘fairness’’ concerning conflict resolutions techniques in the partnership?

- They had a very positive impact
- Their impact was somehow positive
- Their impact was neither negative nor positive
- Their impact was somehow negative
- Their impact was absolutely negative

13) Can you please classify the four phases of partnerships, written below, according to the intensity of political processes which characterised them? Please start from the phase where politics were more intensive, moving towards the phase where politics were less intensive.

Pre-formation phase, Formation phase, Implementation phase, Evaluation phase

- a.
- b.
- c.
- d.

14) What was the impact of unofficial processes on the pre-formation phase of the partnership?

- They had an absolutely positive impact
- Their impact was somehow positive

- Their impact was neither positive nor negative
- Their impact was somehow negative
- Their impact was absolutely negative

15) What was the impact of unofficial processes on the formation phase of the partnership?

- They had an absolutely positive impact
- Their impact was somehow positive
- Their impact was neither positive nor negative
- Their impact was somehow negative
- Their impact was absolutely negative

16) What was the impact of unofficial processes on the implementation phase of the partnership?

- They had an absolutely positive impact
- Their impact was somehow positive
- Their impact was neither positive nor negative
- Their impact was somehow negative
- Their impact was absolutely negative

17) What was the impact of unofficial processes on the evaluation phase of the partnership?

- They had an absolutely positive impact

- Their impact was somehow positive
- Their impact was neither positive nor negative
- Their impact was somehow negative
- Their impact was absolutely negative

18) The strategy of your company tends to be fixed, according to official planning processes, or is it a result of emerging and unplanned events?

- It is fixed most of the times
- It is sometimes fixed, and sometimes affected from sudden, unplanned events
- It is a result of unplanned events most of the times

19) Which of the following organisational levels tends to be more important concerning the identification of opportunities for partnerships?

- The Top Management Team on the highest hierarchical levels
- The Middle Management
- Both groups appear to be equally important on the identification of opportunities.
- Another group

If you have ticked the fourth box (another group), which group is this?

20) If you were asked to classify the importance of the different groups of managers, mentioned in the previous question, in the four different phases of a partnership, which of the two would be more important, in each phase?

Please respond by writing next to the phase first the group which is more important (middle managers or top management team) and then the one which is less important.

Preformation phase	1.	2.
Formation	1.	2.
Implementation	1.	2.
Evaluation	1.	2.

Thanks for participating in this research.

Appendix six: Details concerning the interviews of this research

The table below summarises the information about the participants of this study. As mentioned in the methods section, their names are not included, in order to ensure confidentiality. In total, 53 top and middle level managers were interviewed through the two-year data collection period, which resulted in a large amount of data.

Participants of this study				
Interview number	Interview date	Company	Position	Duration
1.	050510	Alpha	CEO	110
2.	090510	Alpha	Technical Director	90
3.	140510	Lambda	CEO	100
4.	220510	Lambda	International Business Development Director A	90
5.	270510	Alpha	Operations Director A	80
6.	010610	Lambda	Project Manager	90
7.	080610	Lambda	Marketing Director	110
8.	120610	Alpha	Digital Lotteries Director	120
9.	160610	Alpha	Project manager A	100
10.	210610	Lambda	Operations Director	80
11.	100910	Delta	CEO	90
12.	150910	Delta	International Operations Director	90
13.	180910	Alpha	Regional Operations Director	100
14.	220910	Alpha	Software Engineer	80
15.	250910	Psi	CEO	90
16.	280910	Psi	Subsidiary Manager	110
17.	011010	Psi	Operations Director	90
18.	251110	Lambda	Regional Director	80
19.	281110	Lambda	Technical Director A	90
20.	301110	Delta	Technical Director	100

			Regional	
21.	011210	Delta	Operations Director A	80
22.	051210	Lambda	Wireless Director	90
23.	081210	Alpha	Procurement Director A	110
24.	121210	Alpha	Online Lottery Marketing Director	100
25.	151210	Psi	Software Development Director	90
26.	181210	Psi	Software Engineer A	80
27.	150211	Psi	Project Manager	70
28.	190211	Psi	International Business Director	100
29.	230211	Lambda	Head of R&D	80
30.	270211	Delta	Supplies Director	100
31.	020311	Delta	Human Resources Director	80
32.	040311	Alpha	Regional Marketing Director	100
33.	050311	Lambda	Digital Marketing Director	90
34.	070311	Lambda	Customer Service Director	80
35.	090311	Alpha	International Business Development Director A	80
36.	120311	Delta	Regional Operations Director A	90
37.	170311	Delta	Wireless Networks Engineer	100
38.	200311	Delta	Regional Operations Director B	110
39.	230311	Alpha	Marketing Director A	90
40.	260311	Alpha	International Business Development Director B	80
41.	290311	Psi	Marketing Director	70
42.	010411	Alpha	Operations Director B	90
43.	030411	Psi	Technical Director	100
44.	060411	Delta	Project Manager B	90
45.	090411	Psi	Regional	80

			Operations Director	
46.	110411	Psi	Software Engineer B	90
47.	140411	Alpha	Project Manager B	100
48.	170411	Delta	Wireless Networks Director	110
49.	200411	Delta	Project Manager A	90
50.	230411	Lambda	Strategic Analyst	80
51.	250411	Lambda	Technical Director B	90
52.	270411	Lambda	Network Engineer	100
53.	290411	Delta	Software Director A	90
54.	010611	Alpha	CEO	70
55.	050611	Alpha	Operations Director A	80
56.	080611	Lambda	Project Manager	80
57.	100611	Alpha	Technical Director	70
58.	150611	Lambda	CEO	90
59.	200611	Lambda	International Business Development Director A	80
60.	240611	Lambda	Marketing Director	80
61.	290611	Alpha	Digital Lotteries Director	70
62.	020711	Alpha	Project manager A	80
63.	080711	Lambda	Operations Director	90

Table 6.1: Information for the respondents who participated in this study

Appendix seven: Themes. Coding examples, frequency analysis, and summaries of findings

7. Introduction to this section

This section presents information concerning the coding and analysis of each of the three themes. Specifically, for each theme coding examples are provided, along with some tables concerning the frequency analysis conducted. This is followed by summary tables for each finding. All themes are presented and analysed in the following sections.

7.1 Political tactics: coding, analysis and summary of findings

This section presents the codings, analysis and summarises findings over the political tactics exhibited. All these are presented in the following sections.

7.1.1 Definitions, codes and examples of political tactics used in the partnerships

The first half of the table presents the impact that tactics already identified in the literature had in managers' relations. In the second half of the table, an important finding of the current thesis is depicted: because of the fact that it was taking place in a different organisational setting, this being international partnerships, a number of new tactics were observed. These tactics will be further analysed in the following paragraphs of this theme. It needs to be mentioned that the decisions in which these tactics were applied are mentioned in the text, in order to help the readers' contextual understanding. If the reader will require a reminder of these decisions, he will have to look back on section 6.3 from the previous chapter.

Coding of political tactics for data analysis		
Political Tactic	Code	Example
Coalition building	Coalbuil	‘He created an alliance with managers and employees in order to support their preference’ [Regional Operations Director A, Delta]
Support seeking	Suseek	‘The International Business Director was seeking support with employees from the technical department to support his preferred company to be chosen as a partner [Technical Director, Psi]
Ingratiation	Ingra	‘He wanted to affect the regional operations director, and attempted to have a good relationship with him, by congratulating him for his good management skills’ [Project Manager, Psi]
Strategic candidate/personal brand building	Straca	He wanted to be preferred towards the other managers,. And he attempted to appear better by stretching his achievements in past projects’ [Supplies Director, Delta]
Use of specialised knowledge	Speknow	‘In order to persuade, they used complicated arguments and terminology, which was difficult to be validated’ [International Business Director, Psi]
Information manipulation	Inman	‘He attempted to gain time advantage in decision making, by hiding the information, and then present it in a confusing way’ [Regional Director, Lambda]
Budgeting	Budge	‘They attempted to take as much money as possible for the project, by using economic arguments of a different nature’ [Operations Director A, Alpha]
Blaming, threatening and accusing others	Bla	He was blaming him for his past role in making a faulty decision in order to eliminate his role in this specific decision’ [International Business Director, Psi]
Tactics which were identified for first time		
Information stealing	Inste	‘We were gathering as much information as possible concerning their broadband services technology, which we could possibly use for our future [Network Engineer, Lambda]
Relationship building/key employee stealing	Rebu	‘During his visit, he had also two informal dinners, with key employees, where he asked them indirectly if they would like to join our company, and help us with our future expansion’ [International Operations Director, Delta]
Partnership within a partnership	Papa	‘They were attempting to request further money, by complaining jointly about the same extra costs, and other problems, in order to persuade us’ [Technical Director A, Lambda]
Information gathering for accusation expectation	Acexpt	‘We kept writing down small scale mistakes in order to accuse them in case of delays in the project’ [Project Manager, Psi]
Political tactics having an integrative impact	Polintegr	‘They ended up making us a stronger team’ [CEO, Alpha]

Political tactics having an fractious impact	Polfragm	'A conflicting environment was created, we could not trust each other' [Project Manager B, Delta]
Tactics aiming top managers	Polmtmt	'I wanted to influence the operations director' [Regional Marketing Director, Alpha]
Tactics aiming middle managers	Polmmm	'I was much more appropriate than the regional director A to suggest employees for the research team [Technical Director A, Lambda]

Table 7.1: Political tactics identified in the data analysis, their codes, and example of each one

The following section presents an overview of all tactics, the decisions in which they were applied, and the ways that decision making was affected.

7.1.2 Frequency analysis of political tactics used

This section introduces the reader to some of the frequency tables used for the analysis of political tactics. Specifically the tables introduce the tactic analysis per case study investigated. The table and the data analysis of this and the following sections are based in the following references: Bazeley, 2010; Edhlund, 2008; Balogun and Johnson, 2005; 2004; Patton, 2002; 1990; Siggelkow 2001; Strauss and Corbin, 1998; Miles and Huberman, 1994; Silverman, 1993; Gioia and Chittipedi 1991; Eisenhardt 1989; Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Van Maanen, 1983.

Political tactics frequency analysis							
Tactic	Case 1 (n=6)	Case 2 (n=9)	Case 3 (n=9)	Case 4 (n=11)	Total Cases (n=35)	Intra-organisational (n=15)	Inter-organisational (n=20)
Coalition Building	3/6 (50%)	1/9 (11%)	1/9 (11%)	4/11 (36%)	9/35 (26%)	9/15 (60%)	0/20 (0%)
Support seeking	2/6 (33%)	3/9 (33%)	2/9 (22%)	3/11 (27%)	10/35 (29%)	10/15 (66%)	0/20 (0%)
Ingratiation	1/6 (16%)	2/9 (22%)	1/9 (11%)	4/11 (36%)	8/35 (23%)	8/15 (53%)	0/20 (0%)
Strategic candidate	2/6 (33%)	3/9 (33%)	2/9 (22%)	3/11 (27%)	10/35 (29%)	10/15 (66%)	0/20 (0%)
Use of specialised knowledge	3/6 (50%)	4/9 (44%)	4/9 (44%)	6/11 (55%)	17/35 (49%)	8/15 (53%)	9/20 (45%)

Information manipulation	1/6 (16%)	2/9 (22%)	3/9 (33%)	3/11 (27%)	9/35 (26%)	9/15 (60%)	0/20 (0%)
Blaming, threatening and accusing others	2/6 (33%)	3/9 (33%)	4/9 (44%)	5/11 (45%)	14/35 (40%)	6/15 (40%)	8/20 (40%)
Budgeting	1/6 (16%)	1/9 (11%)	2/9 (22%)	1/11 (9%)	5/35 (14%)	0/15 (0%)	5/20 (25%)
Information stealing	1/6 (16%)	2/9 (22%)	3/9 (33%)	3/11 (27%)	8/35 (23%)	0/15 (0%)	8/20 (40%)
Relationship building/key employee stealing	1/6 (16%)	1/9 (11%)	2/9 (22%)	3/11 (27%)	7/35 (20%)	0/15 (0%)	7/20 (35%)
Information gathering for accusation expectation	1/6 (16%)	2/9 (22%)	2/9 (22%)	3/11 (27%)	8/35 (23%)	0/15 (0%)	8/20 (40%)

Table 7.2: Codes and data analysis example one

Note: N=number of decisions analysed

7.1.3 Summary of findings per political tactic

The following section presents information about the findings for each tactic identified through the data analysis.

7.1.3.1 Coalition building

Coalition building is a tactic which has been widely documented in the existing literature in politics. It refers to the development of stronger relationships with other managers, mainly of the same hierarchy. These stronger relationships are often exhibited through mutual support in decision making processes. The result of mutual support is the creation of groups of managers with specific organisational power and influence within the company. The table below summarises the findings for this tactic:

Impact of coalition building tactic		
Tactic	Decisions in which was applied	Way that decision making was affected
Coalition Building	Intra-organisational decisions mainly: Employee selection, partner selection	In intra-organisational decisions, its application would result in separation between groups of managers and employees, of similar hierarchical levels, who had formed coalitions, because of the fact that the coalitions created were easily observed, creating widespread feeling of competition between different teams within the companies.

Table 7.3: Decisions in which the ‘coalition building’ tactic was applied, and the way it impacted the relations of managers and employees of the case companies.

Note: The ‘employee selection’ decision refers to several decisions made concerning the choice of managers and employees who would form an alliance in order to be chosen to carry out specific project tasks, such as research teams, negotiations teams, and evaluation teams.

7.1.3.2 Support seeking

Support seeking is another tactic which was observed in the decisions studied, and has already been documented in single companies. Similar to coalition building, it involves the creation of stronger relations for mutual support during decision making processes. It is different from coalition building however on that it focuses in the creation of stronger relations of managers between different organisational levels, rather from the same one, which is the case in coalition building. The table below summarises the findings for this tactic:

Impact of support seeking tactic		
Tactic	Decisions in which was applied	Way that decision making was affected
Support seeking	Employee selection, partner selection	Creation of a negative presupposition mainly from

		lower managers, against the manager who, during intra-organisational decisions, was creating a competitive support group. Fractious environment could expand between different hierarchical levels.
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Table 7.4: Decisions in which the ‘support seeking’ tactic was applied, and the way it impacted the relations of managers and employees of the case companies

Note: The ‘employee selection’ decision refers to several decisions made concerning the choice of managers and employees who would carry out specific project tasks, which could have benefits for the manager seeking for support, such as research teams, partner evaluation team, negotiations teams, and evaluation teams

7.1.3.3 Ingratiation

Ingratiation is one more tactic which is related with the creation of stronger ties between employees, thus being of a similar nature with the coalition building and support seeking tactics, described above. Its difference however lies on the fact that it is initiated from managers who target higher hierarchical levels, contrary to what happens in the ‘support seeking’ tactic, where the tactic is initiated from managers of higher hierarchical levels, seeking support for their suggestions. It was mainly evident in intra-organisational decisions, as the possibility for creation of stronger ties with managers from the partner company could appear suspicious and as a result it was almost non-existent. One of the few ways that managers from lower levels can approach those from higher is through the use of ingratiation, by using the appropriate words, and appraising them. By engaging in such activities, those managers from lower hierarchical levels attempted to create a positive relationship with top managers. The table below summarises the findings for this tactic:

Impact of support seeking tactic		
Tactic	Decisions in which was applied	Way that decision making was affected
Ingratiation	Employee selection, partner selection	Resulted in the creation of tensions in lower managerial levels, because of the existence of uncertainty resulting from an environment governed by informal communication and transactions targeting managers from higher levels during intra-organisational decisions

Table 7.5: Decisions in which the ‘ingratiation’ tactic was applied, and the way it impacted the relations of managers and employees of the case companies

Note: The ‘employee selection’ decision refers to several decisions made concerning the choice of managers and employees who, in order to be chosen to carry out specific project tasks, would attempt to influence decision makers by creating good relations with them, through the use positive words and comments. Such decisions included research teams, negotiations teams, and project implementation team.

7.1.3.4 Strategic candidate/personal brand building

The strategic candidate tactic consists of activities which help the managers who apply them to appear more appropriate to carry out the tasks being discussed in a specific decision. It is a tactic which is mostly related to employee selection, involving activities such as reputation building within the company by mentioning personal work achievements. These sometimes can be inflated, in order to influence employee choice through the stretching of the manager’s skills and personal experience. It is different from the ingratiation tactic on that it focuses on the candidates and not the decision maker, acting like a self-marketing activity. The table below summarises the findings for this tactic:

Impact of strategic candidate tactic		
Tactic	Decisions in which was applied	Way that decision making was affected
Strategic candidate	Intra-organisational: Employee selection	Creation of tensions and conflict between lower and middle managers, who, attempting to be preferred against other, "sold" themselves through formal and informal activities, in order to differentiate themselves and appear better to the decision makers

Table 7.6: Decisions in which the 'strategic candidate' tactic was applied, and the way it impacted the relations of managers and employees of the case companies

Note: The 'employee selection' decision refers to several decisions made concerning the choice of managers and employees who, in order to be chosen to carry out specific project tasks, would attempt to influence decision makers by creating a positive image towards their skills and their achievements, through the stretching of their strengths and their comparison with those of other employees. Such decisions included research team, negotiations team, and project implementation team.

7.1.3.5 Use of specialised knowledge

The use of specialised knowledge and technical arguments in order to influence strategic decision making was a tactic observed in the cases being analysed. This tactic has been documented in the literature, and involves the use of technical knowledge from managers, which is difficult to be understood from other decision makers. Through the use of such arguments, the persuasion of other decision makers is targeted. This tactic was evident in both inter and intra-organisational decisions. In the cases analysed, it was mostly evident in inter-organisational decisions. The table below summarises the findings for this tactic:

Impact of specialised knowledge tactic		
Tactic	Decisions in which was applied	Way that decision making was affected
Use of specialised knowledge	Intra-organisational: Partner selection, employee selection Inter-organisational: decision for allocation of further financial resources to the project, location choice, decision on method and extent of evaluation, choice of programming language, budget allocation	Mostly evident in inter-organisational decisions, when applied it tended to unite the case companies' managers, as through the use of complex argumentation the persuasion of the partner was attempted. When applied within the case companies, it resulted in the creation of distrust and dishonesty between the managers of the case companies

Table 7.7: Decisions in which the 'use of specialised knowledge' tactic was applied, and the way it impacted the relations of managers and employees of the case companies

Note: The 'partner selection' decision refers to intra-organisational discussions on the choice of the partner before the initiation of negotiations between the different parties. The 'employee selection' decision refers to the intra-organisational choice of managers and employees, in order to carry out specific project tasks, such as research team, and project implementation team. The 'budget allocation' decisions refers to inter-organisational negotiations concerning the distribution of the financial resources of the project between the two partners

7.1.3.6 Information manipulation

One more tactic which was observed in decision making was related to information manipulation. This tactic consisted of different ways which information concerning decision was misrepresented, in order to advance the preferences of the managers applying this tactic. Manipulation appeared to occur, in two different ways: Delays in information transmission, and provision of fake or partially true information. The next sections present these two generic ways to manipulate information within companies, and the impact that this tactic had.

The table below summarises the findings for this tactic:

Impact of information manipulation tactic		
Tactic	Decisions in which was applied	Way that decision making was affected
Information manipulation	Partner selection, employee selection	Creation of an environment of distrust and conflict between decision makers, because of the fear of obtaining delayed or manipulated information again in the future. In order to regain trust, in the future they would require information through official channels or substitution of managers

Table 7.8: Decisions in which the information manipulation tactic was applied, and the way it impacted the relations of managers and employees of the case companies

Note: The ‘partner selection’ decision refers to intra-organisational discussions on the choice of the partner before the initiation of negotiations between the different parties. The ‘employee selection’ decision refers to the intra-organisational choice of managers and employees, in order to carry out specific project tasks, such as research team, and project implementation team.

7.1.3.7 Blaming, threatening and accusing others

The blaming and threatening tactic has to do with the accusation of other managers, in order to advance the interests of the manager applying this tactic in issues being currently discussed. The accusations can be based in both facts and hypotheses, as the essence of the tactic is the creation of a negative opinion against a colleague. Through the creation of a negative opinion, the suggestion of the manager employing the tactic can be preferred, as he would appear to have a more credible suggestion. From the data analysis, it arrived that this tactic is applied in both intra and inter-organisational levels. The table below summarises the findings for this tactic:

Impact of blaming and accusation tactic		
Tactic	Decisions in which was applied	Way that decision making was affected
Blaming and accusation of others	Intra-organisational: Employee selection, partner selection, Inter-organisational: selection of distribution partner, substitution of project managers, cash flow management, creation of TQM team, decision for allocation of further financial resources to the	Observed in both intra and inter-organisational decisions. During intra-organisational decisions, It appeared to create a highly conflicting environment within the case companies, as it also involved blackmailing and the use of real and fake accusations.

	project	The impact was the opposite however in inter-organisational decisions, as the case companies employees would have to cooperate and win the partner through the exchange of true and artificial blaming and accusations
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Table 7.9: Decisions in which the ‘blaming and accusation’ tactic was applied, and the way it impacted the relations of managers and employees of the case companies

Note: The ‘partner selection’ decision refers to intra-organisational discussions on the choice of the partner before the initiation of negotiations between the different parties. The ‘employee selection’ decision refers to the intra-organisational choice of managers and employees, in order to carry out specific project tasks, such as research team, and project implementation team. The ‘allocation of further financial resources to the project’ decision refers to inter-organisational negotiations concerning the a change in the initially agreed distribution of the financial resources of the project between the two partners

7.1.3.8 Budgeting

The budgeting tactic, as its name implies, involves the use of arguments in order to persuade the decision makers over the allocation of resources between interested parties. This argumentation does not have to be based necessarily on the real needs of the case companies; rather it is more related with pressure and persuasion in order to affect the decision makers. As observed from the analysed data, it was evident in inter-organisational decisions. The table below summarises the findings for this tactic:

Impact of budgeting tactic		
Tactic	Decisions in which was applied	Way that decision making was affected
Budgeting	Inter-organisational decisions: Budget allocation, Make or buy IS system, cash flow management, change of pricing policy/profit re-negotiation	Observed in inter-organisational decisions, it would unite managers and employees of the case companies who would have to reject the financial argumentation exhibited from the partner and attempt to provide alternative arguments of an economic nature, In order to persuade their partner

Table 7.10: Decisions in which the ‘Budgeting’ tactic was applied, and the way it impacted the relations of managers and employees of the case companies

Note: The ‘budget allocation’ decisions refers to inter-organisational negotiations concerning the distribution of the financial resources of the project between the two partners

The tactics mentioned in this section have been already identified in the existing literature. As the data analysis showed, they can have a different effect that they have in single companies. The different organisational context of the study however enabled the identification of political tactics which have not been observed yet in the existing literature. The newly identified tactics and their integrative or fractious impact in relations within the case companies is presented in the following section.

7.1.3.9 Political tactics unique in a partnerships setting

The unique organisational setting of the study assisted the researcher to identify some tactics which have not been observed in the existing literature. Initially observed in the pilot study, their existence was increasingly evident, during the subsequent rounds of data collection and analysis. These tactics, namely the information stealing, relationship building/key employee stealing, partnership within a partnership and information gathering for accusation expectation, are described in the following paragraphs. The table below summarises the findings for this tactic:

7.1.3.10 Information stealing

Information stealing was a tactic which was observed in all cases being investigated. It consisted of gathering crucial information from the partner, concerning either technical knowledge or organisational processes in which the partner appeared to be superior, and which the case company did not have. As it can be implied, it is only applied in an inter-organisational level, as it aims information collection about the

partners' skills and competencies. Through the information that the company gathered, the company could use it for its own benefit, which this could be the creation of a new department within the company or its entrance in a new market. The table below summarises the findings for this tactic:

Impact of information stealing tactic		
Tactic	Decisions in which was applied	Way that decision making was affected
Information stealing	Inter-organisational decisions: Budget allocation, Make or buy IS system, cash flow management, change of pricing policy/profit re-negotiation, agreement on method and extent of evaluation, selection of programming language	Applied in inter-organisational level, it would oblige managers and employees to cooperate in efficient and creative ways, in order to collect information which could be used in the future to benefit their company, and enhance the feeling trust and commitment between them

Table 7.11: Decisions in which the 'information stealing' tactic was applied, and the way it impacted the relations of managers and employees of the case companies

Note: The 'budget allocation' decisions refers to inter-organisational negotiations concerning the distribution of the financial resources of the project between the two partners

7.1.3.11 Relationship building/key employee stealing

The 'relationship building' tactic, consists of creating stronger ties with key managers and employees of the partner. These employees, once identified, are regarded as crucial, in order to help the company in its future operations. It consists of attempts for informal meetings and gatherings between managers of the case companies and the partner companies, where possibilities for extension of their cooperation are discussed. In other words, this tactic involves all the activities in order to attract key managers of the partner companies, which could help the case companies in their future expansion. As implied, this tactic can be only observed in an inter-organisational level. The table below summarises the findings for this tactic:

Impact of relationship building and key employee stealing tactic		
Tactic	Decisions in which was applied	Way that decision making was affected
Relationship building/key employee stealing	Inter-organisational decisions: Method and extent of evaluation, change of pricing policy and profit redistribution, buy or make information system, selection of programming language, cash flow management	Applied during inter-organisational decision making, it resulted on the formation of stronger relationships between the managers and employees of the case companies, because of the fact that they had to cooperate in secretive and marginally illegal ways in order to build relationships and attract employees for their company

Table 7.12: Decisions in which the ‘relationship building’ tactic was applied, and the way it impacted the relations of managers and employees of the case companies

Note: The ‘method and extent of evaluation’ decision refers to inter-organisational negotiations concerning the way that the evaluation process would be conducted and the extent of the communications that those carrying out the evaluation would have with the managers of the other company

7.1.3.12 Partnership within a partnership

During the data analysis, the use of a rather unexpected tactic was identified. The ‘partnership within a partnership’ tactic involved the creation of an alliance between the managers and employees carrying out the project. Similar to coalition building, but with an inter-organisational character, the final aim of this tactic would be the increase of the benefits that those carrying out the project would enjoy. It can be regarded as inter-organisational alliance between managers and employees of similar hierarchical levels, aiming the higher managerial levels of both partners. The table below summarises the findings for this tactic:

Tactic	Decisions in which was applied	Way that decision making was affected
Partnership within a partnership	Inter-organisational: Decision for allocation of further resources to the project, dropping of weekend work, modification of bonus policy	Different, depending on organisational levels. Within middle managerial levels, relations between managers could be strengthened, in both inter-organisational and intra-

		organisational levels, as they would have to cooperate and engage in a number of activities, in order to persuade the top management. This was not the same between top and middle management within the companies however, as the top management of both partners would realise the self-serving behaviour of the working teams, which could cause loss of trust, and would oblige them to take actions in order to avoid such mistakes in the future, such as the creation of control teams.
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Table 7.13: Decisions in which the ‘partnership within a partnership’ tactic was applied, and the way it impacted the relations of managers and employees of the case companies

Note: The ‘decision for allocation of further resources to the project’ refers to inter-organisational discussions between top and middle managers in order further amounts from the budget to be allocated to the project

7.1.3.13 Information gathering for accusation expectation

One more tactic which was observed in the cases studied involved collecting and writing down the mistakes and the wrong choices exhibited from the partner, which could be later used in the case of a conflicting situation. Such mistakes and wrong choices, which would not have large impact at the time they occurred, because in this case they would be immediately brought up and discussed between the partners, could help the company secure itself against the arguments that the partner company would use. Related to the ‘blaming’ tactic, its main difference is that it refers to preparedness for a conflicting situation, rather than the political act of blaming *per se*, which could also involve the use non-existent accusations. The table below summarises the findings for this tactic:

Impact of information gathering for accusation expectation tactic		
Tactic	Decisions in which was applied	Way that decision making was affected
Information gathering for accusation expectation	Inter-organisational Decisions: Change of pricing policy, buy or make information system, creation of a TQM team, substitution of project managers,	Evident in inter-organisational decisions and the partnership implementation, it would enhance the cooperative spirit and the trust between the project

	selection of programming language, selection of distribution partner	implementation team, as they would be responsible for collection of information during the life of the partnership in order to protect the company in case of a problematic situation, which could increase the commitment and the loyalty of the team to their company, resulting on stronger links between them
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Table 7.14: Decisions in which the ‘partnership within a partnership’ tactic was applied, and the way it impacted the relations of managers and employees of the case companies

This section described the use of political tactics which have not been yet identified in the literature. Their observation resulted from the unique organisational context of the study, this being international partnerships. These tactics, which would target the partner company, would have an integrative effect mostly within the case companies. The only exception was the ‘partnership within a partnership’ tactic, which would have a rather integrative effect within the case companies.

7.2 Middle Managers: coding, analysis and summary of findings

This section summarises and discusses the different tables of analysis used in for the second theme of this research, concerning middle manager politics and their strategic roles.

7.2.1 Introduction to this section

This section presents the codings, analysis and summarises findings over the political tactics exhibited. Initially, the codes used are presented, followed by a brief presentation of the frequency analysis conducted. The section concludes by summarising the findings for this theme.

7.2.2 Definitions, codes and examples of middle managers autonomy and job focus in the partnerships

The table below presents the codes used for the analysis of this theme, along with quotation from the participants, in order to get a better understanding of the codes used.

Coding of middle managers level of autonomy and job focus analysis		
Level of autonomy and focus of job activities	Code used	Example
High level autonomy in internal	Hint	'The customer service director had power and freedom on the way he would complete the departments' targets...' [Operations Director, Lambda]
Low level autonomy in internal	Lint	'My position did not give me enough space to make moves...and act independently' [Wireless Networks Engineer, Delta]
High level autonomy in external	Hext	'The International Business Director had freedom from his position...he was able to spend money for travelling...he was always alarmed, seeking for business opportunities...' [Operations Director B, Alpha]
Low level autonomy in external	Lext	'Even though his obligations were clear, he would have freedom on the way he would carry out his tasks...which would include research and communications with possible partners' [Technical Director, Delta]
Integrative impact of the political behaviour exhibited	Polint	'His extensive technical knowledge, and the freedom he enjoyed from his position, made him bring a number of different business ideas to the company...new ideas would always create a better environment within the company..' [Technical Director, Psi]
Fractious impact of the political behaviour exhibited	Polfrag	'The only way they could improve their position in the future and be able to use more their creativity would be...the creation of alliances...which created a lack of trust between them' [Project manager, Psi]

Table 7.15: Codes used in the data analysis concerning middle managers' autonomy and the way it affects their political behaviour

7.2.3 Frequency analysis of middle managers' political activity

This section introduces the reader to some of the frequency tables used for the analysis of middle manager political activity. Specifically, the tables introduce the tactic analysis per case study investigated, followed by an analysis of the frequency of the impact of the behaviours exhibited. The table and the data analysis of this and the following sections are based in the following references: Bazeley, 2010; Edhlund, 2008; Balogun and Johnson, 2005; 2004; Patton, 2002; 1990; Siggelkow 2001; Strauss and Corbin, 1998; Miles and Huberman, 1994; Silverman, 1993; Gioia and Chittipedi 1991; Eisenhardt 1989; Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Van Maanen, 1983.

Frequency analysis for level of autonomy and job focus							
level of autonomy and focus of job activities	Case 1 (n=6)	Case 2 (n=9)	Case 3 (n=9)	Case 4 (n=11)	Total Cases (n=35)	Intra-organisational (n=15)	Inter-organisational (n=20)
High level autonomy in internal	2/6 (33%)	4/9 (44%)	5/9 (55%)	6/11 (55%)	17/35 (49%)	10/15 (66%)	7/20 (35%)
Low level autonomy in internal	3/6 (50%)	3/9 (33%)	4/9 (44%)	4/11 (36%)	14/35 (40%)	12/15 (80%)	2/20 (10%)
High level autonomy in external	2/6 (33%)	3/9 (33%)	5/9 (55%)	6/11 (55%)	16/35 (46%)	2/15 (13%)	14/20 (70%)
Low level autonomy in external	3/6 (50%)	3/9 (33%)	2/9 (22%)	4/11 (36%)	12/35 (34%)	2/15 (13%)	10/20 (50%)

Table 7.16: Codes and data analysis example two

Note: N=number of decisions analysed

Frequency analysis of middle manager roles and impact				
	High level autonomy in internal (n=17)	Low level autonomy in internal (n=14)	High level autonomy in external (n=16)	Low level autonomy in external (n=11)
Integrative impact of the political behaviour exhibited	5/17	5/14	13/16	8/11 (73%)
Fractious impact of the political behaviour exhibited	12/17	9/14	3/16	3/11 (27%)

Table 7.17: Codes and data analysis example three

Note: N is the number of decisions in which managers belonging in the corresponding categories participated

7.2.4 Summary of findings for different middle manager activities

The following section presents the codes used for the analysis of each different type of middle manager identified in this study.

7.2.4.1 Summary of activities of Middle Manager with low level of autonomy and internal job focus

The table below summarises the findings for this specific category of middle managers, depending on the autonomy they enjoy, and their job focus.

Decisions in which middle managers with low autonomy and internal job focus were involved	Usual positions of these middle managers	Impact of their political activity within the case companies
Partner selection committee	Operations director, project manager	Fractious mostly, as the employee choice would be characterised by competitive behaviour, often characterised by the use of

		unfair methods, between the different candidates
Employee selection concerning internal research	Business development, project manager, marketing director, operations director, R&D director	Integrative, as it can involve complicated tasks, which however can help the stronger development of within-company relationships
Employee substitution	Project managers, software/wireless engineers, human resource director	Fractious, because of the internal competition and conflict created from the substitution
Cutting down of customer service	Technical directors, project managers	Fractious, as a large conflict and argumentation is created from the different employees of the department which is being cut down

Table 7.18: Decisions in which middle managers with low autonomy and an internal job focus participated, their job positions, and impact of their political behaviour

7.2.4.2 Summary of activities of Middle Manager with low level of autonomy and external job focus

The table below summarises the findings for this specific category of middle managers, depending on the autonomy they enjoy, and their job focus.

Decisions in which middle managers with low autonomy and external job focus where involved	Usual positions of these middle managers	Impact of their political activity within the case companies
Partner selection	Technical, software, wireless, operations directors	Integrative mostly, because of the 'common target' feeling created. Fractious in the cases of disagreement over partner choice
Participation in negotiations	Sales, operations, business development, marketing, technical directors	Integrative, as through their activities, common benefit would be maximised
External research team	R&D managers, technical	Integrative, as the most would help the company make the best choices.

selection	directors, engineers	Fractious in the cases were disagreements existed over the quality of the information provided
Employee selection for partnership evaluation	Wireless, Software engineers, marketing associates	Integrative in most cases, as it would be regarded as an activity through which the company's future interests would be advanced. Fractious effect in the cases were disagreement would exist over the choices that the manager carrying out the evaluation were made

Table 7.19: Decisions in which middle managers with low autonomy and an external job focus participated, their job positions, and impact of their political behaviour

7.2.4.3 Summary of activities of Middle Manager with high level of autonomy and internal job focus

The table below summarises the findings for this specific category of middle managers, depending on the autonomy they enjoy, and their job focus.

Decisions in which middle managers with high autonomy and internal job focus where involved	Usual positions of these middle managers	Impact of their political activity within the case companies
Organisational change (i.e. customer service cut down)	Operations, Customer Service, Human Resource Directors	Fractious, as resistance towards other manager would be legitimated, creating interdepartmental conflict
Within-company budget allocation for the project	Project Manager, Finance, Technical, Operations Directors	Fractious, as feelings of unfair budget allocation would be created. Integrative in the case that budget re-allocation would be widely agreed as a fair pay off for hard work.
Creation of TQM team	Technical, Operations director, project managers	Integrative, as it would be regarded as a fair selection process, for a new task, that the company previously had not engaged, characterised by uncertainty
Selection of the engineers who will go to work for the project	Technical, human resource, business development, marketing directors	Fractious, as feelings of unfair employee selection would be created

Table 7.20: Decisions in which middle managers with high autonomy and an internal job focus participated, their job positions, and impact of their political behaviour

7.2.4.4 Summary of activities of Middle Manager with high level of autonomy and external job focus

The table below summarises the findings for this specific category of middle managers, depending on the autonomy they enjoy, and their job focus.

Decisions in which middle managers with high autonomy and external job focus where involved	Usual positions of these middle managers	Impact of their political activity within the case companies
Project creation and environmental scanning team	Business Development, Technical, Regional Directors	Integrative, as new business opportunities would help the company's growth, creating opportunities for everyone. In some cases it was fractious, when their suggestions were regarded as 'biased'
Negotiations	Technical, Operations , Marketing Directors	Integrative, as they would work together to achieve the best possible result for their company
Purchase or in house development of information system	Technical/Software Director, Project Managers	Integrative, as it could help the company collect important information which could be used for its future operations
Selection of programming language	Software Director, Project Manager	Integrative, as the development of relationships with key employees of the partner company could help the case company in its future expansion

Table 7.21: Decisions in which middle managers with high autonomy and an external job focus participated, their job positions, and impact of their political behaviour

7.3 Political activity in the different phases of firm partnerships

The section below presents and summarises information concerning politics exhibited in the different phases of firm partnerships.

7.3.1 Coding procedures and examples

The table below presents the codes used for data analysis on partnership phases, and the impact of political activity.

Coding for the impact of political activity in the different phases of partnerships		
Concept being investigated	Code	Example
Political behaviour exhibited in Pre-formation	PolPre	'There was large competition, and informal communications, from engineers towards myself, until the formation of the research group concerning the lottery development...[Technical Director, Alpha]
Political behaviour exhibited in Formation	PolForm	'Upon the announcement of the project, we started negotiations with Beta...which were characterised from informal activities, until a final agreement was reached' [International Business Development Director B, Alpha]
Political behaviour exhibited in Implementation	Polimpl	'Both project managers started claiming extra money to be allocated, which however appeared to be suspicious to us' [CEO, Delta]
Political behaviour exhibited in Evaluation	Poleval	'I visited their offices, part of our mutual evaluation agreement...there I arranged informal dinners with two of their employees...in order to know better their expectation...which could bring them to our company in the future' [Regional Operations Director, Psi]
Political behaviour focusing in the company	Polcom	'He was well connected in the company, as he the head of the another department was his uncle...when he saw that he was not included in the research, he transferred this to his uncle...who then came to complain to me... ' [Regional Operations Director, Psi]
Political behaviour focusing in the partner company	PolPar	'After we handed the project to our client, we then wanted to make an evaluation...this involved communications with Epsilon...in which many informal activities which could help our company in the future were used' [Software Engineer B, Psi]
Integrative impact of the political behaviour exhibited	PolInt	'The formation of the team...was more important to be fair...which helped us remain focused to our targets' [Software Engineer A, Psi]
Fractionous impact of the political behaviour exhibited	Polfrag	'We felt blackmailed...we could not trust them at all after that' [Regional Operations Director, Alpha]

Table 7.22: Codes used in the data analysis of the relationship between the phase of the partnership in which a decision is being made and the impact of the middle managers' political behaviour being exhibited

7.3.2 Frequency analysis of the impact of political activity in different phases

This section introduces the reader to some of the frequency tables used for the analysis of middle manager political activity. Specifically, the tables introduce the tactic analysis per case study investigated, followed by an analysis of the frequency of the impact of the behaviours exhibited. The table and the data analysis of this and the following sections are based in the following references: Bazeley, 2010; Edhlund, 2008; Balogun and Johnson, 2005; 2004; Patton, 2002; 1990; Siggelkow 2001; Strauss and Corbin, 1998; Miles and Huberman, 1994; Silverman, 1993; Gioia and Chittipedi 1991; Eisenhardt 1989; Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Van Maanen, 1983.

	Case 1 (n=6)	Case 2 (n=9)	Case 3 (n=9)	Case 4 (n=11)	Total Cases (n=35)	Intra-organisational (n=15)	Inter-organisational (n=20)
Political behaviour exhibited in Pre-formation	2/6 (33%)	2/9 (22%)	3/9 (33%)	3/11 (27%)	10/35 (29%)	9/15 (60%)	1/20 (5%)
Political behaviour exhibited in Formation	1/6 (16%)	2/9 (22%)	1/9 (11%)	2/11 (18%)	6/35 (17%)	2/15 (13%)	4/20 (20%)
Political behaviour exhibited in Implementation	2/6 (33%)	4/9 (44%)	4/9 (44%)	4/11 (36%)	14/35 (40%)	2/15 (13%)	12/20 (60%)
Political behaviour exhibited in Evaluation	1/6 (16%)	1/9 (11%)	1/9 (11%)	2/11 (18%)	5/35 (14%)	1/15 (7%)	4/20 (20%)

Table 7.23: Codes and data analysis example four

Note: N is the corresponding number of decision in each phase

	Political behaviour targeting the company	Political behaviour targeting the partner company
Political behaviour exhibited in Pre-formation	8/10 (80%)	2/10 (20%)
Political behaviour exhibited in Formation	1/6 (16%)	5/6 (84%)
Political behaviour exhibited in Implementation	2/14 (14%)	12/14 (86%)
Political behaviour exhibited in Evaluation	1/5 (20%)	4/5 (80%)

Table 7.24: Codes and data analysis example five

Note: N is the number of decisions analysed in EACH phase

	Integrative impact of the political behaviour exhibited	Fractionious impact of the political behaviour exhibited
Political behaviour exhibited in Pre-formation	3/10 (30%)	7/10 (70%)
Political behaviour exhibited in Formation	5/6 (84%)	1/6 (16%)
Political behaviour exhibited in Implementation	12/14 (86%)	2/14 (14%)
Political behaviour exhibited in Evaluation	4/5 (80%)	1/5 (20%)

Table 7.25: Codes and data analysis example six

Note: N is the number of decisions analysed in EACH phase

7.3.3 Summary of the impact of political activity in the different phases of firm partnerships

The section below summarises the findings concerning the political activity in each different phases of the partnerships of this study.

7.3.3.1 Pre-formation

The table below summarises the findings concerning political activity in the pre-formation phase of the partnerships of this study.

Decisions being made in the pre-formation phase	Political behaviour surrounding these decisions	Impact of the political behaviour within the case companies
Employee selection for creation of research group	Blaming between the candidates, preferential selection between those responsible for the final choice	Creation of feelings of distrust and unfairness, where work disappointed would be openly expressed, combined with conflict and argumentation, having a fractious effect in employees' unity
Business idea identification	Informal communication with potential clients and use of personal networks	Enhancement of employees unity, through establishment of new project, which would create company-wide benefits, having integrative effect in employees relations
Partner identification	Promotion of partners which could indirectly benefit specific managers	Competition and conflict between middle managers with decision making power

Table 7.26: Decisions made in the pre-formation phase of the partnerships, political behaviour surrounding them, and its impact within the company

7.3.3.2 Partnership formation

The table below summarises the findings concerning political activity in the formation phase of the partnerships of this study.

Decisions being made in the formation phase	Political behaviour surrounding these decisions	Impact of the political behaviour within the case companies
Budget allocation	Use of constant argumentation until a final deal had been reached	Growth of the team feeling between those employees from the case companies carrying out the negotiations
Project details including technical specifications	Use of technical knowledge and information in order to persuade the partner about the appropriateness of the company's suggestions, technical information stealing from the potential partner	Development of stronger supportive relations between the negotiations, while simultaneously trust would develop towards those responsible for instant information provision, and those collecting technical information from the partner
Choice of working	Use of economic argumentation and exchange of benefits until a location which would benefit both	Improvement of the employees unity, as they cooperate towards the

place for the project	partners would have been chosen	achievement of common targets, which would ultimately benefit the organisation as a whole
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Table 7.27: Decisions made in the formation phase of the partnerships, political behaviour surrounding them, and its impact within the company

7.3.3.3 Implementation

The table below summarises the findings concerning political activity in the implementation phase of the partnerships of this study.

Decisions being made in the implementation phase	Political behaviour surrounding these decisions	Impact of the political behaviour within the case companies
Local partner choices	Support towards preferred partners, information manipulation, constant argumentation in order to persuade, blaming over previous choices	Integrative effect within the case companies, as the employees and the managers would work together in order to protect their company's interests
Budget re-negotiations (between partners)	Constant argumentation based on budget allocations, blaming between partners, use of specialised knowledge in order to persuade	Integrative effect, as their cooperation towards persuasion would lead to the strengthening of the team unity
Further resource allocation to the project implementation teams	Use of complicated knowledge and information manipulation	Integrative between the working teams, fractious between the top and the middle management, which would lose its trust towards their claims and the way they implement the project
Decisions on technical aspects of the project	Use of technical knowledge, threatening over possible delays and problems which could result from wrong choices, information stealing	Integrative, as employees would form alliances in order to persuade the partner company towards technological choices which could advance their company's interests
Employee substitution	Blaming and argumentation	Integrative, as the cooperation of the working in order to defend their company's interests would increase the trust and the feeling for reliability they had between them

Table 7.28: Decisions made in the implementation phase of the partnerships, political behaviour surrounding them, and its impact within the company

7.3.3.4 Evaluation

The table below summarises the findings concerning political activity in the evaluation phase of the partnerships of this study.

Decisions being made in the evaluation phase	Political behaviour surrounding these decisions	Impact of the political behaviour within the case companies
Evaluation method and extent	Information collecting from the partner company, creation of relationships with key employees, and information protection during visits from the partner company	All activities would be done under confidentiality, from employees which were reliable. This in turn resulted in stronger relations and enhanced the team unity.
Employee choice	Blaming, argumentations and alliance creation with the decision makers in order the candidates to increase their chance of being chosen	Intensive competition resulted in conflict and argumentation within the case companies

Table 7.29: Decisions made in the evaluation phase of the partnerships, political behaviour surrounding them, and its impact within the company

Appendix eight: Informed consent



Company Name

Company Address

XX, 20XX

To Whom It May Concern:

This is to introduce an individual researcher from the University of Edinburgh Business School, who wishes to conduct research in the decision making processes within higher and middle levels of corporations. The research will be conducted through the use of 40 semi-structured interviews, accompanied by questionnaires. The interviews shall last one hour. Four companies will be investigated, from two countries (UK and Greece).

Ultimately, one of the main motives for investigating decision making in companies is to provide updated research on this area. In addition, there has never been conducted a comparative study. With your cooperation, the case studies will be able to successfully guide and support recommendations about improvements in both the theory and practice of management.

At this point, I shall mention that the whole research follows the ESRC Ethics guidelines¹, as well as the Ethics guidelines of the University of Edinburgh², and the guidelines of the Hellenic Ethics in Research Institute³. For this reason, the results of my research will be reported with full anonymity, and all the documents will be destroyed after the analysis of the data, in order to preserve confidentiality.

In addition, during the interview process, in order to ensure that I have understood what you have said properly when I come to look at my notes later, and to save us time while I take notes, I shall use an electronic recorder. Once I will have finished the analysis of the data, the recordings will be destroyed. Notwithstanding these safeguards, if you wish, however, that the interview not be recorded, I will not use an electronic device.

On behalf of me and my supervisors, Dr. R Bradley Mackay and Dr. Simon Harris, I wish to express you our gratitude for your assistance. Should you wish to be entered on my emailing list for the final results of my PhD thesis, please let me know.

Again, thank you very much.

Sincerely,

/signed/

Konstantinos Tsanis MCSI, MSc

PhD Candidate in International Business and

Strategy in the University of Edinburgh

Business School

¹ http://www.esrcsocietytoday.ac.uk/ESRCInfoCentre/Images/ESRC_Re_Ethics_Frame_tcm6-11291.pdf

² http://www.sps.ed.ac.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0005/4658/SSPSEthicsProceduresJuly06.pdf

³ http://www.rc.auth.gr/dnnee/Portals/0/kodikas_deontol/kwdikasdeontologias.pdf

Appendix nine: Analytical set of questions used for the establishment of codes and for generalisation during data analysis

9.1 Analytical set of questions used for creation of codes

This section presents the analytical questions made for the establishment of each code. As mentioned in the coding section. A set of analytical questions was performed in order to improve the quality of the codes used throughout the different phases of data collection and analysis. These are described in the following table. The second section describes the different activities that the researcher performed to ensure that the data collection collection methods were robust and coherent.

Parameters	Analytical questions
Motive for initiation/exhibition of political behaviour from middle managers	What stimulated the exhibition of political behaviour? From whom was the decision process initiated? Which managerial level initiated the decision process?
Motive for repetition of political behaviour from middle managers	What stimulated the repetition of political behaviour? Does repetition of political behaviour have to do with the nature of the decision, or the dissatisfaction over the previous decision outcome? Is it the same persons who engage in political behaviour? Are there are actors/organisational levels involved in the political game?
Concept of organisational and personal interests	What role do goals have in the strategy process? What is the prioritisation of the goals (personal/corporate)? Do top/middle managers attempt to achieve pre-established goals through decision making? On what ways?
Means, ends and their relationship	Do the organisation(s) agree on final choices before a detailed evaluation of alternative means? How are the final choices affected through changes in the available means? How means adapt in order to comply with non-compatible personal goals?
Concept of choice	Which underlying mechanism(s) affect decision outcomes? Are they formal or informal? What is the role of formality/informality of the decision process in informing the final outcome?

	Are the choices evaluated through time?
Analytical comprehensiveness	How comprehensive is the decision making process? How comprehensive are the executives during the decision making process? What is the level of formality of the decision process? What is the role of informal interaction during decision processes? Which mechanisms prevent/force executives to be comprehensive?
Integrative comprehensiveness	How formal and informal sub processes drive an integrative perspective of decision outcomes? To what extent processes converge and explain each other? Are there sub processes which create doubts on the ways they are related?

Table 9.1: Analytic set of questions used for the investigation of each decision of this study and the creation of coding categories. Sources: Pauwels and Matthyssens, 2004; Fredrickson, 1983 (amended)

9.2 Methods applied in the different phases of the research design and coding to ensure robustness

Concerning the way that the researcher attempts to implement the different phases of data collection and analysis, there is an extensive use of grounded theory elements (Regnér, 2003; Miles and Huberman, 1994; Gioia and Chittipeddi 1991), which is a robust set of methods and techniques for theory development. The choice of such an approach is justified from the fact that the final aim of this thesis is to contribute in theory, by producing theoretical suggestions, through an iterative process. This process will be characterised by continuous data collection and analysis, and constant comparison between the cases as well as with the existing theoretical suggestions (Glaser and Strauss 1967). The two different processes occur simultaneously, helping the researcher to be reflexive and understand the research topic in depth (Strauss and Corbin, 1998; 1990; Coffey, Holbrook and Atkinson, 1996).

The use of rigorous processes for the different phases of the current study started from the literature review, which was structured based on feedback and information obtained through academic supervisors, direct communication with field experts, but also through the early participation and paper presentation in academic conferences.

The literature review was contemplated by a deep online search and analysis of all the papers developed in the area of politics and middle managers within the strategy process. This was done through individual research in all databases of most journals with a focus in strategy. This enabled the researcher to gain a holistic perspective of the literature in politics and middle managers, avoiding the exclusion of researchers which have not been widely cited. In the next phase, data collection and analysis occurred simultaneously, with a constant iteration between theory and data across all rounds of data collection (pilot study and subsequent rounds). This helped the researcher to be constantly reflexive and critical on his findings (Cepeda and Martin, 2005; Hardy and Clegg 1997; 1996; Marshall and Rossman, 1995; Miles and Huberman, 1994; Steier, 1991).

The process was empowered by continuous comparisons with the existing theory. Concerning the research methods, a 'formulaic technique to data' (i.e. prescriptive approach in the use of research methods) is avoided (Suddaby, 2006). Instead, the research methodology consists of several methods, which are improvised through the conduct of a pilot study (see section 5.4.10 for the way that the pilot study contributed in the research design, and appendix one for a detailed report on the case study findings). In addition, as it will be discussed later (section 5.4.8), data analysis was conducted in several different phases, through the use handwritten analytical methods, assisted by the use of computer software, which helped data storage and aggregation. The combination of all these different tools of analysis, through a long period of time, because of the nature of the study, helped the uncovering of 'hidden' trends and patterns. This approach in data analysis did not mean that the researcher simply uses the output of the data collection. Instead, the suggestions concerning patterns and causal relation are analysed critically and interpreted, through a mix of analytical methods and constant iteration between data and theory, with simplistic approaches avoided in all the steps of research. In addition, computer software has several advantages for researchers, as it helps in coding texts, editing information, storing large amounts of information, creating memos, search and retrieve information, display data, investigate relations and create graphs to describe the

information obtained (Miles and Huberman, 1994), making its use a prerequisite for modern qualitative researchers.

Overall, effort was put through different ways to ensure that the data collection and analysis were conducted in the best possible ways to maximise the efficiency of this process. This was done through in two different yet complementary ways, as described above. Specifically, codes were established after extensive questioning and iteration with theory for the necessity and usefulness of each of them. This was further improved through a constant iteration between existing theories and data, in order to help the help the grasping of the emerging patterns and their incorporation in the analysis, in order to provide responses to the research questions. Overall, through this process, the validity of the data analysis was improved.

Appendix ten: Within case analysis form

The following section presents the form used for the within case second-order analysis of this study. The development of this form was based on the suggestions of Yin (2009), Miles and Huberman, (1994), and Strauss and Corbin, (1998; 1990).

1. MAIN THEMES OF THE STUDY, IMPRESSIONS, THEMES SUMMARY

Fast overview of themes and impressions within the study.

THEME XXXX: WHY and HOW is it important?

Is it a clear pattern?

On what extent it offers insights on politics?

On what extent it offers insights on middle managers activity?

Is it a one-off or a continuous pattern?

Summary of themes for each case

2. CAUSALITY: EXPLANATIONS, SPECULATIONS, HYPOTHESES

Relations of X with Z. Why and how?

What is the relation of this theme with other themes?

What is the relation of specific code categories with other codes?

Establishment of explanations through discussions with other researcher and interview participants.

Iteration with existing theoretical suggestions.

Development/improvement of hypotheses.

3. ALTERNATIVE EXPLANATIONS, REPORTING OF MINOR PATTERNS, PATTERN DISAGREEMENT AND EXPLANATIONS about what happened in each case

Investigation of other potential explanatory factors

Provision of alternative hypotheses

Discussions with other researchers and interview participants who could provide alternative explanations

Clustering of minor patterns

Further iteration with existing theories

Further improvement of research hypotheses

4. ESTABLISHMENT OF THEMES, PATTERNS, CODES AND COMPARISONS

Recognition of themes and patterns. Coding and re-coding where/when required.

To what extent are the patterns and codes observable through the study?

Are there contextual factors which could explain their observation?

Iteration with existing theories for theme establishment

Clarification of the relation of the themes with existing theories and studies

Comparison of themes and patterns within the case

Establishment of minor themes within the study

5. ITERATION WITH LITERATURE

Investigation of relevant and less relevant research for the provision of further insights on codes and patterns

To what extent existing theoretical frameworks incorporate these themes? On what ways?

Establishment of alternative explanations

Provision of feedback on causal relations through conference participation and extensive communications with experts in order to avoid ignoring existing frameworks and theories

Refinement of codes and research questions

6. NEXT PHASES OF DATA COLLECTION

Follow up questions to participants, specific actions for the next phases of research.

Specific actions for improvement in the next rounds of data collection

What information is missing?

What information could help explanation of patterns and causality?

What information could contradict the explanations of patterns and causality?

Which questions need improvement?

Which questions seem to be of low value?

7. Implications for REVISION AND UPDATING OF THE CODING PROTOCOLS

Which codes need to be improved/changed?

Which new codes shall be added?

Observation and establishment of new patterns?

Simplification/Broadening of some codes?

Interrelations between codes used?

Appendix eleven: First-order analysis case stories

This section presents the first level of analysis conducted from the interview data obtained. First-order analysis was ultimately used for elimination of the data collected, in order to help the researcher focus better in the decision surrounding political behaviour. The first-order analysis for each case study is presented in the following section, will a summary table with the analysis for each case study is provided in the text.

11.1 First-order analysis and data elimination

First-order analysis involves the construction of pure descriptions of the cases in order to inform the interpretation of the area being investigated. This means that the first-order analysis is of descriptive nature, where the focus is on ‘what’ happened during these decisions, rather than ‘how’ and ‘why’ the political behaviour was exhibited (Yin, 2009; Paroutis and Pettigrew, 2007; Balogun and Johnson, 2004; Pettigrew, 1997; Miles and Huberman, 1994; Patton, 1990). This will assist the interpretation of the political phenomena, and the responses in ‘how’ and ‘why’ these occurred, analysed in this thesis.

The cases introduce the reader to the activities which occurred before, during and after strategic decisions were made. This enhances the understanding of contextual characteristics of these decisions. It needs to be mentioned that partnerships are being regarded as consisting of different phases, as described in the literature review (Das and Kumar, 2007; Das and Bing-Sheng, 2002; Langley, 1999; Ariño and De La Torre 1998; Kumar and Nti, 1998; Doz, 1996; Ring and Van de Ven, 1994; Murray and Mahon, 1993; Lorange and Roos, 1993). These general phases are the pre-formation, the formation, the implementation and the evaluation of the partnership. The division of the partnerships in different phases, was not made clear during the interview process. This was done in order to avoid the pre-disposition of the participants on the way they describe events. Simultaneously, this would help the researcher confirm whether in reality partnerships could be divided in these phases.

As result, the participants' responses were more focused on each decision. Moreover, it was confirmed that partnerships can be divided in these four phases. Simultaneously, this assisted the researcher to have a better understanding of the processes occurring within each phase.

As mentioned in the research methodology (section 5.3.5), the data being presented in the cases involves decisions taken jointly by the partners and within one company, focusing however in the partnership (Walter *et al*, 2008; Fontana and Frey, 2000; Mohr and Spekman, 1994). This results from the limitations that research in partnerships impose (Dyer and Singh, 1998; Mohr and Spekman, 1994) because of the sensitivity of information concerning partnerships, and the general difficulty in getting access in qualitative research (Denzin and Lincoln, 1998a;b). The fact that research focuses in power and politics, which is a sensitive research issue (Mintzberg and Quinn, 1991; Mayes and Allen, 1977), would make research in both sides of the partnership much more difficult, because of the time, resource, and contacts required. All decisions are presented on table 20, provided at the end of the chapter. Moreover, as discussed in the methods section (section 5.4), in order to have coherent and rigorous case stories, the data concerning these strategic decisions were interviews taken from managers as well as a number of different secondary sources. Abstracts of case stories were sent to companies' CEOs and main employees to be reviewed, in order to verify the validity of the events and the decisions described in the case stories (Yin, 2009; Jarzabkowski and Wilson, 2002; Mays and Pope, 2000; Altheide and Johnson, 1998).

11.2 Strategic decisions in international partnerships

In the following paragraphs, different decisions taken before and during the life of each partnership are presented in the form of case stories. In order to gain a better understanding of each decision, some further contextual information is provided. This information has to do with the interlinkages between decisions (Langley *et al*, 1995; Radford, 1988; McCall and Kaplan, 1985). Langley *et al* (1995) suggest that

according to their links, decisions can fall on three types: sequential, concerning the same issue over different time periods, lateral, when through a decision, other issues are being considered simultaneously and precursive, when a decision has also impact in other issues over time. An example of a sequential decision can be the discussion of the use of a specific technology for many time years, where time permits the gaining of a better understanding of the decision makers. An example of a lateral decision is the budget allocation between two departments, when the decision for the amount which will be spent on one implies that the rest will be paid to the other one. An example of a precursive decision can be the choice of a new CEO, which will affect several future decisions. The category in which the decisions of this study belong, according to their links with other decisions, are described in the table accompanying each case, as it helps their better understanding.

11.2.1 Case partnership one: ‘Una Fazza, Una Razza’

A multinational looking to expand in the home country of one of its main global competitors

Alpha had been experiencing fast growth, with strong presence in its home country, and an increasing international presence. Being regarded among the ‘blue chips’ of the Athens stock exchange, investors and stakeholders were regarding it as one of companies with great future prospects. This was facilitated by the rapid development of the lottery industry, the aggressive corporate strategy that the company had pursued, and the constant innovation that characterised the company:

‘Our directors were great envisioners when they decided to form this company. The industry was growing fast, the number of people betting with different ways was increasing exponentially...We spent large amounts to achieve constant innovation and get a leading position in a global level’
[Regional Operations Director, Alpha]

Even though the company is relatively young (established in 1992), it has benefited from the deregulation of national lotteries. As a result, it has got involved several

international large scale projects, from either the public or from the private sector. Examples include national lottery systems and different betting games across the US, Europe and Asia-Pacific. This had resulted on the company having adopted a highly dynamic culture, where engineers across all the levels were offered training courses in order to keep learning and enhance their skills. Simultaneously, the company was investing heavily in research and development in digital lottery entertainment, as this was regarded the driver for its future growth. Employees were motivated to bring ideas to the higher managerial levels:

‘We have a culture where innovation is fostered....We ask our employees to come up with ideas and suggestions. We want them to update us with their knowledge...if their suggestions are good, then they get rewarded’ [Regional Marketing Director, Alpha]

A structural characteristic of the industry in which the company operates is that is characterised by a relatively small number of projects of a large value. Such examples include the network support of national lotteries, and the software design of betting and lottery games. The combination of a few high value project meant that the company had to get out of its home country and start internationalising from its early years. This had created a truly multinational company, operating across five continents. Its strong international presence, in developed and developing economies, had resulted on it having operating experience in different environments and cultures. Even though the company was truly international, and it was characterised by constant innovation, especially in the software design and the hardware through which it supported lottery operations, politics occurred often. Political processes existed in the everyday discussions of employees, and were focused more in interdepartmental levels:

‘There was always competition and arguments between the marketing and the technical departments...’ [Procurement Director, Alpha]

The opportunity in the Neighbouring market

Alpha had an established team which was investigating the international markets, attempting to identify business opportunities. This team was responsible not only for suggesting new projects, but also for gathering data and information about market trends and technological developments. Even though its official responsibility was the gathering of information concerning potential business projects, it was not the only team bringing business ideas and opportunities to the top management. In fact, a large number of business ideas and opportunities, especially from emerging economies, where state projects are not always announced to the public, would often be the result of informal communication between personal networks of the managers:

‘In many cases engineers would bring the ideas about new project to the top managers...through different ways (i.e. in vacations, in a reunion with classmates, talks by phone)...people who would know an engineer working in a lottery company, would notify him to look on the project and possibly come and bid for it...obviously all that was not done without any benefit for the guys who brought the ideas. But these are always with the rules of the game with brokers, right?’ [International Business Development Director A, Alpha]

In 2003, the global lottery industry was experiencing large changes. On the one hand, national lotteries were being privatised, in order to harmonise and increase their competitiveness. Examples here include the privatisation of the lotteries in both developed and developing economies, including Italy, Spain and Russia. This meant that Alpha had a large potential portfolio of clients, as privatisations and technological improvements were happening constantly. Another factor which had a great impact in the development of the industry was the fact that the technologies used for the provision of lottery services were changing rapidly. Digital lotteries, in order to have faster communications at a national level, would now have to connect through the use of the internet, which would enable the provision of real-time lottery games at a national level, without delays. The opportunity about the project being studied arrived on January 2004, from the personal research and communications that a regional director had done during summer vacations:

'He was a manager with a very researching attitude. He came up with the idea that we should start looking in this market. He told us that the digitalisation of the national lottery would be a natural consequence...and that he had discussed with an employee of a regional lottery provider, who had mentioned that it was in the plans of the government to announce a bid for the digitalisation of some national lottery games...we decided to form a team to follow the developments on this market, with one of the team members being the employee who brought up the idea..' [Online Lottery Marketing Director, Alpha]

The choice of the two employees who would comprise the research team which would gather information about potential projects resulted in a conflict between the operations and the regional marketing director, as it can be seen from table 16 (decision one), provided at the end of this chapter. While the operations director wanted the team to comprise from the engineer who brought up the idea, and one more engineer, who would be able to provide engineering ideas and knowledge to the researcher, the regional marketing director was opposing this view, suggesting that the second employee should be from the marketing department:

'It makes a sense within a temporary research team to have one engineer and one marketer. We did not only want information of a technical nature. It's like a temporary sales team. That's why we had disagreements with the operations director on the employees' choice' [Regional marketing director, Alpha]

The decision created tensions between the two directors, which resulted in informal discussions between both top and middle managers. The informal discussions were mainly related to the specific employees who would be chosen to accomplish this target. After two weeks however, the two directors had reach an agreement for the imposition of two engineers, with an employee from the marketing department assisting when his help would be required. This was done on the agreement that the imposition of temporary research assistants from both departments would be discussed in a future meeting of the board of directors.

The international bid for the project announced

Within a month from the formation of the team, on March 2004, the first open bids related to lottery projects started. This was done by a private company from the local market, who had already received some projects from the national lottery in the past. Because of its existing relationship, it had acquired licenses for the provision of specific nation-wide games, part of the privatisation of the national lottery. As a result, it initiated international bidding for different parts of the real time games which would operate in different regions of the country. In total, three different biddings were announced, with specific differences in the hardware and software requirements of each one.

Alpha had been preparing for the announcement of these projects, having followed the suggestion of the regional director who brought the idea to the company in November 2003. The winning of one of three projects was of strategic importance for the company: This was the home country of one of the largest competitors of Alpha, and taking clients from its domestic market would show how strong and powerful the company has become:

‘We had to win this project...we would make everything possible to enter this new market...Profit was of a secondary importance here’ [International Business Development Director A, Alpha]

One crucial decision which had to be made at that point was the selection of the partner with whom the company would bid with, as it can be seen from table 16 (decision two). As stated earlier, the project was concerning the digitalisation of real time lottery game, at a national level. Alpha had developed some knowledge and expertise on the development of digital lottery networks, having specialised more in the provision of the software within such networks. What was lacking however, was a partner who would enable it to overcome the hardware development gap that it had compared to the other competitors, who would definitely bid for that project, and the lack of strong knowledge of the local market. The lack of the market knowledge was

a result of the fact that the company had ignored the local market in its past, as it was dominated by its global competitor.

In order to evaluate the potential partner, the company had to form a team of employees who would carry out research and identify the best potential partners. As in the previous decisions, concerning the general environmental scanning of the market before the official project bid was announced, there was a large disagreement between the imposition of the three employees who would form the research team. The technical director, along with the operations director wanted the team to be comprised of employees from the technical department, including those engineers who carried out the research concerning the local market between January and February 2004, as it can be seen from table five (decision two) below. The regional marketing director disagreed, suggesting the use of one marketing employee in the team, which resulted in informal communications towards the regional operations director, who was responsible for a final decision:

‘There was a continuous disagreement between the regional marketing director and technical directors. Both were suggesting different employees to belong in the evaluation team. By favouring the choice of specific employees, who could then work on the project, they could increase the numbers of employees who <<are with them>>...because of the fact that the regional operations director would make the final decision, they were both trying to influence his decision through formal and informal means’ [CEO, Alpha]

Negotiations: Ping Pong between key decision makers

The team finally had short listed a partner on March 2004. This company was Beta, as described in the partnerships table in the methods section (section 5.3.7.1), and was expected to assist the company by offering its hardware expertise while simultaneously offering its knowledge for the local market. The next step was the initiation of the negotiations between the two parties, in order to make an official bid for the project.

Negotiations lasted around one month, until the beginning of April 2004, as seen in table 16 (decision three). In their first round, the technical director participated along with the operational director and the engineers who had formed the partnership evaluation team. Because of the complicated nature of the project, in the first round of negotiations only the most important aspects of the project were agreed, with some more operational level details to be discussed in next meetings.

The next rounds of negotiations would be carried from employees belonging in different departments of the company, who would be able to discuss better specific aspects of the project, because of their specialisation. The decision on the selection of the employees who would participate in the next rounds of negotiations created political behaviour within Alpha, with different directors suggesting that their subordinates should participate in the next rounds of negotiations:

‘There were different opinions on which employees should participate in the negotiations, as they would most possibly be allocated in the development of the project as well. The regional operations director wanted the employees who were in the search team to be part of the negotiations, while the sales director were urging for the use of at least one employee from their departments...The digital lotteries director also wanted to include employees from his department...The final decision was to be made by the vice president of operations however’ [International Business Development Director B, Alpha]

Implementation: Where interfirm political behaviour started being clear

Once the negotiations had finished, the companies made their official offer to the client. Among four other partnerships, the project was allocated from the license holder to the Alpha-Beta partnership, because of the better offer they had made. As mentioned earlier, the entrance of Alpha to this market was of strategic importance, as it was the home country of one of its main competitors in a global scale. As result, in order to win the bidding, they had made a really competitive offer, which brought the result that Alpha wanted.

The partners started working on the project on August 2004. The decision concerning the choice of managers who would participate in the project development created an environment of political behaviour within Alpha. Even though some of these managers would be from the team who carried out the negotiations, as mentioned earlier, a further number of managers and engineers had to be selected for the needs of the project. This project however was regarded as very attractive to work in, as it involved good payoff. Moreover, it was in a neighbouring country, compared to other in countries with large geographical distance, making it an ideal work destination especially for employees who had families and wanted to visit them often, during the life of the project. These two factors resulted in competitive behaviour from the employees who wanted to participate in the project, which was expressed through informal activities towards the regional operations director, as it can be seen from table 16 (decision four):

‘It was a really good project, on that it was offering a good payoff and it was relatively close to our home country, as in the past we might had to travel to Latin America or Australia for similar project...Many employees wanted to work on the project. The regional operations director was bombarded from suggestions and requests from both the chosen project manager and the international business development director, and straight from employees who want to work on the project’ [Operations Director A, Alpha]

The project was progressing, with both partner companies satisfied from the speed of the operations. On February-March 2005 however, when the project was 40% completed, the employees who were participating in the project requested further allocations of financial resources, as it can be seen from table 16 (decision five). These resources would be used for two reasons: on the one hand, they would cover some unexpected living costs they had, because of the conservative estimations which were made in the planning period of the project. The rest of the amount would be used to cover some technical aspects of the project:

‘The company had made conservative estimations were related to the fact that the company had made a very good offer to the client, in order to win the project, which meant that it wanted to minimise every possible cost. This however was proven wrong, as the employees expenditures were proven

much higher....In addition, even though we did not have to, we thought that the use of a larger server, which could even have double capacity, would be much more secure for the operations of the client, in case of an emergency. This was not specified in the official contract...It was just an act of goodwill and trust toward the client...the extra requested amount was equal to 5% of the project's budget' [Project Manager A, Alpha]

Evaluation of the partnership: where political behaviour might turn too risky

On September 2007, the partnership finished, as the digital network for the betting game was ready to be used across the country. The whole budget of the project was 14 million Euros, and, both parties then regarded it as very successful. Even though the partnership was a success, making a profit for both partners, while simultaneously permitting entry to a strategic market, the partners agreed to carry out a mutual evaluation, through physical visits in each other offices and communications with the employees involved in the project, in order to improve their operation in the future.

The choice of the employee who would visit the offices of the partner company created competitive behaviour within Alpha. This was resulting from the fact that the employee which would be chosen would have an important role in the future, as Alpha wanted to establish a Total Quality Management department, and the chosen candidate would most possibly be the one carrying out this specific evaluation. The fact this choice was regarded as an indirect employee promotion resulted in a series of politics and informal activities between employees:

'The employee who would be chosen to carry out the evaluation would be the one who would have to organise and run the total quality department, which was planned to start in the next months. Many employees wanted to this place, as it was totally new, and it could have an important role in advancing their future careers...That's why they were trying to persuade the operations director through different activities...It was agreed that an employee from the marketing department will go, who did not participate in the project. As the marketing department was largely ignored in this project. Also their evaluation could be more objective, because of that' [Technical Director, Alpha]

Case partnership one: Alpha-Beta			
Decision number	Decision content	Period and duration of the decision making process	Relationship of the decision with other decisions
1	Who will be researching the external environment	January 2004, before the project bid was announced, DM lasted two weeks	Sequential, as it would be revised in the future
2	Who will be in the committee for the potential partner evaluation	February 2004, after the official bid announcement was made	Lateral, as it would mean that other managers are excluded from the committee
3	Which middle managers will participate in the second and third rounds of negotiations	April 2004, before their offer was made to the client (DM lasted two months)	Precursive, as the choice of managers could affect the contract which would govern the partnership
4	Selection of the employees who will go to work for the project	August 2004, once the partnership had won the project	Lateral, as it would mean that other managers could not work in the project
5	Decision for the allocation of further financial resources to the project concerning technical issues and bonus payment	February-March 2005, when the project was 40% completed	Precursive, as it would mean that funds would not be able to be used in other activities of the company
6	Choice of the employee(s) who would carry out the evaluation	September 2007, when the project was completed	Lateral, as it would mean that other managers would be excluded for carrying out the evaluation

Table 11.1: Decisions studied in the partnership between Alpha and Beta, time period and duration (where available) of them, and their relation with other decisions through the life of the partnership.

11.2.1.1 Case summary

It was made clear through the case story that the decisions surrounding the partnership were characterised from intensive political behaviour through its different phases. Some decisions which caused informal activities and communications within Alpha included employee selection in different phases of the partnership. In the pre-formation phase, such decisions include the creation of the team which would scan the environment, and the committee of employees who would evaluate potential partners. Similarly, in the negotiations phase, the choice of the managers who would carry them out and of the employees who would be ready for instant provision of information resulted in conflict between the candidates.

Political behaviour was also evident in an inter-organisational level. A decision of the Alpha-Beta partnership on that level had to do with the allocation of extra financial resources in the implementation of the project. As mentioned, this decision resulted in an intensive political environment between the two companies. As it will be analysed in the next chapter however, the tactics applied during this decision had a unique characteristic, as an inter-organisational collation of employees was observed.

The fact that the partnership was characterised by intensive political behaviour, in both intra and inter-organisational levels, did not have a negative effect on the final quality of the project, as it was handled in time, according to the originally agreed requirements. Even though this project was not of a significant profit for Alpha, it had enabled it to achieve its strategic objective, which was the entry in this new market. As result, both partners regarded it as a very successful partnership, despite the political behaviour exhibited in its life.

11.2.2 Case partnership two: Civil War

The next case partnership of this study was formed between two telecommunications companies who were aiming to catch up with the technological advances of the sector. Lambda, a company which was only established in 1993, had a very successful performance in the national market, having achieved a market share of 30% in 2003, ten years after its inception. A major factor which had affected the telecommunications industry was that it had only recently been de-regulated, which had created a new market of private telecommunication providers.

In a global level, the telecommunications industry was growing fast, as a result of the growing demand for higher quality broadband services. The old ISDN internet connections, which were very slow, giving limited opportunities to an increasing number of internet users, were becoming rapidly obsolete. The new trend, which had been experiencing rapid growth, in terms of customer numbers, was the combination of different services that the companies offer in one package. This package would include the provision of phone, internet and cable TV services, also known as 'triple play' services. In some cases, the package could also include the provision of mobile phone services, named 'quasi-play' services. These technological advances had resulted in extreme competition between providers, who, in order to achieve better performance, had started forming alliances in a global scale:

'We had strong knowledge of our local market. However we did not have the technical knowledge concerning cable TV and broadband...we did not offer any mobile services...if we did not form an alliance with a mobile phone company, we would be left out of the game.' [International Business Development Director A, Lambda]

As a result, the company had decided that among its strategic priorities for the period 2003-2004 would be the search for a partner in order to enter the triple play market. This however would be done through the creation of a team of employees, who would carry out some research and create a list of potential candidates, in order to start discussions with them. The creation of the team was discussed on December

2003, as it can be seen from table 17 (decision seven), provided below. The choice of the employees however created disagreements between some directors of the company: The technical director was suggesting that all employees should be from his department. The operational director however was disagreeing with this suggestion, as he regarded that employees from more departments, such as the international operations and the marketing, should be included in the team, in order to have a more holistic opinion on the potential partners:

‘The employees which would form that team would have a crucial role, as they would be responsible for the creation of strong relations with the partner company, and would definitely have some operating roles in the actual partnership. The directors knew that the more employees they could have from their departments, the more influence they could have both in the company and in the partnership. Thus the technical director had a good reason to try to put as many people as possible in this team’ [Operations Director A, Lambda]

Three months later, a short list with potential partners was created, including Omega, among others. This shortlist however was the result of intensive political activity, as it can be seen from table 17 (decision eight): even though team was supposed to carry out an objective evaluation, most members of the board of directors, since both the company and the partners were operating in the wider telecommunications industry, had experience in one or more of these telecommunications companies. This resulted on them having specific preferences on the partner choice. This preference was often expressed by informal meetings, discussions, and creation of stronger ties with employees in order to affect the decision outcome:

‘The market is small...and our executives had experience in or more of these companies...and there would be obvious –personal and corporate- gains to choose one of the company that people had experience with. That’s why there were large disagreement from many top and middle managers’ [International Business Development Director A, Lambda]

From the three short listed companies, the responsible managers then had to initiate communications with each one, and eventually decide on the selection of one partner in order to develop the triple play project. The final choice was made on the basis of

the skills that the company had and the fact that it had experience in operating similar projects in other countries. When the potential partner was chosen, negotiations between the two partners were initiated. They were regarded as very tough from both sides, as each partner wanted to make the most of this new, growing market. They lasted around six months. Still however, no other 'players' had entered the rapidly growing market:

'Negotiations with Omega were very tough. They lasted around six months...Interestingly there was not any other company yet providing triple play services in the national market, so we did not feel pressed to finish our negotiations faster!' [Regional Director, Lambda]

The first decision between the companies characterised with intensive informal communication and interactions was concerning the budget allocation for the projects. The basis of the disagreement was that, according to Omega, Lambda was requesting large amounts of money, compared to what happened in the previous partnerships that the company had. This disagreement had caused a delay, as mentioned above, and even a postponing of the partnership was discussed. At the end however both sides agreed and the negotiations were able to continue:

'Negotiations with both partners were very tough. Our suggestions, made through our technical, finance and international business directors, who were carrying out the negotiations, were very different from what the same employees from Omega were suggesting....Because of the large disagreements, we even had to pause talks twice' [Technical Director A, Lambda]

The next decision between the partners which caused intensive political behaviour concerned the location of the venture which was about to be formed. Lambda, who had its operations within the country, favoured the use of a building it had in its ownership, which however was not being used. The companies had disagreements and different ways on the way they regarded costs and benefits for the place that would be chosen:

‘This round of discussions were held between our operations director and Omega’s international business director. We were suggesting to Omega to locate the employees of the partnership in one old building which we had in our possession, which however was far out of Athens, without any public transportation. Such a choice would mean that Lambda not only would use a building which is in its possession and is being unused, but also that we could request further budget allocation, decision which had caused disagreements with the partner earlier. Omega, from the other side, was making absolutely rational suggestions, requesting that the working place should be in a central location, without very high rent, and easy transportation’ [Operations Director, Lambda]

The partnership was formed on autumn 2004. Its first steps were very successful, and the company was the first to enter the triple play market in the country. This had resulted on it having a dominant market share from the first year of its operations.

The customer basis of the partnership was growing rapidly, making clear its success. As their number was growing however, on spring 2005, the need for the creation of a new customer service department appeared. Until that point, customer service was handled by Lambda, who had provided some of its employees to work on this section, as agreed in the initial contract. This issue was brought to the top management of the partner, who had to make a final decision.

This decision however resulted in a series of tactics and informal activities, in order to affect the way that the new customer service department would be created, as the partners did not both agree on the creation of such a department: Omega was favouring the creation of an automated customer service department, where all the processes would be handled through the use of information systems, and employees would be used only in special cases. Lambda, on the other hand suggested that this system would not be successful in the local market, as customers were used in direct contact with employees, when requesting customer service. This meant that the use of information systems could harm the partnerships customer basis. It needs to be mentioned that one of the basic elements of Lambda’s strategy was that the customer is at the heart of its operations. However a decision favouring the creation of an automatic/electronic customer service department would be in opposition with the company’s’ strategy. The result of the disagreement between the partners was a

series of informal communications and other political activities, until a final decision was made, as it can be seen from table 17 (decision 11):

‘We did not agree with Omega’s suggestion, as it was against our customer-centred approach...As the customer service director was seeing the number of employees under him decreasing, he made every effort to persuade managers go against this decision.’ [Customer Service Director, Lambda]

As the partnership was developing, a decision concerning cash flow management resulted in disagreements between the partners, during the summer of 2006, as it can be seen on table 17 (decision 12). As mentioned earlier, the partnership had achieved a large volume of sales, which had resulted in large revenues. Even though both partners agreed that the money should be reinvested in the company, the decision on the activities on which they would be reinvested had resulted in disagreement between them.

The final decision on the way that the money would be reinvested would create different gains for each partner, resulting in the creation of a political environment before a final choice was made. Lambda, on the one hand, was favouring the reinvestment in marketing activities, such as further advertisements or sales of partnerships services with discounts. Apart from the sales increase which would be created from the marketing expenditure, this would benefit Lambda in another way, as the employees who would carry out this project would most possibly be from their company, given the increased costs for a non-justified benefit which could result if Omega’s employees were brought from abroad. Omega, on the other hand, favoured the reinvestment in R&D, in order to help the services improve for the future moves of the partnership. Lambda however, being a company with low levels of internationalisation, did not have a strong R&D department. This meant that such a decision would mean that it would be Omega’s employees who would carry out the project, which would ultimately help Omega increase its influence. The disagreement resulted in series of informal communications and tactics until la final decision was made:

'We preferred that the money would be reinvested in marketing, as it would have more direct profit, contrary to Omega, who wanted to invest in R&D...which could benefit them as a new department would be created, full of its employees' [Marketing Director, Lambda]

As the partnership was progressing, on September 2007, which was the third year of operations, a decision concerning a change in the pricing of the services resulted in disagreements between the partners (table 17, decision 13). As mentioned earlier, the triple package that the partnership was offering consisted from the provision of landline, internet and cable TV services. In the partnership, Lambda was contributing its landline network, while Omega was offering internet and TV. The period however was characterised by a decrease in the pricing of landline services, because of the fact that alternative phone provisions, such as internet telephony had appeared. On the other hand, internet connections were improving constantly, resulting in higher speed, which however created higher operational costs.

These developments however did not exist during the time that the contract was signed between the two partners, which resulted in disagreements when the issue of changing the pricing policy was discussed. Omega, having observed the price increase, as it was a global trend, brought the issue for discussion in the managers who were running the partnership. According to its employees, they requested that the services that Omega was offering should be priced higher, as this was resulting from the increased costs that the constant technological development of internet created. The alternative that Omega was suggesting, in the case that their services would not be priced higher, would be that Lambda should decrease its share in the revenues.

As expected, Lambda reacted negatively in this suggestion, suggesting that both pricing policy and revenue/profit shares should remain the same. Its main argument was that even if the technology of internet provision had become more expensive,

this technology was not an actual need for the customers of the national market, where internet penetration was the lowest in Europe, suggesting that the pace of change of the internet services that the partnership was offering should decrease. Moreover, Lambda suggested that the expenditure that Omega wanted to make could be allocated in the different markets that the company has presence around the world. It also suggested that there was not any direct link between the general R&D expenditures that Omega made and partnership-specific expenditures. The final decision concerning any potential change in the pricing policy was taken in an environment characterised by intensive political behaviour from both partners:

‘We had a disagreement with Omega in the pricing policy...they wanted higher amounts to be allocated to them, because of the increased costs of broadband services...we disagreed with them, as we regarded as unnecessary the provision of higher quality and speed broadband. our landline director, along with our financial manager were trying to persuade Omega that our suggestion was appropriate...while their international operations director was trying to explain us that the provision of higher speed internet was a global trend...final agreement was made after lots of informal communications and discussions’ [CEO, Lambda]

During January 2008, the partners had to make a decision concerning the information systems and the software which would be used concerning the communications of the employees. Lambda was favouring the development of the software from one of its trusted partners, with whom they had been having strong relationship for many years. The employees of Omega, on the other hand, favoured the in-house development of the software. Omega, because of its large size, had an autonomous information development section. For this reason, it had suggested that they could send some employees from their headquarters to work on its development.

The decision on the way that the information system would be developed resulted in a series of informal communications and political behaviour from employees of both companies, as seen on table 17 (decision 14). This was a result of the fact that each partner would have different gains from the decision outcome. Lambda, by choosing its trusted partner, would further strengthen its existing relation. Omega, on the other

hand, would have an increased role in the partnership, as it would be able to develop and manage the information system much better, since it would be created from its employees, who had experience on similar projects. In addition, it would mean further allocation of some cash flows, In order to cover the employees' costs, who would work in the project, which would increase the employee satisfaction. As a result, managers of both companies engaged in different activities until the final decision was made:

‘The decision on the information system which would be used created large disagreement between the operational directors of both partners...while our technical director suggested that we would order the system development from a trusted partner, Omega favoured the in-house development, which would be done from some of its employees...’[Technical Director A, Lambda]

Evaluation of the partnership: where the political show goes on

On August 2008, the partners had decided to dissolve the partnership. This was done by Omega selling its share to Lambda, as it wanted to re-enter this market with a subsidiary which would be totally controlled by the company. Both companies however had agreed to carry out an evaluation, which would have mutual benefits for each one. The evaluation of the partnership was the last area of political activity between the two companies. The fact that the companies were operating in the same industry caused many problems on the decision concerning the basis of the evaluation, as it can be seen from table 17 (decision 15):

‘We had to be very careful on the agreement we would make towards the methods of evaluations. both companies had reasons to steal employees...and both knew which employees were more important than others. Many disagreements happened until the operations director on the way that the evaluation would be conducted, while the decision would be reviewed later on, in order to ensure that no unfair treatment would happen’ [International Business Development Director A, Lambda]

Case partnership two: Lambda-Omega			
Decision number	Decision content	Period and duration of the decision making process	Relationship of the decision with other decisions
7	Project creation and environmental scanning team	December 2003, before the communications with the potential partners were initiated. DM lasted one month	Lateral, as it would mean that other managers are excluded from the team
8	Creation of shortlist of potential partners	March 2004, before the negotiations with the potential partners would start, DM lasted three months	Precursive, as the choice of the partner could have a serious impact in the success of the project
9	Decision on the budget allocation for the project	September-October 2004, during the negotiation with the partner, DM lasted months	Lateral, as it would be subtracted from the amount that the other partner would receive
10	Decision of location for the working place of employees	November 2004, during the final round of negotiations with the partner	Precursive, as the choice of the location could impact the development of the project in different ways
11	Customer service cut down/transformation	April 2005, during the implementation of the project, DM lasted two months	Precursive, as the use of an automated customer service system would affect the employees of the company and it would also impact other activities of the company, such as the finance, the HR etc.
12	Cash flow management	June-July 2006, during the implementation of the project	Lateral, as the use of money in one activity would exclude it use to the other
13	Change of pricing policy/profit distribution	September 2007, during the implementation of the project	Lateral, as a decision favouring Omega's suggestion on change of pricing policy/profit distribution would decrease the amounts available to Lambda

14	Purchase of in house development of information system	January 2008, during the implementation of the project	Lateral, as the decision favouring the choice of in house software development would automatically exclude the choice of purchasing it
15	Agreement on the evaluation method and managers to be used for the evaluation of the project from each partner	August 2008, Upon the agreement of the partners to dissolve the partnership	Sequential, as the evaluation method and extent would be revised in the future

Table 11.2: Decisions studied in the partnership between Lambda and Omega, time period and duration (where available) of them, and their relation with other decisions through the life of the partnership

11.2.2.1 Case summary

As made clear through the case story, political behaviour was present in all the different decisions made during the partnership, in both intra- and inter-organisational levels. Different intra-organisational decisions were observed, related to employee selection and partner company choice. Specifically, the decision concerning then choice of employees that would scan the environment for potential partner resulted in politics between different members of the management team. Another decision characterised from politics had to do with partner selection, which was affected from informal communications from the interested parties, in order to result in a decision which would best serve their interests.

In an inter-organisational level, self-serving behaviour was expressed from the partner companies during the negotiations, concerning the allocation of financial shares, and the choice of location for the headquarters of the partnership. During the implementation, a series of decisions concerning the reorganisation of the customer service of the partnership, the way that the cash flows would be reinvested in the company, a potential change in the pricing policy, and the way that the information

system would be developed, created disagreements between both partners. In the evaluation phase, the choice of the evaluation methods and the limits of freedom that each employee of the ex-partner company would have when visiting the office of the company, was also a conflicting area, as the risk of ‘employee stealing’ was clear.

Even though the partnership was characterised by intensive political behaviour surrounding crucial decisions through the life of the partnership, which will be analysed in detail in the next chapter of the thesis, it was regarded as successful from both parties. Having lasted four years, it gave a dominant position in the national triple-play market, as it had a 55% share. Moreover, the fact that self-serving behaviours did not have a negative impact in the success of the partnership was clarified by the high net profits that each partner had, even though the market had started being saturated, because of the rapid technological change in the industry.

11.2.3 Case partnership three: Tango for two

Delta is a technological infrastructure and construction company in South East Europe, having gained long experience in large technological infrastructure projects. Apart from strong presence in its home country, where it had implemented many public and private sector high tech projects, it had also an increasingly successful presence in different emerging markets around the world, part of its internationalisation strategy. Its presence in emerging markets was boosted from the fact that it had established successful operations in the rapidly growing Eastern European economies. The large success that the company had experienced resulted in its entrance in the Stock Exchange. Being regarded as a promising company to invest, it had been able to raise large amounts, which could help fund its future projects. Because of the strong experience that the company had in some close geographically emerging markets, its plan was to expand in emerging economies located farther, in Southeast Asia and the Middle East.

The initial idea for the business opportunity was the result of an informal and unpredicted communication that a regional manager had: In summer 2004, the regional manager for North Africa and Middle East had flown back to the place where he grew up, in a North African country. During his stay he met old classmates, and he also had the opportunity to meet some of them who had pursued a successful career in their fields. One of them, who had a highly ranked government position in the ministry of commerce, informed him about the forthcoming announcement of a project concerning the creation of wireless network in one of the Arabian countries surrounding the area. The manager regarded the information he received as reliable, because of the position of the government official and the fact that he had known him for years. Once he had learned this information, it was transmitted instantly to the international business director of Delta, in order it to be taken into consideration in higher managerial levels

An important factor to be mentioned here was that, as the experience of these employees had shown, projects in such countries, characterised by weaker legal institutions, tended to be won by companies who had strong relations with the government, rather than companies who made the most competitive offers. In other words, this meant that, given that the information that the employee had provided was correct, then the next step for the company would be to form a team of people who would be assigned with the scanning of the environment of the country for two reasons: On the one hand, they would be required to provide information concerning the technical aspects of the project, in order Delta to be better prepared for the time when the government will have made the announcement of the project. Simultaneously, this team should be responsible for the creation of good relationship with the national government, which could eventually result in winning the bidding process.

The decision concerning the choice of employees who would comprise the team which would scan the national environment and help the company gather information

about the potential project resulted in political activity within the company. The reason for the creation of such environment was the fact that the team who would carry out the research and the initiation of the relation would participate in the next phase of the projects, with the possibility of having active roles within the project. This would happen because of their deeper knowledge of the technology required and the national culture, resulting from the tasks that this team of employees would have initially. In addition, the employees which would get involved in that team could benefit by having an established relationship with the national authorities of the country, which could help them in their future careers. As a result, there was large competition between different middle managers and their directors, as they wanted to place managers who would help them enhance their influence in the organisation in the future:

‘The selection of the engineers who would be in this team was crucial. On the one hand they would have active roles if the project would be won, with their responsibilities including partner suggestion and selection in the life of the project. On the other hand these employees could end up having created their own network of contacts in this country, which they could use it as an asset for any future companies that they plan to go to...that’s why the technical director had disagreements with the regional manager director, and the intervention of operational director A was required’ [International Business Development Director, Delta]

Once the team was formed, it was responsible for the environmental scanning which lasted two months. During this period, the announcement of the wireless network creation project in the capital city of the country was made from the national government. This meant that the suggestions of the employee had been correct, and that team which working on that project should focus in establishing stronger relationships with the government of the country. Additionally, the team should be responsible for the identification of needs in order to start looking for potential partner for this project. The information that the research team had gathered, along with the official announcement of the project from the government, had made clear the technical skills that the company would require from its future partner. Specifically, the potential partner of the company should contemplate the company in terms of software knowledge as well as in terms of knowledge of the local market.

The decision concerning the choice of the partner with which the company would bid jointly resulted in disagreements in the company, as it can be seen from table 18 (decision 17) below: While some employees suggested that it should be a global company, with an established brand name and presence in many markets, some others favoured the choice of a South European company, with a less global presence, from which many current employees came from, as the industry had a small number of companies, making mobility between employees a frequent phenomenon. This had straight implications about the project, as if the company from which employees were coming from would be chosen, then this could benefit them during the life or the project, because of the stronger ties that they would have with this specific company. The final decision was made for Theta, from which some of Delta's employees had previous work experience, through a series of informal communications and political activities. This choice was made based in the knowledge of the local market that Theta had:

‘At the end the operations director stepped in and helped the wireless director and other middle managers make the final choice: Since the good relations with the national government were important, then the company which would be chosen to be a partner would be one with which we already had a relation, and ties, which would help to be more flexible in the bidding of the project...which is required in such kind of projects’ [Supplies Director, Delta]

The first political games of the partnership

Once Theta was chosen as a potential partner, then the next step involved negotiations with them. Because of the high importance of the project for the company, it was decided that top managers would be responsible for carrying them out. This round of negotiations however involved crucial decisions between both companies, which were also characterised by time pressure, as the deadline for the biddings of the interested companies was approaching. A first such decision had to do with the budget allocation of the companies (table 18, decision 19). Disagreement was caused because of the different way that each partner valued the services that

they contributed in the partnership, resulting in suspicions about the information quality in an inter-organisational level:

‘We had to negotiate and agree to specific shares concerning the allocation of the money for the project. What created the problem here was that, even though we have our own experience in large infrastructure projects, we needed this partner for his software capabilities. who however had already been developing a department concerning the infrastructure of wireless networks... their software director along with others who participated in the negotiations were claiming that they had equal knowledge on the infrastructure required, and, they were claiming that the financial allocation was not fair.’ [Wireless Networks Director, Delta]

Because of the suspicions which had been raised, Delta then took specific actions which would help them enhance their negotiating position. A first action involved the addition of one more employee in the negotiations team, who would be responsible to extract information from the potential partner, and then verify it, to see whether their claims were justifiable. In addition, one more action that the company took consisted of requesting two employees to be ready for instant provision of information during negotiations, which could be requested even through an SMS, in order to help the negotiating team to achieve a better outcome:

‘A group of employees had to be ready to respond any urgent question, during negotiations. Also, the employees who were participating in the negotiations, were assigned to look for any particularly useful information, which could help us having stronger positions during these negotiations...’ [International Business Development Director, Delta]

Implementation of the project: where the partnership became a political arena

The bidding of the Delta and Theta was successful, as they were chosen from the client to carry out the wireless network development project. On August 2005, the companies started working in the project. Among the difficulties that the employees had to face, was the extreme weather conditions of the North African country in which they had to operate. This resulted in many changes concerning the employees’ expenditures, as both companies did not have any previous experience in working in such extreme conditions.

According to the initial planning of the partners, the employees who were working on the project were supposed to work long hours every day, including weekends. As the project was progressing however, on June 2006, it was made clear that most employees of both companies could not continue on such working mode, as it be seen from table 18 (decision 20). This was brought up to the managers of both companies, who then had to reach a decision on possible changes which should be made on the project plan. This decision was characterised by intensive political activity between different managerial levels of both companies:

‘Both project managers were requesting that the weekend work should be dropped...another solution would be to send more employees. However from a visit we made we concluded that there was a bit of exaggeration on that request...at the end however we agreed on the addition of some more engineers in the project, in order to enable the existing employees to have more days off. We also agreed to review this decision in a later time and make further changes, if required’ [Regional Operations Director A, Delta]

Once the decision for the addition of some more engineers working in the project was made then the partnership continued developing smoothly. Within a few months however, on November 2006, further complains arrived from the employees who were carrying out the project. Complains were again from the employees of both partners, and were focusing in the extreme working conditions, which, coupled by the limited options of entertainment that the employees had, because of the strict laws of the North African Country, and the long working times of the project, made their work rather unpleasant. As a result, they requested extra bonus payments, in order to be able to continue working in the same rhythm they had done until that point (table 18, decision 21):

‘Only a few months after we had decided to include some more employees in order to make the engineers life difficult, they had again complains about their working conditions. It seemed that they were probably right....Given the large payments we would receive for these projects, we then reached an agreement to increase their bonuses, in order to make them happy, even though Theta agreed was more difficult to agree’ [Project Manager A, Delta]

The fact that further money was allocated than the amount which was originally estimated, coupled by the large autonomy that the managers and the employees involved in the project were enjoying, because of the large geographical distance, required that the partners take action in order to avoid the creation of further unnecessary costs in the future. In addition, the industry was increasingly being dominated by the use of global quality standards, in order to ensure customers about the services offered. As a result, the partners had agreed in the creation of a Total Quality Management team, which would travel often between the companies and the place that the project was being developed, in order to satisfy both targets of the partners. This however required the selection of a number of employees, who could compose this team.

The decision on the synthesis of the TQM team resulted in disagreements between the partners. Delta wanted a larger team which would have both engineers and economists. Moreover, it wanted the team to consist 60% of its employees, as its participation in the project was larger, which was also reflected by the profit shares. Theta was suggesting that the team should comprise from a small number of employees, in order to decrease the costs resulting from the team. In addition, it suggested that the team should comprise 50% of its employees, in order to avoid potential unfair judgement and practices which could result from the use of increased number of Delta's employees in the team. Because of the different approaches that each partner had in the use of the TQM team, informal communications and political tactics were used until a final decision was made, as seen on table 18 (decision 22):

'The budget for the project had increased by 30%, thus we decided to create a control team in order to have better knowledge of their requests...however we had disagreements in the synthesis of the team, as we wanted more people, from different departments of the company, while Theta wanted less people, who would all be engineers. This disagreement lasted two months, until we had decided on a final team synthesis, which however would be reviewed every six months.' [CEO, Delta]

In the last year of the project, a series of events concerning the performance of the teams created in new political episodes. While the project was expected to be ready by Spring/Summer 2007, this was not the case, as seen from table five (decision 23): Instead, delays on the completion of the software, accompanied by delays in the handling of raw materials, resulted in huge arguments and conflicts once these delays were announced. The situation was even worsened from the fact that these delays were not announced officially from the project managers to their companies, but they were only found out during the progress meeting which were occurring once per six month, while this meeting was supposed to be the last one. This situation again had created an intensive environment, and a solution was then provided by a decision on the substitution of the project managers from both companies. This decision however was made after the creation of an intensive political environment:

‘According to the revised plan, we expected to have completed the project by January-February 2007. This however was not the case...The project managers and the engineers of both companies were then accusing each other for these delays...we decided however that we had to substitute our project manager, which could improve the situation...We expected however Delta to do the same, but this was not the case. The final agreement to change both project managers came after long negotiations’ [Human Resources Director, Delta]

Successful project completion, with politics being always evident

After two years of operations, the project was completed in October 2007, with a delay of five months. This delay however did not have a negative impact in the customer’s satisfaction, as such delays are always expected in large scale projects. Upon its completion, the partner companies received the initially agreed amounts, according to the profit shares they had agreed during their negotiations.

In order however to improve their future performance, they had come in an agreement to carry out a mutual evaluation, which would also involve physical visits to the offices of the other company. The decision however on the evaluation methods which would be applied and the managerial level of the employees who would visit

the company resulted in disagreements between the two parties, , as seen on table 18 (decision 24). The reason for that was because Delta had in their future plans an expansion in software development, which was an area that Theta had specialisation. As a result, the top management of Delta was afraid of potential employee stealing, which could result from the development of stronger relations between employees, during the evaluation process. In addition, Theta wanted to protect some information concerning its skills as well as its organisational architecture. Interestingly, Delta was afraid of the same threat as well, as Theta did not have any presence in the local market and appeared to be attracted from it. As a result, before and after the decision was made, a number of political processes occurred, affecting the partners' relations in an inter-organisational level:

'We were actually afraid that through this process, they could attract some of our employees...nevertheless, we were aiming to do the same thing to them as well! And in order to agree on the evaluation method, and the access that the employees of the other company would have, we had –again- to overcome a series of informal communications, discussions, which were also evident in the appraisal. For example, they wanted to visit our offices have communications with our ireless engineers, which however did not make a real sense in the evaluation process...instead they would be much better off by wanting to meet the project manager or our software engineers' [Project Manager A, Delta]

Case partnership three: Delta-Theta			
Decision number	Decision content	Period and duration of the decision making process	Relationship of the decision with other decision
16	Who will be researching the external environment	September 2004, before the official announcement of the project	Precursive, as the choice of managers could affect the information gathered and the establishment of relations with the government
17	Partner selection	December 2004, once the official bidding process was announced from the client	Precursive, as the choice of the partner could have implications about the quality and the success of the project
18	Which employees should be ready for	January 2005, once the partner for the project had	Lateral, as it would mean that other managers are

	instant provision of information during negotiations	been chosen, and before negotiations with them would start	excluded from the negotiations team
19	Budget allocation	February 2005, before the companies would make their offer to the client, which had to be made under time pressure	Lateral, as the gain of money from the one partner would mean loss to the other
20	Dropping of weekend work	June 2006, during the early project implementation	Sequential, as it would be revised in the future
21	Modification of bonus policy	November 2006, during the project implementation	Precursive, as the amount which would be paid in bonuses would not be invested in other activities
22	Creation of TQM team	December 2006, resulting from the extra costs associated with the use of more employees of the project and the modification of the bonus policy	Sequential, as the synthesis of the team would be revised in the future
23	Decision on the substitution of project managers	February 2007, upon the realisation from the companies managers about the delays which had been created from the managers running the project	Lateral, as the choice of one employee would mean the substitution of another one
24	Decision and agreement on the evaluation methods and managers to be used for the evaluation of the project through physical visit from each partner	October 2007, upon the completion of the project and the final handling to the client	Precursive, as the choice of the evaluation method could impact the measurement, the communications with employees and other factors

Table 11.3: Decisions studied in the partnership between Delta and Theta, time period and duration (where available) of them, and their relation with other decisions through the life of the partnership

11.2.3.1 Case summary

The previous section described the different decisions made during the partnership of Delta and Theta, during the construction of a large infrastructure project. As in the previous cases of this thesis, political behaviour was evident in both intra and inter-organisational levels. Within the company, political behaviour was highly evident in the decisions concerning the creation of the team which would scan the environment for potential projects, and the choice of the partner with whom the company would be able to make its official offer to the client. Both decisions were crucial, as they were associated to the creation of links with the client. As described earlier, these links were critical, as the client, which was a North African country, tended to offer its projects in companies with which they had good relations. This made the employee choice, which would carry out the initial communications with the client, and the partner selection, highly important decisions. Another crucial decision within the company included the choice of those employees who would be able to provide instant information to those carrying the negotiations, as, because of the fact that the deadline for expression of interest was approaching, the detailed examination of each aspect of the project was crucial, making necessary the selection of employees who could help the verification of the information exchanged during negotiations.

In an inter-organisational level, a big number of decisions characterised by political activity concerned the budget allocation between the partners, once the project was won, the discussion on dropping the weekend work, once complaints were expressed from those working on the project, the modification on the bonus policy of employees, the creation of a total quality management team, in order to control better the processes occurring within the working teams, and the decision on the substitution of project managers, as large delays occurred in the project. Moreover, at the evaluation phase, the decision concerning the method and the extent of the evaluation also created an environment of conflict between the partners. What was very interesting in some of the decisions is, as it will be described in the next chapter, that political behaviour was not only expressed between the partners, but also between organisational levels. For example, the decisions concerning the dropping of

the weekend work and the increase in the bonus payments to those carrying out the project were a result of a 'coalition' of the employees of both partners, who, having developed a stronger relationship between them through the time, were aiming to gain similar things from the top managers of both companies.

The fact that the partnership was characterised by political behaviour in different levels was not able to have a negative impact in the clients' satisfaction. Even though the project was delivered to the client with a delay of five months, the client did not have any problem with that, knowing that such delays are typical in such large-scale projects. Both partners were happy from the large payment they had received for this project. In addition, this was a proven as very successful start for Delta, who wanted to enter the wider North African region.

11.2.4 Case partnership four: Business as usual

Psi belongs in the computer software industry. Since its inception, in 1994, it has completed a number of large scale projects, from both the private and the public sector. It has a dominant market share in its home country, with large amounts having been invested in research and development. This had helped Psi to be a very innovative organisation, which resulted on it winning projects from other European countries, as well as from the European Union, making it one of the most successful software development companies around Europe. The establishment of its success was its entrance in the Stock Exchange, which helped the company gather large amounts and reinvest them in its further expansion.

In the recent years, the company started focusing to attract business opportunities from the Eastern European markets. These markets, after the collapse of Soviet Union, had been experiencing rapid growth. Having seen these opportunities, Psi established offices in some of these European countries. These offices however were acting as representatives, attracting projects which were then completed from stuff

residing in the home country of the company, where the company's headquarters were situated. Even though the labour cost would be cheaper in Eastern European countries, the lack of stability in macro economical level and the lack of trust in business relationships had resulted on the company having employees from its home country, rather than local. As a result, the employees working in these areas had good knowledge of the local markets, as well as of the markets of the surrounding countries.

It was a middle manager who was working in these regional offices who brought the business idea to company's managers. In Spring 2004, the head of the engineers working in the Romanian subsidiary, having observed the technological change which was taking place and the rapid transmission of local companies to the digital era, had contacted the international business development manager suggesting that several business opportunities might appear from some Eastern European countries, as they were receiving funds from who the European Union for information technology projects. These funds were allocated to these countries in order to have technological convergence between all member-states of the EU:

'The head of our local subsidiary contacted me these days and told me that....he had come across discussions with people from his local networks, who had told him that politicians.....would start discussing the development of such projects.' [International Business Development Director A, Psi]

The suggestion of the employee was discussed rapidly between the top managers, who then decided to choose some employees from the headquarters to scan the local environments of these countries. The information which would be collected would enable them to identify potential research projects and make better decisions when the bidding for these would start. Simultaneously, the employees who would form the 'Eastern European Strategic Analysis' team would be responsible for the establishment of the local contacts, which can be very useful, especially in emerging economies.

The decision on the creation of this team, on May 2004, as it can be seen on table 19 (Decision 25) provided below, created disagreements within the company. The main disagreement was between the International Business Development director, and the regional team in Romania. While the International Business Development director wanted the employees who would comprise the team to be people of his choice, the local team was in large disagreement, claiming that, since they had much more experience of the local market than the director had, they should be responsible for this choice. The final decision was made in a rather political environment:

‘The choice of the employees who would form the group of strategic analysts had resulted in a very bad climate between the headquarters and the employees at our subsidiary.....The regional director however was in disagreement with them, who wanted to form a team with employees of his trust. [Technical Director, Psi]

Soon after the formation of the group, the first series of projects was announced from the targeted market, on June 2004. One of the projects concerned the development of software to be used between all the schools and the ministry of education of the country. The project had a specific budget, which was very high, and it attracted the interest of Psi. The company with this bid however had lack on local market knowledge, as its subsidiary was located in a neighbouring country. Moreover, the project required the installation of terminals in several different regional offices around the country This meant that, even though the company had the required software skills to complete the project, it would definitely have to partner with a company which could offer the development of the hardware of the project, and, ideally, would possess some local knowledge. One more important factor that had to be taken into consideration was that a final decision should be based on choosing a ‘strong’ partner, in order to avoid having it as a competitor, given the small number of the companies within the industry:

‘There was a booming going on with high tech projects in these countries...and the best way to get some project and make money was to partner with another company...even though the relationship would not be complementary, it would actually eliminate competitors...that’s how we then had to play.’[Software Development Director, Psi]

Different choices were suggested from the local team in Romania, the Easter Europe Strategic Analysis team, and the regional operations director, as it can be seen from table 19 (decision 26). The differences in their choices were mainly lying on the fact that all of them had an indirect link with each company suggested, which, on the one hand, created a sense of trust with the potential partner, and, on the other hand, could have personal benefits for the employees whose choice would be supported. This however created a political environment where different informal processes were observed until a final decision was reached:

‘The partner choice in new market is always crucial...if he will be proven good, then we will keep this good relationship in the future, and they will always be our first contact in this new market...and if they are suggestion of an employee, then he will definitely have an important role in the project. That’s why I was suggesting as a partner the company I used to work before, because I knew them, and trusted them, so it could be easier to have a good relation’ [Regional Operations Director, Psi]

‘The engineers from the strategic analysis team were suggesting a partner which ad strong local presence and knowledge in the market...Some of them used to work in this company, which could also be one of the reason on why they were suggesting this specific partner’ [Software Engineer A, Psi]

Partnership negotiations: risk and reward

Once the potential partners’ checklist had been created, then the next step in the partnership was the negotiations of the terms and conditions with the two candidates, the one of each was Epsilon. The formation of the team who would execute these negotiations however resulted in an intensive political climate. The software and international operations directors were in disagreement on the choice of the employees who would comprise this team, suggesting different employees to follow them in the talks with the partner. The climate was made worse by the risk that

negotiations could fail and the potential partner would ‘run away’ having in their possession crucial information about the project:

‘The directors were suggesting different employees to follow them in the negotiations, as this would mean that they would work on the project later, which would increase the influence of each director...Moreover, in Eastern Europe, trust in business relations did not exist at these days, and we wanted to keep away as much as possible competitors from bidding for the project...so rather than choosing people who would be favoured by each director, we finally chose people who were both smart and loyal’ [Regional Operations Director, Psi]

Both candidates appeared to fulfil Psi’s criteria. Large disagreements however were created within the company, as it can be seen from table 19 (decision 28). The regional operations director favoured the choice of smaller size company, without reputation, which however a relative of him was working. The rest employees from the negotiations team however were suggesting the choice of the other company, which had previous experience in government projects. This company was fulfilling Psi’s requirements in better ways, as it had strong knowledge of the local market, and was involved in hardware development. The only disadvantage of making a decision towards this potential partner was the fact that the company had also got involved in software development, even though its skills were much lower than the skills that Psi. This would possibly create a risk of information gathering and employee stealing from Psi to the partner. This disagreement led to a series of political processes attempting to favour the choice of each candidate. At the end however the final decision was made from the technical director and international business development director, who, because of their longer experience, were delegated from the CEO to make the final decision:

‘There were also disagreements between the regional director and the rest in the negotiations team on the final choice of the partner...Because of the fact they could not agree, the top management stepped in and delegated the international business director and the technical director to make a final decision....They were not involved in the whole negotiations, therefore they could make a more fair judgement on what is more appropriate.’ [Project Manager, Psi]

A final decision was made, and Epsilon was chosen as a potential partner for this project. The two companies started negotiations on August 2004. The negotiations however were the first point of politics and informal activities between the partners. The first issue which caused political behaviour between the two partner companies was the budget allocation for the project, as each partner was valuing their services differently:

‘In the negotiations, they wanted around the 60% of the project budget, which was huge!! We just wanted their local knowledge, and some work in the development of terminal. We did not value their services that high, we thought that a 40% would be sufficient. This resulted in a very conflicting environment, with both technical and non-technical directors getting involved in order to persuade each other...this caused delays in the negotiations.’ [Regional Operations Director, Psi]

Once the budget allocation was agreed, on September 2004, as it can be seen on table 19 (decision 29), the partners then were able to work in the details of their offer, which they would submit to the client in order to participate in the official bidding process. At this stage however the importance of the choice of a partner with local knowledge was made clear: Epsilon made very useful suggestions to Psi, helping them to improve crucial details of the project. Simultaneously, Epsilon had also been able to influence decision making as it had some existing links with key people in the government. This was assisted from the fact that Epsilon had completed smaller-scale projects for the same client in the past. As a result, the Psi-Epsilon partnership won the bid on February 2005:

‘The fact that we had chosen a local partner was proven very important, in order to win the project. Even though Epsilon would lack in terms of technical know-how, compared to a larger company, it had existing links with the government...which was crucial in winning the project’ [Regional Operations Director, Psi]

Once the project was won, the next crucial decision which had to be made concerned the location where the project would be developed. The fact that the partners were

located in different countries created large disagreements on the decision concerning the choice of the location that the employees of both companies would be located in order to work for the project. Psi wanted the software development to be carried out in its headquarters, as this would mean lower travelling expenses and better control of the processes during the life of the partnership. Epsilon, on the other hand, regarded that its home country was the best location for the working teams, as those carrying out the project would have direct communications with the client, thus avoiding unnecessary interruptions and delays in communications which could be created if the operations were taking place in distance. Even though the final decision made on the choice of Epsilon's home country as the location where the project would be developed, this was done through a series of informal processes:

'Even though it would be probably better to be working on the project while having settled in the country, it would mean some extra costs for us. and most important, trust issues could result. we really did not want to have any employee taken from this company...In order to decide, a series of meetings were made between the operational and technical directors....given that we collaboration through internet and some visits in a frequent basis were easy to do, we agreed finally with Epsilon to carry out the project in their country' [CEO, Psi]

Developing the software: Were politics become part of everyday life

The software development phase started on March 2005, aiming to have the project completed within two years. The work routine consisted of the development of different parts of the software from employees of both companies, accompanied from frequent visits from and to the partnering company, in order to check the progress of the hardware development. The partners had expertise in different programming languages. This resulted on each partner having different suggestion for the coding language, even though both satisfied the project requirements. In order to persuade each other on the language choice, a number of political activities were observed:

'This happens always in partnerships in our industry. Many programming languages can produce the same result for the client. Each company however tends to specialise in a particular language. This creates always disagreements, as the language which will be chosen will make one of the two partners to have a more important role in the project completion. [Regional Operations Director, Psi]

‘In our partnership with Epsilon, a number of tactics were used in order to persuade each other party for the choice of the programming language...they were using technical arguments...we were using financial arguments...and vice versa. This however happens always in our industry.’ [Software Engineer B, Psi]

As the project was being developed, another decision concerning the choice of a distribution partner on January 2006 resulted in disagreements and conflicts in an inter-organisational level, as it can be seen from table 19 (decision 32). Psi wanted to use an established distribution company, who had strong presence in Eastern European markets, as this partner was regarded as trustful and able to handle projects of such a scale. On the other hand, Epsilon was favouring the choice of a local partner, who, according to what the company claimed, would have bigger benefits, because of the strong presence that the potential partner already had in the area. This decision however resulted in a series of informal activities, until a final decision had been made:

‘We favoured the choice of a large company, with which we had an existing relationship. The project of the Epsilon however was suggesting the choice of a national company, which even though it was of much smaller size, it could be proven better through its larger local experience. At the end we followed their suggestion, agreeing however that this would be possibly revised in the future’ [International Business Development Director A, Psi]

As the project was developing, on May 2006, the fact that Epsilon required a re-negotiation of the allocated budget resulted in disagreements between the partners. They were suggesting that the amount requested was supposed to cover the extra costs which had been created from the decision on the programming language, on March 2005. This decision had favoured Psi’s suggestion. The fact that Epsilon had that request created an intensive political environment between the partners:

‘They were requesting an extra 5% allocation of the initial budget because they had difficulties on the programming language that we had suggested, which resulted on them spending more time than what they initially thought. Moreover, they wanted to cover some unexpected hardware costs. It was like

black-mailing us. There several meetings between the project managers and the head software engineers...We ended up agreeing, as this had also happened in past similar projects' [Project Manager, Psi]

Partnership evaluation: politics go on

In April 2007 the project had been completed. The client was happy as the developed network was delivered on time, satisfying their higher quality requirements. As a result, the partnership received the initially agreed amounts with the client, which, as mentioned earlier, were higher than the standard amounts received for similar projects, making it a very successful partnership. Before the partnership would be dissolved, the partners had agreed on carrying out an evaluation, in order to improve their future operations. The decision concerning the basis of the evaluation and its extent resulted however in disagreement between the partners, as it can be seen on table 19 (decision 34). Psi wanted the evaluation to be carried out through physical visits to Epsilon's offices. Epsilon however feared that such process could result in the creation of stronger relations with its employees, which could be attracted to work for Psi, which had plans for a future expansion, in this recently created market:

'We suggested visiting their offices and asking for information...however the disagreement lied on the extent of communication we could have with their employees...they were afraid of employee and information stealing. This created a series of informal communications and politics, until a final decision was made between both partners' [Regional Operations Director, Psi]

One more decision in intra-firm level had to do with the choice of the employees who would carry the evaluation. This decision, which this time however was focusing in the company-level, was of a big importance for Psi, as the evaluation was involving the creation of stronger ties with specific employees from the other company. The chosen employees could have advanced roles in future similar objects, and directors were showing preferences to specific candidates. Specifically, the regional operations officer and the software development director were disagreeing on the suitability of different candidates, which resulted in intensive political behaviour:

‘Their disagreement was lying on the fact that the employees who would visit the company and conduct the evaluation would be of a great importance for the company in the future...and this visit would be part of their promotion as well. The regional operations director and the software development director were in large disagreements, and were trying to affect the final decision, which would be made by the operations director [International Business Director, Psi]

Case partnership four: Psi-Epsilon			
Decision number	Decision content	Period and duration of the decision making process	Relationship of the decision with other decision
25	Who will comprise the Eastern European Strategic Analysis team	May 2004, when the potential opportunity in the neighbouring countries was brought up to the top management	Precursive, as the choice of managers could affect the strategic information gathered
26	Partner short listing	June 2004, when the first projects were announced from the client	Precursive, as the choice of the partner could affect the way that the project would be developed
27	Synthesis of the negotiations team	July 2004, before the initiation of negotiations with the potential partner	Lateral, as the choice of employees would mean that other employees are excluded
28	Final partner selection	July-August 2004, after the initial communications had been done with two potential partners	Lateral, as the choice of the one partner would mean exclusion for the other
29	Decision on the budget allocation for the project	September 2004, before the partner would make their bid to the client, DM was delayed, lasted three months	Lateral, as the budget <i>allocated</i> to the one partner would be taken from the other
30	Decision of location for the working place of employees	February 2005, once the project was won from the partnership	Precursive, as the choice of one location could have impact in different aspects of the

			project development, such as extra costs, delays etc.
31	Selection of programming language	April 2005, before the software development would start	Precursive, as the choice of the programming would affect the technical difficulties which can be possibly met in the development of the project. Simultaneously, it is advancing the company with the bigger specialisation in this language
32	Selection of distribution partner	January 2006, when the first terminals were developed	Sequential, as the distribution partners would be revised in the future
33	Decision for the allocation of further budget to the partner	May 2006, when a large part of the project had been covered	Precursive, as the budget allocation would mean reduction from the amounts allocated in other activities of Psi
34	Agreement on the way that the evaluation of the partnership would be carried out	April 2007, once the project had been completed and handled to the client	Precursive, as the way that the evaluation would be conducted could impact both the information gathered and the relations between the companies
35	Who will go to offices of the other company to gather information for the evaluation of the partnership	April 2007, before the evaluation process would have started	Lateral, as the choice of a specific manager would mean exclusion of another one

Table 11.4: Decisions studied in the partnership between Psi and Epsilon, time period and duration (where available) of them, and their relation with other decisions through the life of the partnership

11.2.4.1 Case summary

It was made clear that the decisions being described in the partnership between Psi and Epsilon were characterised by informal activities and political behaviour. Decisions which created a highly political environment within the company include the selection of the managers who would belong to the Eastern European Strategic Analysis team, as they would form a crucial team for the future expansion of the company, the initial listing of potential partners, as some of the companies' employees used to work in some of them, the final partner selection, the synthesis of the negotiations team, as these managers would also have an important role in the project, and finally, the choice of employees who would visit the offices of the other company to gather information for the evaluation of the partnership, as they would be responsible for the collection of crucial information and the creation of stronger links with managers of strategic importance for Psi. The extent that these decisions were affected from the informal processes and tactics applied from the middle managers surrounding them will be discussed in the next chapter.

Moreover, a number of decisions requiring participation from both partners was also characterised from political behaviour. During negotiations between Psi and Epsilon, the decision for budget allocation for the project and the location for the working place of employees were characterised by the use of tactics from both partners in order to achieve the best possible result. As the partnership was progressing, in the implementation phase, the decisions concerning the selection of the programming language under which some parts of the network would be developed and the allocation of further amounts from project's budget to the partner were also characterised from political behaviour in an inter-organisational level. Upon the completion of the partnership, when the partners were deciding the extent and the method of the evaluation they had agreed, political behaviour was again evident, in order the partners to serve their self-interests, as it will be analysed in the next chapter of this thesis.

Even though the partnership was characterised from intensive political behaviour, this did not have a crucial impact in the quality of the project, which left the client satisfied, as his expectations were fulfilled on time. Both partners were also happy from the result of their partnership. Apart from the large payoff it had, it also had a strategic importance for Psi, as it enabled it to enter a new market with great potential for its future plans, who wanted to enter the wider Eastern European region.

