



**CHALMERS**  
UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY



# **Clashing institutional logics and its consequences for communication**

A study of managers in a Swedish cross-cultural mega project

Master's thesis in Design and Construction Project Management

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Gothenburg, Sweden 2021

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*“It is not the strongest or the most intelligent who will survive but those who can best manage change.” – Leon C. Megginson, 1963.*

What Megginson implies can be linked to communication regarding meeting and responding to different cultures. When it comes down to manage cross-culture projects, it is not the people with best education or most amount of projects in their portfolio who will survive, it is the people who are able to adapt to the situation, to meet new cultures and conform to their behaviour, those will prevail.

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Fredrik Bergfeldt and Frida Fischer, Gothenburg, June 2021

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## Abstract

The globalization has served as a ground for government bodies to procure, and construction industry companies to expand beyond their national borders. The public infrastructure client Swedish Transport Administration (STA) have over the last decade introduced strategical aims to advertise their procurements globally, and the efforts have resulted in an increasing presence of foreign contractors in Sweden. In these projects, challenges such as cultural communicational clashes can arise. The responsibility to manage these cross-cultural communicational clashes are not a designated responsibility. However, managers must deal with cross-cultural communication on a daily basis. These challenges have been studied in the Västlänken project, a mega infrastructure project between the client, STA, and foreign contractors. The thesis aims to investigate the communicational challenges present between STA managers and foreign contractor managers, as well as how client-contractor contracts can be improved for cross-cultural communication. The aim was realised through 12 semi-structured interviews with involved managers and two expert interviews. The interview findings were analysed with the theoretical lens of institutional logics.

The analysis revealed a set of 20 clashing and aligning managing institutional logic pairs amongst the managers. Ten of the identified logic pairs were aligning and ten were clashing. It was found that clashing institutional logics have a predominant negative effect on communication. The analysis further showed that both STA managers and foreign contractor managers have reevaluated some of their own previously clashing logics, which indicates that logics can align over time. This inevitable mixture of clashing and aligning logics is an ongoing hybridization which have developed from the managers earlier managing logics. However, it was found that institutional logics can have national affiliation and that some logics will not change.

**Keywords:** Cross-cultural, communication, infrastructure, mega project, institutional logics, construction industry, contract, Sweden

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# Sammanfattning

Den pågående globaliseringen har varit en bidragande faktor till att statliga myndigheter och privata aktörer i byggbranschen har expanderat över sina nationella gränser. Den statliga beställaren Trafikverket har under det senaste decenniet infört strategiska mål om att marknadsföra sina upphandlingar globalt, och ansträngningarna har resulterat i en ökande närvaro av utländska entreprenörer i svenska projekt. I dessa projekt kan utmaningar som kulturella kommunikationsförbristningar uppstå. Vem som har ansvar för att hantera dessa mångkulturella kommunikativa krockar i projekt är inte givet, men det är ofta projektledare som får hantera dessa utmaningar i sitt dagliga arbete. Dessa utmaningar har studerats i Västlänken, ett megainfrastrukturprojekt mellan Trafikverket och utländska entreprenörer. Avhandlingen syftar till att undersöka kommunikations-utmaningarna mellan Trafikverkets projektledare och utländska entreprenörers projektledare samt att undersöka hur kontrakten mellan beställare och utländsk entreprenör kan förbättras med avseende på tvärkulturell kommunikation. Syftet uppnåddes genom tolv semistrukturerade intervjuer med involverade projektledare och två expertintervjuer. Intervjuresultaten analyserades med hjälp av teorin om institutionella logiker.

Avhandlingen identifierade en uppsättning av 20 krockande och samverkande logikpar mellan projektledarna. Tio av logikerna samverkade medan tio krockade. Det kunde konstateras att krockande logiker har en dominerande negativ effekt på kommunikation. Resultaten visade också att både Trafikverkets projektledare och utländska entreprenörers projektledare har omvärderat några av sina egna tidigare krockande logiker vilket är en indikation på att logiker kan sammanstråla över tid. Den oundvikliga blandningen av krockande och samverkande logiker är en pågående hybridisering, som har utvecklats från projektledarnas initiala logiker. Dock är det tydligt från resultaten att logiker kan ha nationell tillhörighet och att vissa logiker inte kan omvärderas.

**Nyckelord:** Mångkulturell, kommunikation, infrastruktur, megaprojekt, institutionella logiker, byggindustrin, kontrakt, Sverige



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# 1 | Introduction

In this chapter, the background to the thesis's focus will be presented as to provide an understanding of the significance and relevance of the study. Further, the thesis aim and research questions will be presented.

## 1.1 Background

The construction industry is characterized by being project based with a high level of uncertainty and complexity (CIOB, 2014). The unique characteristic of construction projects is connected to the geographical location, the technical requirements as well as the project organization for each individual project (CIOB, 2014; Dainty et al., 2006; Ricketts et al., 2004). The uncertainty is, amongst other things, connected to unfavourable weather conditions and the timeframe of construction projects (CIOB, 2014). The longer the timeframe, the higher risk of external factors influencing the project. The complexity is also connected to the need of external involvement from professionals with a wide range of specific expertise and skills (CIOB, 2014; Dainty et al., 2006; Banik & Barnes, 2002). In other words, many stakeholders with different interests, representing different organizations are involved. Hence, the project organization of a construction project is not only complex, but also fragmented, which calls for effective management.

The need for different levels of project management responsibilities is related to the level of complexity and the size of the project – the more complex and larger the project, the greater use of project management functions (Udo & Koppensteiner, 2004). Infrastructure projects are highly dependent on effective and influential project managers. When managing, it is important to understand every stakeholder's unique expertise, to establish trust and to communicate (PMI, 2021). The latter is a core principle for a well-functioning project (Brockmann & Griemscheid, 2007; Abudi, 2013). Effective project communication is correlated to project success and it enables project teams to effectively collaborate and achieve the goals of the project (Dainty et al., 2006).

Effective project communication is certainly a desirable state, but the high reward gained by this key component brings challenges. The communicational management challenges are partly connected to the characteristics of construction projects (Turner 1998, as cited in Dainty et al., 2006). Dainty et al. (2006) also point out the emerging management challenge of cross-cultural communication due to the globalization of the construction industry. The globalization has resulted in opportunities for companies and governmental bodies to expand, and respectively procure, beyond their national borders. In other words, the globalization has led to the presence of foreign involvement in local construction projects. Naturally, cross-cultural project settings put an extra emphasis to the involved managers communication competency.

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To be able to communicate well in cross-cultural projects, cultural knowledge and suitable language skills are essential (Dainty et al., 2006). In light on the ongoing globalization, Ochieng and Price (2010) lift the challenge to manage of cross-cultural communication in multicultural teams. Ochieng and Price (2010) conducted an interview study to explore the experiences and practices of 20 senior project managers with regard to multicultural project teams. The conclusion of the study highlighted communication as “the key to managing expectations, misconceptions, and misgivings on multicultural project teams” (Ochieng & Price, 2010, p. 459). Further, it was found that communication was a significant ingredient to project success in complex construction projects where multicultural teams are involved. The authors call for further research on the topic of cross-cultural communication in multicultural construction teams, as means for construction industry managers to better understand and handle multicultural projects.

## 1.2 Aim

This M.Sc. thesis aims to investigate communicational challenges present between public client managers and foreign contractor managers in cross-cultural mega projects by conducting an interview study and applying institutional logics theory to the interview findings. The application of institutional logics theory serves as a tool to identify the communicational situations where the managers institutional logics clashes and aligns. Further, the thesis aims to investigate how contracts between public clients and foreign contractors can be improved to prevent communicational clashes. The knowledge gained from achieving the aim of this thesis could prevent communicational conflicts and improve collaboration in cross-cultural mega projects.

The focus of the thesis is the Swedish infrastructure sector and the communication performed by client managers and foreign contractor managers. Communication refers to the interaction between individuals. Both micro- and meso-level communication, as defined by Chun Gou et al. (2021), are discussed. The project investigated in this thesis is the Västlänken project, a project which per definition by Flyvbjerg is a mega infrastructure project since the total project sum exceeds “\$1 billion (circa 8,3 billion SEK), take many years to develop and build, involve multiple public and private stakeholders, are transformational, and impact millions of people” (2017, p. 2). The client organization is Swedish Transport Administration (STA) and the supposed foreign contractors are the Västlänken project’s main contactors which have their organizational origin in a country other than Sweden. The thesis builds on information from interviews, literature, and document studies.

A suitable theory which can be used in order to understand the social interplay between different groups is institutional logics (Scott, 2014). Institutional logics helps describing the foundation for how institutions work and behave in different situations and the theory enables researchers to put words on social interaction. When detecting actor’s institutional logics, the existing social believes, practices, expectations and structures will be revealed. Hence, institutional

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logics serves as a suitable theoretical lens for this thesis since it aims to investigate the cross-cultural communicational challenges between managers.

### 1.3 Research questions

The thesis aims to answer the following research questions:

- What main institutional logics can be identified amongst the managers representing the public client and foreign contractors?
- How does the identified clashing institutional logics affect the communication between managers who represent public client and foreign contractors?
- How can contracts between a public client and a foreign contractor be improved in order to prevent institutional logic clashes?

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## 2 | Context of the study

This chapter will present the case study of this thesis by first introducing common client-contractor delivery methods. Further, this chapter will introduce the infrastructure public client STA, followed by information about the infrastructure project under investigation - Västlänken.

### 2.1 Client-contractor contracts

The two standard contract forms often used between client- and contractor organizations in Swedish construction projects are named AB 04 and ABT 06. AB 04 is a design-bid-build (DBB) delivery method and ABT 06 is a design-build (DB) delivery method. According to the Swedish Competition Authority, the DB delivery method is most frequently applied by Swedish public clients (Swedish Competition Authority, 2014). The DBB delivery method is referred to as the traditional delivery method by Beard et al. (2001). In the DBB method, the client is responsible for the design, and the contractor is responsible for the construction of what is specified in the design. The design often includes construction documents with plans and specifications, and the client typically outsources the design to design-experts.

The DB delivery is a method where the client hires a contractor company to carry out both the design and the construction. Beard et al. (2001) argues that the DB delivery method focus on results and performance, as opposed to the DBB delivery method which focuses on rules, means and methods. The authors further emphasize that the DB delivery method enables achievement of the client's major goals and needs since it enables close collaboration, not least since it enables a close collaboration between the design team and the construction team. According to Beard et al. (2001), the designer-contractor collaboration results in better quality, in less administration for the client as well as in cost- and time-savings. The authors however underline that this delivery method requires that the client create a design-build process, uniquely tailored for the project in question.

In design-build contracts, the client organization can either choose to be passive or to be actively engaged in the management of the project (Beard et al., 2001). If the latter alternative is chosen for the project, Beard et al. (2001) underlines that the management team from the client organization should be led by an in-house individual who has great knowledge about the organization's internal operations and who is trusted by the client organization. It is further important to assess whether the client management team possesses the knowledge required for the client management team. If the client management team capabilities do not fulfil the need, the client team needs to be supplemented with suitable consultants.

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## 2.2 The Swedish Transport Administration

STA is a Swedish government agency which has the mission to secure a national functioning transport infrastructure with and safety in consideration (Trafikverket, 2020a). The responsibility includes long- and short-term planning and maintenance for road, railroad and airway traffic. Further, STA wants to act as a “passive” client, meaning that all projects should be designed and executed by external companies (Trafikverket, 2018). However, their level of involvement in procured projects can vary from being passive to having a high project management involvement.

The vision of STA is that “everybody arrives neatly, green and safe” (Trafikverket, 2020b). The vision is based upon the government transport goal which is “To ensure a socio-economically efficient and long-term sustainable infrastructure transportation for citizens and business across the country” (Regeringskansliet, 2021).

### 2.2.1 A procurement strategy with weight on foreign involvement

The procurement strategy of STA is based on the understanding that the taxpayers money is best spent if they act to stimulate productivity, industrialization, innovation, and competition amongst suppliers (Trafikverket, 2017a). Suppliers is external companies which delivers everything from goods to services, for example contractor organizations with the competency to both design and execute STA projects. STA’s procurement strategy includes to “actively operate to lower the entry barriers for both domestic and foreign suppliers”. In 2017, it was evaluated that the present high intensity of STA’s construction projects could overheat the Swedish market, leading to less tenders, higher prices and inadequacy in competence and workforce (Trafikverket, 2017b). Hence, lowering the entry barriers for foreign suppliers is not only increasing the innovation and competition amongst the suppliers as the procurement strategy states, it is also a means for STA to avoid costly risks in future projects.

When the international strategist of STA was asked why it is important for to attract foreign suppliers to participate in the tendering processes of their projects, the answer was:

*“It’s important for STA to consider both national and international suppliers in the procurement process in order to secure that no competitive supplier is overlooked in the selection process. The reason to why STA wants to attract international suppliers to our market is to manage the increasing purchasing volume and to increase competition, which is of special importance in those areas where the number of available national tenderers are low. Finally, to acquire new methods, techniques and competencies, to foster innovation for the Swedish construction industry”*

*- The International Strategist of STA, personal communication, April 12, 2021.*

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One of the projects where STA have acted according to the current procurement strategy is the Västlänken project where great efforts were made to internationally advertise the projects procurement process (Trafikverket, 2014).

### 2.2.2 Future foreign contractor involvement

The future for STA holds many more infrastructure projects where the size, cost, and complexity are a challenge and therefore STA will need the skills, manpower and market competition from foreign contractors. This puts an extra emphasis on investigating and understanding the current situation regarding the communication among STA and foreign contractors and how the understanding between involved parties could be enhanced (Trafikverket, 2017a).

## 2.3 The Västlänken project

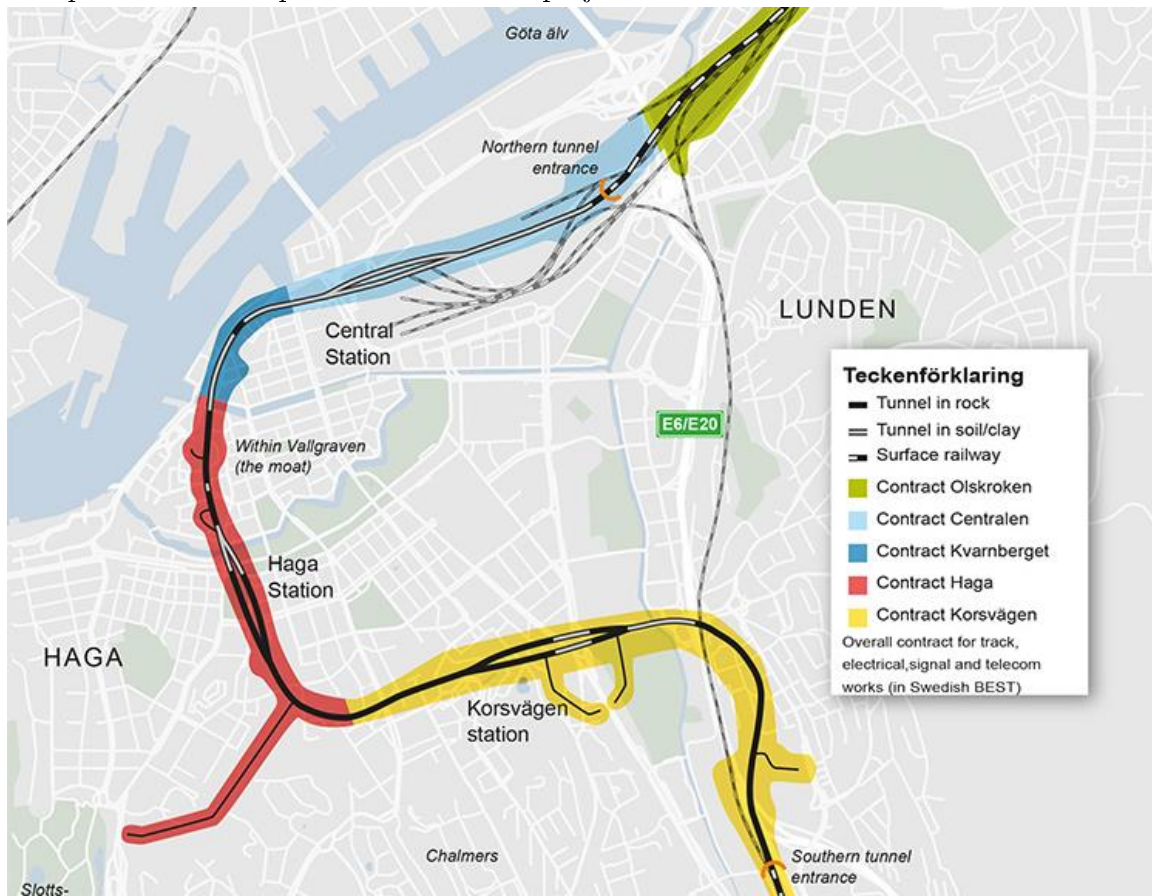
Västlänken is one of Swedens largest infrastructure projects in modern time (Höök, 2021; Trafikverket, 2015). Västlänken is a megaproject located in the centre of Gothenburg, the project has a total contract sum of 28 billion SEK, involves several stakeholders such as private and governmental and lastly spans over a decade. Västlänken will provide a 6 km underground train tunnel for passenger- and commuter-trains, with three underground stations (Trafikverket, 2018). The northern tunnel entrance is in the area Gullbergsvass and the southern tunnel entrance is in the area Almedal, see Figure 1.

The purpose of Västlänken is to connect central Gothenburg city, to ease the traffic on Gothenburg central station and public transport and enable commuters to travel to different locations within the city (Trafikverket, 2021). The Västlänken project is divided into several contracts, these contracts are referred to as E01, E02, E03, E04, E05 and E06. The contracts investigated in this thesis's cases study are E03, E04 and E05. These are the contracts where there is a high involvement degree of foreign contractors. In Table 1, the delivery methods and the estimated contract sums for these contracts are presented.

Today, the Västlänken project status is ongoing with excavation of rock tunnels and shafts, and design phase of the railroad that will be built in the finished tunnel. Contractors has been working for approximately 3 years and the project is estimated to be finished by 13<sup>th</sup> of December 2028 (Office manager and economy of Västlänken, personal communication, 22 April 2021).

**Figure 1**

The procurement map of the Västlänken project



*Note.* The West Link procurement map, Trafikverket, 2021, Procurement – The West Link Project, <https://www.trafikverket.se/en/startpage/projects/Railway-construction-projects/The-West-Link-ProjectVastlanken/Procurement---The-West-Link-Project/> permission granted by Trafikverket 2021-02-17.

**Table 1**

The delivery methods and contract sums of the investigated contracts

CONTRACT NAME	DELIVERY METHOD	CONTRACT SUM (MSEK)
E03 Kvarnberget	DB	817
E04 Haga	DB and DBB	2 333
E05 Korsvägen	DB	3 816

*Note.* The contract sums exclude variations of contract (Office manager and economy of Västlänken, personal communication, 22 April 2021)

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## 2.4 The Västlänken project's procurement strategy

As earlier mentioned, the procurement strategy of STA includes to actively work to lower the barriers for domestic and foreign suppliers. Prior to the procurement phase of Västlänken, STA made major efforts to internationally advertise the project for foreign contractors (Trafikverket, 2014). In a document declaring the projects procurement strategy, it was evaluated that involvement of foreign contractors was the fifth largest risk connected to the strategy (Trafikverket, 2014). According to the document, the risks were “foreign contractors lack in competence regarding Swedish conditions and regulation, local geology, the design phase's scope as well as the time and cost of temporary rearrangements of the traffic” (Trafikverket, 2014, p. 43). The possible consequences mentioned were “delays, increased costs and misperceptions which could lead to defects and increased risks of accidents”. STA's plan for minimizing the risks with foreign contractors was highly connected to communicational actions – they stated that they should:

*“Start the procurements well in advance to provide a good opportunity for international contractors to seek local partners and inform themselves about Swedish conditions. Be clear and pedagogical in tendering documents, negotiations and tender reviews and be aware that lack of knowledge about Swedish and local conditions can exist”*

– Trafikverket (2014, p. 43)

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## 3 | Theoretical framework

In this chapter, literature on the thesis empirical topic will be presented together with theory which the case study findings will be analysed upon.

### 3.1 Project management competencies in construction

Since project management has a generic nature and is rather unattached to specific industries (Wirth, 1996, as cited by Information Resource Management Association, 2016), the general competencies and responsibilities for a project manager can be translated to apply for construction industry project managers.

Udo and Koppensteiner (2004) recognize that project management is a hard-defined profession by exemplifying that a project managers role can range from an “administrator to a multimillion-budget manager”. Hence, the authors press that the project managers role and responsibility should be defined based on the specific project needs. The authors further state that the role of a project manager generally includes the overall success of the project, primarily measured in a time-cost-quality consideration. In other words, a successful project is finished on time, on budget, with the correct functional and technical quality.

In regard to a project managers competency, Udo and Koppensteiner (2004) conducted a large sample of how a range of project management organizations defines project management competencies. Based on the sample, the authors identified three main project management competencies. These were *knowledge*, *proven experience* and *personality*. Included in the project management competencies knowledge and personality, communication was lifted as an important manager competency.

In a PRISMA Statement methodology conducted literature review with focus on trust in megaprojects, Cerić et al. (2020) found that trust is an important project management competency, and that trust, communication, collaboration, and co-ordination are important factors for megaproject success. The project management competencies communication and trust are further explored in the following sections.

#### 3.1.1 Manager-to-manager communication

Communication is a complex term which can mean different things, depending on the context and the situation (Dainty et al., 2006). The communication is performed by a sender, transferred through a medium, and lastly decoded and interpreted by a receiver. Communication can also occur between teams and organizations, and communication is in these settings translated and interpreted by individuals. Examples of communicational mediums are speech, text, gestures and

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audio. The authors underline that “communication has to be a two-way process” (Dainty et al., 2006, p. 6), meaning that the communication is not successful if the receiver does not confirm that the information is received and understood (Dainty et al., 2006, Olanrewaju et al., 2017). If the receiver does not confirm that the information is received, the sender of the information will be uncertain whether the information has been transferred successfully or not.

Communication is not always successful since it is translated and interpreted by individuals. To attain successful communication, it is important to understand why and when communication fails. The literature explains that unsuccessful communication is caused by barriers to communication (Dainty et al., 2006). Some barriers to communication are:

- *Language and dialect* – the communication can be affected by language and dialect differences (Huczynski & Buchanan, 2013).
- *Cultural diversity* – individuals can carry different culturally rooted expectations on how informal and formal communication should be carried out (Huczynski & Buchanan, 2013).
- *The individual’s frame of reference* - the interpretation of information is influenced by individual’s own frame of reference which for example can be shaped by the cultural background (Torrington et al., 2008). The individual’s frame of reference can for example have been developed from the individual’s childhood, social background, and education.
- *‘Halo or horns’ effect* – the receiver will agree with the information if the receiver trust the sender. On the contrary, the receiver will ignore or treat the information with caution if the receiver distrusts the sender (Torrington & Hall, 1998, as cited by Dainty et al., 2006).
- *Making assumptions* - the receiver make assumptions of what the sender means with the communication (Sheldrick-Ross & Dewdney, 1998, as cited by Dainty et al., 2006).
- *Failing to understand cultural differences* - the receiver fails to translate the cultural traits of the sender's communication and miss out on the content of what is communicated (Sheldrick-Ross & Dewdney, 1998, as cited by Dainty et al., 2006).

From an organizational viewpoint, successful communication is a core principle for a well-functioning project (Brockmann & Griemscheid, 2007; Abudi, 2013), and it enables achievement of coordinated results and is a means to avoid resistance to change (Dainty et al., 2006). Successful intraorganizational communication can also motivate employees and increase the understanding of the employee’s needs. In the fragmented construction industry, successful interorganizational communication has the power to ally individuals from different organizations and thus achieve project success by improving the project collaboration. On the contrary, (Mitkus & Mitkus, 2014) have found that unsuccessful interorganizational communication between client and contractor organizations is a frequently occurring cause of conflicts and disputes between the parties.

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As described in the introduction, construction projects have a high degree of complexity since many individuals are involved. Dainty et al. (2006) elaborates on this and underline that these different professionals are needed at different stages of the project which means that the set of individuals that constitutes the project organization are frequently changed. A consequence of the wide involvement of different professionals is that each individual has unique objectives which might not always align with each other. When these ranging objectives are acted upon, conflicts within the project organization might possibly arise. Further, the communication amongst the parties might be negatively affected when individual objectives are acted upon and the actions might also hinder the achievement of the project objectives. The risk that individuals act in accordance with their own objectives rather than the project objectives can be avoided if an effective communication practice is applied in the project (Dainty et al., 2006).

### 3.1.2 The basic forms of trust

As stated by Rousseau et al. (1998), “trust is a psychological state comprising the intension to accept vulnerability based upon positive expectations of the intensions or behaviour of another”. The authors further express that two necessary conditions, risk and independence, must exist for trust to be present. In a project context, many risks and interdependencies are present. Project risks can be cost or time related and interdependencies happens when different actors aim for the same goal, both actors are then dependent on each other. To share risks and to be dependent on each other creates a form of trust, either high or low. Trust in a project is of high importance since trust can work as a control mechanism (Cerić et al., 2020) and has shown to lower transaction costs, it is a good predictor on negotiations and conflict management and has a positive effect when trying to settle disputes (Rousseau, 1998).

There are three basic forms of trust – institution-based trust, calculus-based trust and relational trust (Kadefors,2004; Rousseau et al., 1998). Institution-based trust, is when two individuals belong to the same institution, or have the preconception that they do. Based on their institutional role, this determines if a person can be trusted or not, for example a manager for workers. The calculus-based trust is tied to economic incentives or inducement and costs. The trustworthiness can be confirmed or strengthened by certificates, references or reputation from others that will ensure that the actor can be trusted, but not on a personal level, only financially. The last one is relational trust, this is created when two individuals meet continuously. A relationship is built and parallel to the development of the relationship, a certain level of trust is built. The level of trust in a new relationship can vary depending on various parameters, intentions, the initial actions and circumstances to name a few. Simultaneously as the relationship is developing, the level of trust will either be strengthened or weekended (Kadefors, 2004).

The three basic forms of trust do not necessarily need to be present one at a time, all three can be present simultaneously (Rousseau et al., 1998). Depending on the current interest or objective, different forms of trust can be predominant. To be able to understand two parties

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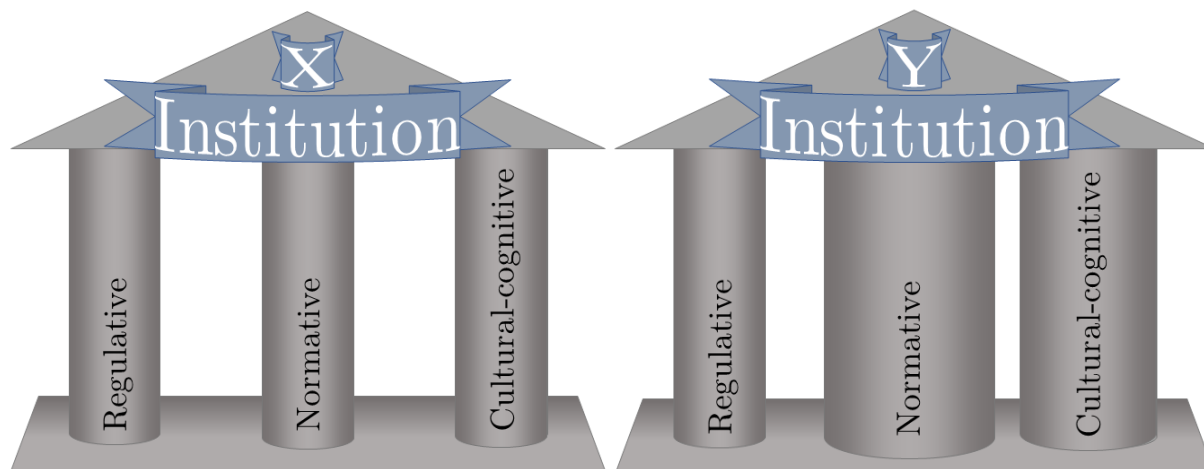
interplay of trust, it is fundamental to first recognize the context of the situation. The context will give a deeper understanding on how the three different forms of trust is performed.

### 3.2 Institutions

Scott (2014) defines institutions as they comprise of “regulative, normative, and cultural-cognitive elements that, together with associated activities and resources, provide stability and meaning to social life”. Institutions is the underlying guidelines for social behaviour and structures that individuals in different groups follows and behave in accordance with, depending on which institution they belong to. According to Scott (2014), an institution is built upon three systems represented by pillars, namely the normative pillar, the regulative pillar and the cultural-cognitive pillar. The three pillars create encouragement and prohibitions regarding legal, moral and cultural behaviour. All of the three pillars need to be present to establish an institution, but each pillars significance varies depending on the institution, see Figure 2.

**Figure 2**

Illustration example of two different institutions, X and Y.



*Note.* A comparison, illustrates that the three pillars significance can vary depending on the given institution.

#### 3.2.1 The regulative pillar

The regulative pillar is built up by rules, laws, codes and directives, created to control actors within the institution with incentives and sanctions. The law, established by governmental bodies and enforced by courts and police forces, is an example where rules and sanctions are highly present. The purpose of the regulative systems is to be instrumental for the actors part of the institution, and to make actors conform to different rules, laws etc. Rules and laws are created to acquire control, or to convey the impression of control. Scott (2014) argues that these regulatory measurements can and will have unintended effects. Effects such as hesitation or distrust can

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emerge if additional requirements or regulations are added to an agreement (Scott, 2014; Rousseau et al., 1998) or closely monitored (Rousseau et al., 1998). The actor that is being monitored can get the impression of not being trusted, even though the monitoring could be mandatory requirements from the organization.

### 3.2.2 The normative pillar

The normative pillar is created from the two sociological concepts values and norms. “Values and norms involve cognitive beliefs of approval or disapproval” (Encyclopedia of Sociology, 2021) and the purpose of the normative systems is to deal with appropriateness (Scott, 2014). Values and norms are strongly linked, where the values create the approval for norms. Values are the desired outcome from the observer's perspective, a preference from the observer's perspective, if the outcome is supposed to be regarded as good or bad. Norms is whether the outcome of the action is accepted or not by the group representing the institution.

Values and norms can be perceived in two ways, that actors act accordingly from value and norms on purpose or unconscious (Scott, 2014). The purposive way is when the actor is behaving from what can give the actor a beneficial result and the unconscious way of acting is rather seen as a cognitive behaviour. From an observer's perspective, the cognitive evaluation of another individual's action is based on the observer's perception of what achievement and competence is.

The relation between values and norms are described by the Encyclopedia of Sociology (2021) as “a norm is a behavioural rule, it produces a feeling of obligation. A value, in contrast, produces a feeling of desirability, of attraction or repulsion”. The normative systems can be described related to a game. The desired outcome is our values, ex “we want to win” and the norms are how are we supposed to do it, “score goals and follow the rules”.

When an individual within an institution has specific values and norms bound to his/her position in the institution, the individual's position is defined as a role. Roles can be formally given or informally created. An informal role is taken by the individual or given by the group over time. An individual who prepossesses a role will have certain expectations and preconceptions on how the individual should behave and act. These are normative expectations. Scott (2014) emphasises that the normative systems create an understanding of an actor's role and his/her expected behaviour in relation to the other actors within the institution. In summary, the normative systems design what behaviours are accepted and what power different roles have within an institution.

### 3.2.3 The cultural-cognitive pillar

The cultural-cognitive pillar manage orthodoxy. Distinct characteristics for the cultural-cognitive pillar are orthodoxy, cultural opinions, common beliefs, and shared logics of action. Cultures can be present at different levels, namely group-, organizational and community-level (Schein, 2004).

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Schein (p.8, 2004) describes, “culture is to a group what a personality or character is to an individual.” This is closely related to Hofstede & Hofstede’s (1991, p. 5) description “Culture is the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one group from another.” From an institutional point of view, Hofstede & Hofstede’s and Schein’s “group” is an institution. The software of the mind can also be related to the cognitive function within humans and Schein (2004) correlates this to that culture is a phenomena active below the surface. Culture is strongly connected to anthropology and group affiliation - humans follow and behave like the group if they feel a connection with the institution (Scott, 2014). According to Scott (2014), cognitive-culture is difficult to change and takes time and effort to transform. The right circumstances need to be present for cultural change to be possible, big happenings such as reorganisation of a company organization, pandemics, big change in markets etc. Connected to the right circumstances, Schein (2004) argues that a culture can not be good or bad, neither functionally effective or not, rather the connection between the culture and the environment it is present in can be right or wrong.

#### 3.2.4 Feelings connected to the institutional pillars

As described in the cultural-cognitive pillar, chapter 3.2.3, group affiliation is closely connected to culture. By being a part of a culture and embracing it, an individual can feel qualified and competent since the actor is behaving as they are supposed to. When behaving as expected, the actor is confirming the common beliefs and shared logics of action in the institution, and thus following the cognitive-culture (Scott, 2014; Thornton et al., 2012). If some of the regulative or normative systems is violated or verified, different feelings can arise. When the regulative systems are confronted, feelings of fear and guilt can arise, or the contrary, relief and innocence. In comparison, when normative systems are opposed, feelings of shame, disrespect or even humiliation can be perceived. Feelings of respect and honour are also present in connection to the normative systems.

If one individual is embracing the culture, following the rules, and behaving in accordance with the norms, the individual will feel affiliation, connected and competent for the institution. On the contrary, if the participant feels or act clueless and lost, they will instead get emotions of disconnection and separation from the institution. As a result, other participants of the institution will apprehend the individual as insane or absurd since they do not share the same ideas (Scott, 2014).

### 3.3 Institutional logics

Thornton et al. (2012) this defined institutional logics to “the socially constructed, historical pattern of material practises, assumptions, values, beliefs, and rules by which individuals produce and reproduce their material subsistence, organize time and space, and provide meaning to their social reality” (Thornton & Ocasio, 1999, p.804). To summarize, logics works as guidelines for

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how the institution should work and behave (Berg Johansen & Waldorff, 2015), the logics support the institution as illustrated in Figure 3.

**Figure 3**

Illustration of how institutional logics support an institution



*Note.* The four logics in this illustration are examples of logics.

An institution can include multiple logics, see Figure 3, this is referred to as *multiplicity* by Berg Johansen and Waldorff (2015). Multiplicity implies that several logics is *active* at the same time for an institution and support how the institution should work and behave. For example, the manager institution is comprised of several logics and beliefs at the same time, a multiplicity of logics works as dynamics of practices.

Berg Johansen and Waldorff (2015) describes that an institutional logic is created and based from a certain set of the three pillars defined by Scott (2014), namely the regulative, normative and cultural-cognitive pillars. For example, the logic of “shake hands” when meeting is based from the cultural-cognitive and the normative rather than in the regulative since rules seldom specify that a individual is supposed to shake hand when meeting people.

Berg Johansen and Waldorff (2015) summarizes how logics interact and synthesize it down to that logics can align and clash with each other. Aligning logics can be understood as being the same logic, and clashing logics is counterproductive towards each other. When one logic from two different parties have different definitions, or described as *conflicting demands* (Pache & Santos, 2013, as cited by Berg Johansen & Waldorff, 2015) this is managed as a clashing logic since they do not align with each other.

Further, Berg Johansen and Waldorff argue that logics can exists as *co-existing*, *competing* and *hybridized*, further presenting a fourth dimension of existing, as in *bricolage*.

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Co-existence and competition are the opposite of each other. Co-existence is when two or more logics co-exists, strengthening one of the logics can consolidate the other logic. Competition is present when one of the logics is strengthened while the others are weakened. Two co-existing logics could be the logic of “shaking hands” and the logic of “hugging each other” when meeting an individual. If both of the individuals accept this behaviour, their logics co-exist. However, if the individuals can not accept one or the other, the logics compete since one want to shake hands and the other wants to hug.

Hybrid logics occurs when logics either merges or dissolve to create a new logic (Berg Johansen & Waldorff, 2015). A hybrid logic is either created or in the creation phase since the hybrid logic is created from two or more logics from before since they either merged or dissolved. For example, if one individual has the logic of being on time and another has the logic of being 30 minutes late, is ok. The individuals may reach a compromise and adapt their behaviour to the logic of 15 minutes late is ok, a hybrid of both logics is created since the logics have merged.

The fourth one is bricolage, “where multiple logics provide different materials for actors to choose and combine among (Ansari, Wijen, & Gray, 2013; Binder, 2007; Christensen & Lounsbury, 2013), or where actors consciously choose to pick certain elements from a given logic while leaving out other (Lok, 2010; McPherson & Sauder, 2013; Voronov, De Clercq, & Hinings, 2013)” (Berg Johansen & Waldorff, 2015, p. 22). Bricolage is applicable for empirical studies when comparing micro- and meso-level of logics. Berg Johansen & Waldorff (2015) argues that bricolage can be described as a category of logics, and within this category, several logics exists which the participants of the institution can choose from. Since participants of the institutions can choose from logics within the bricolage, the logics can therefore co-exist, compete and hybrid.

Institutional logics which are active, can be active at different levels depending on which logic is examined, these levels are micro-, meso- and macro-level (Chun Guo et al., 2021). Were as the logics active at micro-level is personal and small groups logics, opinions and expectations on individuals. At meso-level is organizations and large-scale groups, as represented as companies and managers, while at macro-level is states and countries.

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## 4 | Methodology

In this chapter, the selected methodology of this thesis will be presented and explained as to provide an understanding of why the research approach was chosen to achieve the aim of the thesis, as well as to present how the thesis was carried out.

### 4.1 Research approach

As this thesis aims to investigate the communicational challenges present between the Swedish public client managers and foreign contractor managers, a qualitative research with an inductive approach was selected. Qualitative research allows the researcher to take part of what meanings and interpretations individuals give to experience behaviors, events or objects (Hennink et al., 2020). Further, a qualitative research approach is appropriate when the research will make use of detailed and rich answers (Bell et al., 2019).

To answer the research questions, a case study was conducted. The selection of the case study should be based on the prospect to result in the greatest learning (Stake, 1995 as cited by Bell et al., 2019). The Västlänken project is ongoing and has a high involvement degree of foreign contractors. Hence, the selection of Västlänken as the case study was evaluated not only to result in in-depth knowledge of the case, but also in generalized findings applicable for similar contexts.

The overall process of the thesis included a literature study, a pre-study, an interview study, expert interviews, an analysis-and-conclusion phase, as well as a presentation phase, see Figure 4. As illustrated in the figure, the literature study was an ongoing process throughout the thesis work, supporting the pre-study, the interview study, and the analysis of the case study. The pre-study was completed with the aim to obtain an insight to the case and the research topic, to narrow down the research scope as well as to gather knowledge and information relevant for the interview study. The aim of the interview study was to gather qualitative research data, which would be relevant to the research and empirical topic presented in the theoretical framework. The aim of the expert interviews was to discuss how the theory could be applied to the empirical findings, and to learn about contract improvements in cross-cultural infrastructure projects. The findings from the interview study were summarized and the data was analyzed with support from the theoretical framework chapter 3.3. Followingly, the relation between the empirical topic and the analysis results was discussed, and conclusions were drawn.

The thesis work was effectively and evenly divided between the two authors.

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**Figure 4**

The process of the thesis



## 4.2 Literature study

A literature study was carried out as means to create a theoretical framework for the master thesis. The theoretical framework was created with the aim to both present the empirical topic and to present the applicable theory for the case analysis. The empirical topic covers project management, communication and trust. The theory covers institutional theory and institutional logics.

The literature study was ongoing throughout the thesis work. Books and scientific articles were chosen for the theoretical framework. The books and scientific articles were mainly found from previous courses at Chalmers University of Technology, through recommendations and through searches on academic databases. Chalmers Library was used as a source for books and the academic databases used were mainly EBSCO, ScienceDirect, Scopus and Google Scholar. Main keywords used when searching for literature were *communication*, *conflict*, *construction*, *construction industry*, *culture*, *institutional logics*, *institutions*, *international*, *management*, *managers*, *organizations* and *trust*. The literature presented is taken from research based in the construction industry, in other project-based settings, as well as literature on analytical frameworks.

Governmental publications and information were also gathered and presented in chapter 2. The selection of what is presented in this chapter is aimed to support the understanding of how the client organization of the case study is related to the topic of investigation.

## 4.3 Pre-study

The pre-study included a document study, conversations with client organization representatives and unstructured interviews with managers involved in the Västlänken project. The pre-study phase also enabled the authors of the thesis to identify possible interviewees. The aim of the document study was to gain insight in STA's organization and in the Västlänken project. The document study was mainly conducted on documents and information published by the STA organization. Conversations with different individuals within the STA organization was initiated to broaden the understanding of the current operations connected to this thesis research focus.

In order to better understand the present communicational situation between managers in the Västlänken project and to narrow down the scope of the research, four unstructured interviews

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with STA and foreign contractor managers was conducted. The unstructured interviews included questions of difficulties, experiences, needs and possibilities, mainly in situations of communicational interaction, but also in relation to contract improvements. Two of them represented STA, and two of them represented a foreign contractor. Unstructured interviews are informal and conversational, and the interview method offers the possibility to ask open-ended questions surrounding pre-determined topics (Mann, 2016). Unstructured interviews are appropriate when the aim is to gain an understanding of individual's perceptions, beliefs and practices. Consequently, unstructured interviews are suitable in the early stage of the research in order to fully determine and identify the exploratory basis of the thesis. These interviews were not recorded, instead notes were taken.

#### 4.4 Interview study

The interview study was carried out through interviews with managers involved in the Västlänken project. The interview study was conducted in order to gather qualitative data for the thesis. The aim of the interview study was to cover the views, opinions and experiences from professionals representing STA and foreign contractors in regard to manager-to-manager communicational interaction. Semi-structured interview was chosen since it enables deepened understanding of what the interviewee feels is important to convey (Bell et al., 2019). A semi-structured interview of this kind is often supported by an interview guide, containing a basic set of interview questions. The format offers possibility to ask run-up questions specifically suited for each interviewee's answer. The pre-determined interview questions do not have to be asked in a specific order, the order can be adapted to the situation. As Bell et al. (2019) recommends, the interview guide was created so that the questions would help answering the research questions but at the same time not be too specific. The questions had an open-ended nature and they were adapted to the linguistics which suited the interviewees. The questions were limited to micro- and meso-level of communication, as defined by Chun Gou et al. (2021).

##### 4.4.1 Ethical consideration

As stated by Bell et al. (2019) - ethical considerations are a vital part of the research process. The four ethical principles broken down by Diener and Grandall (1978, as cited in Bell et al., 2019) have served as ethical guidelines for this thesis research approach. The first principle is about avoiding harm for the research participants. The second principle is about informing research participants to the point that they can make informed decisions regarding their participation as well as informed consent. The third principle is about protecting the privacy of the research participants. Lastly, the fourth principle is about preventing deception by fully inform about the research topic.

In regard to the first ethical principle, harm for research participants have been avoided mainly based on the choice to anonymize the research participants, see 4.4.1.1 Anonymity. The

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second, third and fourth ethical principles were applied when potential interviewees were contacted. In the interview proposals, it was clarified what this research was aiming to investigate, what the contribution from the intended interviewee would be, and that content from the interview would be published in a written thesis report. In regard to the third ethical principle, the interview proposal also included information that the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) was integrated in all processes regarding the interviewee's personal information. Further, the overall management of all interviewees data (names, contact information, recordings etc.) was handled in accordance with GDPR.

Another process where the second and third ethical principle was applied was after each interview. The interviewee was sent an e-mail asking for the permission on how the interview material could be used. One of the three following alternatives could be chosen by the interviewee, and their consent of the choice was required to be returned in an e-mail:

- A) **Everything said by me can be used and quoted without any further consent,** I'm aware that my real name or specific role will not be used, mentioned or supplied in the thesis but other people involved in the same project may still recognize me in the text.
- B) **Everything said by me can be used and quoted with my consent,** I'm aware that my real name or specific role will not be used, mentioned or supplied in the thesis but other people involved in the same project may still recognize me in the text.
- C) **Everything said by me can be used (not quoted) but some parts have to be altered in some way so it will be unidentifiable, with my consent.** I'm aware that my real name or specific role will not be used, mentioned, or supplied in the thesis but other people involved in the same project may still recognize me in the text.

A second confirmation email was sent if they choose alternative B or C to get the approval if citation was needed for the thesis.

This thesis was carried out together with Chalmers University of Technology and STA. Hence, the organizations ethical guidelines and code of conduct was always an underlying basic when communicating with stakeholders and managing information. As STA representatives, it was evaluated that the foreign contractor interviewees would possibly withhold information that could restrain the thesis findings. This created the possible dilemma of "them" versus "us". This was managed by thoroughly communicating the aim of the thesis, as well as underlining that the thesis was carried out by students.

#### *4.4.1.1 Anonymity*

To anonymously manage the interviews was of high importance since the authors of this thesis wanted to avoid harm of the research participants, in accordant with the first ethical principle referred to in chapter 4.4.1 Ethics. STA's projects are partly funded by Swedish taxpayers and

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sometimes these projects provoke citizens. Västlänken is a project which have faced strong surveillance and opposition amongst the citizens of Gothenburg (SVT, 2018). Since anonymity is a difficult process, a lot of emphasis was put into making information, workflow, and interviews anonymous.

To protect research participants, structured and proven methods of anonymity have been applied. Based on the methods suggested by Kaiser (2009) about conducting anonymous interviews, the interviewees are not mentioned by name, specific role, or which company they represent in this thesis, with exception for the client company representatives. Since the case is a mega infrastructure project set in Sweden, there can only be one possible client, STA. Hence, anonymizing the client organization representatives was not considered necessary. To mask everyone's identity, the interviewees are grouped into "STA/Trafikverket manager" (TM) and "foreign contractor manager" (FCM), see Table 2. The name of the research participants has not been shared to anyone else.

#### 4.4.2 Interviewees

Suitable interviewees were identified during the pre-study of the thesis. Key persons of the Västlänken project organization were chosen, with the help of previous knowledge about the project since one of the authors has worked within the project of Västlänken for several years. From recommendations, knowledge and studying the project organization the authors created a schematic of which managers to invite for interviews. Every chosen manager is from the top of the project organization and has the ability and hierarchical power to influence the project. From this schematic, 18 managers were asked to participate in this thesis. 12 managers accepted, 2 managers neglected and 4 managers did not answer. Each interviewee has been assigned an interview-ID, see Table 2.

**Table 2**

Table of interviewees

INTERVIEWEE-ID	ORGANIZATION	INTERVIEW DURATION
TM1	Swedish Transport Administration	58 minutes
TM2	Swedish Transport Administration	56 minutes
TM3	Swedish Transport Administration	66 minutes
TM4	Swedish Transport Administration	62 minutes
TM5	Swedish Transport Administration	56 minutes
TM6	Swedish Transport Administration	53 minutes
FCM1	Foreign contractor	54 minutes
FCM2	Foreign contractor	62 minutes
FCM3	Foreign contractor	65 minutes
FCM4	Foreign contractor	56 minutes
FCM5	Foreign contractor	58 minutes
FCM6	Foreign contractor	60 minutes

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The three contracts E03 Kvarnberget, E04 Haga and E05 Korsvägen are all represented by the interviewed managers. The foreign contractor managers either represents an organization consisting of many professionals from the central parts of Europe or represents an organization with many professionals from the Mediterranean parts of Eurasia. The *foreign contractor managers* will be referred to as *contractor managers* in chapter 5, 6, 7.

#### 4.4.3 How the interviews were conducted

The interviews were held by the authors and as stated earlier, held with a semi-structured interview approach to enable flexibility during the interview. The interviews were mainly held online since during the writing of this thesis, the Swedish government had restrictions on in person meetings (MSB, 2021). Therefore 10 of the 12 interviews were held digitally, and the two in-person interviews were held where a safe distance could be guaranteed.

The digital interviews were held over Microsoft Teams © and this thesis's authors had the webcams on during all interviews. By always having a webcam on, emotions, gestures and expressions could easily be shown although the interviews were held online. A lot of emphasis were put into making the interviewee feel trusted and thus comfortable showing their own webcam and relax during the interview.

The first step of gaining the interviewees trust for this thesis was to inform that anonymity was a big priority for the thesis. In the interviews-invitation-email, the interviewees were informed of how their information and interview data would be anonymously handled. This resulted in 90 % of the attendees having their webcam on and a sincere conversation could be held. A lot of emphasis were put into making the interviewee feel heard, instead of interrogated. The interviews started with a brief presentation of the authors of this thesis, the aim of the thesis and general small talk to create a good mood before the interview could start. The interviewee was also informed regarding how the personal information and interview data would be managed and that GDPR was followed in the thesis.

#### 4.5 Expert interviews

Interviews with Daniella Troje and Aisha Nadar, experts in their respective fields, were conducted. Troje have applied institutional theory throughout her PhD and she applied an institutional perspective in her doctoral dissertation. Nadar is an expert in infrastructure procurement and dispute resolution in large cross-border infrastructure projects, and she has been a member of the FIDIC board from 2016 to 2020.

The interview with Troje was held the 11th of March 2021. The topics discussed in the interview was institutional theory, institutional logics, suggestions on how to ask interview questions to boost the data gathering, how the theory of institutional logics could be applied to the empirical findings from the interview study, and how the thesis report could be structured to

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best present the findings. Everything discussed with Troje have influenced the processes of the research and the thesis report.

To contribute to the answer of the third research question, the expert interview with Nadar was conducted. The interview was conducted after the interview study and carried out in two sessions, the first session on the 5th of April 2021, and the second session on the 7th of April. Before the interview, a brief description of the thesis focus was shared with Nadar. As the first interview session started, the authors of this thesis shared a summary of the findings from the interview study. From the interview findings and based on her experience, Nadar could share applicable improvements in client-contractor contracts where the actors have different origins.

#### 4.5.1 Interview findings for contract improvement

Nadar (2021a; 2021b) shared the perspective that a culture has its unwritten, silent expectations on how things should be done and performed, as described by Nadar as norms. Nadar further elaborated that these cultural norms are unwritten, which can be difficult for someone who comes from another culture to learn and understand how things should be done. Nadar applied this perspective on the Swedish construction industry's practices. When a client announces a procurement, the silent expectations are seldom communicated since the tenderers historically originates from the Swedish construction culture. According to Nadar, foreign contractors are not always aware of the construction industry norms in Sweden when they are invited to enter the Swedish market. Since alignment in expectations are a desirable state in the client-contractor relation, it could be of value for the Swedish client to identify and understand the norms and unwritten expectations the client has on contractors, so that these expectations can be communicated to potential foreign tenderers. The client can explore its expectations by comparing a Swedish standard contract to an international standard contract and ask "if I use an international standard, what does it make me communicate that I normally do not communicate with the Swedish standard?". This approach could result in learnings of what could be assumed in Sweden and what is not assumed internationally. Another approach can be to introduce a prequalification tender so that a conversation with the prequalified foreign contractors have more time to ask questions about the upcoming contract for tender.

The client can also reflect upon the choice of contractual language, and the language in the regulatory demands. Many foreign contractors might not be willing to take the risk of engaging in a project where the contract and all regulatory demands are written in Swedish. What is the foreign contractor gaining by being involved in those circumstances?

When a tender is won by a foreign contractor, Nadar's recommendation was that a post-award conference should be held before the project starts. The aim for the conference could be to clarify unclarity, so that the expectations between the client and the foreign contractor aligns. The client should also go over the contract together with the foreign contractor to make sure that both parties have a common understanding of everything.

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## 4.6 Data analysis

*Thematic analysis* was the data analysis approach chosen for the empirical findings, and the recommendation from Bell et al. (2019) served as inspiration to the process. Each interview was transcribed shortly after the interview was conducted. Parallel to the transcription of the interviews, reoccurring themes relevant for the thesis was identified, these themes were *ways of communicating, priorities for project success, expectations on managers, hierarchy, decisions, trust, and contract improvement*. Followingly, each interview transcription was sorted into the identified themes. When all interviews had been transcribed and thematically sorted, the process of identifying the shared views among the interviewees begun. A lot of emphasis was put to only present the shared views amongst the interviewees, and to eliminate the views which only was expressed by a few.

When the findings were summarized, the analysis of the findings begun. The analysis of the findings was made through the lens of institutional logics theory, as a means to answer the first two research questions. For the discussion and conclusion, final notes connected the institutional analysis results to the empirical topic literature and from that, the conclusions could be drawn.

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## 5 | Interview findings

This chapter will present the interview findings from the interviews with the managers in Västlänken.

### 5.1 Ways of communicating for the managers in Västlänken

All interviewees had the perception that communication between STA managers and contractor managers are carried out on a daily basis, in settings ranging from informal conversations to contractual discussions. The intensity of interorganizational communication was partly explained to be connected to a specific paragraph in the contracts, namely a paragraph stating that the project will proceed with a high level of collaboration between the client organization and the contractor organization.

As a result of the high level of collaboration, each contract has a project organization, comprising of both client and contractor representatives. Each project organization has its assigned co-location office, located nearby each contract's production site. According to the managers, the co-location offices enable both informal and formal oral communication, ranging from spontaneous hallway interaction to scheduled meetings. It was found that these spontaneous interactions were much appreciated amongst the managers since it both increased the collaboration and made it possible to quickly solve problems. Contractor managers also valued these spontaneous interactions since it enabled possibilities to easily find answers to questions directed through client managers. However, due to the Covid-19 pandemic, most managers and other project organization members work from home which naturally has resulted in less, if any, spontaneous interactions. The managers expressed that online communication is not as easy as the face-to-face communication since writing have a higher risk of being misinterpreted. Written communication was also explained to not include as much information as oral communication, it is for example not as easy to communicate the context of a topic in writing.

The interorganizational manager-to-manager communication was found to be carried out in either Swedish or English, depending on the type of communication. Since the contractual language is Swedish, some meetings are held in Swedish even though the contractor managers have little to no knowledge of the Swedish language. For example, construction meetings are held in Swedish since these meetings have the largest legal weight. However, other interorganizational meetings are generally held in English if there are one or more participants who do not understand Swedish. TM6 expressed that it is impossible to reach the contractor representatives competence if not a mutual language is not spoken. TM3 had a perception that meetings held in English are

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shorter and more effective than meetings held in Swedish since they tend to stick to the topic when English is spoken.

In general, the managers were satisfied with the intraorganizational communication climate. It was reflected in the interviews that even conversations of contractual weight can be discussed between managers of different interests, a phenomenon connected to the high level of collaboration applied in the contracts. A few contractor managers expressed that STA's openness and cooperation in contractual matters were quite different from how clients act in their home country. Further, both contractor managers and STA managers expressed perceptions of contractor representatives not always being as open towards STA managers. For example, problems are sometimes perceived to be hidden by contractor managers.

Even if the communication generally is working well, it was indicated by the managers that sometimes STA managers, and sometimes contractor managers, have had to adapt to the way of communicating with the other party. In one of the contracts investigated, the contractor representatives said that they had adapted their communication to the "Swedish way of communication".

*"I can see a difference on how intense you can take a discussion with the client. Comparing this to [my country], when I am in Sweden I kind of circle around the problem more instead of addressing it right away. I adapt to the Swedish way. Circle around, try to explain the whole picture, and take in all perspectives, and allowing the people to take it with them and have another meeting and another meeting but slowly slowly come to an agreement."*

– FCM4

According to the contractor managers in the mentioned contract, they have adapted in ways of talking with their counterparties in the client organization so that STA managers would not feel overrun by the contractor managers inherited way of communicating. These contractor managers expressed that it does not work to communicate and come to conclusions while being too straight forward in the Swedish business climate. They had experienced that, amongst other things, it was generally easier to come to conclusions through discussions together with Swedish managers.

Another thing that contractor managers have learned is that STA managers can be too vague in their communication. As expressed by FCM1, STA managers avoid saying "no" when contractor managers propose possible solutions to problems, even though they mean to say "no".

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*“When they say to you ‘Okay, well do you really think...’, or like ‘Please investigate more...’ then you know, they actually mean no. They just don’t tell you. [...] It is not so that they said ‘actually we don’t want that, we never said we want that’ and then you spent a lot of time going wrong directions”*

– FCM1

An example of adaption was given by TM2. TM2 had gained the insight that what TM2 initially thought was said orally and through the body language by contractor representatives, not always aligned with what the words and body language meant for the sender of the communication. From this insight, TM2 has started assigning time to verify that a mutual understanding is attained. TM2 had also gained the insight that things that had been agreed upon with contractor managers not always was followed as agreed. For example, information had not been distributed throughout the contractor organization as agreed upon.

*“They take these things so lightly, while we are used to an agreement being kept. What is agreed must be fulfilled and kept. And of course, it goes wrong sometimes, but then they should notice us in time. [...]. But they do not, it just does not happen or is done in another way and then we get really pissed.”*

– TM2

Further, the interviews revealed that there sometimes are different expectations on how communication should be carried out. In one of the contracts investigated, STA managers expressed their amazement of discussions tending to turn exceptionally heated from the contractor manager’s behalf. The STA managers pointed out that contractor managers could get heated to the point of shouting to professionals in meetings. FCM5 and FCM6 both said that managers in their organization often act out their feelings, something which they said was not the general case for Swedish managers. FCM5 gave an example of why feelings are important to act upon:

*“If I have a machine that is broken, if I can scream at you on the phone and just say ‘the machine is broken, I am on delay’ and you say ‘we will fix it no problem’. But if I start writing emails ‘I have the machine broken’, then you will not really understand what I feel so you can misinterpret.”*

– FCM5

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The screaming tendency from contractor managers is something which STA managers were not familiar with until this project. However, TM6 had observed that contractor managers have made efforts in dampen these behaviours. FCM4 also elaborated on the matter of Swedes not being familiar with contractor managers letting situations get heated:

*“I would say that [people from my home country] are perceived to be very direct and straight forward. My lesson learned is that you can not be cautious enough in what you say and how you say it. If you are in a different culture, as here in Sweden, things like you don't mean to be rude at all, can be perceived as rude from the other side. As for me, I try to be as polite as possible so that this does not happen.”*

– FCM4

## 5.2 Expectations on managers

When STA managers were asked to describe STA's role as a client in the project the answer was primarily to audit and inspect. Many of the STA managers were of the opinion that they are supposed to support and answer questions, but many of them expressed their confusion that it was not enough stated if they should support and answer questions for the contractors. The time planned for STA managers was not enough to additionally be able to support contractor managers. TM3 argued that this was due to that STA's organization has changed their approach from “passive client” to an “active client”. In the passive client approach, STA managers are supposed to solely rely on that the designs will be done as contracted and afterwards inspect that demands are fulfilled etc. Instead, STA organization changed their approach to be “active”, where STA managers are supposed to audit and support in decisions. The problem is that all managers have different opinions on what this role description entails.

The contractor managers point of view is however that with a contract of “high collaboration” and the “active client”, implies that STA managers should support in all matters ranging from small questions and complex problems, and assist in interpretation of regulations, laws etc. The majority of contractor managers experience that STA managers are not fulfilling their role, instead STA managers interfere too much with opinions and decisions about design matters that only the contractor should be able to care about.

*“They are interfering in our responsibility in our work, we have gotten the design responsibility in our contract and I feel like they are trying to interfere too much.”*

– FCM4

Even though the managers have different opinions regarding what the counterparties should do or not, both parties agrees that a manager should be competent, skilled and experienced. A general underlying view amongst the STA managers and contractor managers is that collaboration is

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essential for the success of the project, if collaboration is achieved. The contractual part of “high collaboration” is often implemented at meetings, and all the managers shared the opinion that in this project, there are too many meetings. Since there are a lot of meetings, STA managers and contractor managers clarified that meetings are necessary for project progress but the implication of collaboration at meetings differ. STA managers and contractor managers have different opinions on who should be invited to attend a meeting or not. Contractor managers expressed that STA managers have a habit of inviting several professionals to meetings that, according to them, has no purpose there. Contractor managers often gets invited to meetings where they argue, have “nothing to add” for the meeting and experiences it as a “waste of time and money”.

### 5.3 Hierarchy and decisions

All of the interviewees had recognized different hierarchy cultures compared to what they are used to. Depending on where you are in the hierarchy, or which organization you work for, the personal experiences differed a lot. When contractors described the view of how the hierarchical structure is at STA, it was described as “flat with few hierarchical levels”. On the contrary when describing their own as a pyramid with clear distinct differences in hierarchical status and power. Some of the contractors argued that with a flat organization, decisions could be more deliberately discussed since professionals with right amount of knowledge can take part in decisions even though the hierarchy would not formally allow it. However, the contrast in hierarchy behaviour between the managers has created problems since contractor managers are used to decisions is taken almost instantaneously by the superordinate.

*“In [my home country] you're used to sitting in a meeting and then you like ask a question and then they say ‘Okay, well you do it like this’. In Sweden, it's like ‘Okay, we have to ask this guy, we have to ask this guy, and then give me a month and then we'll come back’, so it takes a bit longer.”*

– FCM1

STA managers have noticed what FCM1 and several more of the contractor managers have pointed out, that contractor managers are not happy with the time inefficiency of decision making and taking. The STA managers argues that some decisions need to be addressed in bigger group meetings with all of the project managers from the client organization to be able to discuss different outcomes a decision may result in.

*“Maybe Trafikverket (STA) are more used to put the decision close to the problem. We have a big group with broad knowledge that takes decisions on several levels. Then if needed, some decisions need to be lifted even higher within the organization.”*

– TM3

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The process of STA managers taking decisions is, according to the contractor managers, taking too long time. The time period of taking a decision should and could be shortened. Since STA is a governmental organization, these processes take time according to TM3. However, the interpretation of when a decision is taken is interpreted in different ways between STA managers and contractor managers. Some contractor managers argue that a decision have been taken when STA managers have a different understanding and interpret the decision as “in the making and not yet taken”, the following was said by TM5:

*“As a Trafikverket (STA) representative you have to watch out for what you say. With a minimum opportunity to claim a change in the contract, the contractor will claim it. You have to be careful on what and how you express certain things on meetings, and watch your tongue. You have to be on your watch so to say.”*

– TM5

Further, the time period for a decision is apprehend as STA managers are not able to take decisions. At several occasions, contractor managers expressed their dislike towards consultants representing the STA organization. According to many contractor managers, consultants representing governmental organizations is perceived as a global problem, not only in Sweden. Further elaborating that the problem still exists that consultants representing STA do not dare or have mandate to take decisions, which creates problems for the project.

*“What I can see here is also that many people representing Trafikverket (STA) are consultants so there is a huge dependency towards Trafikverket (STA). They don’t want to annoy Trafikverket (STA) by signing anything that involves money and time. So, they are in a dependency and a weak position. Not independent in their judgement.”*

– FCM4

STA has managed this problem by not having consultants in the absolute top management of the Västlänken project organization. However, that does not eliminate the fact that consultants are representing STA and should be able to make decisions, according to the contractor managers.

#### 5.4 Priorities for project success

As an extension to Swedish law and regulations, STA has requirements on contractors involved in their projects, named TDOK and also referred to as “building codes”, “design codes” and “codes” in the interviews. TDOK both includes rules and recommendations for STA’s projects,

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and these results in strict regulatory demands and administration for contractors involved in their projects.

*“They are here to build a tunnel while Trafikverket (STA) believes half the job is to build a tunnel and that the other half is to keep track that the surrounding buildings are not moving, that you have a permit to work on the roads, that you have the right education, that work preparations have been carried out, that you have an approved construction document.”*

– TM6

From the interviews, it appeared that STA managers and contractor managers view the codes differently. The STA managers were of the view that if codes and administration is not followed correctly, the project would face time delays and larger costs. Contractor managers perceived that STA focus on codes and administrative requirements (quality) at the expense of time and cost. It was expressed that if the codes are followed too literally, the expertise, experience and innovation which the contractor managers possess will not be fully utilized.

*“The design code is a way of doing it. Since we come from international companies, we also have different approaches and different ways of doing it, and these approaches are not what they are used to here in Sweden.”*

– FCM3

*“They insist that every minor paragraph in the Swedish code is fulfilled and that makes it difficult to be innovative. It is like a building code, it's like a law and give you a guideline, and then you interpret the law. Then you have Trafikverket (STA) that says ‘no this is a law, there is no room for interpretation’. It becomes very difficult to be innovative. [...] In a couple of times when we had ideas for innovations, we stopped ourselves and said ‘it is not worth it anymore, it is not worth the effort, this is something they will not agree on’.”*

– FCM4

In a further regard of time, both STA managers and contractor managers brought up that they have identified that the views on, and practices of, production can be different depending on what country you come from. It was found that all managers had the shared goal of finishing the project on time so that the trains could start rolling in the tunnel. For this to be achieved, production is of high priority for the managers. However, the managers have different views on how production should be carried out. For STA managers, updating and following the production schedule is a key for success. This is elaborated on by TM2:

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*“Production schedule is almost the most important to be able to reach a good production time. And the contractor has not succeeded with this yet. There is a production schedule but it is not reliable. [...] They do not understand the importance of it. In Sweden, the production schedule is the most important thing to follow.”*

– TM2

It was further found that STA managers and contractor managers valued the production schedule differently. The contractor managers argued that the schedule can be altered after the work is done while the STA managers argued that the production schedule should be ahead of executed production.

### 5.5 Trust within the project

STA has put a lot of effort into creating the right circumstances for the creation of trust, through co-location offices, collaboration meetings, open discussions, high transparency etc., from the initial phase trust has been a high priority for STA. STA managers described their approach into the project Västlänken as a little bit naive, that the recognized contractors from around the world could be trusted from the start. This was not the case according to the majority of the STA managers, instead, a more cautious approach towards the contractors is now taken. TM4 elaborated that the contractor managers can be difficult to manage since their culture is so different from Swedish culture. This does not eliminate the trust between managers on the project. Several of the STA managers argue that some of the contractor managers are great to work with since they have a lot of experience and frequently suggest new and innovative solutions, managers like that are easy to trust. On the contrary, some of the contractor managers are perceived as deliberately working against STA and not together in collaboration with them, managers like that can be problematic and harder to trust.

STA managers have observed a noticeable behaviour from the contractor managers, that eventual problems and mistakes are hidden and not brought up to the client. This is further confirmed with statement from FCM1, that this is part of culture, to hide mistakes and problems from the client, as long as possible. None of the contractor managers argue that lying is good, but not telling the client everything is not considered as lying, expressed by FCM1:

*“There's actually a thing that in [my home country] you try to hide mistakes. So when you in [my home country] do something and you do something wrong, you hide it as long as possible.”*

– FCM1

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STA managers described that this behaviour has created a form of distrust towards the contractor managers. According to STA managers, this behaviour is present amongst several of the contractor managers. The distrust is not only present from STA managers towards contractor managers, but also from contractor managers towards STA managers. However, contractor managers argue that, when working with STA managers, they do not work with STA, they work with consultants from consultancy firms. Why contractor managers do not trust these consultants correlates to that the contractor managers do not trust that consultants representing STA have enough authority to make decisions, as also described in 5.3.

There is a distinct relation between decision and trust according to contractor managers. Some of the contractor managers argued that Sweden has a high threshold of how much an organization can trust an individual and vice versa. Several of the contractors expressed and described STA managers as “honest” and “open”, elaborating that this behaviour increased their trust towards STA managers. It was apparent that contractor managers were not familiar with this “honest” and “open” behaviour from the client.

## 5.6 Contract improvement

All managers were asked if there was anything which STA should take into consideration in the procurement of future projects where foreign contractors will tender. Many underlined that they are not experts in the discipline of contracts, but many managers gladly shared their experiences from working in the Västlänken project over the past years. Some STA and contractor managers had comments on the risks with accepting consortiums created just for this project. They were of the view that tougher demands on the contractor organization should be formulated early in the tendering phase. The demands should secure that the winning tenderer not only have an ownership constellation but instead brings their own knowledge and professionals, because with an ownership constellation there is a risk that the contractor employ many Swedish consultants which makes the projects miss out on potential foreign expertise and innovation. Further, it was suggested that tougher demands could include that the foreign contractor organization should have mandatory documents for a company. An equal treatment plan, collective agreements and employee benefits were examples of mandatory documents.

Many sceptical voices were also raised in regard to the choice to choose Swedish as the contractual language. TM6 talked about this and said the following:

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*“It falls on its own unreasonableness that the contract language is in Swedish, when you have a contractor who does not speak Swedish. How can we require that from them? [...] You can not say that you want to focus on inviting foreign contractors and then write that all communication and all documents must be in Swedish. Then it falls immediately. I think Trafikverket (STA) will review that. Even though the argument is ‘yes but we must understand, therefore we must have meetings in Swedish’, well if the contractor does not understand then? We will not have access to the contractor's expertise if we do not use a common language. You lose quite a lot by that. We lose quality when translating from Swedish to [the foreign language]. If you instead decide that the contract language is English, then you meet in the middle.”*

– TM6

As a further solution to mitigate, it was suggested to use FIDIC (international standard contracts) instead of Swedish standard contracts (AB04 and ABT06) by some of the managers.

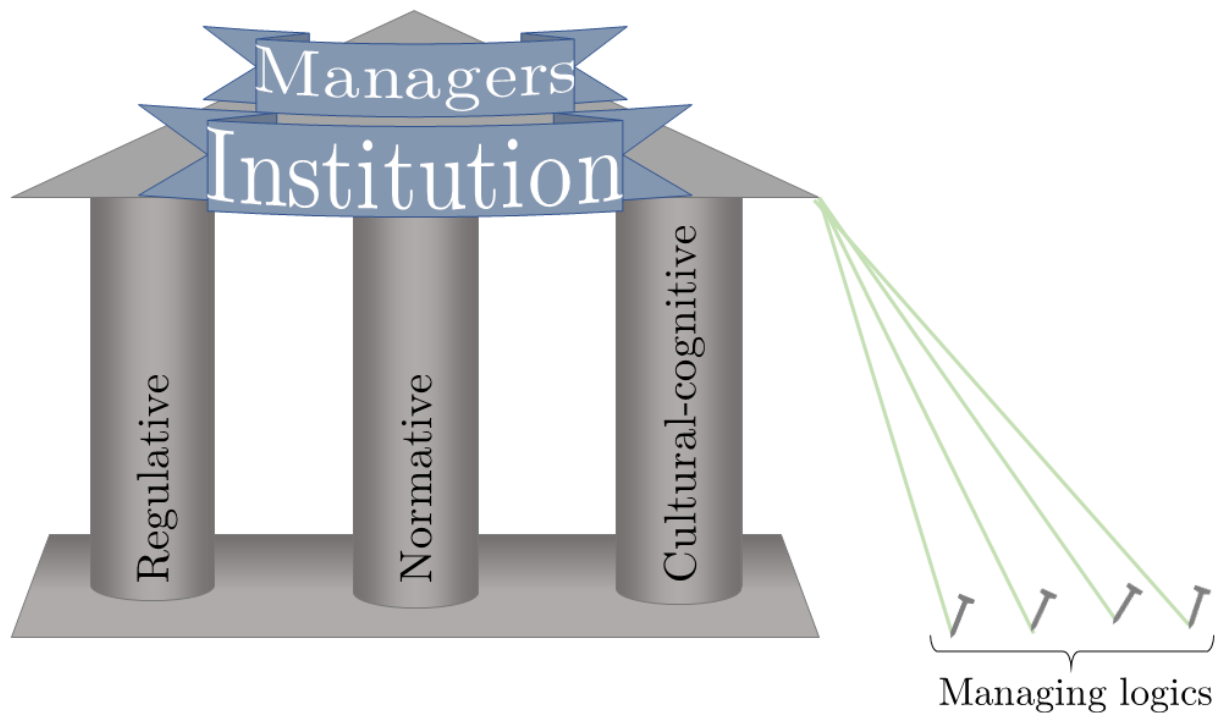
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## 6 | Analysis

The analysis was carried out in accordance with Thornton et al. (2012) theory of institutional logic. Further, the logics have been categorized in Friedland and Alford's (1991) clashing-aligning terminology. The relationship between STA managers and contractor managers clashing logics have been analysed and categorized into competing, co-existing, or hybrid logics, based on Thornton et al. (2012). The fourth existence of logics, bricolage, introduced by Berg Johansen and Waldorff (2015) is seen as a supra-logic in this context, and referred to be the *managing logics* for the Västlänken project managers. The logics discussed in this chapter is what the resulting managing logics is comprised of, as illustrated in Figure 5.

**Figure 5**

Illustration of managing logics – the institutional logics of the manager institution



### 6.1 Ways of communicating for the managers in Västlänken

Contractor managers argue that direct communication is important for projects to run smoothly, especially direct communication between them and client managers. It was evident that contractor managers find it tiring that STA managers not always are direct enough, for example not saying “no” to proposals even though they most of the time mean to say “no”. Many contractor managers

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expressed that they have wasted a lot of time investigating things which should have been discouraged by STA managers early on. Over time, contractor managers have learned that STA are too vague in these situations, hence contractors have stopped contributing with proposals. In other words, contractor managers have a managing logic of being direct and clear in their communication is clashing with how STA managers behave. From the contractor managers point of view, this implies that they do not consider that STA managers are managing as they should in the manager institution. However, this does not imply that STA managers do not value direct and clear communication but it can be an indication that the STA managers value the logic of reaching consensus regarding decisions, further analysed in 6.3.

Another managing logic where two logics are clashing is to keep the word. To keep the word is a logic which is of high importance for STA managers, contractors do not always keep what they have promised, which implies that the logics are competing. To manage this clash, STA managers have changed their behaviour by applying extra monitoring and additional requirements for this specific contractor organization which imply that STA has lost their trust towards this contractor.

Several contractor managers expressed their appreciation of STA managers being open and honest in conversations of contractual weight. This implies that contractor managers do not have a managing logic which supports open contractual communication between client and contractor. The interviews also revealed that contractor managers not always practise openness when it comes to problems and mistakes created by themselves. In other words, hiding problems and mistakes is included as a managing logic in the manager institution for this contractor. The logics “honesty” and “hiding problems and mistakes” are two clashing logics, still both are present and thus they co-exist.

A part of the managing logic on how to talk to one another is also clashing between the managers. It is unfamiliar for STA managers that other managers raise their voice to the extent of yelling. Hence, it is a part of STA managers logic that you talk to people with a moderate tone of voice. It is a part of the contractor managers logic to be permitted to have heated discussions and to yell at colleagues and counterparties. The contractor managers logic of yelling also includes a logic that it is important to be able to share one's emotions. On the contrary, the interviews did not reveal if STA managers have the logic of sharing their emotions. This could explain the incomprehension STA managers had towards the contractor managers logic of yelling. However, the STA managers have accepted and understood that yelling is a common practice in the contractor managers institution. In addition, contractor managers have dampened their yelling behaviour to better suit the expectations from the client. This, in combination with STA managers gradually accommodating to the yelling behaviour indicates that a hybrid logic is progressively created.

In regard to aligning managing logics, the interviews revealed that STA and contractor managers had the opinion that a mutual language was the key for effective communication. To

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be able to understand each other, English is frequently used in the daily communication. Since English is not mother tongue for either STA managers nor contractor managers, important information can be lost in translation when communicating.

No one of the interviewees has deliberately expressed a desire for more or less communication. Hence, one could argue that the managing logic of communication frequency for the managers aligns. The co-location offices have served as a means to facilitate informal and formal communication. All managers had the aligning managing logic of valuing both informal and formal communication. However, due to the Covid-19 pandemic the every-day physical interactions have declined, and so have the frequency of informal communication.

By reason of the Covid-19 pandemic, many involved professionals in the Västlänken project work from home. Hence online communication has served as an important tool for communication between the managers interviewed. Most managers agrees that emailing is an important tool for communication. However, most managers shared the managing logic that email communication is not as effective as oral communication.

## 6.2 Expectations on managers

Five aligning managing logics were found when investigating expectations on managers. Three of these were that collaboration is key for project success, that managers solve problems and that a manager should be competent, skilled, and experienced. The fourth aligning managing logic found was that managers should be able to support other managers. Supporting other managers includes the action of answering questions and discussing urgent matters. The contractor managers sometimes experienced they did not get enough support from STA managers, and many STA managers expressed that they wish they could support more than what their role description includes. Lastly, the fifth aligning managing logic was that both STA and contractor managers shared the logic that arranging and attending meetings is a big part of managing.

An evident clashing managing logic connected to meetings was contractor managers expressed their dislike towards STA managers habit of inviting too many professionals to meetings. Contractor managers advocate that only appropriate professionals should be invited to meetings which probably STA managers also advocate. However, who is appropriate to attend a specific meeting differs, thus this part of the managers meeting logic clash.

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### 6.3 Hierarchy and decisions

STA and contractor organizations have distinct differences in their organizational structures. The contractor organizations have a pyramid organization structure, while STA has a fairly flat organization. However, contractor organization has a clear decision path and the contrary regarding STA organizations, where they have a clear bureaucracy regarding decisions. A benefit with the flat hierarchy is that everyone is able to contribute with their knowledge and expertise. On the contrary, the contractor organization apply the pyramid hierarchy so that a superordinate's opinion weights more than the subordinate's opinion. This is a distinct difference in the managing logics of hierarchy between STA managers and contractor managers. STA managers logic includes that everyone should be able to contribute regardless of their position in the organizational hierarchy. Therefore, the logics compete, however, the contractor managers have changed their behaviour to better suit the logic for STA managers.

The foremost negative effect of including everyone is that it takes longer time for decisions to be made, contractor managers logic for decisions is that important decisions should be made instantaneously by managers. On the contrary, the logic for STA managers is that everyone should be able to contribute with their opinion. By doing so, many perspectives can serve as a ground for a better decision, and the final decision will most likely have a wide support from the parties involved. In other words, to reach consensus is highly valued in the STA managers logic. STA managers logic of decisions is competing with the contractor managers logic, where the latter mentioned logic is overpowered by the former mentioned.

It was also evident from the interviews that involved managers have different conceptions of when a decision is made. According to STA managers, you have to be very careful with what you orally say, since contractor managers can perceive something said as a final decision even though it was not. This can be correlated to contractor managers having the managing logic of communication being clear and direct.

Another managing logic which has been identified amongst the contractor managers is that the hierarchical position not only depends on the position in the organizational structure, but also depends on age and experience. Many managers expressed that it is credible to have age and experience, thus younger managers have less credibility.

### 6.4 Priorities for project success

The importance to follow and fulfilling the requirements set by law, regulations and codes is highly prioritized by STA managers. This managing logic might possibly be the highest valued logic amongst STA managers since their main purpose as a client is to audit and monitor the contractor during design and execution. On the contrary, this logic is not as important for the contractor managers, they argue that rules, especially codes, create barriers for innovation. It was evident

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that many contractor managers do not consider bending on codes requirement as severe as STA managers do.

### 6.5 Trust within the project

The managers expressed that a mutual trust is beneficial for the collaboration and the project. Hence, they have the aligning managing logic of being agents to attain interorganizational trust. However, it is apparent that the managers apply different approaches how to create trust. STA managers apply openness, honesty and keeping their word. The contractor managers have the highest priority to proceed towards the final product in order to prove their trustworthiness. However, problems and mistakes may be hidden to the benefit of production. In contrast, the contractor managers originating from the other geographical area believe that trust is attained if they act and express themselves in the most accommodating way possible for the client when communicating with STA managers.

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## 7 | Discussion

In this chapter, the findings and the analysis are interpreted and discussed in relation to the empirical literature and institutional theory. The discussion is divided into three sections to separately discuss each research question. The research questions are discussed in the following sections:

- Section 7.1: What main institutional logics can be identified amongst the managers representing the public client and foreign contractors?
- Section 7.2: How does the identified clashing managing institutional logics affect the communication between managers who represent public client and foreign contractors?
- Section 7.3: How can contracts between a public client and a foreign contractor be improved in order to prevent institutional logic clashes?

### 7.1 Identified managing institutional logics

From the analysis several managing logics could be identified, these are summarized in Table 3. As indicated in Table 3, three logics marked (\*) were identified through indications rather than being explicitly discussed by the managers, which means that these logics should be considered to require further research to be fully determined. However, it is considered that enough indications have been found so that these three logics can be further discussed in relation to next research question.

**Table 3**

Table summarizing the analysis of the empirical findings

CATEGORY	LOGIC PAIR ID	STA MANAGING LOGICS	CONTRACTOR MANAGING LOGICS	CLASH/ALIGN
Ways of communicating	1	Not being able to say “no”*	Being direct and clear	Clash (co-exist)
	2	To keep your word	To keep your word is not esteemed*	Clashing (co-exist)
	3	To be honest	To hide problems and mistakes	Clash (co-exist)
	4	To talk in a moderate tone of voice	To have heated discussions To share one’s emotions	Clash (hybrid)
	5	To use a common language		Align
	6	To frequently communicate		Align
	7	To practice both informal and formal communication		Align
	8	Oral communication is superior to written communication		Align
Priorities for project success	9	To obey rules	To obey some rules, and to bend other rules*	Clash (compete)
Expectations on managers	10	To invite a lot of professionals to meetings	To invite fewer professionals to meetings	Clash (co-exist)
	11	To collaborate		Align
	12	To solve problems		Align
	13	To arrange and attend to meetings		Align
	14	To support colleagues		Align
	15	To possess skills		Align
Hierarchy	16	Regardless of hierarchical position, one’s opinion matters	A superordinate’s opinion weights more than the subordinate’s opinion	Clash (compete)
	17	Hierarchical exceptions do not exist	Hierarchical exceptions exist	Clash (co-exist)
Decisions	18	A matter should be discussed before a decision is taken	Decisions should be taken instantaneously	Clash (compete)
	19	Oral decisions should be discussed	Oral decisions are valid	Clash (compete)
Trust	20	Agents of creating interorganizational trust		Align

*Note.* \*The logic is identified through indications rather than being explicitly discussed by the managers.

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## 7.2 How the clashing institutional logics affect the communication

In this section, each clashing logic pair is separately discussed.

### 7.2.1 Logic pair 1: Being direct and clear

For the clashing logic pair 1, the contractor managers had an evident managing logic of communicating direct and clear, while the STA managers logic in this regard was difficult to identify. On one hand, the contractor managers stressed that they experience STA managers to be vague in their communication by not explicitly saying “no” to proposals, even though they many times have meant to say no. On the other hand, the STA managers did not raise any issues in regard to communicating direct and clear which could imply that they either do not value this manager trait, or that they perceive that their communicational practices are direct and clear enough. In either case, this managing logic clashes and they probably have different definitions on how to communicate direct and clear. Two barriers for communication, as presented by Dainty et al. (2006), can be connected to the clashing logic, namely the barrier of cultural diversity (Huczynski & Buchanan, 2013) and failing to understand cultural differences (Sheldrick-Ross & Dewdney, 1998). Since it is out of the contractor managers world to not be able to explicitly say “no”, it could be argued that STA managers and contractor managers have different inherited cultures of communicating in this aspect. The contractor managers expressed that an effect of this clash is that they have stopped giving proposals to save time, money, as well as their energy since STA managers unclear directions usually mean “no” even though the word is not explicitly spoken. Further effects of this clash could be that contractor managers develop an expectation that STA managers generally do not communicate what they mean to communicate. This could result in contractor managers not taking general directions from STA managers by the words.

In this case, the contractor managers might need to explicitly ask for clarity when STA managers express themselves vaguely. For STA managers, there is a need to recognize their cultural traits of communicating vaguely, and actively make efforts to improve their way of communicating to avoid misinterpretation from the contractor managers.

### 7.2.2 Logic pair 2: To keep your word

STA managers stressed that it is important that professionals keep their word, and that contractor representatives not always fulfill this. As presented in Table 3 for the clashing logic pair 2, the contractor managers logics in this regard was identified through indications. The interviews indicated that some contractor managers come from a cultural context where keeping your word is not practiced as it is in the Swedish culture. However, it has not been identified if these logics only clash as a result of a clash between the logic pair 16. Anyhow, it is evident from the interviews that due to logic pair 2 clashes, a form of distrust has developed from the STA managers side.

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One could argue that the distrust derived from the action of breaking the relational-based trust (Kadefors, 2004; Rousseau et al., 1998). STA managers expressed that for the initial period of the project, trust gradually evolved between STA managers and contractor managers. STA managers later found out that some contractor managers did not follow the logic of keeping your word, thus ruining the established relational-based trust. However, this form of distrust harms the personal-based trust between the parties and should not change the calculus-based trust. By harming the personal-based trust, informal communication may therefore be negatively affected. Since distrust is the foundation for the horns effect to occur (Torrington & Hall, 1998, as cited by Dainty et al., 2006), one could argue that this clash can foster further communicational barriers between the parties. STA managers might stop trusting the contractor managers in all matters. Tendencies of this have already arose, for example, STA manager have started to put additional communicational resources to double check that things agreed upon are followed as agreed.

The clashing logic pair 2 can possibly be rooted in the managers having different expectations regarding who is allowed to delegate tasks to who. Since this clash is proven to create irritation amongst STA managers, it is in their interest to overcome this logic clash. Hence, STA managers could make efforts in understanding the foreign contractor organizations unwritten rules regarding which hierarchical role is allowed to delegate tasks to who. The reason for why the interpretation of the contractor managers do not keep their word can however constitute from another clashing logic, namely logic pair 16. STA managers should consider acknowledging that the parties probably have contrasting believes of when an agreement is made and investigate who is able to make a promise.

### 7.2.3 Logic pair 3: Transparency

In contrast to the clashing logic pair 2, the clashing logic pair 3 have resulted in positive effects on the communication. Contractor managers expressed that it is frequently practiced to hide problems and mistakes, both intra- and interorganizational. However, since STA managers have been open and honest in contractual discussions and similar matters, contractor managers have started to practice honesty to a larger extent than before. This indicates growth of trust from the contractor managers towards the STA managers. Hence, it could be argued that the STA managers practice of communicational honesty results in a halo effect (Torrington & Hall, 1998, as cited by Dainty et al., 2006) which could make the contractor managers agree with a majority of the information STA managers share. When STA managers lead by example, it could be argued that the contractor managers will follow. If contractor managers adapt to the communicational practice of being honest, they might also apply a practice of keeping their word, the logic identified in logic pair 2. If STA managers continuing with the logic of being transparent and honest, this may result in that the contractor managers logic may align after a while.

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#### 7.2.4 Logic pair 4: The tone of voice

Why logic pair 4 is clashing can be culturally explained, in connection to a number of the barriers to communication gathered by Dainty et al. (2006). It is apparent that the STA managers are unfamiliar with some of the contractor managers traits of raising their voices, expressing their feelings and allowing discussions to get heated. The combination of Sheldrick-Ross and Dewdney's (1998, as cited by Dainty et al., 2006) making assumptions-barrier, and Huczynski and Buchanan's (2013) cultural diversity-barrier can help explaining the cultural reasons to why the logic pair 4 clashes. The STA managers managing logic is evidently a culturally rooted expectation. When contractor managers raise their voice, they usually do it because it is their logic to share their emotions and allow communication to get heated. However, STA managers react to the contractor managers behaviour by, for example, making the assumption that the contractor managers are angry or unwilling to collaborate. This managing logic clash can result in the STA managers taking distance from contractor managers, resulting in a decrease in communication frequency. The clash can also result in that STA managers chose to use mediums other than oral communication, by for instance use email communication. This, even though all managers shared the managing logic that oral communication is superior to written communication.

To overcome this institutional logic clash, STA managers could start exploring why and when the contractor managers raise their voice. By doing so, the STA managers might find what the interview study revealed – that they believe they are yelling from a professional to a professional, rather than from an individual to an individual. In other words, do not take the yelling personally, because they do not.

#### 7.2.5 Logic pair 9: Rules

For the logic pair 9, it is presented that STA managers highly value obedience of rules, while it was identified that contractor managers can have a somewhat relaxed attitude to bending rules, regulations and codes. The STA managers logic correlates to the regulative pillar which emphasizes on those governmental authorities is heavily dependent on the regulative pillar for their institution (Scott, 2014). Their daily work is monitored by the government and their work is to audit and monitor organizations that execute work for the government as well. If STA managers would not follow their own codes, they would not do their job and therefor breach their own institutional logic (Scott, 2014; Berg Johansen & Waldorff, 2015; Thornton et al., 2012). On the contrary, the foreign contractor managers logic is that it is not crucial to obey rules to any cost, since they highly value production and the delivery of a final product. It could be translated to the contractor managers being a part of an institution where Scotts (2014) normative and the cultural-cognitive pillars have a larger impact on their work practices, than the regulative pillar has. However, it is not clear from the data if this clash has to do with the fact that the contractor managers are from another country than the STA managers, or if the clash has to do with the

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managers representing different stakeholder groups in the project. In other words, it is not clear if Swedish contractors share this logic with the contractor managers. However, the logic clash is still apparent. For the communication, this clash has resulted in STA managers having to spend more time on follow-ups by frequently communicating with the contractor managers to verify that the job is done by the book.

#### 7.2.6 Logic pair 10: Invite appropriate professionals to meetings

For logic pair 10, inviting appropriate professionals to meetings, the logics are clashing since the STA managers and contractor managers clearly have different opinions on who and when is supposed to attend a meeting or not. Contractor managers argue that there are too many professionals present at meetings and that irrelevant subjects are discussed. From the contractor managers perspective, their communicational practices in the meetings can be negatively affected when meetings are held and many professionals are invited to meetings. One negative effect could be that contractor managers get less engaged in meetings, since they might feel clueless and lost. When feelings like this arise, a sense of institutional separation can appear (Scott, 2014). Further, the vast number of meetings might also make contractor managers lose the interest in attending to meetings in general, regardless of the meetings relevance for them. A communicational effect of this could be that contractor managers might not receive the information intended for them.

#### 7.2.7 Logic pair 16: Hierarchy and influence

For logic pair 16, these logics address who is allowed to talk, and to whom. From the contractor managers point of view, interorganizational communication should be carried out on the same hierarchical level, and intraorganizational communication should be carried out one level above or beneath your own level. STA managers logic is not bound to hierarchical level. The presence of institutional-based trust (Kadefors, 2004; Rousseau et al., 1998) is evident, and adds to the communicational complication for this situation since hierarchical behavior can be connected to institutional roles. Therefore, STA managers who will not act in accordance with the contractor hierarchy culture may lose the contractor manager's trust.

In relation to Huczynski and Buchanan's (2013) barrier cultural diversity, the managers logics clash since they have different expectations on how formal and informal communication should be carried out. These clashing logics can further affect the communication between the managers. One of the communicational effects is that a message might not be received successfully. If a STA manager communicates with a higher-level foreign contractor manager, the superordinate might not value the STA manager's message. If a STA manager gives work instructions to a lower-level foreign contractor manager, the subordinate might not follow them through since the contractor manager might only take intraorganizational instructions. This can serve as a barrier to the interorganizational communication, and as Cerić et al. (2020) and Dainty et al. (2006) implies, trust and successful interorganizational communication carried out by managers is a key

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for project success. Another communicational effect is that when information is obliged to be transferred one level at the time, the message might lose its meaning on the way.

#### 7.2.8 Logic pair 17: Hierarchical exceptions

For logic pair 17, contractor managers logic supposes that depending on age and experience, an individual is more or less credible, no matter their hierarchical status. The message transferred from an STA manager may be depreciated or even invalid depending on the managers age and experience from contractor managers perspective. A barrier which could be connected to this clash of logics is Sheldrick-Ross and Dewdney's (1998, as cited by Dainty et al., 2006) making assumptions. The receiver might give other meanings to the sender's message by making own assumptions and conclusions of the information.

However, the contractors managing logic in regard to evaluate the legitimacy of someone's information based on the individual's experience is explained by the findings made by Udo and Koppensteiner (2004) since they found that one of the main competencies for a manager is to have proven experience. To make use of previous applicable knowledge, one can prove themselves worthy and competent (Scott, 2014; Friedland & Alford, 1991; Thornton et al., 2012). However, this does not justify the behaviour of not listening to individuals with less experience.

#### 7.2.9 Logic pair 18: Moment of decision

For logic pair 18, contractor managers argue that decisions should be able to be taken instantaneously, while STA managers argue that decisions must be discussed with affected parties and individuals. The latter results in several more conversations, which will generate more time spent on intra- and interorganizational communication. Since contractor managers has deliberately expressed their dislike towards the number of discussions to reach decisions, one of their ways of managing this is to no longer suggesting improvements. A further communicational consequence is that contractor managers could lose their interest by being involved in discussions. When contractor managers lose their interest by being involved, communication will not be successful (Dainty et al., 2006, Olanrewaju et al., 2017).

#### 7.2.10 Logic pair 19: Oral decisions

For logic pair 19, the way oral decisions are interpreted as taken decisions or not differ. Contractor managers sometimes regard decisions are made, while STA managers do not consider the decision has been made. This logic pair could be connected to the logic pair 1, that contractor managers have a highly valued logic of being direct and clear and that they experience that STA managers are vague in their communication. Since logic pair 19 clashes, it can imply that two present barriers to communication are Sheldrick-Ross and Dewdney's (1998, as cited by Dainty et al., 2006) making assumptions, and Huczynski and Buchanan's (2013) cultural diversity. The barriers

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have been distinctly present at occasions when contractor managers have assumed a decision is taken, while STA managers have not. Some of these situations have resulted in dispute, which have made the STA managers more restrictive with what they say. In other words, the clash of the logics has resulted in feelings of fear (Scott, 2014) from the STA managers point of view. As a result of the clash in logics, more communication than necessary might be carried out, as a means to confirm that decisions are mutually understood.

### 7.3 Contract improvements

From the interview study, it was evident that institutional values and norms, represented in the normative pillar (Scott, 2014), are not only reflected in the interaction between individuals, but also in cross-cultural contracts. Even though the managers pointed out that their expertise does not cover procurement strategies, much of what they mentioned as actions for future projects was supported by the recommendations Nadar (2021a; 2021b) shared in regard to cross-cultural contracts. Nadar put words on the often-occurring communicational problems in cross-cultural contracts, saying that the prime challenge often is to make sure the parties align in their expectations. As expressed by Nadar (2021a) and strengthened by Scott (2014), expectations are difficult to identify since they are based on norms. Norms are further difficult to formulate verbally to be covered into the contract. After a few years in the Västlänken project, some of the managers had identified norms and behaviors which are included in the Swedish construction industry institution, but not in all foreign construction industry institutions. The manager interviews revealed that STA could improve future contracts with foreign involvement by including demands that the tendering organizations should have an equal treatment plan, collective agreements and employee benefits. This finding indicates that at least one foreign contractor organization entered the project without such guidelines and processes included. These kinds of requirements were presumably not stated in the tendering documents, since it is a Swedish construction industry norm to already have these organizational functions established within the company before entering a project.

Nadar (2021b) gave three suggestions on how the client can explore the unwritten expectations existing in the Swedish construction industry. These are summarized below:

- The client can compare a Swedish standard contract (AB04 or ABT06) with an international standard contract. By doing so, the client can find out what the Swedish standard contract is not communicating all though it is expected.
- To apply a prequalification process to the tender, so that contractual and written expectations can be discussed with prequalified foreign contractors.
- To introduce a post-award conference with the foreign contractor, to go through the contract together and make sure their expectations align.

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Language differences can serve as a barrier to communication (Huczynski & Buchanan, 2013). A contract improvement suggested by several managers and Nadar (2021a) is that a mutual contract language could help the parties align in their expectations. A further confirmation of the managers standpoint is presented in the interview analysis, where it was found that both STA and foreign contractor managers have the managing logic of using a common language. It could be argued that if English is chosen as the contract language, the interest amongst foreign contractors to tender on STA's procurements might increase since foreign contractors may be more comfortable with English contracts rather than Swedish ones.

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## 8 | Conclusions and further research

In this chapter, the conclusions from this thesis will be presented. The answers of the research questions are followed by suggestions on further research.

### 8.1 Answering the research questions

*What main institutional logics can be identified amongst the managers representing the public client and foreign contractors?*

After several year of cross-cultural communication, the managers have not only realised their counterparties behaviours and expectations, but also their own. However, the initial expectations on their counterparties have been revaluated alongside the progress of the project. From an institutional theory perspective these traits can be translated to represent their institutional managing logics. It is evident that STA managers and foreign contractor managers have some contrasting clashing logics and others which align. However, some of today's aligning institutional managing logics may have been clashing at a previous stage. This indicates that some clashing logics appear to align over time, which implies that a hybridization of managing logics is ongoing. This transformation may not have been an active enforcement but rather a designated process for successful cross-cultural communication, however, this transformation does not apply for all logics.

One could argue that institutions work and behave equally across national borders, however, this study has shown that institutional logics can have national affiliations. Some logics can not be changed. Therefore, it will be a crucial part for STA to meet, and adapt to, the global market by communicating and understanding the behaviours and expectations they, and the contractor organizations, have.

*How does the identified clashing managing institutional logics affect the communication between managers who represent public client and foreign contractors?*

The clashing managing institutional logics have a predominant negative effect on the communication between STA managers and foreign contractor managers. STA managers are at risk of subconsciously distancing themselves from communication with foreign contractor managers, by choosing mediums other than oral communication even though it is considered amongst the managers to be the superior way of communication. STA managers put more time on conducting monitoring and are more restrictive with what they can say and who they can

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trust. However, STA managers way of being honest towards foreign contractor managers has proven to foster an equivalent behavior.

Foreign contractor managers are facing the dilemma of information not reaching the supposed receiver as intended from the sender. Occasionally, foreign contractor managers have to make assumptions of information. STA may risk a decreasing communicational involvement and innovational engagement from foreign contractor managers.

*How can contracts between a public client and a foreign contractor be improved in order to prevent institutional logic clashes?*

To constitute an improved client-contractor contract, the STA organization needs to acknowledge that foreign contractors interpret and translate contracts from their own construction industry institution. By comparing international and STA's standard contracts, STA could learn what is expected but not stated in their own contracts. A prequalification process can serve as means to discuss and understand contractual and written expectations with prequalified foreign contractors. Further, contractual and written expectations should be declared on a post-award conference with the winning tenderer.

Other tangible contractual improvements are that a mutual language should be used in contractual and communicational matters, and to demand that the foreign contractor fulfils Swedish organizational requirements before a tender can be possible.

## 8.2 Suggestions for further research

The theory of institutional logics has been proven to serve as an applicable theory to gain insights and understand cross-cultural communication in the construction industry. Some of the findings and conclusions which this master thesis has resulted in can serve as a foundation for further research focusing on institutional logics in the construction industry. In accordance with the methodology approach applied in this thesis, further research could take the theoretical focus of investigating aligning managing logics amongst local managers and foreign contractor managers. It would also be interesting to investigate the prerequisites for clashing logics to convert to aligning logics. A deeper insight on how clashing institutional logics can contribute to innovation and other project success factors could be investigated as well. Further research could also focus on the hybridization of logics.

As for cross-cultural mega projects, there are a range of challenges to investigate. Further research could limit the focus to the challenges which comes with consortiums being created solely for the purpose of carrying out one project. Further, a more general research could be conducted to investigate the best practices of which professionals to include in meetings, and an optimal frequency of meeting attendance for managers.

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## 9 | Recommendations

Based on the findings from this master thesis, some recommendations which are applicable for both client and contractor organizations in future cross-cultural mega infrastructure projects have been formulated. Related to the client-contractor contract, it is recommended that a mutual understanding of written and unwritten expectations is attained.

Since trust, collaboration, co-ordination and communication are essential for project success (Cerić et al., 2020), the understanding of others behaviours and expectations is crucial. Local client managers which will communicate with foreign contractor managers have to be prepared to meet, learn and adapt their behaviour and expectations related to cultural differences. This is especially important in the initial phase of projects since this is when their expectations have not been contradicted yet.

In future cross-cultural projects, STA managers and foreign contractor managers can consider the following:

- Be curious and openminded to the culture counterparties bring to the project.
- Be prepared that communication might not be carried out as expected.
- Be prepared to reevaluate your own expectations and behaviours.
- Do not take work associated critique personally.
- Confirm that a decision is made.
- What can be interpreted as a conflict might not be understood as a conflict from the other party's perspective.
- Be transparent of what is expected in terms of communication.
- Successful communication is achieved when a mutual understanding is attained.
- There is no such thing as a general perfect culture, instead the culture is unique for each project.
- Clashing expectations and behaviours may align over time.

*With this said, there is no need to solely get stuck on differences, it is likewise important to foster similarities.*

– Fredrik Bergfeldt and Frida Fischer, 2021.

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