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CONFIGURATION, COLLABORATION AND COMPLEXITY IN STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS

AN INSTITUTIONAL INQUIRY CONDUCTED FROM THE INSIDE
OF A STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP IN DANISH CONSTRUCTION

**BY
NICOLAJ FREDERIKSEN**

DISSERTATION SUBMITTED 2021



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**An institutional inquiry conducted from the inside of
a strategic partnership in Danish construction**

by
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AALBORG UNIVERSITY
DENMARK

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Preface

This thesis is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of PhD at Aalborg University. The PhD programme was commenced in February 2018 and finished in April 2021. During this period, I was enrolled at the Doctoral School of Engineering and Science in accordance with the regulations of Ministerial Order No. 1039 of August 27, 2013 on the PhD Programme at the Universities and Certain higher Artistic Educational Institutions.

The past three years have been enriching in many ways and I have felt very privileged to have had the opportunity to work on this project. I will certainly remember my time as a PhD student as a fantastic period of my life, professionally as well as personally. Therefore, finishing this thesis is an ambivalent milestone to pass; it is the culmination of three years of hard work that also marks the end of my PhD journey. I am deeply grateful to Innovation Fund Denmark, Knud Højgaard's Foundation and Realdania for financing the PhD programme and thereby my journey.

I would like to thank my four supervisors, Anders Sørensen, Kim Thinggaard, Christian Thuesen and Stefan Gottlieb for their engagement and help along the way. Anders for always being curious, helpful and supportive, and for introducing me to the heart of Enemærke & Petersen. Kim for our inspiring conversations and discussions on different aspects of strategic partnerships. Although you are employed in Enemærke & Petersen, which is a contractor firm, I still consider you one of the great architects behind the strategic partnership concept. Christian for letting me be part of the research project 'evaluation of strategic partnerships', where the first ideas for this PhD project emerged. And Stefan for supervising me all the way from formulation of the PhD application to submission of this thesis. Besides having introduced me to the academic world, you have also been a mentor and a good friend from whom I have learned a lot.

A special thank you should be sent to all the *ByK* and *TRUST'ers* who have been my *de facto* colleagues and my most important data sources during the project. A thank you should also be sent to my colleagues at Enemærke & Petersen and Aalborg University. I would especially like to thank Lars Jess

Hansen, Peder Johansen and Rasmus Karkov from Enemærke & Petersen with whom I have had several inspiring conversations. I would also like to thank Sidse Grangaard, Lasse Fredslund and Niels Haldor Bertelsen from Aalborg University for having shown interest in my project as well as for my wellbeing in the period.

I also owe Roine Leiringer a thank you for letting me visit you and your PhD students at Hong Kong University in autumn 2019. Also, thank you for co-authoring a paper with me and for introducing me to the programme management literature.

Thanks to everyone involved in the Smart Buildings & Smart Cities Research Cluster. I have enjoyed our many good times during the past three years.

Finally, I would like to thank my girlfriend Rikke and my daughter Rosa for giving me space to conduct this project and for letting me invade our basement in the final months of the study.

Nicolaj Frederiksen
Odense, April 2021

Papers appended in the thesis

The following three articles are the primary scientific outcomes of the PhD study and constitutes Chapter V: Outline of the three papers of the thesis.

Paper I: Gottlieb, S. C., Frederiksen, N., Koch, C., & Thuesen, C. (2020). Hybrid organisations as trading zones: Responses to institutional complexity in the shaping of strategic partnerships. *Construction Management and Economics*, 38(7), 603-622.

Paper II: Frederiksen, N., Gottlieb, S. C., & Leiringer, R. (2021). Organising for infrastructure development programmes: Governing internal logic multiplicity across organisational spaces. *International Journal of Project Management*, 39(3), 223-235.

Paper III: Frederiksen, N., & Gottlieb, S. C. (under review). The materiality of boundary work: Managing institutional complexity in cross-sector partnerships. *Organization Studies*.

Overview of other related work in the period

The following publications serves as an overview of selected supplementary work I have been part of during the PhD study.

Journal articles

Gottlieb, S. C., & Frederiksen, N. (2020). Deregulation as socio-spatial transformation: Dimensions and consequences of shifting governmentalities in the Danish construction industry. *Environment and Planning C: Politics and Space*, 38(3), 484-502.

Peer-reviewed conference papers

Frederiksen, N., Fredslund, L., & Gottlieb, S. C. (2019). The hybridity of strategic partnerships and construction supply chain management. In: I. Lill & E. Witt (Eds.), *10th Nordic Conference on Construction Economics and Organisation*, 7-8 May 2019 (pp. 77-83). Tallinn, EE: Construction Researchers on Economics and Organisation in the Nordic Region (CREON).

Frederiksen, N., & Gottlieb, S. C. (2020). From partnership to firm: Hybridity as source of routine change. In: L. Scott & C. J. Neilson (Eds.),

Proceedings of the 36th Annual ARCOM Conference, 7-8 September 2020 (pp. 55-64). Online conference: Association of Researchers in Construction Management (ARCOM).

Reports and edited books

Gottlieb, S. C., Thuesen, C., Frederiksen, N., & Berg, J. B. (2020). *Strategiske partnerskaber i Københavns Kommune: Erfaringer og resultater 2017-2019* [Strategic partnerships in the City of Copenhagen: Experiences and results 2017-2019]. Copenhagen: Department of the Built Environment, Aalborg University.

Frederiksen, N., & Johansen, P. (in progress). *Erfaringer og fakta om strategiske partnerskaber: Fortalt af praktikerne* [Experiences and facts about strategic partnerships: Explained by the practitioners].

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Dansk resumé (Danish summary)

I denne afhandling undersøges fænomenet *strategisk partnerskab*, som har vundet udbredelse i den danske byggebranche i de seneste år. Et strategisk partnerskab etableres på baggrund af en udbudt rammeaftale, hvor bygherreorganisationen og det vindende konsortium efterfølgende danner en partnerskabsorganisation. Udbud og dannelse af strategiske partnerskaber er tidligere blevet fremhævet som en måde at håndtere komplekse problemer i byggeriet på, gennem dyrkelse af længerevarende samarbejdsrelationer på tværs af byggeriets værdikæde i den dannede partnerskabsorganisation. Den forskningsmæssige interesse i denne undersøgelse er at opnå en forståelse af, hvordan strategiske partnerskaber udvikler samarbejdsrelationer for at adressere, og potentielt løse, komplekse problemer.

Afhandlingens engelske titel 'Configuration, collaboration and complexity in strategic partnerships' henviser til tre specifikke aspekter af strategiske partnerskaber, som jeg undersøger og beskriver i denne afhandling. Den engelske undertitel 'An institutional inquiry conducted from the inside of a strategic partnership in Danish construction' indikerer, at undersøgelsen er gennemført som et single casestudie med udgangspunkt i ét strategisk partnerskab, og at jeg har benyttet mig af en institutionel teoretisk ramme. Mere specifikt er den undersøgte case det strategiske partnerskab mellem Københavns Kommunes bygherreenhed 'ByK' og konsortiet 'TRUST'.

I konklusionen fremgår det, at en bestemt organisationsform og fem komponenter betragtes som legitime i opbygningen af strategiske partnerskaber. Det fremgår også, at samarbejdsrelationer udvikles gennem dannelsen af en partnerskabsorganisation, identitetsarbejde og uddelegering af beføjelser og ansvar i organisationen. Slutteligt fremgår det, at strategiske partnerskaber udvikler processuelle, rummelige (spatiale) og materielle modsvar for at håndtere kompleksitet. Afhandlingen bidrager med viden om, hvordan det strategiske partnerskab mellem ByK og TRUST: (1) arrangerer og omarrangerer komponenter for at danne og udvikle det ønskede strategiske partnerskab, (2) udvikler deres kontraktuelle relation til en samarbejdsrelation og (3) håndterer udfordringer, inkompatible forskrifter og forskellige ambitioner.

Summary

In this thesis I examine the phenomenon of *strategic partnership* that has gained a foothold in Danish construction in recent years. A strategic partnership is materialised through a tender based on a framework agreement, and the subsequent formation of a partnership organisation comprised of the client organisation and the winning consortium. Tendering and formation of strategic partnerships has previously been touted a way to cope with complex problems that characterise modern construction by cultivating long-term collaborative relationships across the construction value chain in the formed partnership organisation. The overall research objective of this study is to obtain an understanding of how strategic partnerships develop collaborative relationships to address and potentially solve complex problems.

The title of the thesis ‘Configuration, collaboration and complexity in strategic partnerships’ refers to three specific aspects of strategic partnerships that I examine and describe in this thesis. The subtitle ‘An institutional inquiry conducted from the inside of a strategic partnership in Danish construction’ emphasises that the study is a single-case study conducted *in* a strategic partnership and that the applied theoretical framework is based on concepts from institutional scholarship. More specifically, the examined case is the strategic partnership between the City of Copenhagen’s client organisation ‘ByK’ and the consortium ‘TRUST’.

In the conclusions, I find that a specific organisational structure and five components are perceived legitimate for strategic partnership configuration. I also find that collaborative relationships are developed through formation of a partnership organisation, identity work and distribution of authority and responsibility in the organisation. Finally, I find that processual, spatial and material responses are developed in strategic partnerships to deal with complexity. The thesis contributes with knowledge about how the strategic partnership between ByK and TRUST: (1) arrange and rearrange components to form and develop the desired strategic partnership, (2) develop their contractual relationship into a collaborative relationship and (3) deals with challenges, incompatible prescriptions and different ambitions.

Chapter I: The Strategic Partnership Era in Danish construction

I. Introduction

How should we understand the concept of *strategic partnership* that has emerged in Danish construction in recent years? And what are the requirements for construction that strategic partnerships apparently seem to demand? These are questions touched upon in this opening chapter, and they will be the starting point for the PhD thesis. In this chapter, I will first describe the emergence of the strategic partnership concept and how it has been positioned in the centre of Danish construction. Subsequently, I will present the objective of the study along with the selected approach *into* the study and thoughts hereof. Finally, I will outline the structure and content of the thesis and highlight main points from the chapters.

I.1. Background

29 November 2016 was a remarkable day in Danish construction history. On this day, the City of Copenhagen's client organisation, *Byggeri København* (transl. 'Construction Copenhagen', abbr. 'ByK'), signed two framework agreements on strategic partnerships with the consortia *TRUST* and *DSP PLUS*. These agreements were the first of their kind in a Danish context and marked the beginning of what could be designated *the Strategic Partnership Era* in Danish construction history with more partnerships to follow. This era is characterised by a series of major strategic partnership tenders based on framework agreements (European Union, 2014), and the subsequent formation of partnership organisations comprised of the client organisations and the winning consortia.

Tendering and formation of strategic partnerships have previously been highlighted as important means of achieving improvements in Danish construction (Kadefors, Thomassen & Jørgensen, 2013), for example in terms of productivity growth and better product quality (Egebjerg & Storgaard, 2006; Kristiansen, 2006; Storgaard, 2006). However, it is in recent years that strategic partnerships have gained a foothold in the industry. The underlying rationale is that the framework agreement, as an alternative to more conventional one-off contracts, provides incentives and room for long-term development, learning and repetition across construction projects procured under the framework agreement. Another rationale is that the formation of a standalone partnership organisation,

staffed with employees from both the client organisation and the consortium, constitutes a space for interorganisational collaboration that allows for mutual recognition, trust building and sharing of competency and knowledge.

Despite good intentions, strategic partnerships are by nature difficult to put into practice, and the reasons for this are many. One reason is that the industry is permeated with contract documents and industry standards for the procurement of single projects and thus locks the industry in a short-term, project-based setting. Another reason is that procurement of construction projects requires the involvement of firms that are members of different professional communities (architects, contractors, engineers, etc.), but there is no tradition for cultivating long-term collaborative relationships across these autonomies. A third reason is that the expectations of what potentially can be achieved through strategic partnerships are huge and reach far beyond the scope of any individual project procured under the framework agreement. In other words, strategic partnerships are considered a way to cope with major, *complex* problems, with which most contemporary societies and organisations are confronted.

The Danish construction sector – a complex sector with complex problems

Danish construction is often highlighted as a sector with numerous serious socioeconomic problems (Gottlieb, 2010). Several of these problems have been known for almost half a century (*cf.* Gottlieb & Haugbølle, 2013) such as low productivity growth, poor product quality, as well as many damages, defects and disputes. Other more contemporary problems are lack of innovation, low degree of international competition and insufficient focus on economic, social and environmental sustainability (Regeringen, 2014). A consequence of these problems is that the sector, and the activities performed in the sector, have often been subject to recurring criticism (Kristiansen, Emmitt & Bonke, 2005). Another consequence is that numerous times the sector has been the target of various development programmes in search for improvements (Frederiksen, 2017; Gottlieb & Frederiksen, 2020; Jensen, Gottlieb & Thuesen, 2011).

The problems stated are undoubtedly highly complex, open-ended, unpredictable and difficult to ‘solve’ because they are deeply ingrained across a sector characterised by a “non-homogeneous collection of

organisations comprising various groups of actors playing various roles at various markets” (Kristiansen *et al.*, 2005, p. 510). In other words, just as no man is an island, no complex problem can be dealt with adequately solely by the efforts of individual organisations. Instead, complex problems necessitate a joint focus and enhanced collaboration among the public, private and non-profit organisations in the sector.

The ambition of promoting collaborative relationships in Danish construction is not new. Throughout the 1990s and the beginning of the new millennium, numerous experiments with innovative concepts and programmes were initiated to anchor partnerships and other forms of integrated supply chain in Danish construction (*cf.* Kristiansen, in progress). These experiments included, among other things, the concepts *construction logistics* (Clausen, 1999) and *public-private partnerships* (Kristiansen, 2009), and the programmes *project house* (By- og Boligministeriet, 2000) and *project new forms of collaboration* (Erhvervs- og Boligstyrelsen, 2002). The latter programme introduced the concept of *project partnering*. Although partnering gained considerable attention among construction practitioners and researchers (Gottlieb, Bang & Larsen 2004; Thomassen & Clausen, 2001), the concept never managed to make an impact in Danish construction as it did in construction industries in the UK and USA (*cf.* Tvarnø, 2016). The introduction of strategic partnerships can thus be considered yet another concept in the series of concepts that have strived to foster collaborative relationships in Danish construction.

In context of Danish construction, strategic partnerships have been touted a way to promote long-term patterns of inter-organisational relationships with a joint focus and a high degree of collaboration between the involved parties. This is portrayed quite illustratively in the strategic partnership tender description from ByK, in which it is explained that the *product* in the partnership tender is a collaborative platform for the execution of construction projects rather than the individual projects built under the strategic partnership (Byggeri København, 2016). Strategic partnerships, moreover, have been touted as a concept with the ability to deal with problems in the sector such as lack of innovation, low productivity growth and poor product quality (Byggeri København, 2016; Gottlieb, Frederiksen, Koch & Thuesen, 2020a).

Strategic partnerships in Danish construction

A strategic partnership is a formal, yet temporary, agreement between a client organisation and a consortium on building a collaborative relationship for the execution of a group of related projects. Legally, a strategic partnership is tendered as a four- to six-year framework agreement, and it is formally materialised once the client organisation and a consortium sign the framework agreement.

In the pre-agreement period, the client organisation formulates the strategic objectives of the tender and groups the projects expected to be procured under the framework agreement. Such a ‘package’ of grouped projects is broadly referred to as a *programme* in the management literature (Lycett, Rassau & Danson, 2004; Project Management Institute, 2017). It is also in this period that the bidding consortia are formed. A consortium is a composition of architecture, engineering and construction (abbr. ‘AEC’) firms, who jointly bids on the framework agreement and thus undertakes working together if awarded the agreement. In the bid, the consortium describes, among other things, how projects will be planned and executed, how strategic objectives are to be met during the contract period and how a collaborative environment is fostered internally in the strategic partnership.

After contracting, the client organisation and the consortium must develop their contractual relationship into a collaborative relationship that can facilitate successful project execution and fulfilment of strategic objectives. This is pursued formally through the formation of a standalone partnership organisation. The partnership organisation has its own structure and business strategy, but it acquires capacity by integrating and further developing the assets, competences and resources of the client organisation and the consortium (Frederiksen & Gottlieb, 2020). The partnership organisation can thus be understood as an *organisation outside organisations* (cf. Ahrne & Brunsson, 2011) in the sense that it is founded and drifted by the client organisation and the consortium, but *de facto* it operates outside the formal structures and businesses of these constituents.

The number of strategic partnerships has increased in Danish construction since the first agreements were signed in 2016. Partnerships are colloquially mentioned as ‘laboratories’ and ‘machines’ (e.g. Gottlieb, Thuesen, Frederiksen & Berg, 2020b) in which there are certain

opportunities that are not provided in more conventional construction collaborations. As strategic partnerships become more widespread in Danish construction, there is a corresponding need to understand how they unfold in practice and how they can be theorised and further understood from different points of views. So, the time is definitely ripe for a study examining this emerging concept of *strategic partnership*.

Partnerships, everywhere...

Nowadays, partnership formation has become a mantra in Danish construction. Partnerships of all types and sizes are formed with promises to address complex problems in construction through collaboration across the construction value chain. To provide some examples:

- ‘REBUS’ is a self-proclaimed *societal partnership* consisting of actors from the entire construction value chain, who seeks to promote sustainable renovations for the benefit of user, industry, the environment and the national economy (Jensen, Johansen & Thuesen, 2017).
- ‘Sustainable Build’ is a non-profit *innovation partnership* that aims to promote the sustainable transition in construction by facilitating increased innovation, knowledge sharing and strong collaboration across actors within the construction industry (Sustainable Build, 2021).
- ‘BLOXHUB’ is a *Nordic hub* for sustainable urbanisation. The hub is of the belief that complex challenges such as global urbanisation and climate change require partnerships and new ways of collaboration (BLOXHUB, 2021). In addition, the hub embraces the idea that co-location builds trust, trust builds communities and communities build partnerships.
- ‘We Build Denmark’ is an association and *national cluster* for the building and construction sector set up by the Ministry of Higher Education and Science. The cluster describes itself as ‘the widest collaboration in Danish construction’ (*cf.* We Build Denmark, 2021). The purpose of the association is to promote technological development in construction that supports the green transition and strengthens competitiveness in the international market (We Build Denmark, 2020).
- The ‘Climate Partnership of the Construction Industry’ is one of 13 so-called *climate partnerships* set up by the Danish Government

(2020). The purpose of the climate partnerships is to provide recommendations to the Danish Government on concrete solutions that can reduce Denmark's greenhouse gas emission by 70% in 2030 through public and private sector collaborations (Climate Partnership of the Construction Industry, 2020).

- Finally, the United Nations has defined 17 interlinked *sustainable development goals* (United Nations Development Programme, 2021) that are to serve as blueprints to ensure a sustainable future for all. The 17th goal is labelled ‘partnerships for the goals’ and serves a quite prominent role as the establishment of partnerships is considered the key to meeting the remaining 16 goals. Several AEC firms are promoting themselves by engaging in several of the sustainable development goals, including the 17th goal regarding partnerships.

As illustrated in the six examples, the formation of partnerships (including clusters, hubs, networks, platforms, etc.) is considered the key to address, and potentially solve, highly complex problems in construction. However, the composition of actors from across the construction value chain seems to have become somewhat synonymous with having a partnership that can solve complex problems. In addition, the interest from the industry in partnerships has mainly been on the potential of bringing actors from across the value chain together *in* partnerships rather than how the actors manage *to* partner and create results for the commons (Fournier, 2013).

In my eyes, *a* partnership (the noun) is nothing but a hollow construct if it does not manage *to* partner (the verb). In line with this, complex problems are not solved by establishing partnerships with parties who agree that well-known problems are serious, but by developing collaborative relationships and action. Formation of partnerships is, undoubtedly, an important step towards being able to address and solve complex problems in construction, but partnership formation itself is not the solution but an enabler. It is well-known that partnerships of various kinds in construction often fail (*cf.* Egebjerg & Storgaard, 2006; Kristiansen, 2006; Storgaard, 2006), but little is known as to why they fail or succeed. In order to produce knowledge that is interesting in academia and useful in practice (Alvesson & Sandberg, 2011, 2013), the focus in this study is to understand *how* partnerships can develop collaborative relationships and thereby address and potentially solve complex problems.

1.2. The premise of the study

When the study was commenced in February 2018, only two four-year framework agreements on strategic partnerships had been entered in Danish construction: one between ByK and TRUST, and another between ByK and DSP PLUS. The former involves the delivery of schools and day care institutions for the City of Copenhagen's Children and Youth Administration to an estimated value of €320M. The latter involves the delivery of projects for the remainder of the City of Copenhagen's administrations¹ to an estimated value of €90M. These strategic partnerships thus constituted an opportunity to gain first-hand experience and produce knowledge of the first stream of strategic partnerships. A lack of knowledge on this subject has been pointed out earlier as a main reason for the absence of strategic partnerships in Danish construction (*cf.* Kristiansen, 2006). The original idea of the study, therefore, was to collect data in the strategic partnership between ByK and TRUST within this limited time span and to transform these insights into knowledge on strategic partnerships. This was to demystify strategic partnerships and enable client organisations and the industry in general to make decisions regarding strategic partnerships on an informed basis.

Shortly after the study was commenced, several client organisations became increasingly interested in strategic partnerships and began tendering framework agreements (for a full overview, see Table 1 in Chapter II: Empirical context). This indicates that strategic partnerships, as a way of procuring projects, were already of interest to others in the industry, but that the industry had been waiting for a first-mover client to test the concept. The proliferation of the concept in Danish construction can thus be seen as a mimetic reaction (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983) among client organisations rather than strategic awareness and affordances. However, it remains an enigma how the partnership organisation, which is established after contracting, operates and over time evolves to foster and sustain a collaborative environment between the client organisation and the consortium. The main purpose of this thesis is to contribute with knowledge in this regard. Having said that, this study will not draw any instrumental conclusions about the ability of strategic partnerships to deal

¹ I.e. the Culture and Leisure Administration, the Employment and Integration Administration, the Finance Administration, the Health and Care Administration, the Social Services Administration and the Technical and Environmental Administration.

with problems in Danish construction e.g. on low productivity growth or poor product quality. Nor will the study make any instrumental conclusions about the worth of the strategic partnership concept *per se*. Instead, the study adopts a processual constructivist and practice-oriented approach to understand intraorganisational dynamics and mechanisms *in* the partnership organisation in terms of cultivating collaborative relationships and deal with complexity.

Exploring terra incognita in-between academia and industry

The study has been conducted jointly by Enemærke & Petersen and Aalborg University as an industrial research project (as per Innovation Fund Denmark, 2019). During the study period, I have been employed by Enemærke & Petersen as an industrial PhD student and affiliated the firm's activities in the strategic partnership between ByK and TRUST. Enemærke & Petersen is the contract holder on behalf of the TRUST consortium. In addition, I have been enrolled at the Doctoral School of Engineering and Science and affiliated with the Research Group for Construction Management and Innovation, Department of the Built Environment, Aalborg University. This means that the conclusions presented in this thesis have mainly been made based on the strategic partnership between ByK and TRUST and not all the ongoing strategic partnerships in Danish construction.

In my eyes, the industrial researcher programme offers something unique and beneficial for the provision and outcome of the research project. On the one hand, as an employee of Enemærke & Petersen I have been considered an *insider* (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009) with a mandate to access data, persons as well as trade secrets in the firm. This mandate is difficult to acquire for an *outsider* because every firm has its secrets and protects these from 'strangers' by creating boundaries that distinguish the known from the unknown (Costas & Grey, 2014). On the other hand, as an industrial researcher in academia I am afforded the opportunity to produce research that contributes not only to theory building but also to empirical knowledge and practice (Bartunek, Rynes & Ireland, 2006). Thus, the industrial researcher programme is an academic-industry collaboration with the purpose of producing research that is *useful* and *interesting*. *Useful* in the sense that it explains both a complex empirical phenomenon and how private sector firms can navigate such complexity pragmatically (Corley & Gioia, 2011). *Interesting* in the sense that it challenges the taken-for-granted assumptions of the examined phenomenon and also

contributes to academia with new insights instead of verifying what is already known about the phenomenon (Barley, 2006; Davis, 1971). As such, being an industrial PhD student is about wearing different hats at the same time (and deal with whatever this may entail) and producing research that benefits and develops both academia and industry.

2. Objective of thesis

If the stated potentials of strategic partnerships, as well as other forms of partnerships in construction (such as those listed in section 1.1. Background), are to be redeemed, then there is a need to better understand why it is so difficult to succeed with such arrangements (*cf.* Egebjerg & Storgaard, 2006; Kristiansen, 2006; Storgaard, 2006). This overall objective is pursued by exploring:

how strategic partnership organisations are formed and developed to foster intraorganisational collaborative relationships and deal with complexity.

In doing so, the study contributes with practicing *a posteriori* insights into how the daily work in strategic partnership organisations unfolds and with what pragmatic consequences. The study also contributes to the empirical literature on strategic partnerships and associated terminological variations² with conceptual understandings of what strategic partnerships are and how they are formed and evolve. Finally, the study contributes to current theoretical debates on i.a. hybrid organising, institutional complexity and boundary work with empirical examples that extend and challenge existing assumptions.

Although the study is organised and conducted within an overall framework, I have pursued three specific research interests that correspond with the following three research questions:

² These terminologies are scattered and sometimes used interchangeably across the fields of construction management research, management research and organisational research and include i.a. alliances, cross-sector partnerships, hybrid organisations, programme organisations and public-private partnerships.

1. *How are strategic partnerships formed and developed?*
2. *How are governance mechanisms implemented in strategic partnerships to coordinate intraorganisational activities and practices?*
3. *How are professional boundaries handled in strategic partnerships?*

Each of the three research questions directs attention to a specific empirical aspect of strategic partnerships and delves into a current practical and theoretical discussion. Moreover, each of them has resulted in a paper that contributes to the overall objective of the study and, altogether, forms the basis for the conclusions and contributions presented in Chapter VI: Conclusions and contributions. In the next section, I will briefly elaborate on how I pursued the three research questions in the three papers.

2.1. The three papers

This section introduces briefly the three papers appended to this thesis. For a more comprehensive introduction to the papers, see Chapter V: Outline of the three papers.

Formation and development of strategic partnerships

The first paper addresses the research question of how strategic partnerships are formed and developed. This interest has been pursued by examining the formation and development of the two strategic partnerships between, on the one hand, ByK and, on the other hand, TRUST and DSP PLUS, respectively. The paper adds to current academic discussions with insights into how strategic partnerships, as a particular type of hybrid organisation, change when mingling prescriptions from multiple institutional logics (Ramus, Vaccaro & Brusoni, 2017; Reay & Hinings, 2009). Moreover, the paper applies the concept of *trading zones* (Collins, Evans & Gorman, 2007) to obtain a processual and more critical understanding of how co-existing institutional logics dynamically evolve the partnership organisation.

Coordination in strategic partnerships through governance mechanisms

The second paper addresses the research question of how governance mechanisms are implemented in strategic partnerships to coordinate intraorganisational activities and practices. This interest has been pursued

through a single case study investigating how the strategic partnership between ByK and TRUST implements governance mechanisms to coordinate intraorganisational activities and practices. Theoretically, the paper contributes to the growing body of knowledge within the management literature (e.g. Hetemi, van Marrewijk, Jerbrant & Bosch-Rekvelde, 2020; Martinsuo & Geraldi, 2020; Söderlund & Sydow, 2019) that seeks to understand the recursive interplay between institutional influences and management activities. Furthermore, the paper extends the existing but scarce literature on organisational compartmentalisation (*cf.* Perkmann, McKelvey & Phillips, 2019) by empirically showing how a compartmentalised structural approach is adopted to deal with internal logic multiplicity.

Handling professional boundaries in strategic partnerships

The third and final paper addresses the research question of how professional boundaries are handled in strategic partnerships. This interest has been pursued through a single case study examining how the strategic partnership between ByK and TRUST creates professional boundaries in the development of organisational artefacts. The paper adds to the institutional literature that focuses on the role of artefacts in organisational phenomena (e.g. de Vaujany, Adrot, Boxenbaum & Leca, 2019; Jones, 2019; Zilber, 2017). Moreover, the paper provides empirical examples that illustrate how the strategic partnership develops organisational artefacts, as a form of boundary work, to manage institutional complexity.

2.2. Philosophical and scientific persuasions

In the previous section, I emphasised that the study has been conducted within an overall framework. However, I did not elaborate further on this framework and how it spans across the three papers. In explaining this, I will lead the attention to the philosophical and scientific choices of the study reflected on in the three papers.

As explained more or less explicitly throughout this chapter, the objective of the study, and thereby this thesis, is to generate *knowledge* about strategic partnerships in Danish construction. My interest is especially the period after contracting where the partnership organisation is formed and subsequently developed. Each of the three papers thus flirts with epistemology; the branch of philosophy that is concerned with knowledge and how knowledge is produced, acquired and used in social phenomena

(Audi, 2011; Rescher, 2003). Moreover, the three papers each adopts the constructionist stance of epistemology. This stance considers truth, or meaning, as socially constructed in the interplay between subject and object (*cf.* Crotty, 1998). Thus, seen through a constructionist point of view, there is no objective truth waiting to be revealed; instead, truth and meaning are constructed *in-situ* and do not universally exist *ex-situ*. The argument presented here is also the reason why I earlier in this chapter claimed that no instrumental conclusions will be presented in this thesis on the effects and worth of strategic partnerships. I will not present such conclusions because I simply perceive strategic partnerships as emerging phenomena that are constructed and given meaning *in-situ*. When multiple strategic partnerships exist, a plurality of divergent truths and meanings are constructed, making it utopian – in my opinion – to draw instrumental conclusions about strategic partnerships. However, what I can make instrumental statements of is the theoretical backbone of the study.

Epistemology is sometimes referred to as *the theory of knowledge* (*cf.* Audi, 2011; Rescher, 2003). This is because epistemology is inherent in theories and theories are fashioned to generate a specific sort of knowledge (Crotty, 1998). The three papers appended to this thesis all draw on theoretical concepts from the field of organisational institutionalism. In addition, two of the papers are partially applying concepts rooted in the field of science and technology studies. Although there are quite striking ontological differences between organisational institutionalism and science and technology studies, such as whether or not institutions exist *per se*, they are both distinctly based in the social constructionism (*cf.* Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Dobbin & Vican, 2015; Lok, 2019; Lynch, 2016). That said, although the three papers are seemingly individual works pursuing different research interests, they have all been conducted and produced within the same overall constructionist framework. The theoretical framework informs the research methodology with criteria for method selection. The research methodology thus serves to link the theoretical framework and methods for data collection so the desired outcomes can be achieved (Crotty, 1998). The research methodology in the study is based on a qualitative and ethnographic approach, which is broadly recognised as fruitful for developing rich descriptions of social phenomena. Methods have been chosen in line with the research methodology.

Summing up, what makes the study coherent is the philosophical and scientific choices, which create synthesis between the three individual papers and allow conclusions to be made across them.

3. Composition of thesis

The thesis is structured as a collection of papers. Consequently, this means that the thesis is composed of three appended papers and a ‘frame’ that is to provide a coherent storyline across the papers.

I chose the paper-based format for two reasons. The first reason was that the paper-based approach seemed a legitimate method to divide the ‘massive’ PhD project into smaller and more tangible parts. I also considered the division of the project as an opportunity to collaborate and learn from other researchers as well as a way to get ongoing feedback on my work (i.a. from colleagues, co-authors, conference participants and reviewers). The second reason was that I had a personal interest in learning the art of writing scientific papers. Writing and publishing papers is the prevailing way to communicate research in academia. However, paper writing is extremely difficult to learn, and there are many ‘unwritten rules’ that papers must conform to in order to be convincing (*cf.* Barley, 2006; Chan, 2020; Martinsuo & Huemann, 2020).

I am aware that the paper-based format also introduces pitfalls that are not typically found in the classic monograph format, such as greater risk of an incoherent thesis and a potential absence of *thick descriptions* (Geertz, 1973) due to a strict conformity to journal guidelines. Consequently, I have endeavoured to write a ‘frame’ that interrelates the papers and presents descriptions which, for various reasons, do not appear in the papers, but which I still consider relevant to the project.

3.1. Structure and chapters

This thesis consists of six chapters. In the following, I will briefly describe the content in each chapter.

Chapter I: The Strategic Partnership Era in Danish construction

In this chapter, I have presented information about the Danish construction sector and outlined selected challenges and problems faced

by the sector. I have also described that strategic partnerships, as well as other compositions of firms from across the construction value chain, are perceived as a way of dealing with complex challenges and problems in the sector. The scope of the study and the pursued research objectives are also presented.

Chapter II: Empirical context

In this chapter, I will delve into the strategic partnership concept and explain how it has made its way into the City of Copenhagen. I will also describe five components that I consider essential in the strategic partnership concept. At the end of the chapter, I will describe how the strategic partnership concept has proliferated in Danish construction.

Chapter III: Theoretical background

In the third chapter, I will unfold the field of organisational institutionalism, with a special emphasis on the theoretical concepts that are employed in the study, their purpose and how they are related to one another. I will also present selected concept from the field of science and technology studies that are mobilised and used in the study to ‘extend’ the institutional framework to better cover materiality and stress processual aspects.

Chapter IV: Research methodology and design

In chapter four, I elaborate on the methodology of the study, which is grounded in a qualitative and ethnographic approach. I will also describe the methods used to collect data and provide an overview of the datasets. In the end of the chapter, I will present considerations regarding qualitative rigour.

Chapter V: Outline of the three papers

In the fifth chapter, I will present details about how the appended papers have come into being and how they have been developed from ideas and thoughts to manuscripts. In the chapter, I will also elaborate on how data has been analysed in each of the appended papers and present the results.

Chapter VI: Conclusions and contributions

In the closing chapter, I will revisit the stated research objective of the study and present the main conclusions, research contributions and practical implications of the study.

Chapter II: Empirical context

4. Strategic partnerships in the City of Copenhagen

In this chapter, I will outline the empirical context that has been under scrutiny in the study. The purpose of the chapter is to present relevant background information about strategic partnerships in Danish construction, including the background for the City of Copenhagen's strategic partnership tenders, conceptual details and proliferation of strategic partnerships in Danish construction. I will first describe the City of Copenhagen's background for tendering strategic partnerships. Then, I will highlight five key components in the strategic partnership concept. Lastly, I will elaborate on what is meant by the Strategic Partnership Era and describe the strategic partnerships that make up this era.

4.1. Background for the City of Copenhagen's strategic partnership tenders

In an internal evaluation of the City of Copenhagen's framework agreements on strategic partnerships (Byggeri København, 2020), it is declared that ByK is the first public client organisation in Denmark to tender such framework agreements. In addition, the evaluation clarifies that the inspiration for strategic partnerships comes from Swedish and UK experiences with procurement of infrastructure projects through framework agreements. Less explained in the evaluation, however, is the underlying rationale for tendering strategic partnerships and what challenges the strategic partnerships are expected to address in the City of Copenhagen. This is elaborated in the following.

Challenges in the City of Copenhagen and the establishment of ByK

In the years before contracting the two framework agreements on strategic partnerships with TRUST and DSP PLUS in 2016, the City of Copenhagen faced several interrelated challenges that were directly related to the city's situation at that time.

First, a forecast predicted that the number of residents in Copenhagen would increase by 100,000 between 2014 and 2025 (Økonomiforvaltningen, 2014). This explicitly meant that the city would be met with demands to procure and renovate a substantial amount of infrastructure projects towards 2025 to keep the pace of the expected growth.

Second, the urgent demand for infrastructure capacity created a pressure on the already overburdened department in the City of Copenhagen named *Københavns Ejendomme* (transl. ‘Copenhagen Properties’). This department was responsible for serving as the client role on construction projects procured by one of the city's seven administrations as well as operating and maintaining the city's existing building stock (*cf.* Lassen, in progress). In 2014, a critical report documented that one in four of the city's infrastructure projects was delayed and that almost half of the projects for the Children and Youth Administration were delayed (Gundersen, 2014). A direct consequence of the criticism was that the City of Copenhagen divided Copenhagen Properties into two units: *Byggeri København* (ByK) who was to serve as the city's client organisation and *Københavns Ejendomme & Indkøb* (KEID) who was assigned the responsibility of operating and maintaining the city's building stock. The argument for dividing Copenhagen Properties into two units was that the City of Copenhagen would obtain better opportunities for strengthening the client function as well as the operation and maintenance function by having the two functions separated in different units.

Third, if ByK were to deliver the much-needed infrastructure capacity, they assessed that a 10% staff expansion was necessary. However, ByK was reluctant to make the necessary staff expansions, as the new employees had to be dismissed again immediately after the capacity had been delivered and the portfolio of projects return to the regular level.

Fourth and finally, the urgent demand for infrastructure capacity in Copenhagen created an economic disequilibrium. This means that an increased amount of financial resources earmarked for infrastructure capacity shrinks the economic latitude to fulfilment of other political agendas such as promoting the green transition and strengthening the welfare system (*cf.* City of Copenhagen, 2015). On top of this, the City of Copenhagen received a commissioned report from a consulting firm (Rambøll Management Consulting, 2016), which stated that the price per square meter was up to 60% higher on infrastructure projects in Copenhagen compared to other Danish municipalities.

All the above-mentioned challenges put ByK in a highly complex situation where status quo was inadequate and would merely make the challenges more serious. Therefore, ByK had to rethink its business so that they could deal more explicitly with the interrelated challenges.

The vision of strategic partnerships in ByK and inspiration from abroad

Internally in ByK, there were discussions about how to transform into a more professional client organisation and how the procurement and construction strategy had to be reformed in order to achieve greater efficiency in terms of time, cost and quality. From ByK's point of view, firms in the industry often considered each other as competitors, or even as adversaries, instead of partners. As articulated by several informants from ByK during the interview conversations (informants listed in section 9.2. Dataset of conversations), the *us* and *them* dichotomy arguably creates boundaries between firms in the industry and promotes fragmentation and opportunistic behaviour instead of collaboration and mutual recognition. In addition, several of the informants emphasised that the dichotomy can be deemed as a product of the framework conditions of the industry rather than a reflection of the actual interest of the AEC firms. According to ByK informants and the former Head of Construction in ByK (Lassen, in progress), this means that AEC firms want to collaborate in pursuit of projects that satisfy the client, but the conventional framework conditions for procurement and construction complicate this effort.

Consequently, ByK began to formulate an alternative framework, or concept, that largely should make it possible to meet the demands of the city and cultivate the development of collaborative relationships. The vision for the concept was to ensure long-term strategic collaboration between ByK and consortia of AEC firms. This was to be materialised by grouping a substantial amount of the city's coming infrastructure projects in major construction programmes and tender the programmes as four-year framework agreements. By doing this, ByK would be able to reduce significantly its annual number of tenders and contracts, which in 2015 counted 219 tenders and 420 individual contracts with contractors and suppliers (Andersen, 2016). In addition, grouping projects into major programmes would make it more attractive for consortia to work *for* ByK as well as learn about ByK's needs, and to develop solutions that could help ByK transform into a more professional client organisation. ByK labelled this concept *strategic partnerships*, which emphasises the concept's strategic focus on collaboration and mutual recognition in the pursuit of public (i.e. ByK) and private (i.e. the consortia) objectives.

ByK, however, had no experiences with procurement of infrastructure projects through framework agreements or in being part of long-term collaborations with AEC consortia. Consequently, they searched for

inspiration in construction industries in Finland, Norway, Sweden and the UK, where framework agreements and forms of long-term collaboration traditionally have been used for the procurement of public infrastructure projects (*cf.* Lassen, in progress). Experiences with framework agreements, particularly in Sweden and the UK, were considered interesting to ByK. In Sweden, the Nacka Municipality and the Södertälja Municipality had procured infrastructure projects through framework agreements based on strategic partnering. In the UK, the Manchester City Council had procured infrastructure projects through framework agreements based on partnering. ByK commenced case analyses of the Swedish and the UK framework agreements and in 2015 were on a study trip to the Södertälja Municipality to learn about their more pragmatic experiences in organising and implementing framework agreements.

In spring 2016, ByK announced to the media that they would soon be tendering a substantial part of their project portfolio in framework agreements based on strategic partnerships. As explained by ByK's former Head of Construction Rasmus Brandt Lassen:

“We need to rethink the way we collaborate, and there must be better frameworks allowing us to find the best solutions together with the industry. Therefore, we will soon collect a substantial part of our project portfolio in strategic partnership tenders. This means that we over the coming four years will work with permanent consortiums of contractors, architects and engineers in effort to optimise the city's buildings.” (Press release in Andersen, 2016)

The announcement triggered discussions among firms in the industry who either welcomed the coming strategic partnership tenders or criticised them (several are highlighted in section 9.3. Dataset of documents). Based on the media coverage and the divergent opinions of firms in the industry, it was clear that ByK was about to introduce a concept in Danish construction that was radically new.

4.2. The strategic partnership concept

I have repeatedly referred to strategic partnerships as a *concept* in the front-end of the thesis. This section is dedicated to further explaining what is meant by a concept as well as outlining selected key components of the strategic partnership concept.

The meaning of a concept

When looking up the term ‘concept’ in a dictionary (e.g. Merriam-Webster Inc., 1989, p. 274), it is written that the term is a Latinised form of *conceit* and means ‘idea’ or ‘notion’. Concepts are thus *conceived constructs* based on certain beliefs of rational behaviour. Hence, the rationality of a concept can be considered superior or inferior to others.

In academia, the term ‘concept’ has been used in different respects. For example, Reinhart Koselleck (1982) speaks of concepts as *terminologies* (e.g. democracy, liberty and modernity) that historically have evolved certain semantics and pragmatics. Such concepts are incorporated and evolved within political and social contexts, where the act reflects the contested and conceptualised understandings of concepts (*cf.* Richter, 1996). Analogously, John McKinney (1966) speaks of concepts as specific *orders of things* developed from a vast diversity of experiences. Moreover, McKinney (1966) argues that concepts *per se* are ‘unreal’ in the sense that they are abstract generalisations developed from experiences and, therefore, do not reflect the complex and diverse dimensions of the actual experiences.

In this study, I do not consider the strategic partnership concept as a historically evolved terminology (as per Koselleck, 1982) nor as a particular order of things developed from experiences (as per McKinney, 1966). Instead, I consider it as yet another management concept in Danish construction, which already counts concepts such as construction supply chain management (e.g. Fredslund, 2021; Koch, Larsen & Gottlieb, 2006), lean construction (e.g. Forman, 2013; Simonsen, 2007) and partnering (e.g. Gottlieb, 2010; Tvarnø, 2016). Management concepts each contain a number of so-called *key components* (Nyström, 2005) that are considered essential to the specific concept and that differ from other concepts. When a firm adopts a management concept in pursuit of rationality, the components in the adopted concept are likely to penetrate and displace existing managerial practices and aspects of organisational life (Cameron & Whetten, 1981; Quinn & Cameron, 1983).

In the following, I highlight five key components in the strategic partnership concept. The components have been identified by scrutinising ByK's tender material (Byggeri København, 2016) as well as TRUST's bid for the framework agreement on strategic partnerships (TRUST, 2016). In addition, the five components play a more or less prominent role in all the

strategic partnerships that have been launched in Danish construction (see list of strategic partnerships in Danish construction in Table 1 in Chapter II: Empirical context).

Five key components in the strategic partnership concept

The first component is the *framework agreement*. The framework agreement is a four- to six-year agreement between a client organisation and a consortium, which prescribes the terms and conditions that will apply to procurement contracts entered under the framework agreement (European Union, 2014). As such, the framework agreement introduces a long-term relationship between a client organisation and a consortium that, unlike conventional relationships in construction, is not defined based on project-specific conditions.

The second component is the *programme of projects*. The client organisation groups a programme of projects and dedicates the programme to the consortium. A programme is characterised by containing a number of projects that are similar and related to each other (e.g. in terms of building typology, stakeholders or type of users), and are pooled in the quest for achieving set strategic objectives (Project Management Institute, 2017). Analogously, the consortium orchestrates and coordinates its assets, competences and resources in accordance to the needs of the programme and the set strategic objectives of the client organisation. By operating at the level of the programme, several long-term opportunities are generated such as cross-project planning, economics of scale, repetition effects and standardisation.

The third component is what, in ByK's own words (Byggeri København, 2016), is described as a *collaborative platform*. The collaborative platform refers to all the technical procedures, processes, systems and tools that the client organisation and the consortium will develop jointly to enable achievement of strategic objectives when realising the programme. This involves, among other things, diagrams, ICT systems, programme planning tools, project models and templates.

The fourth component is *soft (relational) elements*. Strategic partnerships are multi-firm constructs and, consequently, do contain individuals who are either employed by the client organisation or by one of the consortium's constituents. This means that the organisational silos that are prevailing in conventional construction projects, and often considered a source of

conflicts (*cf.* Davis and Love, 2011), also are found within the strategic partnership. The promotion of soft elements, such as interdisciplinarity, mutual recognition and trust, is a way to dismantle the organisational silos and, thereby, replace the risk of conflicts with opportunities of fostering a collaborative relationship. Moreover, trust is perceived as a mechanism to reduce the negative effects of opportunism and bounded rationality (Rosseau, Sitkin, Burt & Camerer, 1998) in contractual relations, thus reducing transaction costs (Nooteboom, 1996; Williamson, 1981).

The fifth and final component is the *partnership office*. In my eyes, the partnership office is one of the most important enablers (Müller, Pemsel & Shao, 2015) in a strategic partnership. The partnership office has a dual role in the sense that it is both an object and a subject. As an object (or artefact), the partnership office constitutes the physical space of the strategic partnership in which the client organisation and the consortium co-locate and perform activities related to the programme. As a subject, the partnership office supports the desired functions of the strategic partnership by managing, organising and shaping social structures as well as normative and behavioural aspects.

I consider the five key components as highly interrelated to one another. For example, it is hard, or even impossible, for a strategic partnership to operate at the level of the programme and realise strategic objectives without having a framework agreement. This would be possible in so-called megaprojects that are so huge, that they in themselves are programmes (*cf.* Flyvbjerg, 2014), but not in a strategic partnership that only exists for as long as new projects are awarded. Furthermore, the programme is a very strong indicator for the engagement in the collaborative platform and the soft (relational) elements because beneficial outcomes from these components can be invested in projects across the programme. Having said that, I do not claim that strategic partnerships automatically will fail if not all five key components are deployed. But opting out some of the components potentially could mean that others must be implemented.

5. Revisiting the Strategic Partnership Era

In this subchapter, I will revisit what I in Chapter I: The Strategic Partnership Era in Danish construction referred to as the Strategic Partnership Era in Danish construction. I will in this regard describe how the strategic partnership concept has proliferated in Danish construction and how strategic partnerships can be theorised.

5.1. Defining an era

An era can be understood as a “period of history characterized by a particular state of affairs, series of events, etc.” (Burchfield, 1998, p. 783). Examples of other eras in Danish construction are the Industrial Era and the Innovation Era. The former emerged in the post-war period and involved the development of standards and principles for mechanisation and prefabrication in construction (Gottlieb, 2010). The latter emerged in the 1990s and pursued increased innovation in construction through experimentation with innovative concepts and programmes (Clausen, 2002).

The Strategic Partnership Era in Danish construction emerged in 2016 when ByK entered two framework agreements on strategic partnerships with TRUST and DSP PLUS. Prior to the formation of the two strategic partnerships, ByK had experienced several interrelated challenges, which complicated the efficient procurement of infrastructure projects in the City of Copenhagen. The rationale of the strategic partnerships was therefore to achieve greater efficiency in terms of time, price and quality by grouping the city's coming projects into programmes. Another rationale was to reduce the number of conflicts and disputes by redefining the conventional client-supplier relationship from two contract holders to two parties in a strategic partnership.

ByK's stated challenges and needs for increased procurement efficiency, however, were not special for ByK, but reflected challenges and needs that were rather common among client organisations. Consequently, client organisations with different characteristics and different project portfolios began to imitate ByK and announce strategic partnership tenders based on basically the same challenges and needs (as I will explicate in the next section).

The Strategic Partnership Era in Danish construction, however, is not only characterised by, at the time of writing, nine strategic partnership with a total estimated value of more than €2,500M and a time span of more than 10 years. In my eyes, the era is also characterised by a very persistent effort in materialising and refining the strategic partnership concept and what I in section 4.2. The strategic partnership concept described as key components in the concept.

5.2. Streams of strategic partnerships in Danish construction

Since the first two strategic partnership tenders in 2016, which I consider the first stream of strategic partnerships in Danish construction, an addition of two streams have emerged. The second stream emerged in the beginning of 2019 while the third stream emerged in the fourth quarter of 2020. Table 1 shows the three streams as well as their associated strategic partnerships. Each of the three streams is briefly described immediately after the table.

Table 1. Overview of streams and associated strategic partnerships in Danish construction. Each of the nine strategic partnerships (each represented by a bar) are presented in the following order: (1) name of client organisation, (2) name of consortium and (3) estimated value of framework agreement.

2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026
	ByK / TRUST €320M									
	ByK / DSP PLUS €80M									
		FSB / HJEM €320M				extension clause				
		KAB / &os €750M				extension clause				
			Egedal K / L:Eg €55M							
			BYGST / Team Hoffmann €240M							
			Civica / LIVA €240M			extension clause				
			Region H / Team MTH €295M							
			ByK / TBD €335M							
	First stream		Second stream		Third stream					

The first stream

The first stream involves ByK's two four-year framework agreements on strategic partnerships with TRUST and DSP PLUS. As such, this stream is characterised by strategic partnerships between parties from the public

and private sectors based on framework agreements worth €80-320M. Moreover, the strategic partnerships are the first of their kind in Danish construction and, accordingly, had to start from scratch in terms of developing content and principles for the concept.

TRUST comprises two architecture firms, two engineering firms, one landscaping firm and one contractor. DSP PLUS comprises two architecture firms, one engineering firm, one landscaping firm and one contractor.

The second stream

The second stream consists of two four-year framework agreements on strategic partnerships, which are possible to extend by another two years. The clients in these strategic partnerships are the two major organisations from the social housing sector, *FSB* and *KAB*. The two strategic partnerships thus comprise parties from the social housing sector and the private sector and are based on framework agreements worth €320-750M. This second stream thus proliferates the strategic partnership concept to the social housing sector. Both client organisations have stated to the media that the framework agreements on strategic partnerships are expected to increase quality, lessen the number of conflicts and provide better value for money.

HJEM consists of one architecture firm, one engineering firm, one contractor and one consulting firm specialised in innovation management. *Os* consists of two architecture firms, two engineering firms, one landscaping firm, one contractor and one consulting firm responsible for partnership development.

The third stream

The third and ongoing stream consists of five framework agreements on strategic partnerships that are rather different from those in the first and second streams.

The first strategic partnership between *Egedal K* (a municipality in North Zealand) and *L:Eg* is the smallest strategic partnership to date based on the estimated value of the framework agreement and size of programme. *L:Eg* is made up of one architecture firm, one engineering firm, one contractor and one consulting firm specialised in energy and sustainability. The second strategic partnership between *BYGST* (i.e. the Danish

Building and Property Agency) and *Team Hoffmann* is the first strategic partnership with a nationwide programme. Team Hoffmann (final consortium name is under development) includes of two architecture firms, one engineering firm and one contractor. The third strategic partnership between *Civica* and *LIVA* is the first strategic partnership entered by a social housing client outside Copenhagen. LIVA consists of two architecture firms, two engineering firms, one landscaping firm and one contractor. The fourth strategic partnership between *Region H* (i.e. the Capital Region of Denmark) and *Team MTH* is the first strategic partnership entered by a region and the first to execute a programme within the building typology of hospitals. Team MTH (final consortium name is under development) comprises of one architecture firm, two engineering firms and one contractor. The fifth and final strategic partnership between ByK and a not yet chosen consortium is the first strategic partnership tender announced by a client organisation with experience in strategic partnerships.

5.3. Theorising strategic partnerships

The Danish construction industry, just like other construction industries (Chan, Cooper & Tzortzopoulos, 2005; Jensen, Thuesen & Geraldi, 2016), is characterised by project-based nature where firms from across the construction value chain organise themselves and their services in accordance with project-specific characteristics. Aside from megaprojects, such as airports or hospitals (Flyvbjerg, 2014), which take years to develop and built, construction projects usually have a relatively short duration. A direct implication hereof is that project organisations in construction, as well as the cultivation of relationships across the construction value chain, are short-term ventures. Moreover, relationships in construction projects are transactional in the sense that project parties often are competing and awarded tasks based on the *lowest price criterion* and mainly build relationships because it is perceived a prerequisite to ensure a decent profit margin. However, The project-based nature of construction, and associated short-term, transactional relationships based on the lowest price criterion have often been highlighted as reasons for the industry's high degree of fragmentation and inability to address and solve complex problems (e.g. Fredslund, 2021; Gottlieb & Haugbølle, 2013; Kristiansen, 2006).

Strategic partnerships represent the opposite of conventional project-based organisation. By this I mean that strategic partnerships are programme-based, joint organisations with rich opportunities for building long-term, collaborative relationships based on shared objectives for the benefit of all involved parties. The joint organisation is comprised of a client organisation and a consortium, and the organisation is formed by combining organisational forms, identities and rationales from each party. Therefore, strategic partnerships represent a particular form of hybrid organisation (Battilana, Besharov & Mitzinneck, 2017) where the the client organisation and the consortium are integrated in a joint organisation.

Mobilising the understanding of strategic partnerships as hybrid organisations that combine organisational forms, identities and rationales from multiple parties provides opportunities to explore the institutional challenges associated with partnership formation and how such challenges are potentially overcome. I will elaborate on this further in the next chapter.

Chapter III: Theoretical background

6. Organisational institutionalism

In this chapter, I will unfold the theoretical background of the study, which is grounded in the field of organisational institutionalism. This perspective is useful to explain how strategic partnerships, as a particular (hybrid) organisation, make sense of institutions and how institutions influence organisational structure and behaviour (*cf.* Greenwood, Oliver, Sahlin & Suddaby, 2008). I will first provide a brief introduction to the field of organisational institutionalism and the theoretical concepts that have been used in the study as primary theory. Then I will present selected theoretical concepts from the field of science and technology studies that have been mobilised in a complementary fashion to challenge, enrich and potentially widen the institutional focus on meaning to other domains. The intent of the chapter is to describe the applicability of the theoretical basis and associated concepts rather than providing in-depth but generic descriptions of each concept.

6.1. The rise of organisational institutionalism

Organisational institutionalism is the perspective of neo-institutional scholarship that seeks to explain organisational structure and behaviour in context of institutional influences and processes. The original thoughts of this perspective were described throughout a series of highly influential papers published in the late 1970s and early 1980s (*cf.* Greenwood *et al.*, 2008). The papers disclaimed the, at that time, prevailing understanding of organisations as utterly agentic and rational actors “responding to situational circumstances” (Greenwood *et al.*, 2008, p. 3). Furthermore, the papers advocated the idea of organisations as conforming to wider social obligations of their institutional context, because compliance with these was perceived as rational. The four following historical studies outline some of the most important observations made by institutional scholars in the late 1970s and early 1980s that set a new and more structural direction for institutional scholarship:

- In their study of how organisations incorporate formal organisational structures, John Meyer & Brian Rowan (1977) argued that organisations conformed to prevailing *rational myths*, which are institutionalised rules, norms and ideologies that arise in

highly institutionalised contexts and prescribe rationalised organisational structures.

- In her study of the role of institutionalisation in cultural persistence, Lynne Zucker (1977) showed that high degree of institutionalisation, similarly, generated a high degree of uniformity, maintenance and resistance to change.
- Pamela Tolbert & Lynne Zucker's (1983) study of the diffusion and institutionalisation of changes in the formal structures of organisations showed that changes in organisational structures were determined by the extent to which policies and programmes under consideration were institutionalised.
- Finally, in their study of what makes organisations similar, Paul DiMaggio & Walter Powell (1983) argued that organisations are pushed towards homogenisation through mechanisms of institutional isomorphic change within the organisational field of which they are members.

As indicated in the four studies, institutional scholars began to question and disclaim the prevailing understanding of organisational structure and behaviour as utterly agentic and rationally motivated. Instead, they missionised a structural explanation, implying that perceptions of rationality were conditioned by the institutional context of organisations, and that organisations pursued legitimacy by conforming to institutionalised organisational structures (i.e. structures that are normative within an organisational field). The structural understanding of organisational structure and behaviour was prevalent within institutional scholarship until late 1980 where institutional scholars called for a stronger agentic focus. Most notably, Paul DiMaggio (1988) criticised the prevailing structural understanding and claimed that structural explanations of organisations did not allow institutional scholarship to explain fundamental change. Accordingly, DiMaggio (1988) proposed reintroducing agency into the literature.

A result of the burgeoning interest in agency was a massive body of institutional inquiries conducted in the late 1980s and throughout the 1990s that examined the constraining and enabling effects of institutions on organisational structure and behaviour. This new, yet still prevailing, perspective in institutional scholarship was dubbed the new institutionalism in organisational analysis (DiMaggio & Powell, 1991;

DiMaggio, 1998). The original interest within this perspective was to explain change and legitimacy (*cf.* Greenwood *et al.*, 2008). This is reflected in the early works of this perspective that, among others, sought to understand organisational change (e.g. Greenwood & Hinings, 1993, 1996), competing institutional logics as a source of change (e.g. Friedland & Alford, 1991), organisational responses to institutional environments and their variations (e.g. Lounsbury, 2001; Oliver, 1991) and how organisations can change the structures in which they themselves are embedded (Seo & Creed, 2002; Uzzi, 1997).

A more contemporary and proliferating interest within organisational institutionalism, which this study also shares, is how organisations navigate institutional pluralism (e.g. Kraatz & Block, 2008; Mair, Mayer & Lutz, 2015) and cope with incompatible institutional prescriptions and organisational heterogeneity (e.g. Greenwood, Raynard, Kodeih, Micelotta & Lounsbury, 2011; Ocasio & Radoynovska, 2016) by adopting hybrid structures (e.g. Battilana & Dorado, 2010; Pache & Santos, 2013; Raynard, 2016).

6.2. Organisations in pluralistic institutional environments

In their seminal work, Roger Friedland & Robert Alford (1991) articulated the notion of contemporary Western societies as constituted by several key *institutions*. According to William Scott (2003, p. 880), institutions are resilient social structures composed of “cultural-cognitive, normative, and regulative elements that, together with associated activities and resources, provide stability and meaning to social life”. Thus, institutions *are* institutionalised orders in the sense that they each presupposes a set of cultural symbols, organising principles and logics of action (*cf.* Thornton & Ocasio, 2008) that are considered legitimate within the domain of an institution. Friedland & Alford (1991) also argued that each institution has a central *institutional logic*. An institutional logic can be understood as cultural beliefs and rules guiding legitimate behaviour and prescribing taken-for-granted conceptions of goals that are legitimate to achieve (Greenwood, Díaz, Li & Lorente, 2010; Lounsbury, 2007; Pache & Santos, 2013). Thus, individuals and organisations in contemporary Western societies are exposed to the prescriptions of multiple and potentially incompatible institutional logics at the same time (Friedland & Alford, 1991). Although Friedland & Alford (1991) did not describe this phenomenon of co-existing institutions and logics as *institutional pluralism*,

Matthew Kraatz & Emily Block (2008) later introduced this term to the literature.

Institutional pluralism and complexity

Institutional pluralism refers to a situation where over lengthy periods an organisation is exposed to prescriptions of multiple institutional logics because it operates within multiple institutional spheres where logics co-exist (Jarzabkowski, Matthiesen & Van de Ven, 2009; Kraatz & Block, 2008). The interest in institutional pluralism has grown among institutional scholars in recent years (*cf.* Kraatz & Block, 2017). One reason for this is that modern societies increasingly are recognised as being naturally pluralistic (Vermeulen, Zietsma, Greenwood & Langley, 2016), and that organisations, by the same token, are commonly operating under conditions of institutional pluralism (Jancsary, Meyer, Höllerer & Barberio, 2017) and become heterogeneous (Ocasio & Radoynovska, 2016). A natural interest, therefore, has been to understand how organisations embody heterogeneous prescriptions from multiple logics in organisational practice (*cf.* Heinze & Weber, 2016). Another related interest has been to understand how organisations cope with *institutional complexity* (Greenwood *et al.*, 2010), i.e. situations where the embodied prescriptions are incompatible and therefore produce tensions within an organisation.

While institutional pluralism is generally considered as a fundamental and relatively harmless condition for most contemporary organisations, institutional complexity contrarily is associated with several negative effects. Institutional complexity is a source of organisational fragmentation (Greenwood *et al.*, 2011) and paralysis (Pache & Santos, 2010), and as such can generate unintended and fatal consequences for the performance of organisations and for their acquisition of legitimacy (Mair *et al.*, 2015). Consequently, organisations must navigate pluralistic institutional environments to avoid situations of institutional complexity (Jay, 2013). This can be accomplished either by developing *strategic responses* (Oliver, 1991; Pache & Santos, 2010) or by adopting *hybrid organisational structures* (Perkmann *et al.*, 2019; Raynard, 2016), which enable orchestration of diverging institutional prescriptions harmoniously.

6.3. Organisational responses to institutional complexity

In the past three decades, the classification of and boundaries between commercial businesses, public organisations and private charities, and their respective sectors, has become increasingly blurred (Battilana & Lee, 2014; Billis, 2010; Emmert & Crow, 1988; Haigh & Hoffman, 2012). A result hereof is that contemporary organisations are likely exposed to, and have to master, competing and often contradictory demands from multiple societal sectors (Ocasio & Radoynovska, 2016). However, the efforts of organisations to address demands from multiple sectors pose an organisational challenge as organisations are traditionally formed and homogenised in organisational fields (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983) to meet objectives and solve problems within a single sector (Billis, 2010). This means that established categories of organisational forms are inadequate to handle pluralistic demands, and the growing occurrence of hybrid organisational structures can be explained in the light of this (Haigh & Hoffman, 2012; Kraatz & Block, 2008).

Hybrid organisational structures

Organisations adopting hybrid organisational structures (i.e. *hybrid organisations*) such as public-private partnerships, social enterprises and venture philanthropy organisations are perceived to thrive in pluralistic institutional environments, due to their ability to combine and reconfigure distinct institutional logics and thereby address multiple demands (Battilana & Dorado, 2010; Pache & Santos, 2013). Establishing hybrid organisations is also considered an effective way to dissolve traditional public, private and non-profit sectoral boundaries (Doherty, Haugh & Lyon, 2014). Hybrid organisations operating in the interstices of sectors can access artefacts, competences, information and practices that are located within and traditionally restricted by sectoral boundaries (Powell, 1987). Hybrid organisations are thus supposed to effectively address complex problems related to competing demands that cannot be solved by drawing narrowly on a single logic but require attention to the plurality of institutional environments (Jay, 2013; Pache & Santos, 2013).

In the literature, a distinction is typically made between the *blended hybrid organisations* and the *compartmentalised hybrid organisations*. The former type is an organisation where prescriptions of multiple logics are *blended* and guiding the entire organisation (e.g. Battilana & Dorado, 2010; Jay, 2013). The latter type is an organisation where prescriptions of different logics

are *compartmentalised* and guiding different compartments of the organisation (e.g. Greenwood *et al.*, 2011; Pratt & Foreman, 2000). Recent studies have proposed that compartmentalised hybrid organisations are characterised by containing several bounded *organisational spaces*, each of which is guided by a distinct institutional logic or a specific combination of institutional logics (Frederiksen, Gottlieb & Leiringer, 2021; Perkmann *et al.*, 2019).

7. The ‘big tent’ of institutional scholarship

Institutional scholarship has been criticised for having unclear boundaries (Alvesson & Spicer, 2019), for being uncritical (Willmott, 2015) and for becoming increasingly uninhibited (Alvesson, Hallett & Spicer, 2019). This critique has derived a range of insightful scholarly inquiries in which the very fundamentals of institutional scholarship have been revisited (e.g. Lounsbury & Wang, 2020; Ocasio & Gai, 2020) and the critics have been addressed (e.g. Friedland & Arjaliès, 2019; Kraatz, 2020; Lok, 2019). In my eyes, one of the most interesting outcomes of the critique and the associated responses is the renewed articulation and understanding of institutional scholarship as ambiguous and incoherent.

7.1. Institutional scholarship – a field rather than a theory

Institutional scholarship is a field – or a ‘big tent’ (*cf.* Kraatz, 2020; Ocasio & Gai, 2020) – of analytical concepts for understanding social reality in context of institutions. William Ocasio & Shelby Gai (2020, p. 266) apply Ludwig Wittgenstein's (1953 [2009]) idea of family resemblance and argue that organisational institutionalism is “a family resemblance of theoretical perspectives, and certainly not a coherent theory, nor does it aspire to be”. This field of analytical concepts evolves and expands as new social phenomena and scholarly ‘turns’ arise, and concepts should therefore be understood in context of their temporal emergence (Greenwood, Hinings & Whetten, 2014). In addition, some concepts have been developed to understand the influence of institutions either at the macro level i.e. structures and cultures in society (Friedland & Alford, 1991), the meso level i.e. the norms, rules and traditions in organisational fields (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983), the micro level i.e. the day-to-day work of individuals (Powell & Colyas, 2008) or across the levels (e.g. Battilana, Leca &

Boxenbaum, 2009; Pache & Santos, 2010; Smets, Morris & Greenwood, 2012).

It is difficult to draw a clear line between what is *in* the big tent and what is not. For example, the analytical concept of *space* was not considered part of the institutional scholarship 15 years ago. The concept of space was introduced into institutional scholarship by Katherine Kellogg (2009) who adopted the concept of *free spaces* from social movement theorists to explain microinstitutional change in surgery in what she dubbed *relational spaces*. Later, the idea of relational spaces (Kellogg, 2009) was mobilised and evolved into so-called *spaces of negotiation* (Battilana, Sengul, Pache & Model, 2015). Spaces of negotiations are ‘arenas’ where trade-offs between members of a group can be discussed. In addition, the establishment of spaces of negotiations is suggested as a way of maintaining productive tensions in hybrid organisations (*cf.* Battilana *et al.*, 2015). Most recent, the concept of *hybrid spaces* was introduced by Markus Perkmann and colleagues (2019). A hybrid space is a bounded compartment within an organisation that is guided by a combination of hybridity that differs from combinations found in other compartments in the organisation (Perkmann *et al.*, 2019). In their study of selective couplings as a response to competing institutional logics, Anne-Claire Pache & Filipe Santos (2013) also articulated the existence of hybrid spaces. However, they never elaborated further on what was meant by a hybrid space.

What I am trying to illustrate above is that over the past 15 years, *space* has slowly been evolved, conceptualised and ‘institutionalised’ within institutional scholarship as an analytical concept to explain the role of bounded spaces in, for instance, stimulating institutional innovation (*cf.* Cartel, Boxenbaum & Aggeri, 2019) or engagement in minority logics (Perkmann *et al.*, 2019). This is an example of how the big tent grows to maintain the relevance of institutional scholarship and to provide novel institutional explanations of social phenomena.

7.2. Transcending the ‘big tent’

As I elaborated in section 6.2. Organisations in pluralistic institutional environments, institutions provide stability and meaning to social life (Scott, 2003). In line with this, scholars have in the past decades often deployed an organisational institutionalism framework to examine the element of meaning and culture in organisations and in organisational

fields (*cf.* Hinings, Logue & Zietsma, 2017; Ocasio & Gai, 2020). However, institutions as well as their central logics consist of more than meaning and culture. For instance, Friedland & Alford (1991, p. 248) argued that institutional logics each has “a set of material practices and symbolic constructions”, but relatively scarce attention has been directed towards the material practices among institutional scholars.

In two of the appended papers, the co-authors and I have therefore mobilised analytical concepts from the field of science and technology studies in order to make contributions that goes beyond the institutional realm (as per Alvesson & Spicer, 2019). More specifically, we mobilised the concept of trading zones (Collins *et al.*, 2007) in the first appended paper to stress the processual aspect of how strategic partnerships are developed over time by blending and segregating institutional prescriptions. According to Renate Meyer (2019), institutional scholarship has always been highly processual, but institutional scholars have tended not to stress processual aspects significantly. Moreover, we mobilised the concepts of boundary work (Lindberg, Walter & Raviola, 2017; Quick & Feldman, 2014), black-boxing (Latour, 1999) and closure (Pinch & Bijker, 1984) in the third appended paper to understand how institutional complexity is managed by negotiating boundaries between social categories in the development of organisational artefacts. The theoretical background of the study is thus grounded in the field of organisational institutionalism but not strictly limited by the concepts that are embedded in this theoretical field.

Chapter IV: Research methodology and design

8. The qualitative approach

In qualitative research, the researcher is investigating and describing social phenomena ‘out there’ instead of designed research settings such as laboratories (Flick, 2018). In this quest, the researcher travels *into* a phenomenon of interest to mingle with the ‘natives’ (Geertz, 1974) and to experience, analyse and understand the phenomenon at first hand. In this way, the researcher is the most important ‘instrument’ for producing knowledge in qualitative research (*cf.* Brinkmann, 2013).

In this chapter, I will first describe the research methodologies that *I* have employed in the study and that accordingly have informed *me* during data collection, processing and analysis. Subsequently, I will present a complete overview of the collected data before closing the chapter by presenting consideration regarding qualitative rigour.

8.1. The single-case study

The inquiry has been conducted as a longitudinal single-case study where the strategic partnership between ByK and TRUST has been the case under scrutiny. In this respect, it is worth mentioning that the study is rooted in a five-year research project entitled ‘evaluation of strategic partnerships’ carried out by Aalborg University and Technical University of Denmark. The evaluation examines both of ByK's strategic partnerships with TRUST and DSP PLUS and focuses on their efforts in creating cost efficient services. The PhD project, on the other hand, has an interest in understanding and producing knowledge about the day-to-day lived realities in ByK and TRUST.

A case study can be understood as “an in-depth study of a single unit (a relatively bounded phenomenon) where the scholar's aim is to elucidate features of a larger class of similar phenomena” (Gerring, 2004, p. 341). This bounded unit is defined by more or less blurred boundaries that determine and distinguish between what is part of the case study and what is not (Dumez, 2015). Where the multiple-case study design enables researchers to compare and identify replications across several cases (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007), the heart of the single-case study is to describe in detail the fundamentals of a phenomenon through *one* case (Siggelkow, 2007).

The single-case design was chosen for two reasons. The first reason was that the strategic partnership between ByK and TRUST represented a *critical case* (cf. Flyvbjerg, 2006) in the sense that this type of partnership has not previously been initiated in Danish construction and therefore represented the empirical state-of-the-art. The second and quite mundane reason was that I, in the project period, was employed by Enemærke & Petersen, and they were interested in having a researcher follow the strategic partnership and generate research-based knowledge about the day-to-day lived realities. In the study, the strategic partnership between ByK and TRUST has been perceived as a critical case that yields knowledge of strategic partnerships as a social phenomenon and, potentially, constitutes a *paradigmatical case* for other strategic partnerships (Flyvbjerg, 2006).

Due to the study's interest in understanding the configuration, collaboration and complexity *in* strategic partnerships, a distinction has been made between strategic partnership activities carried out in the partnership office and at the construction site, respectively. The focus of this study has been exclusively on the former, as the partnership office has been a significant source of development, relation cultivation and conflict management in the strategic partnership.

Single-case design

The single-case study has been designed as a three-year inquiry corresponding to the duration of the PhD programme. The purpose of the design has been to gain real-time as well as retrospective insights into the strategic partnership by employing multiple data sources (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007; Gioia, Corley & Hamilton, 2012). Real-time insights have been obtained through ethnographic work (Spradley, 1980; Van Maanen, 1988 [2011]) while retrospective insights have been obtained using interviewing of a phenomenological nature (Brinkmann, 2013) and by studying documents related to the examined case and phenomenon (Prior, 2004; Ventresca & Mohr, 2002). This design makes it possible to draw conclusions on the practices of organisations and individuals in their social context. The design is also compatible with the theoretical backbone of the study (as described in Chapter III: Theoretical background), which is based on a social constructionist understanding of knowledge and meaning creation (Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Dobbin & Vican, 2015).

When the study becomes infected by a bloody pandemic

Real-time insights through an ethnographic approach presupposes a somewhat continuous presence *in* the strategic partnership (i.e. in the partnership office); I accordingly endeavoured to be present in the office 3-4 days a week throughout the project period. This progressed as planned from project start in February 2018 until March 2020 where the Danish government, like most European governments, initiated a nationwide shutdown due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In the wake of the shutdown, members of the strategic partnership were encouraged to work from home and to hold work-related meetings and conversations via online media. Although the day-to-day work of the strategic partnership continued during the shutdown in a virtual fashion, my regular presence in the office ceased and so did my studies from the inside of the strategic partnership.

8.2. The strategic partnership 'ByK and TRUST'

In this section, I will briefly introduce the strategic partnership between ByK and TRUST that has been the case under scrutiny in the study. I will also introduce Enemærke & Petersen whom is the contract holder on behalf of the TRUST consortium and the firm in which I have been employed as industrial PhD student in the project period.

ByK – The City of Copenhagen's client organisation

ByK is anchored in the City of Copenhagen's Finance Administration and serves as the city's client organisation with an annual budget on approximately €190M distributed on approximately 200 projects. As per 2021, ByK consist of a total of 100 employees distributed on seven internal offices (i.e. divisions), where four of them are bespoke construction offices that handle the planning and management of the city's construction projects. The remaining three offices provide the four construction offices with expertise on legal, economics, strategy and learning.

ByK operates on the basis of three strategic objectives. The first objective is to achieve *cheaper construction* with a special focus on value for money and life cycle cost. The second objective is to achieve *punctual construction* in the sense that schedules and deadlines are met. The third and final objective is to achieve *better construction*, which means that the procured projects are sustainable, fulfil their intended functions and can easily be operated.

TRUST – ByK's strategic partner

TRUST was awarded the larger of ByK's two framework agreements on strategic partnerships after winning a competitive tender based on the award criteria: price (40%), organisation and staffing (30%) and optimisation, tools and methods (30%).

TRUST is a consortium represented by the six firms: Dominia, Enemærke & Petersen, Lytt Architecture (former GHB Landscape Architects), KANT Part of Sweco (former KANT Architects), Norconsult and Nøhr & Sigsgaard. The name 'TRUST' is an acronym for the Danish words: tillid (trust), ressourcer (resources), udvikling (development), samarbejde (collaboration) and trimmet byggeri (lean construction). Besides being a very symbolic acronym, TRUST (2016) also emphasised in their bid that ByK can *trust* that the consortium: (1) will invest in the partnership and in the learning culture, (2) has the required professional as well as social competences and (3) has the capacity and experience to be equal to the task. Enemærke & Petersen is contract holder on behalf of the TRUST consortium.

Enemærke & Petersen – the contract holder on behalf of TRUST

Enemærke & Petersen is a contractor firm established in 1975. The firm has more than 700 employees at offices in Aalborg, Aarhus, Glostrup, Odense, Ringsted and two strategic partnership offices in Copenhagen. In 2020, Enemærke & Petersen had a revenue of €300M and a profit margin on €18M.

In 1975, Enemærke and Petersen started as a roofing company, but expanded the firm's activities in the early 1980s to include roofing as well as façades, which is illustrated in the company logo (Enemærke & Petersen, 2015). In mid-1980s, Enemærke & Petersen created a division named *E&P Totalentreprise* (transl. 'E&P Turnkey Contractors') in an effort to expand its business and thereby gain a larger share of the construction market. In 2000, Enemærke & Petersen was acquired by Højgaard & Schultz (today the corporate group MT Højgaard Holding) and is today representing one of six subsidiaries in MT Højgaard Holding.

Since the turn of the millennium, Enemærke & Petersen has also showed a special interest in construction processes and experimented with management concepts such as lean construction, location-based management, partnering and most recently strategic partnerships.

Enemærke & Petersen is today known in the industry as a proactive and innovative contractor with a strong social profile and dialog-driven approach to the market. This is mirrored in the firm's slogans 'people who build for people' and 'Denmark's social contractor'. From time to time, employees in Enemærke & Petersen also mention the existence of a special culture and identity in the firm that characterise the so-called Enemærke & Petersen *family*.

8.3. Ethnographic work

I conducted ethnographic work in ByK and TRUST for a period of 25 months starting in February 2018. As methodology, ethnography is distinctly inductive involving that the researcher observes and subsequently unfolds the analysis based on the observations made (Buscatto, 2018). In addition, ethnography presupposes that the researcher regularly is present in the examined case and conducts long-term observations in a systematic manner (Buscatto, 2018).

The purpose of the ethnographic work was twofold. The first was to obtain real-time insights into the strategic partnership by observing and documenting practice in informal and formal settings (Spradley, 1980). Informal settings included ad hoc situations and everyday conversations while formal settings included planned events and meetings. The second was to identify development of structures and patterns of behaviour in a strategic partnership that over time potentially could set the standard for other strategic partnerships and thereby constitute a paradigmatic case (Flyvbjerg, 2006).

The observing colleague

Being an industrial PhD student is a tricky position in relation to data collection, as my motive for engagement in the strategic partnership has been different from that of my fellow ByK and TRUST colleagues. In short, I have been both an observer and a colleague at the same time. This implies that I weave into the empirical context, while maintaining an appropriate professional distance; what in the literature is referred to as the *involvement paradox* (e.g. Langley & Klag, 2019).

This somewhat paradoxical position undoubtedly includes some ethical considerations and choices on how to conduct trustworthy research without being an immoral colleague. To provide an example: when a

group of TRUST members during a lunch discusses a topic of relevance for my studies, should I then write about this discussion in detail in my field notes? The simple answer is *no*, as documenting such ‘off-the-record’ discussions would be unethical. Nevertheless, I think the essence of any interesting discussion deserves to be documented to understand whether it is an everyday or a more fundamental discussion of strategic partnership as a phenomenon. Therefore, I have endeavoured to balance my dual role as observer and colleague by deliberately using different degrees of detailing when developing field notes. When observations have contained sensitive elements (e.g. trade secrets or personal information) or details not intended for a larger audience, I have omitted such details in my field notes and instead focussed on grasping and describing the overall essence of the observed.

Participant observations

The ethnographic work has been carried out through participant observations and the development of field notes. In participant observation, the researcher is *participating* in social situations where people perform certain activities (Spradley, 1980). Moreover, the researcher plays a more or less established *participant* role in the scene studied (Atkinson & Hammersley, 1998) and documents the scene by developing field notes (*cf.* Van Maanen, 1988 [2011]). The observations made in this project can be divided roughly into two distinct types. The first type is the observations of the *day-to-day scenes* in the partnership office. The second type is the observations of *staged meetings* held in the partnership office. The two types are elaborated further in the following.

The day-to-day scenes are distinctly informal and unstructured in the sense that they are unplanned and ‘non-staged’ scenes without a well-defined purpose. Such scenes are, for instance, when people start interacting while waiting for coffee or the printer, or when people interact during lunch or when people happen to meet in office areas and begin to interact. These scenes are often of short duration, typically a few minutes and rarely more than 15 minutes. Participation in a day-to-day scene is partly voluntary in the way that there is no compulsory participation, but that a natural interaction between people must take place before a scene occurs and others can join. My participation in day-to-day scenes has been with the very same mandate as any other participant and with the amount of sensitive information often relatively high (primarily personal information) due to the informal nature of the scenes.

In contrast to the day-to-day scenes, the staged meetings are highly formal and structured in the sense that they are planned and guided by a meeting agenda. This type includes development meetings, dissemination and orientation meetings, onboarding meetings, planning meetings, and steering committee meetings. The meetings usually have a fixed duration of 30 minutes, 60 minutes, 90 minutes or 120 minutes. Participation in the staged meetings presupposes an invitation, and participation is normally mandatory for the invited. My role in the staged meetings has mainly been as a guest, where prior to a specific meeting I have asked the meeting organisers for permission to participate as an observer. In the few cases where staged meetings have contained sensitive information, these were typically related to trade secrets.

Field notes

I have written field notes from my participations in the day-to-day scenes and the staged meetings. The notes from the day-to-day scenes are quite simple and loosely structured (most of them just a half page of descriptions and some pictures). In addition, many of the notes contain points that I previously thought would be relevant to the study, but where I later realised that they were outdated. The notes from the day-to-day scenes have been extremely useful to document and reconstruct what was discussed in the strategic partnership at a specific time as well as what the daily atmosphere in the partnership office was like. Notes from day-to-day scenes have also been useful in identifying relevant interview topics.

Notes from the staged meetings are structured in accordance to the specific agenda for the meeting. The notes are descriptive in the sense that they contain detailed descriptions of the dilemmas and discussions regarding specific topics (e.g. division of responsibility or how to calculate project economy). These descriptions have been useful in understanding why new activities and practices are introduced in the strategic partnership and how the strategic partnership develops.

8.4. Conversations

Interviewing of phenomenological nature has been conducted. The interviewing has provided first-person experiences of different aspects of the strategic partnership phenomenon. In the phenomenological perspective, the researcher is pursuing “descriptions of *how* interviewees experience the world, its episodes and events, rather than speculations

about *why* they have certain experiences” (Brinkmann, 2013, p. 22). In this pursuit, I have been aware of the fact that such retrospective descriptions are reconstructions of real experiences and that informants might have camouflage some details in order to highlight and conceal other certain points (Benjamin, 1913 [2002]).

Where the ethnographic work is useful to get insights into the lived realities in the strategic partnership through direct observations, interviews are appropriate to evoke and describe the *unseen* and taken-for-granted aspects of strategic partnerships. Lamont & Swidler (2014), for instance, state that institutional systems, the construction of social categories, boundaries and hierarchies are difficult to observe with the naked eye. In addition, they argue that such often ‘unseen’ aspects can be evoked in far greater detail through interviewing than with ethnographic methods, as the researcher can address these aspects directly through the asked questions (*cf.* Lamont & Swidler, 2014).

The open-ended interview

All interviews have been conducted according to an interview form that can best be described as open-ended and loosely structured (Seidman, 2006). The purpose of this form was to set up a casual setting for the interview conversations, in which the interviewing could be conducted as *friendly conversations* (*cf.* Spradley, 1979) rather than interrogations based on formal and systematic questioning.

The informants were identified in close dialogue with members of the steering committee and operational management group of ByK and TRUST. Once informants had been identified, they were each invited to participate in an interview conversation. In addition to the invitation, an accompanying cover letter describing the purpose and structure of the conversation as well as the topics of interest was sent. These topics were used actively during the interview conversations as starting points for interactions and as a guideline to ensure that the conversations remained ‘on track’ and did not drift in unwanted directions. As such, interview questions were formulated *in-situ* as the conversation progressed and experiences were described and contextualised by the informant.

Each of the conversations was orchestrated as a face-to-face conversation between one informant and one to three researchers (i.e. the two academic supervisors of this PhD project and I). The conversations were conducted

at a location chosen by the informant (usually the informant's workplace). All conversations were started with a non-audio-recorded dialogue where the researcher(s) briefly outlined the scope and purpose of the conversation and the informant was given the opportunity to ask questions and explain concerns off-the-record. When the opening dialogue was completed and 'the rules of the conversation' outlined, the audio recorder was turned on and the conversation officially started.

Interview transcriptions

41 audio-recorded conversations were transcribed word-for-word from Danish speech to Danish text. This process was carried out manually through several transcription sessions where I listened in turns to the audio recordings and then literally wrote what was said and by whom (i.e. informant or researcher). All quotations in the appended papers have been extracted from the interview transcriptions, which means that they have all been translated into English from Danish. These linguistic translations have been made with respect for the semantics of the original quotations (Benjamin, 1924 [2002]), and a balance has therefore been sought between the figurative and literal meanings of each quotation in the translation work.

8.5. Documents

A folder of documents has been assembled during the study. When I use the term 'documents', I mean non-academic written works produced by associations or people *in* the industry who write more or less explicitly about ByK and TRUST. Such documents constitute an empirical account in exact the same manner as participant observations and interview conversations (Ventresca & Mohr, 2002).

Examples of such documents are the tender description from ByK (Byggeri København, 2016) describing the objectives of the strategic partnership tender, and the bid from TRUST (TRUST, 2016) that is responding on how the stated objectives are expected to be realised. As such, both documents represent time-specific written manifestations that are not post-rationalised. Another example is the media coverage of the strategic partnership, which has regularly reported different views such as criticism of the partnership model (e.g. Espersen, 2016) and experiences from the projects procured through the strategic partnership (e.g. Nørgård, 2017). When criticism is provoked in the media, this is

something that the strategic partnership must respond to in order to justify its existence. So, it can be claimed that documents can commence organisational action and development (Prior, 2004). An example hereof is presented in the third appended paper (Frederiksen & Gottlieb, under review). That paper describes how the development of *the incubator* in ByK and TRUST was a direct response to the criticism that the partnership model would lead to a monopoly-like situation.

To be frank, documents have not played a prominent role in this study compared to the participant observations and the interview conversations. However, they have still been quite central in understanding decisions made in the past and as indicators of why certain initiatives were commenced in the strategic partnership.

9. Overview of datasets

In this subchapter, I will delve into each of the three datasets developed during the study (i.e. the ethnographic work, the interview conversations and the documents) that together form an ‘empirical repository’ for the PhD project. Table 2 provides an overview of the three datasets and their time of development.

Table 2. Overview of the datasets and their development in the study. The dotted lines mark the study period. ¹The first round of interview conversations was conducted between September and November 2017.

	2018				2019				2020				2021	
Quarter	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2
Ethnography														
<i>Day-to-day scenes</i>	■				■				■					
<i>Staged meetings</i>	■				■				■					
Conversations														
<i>First round¹</i>														
<i>Second round</i>					■									
<i>Third round</i>					■									
<i>Podcast sessions</i>									■					
Documents	■													

A total of 134 observation logs were prepared between 24 October 2018 (first dated log) and 9 March 2020 (last dated log). The observation logs contain descriptions of the everyday life in the partnership office and the activities performed. Moreover, the observation logs describe how artefacts are applied in daily practices to coordinate and perform work (e.g. through boards, charts, diagrams or drawings), what interactions are taking place and the subject of interaction, and 1,407 photos taken of the everyday life in the partnership office. Each of the observation logs contains one to two pages of written descriptions and about 10 photos.

Staged meetings

I have observed and developed field notes from 56 staged meetings. Each of the observations has yielded one to five pages of field notes. Out of the 56 meetings, 54 of them were held within the timeframe of the PhD study while the remainder two were held in 2017. In addition, five of the 54 meetings were held via online media (those held after 11 March 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic). The staged meetings spanned over five different types: (1) development meetings, (2) dissemination and orientation meetings, (3) onboarding meetings, (4) planning meetings and (5) steering committee meetings. Below, I will briefly describe each of the five types.

- Development meetings are meetings where future strategic partnership activities and practices are identified and debated. These meetings lasted 60-180 minutes and had four to seven participants including members of the operational management group, one to two researchers and an external consultant.
- Dissemination and orientation meetings are meetings where project members gather to transfer information from one group of project members to others. Examples of these were the operational management group gathering project members to inform them of decisions made by the operational management group, or the project members associated with a profession meeting to share professional-specific experiences across projects (these were facilitated by appointed *heads of professions*). These meetings usually lasted 30 minutes and had 15-30 participants from all levels of the strategic partnership.

- Onboarding meetings³ are meetings where new project members in the strategic partnership have been introduced to partnership-specific schemes and tools. During onboarding meetings, project members were also introduced to a *core story*, which prescribed notions of legitimate behaviour in the strategic partnership. Onboarding meetings were held every four months, and it was mandatory for all new project members to attend an onboarding meeting. The observed onboarding meeting lasted 120 minutes and had 25 participants.
- Planning meetings are meetings where the daily work has been coordinated between project members who were either associated through the same occupation or worked on the same project. These meetings lasted 60-120 minutes and had 10-20 participants who worked on the project-level.
- Finally, steering committee meetings are meetings concerning the strategic development of the partnership. These meetings lasted 90 minutes and had seven to eight participants including members of the steering committee, members of the operational management group and one to two researchers.

9.2. Dataset of conversations

The dataset of conversations contains 53 interview conversations (ByK: 13; DSP PLUS: 12; TRUST: 28) and four podcast sessions. The interview conversations were conducted in three ‘rounds’ while the podcast sessions were conducted in an intensive course of two days. Topics covered in the interview conversations and the podcast sessions, respectively, as well as details of informants are described further below.

First round of interview conversations

This round contains 22 interview conversations (ByK: 7; DSP PLUS: 9; TRUST: 6) which were conducted between 12 September and 6 November 2017. The purpose of the round was to gain insight into processes and considerations related to the establishment of strategic partnerships. Therefore, the conversations covered the five topics: (1) expectations and preliminary experiences, (2) functionality and quality, (3)

³ Onboarding meetings are referred to as *induction meetings* in Frederiksen *et al.* (2021).

products, procurement and supplies, (4) transaction costs and (5) understandings of the partnership model.

Table 4 presents an overview of the conversations conducted as part of this round. The conversations with informants from ByK and TRUST have all been transcribed and consist of 131 pages (780 words on average per page).

Table 4. Informants from the first round. ¹Member of steering committee; ²Member of operational management group.

No.	Affiliation	Role	Date	Duration
1.	ByK	Finance Director	2017-10-31	54 min
2.	ByK	Chief Consultant	2017-10-31	71 min
3.	ByK	Head of Construction ¹	2017-10-31	65 min
4.	ByK	Head of Office ²	2017-11-02	53 min
5.	ByK	Legal Director	2017-11-02	61 min
6.	ByK	Head of Office ²	2017-11-03	60 min
7.	ByK	Project Manager	2017-11-06	57 min
8.	DSP PLUS	Head of Division ²	2017-10-09	97 min
9.	DSP PLUS	Sector Manager ¹	2017-10-09	57 min
10.	DSP PLUS	Tender Estimator	2017-10-09	63 min
11.	DSP PLUS	Head of Tenders	2017-10-09	60 min
12.	DSP PLUS	Portfolio Manager	2017-10-10	53 min
13.	DSP PLUS	CEO in Architectural Firm ¹	2017-10-10	72 min
14.	DSP PLUS	Head of Division ²	2017-10-11	65 min
15.	DSP PLUS	Partner in Architectural Firm ²	2017-10-12	61 min
16.	DSP PLUS	Process Facilitator	2017-10-25	74 min
17.	TRUST	Facilitator	2017-09-12	69 min
18.	TRUST	Head of Process ²	2017-09-13	55 min
19.	TRUST	Project Manager	2017-09-13	61 min
20.	TRUST	Partner in Engineering Firm ¹	2017-09-20	61 min
21.	TRUST	Assistant Director, E&P ¹	2017-09-20	61 min
22.	TRUST	Head of Resources ²	2017-09-26	71 min

Second round of interview conversations

This round contains 17 interview conversations (TRUST: 17) which were conducted between 6 November 2018 and 21 March 2019. The purpose of the round was to learn about the daily work in the partnership office. The conversations covered the four topics: (1) daily work in the partnership, (2) development of partnership-specific tools, (3) project governance and (4) relation to parent firms.

Table 5 presents an overview of the conversations conducted as part of this round. All conversations were transcribed and consist of 141 pages (757 words on average per page).

Table 5. Informants from the second round. ¹Team leader.

No.	Affiliation	Role	Date	Duration
1.	TRUST	Design Manager ¹	2018-11-06	45 min
2.	TRUST	Electrical Engineer ¹	2018-12-04	38 min
3.	TRUST	Production Manager	2019-02-18	54 min
4.	TRUST	CEO of E&P	2019-02-18	51 min
5.	TRUST	Project Manager	2019-02-19	54 min
6.	TRUST	Electrical Engineer	2019-03-04	69 min
7.	TRUST	Architectural Engineer	2019-03-04	49 min
8.	TRUST	Structural Engineer	2019-03-05	41 min
9.	TRUST	Project Manager	2019-03-06	38 min
10.	TRUST	Design Manager	2019-03-06	53 min
11.	TRUST	Work Environment Specialist	2019-03-07	72 min
12.	TRUST	Collaboration Developer	2019-03-08	38 min
13.	TRUST	Design Manager	2019-03-11	29 min
14.	TRUST	Landscape Architect	2019-03-12	45 min
15.	TRUST	HVAC Engineer	2019-03-12	59 min
16.	TRUST	Head of Calculations	2019-03-18	55 min
17.	TRUST	Sustainability Specialist	2019-03-21	52 min

Third round of interview conversations

This round contains 14 interview conversations (ByK: 6; DSP PLUS: 3; TRUST: 5) which were conducted between 3rd April and 27th May 2019. The purpose of the round was to learn about project governance in strategic partnerships and preliminary experiences. The conversations covered the three topics: (1) capabilities and resources, (2) planning of project interdependencies and (3) partnership governance.

Table 6 presents an overview of the conversations conducted as part of this round. The conversations with informants from ByK and TRUST have all been transcribed and consist of 159 pages (734 words on average per page).

Table 6. Informants from the third round. ¹Member of steering committee; ²Member of operational management group.

No.	Affiliation	Role	Date	Duration
1.	ByK	Head of Construction ¹	2019-04-03	78 min
2.	ByK	Head of Office ²	2019-04-08	83 min
3.	ByK	Legal Director	2019-04-08	83 min
4.	ByK	Head of Office ²	2019-04-08	85 min
5.	ByK	Head of Office ²	2019-04-09	76 min
6.	ByK	Project Manager	2019-04-09	79 min
7.	DSP PLUS	Partner in Architectural Firm ²	2019-04-25	83 min
8.	DSP PLUS	Portfolio Manager ²	2019-04-25	71 min
9.	DSP PLUS	Head of Division ²	2019-04-30	91 min
10.	TRUST	Project Manager	2019-04-10	58 min
11.	TRUST	Partner in Engineering Firm ¹	2019-04-11	85 min
12.	TRUST	Head of Office ²	2019-05-01	90 min
13.	TRUST	Head of Resources ²	2019-05-01	52 min
14.	TRUST	CEO of TRUST ²	2019-05-27	73 min

Podcast sessions

Four podcast sessions were conducted in autumn 2019. The purpose of the sessions was to start group conversations where mundane topics from the strategic partnership between ByK and TRUST were debated in plain, non-technical language. The sessions also aimed to inform client organisations and AEC firms that were not familiar with strategic partnerships about the potentials of strategic partnerships. For this reason, Enemærke & Petersen uploaded the sessions on Spotify under the podcast name *BygBedre* [transl. 'build better']. Table 7 presents an overview of the sessions including themes and participants.

Table 7. Conducted podcast sessions and their scope.

No.	Theme	Participants and roles	Date	Duration
1.	The role of the client	<i>Informants:</i> - Head of Office, ByK - Project Manager, ByK <i>Hosts:</i> - Assistant Director, E&P - PhD Student	2019-09-24	59 min
2.	The daily work	<i>Informants:</i> - Design Manager, TRUST - Project Manager, TRUST - Project Manager, TRUST <i>Hosts:</i> - Assistant Director, E&P - PhD Student	2019-09-24	52 min
3.	Management and organising	<i>Informants:</i> - Head of Office, TRUST - CEO of TRUST <i>Hosts:</i> - Assistant Director, E&P - PhD Student	2019-09-25	54 min
4.	Budget and risk management	<i>Informants:</i> - Assistant Director, E&P - Head of Calculations, TRUST <i>Hosts:</i> - Assistant Director, E&P - PhD Student	2019-09-25	40 min

9.3. Dataset of documents

The dataset of documents contains a wide range of documents that can be categorised as either a *ByK document*, a *TRUST document*, an *industry document* or columns in the *media*. In Table 8, I have highlighted some selected documents that have played more or less prominent roles in the study. They have primarily been used to identify whether there is a link between criticism from ‘outsiders’ and the activities and practices that have been initiated in the strategic partnership between ByK and TRUST.

Table 8. Overview of documents.

Type/year	Title	Description
<i>ByK document</i> (2016)	<i>Bilag A – Rammeaftale</i> [Appendix A – Framework agreement]	Content in the framework agreement

<i>ByK document (2016)</i>	<i>Bilag 02 – Opgavebeskrivelse</i> [Appendix 02 – Task description]	Tender description including ByK's motives and expectations
<i>ByK document (2016)</i>	<i>Bilag 03 – ABR89</i> [Appendix 03 – ABR89]	Agreement for consultancy services
<i>ByK document (2016)</i>	<i>Bilag 04 – ABT93 med tilføjelser og rettelser</i> [Appendix 04 – ABT93 with additions and corrections]	Agreement between client and contractor in connection with turnkey contracts
<i>ByK document (2020)</i>	<i>Evaluering af de strategiske partnerskaber om byggeprojekter</i> [Evaluation of the strategic partnerships on construction projects]	Internal evaluation of the two framework agreements on strategic partnerships with TRUST and DSP PLUS
<i>TRUST document (2016)</i>	<i>Organisation og bemanning</i> [Organisation and manning]	TRUST's bid for the framework agreement on strategic partnership
<i>TRUST document (2018)</i>	<i>Faseoversigt</i> [Phase overview]	Document illustrating what work to be carried out in the different phases of a project
<i>TRUST document (2018)</i>	<i>Indretningsplan</i> [Interior design plan]	Overview of who is sitting where in the office
<i>TRUST document (2018)</i>	<i>Organisationsdiagram</i> [Organisation diagram]	Diagram of the strategic partnership organisation
<i>TRUST document (2018)</i>	<i>Procesdiagram – projektledelse</i> [Process diagram – project management]	Diagram illustrating who is responsible for the different phases of a project
<i>TRUST document (2019)</i>	<i>Projektmodel</i> [Project model]	Project model that is mandatory to conform to in every project
<i>Industry document (1989)</i>	<i>General conditions for consulting services</i>	Constitutes the general basis of consultation agreements for professional assistance by architects and engineers
<i>Industry document (1993)</i>	<i>General conditions for turnkey contracts</i>	Serves as a set of rules that can be applied to regulate the contractual relationship between client and contractor in connection with a turnkey contract
<i>Industry document (2012)</i>	<i>Description of services for building and planning</i>	Serves as a basis for providing consultancy in

		connection with building and planning projects
<i>Media</i> (2016) In: <i>Ingeniøren</i> , 27 April, 2016	<i>Ny idé til udbud skal give København 10 procent billigere byggeri</i> [New idea for tender to give the City of Copenhagen 10 percent cheaper construction]	ByK announces an upcoming tender for two framework agreements on strategic partnerships
<i>Media</i> (2016) In: <i>Licitationen</i> , 11 June, 2016	<i>Nye partnerskabsaftaler i Københavns Kommune skaber utryghed hos rådgiverne</i> [New partnership agreements in the City of Copenhagen create uncertainty among the consultants]	An engineering firm expresses concern about ByK's decision to tender strategic partnerships
<i>Media</i> (2016) In: <i>Frinet.dk</i> , 16 June, 2016	<i>Kan rammeaftaler gøre mere skade end gavn?</i> [Can framework agreements do more harm than good?]	A representative from the Danish Association of Consulting Engineers expresses concern about ByK's decision to tender strategic partnerships
<i>Media</i> (2016) In: <i>Politikken</i> , 5 July, 2016	<i>Arkitekter: Byggemonopol giver et ensartet København</i> [Architects: Construction monopoly provides a uniform Copenhagen]	Architectural firms express concerns that strategic partnerships will harm competition and quality
<i>Media</i> (2016) In: <i>Berlingske Business</i> , 18 November, 2016	<i>Her er virksomhederne som vil ændre Københavns udseende de næste år</i> [Here are the firms that will change Copenhagen's appearance in the coming years]	Introduction to the consortia TRUST and DSP PLUS
<i>Media</i> (2017) In: <i>Danskeark</i> , 11 August, 2017	<i>Strategisk samarbejde kan også udvikle arkitekturen</i> [Strategic collaboration can also evolve the architecture]	TRUST's Head of Resources emphasises that strategic partnerships can improve architecture
<i>Media</i> (2017) In: <i>Arkitektens Forlag</i> , 2 October, 2017	<i>Hvad nu med kvaliteten, København?</i> [What about the quality, Copenhagen?]	An architect argues that quality deteriorates when projects are procured in a partnership where the contractor has the command

10. Considerations regarding qualitative rigour

Qualitative methods such as ethnographic work and interviewing are inductive in the sense that researchers primarily apply them to generate theory from data (Eisenhardt, Graebner & Sonenshein, 2016; Pratt, 2008). However, research inquiries relying on inductive research designs are often met with criticism for not being adequately transparent and for lacking rigour (*cf.* Gioia *et al.*, 2012). A co-author and I were also confronted with such critique in the first revision process of the third appended paper when a reviewer requested enhanced transparency of the research:

“In the method section, your description is trustworthy, but I would like to have more details and examples about how you analysed your field material”
(reviewer comment on an earlier version of the third paper appended, May 25, 2020)

Demonstration of rigour is expected in any qualitative research inquiry, whether it is prepared for submission in a top-tier journal or a less prestigious journal (*cf.* Gioia *et al.*, 2012; Pratt, 2008), but rigour is extremely difficult to capture and demonstrate in qualitative research for several reasons. One reason is that the notion of *rigour* is ambiguous and means different things to different people (as nicely demonstrated in the survey made by Rheinhardt, Kreiner, Gioia & Corley, 2018). Another reason is that no standard ‘recipes’ or ‘templates’ can be followed to guarantee demonstration of rigour in qualitative inquiries as inductive research designs can vary significantly from inquiry to another (Harley & Cornelissen, 2020; Pratt, 2008). A third and final reason that I would like to highlight is that the perception of *when* rigour has been adequately demonstrated might differ significantly from the researchers involved in the inquiry and those not involved in the inquiry (Langley & Klag, 2019).

Despite difficulties in capturing rigour in qualitative research, there is somewhat consensus among researchers in the field of management and organisation studies that it is about honesty and transparency of what has been done in the inquiry (Eisenhardt *et al.*, 2016; Rheinhardt *et al.*, 2018). This is also echoed by Jason Jay (2013, p. 142) who claims that the key to rigour is to “be reflexive and transparent about one's own impact, the ‘triangulate’ insights with multiple data sources, and to consider one's own

role when theorizing about organizational processes observed”. With this in mind, the purpose of the next chapter is to increase the transparency of the study by elaborating on: (1) the main idea of each of the three appended papers, (2) my role in the development of the papers and (3) how data was processed and analysed in each of the papers.

Chapter V: Outline of the three papers

1.1. Hybrid organisations as trading zones

This paper entitled *Hybrid organisations as trading zones: Responses to institutional complexity in the shaping of strategic partnerships*⁴ was submitted to Construction Management and Economics on 19 January 2019 and accepted for publication on 27 February 2020. Editor-in-Chief of Construction Management and Economics, Professor Paul W. Chan, kindly gave permission to reprint for use in this thesis. Find the accepted paper here: <https://doi.org/10.1080/01446193.2020.1738514>.

Authors: Stefan Christoffer Gottlieb, Nicolaj Frederiksen, Christian Koch & Christian Thuesen.

1.1.1. Abstract

Hybrid organisations have been touted as solutions to a range of societal problems. In a construction context, strategic partnerships, as a particular type of hybrid organisation, have given promises of increased productivity and innovation through business models combining logics and governance structures from both the public and private sectors. Little is however known about how strategic partnerships are established and develop throughout their lifespan by combining different logics in response to institutional complexity. Drawing on a study of a public client's efforts to create cost efficient services, we analyse the formation of two strategic partnerships as emerging hybrid organisations in the intersection between a market logic, a project logic, a community logic, and an administrative logic. It is shown how different logics are mobilised in the dynamic shaping of the partnerships in response to moments of institutional complexity. On this background, we discuss how the contours of two different forms of hybrid organisation emerged, even though the partnerships initially operated and responded similarly to the institutional demands. On this basis, it is concluded that strategic partnerships can be seen as “trading zones” that follow different trajectories in coping with institutional demands, and hence the development of hybrid organisational forms.

⁴ Please note that the following pseudonyms have been used in the appended paper: ByK = Aedificare, TRUST = Fiducia and DSP PLUS = Eruditio.

11.2. Background of the paper

The initial idea for this paper emerged during the interview conversations conducted in 2017. In these conversations, the informants from DSP PLUS and TRUST described how they had worked with the establishment of the strategic partnerships and what strategic choices they had made in this regard. Although both consortia were working in framework agreements with the same client organisation (i.e. ByK), we noticed that several strategic choices varied from one consortium to another. For example, DSP PLUS had established a partnership office in one of the constituent firms' existing office facilities while TRUST had established their office at a 'neutral site' to distance itself from the constituent firms. Another example was that DSP PLUS pursued increased collaboration between the different occupations present in the consortium while TRUST endeavoured to 'mix' the conventional occupations under the auspices of a common TRUST identity. As such, the primary interest in this paper has been to understand why DSP PLUS and TRUST made different strategic choices (Ocasio & Radoynovska, 2016) and what implications this had for the configuration of the two strategic partnerships.

Development of the paper and my role

This paper is the result of three interrelated conference papers through which we developed and refined our ideas. Table 9 shows the sequence of papers.

Table 9. Development of the first appended paper.

Outlet	Title of paper	Author list
1. <i>European Academy of Management (EURAM)</i> , 20-23 June 2018, Reykjavík, IS	Integration and differentiation of institutional logics in strategic partnership: Responses to institutional pluralism	Gottlieb, S. C., Frederiksen, N., & Koch, C.
2. <i>European Group of Organizational Studies (EGOS)</i> , 5-7 July 2018, Tallinn, EE	Establishing a public private partnership: An emerging hybrid organization or a continued trading zone?	Koch, C., Gottlieb, S. C., & Frederiksen, N.
3. <i>Association of Researchers in Construction Management (ARCOM)</i> , 3-5 September 2018, Belfast, UK	Institutional logics and hybrid organizing in public-private partnerships	Gottlieb, S. C., Frederiksen, N., Koch, C., & Thuesen, C.
4. Submitted to <i>Construction Management and Economics</i> 19 January 2019 and accepted for publication 27 February 2020	Hybrid organisations as trading zones: Responses to institutional complexity in the shaping of strategic partnerships	Gottlieb, S. C., Frederiksen, N., Koch, C., & Thuesen, C.

All four papers listed in Table 9 draw on the observations and interview conversations conducted in 2017, but the theoretical basis has changed from first to the last paper. In the first paper, we mobilised the theoretical concepts of hybrid organisations and institutional logics (i.a. Battilana & Dorado, 2010; Jay, 2013; Pache & Santos, 2013) as well as the concept of institutional work (Lawrence & Suddaby, 2006). In the second and third papers, we additionally introduced the concept of trading zones (Collins *et al.*, 2007) to obtain a more processual understanding of strategic partnerships as trading zones that “follow different trajectories in coping with institutional demands” (Gottlieb, Frederiksen, Koch & Thuesen, 2018, p. 391). In the fourth and final paper, we pruned off the concept of institutional work at the request of one of the reviewers who claimed that the concept was incompatible with the institutional logics perspective. In addition, we expanded and refined our descriptions of the trading zones concept and made a stronger analytical framing according to this concept.

My role in the data collection process was, among other things, to prepare the interview conversations (what in section 9.2. Dataset of conversations is referred to as the ‘first round of interview conversations’) as well as the

invitation and the accompanying cover letter for the informants. Moreover, I participated in all the conversations and transcribed the audio recordings with ByK and TRUST informants. In the development of the papers, I participated in several empirical and theoretical discussions with the co-authors and in framing the paper within relevant literature. I also worked on drafts for specific sections in the first, third and fourth papers, especially the sections on theory, methods and discussions.

Data processing and analysis

When we had completed the interview conversations in 2017, we manually identified four institutional logics that were mobilised by the two strategic partnerships. These institutional logics were identified by studying the literature on this theoretical perspective (e.g. Friedland & Alford, 1991; Thornton & Ocasio, 2008) and then linking the informants' descriptions with the theoretical insights. For example, TRUST's Head of Resources stated:

“I believe that construction firms as we know them today have some challenges because they are not highly specialised. This partnership [i.e. between ByK and TRUST] gives us the opportunity to become specialists.”

As indicated by TRUST's Head of Resources, TRUST becomes specialised within the typology of schools and day care institutions and can take advantage of this specialisation in future business ventures. We argue that this reflects the presence of a market logic (Thornton & Ocasio, 2008) guided by market performance, effective competition and profit maximisation. ByK's Head of Construction provided another example in saying:

“The strategic partnerships are not required to use the same ‘dialects’, but they should be able to translate their processes into paradigms found in the City of Copenhagen.”

In the statement, ByK's Head of Construction argued that DSP PLUS and TRUST had a significant degree of autonomy as long as their ‘dialects’ (metaphor for the diagrams, methods, principles and processes that they developed) fit into ByK's existing paradigms. We argue that this statement reflects the presence of an administrative logic that regulates activities in the strategic partnerships in accordance with the legal and bureaucratic hierarchies (Friedland & Alford, 1991) that characterise ByK.

After categorising the informants' descriptions according to the identified institutional logics, we applied the concept of trading zones to obtain a more processual understanding of how the strategic partnerships developed over time by respectively blending and segregating the institutional logics. This was done by examining what institutional logics the two strategic partnerships mobilised when making strategic choices, and how these choices over time resulted in the partnerships developing different contours.

11.3. Results

The main result in this paper is that we demonstrated that strategic partnerships are not static entities but characterised by dynamism and ambiguity throughout their lifespan. This provides a more processual understanding of strategic partnerships, and hybridity, than characterises the majority of the literature (e.g. Lönngren, Rosenkranz & Kolbe, 2010; Tang, Shen & Cheng, 2010). More explicitly, we showed that DSP PLUS and TRUST are exposed to the same institutional demands but develop different responses to these demands by blending or segregating institutional logics. A consequence hereof is that the strategic partnerships are continuously evolving and, over time, develop different contours. Therefore, we argue that strategic partnerships can be seen as trading zones (Collins *et al.*, 2007) that follow different trajectories, or states of hybridity, in order to address changing institutional demands.

12. Organising for infrastructure development programmes

This paper entitled *Organising for infrastructure development programmes: Governing internal logic multiplicity across organisational spaces* was submitted to International Journal of Project Management on 17 May 2020 and accepted for publication 25 January 2021. Editor-in-Chief of International Journal of Project Management, Professor Martina Huemann, kindly gave reprint permission for use in this thesis. Find the accepted paper here: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijproman.2021.01.004>.

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12.1. Abstract

Programme organisations operate in complex environments under the influence of multiple institutional logics. Previous studies have focused on how these kinds of organisations respond to external demands by implementing appropriate governance structures. This, however, produces an understanding of programme organisations as being unitary and working to integrate programme activities and practices under one dominant internal institutional logic. In this paper, we study the consequences of internal logic multiplicity for the governance of programme organisations. Drawing on data from a major Danish construction programme we show how, in order to achieve its mission, the programme organisation incorporates three distinct logics into its daily activities and practices. The findings illustrate how a compartmentalised structural approach is applied to differentiate and independently deal with the three logics in structurally distinct organisational spaces. To avoid fragmentation and ensure coordination, governance mechanisms are put in place that coordinate activities and practices across the organisational spaces whilst maintaining their compartmentalisation. The paper thus contributes to the literature on programme management with insights on how the institutional context influences programme structures and operations, and how governance mechanisms are implemented to manage activities and practices across organisational spaces guided by different logics.

12.2. Background of the paper

The idea for this paper emerged in autumn 2018 where I attended the PhD course ‘Innovative processes and their staging’ at Aalborg University. As part of the course, each participant had to develop a short paper, in which the course literature was mobilised to analyse data from one's own PhD project. The course literature consisted of articles concerning different perspectives of innovation, including the framing, organising and staging of innovative processes. In addition, the literature spanned different theoretical fields and concepts such as actor-network theory, design-driven innovation, path dependency and sociotechnical spaces.

In the months prior to the course, I had scrutinised documents prepared by ByK and TRUST regarding the organisational and management structures of the strategic partnership (some of them are listed in section 9.3. Dataset of documents). This was to link my preliminary observations to the formally defined authorities and responsibilities in the different organisational levels of the strategic partnership. I found it natural to analyse and refine these early empirical insights in the short paper assignment, which I named ‘Framing public-private partnerships: Perspectives on sociotechnical spaces, staging, and innovation of meanings’.

In the short paper, I argued that the strategic partnership between ByK and TRUST had a formally defined structure but in practice consisted of several staged *spaces* (Clausen & Yoshinaka, 2007), in which different activities were performed and decisions were negotiated. More specifically, in the short paper I elaborated on how: (1) a *core* was fostered in the strategic partnership, (2) how the partnership office was established and maintained and (3) how teams and tasks were defined in the strategic partnership.

Development of the paper and my role

The paper has gone through what could be described as a three-stage development. In the first stage, the ideas of the paper were outlined and presented to the PhD course organisers and the participants who provided constructive feedback on how I could develop my work. In the second stage, the short paper was extended into a conference paper in which we (i.e. a co-author and I) developed and refined the originally outlined ideas. In the third and final stage, the authorship was once more expanded, and

the conference paper was thoroughly reworked with a new framing, theoretical framework and additional data. Table 10 illustrates the three stages of development.

Table 10. Development of the second appended paper.

Outlet	Title of paper	Author list
1. Assignment prepared for the PhD course <i>Innovative processes and their staging</i> , Aalborg University, DK	Framing public-private partnerships: Perspectives on sociotechnical spaces, staging, and innovation of meanings	Frederiksen, N.
2. <i>Nettverk for Organisasjonsforskning i Norge</i> [Network for organisational Research in Norway] (NEON), 21-22 November 2018, Lillehammer, NO	Framing public-private partnerships: Perspectives on sociotechnical spaces, staging, and innovation of meanings	Frederiksen, N., & Gottlieb, S. C.
3. Submitted to <i>International Journal of Project Management</i> 17 May 2020 and accepted for publication 25 January 2021	Organising for infrastructure development programmes: Governing internal logic multiplicity across organisational spaces	Frederiksen, N., Gottlieb, S. C., & Leiringer, R.

While few substantial changes were made from the first to the second paper, three notable changes were made from the second to the third paper. First, the framing was changed from public-private partnerships (i.a. Brinkerhoff & Brinkerhoff, 2011) to programme organisations (i.a. Lycett *et al.*, 2004; Project Management Institute, 2017) in order to obtain a stronger focus on governance and management. Second, the original theoretical framework based on actor-network theory (i.a. Akrich, Callon & Latour, 2002; Latour, 2005) and design-driven innovation (i.a. Battistella, Biotto & De Toni, 2012; Verganti, 2008) was replaced by concepts from the field of organisational institutionalism. However, we retained the concept of *spaces* but changed the socio-technical variation (*cf.* Clausen & Yoshinaka, 2007) with an institutionalist variation that allowed us to explore the interplay between macro-level institutional influences and micro-level management activities (e.g. Battilana *et al.*, 2015; de Vaujany & Vaast, 2014; Perkmann *et al.*, 2019). Third and finally, the period between the second and third paper was 18 months, which means

that the third paper is based on a far more extensive dataset (as per subchapter 9. Overview of datasets).

My role in the data collection was to prepare the interview conversations (all three rounds presented in section 9.2. Dataset of conversations) including the invitations to informants, the accompanying cover letters, and transcribing conversations with ByK and TRUST informants. In addition, I was responsible for conducting the ethnographic work. In the development of the papers, I wrote full drafts for all three papers. In the second and the third paper, the co-author(s) mostly served as ‘the devil's advocate’ by presenting counter arguments and provoking discussions that forced me to improve clarity of our arguments and strengthen our claims. The co-authors also contributed in the final work of the third paper by rewriting paragraphs as well as reorganising the presented flow of arguments to improve clarity. I was responsible for drafting the cover letter to the editor and the response letter to the reviewers.

Data processing and analysis

We used the ethnographic field notes and interview transcriptions to produce empirical descriptions of selected activities and practices performed in the three formally defined organisational levels of the strategic partnership (i.e. the steering committee level, the operational management level and the project-level). As we produced these descriptions, we also searched for institutional logics incorporated into the strategic partnership and, thereby, influencing the performance of activities and practices. We identified three distinct institutional logics: (1) a corporate logic (Thornton, Ocasio & Lounsbury, 2015) that prescribed the development of shared objectives and commitment to the organisation, (2) a community logic (Almandoz, 2012) that prescribed development of shared perceptions and a TRUST identity and (3) a professional logic (Thornton & Ocasio, 1999) that prescribed compliance to new strategic partnership principles while maintaining more conventional professional environments with esoteric knowledge.

It was neither surprising nor interesting that the strategic partnership incorporated multiple institutional logics. This was rather expected as the strategic partnership is a constellation of culturally heterogeneous organisations (Kraatz & Block, 2008) from the public and private sector and, therefore, formed on a significantly pluralistic basis (Heinze & Weber, 2016). What was interesting, however, was the adopted approach to deal

with the institutional logics. We found that the strategic partnership compartmentalised the three incorporated institutional logics into three distinct organisational spaces (Greenwood *et al.*, 2011; Perkmann *et al.*, 2019) to differentiate and independently deal with each of them. In addition, we found that several governance mechanisms were implemented to interrelate and coordinate activities and practices across the differentiated organisational spaces and thereby the institutional logics guiding them.

All the governance mechanisms were identified during the ethnographic work, and several of them were further discussed in the interview conversations. The identified governance mechanisms covered different material and symbolic forms. The material forms encompass interior design plans, meeting principles and a project model. Analogously, the symbolic forms encompass a core story, job titles and a TRUST identity. These different and quite multifaceted governance mechanisms illustrate that *governance* is not only a term “with many meanings” (Klakegg, Williams, Magnussen & Glasspool, 2008, p. 27) but also a term that, in practice, may take various forms and have various functions.

12.3. Results

The contribution of this paper is that we showed that the strategic partnership incorporates three institutional logics and compartmentalises the logics into three distinct organisational spaces to deal with them independently. The three spaces are flexible in the sense that they can be adapted to accommodate institutional demands without changing the formally organisational design of the strategic partnership. In order to ensure coordination between activities and practices across the three spaces, and thereby avoid fragmentation (*cf.* Greenwood *et al.*, 2011), the strategic partnership develops and implements a variety of governance mechanisms. These governance mechanisms have a dual function as they, on the one hand, maintain the organisational spaces as separate units guided by distinct logics and, on the other hand, coordinate activities and practices across the spaces to avoid fragmentation. The compartmentalised approach thus allows the strategic partnership to incorporate and deal with prescriptions of multiple institutional logics simultaneously without conflicts arising between them.

13. The materiality of boundary work

This paper entitled *The materiality of boundary work: Managing institutional complexity in cross-sector partnerships*⁵ was submitted to Organization Studies on 3 January 2020 and resubmitted on 23 November 2020. Editor-in-Chief of Organization Studies, Professor Daniel Hjorth, has kindly given me permission to append the paper in this thesis although it is under review.

Authors: Nicolaj Frederiksen & Stefan Christoffer Gottlieb.

13.1. Abstract

This article explores how a cross-sector partnership develops organisational artefacts as a form of boundary work to manage institutional complexity. Drawing on the concepts of institutional complexity and boundary work, we analyse qualitative longitudinal data from a cross-sector partnership operating in the Danish construction industry. We identify two mechanisms of boundary work – closure and black-boxing – that the partnership pursues by developing organisational artefacts. Closure takes place as organisational artefacts are developed that affix or blend social categories in new organisational practices and thereby increase consensus, stability, and legitimacy, between the categories. Analogously, black-boxing takes place as organisational artefacts are developed that separate social categories while enabling interpretative flexibility and translation between the categories. We integrated these mechanisms in a process model to explain how development of organisational artefacts constitute a form of boundary work that allow the cross-sector partnership to manage situations of institutional complexity.

13.2. Background of the paper

The preliminary thoughts on this paper arose a few months after initiation of the study. I was sitting at my desk in the partnership office and, for the second time, relocated to another desk because the operational management group had updated the interior design plan again. The

⁵ Please note that the following pseudonyms have been used in the appended paper:
ByK = Aedificare and TRUST = Fiducia.

interior design plan fused employees and desks, thus prescribing who should sit where and next to whom in the office.

While I was moving my accessories to the new desk, I had an epiphany. I realised that the partnership office was not a conventional workplace but a physical manifestation of a partnership between occupations and firms that traditionally were separated. In pursuit of manifesting the partnership, the operational management group made regular changes *in* the office to change the workings *of* the strategic partnership by implementing symbols that promoted certain rules and norms, introducing meeting policies and through changes in the interior design plan. Consequently, I became increasingly interested in organisational artefacts developed in the strategic partnership and their role in organisational life.

Development of the paper and my role

I attended the PhD course ‘Institutional organizational analysis – Change and transformation’ at Copenhagen Business School in autumn 2018. In the course, Eva Boxenbaum and Renate Meyer gave a lecture about the visual and material dimensions of institutional processes, which I found inspiring and highly coincidental to my own interest in organisational artefacts. After the course, I began formulating ideas for how I could make the partnership office the subject for an analysis based on an organisational institutional framework. These ideas were subsequently developed into a conference paper and later a journal article draft as illustrated in Table 11.

Table 11. Development of the third appended paper.

Outlet	Title of paper	Author list
1. <i>Association of Researchers in Construction Management (ARCOM)</i> , 2-4 September 2019, Leeds, UK	Hybrid organisational arrangements and the role of multimodality	Frederiksen, N., & Gottlieb, S. C.
2. Submitted to <i>Organization Studies</i> 3 January 2020 and resubmitted 23 November 2020	The materiality of boundary work: Managing institutional complexity in cross-sector partnerships	Frederiksen, N., & Gottlieb, S. C.

Three substantial changes were made from the first to the second paper, most notably in revising the second paper after the first review. Firstly, the framing was changed from a focus on the role of materiality in

construction (in line with Bresnen & Harty, 2010; Chow & Leiringer, 2021; Sage, 2017; Styhre, 2017; Tryggestad, Georg & Hernes, 2010) to a more processual focus on how boundaries between social categories in cross-sector partnerships were shaped in the development of organisational artefacts (i.a. Comeau-Vallée & Langley, 2020; Langley, Lindberg, Mørk, Nicolini, Raviola & Walter, 2019). Secondly, the theoretical framework was changed from hybrid organisations (i.a. Battilana & Dorado, 2010; Jay, 2013; Pache & Santos, 2013) and multimodality (i.a. Boxenbaum, Jones, Meyer & Svejnova, 2018; Meyer, Jancsary, Höllerer & Boxenbaum, 2018) to institutional complexity (i.a. Greenwood *et al.*, 2011) and boundary work (i.a. Lindberg *et al.*, 2017; Quick & Feldman, 2014). Thirdly and finally, the analysis was completely rewritten with a focus on adding further details about materialisation processes. This was requested by one of the reviewers who wanted us to put more substantial matter to the analysis:

“right now the idea of the process as a contribution comes rather at the end [i.e. in the discussion] ... I would really encourage you to pursue this idea by fleshing out the drama in your field stories and analysing them as showing materialization processes rather than ready-made artefacts” (reviewer comment on the first version of the paper appended, 25 May 2020)

My role in the data collection was to contribute to the sequential planning of the interview conversations and to draft the invitations and accompanying cover letters to the informants (to all three rounds presented in section 9.2. Dataset of conversations). I was also responsible for carrying out the ethnographic work and developing field notes as well as transcribing the interview conversations with informants from ByK and TRUST. In the development of the papers, I wrote the draft of the first paper while having ongoing discussions with the co-author regarding scope and content. The co-author challenged my claims and suggested several editorial and substantial changes that could strengthen the analytical points and improve clarity of the paper. The second paper was produced according to the same procedure used in first paper. A noticeable change was that we (i.e. co-author and I) held far more meetings. In these meetings, we discussed in particular: (1) how to derive and present empirical points, (2) how to code and analyse data and (3) how to develop a process model illustrating how institutional complexity is managed in the materialisation process of an organisational artefact. In the

submission (as well as resubmission) process, I was responsible for writing the cover letter to the editor and the response letter to the reviewers.

Data processing and analysis

In my eyes, the data processing and analysis for this paper has been described in reasonable detail in the paper's section on research context and design. Therefore, I will instead explain the identification of the three organisational artefacts that were the subject of analysis. The three artefacts are: the incubator, the partnership office and the budget front.

The incubator was first mentioned in TRUST's bid for the framework agreement. In the bid, the incubator was described as “a space through which new competences, occupations, knowledge, tools or incentives can be brought into play [i.e. by involving outside firms in the strategic partnership]” (TRUST, 2016, p. 17). However, we also noticed that there was a direct correlation between the declared purpose of the incubator and the criticism raised by professional associations in the industry. For example, the criticism that the framework agreement would lead to a monopoly-like situation and exclude smaller firms from the public construction tasks (i.a. Espersen, 2016) was to be addressed by involving outside firms through the incubator. Therefore, we perceived the incubator as a novel organisational artefact that constituted a gateway into the strategic partnership's tasks for outside firms.

The interest in the partnership office arose, as explained earlier in this section, in the infancy of the study. I noticed that the operational management group used the partnership office to span and penetrate conventional occupational (i.e. defined by job title) and professional (i.e. defined by educational background) relationships in construction. In Danish construction, AEC firms are usually consider themselves as part of a professional community located *within* either the A(rchitecture), the E(ngineering) or the C(onstruction) category and rarely *across* the three categories. There are examples of corporate groups (i.e. parent companies who owns subsidiaries) in Danish construction that span across the categories. For example, MT Højgaard Holding portrays itself as a group that is among the leading players within construction and civil engineering in Denmark (MT Højgaard Holding, 2021). Another example is Sweco AB who portrays itself as the leading engineering and architectural consultancy group in Europe (Sweco AB, 2021). However, a significant difference is that corporate groups span categories in order to offer a wide spectrum of

services to clients in various markets, while strategic partnerships span categories to dismantle organisational silos (Davis & Love, 2011). Therefore, we perceived the partnership office as an important organisational artefact in the strategic partnership where junctures (Quick & Feldman, 2014) between professionals could be made in order to dismantle organisational silos.

The third and final organisational artefact is the budget front. We (i.e. the co-author and I) first heard about the budget front during a development meeting held in June 2018. The meeting was held because members of the operational management group of ByK and TRUST were of the opinion that project data, which was reported to an external benchmark operator, was misleading. Consequently, members of the operational management group, a representative from the benchmark center, an external consultant and three researchers (including the co-author and I) met to discuss which data should be reported to the benchmark operator. During the meeting, the CEO of TRUST presented conceptual ideas of a so-called budget front, which he was developing together with colleagues. Moreover, the CEO of TRUST declared that the budget front would constitute a calculation method tailored for projects procured under the framework agreement, and that both ByK and TRUST would approve the method. We chose the budget front as subject of analysis because it represented an organisational artefact that introduced a new calculation method that determined project prices in the strategic partnership.

13.3. Results

The contribution of this paper is that we demonstrated how the strategic partnership initiates boundary work through the development of organisational artefacts that affixes, blends or separates social categories. In addition, we show that the development of organisational artefacts plays an important role in strategic partnerships to span across multiple professionals, firms as well as societal sectors while managing situations of institutional complexity that may occur in this pursuit.

Chapter VI: Conclusions and contributions

14. Conclusions

The stated objective of this project was to obtain an understanding of the strategic partnership concept that has emerged in Danish construction in recent years. I have pursued this research objective by studying:

how strategic partnership organisations are formed and developed to foster intraorganisational collaborative relationships and deal with complexity.

The study has been conducted as a single-case study with the strategic partnership between the City of Copenhagen's client organisation 'ByK' and the AEC consortium 'TRUST' as the scrutinised case. I have considered the strategic partnership between ByK and TRUST as a critical case (*cf.* Flyvbjerg, 2006) where the results are assumed to be relatively comparable to those that might be yielded in other strategic partnerships in Danish construction. Building on this, I have also stressed that the case, potentially, will set the standard for strategic partnership formation and development in Danish construction and thereby develop into a paradigmatic case. The theoretical backbone of the study is grounded in an organisational institutionalism framework and data has been collected by deploying a research methodology based on a qualitative and ethnographic approach. In the study, I have pursued the following three research questions:

1. *How are strategic partnerships formed and developed?*
2. *How are governance mechanisms implemented in strategic partnerships to coordinate intraorganisational activities and practices?*
3. *How are professional boundaries handled in strategic partnerships?*

The primary scientific outcome of the study is the three papers that I have introduced in Chapter V: Outline of the three papers. Table 12 provides a recapitulation of the three papers based on selected features.

Table 12. Recapitulation of the three appended papers.

	Paper 1	Paper 2	Paper 3
RQ covered	1, 2	1, 2	2, 3
Level of analysis	Field (Danish construction)	Intraorganisational (programme level)	Interorganisational (across categories)
Empirical phenomenon	Strategic partnership	Programme organisation	Cross-sector partnership
Theoretical field	Construction management	Programme management	Organisation studies
Practical insights	Establishment and shaping of strategic partnerships	Coordination within a programme organisation	Boundary work within a cross-sector partnership
Source of complexity	Confrontation with institutional field-level prescriptions that are incompatible	Incompatibilities between the incorporated institutional scripts	Traditional boundaries between categories of social life are contradictory
Solution to complexity	Responding by blending and/or segregating logics and thereby adopting hybrid organisational structures	Mobilising a compartmentalised structural approach and subsequently coordination across compartments	Development of organisational artefacts as a form of boundary work that redefine the boundaries

The overall research objective and the three appended papers can be crystallised into three very specific aspects of strategic partnerships that I have thoroughly examined in this study. All three aspects have been explored in all three papers. The first aspect is the *configuration* in strategic partnerships, i.e. how the client organisation and the consortium arrange and rearrange components to form and develop the desired strategic partnership. The second aspect is the *collaboration* in strategic partnerships, i.e. how the client organisation and the consortium develop their contractual relationship into a collaborative relationship. The third aspect is the *complexity* in strategic partnerships, i.e. how the client organisation and the consortium cope with interrelated challenges, incompatible prescriptions and ambitions. In the following, I will initially elaborate on the three aspects of strategic partnerships. Subsequently, I will answer the stated research objective. Finally, I will be presenting research contributions and practical implications of the study.

14.1. Configuration, collaboration and complexity in strategic partnerships

In this thesis, I have chosen to use the term *in* strategic partnerships instead of *of* strategic partnerships. This is to emphasise that my study has explored how configuration, collaboration and complexity occur and are dealt with *inside* a partnership organisation. As such, I have adopted a constructionist point of view to understand how truths and meanings are constructed *in-situ* (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). In the following, I will elaborate on each of the three aspects based on my studies from the inside of the strategic partnership between ByK and TRUST.

Configuration in strategic partnerships

Although there are no 'ready-to-wear' templates for strategic partnership configuration, there are some structures and components that are perceived more eligible to form and develop a strategic partnership than others. For instance, the strategic partnership between ByK and TRUST adopted an organisational structure based on the three organisational levels: (1) the steering committee, (2) the operational management group and (3) the interdisciplinary project teams.

The steering committee functions as the strategic partnership's 'board of directors' in the sense that it is not directly involved in the day-to-day activities but governs the strategic partnership at distance to ensure that the defined strategic objectives are met. The operational management group handles the day-to-day management of the strategic partnership including programme planning, setting up the partnership office and implementing procedures, processes, systems and tools across the partnership organisation. The operational management group also facilitates the development of partnership-specific artefacts that are perceived necessary for the strategic partnership such as calculation methods, meeting types and project models. The interdisciplinary project teams are performing project-specific activities and tasks. As such, the interdisciplinary project teams are relatively comparable to more conventional project-based organisations where firms from across the construction value chain organise themselves and their services in accordance with project-specific characteristics. However, one major difference is that the interdisciplinary project teams operate across a programme of projects, which means that activities and tasks are project-specific, but that the cultivated relationships within the teams are

programme-based and thereby long-term. As such, the adopted organisational structure allows the strategic partnership to bridge short-term activities and tasks at the level of the project with the long-term strategic objectives set for the strategic partnership.

The five key components that I presented in section have also played a prominent role in the strategic partnership. These were: (1) the framework agreement, (2) the programme of projects, (3) the collaborative platform, (4) the soft elements and (5) the partnership office. Together, these five components formed what could be labelled as the infrastructure or *intraorganisational order* (Ingersoll, 1993) in the strategic partnership. This order prescribes interdependencies, coordination and control mechanisms and is a source of stability internally in the joint organisation. However, as illustrated several times in the three appended papers, the five components are not static nor definitive, but are subject to numerous discussions, interpretations and modifications from one time to another. For instance, in the first paper (Gottlieb *et al.*, 2020a), we showed that the number of employees in the partnership office varied considerably because the programme of projects was fluctuating (this is also elaborated in Gottlieb *et al.*, 2020b). We also described that the strategic partnership advanced its collaborative platform by strengthening the ICT function and by developing planning tools and templates (e.g. the project apron⁶ and standard reporting paradigms for accounting). In the second paper (Frederiksen *et al.*, 2021), we illustrated how relational contractual elements were promoted and distributed within the partnership organisation to avoid negative effects that are typically associated with the transactional approach to contracting. In the third paper (Frederiksen & Gottlieb, under review), we showed how changes were made in the partnership office to promote a common organisational identity. In addition, we described how artefacts were developed as a form of boundary work to improve the collaborative platform.

It is worth mentioning that the organisational structure based on the three organisational levels as well as the five key components are mirrored across all nine strategic partnerships listed in Table 1. They have either been described directly in the tender descriptions or in the associated bids prepared by the consortia. As such, although there are no ‘ready-to-wear’

⁶ In Frederiksen & Gottlieb (under review), the *project apron* is referred to as the *budget front*.

templates for strategic partnership configuration, the organisational structure and the five components function as rational myths (Meyer & Rowan, 1977) in the sense that they are perceived as a legitimate strategic partnership configuration in the industry. In addition, these have played a central role in the diffusion of the strategic partnership concept in Danish construction because they are relatively tangible to transfer and adopt by other strategic partnerships.

Collaboration in strategic partnerships

In section 1.1. Background, I explained that a strategic partnership is an agreement between a client organisation and a consortium on building a collaborative relationship for the execution of a programme. Therefore, collaboration is a cornerstone in strategic partnerships because it is considered the way to successful project execution and fulfilment of strategic objectives. The strategic partnership between ByK and TRUST developed their contractual relationship into a collaborative relationship through: (1) the formation of a standalone partnership organisation, (2) extensive identity work and (3) the distribution of authority and responsibility. These three points are described further in the following.

The formation of a standalone partnership organisation was first and foremost materialised and made operational with the establishment of a partnership office. The establishment of the partnership office meant that the constituent firms had to move employees into the partnership office under the control of TRUST's operational management group. This provided the operational management group two tangible opportunities for cultivating collaborative relationships. The first opportunity was to develop the partnership office into a multi-firm construct staffed with architects, contractors and engineers, which enabled co-location and dismantled organisational silos (as explained in section 13.2. Background of the paper and in Frederiksen & Gottlieb, under review). The second opportunity was to initiate identity work and 'onboard' employees into the partnership organisation, thereby strengthening the employees' commitment to the strategic partnership by weakening their ties to the constituent firms (*cf.* Frederiksen *et al.*, 2021).

The operational management group also initiated identity work in order to foster a collaborative environment in the partnership organisation characterised by a high degree of empowerment, mutual recognition, transparency and trust. Differences between organisational identities have

frequently been highlighted as sources of tensions and conflicts in construction (e.g. Fredslund, 2021; Gottlieb & Haugbølle, 2013; Gottlieb *et al.*, 2020a). The operational management group performed identity work by, among other things, formulating a core story that stipulated normative and cognitive scripts about how to behave in the partnership organisation (Frederiksen & Gottlieb, 2020; Frederiksen & Gottlieb, under review), developing an inter-language (Gottlieb *et al.*, 2020a) and implementing quotes and symbols in the partnership office encouraging collaboration (Frederiksen *et al.*, 2021).

Finally, the operational management group promoted collaborative relationships by distributing authority and responsibility to employees who worked in the interdisciplinary project teams in the partnership organisation. For instance, the operational management group appointed three *team leaders* who were assigned authority to facilitate detail planning at the level of the project (Frederiksen & Gottlieb, 2020) and assist the operational management group in programme planning and allocation of project resources (Frederiksen *et al.*, 2021). As such, the team leaders were responsible for bridging the interdisciplinary project teams and the operational management group, thereby ensuring a harmony between project planning and programme planning in the strategic partnership. The operational management group also appointed several heads of professions, who were assigned authority to facilitate dissemination meetings where professional-specific knowledge and experiences were disseminated across projects. As such, the heads of professions were responsible for promoting strong professional communities within the partnership organisation and for distributing professional-specific knowledge and experiences across projects (as briefly described in Frederiksen & Gottlieb, 2020).

Complexity in strategic partnerships

As I emphasised in section 12.2. Background of the paper, strategic partnerships are constellations of culturally heterogeneous organisations from different sectors and, therefore, are formed on a significantly pluralistic basis. By this is meant that partnership organisations combine organisational forms, identities and rationales from across sectors and organisations that are potentially incompatible and likely to produce tensions and complexity in the partnership organisation. Hence, strategic partnerships must navigate pluralism and deal with incompatibilities to avoid situations of complexity. In the three appended papers, the co-

authors and I stressed three different approaches to navigate pluralism and deal with complexity in a strategic partnership. These are elaborated in the following.

In the first paper (Gottlieb *et al.*, 2020a), we focussed on how the strategic partnership was exposed to pluralistic institutional field-level prescriptions that were incompatible. In order to navigate and deal with the incompatible prescriptions, the strategic partnership adopted a hybrid organisational structure by selectively blending and segregating the institutional prescriptions into the partnership organisation. As such, the strategic partnership responded to pluralistic field-level prescriptions by either integrating them in the partnership organisation (e.g. reporting methods associated with the administrative logic) or rejecting them (e.g. agreed industry documents associated with the project logic). In the second paper (Frederiksen *et al.*, 2021), we observed how the strategic partnership handled institutional prescriptions in the partnership organisation that were incompatible. In order to avoid complexity between the integrated prescriptions, the partnership organisation adopted a compartmentalised structural approach to separate and independently deal with the prescriptions within bounded spaces in the partnership organisation. In addition, governance mechanisms were implemented in the partnership organisation to coordinate activities and practices across the bounded spaces and thereby avoid organisational fragmentation and paralysis. In the third paper (Frederiksen & Gottlieb, under review), our focus in the strategic partnership was on the experienced complexity associated with boundaries between social categories (i.e. inside versus outside the partnership, different occupations in the partnership, and public versus private parties in the partnership). In order to manage the experienced complexity, the strategic partnership engaged in boundary work by developing organisational artefacts, which either affixed, blended or separated the social categories from one another.

14.2. Answering the research objective of the study

Strategic partnerships are formed and developed as a response to the increasing complexity that is permeating modern construction and stipulates an abundance of demands that construction must be able to manage. At the level of the project, construction is expected to be cheap, punctual and of high quality and functionality (Byggeri København, 2016). At the level of the sector, construction is expected to promote innovation

and competition (Regeringen, 2014) and to be high productive and without damages and defects (Gottlieb & Haugbølle, 2013). At the level of society, construction is expected to facilitate the green transition of cities (City of Copenhagen, 2015) as well as promoting economic, social and environmental sustainability in pursuit of national obligations (Transport- og Boligministeriet, 2020).

As I emphasised in section 1.1. Background, none of these demands can be dealt with solely by the efforts of individual organisations but necessitate a joint focus and enhanced collaboration among the public, private and non-profit organisations in the sector. The formation of partnership organisations is a way to integrate organisations from across sectors and the construction value chain in a joint organisation to better cope with a selection of these interrelated demands. Having said that, modern construction is not about bricks and mortar but about how complex problems across sectors of society can be addressed and dealt with through construction at large.

15. Research contributions and practical implications

In section 1.2. The premise of the study, I emphasised that my ambitions in the study was to produce research that was useful as well as interesting. Taking this into account, in this subchapter I will present empirical and theoretical contributions as well as practical implications of the study. The empirical contributions are the study's contributions to the strategic partnership phenomenon, the theoretical contributions are the study's contributions to extending existing theoretical concepts and fields while the practical implications are the pragmatic learnings that practitioners can acquire from the study.

15.1. Empirical contributions

The study contributes to the empirical phenomenon of strategic partnerships in construction with an understanding of strategic partnerships as a particular type of hybrid organisation. By considering strategic partnerships as hybrid organisations, the study has revealed how a strategic partnership dynamically combines organisational forms, identities and rationales from the client organisation and the consortium

in the joint organisation. By extension, the study has stressed that the joint organisation is not simply formed when the client organisation and the consortium have signed the framework agreement. Instead, formation of the joint organisation is an ongoing development venture characterised by a high degree of ambiguity and dynamism.

In the study, my real interest has been to understand and explain the empirical phenomenon that has come into being under the label strategic partnership rather than the strategic partnership *per se*. By this I mean that the label ‘strategic partnership’ is nothing but a *name* and that what is really interesting is the empirical phenomenon that is fostered and exists under this name. In a nutshell, the empirical phenomenon labelled strategic partnership could have been given many other names (i.a. cross-sector partnership, programme organisation, public-private partnership, strategic alliance or strategic partnering), but the empirical phenomenon would remain the same regardless of the chosen name. In the study, I have therefore examined the strategic partnership from its empirical premises and subsequently framed the empirical insights into different theoretical discussions instead of the opposite.

15.2. Theoretical contributions

This study contributes theoretically to institutional scholarship as well as to the field of science and technology studies. In context of institutional scholarship, the study contributes with insights on how institutional prescriptions from multiple institutional logics are navigated in a strategic partnership to avoid or deal with complexity. Three approaches to navigating pluralism in strategic partnerships are explicated. The first approach implies that the strategic partnership adopts a hybrid structure by selectively blending and segregating prescriptions from institutional logics in the partnership organisation (Gottlieb *et al.*, 2020a). The second approach implies that the strategic partnership adopts a compartmentalised structural approach to separate incompatible prescriptions from institutional logics that are integrated in the partnership organisation (Frederiksen *et al.*, 2021). The third approach implies that the strategic partnership initiates the development of organisational artefacts to facilitate processes of boundary work, where a balance between institutional prescriptions is negotiated and manifested (Frederiksen & Gottlieb, under review). As such, the first paper contributes with a processual understanding (e.g. Langley, 1999; Ramus *et al.*, 2017), the

second with a spatial understanding (e.g. Kornberger & Clegg, 2004; Perkmann *et al.*, 2019) and the third with a material understanding (e.g. Boxenbaum *et al.*, 2018; Meyer *et al.*, 2018; Nicolini, Delmestri, Goodrick, Reay, Lindberg & Adolfsson, 2016) of how hybrid organisations handle complexity.

In context of science and technology studies, the study most notably contributes with an understanding of boundaries (*cf.* Langley *et al.*, 2019) as well as social categories (*cf.* Quick & Feldman, 2014) as negotiated and enacted through everyday practices rather than being pre-existing and fixed in advance. This contribution is most prominent in Frederiksen & Gottlieb (under review).

15.3. Practical implications

For practitioners in construction, the study provides tangible descriptions concerning: (1) how to organise and manage strategic partnerships, (2) how to develop the contractual relationship between the client organisation and the consortium into a collaborative relationship and (3) how to deal with complexity in strategic partnerships. Moreover, the study outlines and describes five components (in section 4.2. The strategic partnership concept) that are prevailing in the strategic partnerships in Danish construction.

As I stressed earlier in this chapter, strategic partnerships can be considered a response to an increasing complexity in modern construction, which confronts organisations with expectations to deliver on several converging demands. The demands are addressed in strategic partnerships by integrating a client organisation and organisations from across the construction value chain in the joint organisation and combine their assets, competences and resources. As such, strategic partnerships can be considered a more flexible and less-permanent alternative to firm acquisitions, which is another trend that has been prevailing in Danish construction in recent years to address converging demands.

Finally, I will dedicate this last paragraph of the thesis to make a brief comment on the criticism that has been directed towards the strategic partnership concept by firms and associations in Danish construction (as described in Frederiksen & Gottlieb, under review). The conventional project-based nature of construction and the associated short-term focus

and use of one-off contracts are simply not appropriate to meet client organisations' long-term strategic objectives nor addressing the converging demands that characterise modern construction. It is very likely that the formation of strategic partnerships is not the only way to create a joint organisation that is broad-spectred and 'strong' enough to deal with challenges in Danish construction. But for now, the formation of strategic partnerships represents one attractive alternative to the conventional project-based nature of construction, which is typically associated with a high degree of fragmentation, conflicts and disputes.

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Appended papers

Three papers are appended:

First paper: *Hybrid organisations as trading zones: Responses to institutional complexity in the shaping of strategic partnerships*. From page A1 to page A45.

Second paper: *Organising for infrastructure development programmes: Governing internal logic multiplicity across organisational spaces*. From page B1 to page B44.

Third paper: *The materiality of boundary work: Managing institutional complexity in cross-sector partnerships*. From page C1 to page C38.

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