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Transferring trust between projects in inter-organisational relations – A case study in the Norwegian construction industry

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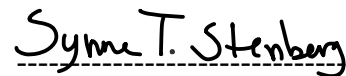
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## Abstract

This thesis sets forth to provide a more nuanced and rich understanding of the trust transfer concept. Based on secondary data and semi-structured interviews with 28 participants from a repeat collaboration (embedded single case study) in the empirical context of the Norwegian construction industry, *how* trust transfer takes place between projects in inter-organisational relations was explored. Applying an abductive approach, the researchers constantly went ‘back and forth’ between theory and continuing research, resulting in a study providing rich insights to the trust transfer research stream.

New and interesting insights into especially three topics related to trust transfer were attained: boundary spanning people’s characteristics, boundary spanning groups enabling trust transfer, and a willingness to transfer perceptions of trustworthiness. The chief insights derived from our study are threefold. First, the shadow of the past and the shadow of the future are *conditional* for the transfer of trust. Second, boundary spanning individuals and groups are *enablers* of trust transfer. Their individual characteristics are acknowledged to enable the transfer, and boundary spanning structures are regarded to further strengthen the transferring effect of the boundary spanning people by posing as an arena for such. Third, all ‘parts’ of trust (perceived ability, benevolence, and integrity) are able to transfer between projects both on the individual and organisational level, reinforced by a *willingness* of individuals to transfer the assessments of trustworthiness.

Our research offers the scholarly field valuable, nuanced insights addressed through theoretical implications, emphasising the concept of trust transfer and boundary spanners’ effect on such. Additionally, a range of fruitful avenues for further research is proposed in this regard. Practical implications include managers’ prospective utilisation of boundary spanning people by acknowledging the individual, identified set of transfer enabling characteristics. Moreover, recognising that by being both transparent and opaque, boundary spanning groups have the capability to enable trust transfer.

**Keywords:** Trust, trust transfer, transference, inter-organisational relations, project-based organisations

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

Projects are riddled with many-faceted, complex inter-organisational relations (IORs) in which the involved organisations together seek a successful outcome of the collaboration. It is evident from prior literature that trust between parties is important to organisational success (Gambetta, 1988; Scott, 1980; Zand, 1972) and an important facet of IORs' exchange dynamic (Zaheer et al., 1998); Project success is dependent on trust between project team members of the focal organisation and its partners (Kadefors, 2004; Wong P.S.P. & Cheung, 2004). The concept of trust transfer has its origin from psychology and the work of Freud (1912/58) on transference in that experiences with others may be displaced onto another with which one is interacting. While there is a large body of research investigating the concept of trust (e.g. Currall & Inkpen, 2002, 2006; Fulmer & Gelfand, 2012; Mayer et al., 1995; Swärd, 2016), scant attention has been directed at exactly *how* trust may be transferred between projects in IORs, rendering no coherent view in the trust transfer literature as of today. Hence, the purpose of this thesis is to advance prior literature within the research stream by providing a more nuanced and rich understanding of the trust transfer concept. This in which will be done by exploring a repeat collaboration set in the Norwegian construction industry.

The transfer of trust in a repeat collaboration might not be given as a new project generally equals new people and new circumstances, rendering project partners often lacking prior collaboration experience on which they could base their expectations and predictions (Gulati, 1995; Maurer, 2010). It is not given for the coalition actors in the first project to have trust in those collaborating in a subsequent one. However, if trust were transferred between the projects in a repeat collaboration, the second project could benefit from trust developed and established in the prior. This would make both the involved organisations and the projects better off as an elevated level of trust would increase project performance (Kadefors, 2004) – that is why transference is important. Based on this, exploring trust transfer in a repeat collaboration with nearly the same coalition of actors serves a relatively 'rare' and unique possibility. By doing so, the researchers are able to study both projects (and the relations within each) in isolation, in addition to how trust transfers between them. Consequently, using a repeat collaboration as the case makes for a better-suited setting than, for instance, an intra-organisational context.



These considerations lead to the following research question:

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*“How does trust transfer take place between projects in IORs?”*

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To address the research question, a deep dive into the trust transfer literature is a necessity. Trust may be transferred from one individual to another individual or group with which the trustor has limited, or even no, direct experience (Milliman & Fugate, 1988; Strub & Priest, 1976) if the trustee is affiliated with a trusted ‘proof source’ (Fang et al., 2008; Zaheer et al., 1998). It thereby may occur as a cognitive process in terms of experience spill-overs or as a product of a communication process (Stewart, 2003). As such, *boundary spanners*’ – therein boundary spanning people and objects – potential role as trusted ‘proof sources’ for trust to transfer is evident, rendering boundary spanners closely tied to the concept of trust transfer. A variety of scholars have studied boundary spanning people and their effect on organisations (e.g. Kroeger, 2012; Currall & Judge, 1995; Perrone et al., 2003), and they are considered significant for ‘tying’ the focal organisations together (Spekman, 1979; Akkerman & Bakker, 2011). However, less scholarly attention has been given to boundary spanners’ effect on the individual to group level – and vice versa. As such, this is considered an area of interest in this thesis, which will likely assist in the quest of answering the research question.

An area with great coverage in the trust literature is that by having a positive *shadow of the past* and *shadow of the future*, trust between partners is more likely to emerge (Swärd, 2016). Actors’ prior history affects the evaluation of the trust in the present, and similarly so does the potential expectations of continuity (Poppo et al., 2008). As such, at the time of trust transfer, what has happened in the past and what is expected to happen in the future is essential. Scant attention has, however, been directed at the link between the shadows and that of trust transfer. Therefore, in figuring out how such transfer takes place, exploring collaborating actors’ prior history and expectations of a conjoined future would enrich the research field. Moreover, the assessments of *trustworthiness* – based on perceived ability, benevolence, and integrity – poses a framework for evaluating to what extent individuals and organisations are regarded as trustworthy (Mayer et al., 1995). By such, the involved actors’ trustworthiness is evaluated, and thereby determining

what kind of trust is able to transfer. In prior literature, there is scarce knowledge concerning what ‘parts’ of trust is transferred and if what transfers is identical to the ‘original’ trust. Consequently, directing attention towards the nuances of the concept in this regard would benefit the trust transfer research stream.

**Contribution of the study.** This thesis offers several contributions to the emerging literature on trust transfer. First, it addresses a slight gap in the existing literature where exactly *how* trust transfer takes place between projects in IORs is yet underdeveloped and would benefit from further exploration. As such, the main contribution of this thesis is showcasing ways in which trust may transfer between projects in IORs – and therein further enhance the trust transfer research stream. Second, the study aims to advance the trust transfer concept further and create a more nuanced and rich understanding of it to develop a more thorough understanding of the concept in an inter-organisational setting.

### 1.1. Empirical context – The Norwegian construction industry

The research question is explored in the Norwegian construction industry, making this the *empirical context* of the study. The construction industry, a project-based industry (Hobday, 2000), is prominent in Norway’s GDP with a turnover of approx. 120 BNOK in 2018 (BDO, 2019). In Norway, the industry is parted into the building sector (e.g. building houses, commercial buildings) and the construction sector (e.g. construction of roads, railways) (Wasilkiewicz et al., 2018). The study’s scope is limited to the latter. Moreover, the industry actors are oftentimes split into two parts: the client-side (primarily an entity of the state) and the contractor-side (the various actors hired to do the construction) (Bygballe et al., 2010). Literature has mostly focused on the main contractor when investigating the two, ignoring the importance of subcontractors and suppliers (Dainty et al., 2001; Miller et al., 2002).

The deciding factor in most contractor selection has historically been the price (Kadefors, 2005). However, price-based selection has been listed by Cox and Ireland (2002) as a ‘root cause’ of performance problems in construction. To mitigate the observed friction (Naoum & Egbu, 2015), the industry has lately employed ‘best value procurement’ (BVP), capturing factors such as environment, health, safety, quality, economy, social responsibility, and experience and relevance from similar projects (Nye Veier, n.d.). If a bidder fails to address a key requirement

sufficiently, they do not proceed in the selection process while the successful ones proceed to the next step where price and actual bids are part of an overall assessment. Further, in most countries, the traditional Design-Bid-Build (DBB) project delivery model has historically been dominating (Lloyd-Walker & Walker, 2015). This model is characterised by the tendency to separate design and delivery (El Asmar et al., 2013). In the Norwegian construction industry, however, the Design-Build (DB) project delivery model has in the later years received increased popularity. With the DB delivery model, the contractor-side of the project is responsible for both the designing and the execution, and the proposals within this method are commonly evaluated based on BVP (Adamtey, 2021).

**Repeat collaboration.** A construction project is by Dubois and Gadde described as comprising a “temporary network within the larger permanent network of the construction industry as a whole” (2000, p. 209). The nature of the activities within the construction industry differs from other production industries, as they have a limited time span, a high degree of interdependence, and a need to build trust ‘swiftly’ (Meyerson et al., 1996; Weber et al., 2004). The industry consists of temporary systems created for the performance of specific project tasks (DeFillippi, 2002; Lundin & Söderholm, 1995), indicating that the actors seldom work with the same organisations. As such, transferring trust from one project to another in which the project organisations likely are not the same might prove difficult. However, in general, if the previous collaboration is recent and deemed a success, and the projects are similar in type, the likelihood of a repeat collaboration increases (Aadland & Kvålshaugen, 2017; Inoue, 2015; Schwab & Miner, 2008), in addition to when obvious dependencies between the actors are present (Ferriani et al., 2005). Moreover, trust in relationships and relational-specific investments may strengthen and improve the relationship between project partners and thereby entail benefits for the project in its entirety (Wong W.K. et al., 2008), in addition to having been found to increase repeated collaboration likelihood (Ebers & Maurer, 2016).

## 1.2. Outline of the thesis

The thesis is divided into six chapters. The first chapter is this introduction, including the purpose and contribution of the study, as well as a description of the empirical context. The second chapter comprises a review of literature, before the research methodology is presented in the third. The third chapter also justifies the

researchers' decisions about the selected case and provides a description of it. Chapter 4 consists of the study's empirical findings and analysis. Thereafter, in Chapter 5, three topics from the findings deemed especially new and interesting are discussed in relation to the existing literature. Lastly, in the sixth chapter, the researchers provide a conclusion, implications, and limitations of the study, as well as avenues for future research.

## **Chapter 2: Literature review**

In this chapter, the researchers review existing literature on IORs in project-based organisations (PBOs), the concept of trust, and the phenomenon of trust transfer. This review provides a basis for approaching the research question and, thus, a background for studying how trust transfer takes place between projects in IORs.

### **2.1. Inter-organisational relations in project-based organisations**

According to Bygballe and Swärd (2015), the PBO is a complex and decentralised organisational form. Its presence is evident in industries such as the construction industry and has in the later years received increased attention as an emerging organisational form (Aadland & Kvålshaugen, 2017; Sydow et al., 2004). Every construction consists of multiple systems in which no single actor can ensure completion by themselves (Fischer et al., 2017), indicating that cooperation and collaboration of multiple firms is a necessity for successful project completion. As stated by Parmigiani and Rivera-Santos (2011, p. 1109), "No organization is an island – all need relationships with other organizations to survive and grow". In the later decades, one can observe a sustained increase in IORs and consequently elevated attention in the literature (Lumineau & Oliveira, 2017). Project success is dependent on trust between the project team members of the focal firm and its outside partners (Kadefors, 2004; Wong P.S.P. & Cheung, 2004). An elevated trust may strengthen the relationship between the project partners (Wong W.K. et al., 2008), which moreover may elevate the total project benefits. Furthermore, the initial level of trust in IORs is essential as it affects the later stages and, thereby, the outlook for collaborative success (Vlaar et al., 2007).

A key characteristic when investigating PBOs is their temporary nature (Hobday, 2000), being created to solve unique challenges of specific tasks and disbanded

upon completion, and thus shorter horizons and operations compared to other organisational forms (Bygballe & Swärd, 2015). When starting a new project, there is a tendency to “reinvent the wheel” (Newell et al., 2006, p. 167) rather than drawing on prior experiences – in terms of repeat collaborations – as there for each new project is ‘born’ a new temporary organisation. Hence, project partners often lack prior collaboration experience on which they could base their expectations and predictions (Gulati, 1995; Maurer, 2010). This typically generates a more intense strategic cooperation than in the ‘average’ strategic alliance, in addition to intensifying the trust-building process as it causes a limited time to build trust (Meyerson et al., 1996); Thus, the organisations regularly lack time and continuity, making it more difficult for the project partners to elevate their familiarity and develop a basis for proving their trustworthiness (Maurer, 2010; Nordqvist et al., 2004). Meyerson et al. (1996), however, state that trust can be observed to be at an unexpectedly high level in situations where a group of unacquainted professionals are looking to solve a problem. This has to do with “a unique form of collective perception and relating that is capable of managing issues of vulnerability, uncertainty, risk, and expectations” (Meyerson et al., 1996, p. 167) emerging when temporary systems are formed. In short, trust may be ‘swift’ and thus based on knowing and accepting an individual’s role (Möllering, 2018).

## 2.2. Trust

“Definitions of trust shift across levels, trustor foci, and trustee targets” (Fulmer, 2021). As such, a multitude of definitions of trust has been offered in the literature. Amongst these, a common understanding of trust containing the principal components of an expectation of cooperation and openness to risk or vulnerability is indicated (Bigley & Pearce, 1998; Currall & Inkpen, 2002; Malhotra & Murnighan, 2002). A lot of research has adopted the following definition of trust:

The willingness of a party to be vulnerable to the actions of another party based on the expectation that the other will perform a particular action important to the trustor, irrespective of the ability to monitor or control that other party. (Mayer et al., 1995, p. 712)

Trust may be experienced at different levels and in different referents (trustees) (Fulmer & Gelfand, 2012). Referring to the above definition, a ‘party’ may refer to

an individual, group, or organisation (Currall & Inkpen, 2002), yet prior research has focused mainly on trust at the individual level (e.g. Fulmer & Gelfand, 2012; Kramer, 1999; Lewicki et al., 2006; Mayer et al., 1995; Rousseau et al., 1998). The recent years, however, this interpersonal notion of trust has been extended to organisations (Gulati & Nickerson, 2008). As such, inter-organisational trust has been defined by Zaheer et al. (1998, p. 142) as “the extent of trust placed in the partner organization by the members of a focal organization”. In this thesis, Mayer et al.’s (1995) definition of trust is used both on the individual and organisational level of analysis to explore how trust transfer takes place between projects in IORs.

Trust at one level does not necessarily exclude trust existing at another (Doz, 1996); Individual-level trust may facilitate trust at the group level, which again may facilitate trust at the organisational level, and vice versa (Currall & Inkpen, 2002). Most studies of trust are static as they measure trust at a single point in time (Lewicki et al., 2006; Schilke & Cook, 2013). However, it is not a static phenomenon, but dynamic, as it evolves back and forth in a reciprocal manner (Currall & Inkpen, 2002; Faems et al., 2008; Korsgaard, 2018; Narayandas & Rangan, 2004; Swärd, 2016).

### **2.2.1. Assessments of trustworthiness**

In accordance with Mayer et al.’s (1995) model, trust is based on three factors of trustworthiness: perceived ability, benevolence, and integrity (ABI). Hence, three main antecedents of perceived trustworthiness done by the trustor, of the trustee, is applied in dedication to the enabling of trust (Nikolova et al., 2015). Even though relationships form between individuals, trustworthiness opinions may be formed about organisations too (Caldwell & Clapham, 2003). The ABI-model was created to address interpersonal relations within organisations, however, the initial intention was to create a multilevel model (Schoorman et al., 2007). It has successfully been applied to other levels, rendering the level of analysis irrelevant for the model’s functionality. Further, assessments on ability and integrity on other levels of analysis have been widely accepted, while benevolence has been given less attention (Schoorman et al., 2007).

Mayer et al.’s (1995) three specific characteristics of the trustee is described as the following: Ability refers to the trustor’s assessment of the competencies, capacities,

and capabilities of the trustee in certain areas, and it reveals the domain-specificity of trust as one can trust someone to do a particular task but not another (Zand, 1972). Benevolence is the expectation of the trustee's intention to do good to the trustor in situations of possible opportunism. Lastly, integrity refers to the counterpart's adherence to accepted principles and values. Besides, ability differs by the possible granting through reputation, whereas the other two must be experienced through interaction (Swärd & Lunnan, 2011). Ability and integrity can be proved through signalling, while benevolence is seen as a demonstrative demeanour (Nikolova et al., 2015). Also worth noting is the time dimension of the model, as judgements of ability and integrity may form rather quickly in a relationship, whilst benevolence judgements might require a longer time (Nikolova et al., 2015). Further, Schoorman et al. (2007) claim that if actors primarily are motivated by financial interest, then benevolence is *not* the most critical factor of developing inter-organisational trust. As such, the trustee's characteristics play a crucial role in individual trust in organisations (Caldwell & Clapham, 2003; Fulmer & Gelfand, 2012).

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The assessments of trustworthiness – based on perceptions of ability, benevolence, and integrity – poses a framework for evaluating to what extent individuals and organisations are regarded as trustworthy. Consequently, the involved actors' trustworthiness is evaluated, and thereby what kind of trust is able to transfer between projects. From the prior literature, it is known that trust may be transferred, however, less is known about what 'parts' of trust is transferred and if what transfers is identical to the 'original' trust. Even though the ABI-model is well-documented in the trust literature, some aspects of the framework are still rendered less so concerning the *transfer* of trust. More scholarly exploration by directing attention towards the nuances of the concept in this regard would thereby benefit the trust transfer research stream.

### **2.3. Trust transfer**

The concept of transference, with its roots in psychology and the work of Freud (1912/58), laid the foundation of what is commonly known as 'trust transfer'. Freud claimed in his seminal publications that experiences with others may be displaced onto another with which one is interacting, meaning that interpersonal relating derived in previous relationships might resurface in later, future social encounters (Berk & Andersen, 2000; Chen & Andersen, 1999).

Strub and Priest (1976, p. 399) describe the “extension pattern” of attaining trust as using a “third party’s definition of another as a basis for defining that other as trustworthy”. This indicates that a certain amount of trust may be transferred from one individual to another individual or group with which the trustor has limited – or even no – direct experience (Milliman & Fugate, 1988; Strub & Priest, 1976) if the target is affiliated with a trusted ‘proof source’ (Fang et al., 2008; Zaheer et al., 1998). Thereby, if X trusts Y and Y trusts Z, then, in line with the reasoning of Strub and Priest (1976), X will also trust Z if Y is regarded as a trusted source. The person chooses whether to accept the definition based on their (dis)trust in the third party’s judgement. The logic of interpersonal relations with trust as an observable entity for a focal individual, in turn, gives spill-over effects to anyone affiliated with a trusted source (Doney & Cannon, 1997; Milliman & Fugate, 1988; Strub & Priest, 1976). Trust transfer can occur as a cognitive process where the individual’s target has a relationship to a trusted source of the individual, or as a consequence of a communication process between the source and the target leading to direct influence on the focal trustor (Stewart, 2003).

Further, an individual or a group can observe trust at another level. For instance, observing trust at the operational level can influence the level of trust at the managerial level (Faems et al., 2008), and vice versa, even with different kinds of trust present at different levels (Currall & Inkpen, 2002; Zaheer et al., 1998). In line with the reasoning of Strub and Priest (1976), the assessment of trustworthiness done by a trustor may transfer from one individual to another based on an ‘event’ occurring between them, serving as social proof or cue of trustworthiness by observation from outsiders. Thus, trust transfer may occur as an experience spill-over from other relationships or experiences, indicating boundary spanners to be significant. As such, directing attention towards the existing literature on boundary spanners might provide fruitful insights into the trust transfer concept.

### **2.3.1. Boundary spanners**

Trust in an organisational context, as opposed to trust between individuals, has been seen as a more complex endeavour (Fukuyama, 1995; Perrone et al., 2003; Zucker, 1986). Perrone et al. (2003) claim that to assess the trustworthiness of individual organisational members, one must account for the effects of organisational context on individual behaviour, which may be done through roles (Shapiro, 1987).



**Boundary spanning people.** When dealing with trust transfer, a role of particular importance is that of the boundary spanner *person* (Currall & Judge, 1995; Perrone et al., 2003). Studies emphasise that IORs involve multiple boundary spanning people differing in the type, frequency, and quality of their interactions with the partnering organisation (e.g. Currall & Inkpen, 2002), who might cause interpersonal trust to ‘rub off’ onto organisational trust (Kroeger, 2012). The boundary spanning peoples’ role involves processing information from the partner organisation while representing the interests of their firm in the relationship and “link organizational structure to environmental elements” (Aldrich & Herker, 1977, cited in Perrone et al., 2003, p. 423; Tushman & Scanlan, 1981). Hence, boundary spanning people are put in the crossfire between their organisation (internal) and the partner organisation (external), likely receiving competing expectations (Spekman, 1979). According to Doney and Cannon (1997), trust between individuals in an organisational context may result from a person’s expertise or power, in addition to likability and similarity. Furthermore, the authors also claim that the nature (frequent or in-frequent contact) and the duration of the relationship are of importance. Perceived competence is ranked particularly highly as a sign of a boundary spanner’s trustworthiness (Hawes et al., 1989; Kroeger, 2012).

**Boundary spanning objects.** Boundary spanning *objects* refer to artefacts gaining continuity across sites by fulfilling a ‘bridging function’ (Akkerman & Bakker, 2011; Star, 1989) such that they are ‘shared and shareable’ across various issue solving contexts (Carlile, 2002). These are objects that have the role of being “both plastic enough to adapt to local needs and the constraints of the several parties employing them, yet robust enough to maintain a common identity across sites” and they “are weakly structured in common use, and become strongly structured in individual site use” (Star & Griesemer, 1989, p. 393).

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Boundary spanners, therein boundary spanning people and objects, have in the prior literature been discussed in relation to the trust transfer concept. As such, boundary spanning people and their effect on organisations have received noticeable attention in the existing literature (e.g. Kroeger, 2012; Currall & Judge, 1995; Perrone et al., 2003), and boundary spanners in general are acknowledged as important for ‘tying’ the focal organisation together (Spekman, 1979; Akkerman & Bakker, 2011). Based on this, boundary spanners may be significant in relation to trust transfer. However,

less scholarly attention has been given to boundary spanners' effect on the individual to group level – and vice versa. Moreover, what characterises boundary spanning people remains unclear in the literature as of today. These are thereby identified as areas within the concept of trust transfer that could benefit from further exploration and is consequently considered areas of interest in this thesis.

### **2.3.2. Shadow of the past and the shadow of the future**

According to Poppo et al. (2008), trust emerges from either a shadow of the past or a shadow of the future – the first being prior history between actors and the latter an expectation of continuity. The shadow of the future is necessary to promote cooperation and perceptions of trust (Ring & Van de Ven, 1992; Telser, 1980) and refers to a forward-looking calculus (Poppo et al., 2008). This logic relies on the expectations of continued interaction where an act of opportunism would be detrimental to future value – more detrimental than the immediate gain.

“A party’s trust of the other is developed over time by accumulating through the relationship exchange experiences that indicate the kind of behavior to expect from the other party” (Poppo et al., 2008). As such, the shadow of the past refers to the prior history between the collaborating actors. According to McAllister (1995), when working relationships are extended over time, the individuals may consider the antecedents of their peers (prior exchanges and reputation) in assessing trustworthiness. “The past is merely sunk cost” (Zaheer & Harris, 2006, p. 181) provides game-theoretic reasoning to the matter. However, it has been shown that a shadow of the past might be enabled if there is an expectation of a conjoined future present simultaneously. Poppo et al. (2008) introduce the potential interdependence of the shadows, stating that both aspects intertwined are origins to trust. Thereby, by having a positive shadow of the past and of the future, trust between partners is more likely to emerge (Svärd, 2016).

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The shadow of the past and of the future is well-covered in the trust literature (e.g. McAllister, 1995; Poppo et al., 2008; Svärd, 2016). Actors’ prior history affects the evaluation of the trust in the present, and similarly so does the potential expectations of continuity (Poppo et al., 2008). As such, at the time of trust transfer, what has happened in the past and what is expected to happen in the future is essential by making up for the surrounding context in which trust transfer occurs or

not. Scant attention has, however, been directed at the link between the shadows and that of trust *transfer*. Thereby, in the quest towards figuring out how trust transfer takes place between projects in IORs, exploring collaborating actors' prior history and expectations of a conjoined future would enrich the study.

### **2.3.3. Trust transfer at different levels and in different referents**

Trust in its very nature is an individual-level concept as it generally is the individual who trusts, not the organisation (Swärd & Lunnan, 2011). Accordingly, boundary spanning people may be regarded as significant when dealing with interpersonal trust being transferred onto organisations (Kroeger, 2012). Individuals' trust in organisations may arise from relevant prior interactions, general reputation, and/or institutional categories to which the partner organisation belongs (Schilke & Cook, 2013). Thereby, the assessment of organisations' ability, benevolence, and integrity plays a key role in establishing what 'parts' of trust are present (Caldwell & Clapham, 2003; Fulmer & Gelfand, 2012), and thereby able to transfer. Moreover, individuals can also influence group/team level trust (Doney & Cannon, 1997; Zaheer et al., 1998). This, however, is a theoretical area having received scant attention in existing literature (Fulmer & Gelfand, 2012). According to Swärd and Lunnan (2011), when trusting one group of an organisation, trusting another less known group is rendered easier due to the knowledge of the first (Strub & Priest, 1976; Zaheer et al., 1998). Thus, warranting trust transfer by a so-called 'extension pattern' (Strub & Priest, 1976).

Even though organisations' trust generally originates from the individuals within the focal organisation (Swärd & Lunnan, 2011), the resulting trust is directed at the organisation as opposed to the individuals (McEvily & Zaheer, 2006). Doney and Cannon (1997) argue that in an exchange context, when presented with uncertainty and dependence, inter-organisational trust takes the role as a governance mechanism (Bradach & Eccles, 1989; Heide, 1994) mitigating opportunism and decreasing the need for a rigid contract (Faems et al., 2008; Gulati, 1995). In line with the reasoning of McEvily and Zaheer (2006), organisational level trust might transfer between organisations, for instance, through boundary spanners. As such, the occurrence of trust transfer is evident in existing literature, yet little attention has been directed towards understanding exactly *how* it transfers between projects in IORs. To better grasp this, the following methodology is applied.

## Chapter 3: Research methodology

This chapter provides a detailed description of the research methodology and justification of choices to approach the research question. First, the researchers present the research strategy and design in addition to the selected case. After that, the data collection approach is elaborated on, emphasising how the primary and secondary data were utilised. The analytical process is then described before describing how the quality of the research has been secured. Lastly, limitations of the methodology and a description of ethical considerations taken in conducting research for the thesis is provided.

### 3.1. Research strategy and design

To generalise and navigate business research, one must have a research strategy (Bryman & Bell, 2015). In this study, the research strategy chosen is the *case study*. According to Eisenhardt (1989, p. 534), “the case study is a research strategy which focuses on understanding the dynamics present within single settings”, and the focus is on theory-building rather than theory-testing. The research question, “How does trust transfer take place between projects in IORs”, concerns a ‘how’ question and the case study approach is by that – according to Yin (2014) – preferred. This as the approach can provide answers to ‘how’ questions about phenomena in social settings where there are no clear boundaries between the phenomenon and context (Håkansson, 2013). Although the phenomenon can occur outside of the context, the method is suitable for the purpose as the researchers aim to explore exactly *how* trust transfers between projects in IORs using the Norwegian construction industry as context. Thus, the investigation is not possible without including the context.

Case studies can be explanatory, exploratory, or describing of an event (Yin, 2003). As reflected in the research question, this study is *exploratory* of how trust transfers between projects in IORs – an area within the trust transfer research stream not yet fully developed nor sufficiently understood. Hence, the aim is at exploring the data rather than measuring, producing analytical as opposed to statistical generalisations (Yin, 2014). The exploratory case study design is deemed appropriate in exploring the phenomenon of trust transfer which has no clear, single set of outcomes (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Yin, 2003). Additionally, the same applies when “relatively little is known about something, perhaps because of its “deviant” character or its newness” (Straits & Singleton, 2018, p. 68), being the case in this regard.

According to Eisenhardt and Graebner (2007, p. 25), a case study “involves using one or more cases to create theoretical constructs, propositions and/or midrange theory from case-based, empirical evidence”. The research is conducted with an *embedded single case study design* of two infrastructure projects, chosen due to the nature of the research question and for providing the best prospect for answering it. Besides, an embedded case design implies having *multiple units of analysis*. These units are all the various instances of trust transfer. As this thesis focuses on trust transfer between projects in IORs, a challenge is to extend “an inherently individual-level phenomenon to the organisational level of analysis” (Zaheer et al., 1998, p. 141). To explore the phenomenon of trust transfer in-depth, the researchers are trading breadth for depth (Yin, 2003). As various qualities or circumstances of the selected case are unique to the particular case (Baxter & Jack, 2008) – however, not necessarily to the context – the research design is deemed the sound choice.

## **3.2. Case selection**

### **3.2.1. Sampling of case**

A case with rich information enabling the researchers to attain an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon (Eisenhardt, 1989; Yin, 2014) was selected. The case was deemed suitable due to its relatively ‘unique’ nature being a repeat collaboration with similar, almost identical project composition and similar tasks within the Norwegian construction industry. In a repeat collaboration, transferring trust from one project to a subsequent one may generate benefits for the project outcome, in addition to create a basis for possible, future collaborations within an industry not known for repeating collaborations systematically. As such, sampling a repeat collaboration indicates the latter project to have a shadow of the past as the organisations have collaborated previously, bringing with a likelihood for trust to be transferred.

The two projects were not completely identical in terms of composition. Therefore, transferring trust from the first project to the latter is arguably more important than if it was a 1:1 continuity of individuals. If so, the latter project could be regarded as an extension of the first and thereby offer a context more similar to an intra-organisational setting. Selecting this case, thereby, poses an opportunity to explore the phenomenon in a well-suited, highly interesting, and relatively ‘unique’ setting,

and one in which trust transfer is likely to occur. Thus, the circumstances allow for a thorough investigation of how trust transfers between projects in IORs.

### 3.2.2. Case description

The case consists of two projects, presented as Project A and Project B. This section describes the two projects to provide an understanding of the case. In the following, to preserve the confidentiality of the organisations and projects, the information is generalised and identifiable facts are left out.

Project A and Project B are both large infrastructure projects in Norway. The two projects have a similar, almost identical project composition – regarding their main organisations, location, and delivery model. The contractor-side comprise a Design and Build Contractor (DBC), Subcontractor (SC), and consulting firm – Competent Consulting (CC). The DBC had the overall responsibility for the projects (planning and construction), the SC constructed the bridges, while CC oversaw the designing of all structures, bridges, tunnels, and culverts. The wholly owned Norwegian Government Company (NGC) was the client in both projects, and they followed a design-build project delivery model. Even though Project A and B consisted of the same main organisations, the individuals within each were not completely identical: from the DBC 71%, the SC 54%, and CC 43% were the same. Amongst these individuals, some also changed roles internally between the projects.

**Project A.** The first project was a large 22 km, now concluded (closure phase), infrastructure project. The project in full had a cost of 3.2 BNOK (ex. VAT) divided from the NGC to the DBC and in turn to the other organisations in the coalition. The project differed from previous, ‘similar’ projects in the industry as it dealt with parallel design and execution and introduced elements of technological usage not previously utilised, such as Building Information Modelling (BIM). Project A in its entirety was considered a success in terms of deadline and cost, leaving the actors with a ‘smooth’ final phase compared to other projects in the industry.

**Project B.** The second project, similar to Project A, is a large infrastructure project dealing with parallel design and execution, constituting 19 km of infrastructure to be built. Project B is still ongoing (execution phase) as opposed to Project A, with a scheduled duration of 48 months. The project in full has a cost of 4.7 BNOK (ex.

VAT), exceeding that of Project A, and is currently the largest infrastructure project in Norway. As opposed to Project A, Project B is supposed to be completely free from physical drawings and only use BIM technology.

**Table 1.** Case data

	<b>Project A</b>	<b>Project B</b>
<b>Project phase</b>	Completed	Ongoing
<b>Coalition organisations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- DBC</li> <li>- SC</li> <li>- CC</li> <li>- NGC (client)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- DBC</li> <li>- SC</li> <li>- CC</li> <li>- NGC (client)</li> </ul>
<b>Delivery model</b>	Design-build contract	Design-build contract
<b>Contractual sum</b>	3.2 BNOK (ex. VAT)	4.7 BNOK (ex. VAT)
<b>Data sources</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Interviews (28 + 8)</li> <li>- Evaluation reports</li> <li>- Organisational charts</li> </ul>	

### 3.3. Qualitative data collection

A *qualitative* research approach was applied due to the exploratory design and the complex nature of the research question – “How does trust transfer take place between projects in IORs?”. The complexity of trust, therein how it transfers, calls for an in-depth qualitative approach; Applying a quantitative approach would not be sufficient to answer the research question. A benefit of qualitative data collection is its capacity to capture temporally evolving phenomena in great detail (Langley & Abdallah, 2011), providing rich and ‘real’ qualitative insight (Miles, 1979).

Qualitative research is described as multimethod research (Rynes & Gephart, 2004). Thereby, it can be conducted through a variety of methods such as interviews (structured, semi-structured, and unstructured), observations, focus groups, and analysis of archival data. In this thesis, the data is collected using two approaches: *semi-structured interviews* and *archival data*. Interviews were chosen to obtain individuals’ insights into the complex nature of trust transfer up close. As such, the researchers collected data by directly talking to the individuals in their environment to learn participants’ meanings about the phenomenon, rather than bringing them into a lab or sending out surveys to complete. This also allowed the interviewees to provide historical information which is essential in analysing a repeat collaboration.

Analysis of archival data was also chosen to achieve triangulation of the findings by enabling the researchers to cross-check what was derived from interviews. Even though including qualitative observations by taking field notes on-site would likely have enriched the findings even further, conducting interviews and analysing archival data were deemed sufficient to obtain the information needed for answering the research question. Taking field notes on-site, however, was hindered by the Covid-19 pandemic restraining most social contact with the interviewees.

### 3.3.1. Interviews

Interviews, being a highly efficient way to gather rich, empirical data” (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007, p. 28), are used in this study to allow for in-depth investigation of the research question such that the nuances of the participants’ subjective understandings are captured. These individual, subjective reflections create the collective perception, emphasising the social construction of reality (Cunliffe & Eriksen, 2011; Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007).

**Interview guide.** The semi-structured *interview guide* (see Appendix 1) consists of a series of questions in an open-ended manner, allowing for follow-up questions if the interviewers see the need for it (Bell et al., 2019). Due to the study’s exploratory nature, several of the topics the informants brought up could not be foreseen; A structured interview guide would have inhibited the possibility of digging deeper into emerging topics. Thus, the interview guide took an explorative approach. The guide was *not* sent to the informants beforehand, however, they were provided with ‘general’ information about the study and what to expect from the interviews to be held. This to inhibit participants from preparing answers to formulated questions and instead facilitate reflection upon the topic in general beforehand.

When creating the interview guide, the aim was to ensure the aspects in which the researchers desired more information were sufficiently included so the informants would provide as much input as possible – while still making sure the guide had an explorative approach. The interviewers began asking about the two projects and relations, both internally and towards the other organisations, before going into detail on the transfer of trust as the interviewees began mentioning the topics themselves. As the interviewees began reflecting on the repeated collaboration, the researchers dug into more details concerning the prior history and potential



expectations of future collaboration, in addition to key people, objects, and structures suspected to be important for the transference. Thereby, a deepened examination of the relations and collaborative environment was initiated as the participants proved willing to reflect upon both the internal and external dynamics. Due to the semi-structured interview approach, the researchers rearranged the order of questions when necessary for the interview to flow or follow the interviewees' line of thought.

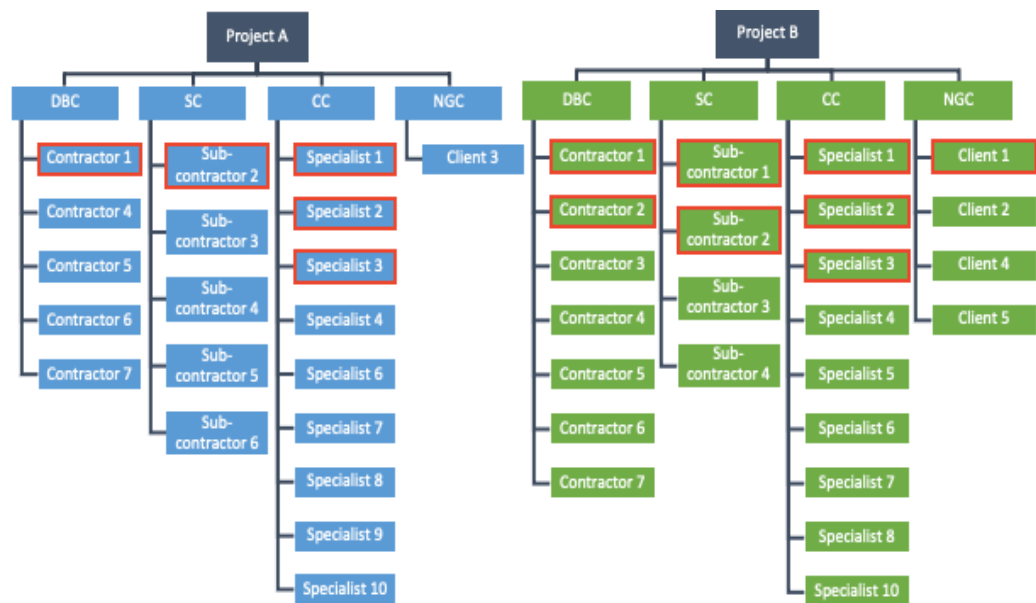
**Conducting the interviews.** Even though interviews are preferably done face-to-face to capture facial expressions and body language, due to the Covid-19 pandemic it was a necessity to conduct them through video conference (Microsoft Teams). Performing video calls was the preferred method as this still allowed the researchers to observe the informants' body language and reactions when asking questions. The length of all interviews varied between 50 and 60 minutes. Both researchers were present at all interviews, as it has been argued to pose as an advantage being more than one interviewer (Bechhofer et al., 1984). One person took an active role and the other a passive role, preventing a uniform, uncritical perception of the informants. Moreover, all interviews were audio and/or video recorded and subsequently transcribed verbatim, allowing a thorough and accurate examination of the data. The interviews were conducted and transcribed in Norwegian as this was the local language and primarily used on both projects. Hence, as the thesis is written in English, all quotations used in Chapter 4 have been translated from Norwegian to English, with the utmost focus on ensuring the participants' statements in their original language were reproduced authentically in translation. See Appendix 3 for a list of all quotations.

**Sampling of interview objects.** Based on the nature of the exploratory case study, it is not plausible to attempt generating a representative sample fit for statistical generalisability, ruling out selecting participants on a random basis. They were therefore selected from expected relevance to the topic and the progress in the data collection (Etikan et al., 2016), based on the non-probability sampling technique *purposive sampling*; The researchers select units deemed representative or 'typical' for the population (Straits & Singleton, 2018) able to provide sufficient relevance to the research question (Bell et al., 2019). A total sample of 28 informants was interviewed from Project A and B altogether, and therein eight of these were

sampled in the second round of interviews. The eight were sampled based on responses in the first round, in which the researchers considered the participants’ reflections highly relevant to the research question and identified an opportunity to gain further deepened insight. Further, the sample was decided upon ensuring all organisations were well-represented and included individuals working across hierarchical levels and functions.

Below, in Figure 1, an overview of all informants from Project A and Project B is illustrated in a hierarchical structure. The informants having participated in both interview rounds are highlighted in red.

**Figure 1.** Informant tree



### 3.3.2. Secondary data

Secondary data may include but are not limited to financial reports, news reports, industry analysis, academic articles, and evaluation reports. In this study, archival data in terms of academic journals, evaluation reports, and organisational charts have been analysed. It is used complementary to the interviews (primary data) to enhance the understanding of how trust transfers between projects in IORs and triangulates the collected data. Information was gathered from a range of academic journals depending on the topic and to what extent it was covered in prior literature. A brief description of the data gathered from evaluation reports and organisational charts throughout the study’s duration follows.

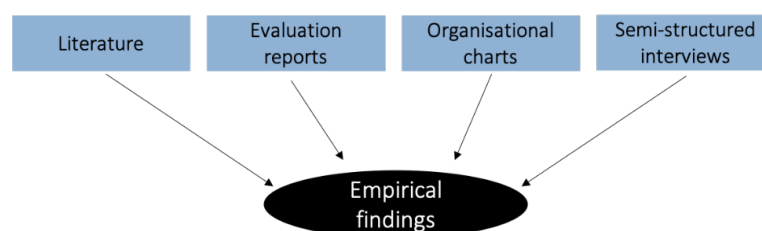
**Evaluation reports.** In the initial data gathering process, five evaluation reports from Project A were analysed using the NVivo data indexing tool by reducing and categorising the information into nodes and children-nodes based on themes and patterns identified. Then, the insight derived from the reports were combined with the empirical findings from the interviews, as means to cross-check the information from the interviewees. The content of the evaluation reports was focus areas to solve and continuous evaluations of the progress made on a meeting-to-meeting basis.

**Organisational charts.** The literature on repeat collaborations, especially in PBOs, emphasises relations and the transfer of people. In this regard, the proportion of people from the various organisations working (or having worked) on Project A and Project B was analysed. The analysis was done by transforming the organisational charts into structured representations of each organisation in Microsoft Excel. As such, the DBC, the SC, and CC actors within each organisation were divided into two categories: managers and site managers/specialists.

### 3.3.3. Triangulation

The case study design is used to attain a deep understanding through multiple types of data sources (Yin, 1994). The various data collection methods (see Figure 2) were used to achieve *triangulation*, namely when “two or more dissimilar measuring instruments or approaches are used” (Straits & Singleton, 2018, p. 355), and develop ‘convergent lines of inquiry’ (Yin, 2003). By combining a variety of information sources in the data collection, using both primary and secondary data, the researchers are enabled to cross-check the data derived from interviews to, for instance, evaluation reports and organisational charts. Hence, data credibility was enhanced (Patton, 1990; Yin, 2003) by using multiple data sources to increase the accuracy and quality of the study (Yin, 1994), in addition to ameliorate the internal and external validity; Consequently, a more ‘robust’ study is created.

**Figure 2.** Data collection methods



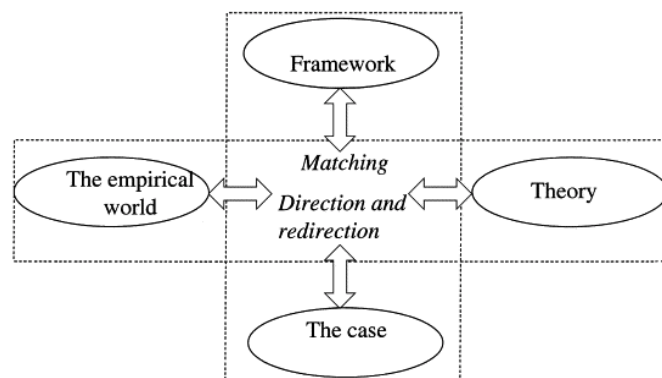
### 3.4. Data processing and analysis

#### 3.4.1. Inductive and abductive approach

In dealing with a qualitative research strategy, the characteristics of an *inductive* research approach are evident. Since the study is qualitative, an inductive approach focusing on theory-building generated out of research (Bryman & Bell, 2015), rather than testing the established, was adopted in the initial data collecting phase. The aim for theory-building and attaining a deeper understanding of the trust transfer concept is reflected in the research question. Since the ways in which trust transfers between projects would still benefit from further investigation, the researchers deemed the inductive theory-building approach to be the best fit, justified by the lack of knowledge in the theory field.

Later, the approach shifted increasingly from inductive towards an *abductive* approach – a combination of inductive and deductive. According to Dubois and Gadde (2002), the abductive approach – referred to as systematic combining – is to a greater extent related to the inductive than the deductive approach. At its core is the continuous movement between theory and reality; Put differently, the process where the theoretical framework, empirical fieldwork, and case analysis evolve simultaneously when aspiring to develop theory (Dubois & Gadde, 2002). Even though being inductive in the initial data-gathering phase, the researchers went back to the theory before again directing attention towards the ‘real world’, still aiming to build theory. By continuously going ‘back and forth’ between framework, data sources, and analysis matching theory and reality while simultaneously directing and redirecting the study to develop theory, an abductive approach was applied. This process is illustrated in the framework below.

**Figure 3.** Systematic combining



**Source.** Dubois and Gadde (2002, p. 555)

**Research process.** Conducting a qualitative study, “the data collection and analysis occur concurrently” (Baxter & Jack, 2008, p. 554). The researchers went constantly back and forth between theory and continuing research, resulting in a study providing rich insights. The abductive approach allowed an elevated understanding of the phenomenon in both the ‘real’ and theoretical world. As the process for qualitative researchers is emergent, the initial plan for conducting research likely changes throughout the research period and cannot be strictly prescribed. The research process is summed up in the table below.

**Table 2.** Research steps

Research steps	Process description
<b>1:</b> Reviewing the existing literature	The research process started by writing a preliminary literature review on PBOs, trust, trust transfer, and IORs, in addition to reviewing existing literature on how these topics positioned themselves in relation to the Norwegian construction industry. This step provided the researchers with insight into current challenges and opportunities in the industry related to the research question, and identifying slight gaps in the literature.
<b>2:</b> Collection of initial data	In terms of 28 semi-structured interviews, the researchers, in collaboration with the BI Centre for the Construction Industry, gathered data in 2020 – the first 5 interviews in January/February, then 23 interviews in May/June. This first data collection was aligned with the centre’s larger research project set out to investigate the benefits of repeat collaboration in the Norwegian construction industry. The interviews, in addition to archival secondary data, made up the initial round of data collection.
<b>3:</b> Coding and analysis of initial data	The data collected from the first round of interviews in 2020 were coded based on thematic analysis in the NVivo software. As the initial interview guide included several topics but did not deep dive into the phenomenon of this thesis (trust transfer), the findings derived from the analysis was not sufficient to approach the research question. Therefore, the researchers identified a need to conduct additional interviews.
<b>4:</b> Refining the literature review and identifying areas of interest	The researchers went back to the literature once again, improving and further specifying the topics in the review. As such, areas of interest derived from the prior literature deemed to assist in addressing the research question was identified. Doing so helped form exploratory interview guide, both to address specific areas of interest and still being inductive and explorative.
<b>5:</b> Collection of data	In February/March 2021, the researchers collected the remaining data in terms of 8 additional semi-structured interviews, using an exploratory interview guide. The interviews allowed gaining rich insights into the identified interest areas and exploring new aspects to build theory from.

<b>6: Coding and analysis of data, and developing empirical findings</b>	After having conducted the second round of interviews and coded the data once again using thematic analysis in the NVivo software, the researchers developed and structured the empirical findings. The findings were after that integrated with theory from the literature review and sufficiently worked through, resulting in the discussion chapter.
<b>7: Writing the conclusion and avenues for future research</b>	The last step of the research process was summing up the major insights from the discussion in terms of a conclusion. Thereafter, limitations and implications of the research were described, in addition to areas for future research.

### 3.4.2. Coding and analysis of data

Qualitative data collection tends to result in vast amounts of data, rendering difficulties in how to interpret it afterwards (Bryman & Bell, 2015). Nevertheless, the data collected through interviews allowed the researchers to recognise themes, patterns, and relationships in the data (Saunders et al., 2019). *Thematic analysis* by Braun and Clarke (2006), a flexible yet systematic approach, is regarded the fundamental method for qualitative analysis and is the method applied in this thesis. Themes or patterns occurring across the data were identified, analysed, and reported on (Saunders et al., 2019), allowing the researchers to comprehend the research while transforming the data to a simplified representation in terms of empirical findings in Chapter 4. The process was highly iterative, involving a continuous return to data and theory (Locke, 2003).

**Coding process.** Building on thematic analysis, the NVivo data indexing tool was used to reduce the codifiable, transcribed data into nodes and children-nodes. The tool poses a place to organise, store, and retrieve the extensive amount of data, and it can import and process documents saved in rich text format (Saldaña, 2015). This categorisation was done to sort the data into units of interest and relevance and make each data piece accessible for further analysis (Saunders et al., 2019).

After all interviews were conducted, both researchers engaged in transcribing and coding of data consecutively. In the coding process, both predetermined and emergent codes were used; Predetermined codes, developed based on the literature and identified areas of interest, were used and data fit to them, in addition to allowing for creating nodes during the analysis based on emerging information from interviewees. The children-node ‘Structures’ within the ‘Boundary spanners’ node was created based on emerging information, as well as the “Inter-organisational

relations” node and children-nodes within. As such, the researchers allowed the initially defined nodes to change based on information derived during data analysis. An overview of the nodes and children-nodes is presented in the table below.

**Table 3.** Nodes and children-nodes in NVivo

Nodes	Children-nodes
Assessments of trustworthiness	Ability
	Benevolence
	Integrity
Boundary spanners	People
	Objects
	<i>Structures</i>
The shadow of the past and of the future	Past
	Future
<i>Inter-organisational relations</i>	DBC – NGC
	DBC – CC
	DBC – SC
	SC – CC

When examining the data, instances of trust transfer were identified based on knowledge derived from the literature before it was categorised within the predetermined nodes and children-nodes, as illustrated in Table 3. See Appendix 2 for examples of the coding, where quotations representing instances of trust transfer derived from the data is provided, in addition to the researchers’ interpretation of these. When the coding process was concluded, both researchers went back to all transcriptions to review these to ensure consensus on how the interviews were coded and cross-check the results derived from the data set.

### 3.5. Quality of the research

#### 3.5.1. Quality criteria

The most common approaches in establishing the quality of case study research are reliability and validity (Bell et al., 2019), however, qualitative scholars have discussed their relevance. Lincoln and Guba (1985, cited in Bell et al., 2019) propose alternative quality criteria of qualitative research distinguishing between

*authenticity* and *trustworthiness*. Since authenticity refers to the political impact on the research, the focus in this thesis is on the four trustworthiness criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. These are argued to be closely tied to validity and reliability of quantitative research (Bell et al., 2019).

**Credibility.** The criterion of credibility parallels ‘internal validity’ and refers to how true and accurate the findings are, meaning whether the findings reflect participants’ experiences in a believable manner (Whittemore et al., 2001). The credibility increases when using multiple data sources (Bryman & Bell, 2015), and, in this thesis, triangulation is achieved by combining a variety of information sources in the data collection. Besides, to obtain credible research, the researchers were open for the participants to be involved throughout the data gathering process. Being at least two interviewers present at all interviews further decreased bias (interviewee and response bias) as both had the possibility to ask questions, listen to responses, and gather expressions. The initial interviews were conducted by the BI Centre for the Construction Industry by two professors and a PhD student working on the larger research project, in addition to the researchers of this thesis. Audio and/or videotaping the interviews ensured the availability and completeness of raw material so that the researchers were able to accurately transcribe and interpret the data afterwards. Moreover, both researchers were doing the coding and analysis of data.

**Transferability.** The transferability of the study, paralleling ‘external validity’, refers to the possibility to adopt the findings to other empirical contexts or situations (Bell et al., 2019) – the generalisability of the study. The study concerns *how* trust is transferred between projects in IORs, and it is fair to state that the phenomenon may be adopted into other industries than the Norwegian construction industry. This, even though the case study aims at attaining a deeper understanding of the phenomenon in a specific context (Guba, 1981). As this study has an exploratory purpose, it is important to specify that the aim is not necessarily to generalise the findings but to explore and develop theory. This is supported by Halldórsson and Aastrup (2003), claiming that researchers should avoid generalising their findings when conducting a case study as the results might not be representative of the population. The researchers are aware that the transferability of the findings may not be sufficient for other contexts due to the case’s uniqueness.



**Dependability.** The third criterion refers to whether the findings are likely to be consistent if the study were to be replicated (Bell et al., 2019), and it shares similarities to the ‘reliability’ dimension. For the study and its findings to be possible for others to replicate – a high degree of dependability – one must provide a thorough and detailed research process description and process the collected data properly (Elo et al., 2014). In this thesis, dependability is ensured by the detailed documentation of the research process earlier in Chapter 3 and attaching the interview guide in the appendix to mention some. Furthermore, the interviewees were chosen to ensure all actors were represented and that the individuals spanned across hierarchical levels and functions.

**Conformability.** The conformability of the study revolves around the objectivity of the findings and ensures that these reflect the informants’ voices; Focus is that neither the researchers nor the informants are biased in terms of values (Bryman & Bell, 2015). When dealing with qualitative data gathering, a challenge is to avoid asking questions influenced by, or skewed towards, personal opinions threatening to intrude the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). To tackle this challenge and ensure conformability, both researchers were present at all interviews. Additionally, the semi-structured interview guide limited the possibility to depart fully from the pre-decided questions. This initiative puts a restraint on possible personal opinions or values influencing the question asking and discussion, ensuring conformability. Another measure was completing and transcribing all interviews before any empirical findings were developed through coding and analysis (Bryman & Bell, 2015), in addition to keeping the potential translation bias to a minimum.

### **3.5.2. Limitations of the methodology**

Using the case study research design, a common critique is that it provides a limited basis for scientific generalisability (Yin, 1994). The aim of this research, however, was not to obtain generalisable findings but to explore and gain a more nuanced understanding of the trust transfer concept. The researchers’ main mission was rather striving to “illustrate the case they have studied properly, in a way that captures its unique features” (Ruddin, 2006, p. 804). As such, case studies are generally relevant in a specific, empirical context and not widely applicable to others. This study, however, may be applicable to other actors within the Norwegian construction industry.

A limitation to the data collection was the time and resource constraint, leading to a limited research scope. Project B was not fully completed at the time of data gathering. As such, the researchers were not able to identify surfacing changes in the relations nor to how the trust did transfer at later stages. Since Project B was well underway when the second round of interviews was held, limited time was rendered for changes in the relational dynamics between the projects. If able to observe both projects from start to conclusion, though, there is a possibility that even more information and accurate results would be assimilated; Although, the researchers regard the data sufficient to cover the transition between the projects. Moreover, including qualitative observations by taking field notes on-site (hindered by the Covid-19 pandemic) would likely have enriched the findings even further.

Another well-acknowledged limitation to case studies is the subjectivity of the researchers. Thereby, essential when conducting interviews is to use data collection approaches that limit bias (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007). In working close to people knowledgeable of both the industry and research area from the BI Centre for the Construction Industry, the researchers risked getting influenced. However, the researchers have gone to great lengths to mitigate this to limit *researchers' bias*, as described throughout the methodology chapter. The selection of informants may also be subject to bias, making the sampling process a limitation. This as the informants in the first round of interviews were chosen by their project organisation leaders, opening the possibility for a *selection bias*. Possible sampling bias could be minimised by extending research by taking a larger sample into consideration.

### **3.5.3. Ethical considerations**

Ethical issues may arise when elements in conducting a study conflict with general ethical principles (Straits & Singleton, 2018). According to Diener and Crandall (1978), there are four somewhat overlapping ethical considerations of concern: harm to participants, lack of informed consent, invasion of privacy, and deception. Throughout the entire research process, the researchers did their utmost to ensure no harm is done to the participants, in addition to honouring both the ethical and legal considerations concerning the confidentiality and anonymity issues.

The research project was submitted to, and approved by, the Norwegian Centre for Research Data (NSD) in terms of the storing of personal data. This as the university

requires all research involving human participants to be considered and approved by the NSD. All data collection, storing, and deleting was done in compliance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) guidelines. Further, the informants contributed voluntarily, and all participants were thoroughly informed about their rights before the interviews – both written in terms of a consent form sent to the interviewees and a verbal reminder before asking questions. Thus, the participants were informed about the purpose of their contributions, and the purpose of the research itself, the data collection methods, when the research is to be completed, and what then happens to the data. All informants' personal information and statements were anonymised, and all interviews were audio and/or video recorded in their full length and have not been subject to any editing and were deleted after transcription. Any personal information and transcribed material will not be used for any other purposes than those stated in the consent form.

#### **Chapter 4: Empirical findings and analysis**

This chapter presents the empirical findings as a detailed, descriptive portrait (Creswell, 2009), providing rich descriptions of the data in terms of an extensive text with quotations from the interviews. Given the abductive approach, the aim is not to test established theory but to develop the trust transfer concept further by constantly going back and forth between theory and continuing research. Thus, this chapter is structured to reflect the researchers' quest in developing theory with an explorative research design and abductive approach.

By exploration of the data from the first round of interviews, the researchers found that boundary spanners (people and objects) were important to trust transfer – in line with prior literature on the topic. Additionally, a newfound curiosity of whether structures have a similar role was attained. Due to these insights, the literature was revisited before the second round of interviews. Acknowledging the boundary spanners' importance, the researchers dug further into the people identified as boundary spanners in the case and found these existing on different levels (both the individual and group level) than seen before in literature. Thus, in section 4.1., the findings on the boundary spanning people in the repeat collaboration are described on the individual and group level. By continued exploration, boundary spanning objects (BIM technology and The Progress Plan) and structures (co-location,

meetings and meeting places, and organisational structures) were identified as important to trust transfer as well – being described in the following sub-sections.

It became evident that to identify instances of trust transfer in the data, and thus insights into exactly how trust transfers between projects in IORs, more knowledge about the inter-organisational context in which trust transfer occurs or not had to be attained. Investigating the shadow of the past and of the future in the repeat collaboration thereby served as a possibility to map said surrounding context. The findings related to the shadows is found in section 4.2. Moreover, when boundary spanning people's importance to trust transfer became evident in the data, exploring what 'parts' of trust are able to transfer, as well as the present trust in the case, was deemed important to approach the research question. As such, the ABI-model by Mayer et al. (1995) is employed in section 4.3. to further nuance the understanding of how trust transfer occur between projects in IORs.

#### **4.1. Boundary spanners – people, objects, and structures**

**Boundary spanning people.** In this section, the individuals within the project organisations are explored to potentially identify boundary spanning people in the case. If so, their role in transferring trust between Project A and is investigated.

##### Individual level:

Boundary spanning people seems to be present in the case. They, however, seem not to be the same person(s) throughout both projects, but it depends on the position, tasks, and personal relationships of the interviewee, i.e. whom the identified individuals are vary depending on the perspective of the interviewee. They tend to point to colleagues close to themselves in the hierarchy, both horizontally and vertically.

Although the project coalition in the repeat collaboration is relatively new, some of the personal relationships go back years before Project A and B; The continuity of some relations, both personal and organisational, spans over a longer period than the case. This is expected given the size and actor density of the industry, nonetheless, decisive for the collaborative environment. Specialist 3 emphasises the importance of specific key personnel being involved beyond their role in which the

DBC benefits from on the current project. In this regard, Specialist 1 was particularly pointed out.

*We also have another one, Specialist 1, who is probably included in the DBC's work and asked for advice outside of the set responsibilities. So there are some key people out and about whom the DBC have good use of. (Specialist 3)*

The CC actor, Specialist 1, describes own position as being a versatile engineer with the ability to combine the practical and theoretical. When asked, the claim is that the boundary spanning role was intentional from the management.

*Ehm, yes, it is [intentional]. But that actually comes from the DBC themselves. I've had some projects with the DBC earlier, close to my office, where I've had the pleasure of working in 'the ditch' with the boys. They felt like I knew what I was talking about, also with the practical stuff. Contractor 1 [...] wanted me on-site to create that connection, a tighter connection between theory and practice, so we got that understanding of the practicalities amongst the engineers. (Specialist 1)*

The composition of people within the organisations was not identical in the repeat collaboration, leading to new people coming in without any first-hand knowledge of Project A. While this could be viewed as a challenge, bringing new people up to speed in an established coalition, the presence of 'carriers of history and experience' was decisive to maintain momentum from Project A into B. Hence, the continuity of some relations from Project A benefitted Project B, as expressed by Contractor 2 being a novel actor going into the latter project:

*It's correct that I came into the project after its start. And as a consequence of the change of a project leader, that's not something we plan for, so that was an extra challenge for the DBC and for me. A pretty substantial part of why it has gone down well in my eyes is precisely what I've touched upon earlier, there were some carriers of history and experience. (Contractor 2)*

Despite the disruption caused by a project leader opting out of Project B, the project did not suffer as there still were enough 'carriers of history and experience' present to transfer trust – enough continuity of relations was saved. Even though this could be classified as undramatic given its outcome, there seems to be no coincidence as the DBC has an underlying strategy to make sure such carriers are present in the projects.

*What I believe makes the DBC stand out and what is some of the success factor is that there is a conscious attitude towards how to build project organisations and teams, not to dilute that composition of these carriers of culture. (Contractor 2)*

People are generally hired to do a certain task with set responsibilities and can create value through satisfactory fulfilment of these, not having other value-creating initiatives. Yet, some bring an additional value exceeding their set expectations, either by the organisations actively utilising people with skills going outside of the ‘needed’ competence or as a welcomed, random occurrence. The case had several individuals deemed important by others and themselves. Along with Specialist 1, Contractor 1 was also emphasised by several from various organisations to be a person spanning the boundaries.

*It’s clear that Contractor 1 is an important person and has a personality that’s very well suited for trust building and cooperation. [...] Contractor 1 is open, including, proactive, and at the same time clear and precise in the demands and expectations. But Contractor 1 is still a person that creates trust, radiates trust, and has a capability and will to cooperate. (Specialist 2)*

Specialist 2 was also particularly identified as a boundary spanning individual. After a managerial change within the DBC, Specialist 2 stepped in, covering the position and taking on a ‘double’ role in Project B, serving as a hired consultant at the DBC and a top leader of one of their customers, the original workplace, CC. This role serves as an affirmation of trust in the individual and enables Specialist 2 to span across two organisations, combining efforts from both. The relations on both sides were thereby perceived to get closer, clearly enabling trust to transfer. Specialist 2 was clear when asked if the personal network and social relations benefitted from the ‘double’ role. Additionally, Specialist 3 also attest to the individual’s importance and boundary spanner role.

*Yes, I think so. And I think that’s why the DBC wants it that way, and that’s why CC wants it that way. We believe it gives us, that way of organising, an agile, good and safe way of operating with the least amount of hassle. (Specialist 2)*

*We’ve had Specialist 2 in our driver seat. So it’s clear that Specialist 2 is one of the absolutely most important here. Very good at connecting everyone together and including people too. [...]. Specialist 2 is very thorough, very thorough. And basically has an overview of the details and the big picture really. And that creates*

*trust I think, also for the DBC where we see that they use what's offered outside of the set role for advice and the lot, so it shows the high level of trust. (Specialist 3)*

Specialist 2 is not only appreciated by the actors on the contractor-side but also the client is clear in the judgement of the CC actor. The client emphasises Specialist 2's characteristics as well as professional capabilities and responsibilities.

*Specialist 2 has enabled trust and cooperation and all of those kinds of topics to work very well. Because Specialist 2 is really good at processes and is really proficient, so I don't have anything negative to say. [...]. Specialist 2 preserves the interests of CC and all of their delivery, but at the same time Specialist 2 has a responsibility for the DBC. (Client 1)*

The effects of those in which contribution exceeds expected tasks are argued by Specialist 3 to blur the lines between the organisations: *"The distinction is sort of not as clear. We [the DBC and CC] are one cohesive unit rather than two firms"*. This attests to the individuals being deemed boundary spanning to somewhat tie firms together. What characterises these boundary spanning people, however, is differing. Some describing characteristics used by interviewees were versatility, a high degree of expertise, a broad knowledge base, benevolent, a strong personality, thoroughness, actionability, inclusive, proactiveness, clearness and preciseness in their expectations and requirements, collaborative, and structuredness. Moreover, the boundary spanning individuals having a similar mindset to the interviewees, amongst other similarities, was brought up as positive.

#### Group level:

Based on insights derived from the first round of interviews, the researchers wanted to explore if a group could serve as some sort of boundary spanning 'catalyst'. As such, the group, through its efforts and position, could potentially transfer and affect trust in other parts of the hierarchy – both the levels downwards and upwards. At the operational level, interviewees seem clear about their effects on their subordinates, yet the effect from managers on the leading operating level seems somewhat ambiguous, in isolation. Subcontractor 2, from the operational level, states:

*Yes, at least downwards I know it rubs off [effects of the good cooperation]. If they need anything, they'll get it. And at the same time, if we stop an excavator and need*

*some help we get it, it's not that complicated. [...]. There's no need to call the leader, the subordinates know they can just say yes. So I believe some of our cooperation reflects downwards. Upwards, one step up, my project leader knows the situation is very good. The project leader above that, I think has so much to deal with on its own that the project leader just reflects on our success and is delighted, but I don't think it affects, no. (Subcontractor 2)*

Combining the insights from the operational level with that of the managerial level, the well-functioning cooperative at the operational level seems less of a coincidence. Those on the managerial level showcases trust in the ones working operationally by giving them the space to operate efficiently and believing in their ability to solve operational challenges.

*It's rather a lack of guidelines and surveillance, I'd say. We have trust in them to continue their work and cooperation they've had all along. And that we let them make pretty big decisions without intervening. (Subcontractor 1)*

The combination of individuals higher up in the hierarchy with a well-functioning cooperative had some transferring effects to others downwards and upwards in the hierarchy. This by being resources of knowledge and competence, or by showcasing professionalism and desired behaviour. These transferring effects are shown to come from a high degree of transparency, yet also from being more opaque to shield the 'lower' parts of the organisations from conflicts at the higher level.

*The management has done good to be honest and open. And I feel that from my point of view it's been a good climate. It has probably been discussions and similar that we aren't involved in, but still, very neat and professional. (Specialist 3)*

*I believe, in the cooperation of CC and the DBC, that it's myself and the assistant project leader who carry some of that responsibility. [...] We led the preliminary work and won this project. So we've worked together for two and a half years on this project and the cooperation we have, that we still manage to react positively together, I believe that to be important. (Specialist 2)*

When asked about the top leaders of Project B, namely Contractor 1 and Specialist 8, Specialist 2 spoke warmly of them, emphasising their position and persona, which was believed to be the source of the transference:



*I think that our person, so to speak, on the other side of the table on that level is unbelievably tidy and structured, and equivalently cooperative-oriented guy [As Contractor 1]. So I think that is two people who match each other well. [...]. And it's the combination that makes things powerful, when there is coalescence of personality and roles, things go well. (Specialist 2)*

Moreover, Specialist 5 has extensive knowledge of the design-build project delivery model and argues that the group consisting of “Contractor 1, Contractor 7, Specialist 2 and those guys” is very influential. The group of leaders working well together arguably influence the rest of the organisation and the repeat collaboration in its entirety. As such, Specialist 5 describe the group of influential leaders:

*I perceive them as a very tight group, with a good atmosphere and dialogue. And I think that has affected us too, in that it gave us a proper building block to go on from. [...]. We work towards the same goal. I see that as a very big difference really compared to other projects I've been a part of. (Specialist 5)*

**Boundary spanning objects.** In the first round of interviews, particularly two ‘objects’ were identified as having a somewhat added value beyond its purely technical and operational role: The *Progress Plan* and *BIM technology*. These were explored further to gain insight into their potential boundary spanning role.

#### The Progress Plan:

After the first round of interviews, the initial belief was that the common, detailed Progress Plan had a solid standing amongst the organisations in the coalition – the mantra ‘we follow the plan’ clearly predominated. This perception, however, proved more nuanced after the second round of interviews, with the insights derived from the first round as the fundament.

On the managerial level, the collective perception was that the common plan served as an enabler of trust transfer, however, to differing extents depending on the organisations. The DBC itself, having laid out this plan, claimed in a clear manner that it contributed to the trust transfer from Project A to Project B and is sacred within the projects. The reason for this sacredness primarily being sticking to a concept, not engaging oneself in what seems sensible but might prove time or cost

consuming in the long run. As such, the DBC's perception of the plan is uniform to what was identified in the initial round of interviews.

*[...] we even have coffee cups on which it says 'we follow the plan', so it is quite true that we have elevated it [the Progress Plan] to something very sacred here in the project. It's first and foremost about sticking to a concept, not throwing oneself into something that may seem sensible at a time, in which one does not see the range of along the way. [...] but that presupposes that you have a good plan as the fundament. Otherwise, it does not work no matter how good one is at planning. (Contractor 2)*

*We follow the plan. We will follow the plan that is set, and do everything we can to ensure it's followed. (Contractor 4)*

The SC had a strong sense of ownership in the plan being laid out as well, in that it defines what they are to deliver and at what time. Besides, the DBC is deemed well-aware of the effects the plan has on the other coalition organisations, especially the SC, and acknowledges their power in the process of creating it.

*[...] the SC's become, in a way, whether they want to or not, part of the plan. And then we manage very precisely in accordance with the plan. (Contractor 2)*

In a similar vein as the DBC, those within CC perceive the Progress Plan to serve an added value posing as a common identity or intermediary, enabling trust transfer, extending on its operational role. Some even claimed that it contributed to the transfer of trust between Project A and B to a significant extent. This was based on the certainty that they (the DBC and CC) work towards common goals.

*The fact that we understand their Progress Plan, the importance of it, and what milestones are important in the planning is an important element. [...]. It is very important to understand the DBC's Progress Plan and their milestones, and then set our milestones so that they match by a good margin. (Specialist 1)*

Regarding the practical reporting and conformity to the Progress Plan, however, the interviewees were diverting in their statements. Within CC, they believed both the managerial and operational level report and conform to the highest degree, however, there is a disagreement by actors on the operational level – a misbelief in the standing and effectiveness of the plan was stated. The reason for this was pointed to the DBC being in charge of the plan whilst the SC, even though having

provided input to it, is somewhat questioning whether it is currently fully functioning. The SC claimed that by having a meeting at the beginning of the project where they sit down agreeing to what was to be delivered and when, it might have been improved. Still, fully functioning or not, this is not perceived to impact everyday life working on the projects due to an overall good collaborative.

*At the same time, we feel that there is quite a lot to go on to have a fully functioning overall plan. But at the same time, the collaboration works so well on the project that it does not affect everyday life. (Subcontractor 1)*

### BIM technology:

The importance of, and engagement concerning, BIM was identified in the initial round of interviews, described in detail for its technological role in the case. This was amplified in Project B as the intention was for the project to be completely free from physical drawings and use BIM technology in its place. In Project A, in comparison, only elements of BIM were used. This indicates that there was a large development in the use of BIM technology from Project A to Project B, and is further expressed by several interviewees:

*We sold BIM as a next-generation [technology] on Project B, based on Project A. [...]. The BIM part from A to B was very good. If we were at 60 per cent on Project A – which was 100 per cent to the client's expectation –, then we were at our 100 per cent – which was maybe 200 per cent to the client's expectation – on Project B. (Specialist 1)*

*Yes, I think so. This is the first infrastructure project carried out with that level of BIM use. And it's a road that has not been walked before. (Subcontractor 2)*

*The fact that we had made an attempt in Project A proved that we could probably achieve something. BIM was probably one of many such, yes, objects or trust... such trust-building products, services, deliveries, processes that made us able to enter Project B with enough confidence to believe we could deliver in accordance with the new contract requirements. (Specialist 2)*

The development in the use of BIM from Project A to Project B is supported from the client-side as well. The client claimed the industry likewise had been advanced astoundingly from Project A and that there have been synergic effects for themselves, the DBC, and CC.

*It has been a synergy for the NGC, and very synergetic for the DBC and CC, which they can bring with them. I know they have used this [BIM technology] and developed it further [...]. They have delivered very well concerning BIM and had a tremendous development. And the industry has developed a lot from Project A as well. (Client 1)*

When asked if interviewees thought BIM technology might present any additional value than the purely technical, the response was mixed. Some claim it did so in a strong, clear manner, whilst others are more unsure of the effects as of today. Notably, none of the actors from any of the coalition organisations stated no. As such, the client was clear in its statements considering BIM to serve a ‘bridging’ function in the communication between the organisations in the coalition. Similar beliefs were stated within the DBC as well, however, explicitly emphasising the positive effects of BIM on communication towards those working operationally.

*Yes – the answer to all of that is yes. One could probably encourage even more use of it [BIM technology] as well. But one should really focus on further developing it, take it even more to use, showcase it, and lower the threshold for communication and such. (Client 1)*

*It [BIM technology] visualises in a slightly simplified way for the boys and girls working – let us say – ‘in the ditch’ what is to be built. In that sense, it can have a positive effect by making it easier to communicate how things should look in the end. [...] which in turn means that things can be experienced as more structured and orderly. (Contractor 1)*

BIM, therein the insight it provides, allows the various professions to attain a deeper understanding of each organisation’s roles and work. This has been pointed out by several interviewees as a contributor to unity and trust between the involved parties, enabling trust transfer, in addition to allowing people to flag concerns or desires earlier. Subcontractor 1 illustrated how the SC’s trust in CC has increased compared to Project A by actively utilising BIM technology. Furthermore, by illustrating how technology takes on a role of transferring trust in the object onto other actors working with it, Subcontractor 2 describes the increased openness due to BIM.

*[...] we use much more advanced tools. We don’t walk around with a meterstick anymore, writing on a piece of paper – we just check the model and see what we have built. This means that our trust in CC must be elevated compared to before.*

*We are dependent on the BIM model being correct and, more or less, it is. So, one saves a lot of time and resources on using BIM. (Subcontractor 1)*

*[...] enabling one to detect conflicts earlier is one thing, but also unfavourable choices in terms of execution are another. [...] it has become a lot more open – or perhaps easier to have that openness – in that people have access to a model; They can either flag a concern or a wish earlier than before. (Subcontractor 2)*

The design-build project delivery model was brought up as a large contributor to this elevated unity and trust as well. The delivery model combined with increased utilisation of BIM technology in Project B led the actors, especially those designing and executing, to be more connected than in the first project.

*Yes, it's clear that much of the learning lies in the nature of the design-build contract itself, regardless of which tools you use. This is because the cooperation between the DBC and CC must necessarily be closer when the DBC is responsible for the designing and not the client. So, that alone results in such an effect as the one you describe, but when you also have good tools it of course gets even better. But the main effect probably lies in the form of the contract itself. (Specialist 2)*

From the DBC's top level, however, caution was issued regarding viewing the tool as something 'more' than the technology tool it was created to be. Additionally, a concern related to the measurability per today of any potential higher utility value of BIM was raised. The reason for this was that the DBC has not yet been able to measure what effects (i.e. savings/benefits) BIM provides to their organisation and do not know for sure if any has been realised. Within the SC as well, the novelty of utilising BIM technology to such a large extent on a project was brought up.

*At the same time, I think it is important to exercise a certain degree of sobriety when hyping the importance of BIM and digital tools. It's 'shit in shit out' in a way. Tools themselves – and all the possibilities existing within – have such a large focus and demand great amounts of energy that we risk the trained professional to perish. If that happens, both from the consultant side and from the contractor-side, we are somewhat on the wrong track. (Contractor 1)*

*Yes, I'm a little unsure of that. The reason why I say I'm unsure is that it's still a bit early in the 'quest' to be able to measure what kind of savings or benefits – effects – we gain ourselves. What impact this has on our collaborators [...] should probably in the years to come have a greater degree of measurability. [...]. It is*

*also a bit unclear whether something has actually been realised – and at least to what extent it has been realised. (Contractor 2)*

**Boundary spanning structures.** A topic of interest arising from the first interviews was the presence of structures potentially having a boundary spanner role in the case. The structures identified to have an added value in the projects are co-location, meetings and meeting places, and organisational structures.

Co-location:

Even though the projects were large, stretching a great geographical length, several interviewees brought up the co-location as beneficial. In Project A, the coalition shared offices, had combined site locations, and strived to create an environment with ‘short’ lines of communication. The DBC and the client’s site-offices were located at the same place, making short visits an alternative to digital means of communication. The co-location was decided due to a wish from the client and deemed a success throughout Project A. Largely due to changes in the NGC and their approach to Project B compared to that of Project A, the situation was not the same at the latter. In project A, the NGC was less involved and adhered more strictly to the role as a customer of a project using a design-build delivery model rather than being ‘hands-on’. With reduced co-location and the Covid-19 pandemic giving less freedom of choice regarding social contact, there was a clear consensus that Project A benefitted from the closeness, and Project B would have too.

*Positively important at the beginning [co-location]. Very important in the procurement phase, get to know each other until everything settles. Important, but we saw when Corona struck that we’ve managed very well after that too. And we’ve had very little physical interaction in the shared offices, but [the success] is due to the fact that we’ve already practised for two years before the Corona struck. If we didn’t get to do that I think we would have longed for it now. (Specialist 2)*

Moreover, as argued by several, the time spent together on the projects (especially Project A) provided the coalition with a good foundation of practice to continue the operations on digital platforms. Confronted with a hypothetical situation of starting the collaboration for the first time after lockdown, Specialist 3 reflected:

*Then we hadn’t had the opportunity to start the same way nor the same fundament. And it’s clear that, to another time, then we have that basis. If we had started a*

*brand new project and gone straight to Microsoft Teams without anything physical, then we would perhaps not have gotten the same value so to speak. (Specialist 3)*

The distribution of rigs, therein rig-offices, and local presence (proximity) of the actors along the operational sites throughout the projects was considered important. As emphasised by Subcontractor 2, it might prove ‘healthy’ for projects to break down the structures, not being isolated in organisational silos.

*I believe there are positives to that the DBC not only has one massive rig but that they also have rig-offices throughout the project. I believe positioning of the rigs and rig-offices is sort of, it isn't just two massive, shared offices, but that we are distributed throughout. That you break down the structures a little, I think that's healthy in these kinds of projects. (Subcontractor 2)*

#### Meetings and meeting places:

In large projects, such as Project A and B, there are typically a lot of meetings and thereby planning and time dedicated to it. While some are strictly necessary and fruitful for the project, others can be less so or even counterproductive. In the case, a few central meetings are identified: a designer meeting every other week, cooperative arenas in the procurement phase, internal meetings of CC with the DBC present, and the client-contractor meetings. Specialist 2, currently working within the DBC, explains that he believes most meetings are meaningful. The interviewee states that the ‘meeting day’ with the key managers on-site has been very successful, being part of connecting the operational activities to the managerial. Furthermore, the meetings with the DBC and the client have worked well, and the designers' meetings are considered fruitful. The internal meetings of CC where they involve the DBC is seen as an arena where potential conflicts can be resolved ahead of time. Although supposed to be an internal meeting for CC with design on the agenda, the involvement of the DBC is to improve the quality of the relationship and tighten the cooperation.

*The DBC has been a part of every meeting, even the internal CC meetings, so it's very transparent. [...]. The designers' meetings with the client and the DBC every other week [have been very important]. It's planned in a way such that we can communicate before we send over anything if we have a problem or something else to make sure we're on the same page. [...]. It's a constructive process really. (Specialist 3)*

The meetings described are, to a large extent, planned with an agenda involving the managerial level. Yet, the operational level is also found to have a plan for their meetings, albeit with a slightly different outcome – the effects after the fact are deemed just as valuable as the meeting itself. As such, meetings might enable actors to come together and create value extending on the meetings' intended purpose.

*Early on, we had a lot of on-site meetings. So I believe that having a set of meetings on-site establishes a good foundation and relationships, and by that lowers the threshold to visit. So we don't need that many meetings after that. [...] that the operational site gets to be an operational site is valuable, I think. That we can be here, that we can be available and that we can solve things without a meeting summons. (Subcontractor 2)*

#### Organisational structures:

Implementation of structures in novel project coalitions might pose a challenge, as each project generally equals new compositions of PBOs. Due to the repeat collaboration, the coalition was allowed to continue with – and improve – some of the structures utilised in Project A, capitalising on the familiarity of having worked together on a similar project.

The 'tightest' connection in the coalition is the one between the DBC and CC. As such, the large extent of cooperation on specific tasks between the two organisations indicates the organising in terms of organisational structure to be highly important.

*The organising is important. To be able to know that you cover every link, both at the DBC and CC, but also that you cover gaps between them. (Specialist 1)*

Furthermore, a CC actor argues that the familiarity in organising from Project A when transitioning to Project B was decisive. Despite some refinement in the structures from the first project, benefits were generated in the transition and initial phase – especially for those working in both projects. The reason for this eased transition is thus claimed to be the past knowledge of the structures on Project B having collaborated on Project A – the familiarity of the organisational structures.

*Yes, so, if you look at the big picture of it then both the DBC's Project A and Project B were organised pretty similarly as I see it. And the same with our [CC] project. We had a type of organising and structure in CC that in principle is continued to*



*Project B, of course with some adjustments and modifications. So the fact that we have a structure both at the DBC and at CC that is somewhat familiar, that gives an effect in such a transition [of projects]. You don't have to learn those things again. [...] that gives at least those who worked in both projects an easier transition. (Specialist 2)*

From the DBC's perspective, having the same organisations on the contractor-side was something they had in mind when transitioning to Project B, making the leadership system and the structure recognisable. Further developing and bringing along the project plan from Project A facilitated continuity and eased the transition into Project B, in addition to providing a 'flying start' due to familiarity.

*Yes, you can say that the leadership system and the structure were recognisable. [...] the project plan that we built on Project A was developed and continued and gave us a 'flying start'. And that the plan was familiar to the client and our collaborators. So I think that was a part of, well, facilitated a continuity and we were able to quickly figure out things together. And that is much of what it's about early in the projects – compressing the time it would take otherwise to get good collaboration, good communication, good dialogue, good relations. (Contractor 1)*

## **4.2. The shadow of the past and the shadow of the future**

**Shadow of the past.** Since the organisations previously had collaborated on Project A, the starting point on Project B was laid on a different foundation than most other similar projects in the industry. The personal relationships created on Project A was in particular mentioned by interviewees as a large contributor to the collaborative environment on Project B. Due to this basis from Project A, it was thereby deemed more beneficial to develop the relationships as opposed to starting from scratch.

*You have a nice flow, you've established friendships, [...]. I think it's always that uncertainty of whom you meet for other projects, that was eliminated when you already knew who was coming. And when stuff sort of had worked out and things were OK it is easier to pick up the threads. (Subcontractor 2)*

*[We have] corrected each other, inspired each other and we've had a big focus on a form of continuity from Project A to B where we've been open-minded, open in evaluations, what has worked, what has not, [and through this] found out that it is smart to develop the collaboration with CC further, rather than starting with a*

*clean slate with other consulting firms. So it's been a mutual strategy, from both CC and the DBC. (Contractor 1)*

Benefits of having a history together are seen as the ability to have continuity in focus areas as well as the possibility of not making the same mistakes. The experience from Project A in specific areas, utilised on Project B, was explicitly deemed crucial by interviewees. For instance, continuing the successful work on EHS cemented on Project A was important for the actors as it gave the coalition the ability to reduce risks by also involving those having made mistakes previously. This experience was argued to have a stronger effect than any formal report would.

*Well, we have continued the work on EHS in a straight line from Project A into this, uninterrupted. And that is good. Without a foundation of EHS there is no project. [...]. It really is not two projects, it's one straight line from the beginning of Project A and straight into this. And I think that is crucial to bring along, because it is unbelievably important to have that EHS and that culture. And we've made it and that is a success story in itself. (Subcontractor 1)*

*I have a perception that it is just as important to bring along the people who have sufficiently messed up in some way. This way they learn even better than reading a synergy report. (Contractor 1)*

The effects of the experiences drawn from Project A on the beginning of Project B was evident in several hierarchical levels – there was a consensus that the carry-over was positive. Already existing personal relationships and the opportunity to build further on these, as opposed to starting with clean slates, was argued as important. Notably, these positive effects were identified as even stronger in the lower parts of the hierarchy. Furthermore, as the novel people entering the coalition argued to find their place quicker than usual, an eased on-boarding was revealed.

*A building project is sort of like a book. You have a start, a middle and an ending. If you bring relationships into the start, it will be much shorter. You don't have to work that much together to create the relations, they're already there. [...]. And if you get going with the start quickly, the middle part will also be much, much easier. [...] And if you don't have the direct relationships, it's at least important to have core personnel. So, relationships are incredibly important and the fact that we brought along some core personnel from A to B enabled us to start quicker with the action of the book. (Specialist 1)*

*At the same time novel people come in, so I believe the new ones feel that it's easier to come in now that it's already an established relationship. Compared to when everyone needs to start over, it's not 100 men meeting for the first time. You get a gradual introduction, so I think that contributes to the flow of the project really.*  
(Subcontractor 2)

Considering how the past is seen to affect the present situation on Project B, the outcome of the first project was important for the latter. Project A was widely regarded as a success by the involved actors, which was argued to make the collaborative environment and outset of Project B better since the coalition knew they could succeed once again. The SC also stated that if it was the other way around, Project A not being a success, then Project B would likely have been harder.

*At least we knew that we were capable of solving a challenge of the size that building lots of kilometres of a new highway is together. It's high demands both to the DBC and of course the subcontractors, so I would say ... we've now shown that we are capable and that it's possible to do it again.* (Contractor 2)

Although the latter project benefitted greatly from the success of Project A, there were some identified downsides as well. A recurring theme is the client changing much of its organisation and monitoring practices between the projects, unexpected for the contractor-side. Thereby, they wished for a larger portion of the relationships continued.

*I would say the foundational trust between contracting parties in the DBC and the client was present. And we noticed that, even though the client is still the client, we met entirely different people from the customer's side on project B than we did on Project A. [...] We saw little evidence of experience flow over to Project B. There were new people, new resources that wanted to do things their way.* (Contractor 1)

Another consequence of the continuity of relationships from Project A was an expectancy to 'plug and play' in the next. Although the projects were similar, some differences were not appropriately addressed as the actors did not allocate time to plan sufficiently in the initial phase of Project B. This lack of planning resulted in some challenges of principle matters that could have been resolved at an early stage. Whereas the expected possibility to continue as before downplayed the importance of doing so, showcasing a possible pitfall of a strong, positive shadow of the past.

*I've expressed pretty clearly that the process the client had with the contractor with a pretty lengthy phase between initial contact and the actual signing, nearly half a year, that I miss a mini version of that. Perhaps only a month's time, but still that we properly sat down and discussed. [...]. We have a pretty substantial pile of principle decisions that need to be taken care of. (Subcontractor 1)*

**Shadow of the future.** On Project A, when the actors learned that they with certainty were to cooperate on a subsequent project immediately after the first, the DBC unanimously believed a positive change in the collaborative environment between themselves and the SC was experienced. As expressed by Contractor 1, a positive change in the relational dynamic was experienced on the managerial level:

*Yes, I would say it had a positive effect. And I assume the effect similarly could have had a negative impact on the last phase of Project A if I had communicated to the SC that on the next project I chose another bridge builder. This would have been a bit of a failure due to the expressed will from both sides to make each other better and better. [...] but I would argue we got extra inspiration from the fact we [DBC and SC] already were 'married' on the next project – we had several years of cooperation ahead of us. (Contractor 1)*

As implied by the DBC, them being committed to the SC for a certain, longer period provided them with a better foundation when collaborating at Project A. This resulted in each organisation's management doing their best to conclude the final settlement in the most reasonable manner possible before Project B, in addition to have a disciplinary effect; Acting opportunistically on Project A would likely do more harm than good as they were bound to collaborate on Project B either way.

On the operational level, however, it was implied a somewhat differing perception. No significant change in the collaborative environment was identified when they learned the same coalition was to collaborate immediately after the conclusion of Project A. This as if a good collaborative went from 'good' to 'really good', the slight positive change would not result in any remarkable changes. The same perception applied to CC.

*No, neither to nor from. But I had a pretty good atmosphere where I was, so I think it would take a lot for it to get worse. And if it would get a little bit better then, well*

*it was probably already in such a good place that one does not notice so well if it goes from 'good' to 'really good' sort of. (Subcontractor 2)*

*Not at our level. It could be that a change happened at a 'higher level'. After all, that's where an agreement is to be executed between the DBC and CC with price and so on. So there might have been something there that I haven't been told. (Specialist 1)*

On Project B, the possibility, or even expectation, of another future collaboration at some point affected the current situation when it comes to how the actors behave towards each other. The expectation was by several interviewees described to have a slight disciplinary effect, indicating that a shadow of the future was present. Further, within the SC, it was specifically communicated from the management that there was a wish to establish a relationship with the DBC.

*I have been asked by my managers to treat the DBC nicely. They have a desire to potentially collaborate in the future, so if we behave poorly then that will not happen. (Subcontractor 1)*

*I think it has a disciplinary and educational effect on both parties [DBC and SC]. [...] both parties have less interest in going to the trenches related to various things. In other words, we have more interest in doing better together and strengthening our collective competitiveness for the future. (Specialist 2)*

If communicated similarly, on Project B, that the same coalition were to repeat the collaboration with certainty at some point, this yielded similar responses. The collective thought was that they would continue as before or that a positive effect would be experienced in the current collaboration. Attaining this knowledge was thus not believed to generate any negative changes to the relational dynamics. The physical delivered product is the focus and for what each organisation is remembered; Preserving their organisational reputation was regarded as essential.

*Not significantly. You must be able to stand by the work that is physically delivered, that's the most important. Some discussions are OK, you just have to live with that and try to make them as small and light as possible. But we still have to deliver – that's the most important. And as long as we deliver more or less on time and cost, that's what we are remembered for. (Subcontractor 1)*

*I like to think that we had collaborated in quite a similar way. Since we want these*

*collaborations to withstand both a tough project as the current one and at the same time that everyone involved wants to repeat the collaboration later. Of course, things may happen that makes it more difficult to imagine, but we put a lot of work into having good relationships and good cooperation with both the client and subcontractors. And something quite exceptional must happen if it should affect anything at this point. (Contractor 2)*

If the actors knew with certainty that they were *not* going to collaborate in the future, they still did not think there would be any significant changes in their behaviour. The SC claimed they, if so, might then get a bit tougher on their demands, but it is preserving their reputation which is important. However, not collaborating again is not seen as likely, since the Norwegian construction industry is considered ‘small’ and closely tied together. The actors are deemed to meet again later, even though they currently do not have a similar project lined up.

*In total, we must deliver as professional actors in the market. So we must deliver whether or not we are to cooperate with the DBC or not. That is, we must be able to stand by the reputation we attain from this project and from all else as well – that’s just as important really. (Subcontractor 1)*

### **4.3. Assessments of trustworthiness**

**Ability.** In Project B, as the actors had collaborated previously, they had knowledge of each other’s ability (e.g. competencies, capacities, and capabilities). The latter project profited on synergies from the first and, combined with the relationships developed, the basis for assessing ability was considered adequate.

*We know how much use we’ve had from the dialogue and close connection with them. I feel like it’s a win-win situation. Very skilled people we’re dealing with. (Specialist 3)*

*It’s short [line of communication] and I think CC is competent. You might see that from the projects we bring them along on - we use them a lot. You get to know each other, for better or worse. (Contractor 4)*

Ability’s domain-specificity was clear, and then especially in situations and forums where different professions were present. As such, while the perception of other actors’ ability in their respective profession was positive, there were some concerns regarding competence in other fields.

*That happens constantly [receiving advice]. Remember that this is a concept only used twice before in Norway. [...]. I think it's funny that someone from the DBC's analytics department gives me advice on how to get the bridge into position. [...]. Some are just trying to help, some just say something to say something, but you quickly understand which is which. (Subcontractor 2)*

The domain-specificity of ability was even clearer in the relation between the client and the contractor-side. Although there was a planned and notified change within the NGC, the contractor-side was somewhat disappointed by the outcome, particularly in situations where the client intervened or the contractor-side contacted them for clarifications. When asked about the organisations' competence, the NGC was highlighted as a potential problem.

*Yes, in general it's good. But I believe that if we are to speak about a party who could've had some more knowledge it would have to be the NGC. They seem a little scarcely manned in some roles. (Specialist 2)*

Moreover, the DBC perceived themselves as having high ability, argued by them being superior and a driving force for progression within the projects. This perception is supported by the other organisations, pointing to their reputation in the industry, their professionalism, and especially their competence.

*[...] without bragging too much about ourselves, I believe we raise the bar in collaboration with some suppliers. And raising the bar often takes time. It's not just doing it, but to develop the form of cooperation. (Contractor 2)*

*The DBC has a lot of skilled people [...]. They are great people and they do a lot of great work. (Subcontractor 2)*

However, the DBC's high assessment of own ability might be detrimental to their inclination to 'blindly' trust other actors, as indicated by one of the subcontractors:

*They probably trust us to deliver what we should, but it is still the old story of "I trust you in your work, but I check it anyway". (Subcontractor 1)*

One of the most prominent relationships in the case is the one between the DBC and CC. These organisations have been collaborating in projects for several years, having resulted in a tight-knit, fruitful relation, both in terms of profits and trust-building and cooperative dynamics.

*There is an expectation at least from the DBC to us that what we design is correct. There is no one monitoring us and watching what we do at all times. So, yes, to all intents and purposes, trust is important. (Specialist 1)*

*As of now, CC is the biggest and best – at least according to themselves. (Contractor 2)*

As the NGC gave the contract and project to the DBC, their perception of the DBC to be competent and capable was apparent. Nevertheless, the continuous assessment of their ability was mostly positive.

*Obviously, we could always wish for more information, but when asked, they've given us what we needed. Especially in the design work they have a large pool of competence to draw from. In some instances, the answers we've received have not been good enough. Then they have access to resources as countrywide experts in special fields, so even though they don't have the competence at hand, they can get it. There are no limits to this really. (Client 1)*

**Benevolence.** Even though profit is often regarded as the overall motivation in the construction industry, a common conception shared by the interviewees was that the organisations were believed to want to do good, as opposed to acting in bad faith solely motivated by profit. Hence, the actors in the case deemed each other relatively benevolent, having not only their own interests in mind but operating with a collective profit motive.

*It's completely in line with the construction industry. It is the money that governs and ultimately you are looking to make money. [...]. But that's the industry, that's what they make a living from. They live off the money. (Specialist 1)*

It was, however, pointed out that even though the contractors may not act in such a way, smaller subcontractors might. As such, interviewees acknowledged the presence of such behaviours in the construction industry as a whole.

*I don't think there is any opportunism here. [...] because that is towards cynicism sort of. There might be individual elements – which are individuals –, there might be smaller, hired subcontractors that might be like that to a degree [cynical]. But the large contractors can't operate in that world. It will be... no. (Specialist 1)*



On site, according to an actor within the SC, a certain degree of benevolence was perceived. When presented with a choice of doing good or acting opportunistically, the actors chose the first based on a collective thought of what one ought to do to preserve cooperation – a low degree of opportunism was present. Those working operationally did their best to make everyday life a little easier for each other by showing benevolence in ‘smaller’ situations when presented with the opportunity to do so throughout the projects; The individuals generally take the opportunity of proving their benevolence, motivated by a wish for a good cooperative.

*If there is a delivery I know isn't intended for me, then I can send it to the head office – even though I know where it's going I have no responsibility for it. I can disregard it if I want to, which I would have done if they had been shitty, however, I of course call whomever I know should have it. [...] if you are going to be really rigid then we should just expel it from the place. But you don't do that – you should collaborate on this. (Subcontractor 2).*

A concern whether the DBC ultimately wants what is best for the SC was raised as well, directed upwards in the hierarchy and not between the individuals working operationally. Even though diverging interests and prioritising of such was identified, the SC deemed that the DBC wanted them good anyway.

*There might be a feeling that the DBC prioritises their own work – the part they have their own people on, while we're given a lower priority. [...]. It may be a bit unfair as experienced from our side, but it's not entirely for certain this is true. (Subcontractor 4)*

Further, when asked if anyone had withheld information or experienced information being withheld, the importance of transparency was highly emphasised by the various interviewees – both towards other organisations on the contractor-side and towards the client. Two actors within the SC describe the experienced transparency:

*No. I think that is a bad thing. To withhold information that may be relevant. Whether it's negative or positive for me, negative or positive for the DBC, negative or positive for the SC – it does not matter if we don't have transparency and are honest with each other. If you make a mistake – that's very often what's going on – then you should be responsible for the mistake you made. Then it also creates trust and you win in the long run from being honest. [...]. I think transparency is incredibly important for everyone. To build relationships, to build trust, to be able*

*to bring the collaboration to the next project. (Specialist 1)*

*We have shared everything with the client, so we have no mistakes that are not shared with them. That is to ensure that we are... really to show the client we take this seriously and that we are learning. (Specialist 9)*

**Integrity.** Several of the participants perceived the organisations in the project coalition to have a sound level of integrity in relation to industry standards within the Norwegian construction industry.

*It's not a cowboy industry. Although parts of the construction industry may be a bit more of a cowboy industry, in the bigger picture this is not the term to use. It's rather seriousness, to be solid, and quality et cetera that is the focus. (Client 1)*

*All participating actors [...] are serious actors that, in some way, where there are competent people who want to deliver and wish to both further develop and solve problems. (Contractor 1)*

It was further implied that the relational dynamics resulting from conformity to industry standards might occur as a consequence of the actors wanting to appear professional, both in the ongoing project and in case of a possible future repeat collaboration. Thus, making the shadow of the future effective also in this regard. Hence, actors tend to be driven by professional pride and the expectation that one may end up working together once again.

*I've been impressed by the DBC all along. Everything they stand for, I feel they are solid and professional. (Specialist 3)*

*Yes, I think so – solution-oriented and professional. I felt we could sit down and discuss the big things and express all our opinions without necessarily souring the environment in any way. We all had our contracts and our interests, yet we managed to solve the project in a good way. (Subcontractor 6)*

Another aspect brought up was the actors behaving with integrity to preserve their reputation in the industry. In Norway, the industry is considered 'small' and closely tied together, and one's reputation might therefore precede oneself.

*We must deliver as professional actors in the market. We therefore must deliver regardless of whether we collaborate with the DBC or not – that is, we must be*

*able to represent the reputation gained from this project and everything else. [...]. That's ultimately what's most important, that is how we make a living – our reputation. (Subcontractor 1)*

Each individual's personal traits might cause differing approaches to dealing with problems occurring as means to behave professionally. As such, an SC actor stated:

*I hadn't been able to go to work if everything was about being terrible [to each other] day in and day out. I think life is too short for that, however, I know some people view this differently. We're different in that regard. But then I rather confront them and finish the matter, then we start fresh again. (Subcontractor 2)*

An indicator for the actors' perceived integrity impacting the transfer of trust from Project A to Project B is that the initial project was deemed a success, being delivered before the due date. As such, the organisations vouch for their adherence to delivering on time and acting professionally, making it more desirable for the DBC to collaborate on contracts with the client also in the future.

*We delivered Project A ahead of time, and we at least plan to deliver on time here as well. It looks very promising so far and that is good for our CV – our company CV. (Subcontractor 1)*

*Everyone wanted the project to succeed, so everyone was willing to do the best for each other so to speak. And of course, to achieve what we'd started on, cooperation was needed. (Subcontractor 5)*

#### **4.4. Summing up the empirical findings**

The following section summarises the empirical findings in relation to the trust transfer concept before deep diving into a few of the topics deemed particularly new and interesting in the subsequent discussion chapter.

The section concerning *boundary spanners* described how several individuals, groups, objects, and structures were identified as spanning the boundaries in the case, tying the organisations together in the IORs. As such, the identified boundary spanners were found to be people both on the individual and group level, objects in the form of BIM technology and the common Progress Plan, as well as structures embodied as co-location of the actors, meetings and meeting places, and familiarity in organisational structures. The discussion in Chapter 5, however, will only bring

forth boundary spanning people (on both levels) and structures, as the findings on boundary spanning objects were in line with existing trust transfer literature, not providing any particularly novel insights.

The section addressing *the shadow of the past and of the future* in relation to trust transfer presented how the shadows affected the coalition organisations throughout the repeat collaboration. Their effect on the actors was investigated hypothetically, in retrospect, and presently. By doing so, how the prospect of future collaboration and past experiences would likely affect the present was identified, in addition to allowing for comparing it to the real-time situation. The empirical findings have not identified the shadows to serve as an intermediary to trust transfer, albeit the shadows may be used to understand the surrounding context of the case.

Lastly, the empirical findings concerning the assessments of trustworthiness provided insights into what ‘parts’ of trust that transferred between the projects while simultaneously revealing underlying reasons as to why these ‘parts’ may or may not transfer. Moreover, employing the ABI-model provided the researchers with useful and nuanced understandings of how the actors in the case perceive each other as opposed to treating trust as a single entity concept.

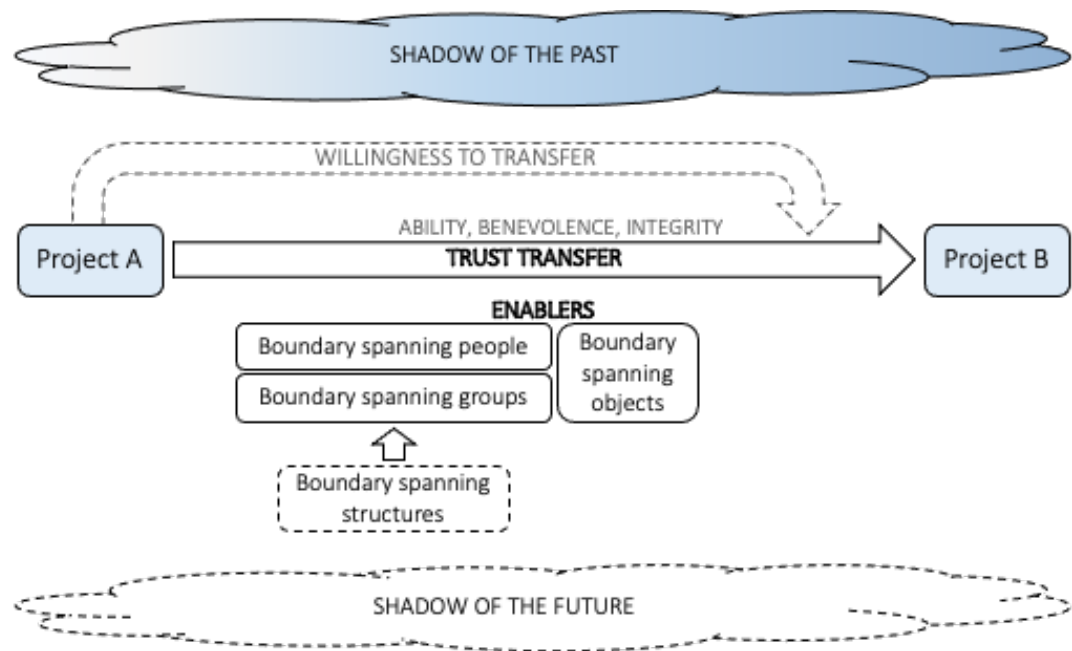
## Chapter 5: Discussion

This thesis has aimed to explore how trust transfer takes place between projects in IORs. The empirical findings provided new and interesting insights into especially three topics that will be discussed in more detail in this chapter: boundary spanning people’s characteristics, boundary spanning groups enabling trust transfer, and willingness to transfer assessments of trustworthiness.

**Theoretical model.** The figure below is a theoretical, generalised representation of the empirical findings of this study. The model illustrates how trust transfers from one project to another, illustrated with the ‘trust transfer’-arrow encompassing perceived ability, benevolence, and integrity. The shadow of the past and of the future are regarded as conditional for trust transfer to occur. The dotted line of the shadow of the future reflects its intangible nature, stretched from Project A to the end of Project B to account for the ever-present reputational considerations

throughout the projects. Further, the shadow of the past is depicted with a faint beginning as it is less apparent in the early parts of a collaborative yet increases as the coalition actors enhance their experience with each other. Its presence in the very beginning of Project A is argued to reside in the knowledge the actors had of each other before starting up. Boundary spanning people, groups, and objects are located beneath the ‘trust transfer’-arrow, illustrating its enabling effects on transfer. Moreover, the strengthening effect of boundary spanning structures on boundary spanning people’s – and thus group’s – transfer enabling effect is illustrated with it being placed in a dotted line below the respective spanners. Lastly is the dotted, grey ‘willingness to transfer’-arrow showcasing that the trust transfer is reinforced by a willingness of the actors to do so.

**Figure 4.** Theoretical model



When exploring how trust transfers between projects, the inter-organisational context accounting for the relational dynamics between the organisations in the project coalition must naturally be taken into consideration. As such, the *shadow of the past and of the future* makes up for the surrounding context in which trust transfer occurs or not and is thereby regarded as *conditional* for transfer in this study. Consequently, the findings must be analysed with these shadows in mind.

To set the scene for the subsequent discussion: The findings proclaim that Project A affected Project B, and thereby the outcome of the first was conditional for the

performance in the latter. Interpersonal relating derived from Project A resurfaced in the latter project (Berk & Andersen, 2000; Chen & Andersen, 1999), and it was evident how the past affected all actors in the coalition – either from having history with the other actors, knowledge of each other, or through reputation (McAllister, 1995; Schilke & Cook, 2013). Project A, being perceived as a success, was generally agreed upon by interviewees, creating a positive memory (positive shadow of the past). At Project B, when the interviewees recalled the shadow of the future's effect on Project A, the current collaborative environment was argued to be at such a functional level that the definite conjoined future likely had no significant effect. Nevertheless, additional dynamics were found, such as a disciplinary effect (opportunism would do more harm than good), extended time perspective, and a slightly increased motivation to act with integrity through a forward-looking calculus (Poppo et al., 2008). On Project A, similarly, the shadow of the future was not only deemed to have had a disciplinary effect due to the certainty of a conjoined future but also as the actors had a reputation to maintain within and outside of the coalition. This indicates the shadow of the future to be even more ubiquitous than generally found in the literature in this empirical context, as the reputational effects must also be accounted for. The positive shadow of the past in turn affected the actors to have beliefs that the same success was possible again, creating a positive shadow of the future through the positive shadow of the past. This is in line with the reasoning of Poppo et al. (2008) and Swärd (2016), in that having an intertwined positive shadow of the past and of the future is regarded as origins to trust, thus being conditional to trust transfer.

### **5.1. Boundary spanning people's characteristics**

The trust in the individuals with a boundary spanner role in the projects was to a large extent due to their individual characteristics. As such, the boundary spanning people in the case are identified to have a set of characteristics that enables trust transfer, contributing to the existing trust transfer literature. These individuals were typically described as people with a strong personality having a high degree of expertise and a broad knowledge base, being inclusive and proactive while at the same time clear and precise in their expectations and requirements. Moreover, the boundary spanning people were described as benevolent, collaborative people, doing their best to tie the organisations together to one cohesive unit rather than separate firms, attesting for their likability. Various descriptions about the boundary

spanning people being similar to oneself in some regard, for instance having a similar mindset, were highlighted as positive for the transfer of trust as well. These descriptive characteristics – not necessarily exhaustively describing all boundary spanning people but each having a mixture – align well with Doney and Cannon's (1997) study in which the authors claim that trust between individuals in an organisational context may result from a person's *expertise* or *power*, in addition to his or her *likability* and *similarity*. Competence as a boundary spanner characteristic was put great emphasis on by many of the interviewees, being a sound attest for the spanners' trustworthiness (Hawes et al., 1989; Kroeger, 2012).

The characteristics of expertise/competence, power, and likability are emphasised to a larger extent than that of similarity – although the similarity is not regarded as an unimportant factor. In addition to these characteristics, some boundary spanning people were also regarded as being very thorough and structured, versatile, and actionable; The findings indicate that Doney & Cannon's (1997) established characteristics may not cover all the nuances to boundary spanning people entirely, however, they seem to coincide well with the prior literature to some extent.

Boundary spanning people, possessing the described characteristics and tying organisations together, are deemed enablers of trust transfer and cause interpersonal trust to 'rub off' onto organisational trust (Kroeger, 2012) – therein also group level trust (Doney & Cannon, 1997; Zaheer et al., 1998). These individuals, even though not being the same person(s) to all trustors throughout both projects (but rather depending on the position, tasks, and personal relationships of the trustor), have been pointed out as having a particularly important role regarding the transfer of trust (e.g. Curall & Judge, 1995; Perrone et al., 2003). As the composition of people from the organisations in the coalition were not entirely the same throughout, new people entered Project B without any first-hand knowledge of Project A. However, due to the continuity of some individuals – and thus relations – from the first project, enough 'carriers of history and experience' was present to maintain momentum and enable trust transfer. These carriers and the identified boundary spanning people are *not* necessarily the same, however, they might overlap.

Besides, the *nature* and *duration* of the relationships (personal or organisational) in the case were highlighted as decisive for the collaborative environment and trust

between actors, also in line with Doney and Cannon's (1997) study. The frequent contact between the actors and duration of the relations improved the quality of the relationships and gave a prolonged period for establishing trust, thus easing the trust transfer. Further, the effect of the 'carriers of history and experience' is similar to that of the shadow of the past in that the carriers bring along knowledge of past encounters to the rest of the organisation, while simultaneously facilitating a better environment for the boundary spanning people's enabling effect on trust transfer.

The boundary spanning people's transfer enabling effects were further strengthened through (boundary spanning) structures, identified in the study as the co-location, meetings and meeting places, and organisational structures. The existing literature is scarce in its description of boundary spanning structures as a concept in relation to trust transfer. However, the empirical findings of this thesis point to the effect of boundary spanning structures on what the researchers argue to be boundary spanning people's capability to enable trust transfer. Although not conditional to their transferring effect, the structures are argued to pose as an arena for such and thus strengthen the effect; The co-location, meetings and meeting places served as 'strengtheners' in the way that through these, the boundary spanning people gained proximity to a 'wider' part of the organisation. Although the logic of closer proximity in a project would suggest tighter connected organisations and therefore less need for boundary spanning people connecting the organisations, the researchers suggest this is not the case. As such, the trust transfer caused by having closer proximity, 'shorter' lines of communication, and more frequent contact is not solely due to the structures but also helped by the augmentation of the area of operation for the boundary spanning people.

Furthermore, the possible overlap of boundary spanning people and 'carriers of history and experience' was observed in the effect a familiar organisational structure has when entering a new project, described as simplifying the making of acquaintances – both in terms of others and of the structures. When there is familiarity in organisational structures across two subsequent projects, only the individuals having experienced the first project will carry the history and experience in that sense. However, these people need *not* be boundary spanning people, yet they will help the newcomers transition into the project and assist the boundary spanning people to be more efficient in their role as enablers of trust transfer.



## 5.2. Boundary spanning groups enabling trust transfer

A highly interesting finding, exceeding that of the existing boundary spanner literature, is that some boundary spanning people in the repeat collaboration were grouped, serving as some sort of boundary spanning ‘catalysts’ for trust and thus enabling of trust transfer in a similar manner that boundary spanning people were found to do. As such, individuals upwards in the organisational hierarchy with a well-functional cooperative were pointed out to serve as what this study terms ‘boundary spanning groups’. These groups were deemed to affect and have transferring effects to other individuals upwards and downwards in the hierarchy. Similar to the notion that observed trust at one level may influence trust at another level (Faems et al., 2008; Currall & Inkpen, 2002), the boundary spanning groups may be regarded as the Y in a trust transfer process between X and Z. Additionally, as interpersonal relations within these boundary spanning groups cause the trust to be an observable entity for other individuals, this facilitates spill-over effects to those affiliated with the trusted source (Doney & Cannon, 1997; Milliman & Fugate, 1988; Strub & Priest, 1976). This, in turn, arguably is self-reinforcing for each individual within the boundary spanning groups.

The source of this transfer enabling effect is, based on the findings, both the position and persona of the groups being perceived as ‘influential’. Thus, well-functioning boundary spanning groups may influence the rest of the respective organisations in addition to the project(s) in its entirety. This effect was deemed to be enabled by the groups being resources of knowledge and competence or showcasing professionalism and desired behaviour. Those upwards in the organisational hierarchy being somewhat ambidextrous, having a balance of transparency and opaqueness (to shield the ‘lower’ parts of the organisations from conflicts), was perceived to enable this effect. Hence, boundary spanning groups may serve as boundary spanning ‘catalysts’ for trust and thus enable trust transfer.

## 5.3. Willingness to transfer assessments of trustworthiness

Another interesting finding is the actors’ *willingness* to transfer perceptions of ability, benevolence, and integrity (‘parts’ of trust) from one project to another. Although the situation was not identical entering into the latter project, the actors overall showcased a willingness to bring along their assessments of trustworthiness. When the novelty of Project B caused high amounts of uncertainty, interviewees

indicated having reservations towards carrying on as before, however, still with a willingness to transfer perceptions deemed positive. This might be a result of judgements requiring time to form, especially benevolence (Schoorman et al., 2007), and therefore detrimental to the start of a new project if not transferred. The willingness is thereby likely connected to the interest of the coalition actors to perform well in the collaboration as well as improve the collaborative environment, with the recognition that a higher level of trust may assist them in doing so. This is captured by Parmigiani and Rivera-Santos (2011), stating that all organisations need other organisations to survive and grow, and by Kadefors (2004) and Wong P.S.P. and Cheung (2004) stressing project success' dependence on trust. However, despite an identified willingness to transfer the assessments of trustworthiness, uncertainties could potentially affect *what* transfers.

Even though the individuals and organisations on the contractor-side were deemed skilled in their set responsibilities, the domain-specificity of *ability* trustworthiness (Zand, 1972) was observed in that the actors perceived others as less competent in the observer's field of expertise. It was evident that the ability-part of trust transferred between the two projects and continued as if they were one, even with an observed elevation in the perceived competence on the contractor-side in the latter project. Moreover, the actors deemed each other *benevolent*, operating with a collective profit motive – a perception that improved slightly throughout the case as the actors interacted (Swärd & Lunnan, 2011) and got to know each other. It was argued that replacement of current organisations would likely not change the level of benevolence. As such, the benevolence-part of trust may also transfer between projects, not being tied to the focal organisations but to the repeat collaboration itself.

Furthermore, managed by the actors wanting to appear professional, both in the ongoing project and in case of a future collaborative, an adequate level of perceived *integrity* was found as well. Due to the reputational considerations in the industry, integrity judgements were formed quickly – in line with Schoorman et al.'s (2007) study. Project A was deemed a success by the coalition actors, raising the bar of professionalism when entering Project B due to the shadow of the past; The integrity-part of trust is found to be highly dependent on the past and may transfer from one project to another in IORs as a result.

## Chapter 6: Conclusion

In this thesis, the researchers have explored how trust transfer takes place between projects in IORs in the empirical setting of the Norwegian construction industry. The chief insights are threefold.

Firstly, the shadow of the past and the shadow of the future makes up for the surrounding context in which trust transfer occurs or not and is thereby *conditional* for the transfer of trust. Secondly, boundary spanning people and groups are deemed *enablers* of trust transfer between projects in IORs. Boundary spanning people's individual characteristics are acknowledged to enable the transfer of trust, and their transferring effect is further strengthened through boundary spanning structures posing as an arena for such. Thirdly, the different 'parts' of trust (perceived ability, benevolence, and integrity) are deemed able to transfer between projects both on the individual and organisational level, but with vulnerability to the uncertainty of new projects potentially hindering the 'original' trust from transferring in its totality. A reinforcing dynamic to this transfer is the *willingness* of individuals to transfer the assessments of trustworthiness.

Our research has several implications for theory and practice. These in which will be described in the following sections.

**Theoretical implications.** This study complements and extends the existing trust transfer research. As such, this thesis has contributed to extending knowledge about exactly *how* trust transfer takes place between projects in IORs, nuancing and further developing the trust transfer concept in an inter-organisational setting.

Specific empirical contributions to the *trust transfer literature* are providing a more nuanced understanding of boundary spanning people and their enabling effect on trust transfer, therein insights into their individual characteristics and elevated effect through boundary spanning structures. Also, acknowledging their effect on trust transfer when grouped describes aspects not having received scholarly attention in the literature. Insights into what 'parts' of trust are able to transfer, as well as the willingness to do so, elevates the understanding of the trust transfer concept. These theoretical implications are deemed important for a scholarly field well aware of the occurrence of trust transfer but not sufficiently so regarding how it takes place.

Aside from the specific empirical contributions, this thesis simultaneously advances the overall *trust literature* by offering a more detailed and rich understanding of the trust transfer concept. Moreover, by exploring the three factors of trustworthiness in detail, a deepened understanding of each is attained. Consequently, as the ABI-model was successfully applied both at the individual and organisational level in the study, our research supports the model being multilevel.

**Practical implications.** This research has several practical implications, including, but not necessarily limited to, the following.

Identifying a set of characteristics of boundary spanning people provides managers with the possibility to utilise this knowledge in managing their composing of project organisations, and to a larger extent cause the individuals to utilise their capabilities in the best possible manner. By being aware of characteristics boundary spanning individuals are likely to possess, selecting and delegating the ‘correct’ personnel to each specific role would render the organisation with benefits overall. Furthermore, acknowledging that having enough ‘carriers of history and experience’ from one project to another might enable trust transfer and maintain momentum could benefit organisations. By ensuring there is enough continuity of relations and individuals when entering new projects, the making of acquaintances, both interpersonal and of the structures, would be rendered simplified due to familiarity.

By acknowledging boundary spanning groups’ capability and the possible utility of being ambidextrous (both transparent and opaque to the rest of the organisation), these groups can leverage this to adapt their behaviour. As such, boundary spanning groups may increase trust in organisations by being transparent while simultaneously shielding the ‘lower’ parts of the organisations from conflicts and ‘noise’ they are not supposed to be involved with.

An elevated understanding of the trust transfer concept can help facilitate such transfers between projects, leading to an improved overall level of trust in IORs. Although a relatively complex practice to force by management, being aware of the ways in which trust transfer takes place can aid PBOs to thrive together and ultimately be more successful.

## 6.1. Limitations of the study

Like all studies conducted, this thesis contains limitations worth elaborating on, which might indicate fruitful opportunities for future research. In section 3.5.2, the limitations of the methodology are described in detail. Thereby, in this section, limitations of the study itself will be provided.

Firstly, the researchers acknowledge that the success of Project A provided the project coalition with a good basis for collaboration, making it easier to enter Project B than expected by the actors and what possibly could be otherwise. As such, this basis for collaboration might have affected the empirical findings of this study, rendering them somewhat skewed relative to other repeat collaborations.

Secondly, the vastness of the projects, including the coalition organisations in addition to other stakeholders, would require a lot more than the scope of this thesis to study in its entirety. By selecting the case, the researchers thereby exclude relations that could have provided more comprehensive insights into the research question and thus restrains the research scope from encompassing the respective coalition only. The same logic applies to topics emerging during the research; Not all topics, or dynamics within topics, could receive equal attention in this thesis as one had to choose where to put emphasis to approach the research question. For instance, as boundary spanning people were deemed highly interesting to explore, boundary spanning structures were described in relation to such and not as a stand-alone concept.

Thirdly, using the empirical context of the Norwegian construction industry predominated by PBOs might affect the empirical findings as these organisations are possibly better at collaborating in projects than ordinary, non-PBOs. The organisations having knowledge of each other before initiating the collaboration in the case, in addition to the reputation often preceding themselves in the industry, are deemed to lead to a more apparent shadow of the past and a higher concern of future reputation (shadow of the future) than in ordinary IORs. Through this, the findings might not be applicable to other settings with a 'smaller' shadow of the past and less of a consideration of future encounters.

## 6.2. Avenues for further research

The empirical findings and linkages to existing literature reported in Chapter 5 open several avenues for future research. In light of the study and its limitations, certain aspects that could benefit from more in-depth and further research is evident. The data collected is extensive and several interesting topics and nuances identified exceed the scope of this thesis and have been set aside for others to research further.

First and foremost, an avenue for further research is to take a similar approach but use more than one case to reach findings easier to compare and generalise. Hence, the researchers recommend future research to either replicate the study using more than one case or conduct comparative studies of how trust transfer takes place between projects in IORs with the empirical setting of the Norwegian construction industry. It would be of particular interest to analyse cases where the first project was not deemed as successful as Project A to research if this study still is replicable with a different basis for collaboration. Moreover, it would also be interesting to extend the research scope to examine how trust transfers between projects in other PBOs in different empirical contexts, exploring if this yields similar empirical findings. The same applies to extending the scope to encompass other stakeholders as well as the coalition organisations.

Another recommendation is to investigate how the shadow of the future includes a consideration of one's own reputation after a collaboration. It was revealed that actors considered their actions in the project as having consequences at later stages, also outside of the involved project coalition. While this might be described as only an extended scope of the shadow of the future in prior literature, more exploration might develop the concept even further, potentially providing another dimension to the established theory. The effect of the relatively small size of the Norwegian construction industry on the actors would be interesting to compare to larger industries. Moreover, investigating the effect of this part of a shadow of the future in contexts where the collaboration outcome is varyingly transparent for outsiders.

Furthermore, boundary spanning people and the 'carriers of history and experience' are not necessarily the same, however, they might overlap, as argued in this thesis. As such, a proposed avenue for future research is exploring whether there is an advantage to being both a boundary spanning person *and* a 'carrier of history and

experience' – potentially, does having one of the roles make it easier to become the other? This study points to the importance of both being present in a project, yet the effect of being a combination of the two remains unclear. Hence, this avenue could potentially provide both theoretical and practical implications by being investigated further. Moreover, investigating if boundary spanners can hinder trust transfer, as opposed to being enablers of such, would be an interesting avenue as well.

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## Appendix 1: Interview guide

### INTERVJUGUIDE – Overføring av tillit mellom prosjekter

**Fokusområde:** Hvordan tillit ble overført mellom Project A og Project B.

#### Del 1: Introduksjon

*Det er her formål at intervjuobjektene skal bli kjent med intervjuerne, samt bli kjent med formålet for intervjuene og selve prosjektet.*

- Kort presentasjon av intervjuerne og temaet som skal undersøkes.
- Forklar målet med intervjuet, altså å skaffe innsikt i intervjuobjektene subjektive refleksjoner og opplevelser rundt Project A og Project B.
- Be om tillatelse til opptak, transkribering og at ytringer kan brukes i masteroppgaven, samt informere om anonymitet og at videoene slettes etter transkribering.
  - Innhente bekreftelse, ref. samtykkeerklæring dersom denne ikke er mottatt signert før intervjustart.
- Informer om tenkt tidsbruk for intervjuet (ca. 1 time).

#### Del 2: Om intervjuobjektet

*Da alle informantene har blitt intervjuet før, trengs ingen bakgrunnsinformasjon hva gjelder stillinger, arbeidsforhold, rolle etc. Formålet her er å kartlegge evt. endringer.*

- Har din rolle/stilling endret seg fra sist intervjurunde i mai/juni?
  - Isåfall, hvordan? Og hva er da din nåværende rolle/stilling?

#### Del 3: Overordnet om relasjoner i det gjentagende samarbeidet

*Formålet er her å kartlegge intervjuobjektene sine generelle refleksjoner og formeninger vedr. relasjoner på de to prosjektene. Det er her et fokus på relasjoner innad i – og mellom – organisasjonene.*

- Dersom du var med på begge prosjektene, kunne du fortalt litt om hvordan du har oppfattet relasjonene på Project A?
- Kunne du fortalt litt om hvordan du har oppfattet relasjonene på Project B?
- Dersom du var med på begge prosjektene, var det noen likheter eller forskjeller mellom relasjonene etter din mening? Om så, forklar.
- Dersom du *ikke* var med på Project A, har du fått innblikk i likheter og forskjeller mellom de to prosjektene hva gjelder relasjonene? Om så, forklar.
  - Hvordan var utgangspunktet ditt som ny i prosjektkoalisjonen?

#### Del 4: Tidligere historikk og eventuelt fremtidig samarbeid

*Formålet her er å utforske intervjuobjektene formeninger om samarbeidets tidligere historikk og videre deres tanker om et eventuelt fremtidig samarbeid hva gjelder relasjoner.*

- Hvilke tanker gjør du deg om at det var en etablert relasjon mellom aktørene for dynamikken i Project B?
  - Vil du si denne tidligere historikken påvirket relasjonene mellom aktørene nå på Project B? Om så, forklar.
  - Det var, som vi har forstått det, en generell konsensus om at Project A var et suksessprosjekt. Vil du si viten om dette påvirket Project B i noen grad? Hvorfor/hvorfor ikke?
- Er det noen *hendelser* som stikker seg (positivt eller negativt) ut der du føler denne spesifikke hendelsen har hatt påvirkning på relasjonene? Om så, forklar.
- Var det noen spesifikke *personer* du opplever som hadde særlig betydning (positivt eller negativt) i Project A, Project B eller i overgangen fra A til B? Om så, forklar.
  - Kan du si noe om hva som var spesielt med disse personene?
    - F.eks. omgjengelighet, ekspertise, innflytelse, likhet, kontaktfrekvens, eller relasjonslengde.
  - Var det noen grupperinger av personer som du vil si var/er særlig viktige hva gjelder tillit? Om så, forklar.
- På Project A, vil du si vissheten om at det ble et fremtidig samarbeid påvirket samarbeidet på daværende tidspunkt når dere fikk vite om det? Om så, forklar.
  - Vil du si muligheten for et fremtidig samarbeid påvirker nåsituasjonen? Isåfall, hvordan?
  - Hvordan tror du det ville påvirket Project B nå om det kom en beskjed om at samme aktør-koalisjon skulle gjentas i et nytt prosjekt?
  - Hva om du visste at dere ikke skulle samarbeide i fremtiden, tror du noe hadde endret seg for nåsituasjonen?

## Del 5: Objekter og strukturer

*Formålet her er å utforske hvorvidt det var/er noen objekter eller strukturer til stede i prosjektene som har påvirket relasjonene og bidratt til å videreføre tilliten.*

- Var det noen *objekter* som var viktig for å videreføre tilliten? Om så, forklar.
  - Hva tenker du om teknologi-verktøy, som f.eks. BIM og MMI, om hvorvidt disse kan ha høyere nytteverdi enn bare det det er laget for å være?
  - Vi har forstått det slik at en felles fremdriftsplan står veldig sterkt. Tror du denne felles, detaljerte fremdriftsplanen har vært en bidragsyter til at tillit har blitt overført fra Project A til Project B?
- Var det noen *strukturer* som var viktig for å videreføre tilliten? Om så, forklar.
  - Det har blitt nevnt at diverse møter holdes – både internt og med andre aktører. Er det noen spesielle møteplasser du opplever som er/har vært særlig viktige hva gjelder tillit? Om så, forklar.
  - Er det noe annet i denne forstand som du tenker har forbedret tilliten mellom prosjektene?
    - F.eks. Hvorvidt samlokaliseringen eller andre grensesnitt har påvirket tilliten mellom aktørene på noen måte?

## **Del 6: Evaluering av relasjonene og samarbeidsklima**

*Her er formålet å utforske relasjoner og samarbeidsklima. Vi søker her innsikt i personenes vurderinger av de andre aktørene og samspillet med dem, samt dynamikken innad i egen organisasjon.*

- Kan du beskrive samarbeidsklimatet på prosjektene? Vil du si at disse endret seg fra det ene prosjektet til det andre? Om så, forklar.
  - I slike prosjekter kan det bli sett på som ‘vanlig’ at man er mest opptatt av egen inntjening – hvordan vil du si det var på dette prosjektet?
    - Fant dere løsninger som gagnet alle (reciprocity), altså forsøkte dere å finne løsninger med relativt jevn verdiskaping? Forklar.
    - Var det noen som var opportunistiske når det var muligheter for profitt?
  - Vil du si aktørene jobbet mot felles mål, eller ikke?
- Hvordan vil du vurdere åpenheten på de to prosjektene?
  - Var det noen situasjoner/diskusjoner der du følte andre aktører holdt tilbake informasjon du kunne trengt?
  - Har det vært noen tilfeller der du holdt tilbake informasjon siden du var redd det kom til å bli brukt mot deg?
- Har det vært situasjoner/diskusjoner hvor du har betvilt kompetansen til de andre aktørene? Forklar.
  - Har det hendt at andre aktører har kommet med tips du føler du hadde bedre forutsetninger enn de til å løse? Om så, forklar.
- Hva tenker du om ‘frihet under ansvar’ vs. overvåkning? Hva har vært gjeldene på de to prosjektene? Forklar.
- Hvordan vil du vurdere de andre aktørene sin integritet ut ifra gitte normer i bransjen?

## **Del 7: Avslutning**

*Her er formålet på runde av intervjuet, samt finne ut om det er noen temaer informanten mener vi burde tatt opp.*

- Hvordan vil du si totalinntrykket ditt av det gjentatte samarbeidet er?
  - Var det i all hovedsak positivt å gjenta samarbeidet eller kunne aktørene like godt vært noen nye?
- Hva tenker du om overføring av tillit mellom prosjektbaserte organisasjoner (som her), sammenlignet med samarbeid der tidsomfanget er lenger og sluttdato ikke er forutbestemt.
  - Ser du på organisasjonsformen som en utfordring hva gjelder overføring av tillit fra et prosjekt til det neste? Hvorfor/hvorfor ikke?
- Gitt tema som har vært sentralt i dette intervjuet, er det andre innspill og/eller kommentarer du mener vi ikke har dekket?



## Appendix 2: Examples of coding

	Quotation	Interpretation
1	<i>It's correct that I came into the project after its start. And as a consequence of the change of a project leader, that's not something we plan for, so that was an extra challenge for the DBC and for me. A pretty substantial part of why it has gone down well in my eyes is precisely what I've touched upon earlier, there were some carriers of history and experience. (Contractor 2)</i>	Explains the experience of entering the project as a novel actor and showcasing the importance of 'carriers of history and experience'. Pointing towards actors spanning the boundaries of the organisations which may be regarded as boundary spanning people.  <i>Coded as: 'People' within 'Boundary spanners'</i>
2	<i>The fact that we understand their Progress Plan, the importance of it, and what milestones are important in the planning is an important element. [...]. It is very important to understand the DBC's Progress Plan and their milestones, and then set our milestones so that they match by a good margin. (Specialist 1)</i>	Describes the Progress Plan's effects on the actors in the project coalition, and by that illustrating an effect of consolidation of the involved actors and an object being able to enable trust transfer.  <i>Coded as: 'Objects' within 'Boundary spanners'</i>
3	<i>The organising is important. To be able to know that you cover every link, both at the DBC and CC, but also that you cover gaps between them. (Specialist 1)</i>	Showcasing that a focus on organising and matching of structure is important for the projects.  <i>Coded as: 'Structures' within 'Boundary spanners'</i>
4	<i>You have a nice flow, you've established friendships, [...]. I think it's always that uncertainty of who you meet for other projects, that was eliminated when you already knew who was coming. And when stuff sort of had worked out and things were ok it is easier to pick up the threads. (Subcontractor 2)</i>	A description of how the past affects the present. Arguing that a past together considered positive may affect the current trust between parties.  <i>Coded as: 'Past' within 'The shadow of the past and of the future'</i>
5	<i>I think it has a disciplinary and educational effect on both parties [DBC and CC]. [...] both parties have less interest in going to the trenches related to various things. In other words, we have more interest in doing better together and strengthening our collective competitiveness for the future. (Specialist 2)</i>	Illustrating how a strong expectation of a co-joined future may affect the current trust between parties. As such, it is expressed to have a disciplinary effect.  <i>Coded as: 'Future' within 'The shadow of the past and of the future'</i>
6	<i>It's short [line of communication] and I think CC is competent. You might see that from the projects we bring them along on - we use them a lot. You get to</i>	The statement about CC's competence clearly attests for the organisation's ability and is thus an indicator for its trustworthiness.

	<i>know each other, for better or worse. (Contractor 4)</i>	<i>Coded as: 'Ability' within 'Assessments of trustworthiness'</i>
<b>7</b>	<i>We have shared everything with the client, so we have no mistakes that are not shared with them. That is to ensure that we are... really to show the client we take this seriously and that we are learning. (Specialist 9)</i>	Describing transparency and a wish to 'do good'. As such attesting for the organisation's benevolence and is thus an indicator for its trustworthiness.  <i>Coded as: 'Benevolence' within 'Assessments of trustworthiness'</i>
<b>8</b>	<i>I've been impressed by the DBC all along. Everything they stand for, I feel they are solid and professional. (Specialist 3)</i>	Illustrating the organisation's integrity by describing them as 'solid and professional', and further supporting the argument for integrity having to be personally experienced. This is thus an indicator for its trustworthiness.  <i>Coded as: 'Integrity' within 'Assessments of trustworthiness'</i>

*\* The coding within 'Inter-organisational relations' is not exemplified in the table as it is used for contextual purposes only and in the understanding of underlying dynamics.*

**Appendix 3: Quotations**

*\* Additional quotations marked in grey are not included in the thesis but support the empirical findings.*

**4.1. Boundary spanners:**

Boundary spanning people
<i>Individual level:</i>
We also have another one, Specialist 1, who is probably included in the DBC’s work and asked for advice outside of the set responsibilities. So there are some key people out and about whom the DBC have good use of. (Specialist 3)
Ehm, yes, it is [intentional]. But that actually comes from the DBC themselves. I’ve had some projects with the DBC earlier, close to my office, where I’ve had the pleasure of working in ‘the ditch’ with the boys. They felt like I knew what I was talking about, also with the practical stuff. Contractor 1 [...] wanted me on-site to create that connection, a tighter connection between theory and practice, so we got that understanding of the practicalities amongst the engineers. (Specialist 1)
It’s correct that I came into the project after its start. And as a consequence of the change of a project leader, that’s not something we plan for, so that was an extra challenge for the DBC and for me. A pretty substantial part of why it has gone down well in my eyes is precisely what I’ve touched upon earlier, there were some carriers of history and experience. (Contractor 2)
What I believe makes the DBC stand out and what is some of the success factor is that there is a conscious attitude towards how to build project organisations and teams, not to dilute that composition of these carriers of culture. (Contractor 2)
It’s clear that Contractor 1 is an important person and has a personality that’s very well suited for trust building and cooperation. [...] Contractor 1 is open, including, proactive, and at the same time clear and precise in his demands and expectations. But, he is still a person that creates trust, radiates trust, and has a capability and will to cooperate. (Specialist 2)
Yes, I think so. And I think that’s why the DBC wants it that way, and that’s why CC wants it that way. We believe it gives us, that way of organising, an agile, good and safe way of operating with the least amount of hassle. Because at the moment in these kinds of projects that we let the contract decide, so, yes, then we’ve lost. In that moment. (Specialist 2)
We’ve had Specialist 2 in our driver seat. So it’s clear that Specialist 2 is one of the absolutely most important here. Very good at connecting everyone together and including people too. [...]. Specialist 2 is very thorough, very thorough. And basically has an overview of the details and the big picture really. And that creates trust I think, also for the DBC where we see that they use what's offered outside of the set role for advice and the lot, so it shows the high level of trust. (Specialist 3)
Specialist 2 has enabled trust and cooperation and all of those kinds of topics to work very well. Because Specialist 2 is really good at processes and is really proficient, so I don’t have anything negative to say. [...]. Specialist 2 preserves the interests of CC and all of their delivery, but at the same time Specialist 2 has a responsibility for the DBC. (Client 1)

<p>The distinction is sort of not as clear. We are one cohesive unit rather than two firms. (Specialist 3)</p>
<p><b>Group level:</b></p>
<p>Yes, at least downwards I know it rubs off [effects of the good cooperation]. If they need anything, they'll get it. And at the same time, if we stop an excavator and need some help we get it, it's not that complicated. [...]. There's no need to call the leader for, the subordinates know they can just say yes. So I believe some of our cooperation reflects downwards. Upwards, one step up, my project leader knows the situation is very good. The project leader above that, I think has so much to deal with on its own that the project leader just reflects on our success and is delighted, but i don't think it affects, no. (Subcontractor 2)</p>
<p>It's rather a lack of guidelines and surveillance, I'd say. We have trust in them to continue their work and cooperation they've had all along. And that we let them make pretty big decisions without intervening. (Subcontractor 1)</p>
<p>The management has done good to be honest and open. And I feel that from my point of view it's been a good climate. It has probably been discussions and similar that we aren't involved in, but still, very neat and professional. (Specialist 3)</p>
<p>I believe, in the cooperation of CC and the DBC, that it's myself and the assistant project leader who carry some of that responsibility. [...] We led the preliminary work and won this project. So we've worked together for two and a half years on this project and the cooperation we have, that we still manage to react positively together, I believe that to be important. (Specialist 2)</p>
<p>I think that our person, so to speak, on the other side of the table on that level is unbelievably tidy and structured, and equivalently cooperative-oriented guy [As Contractor 1]. So I think that is two people who match each other well. (Specialist 2)</p>
<p>I perceive them as a very tight group, with a good atmosphere and dialogue. And I think that has affected us too, in that it gave us a proper building block to go on from. [...] We work towards the same goal. I see that as a very big difference really compared to other projects I've been a part of. (Specialist 5)</p>
<p>Yes, ehm, it's both of course. And it's the combination that makes things powerful, when there is coalescence of personality and roles things go well. (Specialist 2)</p>

<p align="center"><b>Boundary spanning objects</b></p>
<p><b><i>The progress plan:</i></b></p>
<p>[...] we even have coffee cups on which it says 'we follow the plan', so it is quite true that we have elevated it [the Progress Plan] to something very sacred here in the project. It's first and foremost about sticking to a concept, not throwing oneself into something that may seem sensible at a time, in which one does not see the range of along the way. [...] but that presupposes that you have a good plan as the fundament. Otherwise, it does not work no matter how good one is at planning. (Contractor 2)</p>
<p>We follow the plan. We will follow the plan that is set, and do everything we can to ensure it's followed. (Contractor 4)</p>
<p>[...] the SC's become in a way, whether they want to or not, part of the plan. And then we manage very precisely in accordance with the plan. (Contractor 2)</p>

<p>The fact that we understand their Progress Plan, the importance of it, and what milestones are important in the planning is an important element. [...]. It is very important to understand the DBC's Progress Plan and their milestones, and then set our milestones so that they match by a good margin. (Specialist 1)</p>
<p>There is no Progress Plan on this project – it's just bullshit. If you try to report the actual progress that is happening today then you're just told to revise it and report according to the plan agreed on. [...] You're trying to report on what's actually happening, but nobody's listening. (Subcontractor 2)</p>
<p>At the same time, we feel that there is quite a lot to go on to have a fully functioning overall plan. But at the same time, the collaboration works so well on the project that it does not affect everyday life. (Subcontractor 1)</p>
<p><b><i>BIM technology:</i></b></p>
<p>We sold BIM as a next-generation [technology] on Project B, based on Project A. [...]. The BIM part from A to B was very good. If we were at 60 per cent on Project A – which was 100 per cent to the client's expectation –, then we were at our 100 per cent – which was maybe 200 per cent to the client's expectation – on Project B. (Specialist 1)</p>
<p>Yes, I think so. This is the first infrastructure project carried out with that level of BIM use. And it's a road that has not been walked before. (Subcontractor 2)</p>
<p>The fact that we had made an attempt in Project A proved that we could probably achieve something. BIM was probably one of many such, yes, objects or trust... such trust-building products, services, deliveries, processes that made us able to enter Project B with enough confidence to believe we could deliver in accordance with the new contract requirements. (Specialist 2)</p>
<p>It has been a synergy for the NGC, and very synergetic for the DBC and CC, which they can bring with them. I know they have used this [BIM technology] and developed it further [...]. They have delivered very well concerning BIM and had a tremendous development. And the industry has developed a lot from Project A as well. (Client 1)</p>
<p>Yes – the answer to all of that is yes. One could probably encourage even more use of it [BIM technology] as well. But one should really focus on further developing it, take it even more to use, showcase it, and lower the threshold for communication and such. (Client 1)</p>
<p>It [BIM technology] visualises in a slightly simplified way for the boys and girls working – let us say – 'in the ditch' what is to be built. In that sense, it can have a positive effect by making it easier to communicate how things should look in the end. [...] which in turn means that things can be experienced as more structured and orderly. (Contractor 1)</p>
<p>[...] we use much more advanced tools. We don't walk around with a meterstick anymore, writing on a piece of paper – we just check the model and see what we have built. This means that our trust in CC must be elevated compared to before. We are dependent on the BIM model being correct, and, more or less, it is. So, one saves a lot of time and resources on using BIM. (Subcontractor 1)</p>
<p>[...] enabling one to detect conflicts earlier is one thing, but also unfavourable choices in terms of execution are another. [...] it has become a lot more open – or perhaps easier to have that openness – in that people have access to a model; They can either flag a concern or a wish earlier than before. (Subcontractor 2)</p>
<p>Yes, it's clear that much of the learning lies in the nature of the DB contract itself, regardless of which tools you use. This is because the cooperation between the DBC and</p>

<p>CC must necessarily be closer when the DBC is responsible for the designing and not the client. So, that alone results in such an effect as the one you describe, but when you also have good tools it of course gets even better. But the main effect probably lies in the form of the contract itself. (Specialist 2)</p>
<p>At the same time, I think it is important to exercise a certain degree of sobriety when hyping the importance of BIM and digital tools. It's 'shit in shit out' in a way. Tools themselves – and all the possibilities existing within – have such a large focus and demand great amounts of energy that we risk the trained professional to perish. If that happens, both from the consultant side and from the contractor-side, we are somewhat on the wrong track. (Contractor 1)</p>
<p>Yes, I'm a little unsure of that. The reason why I say I'm unsure is that it's still a bit early in the 'quest' to be able to measure what kind of savings or benefits – effects – we gain ourselves. What impact this has on our collaborators [...] should probably in the years to come have a greater degree of measurability. [...]. It is also a bit unclear whether something has actually been realised – and at least to what extent it has been realised. (Contractor 2)</p>

Boundary spanning structures
<p>Positively important in the beginning [co-location]. Very important in the procurement phase, get to know each other until everything settles. Important, but we saw when Corona struck that we've managed very well after that too. And we've had very little physical interaction in the shared offices, but [the success] is due to the fact that we've already practiced for two years before the Corona struck. If we didn't get to do that I think we would have longed for it now. (Specialist 2)</p>
<p>Then we hadn't had the opportunity to start the same way, nor the same fundament. And it's clear that, to another time, then we have that basis. If we had started a brand new project and gone straight to Microsoft Teams without anything physical, then we would perhaps not have gotten the same value so to speak. (Specialist 3)</p>
<p>I believe there are positives to the fact that the DBC not only has one massive rig but that they also have rig-offices throughout the project. I believe positioning of the rigs and rig-offices is sort of, it isn't just two massive, shared offices, but that we are distributed throughout. That you break down the structures a little, I think that's healthy in these kinds of projects. (Subcontractor 2)</p>
<p>I don't feel there are that many meetings that are unnecessary in this project [B]. If we look at the DBC-client, the meetings have eventually elevated to a degree where they work pretty well. The designers' meetings have two variants, one every other Wednesday where we include the client, sort of a DBC-client-CC-designers' meetings. This meeting is traditional, but it has worked well. Then we have the internal designers' meeting of CC where the DBC are involved. These meetings have worked out even better. In relation to the cooperation between the DBC and CC where we have had a weekly review on site with the central managerial level on the project. This has been a whole day once a week, starting with an inspection of the production with the most important leaders of the DBC in addition to the designers. So, it has been meetings throughout the day and a managerial follow-up meeting at the end. These Tuesday meetings have been very successful. (Specialist 2)</p>
<p>The DBC has been a part of every meeting, even the internal CC meetings, so it's very transparent. [...]. The designers' meetings with the client and the DBC every other week [have been very important]. It's planned in a way such that we can communicate before</p>

<p>we send over anything if we have a problem or something else to make sure we're on the same page. [...]. It's a constructive process really. (Specialist 3)</p>
<p>Early on, we had a lot of on-site meetings. So I believe that having a set of meetings on-site establishes a good foundation and relationships, and by that lowers the threshold to visit. So we don't need that many meetings after that. If there is anything they come through my door anyway or you meet them at the road or we stop or... To be present. To have people, that the operational site gets to be an operational site is valuable, I think. That we can be here, that we can be available and that we can solve things without a meeting summons. (Subcontractor 2)</p>
<p>The organising is important. To be able to know that you cover every link, both at the DBC and CC, but also that you cover gaps between them. (Specialist 1)</p>
<p>Yes, so, if you look at the big picture of it then both the DBC's Project A and Project B were organised pretty similarly as I see it. And the same with our [CC] project. We had a type of organising and structure in CC that in principle is continued to Project B, of course with some adjustments and modifications. So the fact that we have a structure both at the DBC and at CC that is somewhat familiar, that gives an effect in such a transition [of projects]. You don't have to learn those things again. [...] that gives at least those who worked in both projects an easier transition. (Specialist 2)</p>
<p>Yes, you can say that the leadership system and the structure were recognisable. [...] the project plan that we built on Project A was developed and continued and gave us a 'flying start'. And that the plan was familiar to the client and our collaborators. So I think that was a part of, well, facilitated a continuity and we were able to quickly figure out things together. And that is much of what it's about early in the projects – compressing the time it would take otherwise to get good collaboration, good communication, good dialogue, good relations. (Contractor 1)</p>

**4.2. The shadow of the past and the shadow of the future:**

Shadow of the past
<p>You have a nice flow, you've established friendships, [...]. I think it's always that uncertainty of who you meet for other projects, that was eliminated when you already knew who was coming. And when stuff sort of had worked out and things were OK it is easier to pick up the threads. (Subcontractor 2)</p>
<p>[We have] corrected each other, inspired each other and we've had a big focus on a form of continuity from Project A to B where we've been open-minded, open in evaluations, what has worked, what has not, [and through this] found out that it is smart to develop the collaboration with CC further, rather than starting with a clean slate with other consulting firms. So it's been a mutual strategy, from both CC and the DBC. (Contractor 1)</p>
<p>Well, we have continued the work on EHS in a straight line from Project A into this, uninterrupted. And that is good. Without a foundation of EHS there is no project. [...]. It really is not two projects, it's one straight line from the beginning of Project A and straight into this. And I think that is crucial to bring along, because it is unbelievably important to have that EHS and that culture. And we've made it and that is a success story in itself. (Subcontractor 1)</p>
<p>I have a perception that it is just as important to bring along the people who have sufficiently messed up in some way. This way they learn even better than reading a synergy report. (Contractor 1)</p>

<p>A building project is sort of like a book. You have a start, a middle and an ending. If you bring relationships into the start, it will be much shorter. You don't have to work that much together to create the relations, they're already there. [...]. And if you get going with the start quickly, the middle part will also be much, much easier. [...] And if you don't have the direct relationships, it's at least important to have core personnel. So, relationships are incredibly important and the fact that we brought along some core personnel from A to B enabled us to start quicker with the action of the book. (Specialist 1)</p>
<p>At the same time novel people come in, so I believe the new ones feel that it's easier to come in now that it's already an established relationship. Compared to when everyone needs to start over, it's not 100 men meeting for the first time. You get a gradual introduction, so I think that contributes to the flow of the project really. (Subcontractor 2)</p>
<p>At least we knew that we were capable of solving a challenge of the size that building lots of kilometres of a new highway is together. It's high demands both to the DBC and of course the subcontractors, so I would say ... we've now shown that we are capable and that it's possible to do it again. (Contractor 2)</p>
<p>It [Project B] would be tighter and harder for us, yes, if it was the other way around [Project A not being a success]. (Subcontractor 1)</p>
<p>I would say the foundational trust between contracting parties in the DBC and the client was present. And we noticed that, even though the client is still the client, we met entirely different people from the customer's side on project B than we did on Project A. [...] We saw little evidence of experience flow over to Project B. There were new people, new resources that wanted to do things their way. (Contractor 1)</p>
<p>I've expressed pretty clearly that the process the client had with the contractor with a pretty lengthy phase between initial contact and the actual signing, nearly half a year, that I miss a mini version of that. Perhaps only a month's time, but still that we properly sat down and discussed. [...]. We have a pretty substantial pile of principle decisions that need to be taken care of. (Subcontractor 1)</p>

Shadow of the future
<p>Yes, I would say it had a positive effect. And I assume the effect similarly could have had a negative impact on the last phase of Project A if I had communicated to the SC that on the next project I chose another bridge builder. This would have been a bit of a failure due to the expressed will from both sides to make each other better and better. [...] but I would argue we got extra inspiration from the fact we [DBC and SC] already were 'married' on the next project – we had several years of cooperation ahead of us. (Contractor 1)</p>
<p>No, neither to nor from. But I had a pretty good atmosphere where I was, so I think it would take a lot for it to get worse. And if it would get a little bit better then, well it was probably already in such a good place that one does not notice so well if it goes from 'good' to 'really good' sort of. (Subcontractor 2)</p>
<p>It has not affected anything other than in a positive manner, I think. (Specialist 3)</p>
<p>Not at our level. It could be that a change happened at a 'higher level'. After all, that's where an agreement is to be executed between the DBC and CC with price and so on. So there might have been something there that I haven't been told. (Specialist 1)</p>



<p>I have been asked by my managers to treat the DBC nicely. They have a desire to potentially collaborate in the future, so if we behave poorly then that will not happen. (Subcontractor 1)</p>
<p>I think it has a disciplinary and educational effect on both parties [DBC and CC]. [...] both parties have less interest in going to the trenches related to various things. In other words, we have more interest in doing better together and strengthening our collective competitiveness for the future. (Specialist 2)</p>
<p>Not significantly. You must be able to stand by the work that is physically delivered, that's the most important. Some discussions are OK, you just have to live with that and try to make them as small and light as possible. But we still have to deliver – that's the most important. And as long as we deliver more or less on time and cost, that's what we are remembered for. (Subcontractor 1)</p>
<p>I like to think that we had collaborated in quite a similar way. Since we want these collaborations to withstand both a tough Project As the current one and at the same time that everyone involved wants to repeat the collaboration later. Of course, things may happen that makes it more difficult to imagine, but we put a lot of work into having good relationships and good cooperation with both the client and subcontractors. And something quite exceptional must happen if it should affect anything at this point. (Contractor 2)</p>
<p>Probably a bit, yes. Not that much either. But it's probably just that we would then be a bit tougher on the requirements. (Subcontractor 1)</p>
<p>In total, we must deliver as professionals actors in the market. So we must deliver whether or not we are to cooperate with the DBC or not. That is, we must be able to stand by the reputation we attain from this Project And from all else as well – that's just as important really. (Subcontractor 1)</p>

**4.3. Assessments of trustworthiness:**

Ability
<p>No, it's correct to say it was more. We've haven't had many DB contracts in construction, but there have been a few. And we've collaborated with CC previously with great success. (Contractor 1)</p>
<p>We know how much use we've had from the dialogue and close connection with them. I feel like it's a win-win situation. Very skilled people we're dealing with. (Specialist 3)</p>
<p>It's short [line of communication] and I think CC is competent. You might see that from the projects we bring them along on, we use them a lot. You get to know each other, for better or worse. (Contractor 4)</p>
<p>That happens constantly. Remember that this is a concept only used twice before in Norway. [...]. I think it's funny that someone from the DBC's analytics department gives me advice on how to get the bridge into position. [...]. Some just are trying to help, some just say something to say something, but you quickly understand which is which. (Subcontractor 2)</p>
<p>We're very interdisciplinary when we sit in, for instance, large meetings discussing specific elements in road construction. In such, there may be individuals who have nothing to contribute with in the dialogue but who still are happy to contribute. And their contribution does not gain anyone. (Specialist 1)</p>

<p>It's rather a lack of guidance so to speak. We've allowed them to continue the cooperation they've had all along. And we let them make pretty big decisions without intervening. (Subcontractor 1)</p>
<p>Yes, in general it's good. But I believe that if we are to speak about a party who could've had some more knowledge it would have to be the NGC. They seem a little scarcely manned in some roles. (Specialist 2)</p>
<p>[...] without bragging too much about ourselves, I believe we raise the bar in collaboration with some suppliers. And raising the bar often takes time. It's not just doing it, but to develop the form of cooperation. (Contractor 2)</p>
<p>The DBC has a lot of skilled people [...]. They are great people and they do a lot of great work. (Subcontractor 2)</p>
<p>They probably trust us to deliver what we should. But it is the old story of "I trust you in your work, but I check it anyway". (Subcontractor 1)</p>
<p>There is an expectation at least from DBC to us that what we design is correct. There is no one monitoring us and watching what we do at all times. So, yes, to all intents and purposes, trust is important. (Specialist 1)</p>
<p>As of now, CC is the biggest and best – at least according to themselves. (Contractor 2)</p>
<p>Obviously, we could always wish for more information, but when asked, they've given us what we needed. Especially in the design work they have a large pool of competence to draw from. In some instances, the answers we've received have not been good enough. Then they have access to resources as countrywide experts in special fields, so even though they don't have the competence at hand, they can get it. There are no limits to this really. (Client 1)</p>
<p>I believe the NGC has changed a little. And that coincides with the warranty liability the DBC have. [...]. The NGC has fewer control engineers doing controls because we've had an approach where the DBC build quality and have good plans to maintain the overall quality. But obviously, we can't be absent, so there needs to be a balance. Rather have some possibility to monitor, but not necessarily surveil and control. (Client 1)</p>

Benevolence
<p>It's completely in line with the construction industry. It is the money that governs and ultimately you are looking to make money. [...]. But that's the industry, that's what they make a living from. They live off the money. (Specialist 1)</p>
<p>I don't think there is any opportunism here. [...] because that is towards cynicism sort of. There might be individual elements – which are individuals –, there might be smaller, hired subcontractors that might be like that to a degree [cynical]. But the large contractors can't operate in that world. It will be... no. (Specialist 1)</p>
<p>If there is a delivery I know is not intended for me, then I can send it to the head office – even though I know where it's going I have no responsibility for it. I can disregard it if I want to, which I would have done if they had been shitty, however, I of course call whomever I know should have it. Can you come to pick up your delivery? Or where do you want it? [...] if you are going to be really rigid then we should just expel it from the place. But you don't do that – you should collaborate on this. (Subcontractor 2)</p>

<p>There might be a feeling that the DBC prioritises their own work – the part they have their own people on, while we’re given a lower priority. [...]. It may be a bit unfair as experienced from our side, but it’s not entirely for certain this is true. (Subcontractor 4)</p>
<p>No. I think that is a bad thing. To withhold information that may be relevant. Whether it’s negative or positive for me, negative or positive for the DBC, negative or positive for the SC – it does not matter if we don’t have transparency and are honest with each other. If you make a mistake – that’s very often what’s going on – then you should be responsible for the mistake you made. Then it also creates trust and you win in the long run from being honest. [...]. I think transparency is incredibly important for everyone. To build relationships, to build trust, to be able to bring the collaboration to the next project. (Specialist 1)</p>
<p>We have shared everything with the client, so we have no discrepancies that are not shared with them. That is to ensure that we are... really to show the client we take this seriously and that we are learning. (Specialist 9)</p>

Integrity
<p>It’s not a cowboy industry. Although parts of the construction industry may be a bit more of a cowboy industry, in the bigger picture this is not the term to use. It’s rather seriousness, to be solid, and quality et cetera that is the focus. (Client 1)</p>
<p>All participating actors [...] are serious actors that, in some way, where there are competent people who want to deliver and wish to both further develop and solve problems. (Contractor 1)</p>
<p>I’ve been impressed by the DBC all along, I was about to say. Everything they stand for, I feel they are solid and professional. (Specialist 3)</p>
<p>Yes, I think so – solution-oriented and professional. I felt we could sit down and discuss the big things and express all our opinions without necessity souring the environment in any way. We all had our contracts and our interests, yet we managed to solve the project in a good way. (Subcontractor 6)</p>
<p>We must deliver as professional actors in the market. We therefore must deliver regardless of whether we collaborate with the DBC or not – that is, we must be able to represent the reputation gained from this project and everything else. [...]. That’s ultimately what’s most important, that is how we make a living – our reputation. (Subcontractor 1)</p>
<p>I hadn’t been able to go to work if everything was about being terrible [to each other] day in and day out. I think life is too short for that, however, I know some people view this differently. We’re different in that regard. But then I rather confront them and finish the matter, then we start fresh again. (Subcontractor 2)</p>
<p>We delivered Project A ahead of time, and we at least plan to deliver on time here as well. It looks very promising so far and that is good for our CV – our company CV. (Subcontractor 1)</p>
<p>Everyone wanted the project to succeed, so everyone was willing to do the best for each other so to speak. And of course, to achieve what we’d started on, cooperation was needed. (Subcontractor 5)</p>