Thesis Proposal

Front-end value creation in inter-organisational project settings:

A communication perspective on marketing agency-client interactions

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1. Introduction

"At the end of the day, it is all about enhancing the client's business with respect to their corporate strategy (…) Solutions *must* be tailored to the client. However (…) it is extremely important that we also become a success"

– Digital Account Manager, Agency #3, 26:50-28:00

Findings from my preliminary data point to a challenge in Danish marketing agencies' client interactions. On the one hand, agencies are increasingly expected to offer solutions that create strategic value for their clients. On the other hand, the agencies perform projects that also contribute value in the agencies' own organisation, in order to keep pace with a progressively competitive environment. However, contemporary knowledge about project value creation (PVC) tends to overlook challenges emerging in inter-organisational contexts, as e.g. experienced by marketing agencies whose main activities rely on inter-organisational project work.

This Thesis Proposal (TP) explores challenges of front-end value creation in inter-organisational project settings. The proposed study explores how Danish marketing agencies perform projects to realise strategic goals with their clients. To this end, the TP relies on an understanding of value creation that distinguishes between the co-creation of value and the appropriation of value (Di Gregorio, 2013; Lepak, Smith, & Taylor, 2007). A PVC framework building on value co-creation and value appropriation responds to a recent call by Laursen and Svejvig (2016, p. 743) to employ PM frameworks that understand value as co-produced by developing "value creation and value capture as a broader concept in project management inferring short term, longer term and emergent value." Through a review of PM literatures, the TP identifies decision-making and integration as processes supporting front-end value creation. The TP propose to use CCO (Communication Constitutes Organisation) concepts to develop a communication framework that draws on a constitutive understanding of communication (Ashcraft, Kuhn, & Cooren, 2009; Craig, 1999), which allows an exploration of the role of communication for front-end value creation. Developing this framework requires a synthesis of concepts across project management (PM), organisation, and CCO literatures. Expected contributions include a nuanced understanding of PVC, and an unpacking of the role of communication for front-end value creation in inter-organisational project settings.

The growing demand for Danish marketing agencies to enhance their clients' business at a strategic level requires more focus on consultancy aspects of their client interactions. This, in turn, demands a focus on aligning the project with both the client's and the agency's organisational strategies. A

recent report published by Bureaubiz (2016)[1] based on key insights from 257 agencies suggests that Danish marketing agencies are gradually becoming "consultancy-heavy" (p. 6, *own translation*), mainly due to growing competitiveness in the industry. Thus, marketing agencies are increasingly expected to not only deliver marketing-based solutions, but to strategically interact with and consult their clients. At the same time, PVC is increasingly established as a strategic front-end project activity (Edkins, Geraldi, Morris, & Smith, 2013), which indicates the need for organisations to focus on value creation in the very beginning of projects. As pointed out by the Danish initiative *Project Half Double*, "We need to move away from the premise that projects only generate value at the very end of their lifespan… We need to establish a stronger link between the project, the organization's strategy, and the management's interest by focusing on value creation when designing the project" (The Half Double Book, chapter 4) [2]. The quote indicates the need for aligning the project and the organisation's strategy by focusing on value creation in the beginning of projects. This line of argumentation echoes previous studies connecting PVC to organisational strategy (Winter, Andersen, Elvin, & Levene, 2006a; Winter, Smith, Morris, & Cicmil, 2006b) as well as studies establishing a connection between front-end value creation and the alignment of project and organisational strategy (see e.g. Edkins et al., 2013; Koen et al., 2001; Williams & Samset, 2010). However, while PVC appears as a continuing topic of interest in project management studies (for a recent review, see Laursen & Svejvig, 2016), little is still known about which front-end processes contribute to value creation in inter-organisational project settings, and how (Artto, Ahola, & Vartiainen, 2016). Consequently, current research fails to distinguish front-end value creation in inter-organisational project settings from front-end value creation in intra-organisational settings. As this TP argues, this is partly due to a dominant assumption in PM literature that projects have only one parent organisation.

1.1. Research question

Based on these considerations, the proposed research study will explore the following research question:

Research question: How do communication processes facilitate and support front-end value creation and value appropriation in inter-organisational projects performed by Danish marketing agencies?

The research question is broken down into three sub-questions. Section 3 elaborates on how each of these questions is meant to guide an article to constitute an article-based dissertation.

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[1] Bureaubiz.dk makes daily and yearly reports focused on the Danish industry of marketing agencies.
[2] For more information about the Project Half Double, please visit http://www.projecthalfdouble.dk/en

Sub-question 1: How may front-end activities in inter-organisational project settings be reconceptualised from a constitutive communication perspective, and what implications might this have for our understanding of PVC?

Sub-question 2: Which front-end communication processes do project participants from Danish marketing agencies perceive as useful for supporting value creation in their client interactions, and how may these be understood from a communication-centred perspective?

Sub-question 3: Which front-end communication processes are used by Danish marketing agencies in their client interactions, and in what ways do they support a value-creation focus?

The remainder of the TP is divided into three sections. Section 2 develops the proposed communication framework. Section 3 elaborates on methodological approaches to data collection and data analysis and addresses theory of science considerations. Finally, section 4 presents a progress report and my plan ahead for the remainder of my PhD programme.

2. Theoretical framework: Developing a communication framework for exploring front-end value creation in inter-organisation project settings

Developing a communication framework relies on a synthesis across PM, organisation, and CCO literatures. This process has been broken down into five sections. Section 2.1 challenges the dominant assumption in PM literature that projects have only one parent organisation. As will be argued, this assumption does not adequately reflect the challenges that emerge in inter-organisational project settings. Section 2.2 argues for distinguishing between value co-creation and value appropriation to address PVC in inter-organisational settings. Based on this, section 2.3 identifies decision-making and integration as two key processes supporting front-end value creation, and argues for an understanding of these processes as value co-creation and value appropriation. Section 2.4. addresses how communication is treated in PM literature, and demonstrates that communication remains largely unpacked, out of focus, or approached from a transmission view (Axley, 1984; Craig, 1999) perspective across literatures on PCV, the strategic front-end, and inter-organisational project settings. This, I argue, implies the need for a more advanced understanding of the role of communication for front-end value creation. This leads to section 2.5 which presents the proposed communication framework building on CCO concepts of organisationality (Dobusch & Schoeneborn, 2015), decision communication (Luhmann, 2005; Seidl & Becker, 2005), and co-orientation (Taylor, 2006).

2.1. Project value creation in inter-organisational project settings: challenging the one-parent assumption

PVC in inter-organisational project settings presents challenges that are different from challenges appearing in intra-organisational project settings. As Morris (2013) points out, inter-organisational projects are likely to be faced with challenges of conflicting needs and requirements between participating organisations. However, according to Artto et al. (2016), little is still known about how value is created in projects of multiple interdependent organisations which may be a consequence of a dominant assumption in PM literature that projects have only one parent organisation.

Value creation is a complex and multifaceted concept (Laursen & Svejvig, 2016) which has been defined as the result of, "actions that entail the novel combination and exchange of resources, by which resources are diverted from known applications to be deployed in new contexts" (Schumpeter, 1928 in Di Gregorio, 2013, p. 40). In PM contexts, Winter and Szczepanek (2009, p. 124) define value creation as "an organized process to create value and benefit for different individuals, groups, and organizations," which entail various types of value, financial as well as non-financial (e.g. service and quality improvements). PVC was brought to the forefront in PM literature by Winter et al.

(2006b) in their seminal article on *Rethinking Project Management* in which they define projects as value creation processes. As one of five directions for future research in PM, they call for a shift in focus from product creation to value creation: "For many organisations, the main concern now is no longer the capital asset, system or facility etc., but increasingly the challenge of linking business strategy to projects, maximising revenue generation, and managing the delivery of benefits to different stakeholder groups." (p. 644). Correspondingly, Winter et al. (2006a, p. 700) coin the *value-centric view* of PM, arguing that the primary concern of PM is "the challenge of creating value and benefit for different stakeholder groups" (p. 700).

Since then, projects viewed as value creation processes has been discussed by e.g. Winter and Szczepanek (2008, 2009), and as demonstrated in a recent review by Laursen and Svejvig (2016), the development of PVC is still going strong. In particular, the proposed shift in focus from product to value creation still resonates in PM research. For instance, Andersen (2014, p. 885) develops the *Mission Breakdown Structure* to secure, "an effective interplay between the base organization and its project." The Mission Breakdown Structure is developed against the argument that projects are increasingly seen as long-term strategic interventions that support the achievement of business purposes, requiring a broader set of criteria for measuring project success than the narrow design specifications of time, cost, and quality. The focus on expanding the criteria for project success appears as another key theme in PVC literature, particularly focusing on the distinction between project output and project outcome. For instance, Atkinson (1999) develops the *Square Route* framework to provide a more comprehensive understanding of project success criteria and evaluation which expands the classical PM iron triangle of cost, quality, and time with three additional success criteria: the information system, organisational benefits, and stakeholder community benefits. Similarly seeking to expand the iron triangle as the main indicator of project success, Nelson (2005) offers a framework to evaluate projects from multiple dimensions. He divides evaluation criteria into project process (time, cost, and product, i.e. "the iron triangle") and project outcome (learning, use, and value), arguing that project outcome elements may not be measured until long after project implementation. Regarding measurement, Cooke-Davies (2002) suggests distinguishing between project success (measured against the project's overall objectives) and PM success (measured against cost, time, and quality), as well as between success criteria (the measures by which success of failure is evaluated) and success factors (the inputs to the management system that lead to success of the project or organisation).

Despite these various approaches to advancing our understanding of PVC, the literature tends to build on the assumption that a project has only one parent organisation, and may therefore not capture challenges of value creation in inter-organisational contexts. For instance, studies generally discuss projects as connected to a single organisation towards which the project must contribute

value, e.g. "linking business *strategy* to projects" (Winter et al., 2006b, p. 644, italics added). This point can be further illustrated by Atkinson's (1999) distinction between organisational benefits (i.e. internally realised by the organisation) and stakeholder benefits (i.e. externally realised by various stakeholders). Arguably, in inter-organisational projects settings, organisational benefits extends to encompass multiple organisations, which means that two or more organisations may realise organisational (and not stakeholder) benefits differently around the same source of value.

According to Artto, Kujala, Dietrich, and Martinsuo (2008, p. 4), the prevalent assumption that there is "one strong parent organization for a project" results in oversimplified notions of project strategy and project success; concepts that are widely connected to PVC (see e.g. Cooke-Davies, 2002; Laursen & Svejvig, 2016). Consequently, contemporary knowledge about PVC is scant regarding challenges emerging in inter-organisational contexts. Recently, however, Morris (2013) suggested that inter-organisational projects are challenged with potentially conflicting needs and requirements between participating organisations. As marketing agencies have been defined as working mainly in inter-organisational settings (Gann & Salter, 2000; Hobday, 2000), they may face challenges of aligning needs and requirements with clients to perform projects whose value proposition relates to both agency and client goals. The dual processes of value creation and value appropriation (Di Gregorio, 2013) is proposed to shed light on these challenges with respect to PVC.

2.2. Value co-creation and value appropriation

Distinguishing between value co-creation and value appropriation (Di Gregorio, 2013; Galvagno, 2014; Lepak et al., 2007) may shed light of challenges of PVC in inter-organisational contexts, as it allows an approach to understand how value, although co-created, may be realised differently by multiple parent organisations. Marketing agencies have been found to perform projects *with* rather than delivering projects *for* their clients (Girard & Stark, 2002), and I thus propose to view value creation in marketing agency-client projects as co-creation. Value co-creation refers to companies creating value through interaction and has been defined as the, "joint, collaborative, concurrent, peer-like process of producing new value, both materially and symbolically" (Galvagno, 2014, p. 644). From a co-creation perspective, value creation in projects may be understood as a joint process of co-creating value in the collaboration between organisations (i.e. the agency and its client). Value appropriation refers to companies realising or capturing value. It comprises two interrelated processes: inter-organisational appropriation (how value is distributed among organisations) and intra-organisational appropriation (how that value, once appropriated by an organisation, is distributed among internal stakeholders) (Di Gregorio, 2013). The TP focuses focuses on inter-organisational appropriation.
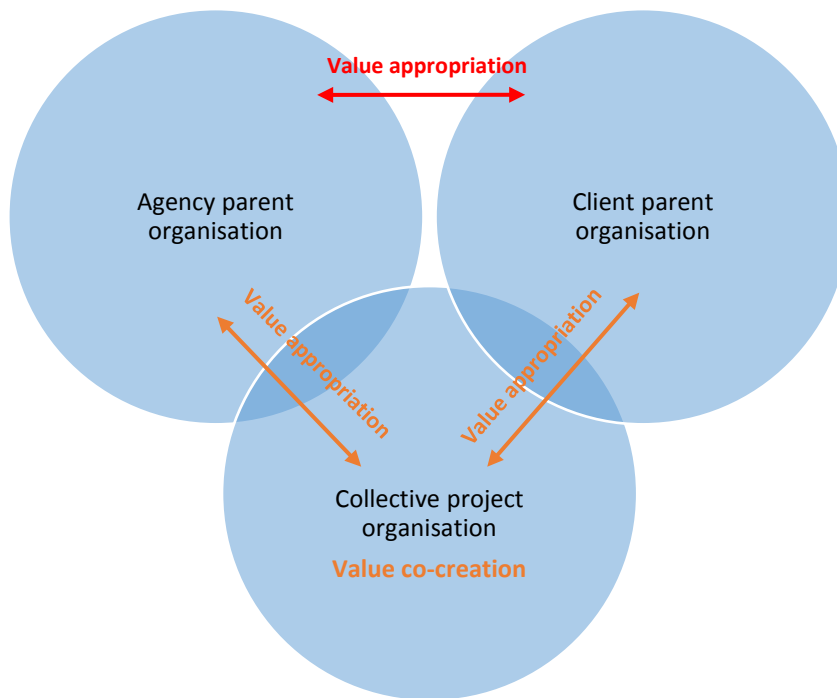
Model 1: Value co-creation and value appropriation in inter-organisational project settings

Model 1 illustrates the relationship between value co-creation and value appropriation in an inter-organisational project context, i.e. how value is co-created in a collective project organisation across organisational boundaries, and how that value is appropriated by the agency's and the client's parent organisations. The notion of the collective project organisation builds on an understanding of projects as temporary organisations (Bakker, 2010; Packendorff, 1995). As such, as indicated by the orange arrows, the collective project organisation may also appropriate value that is created in either one of the parent organisation. Thus, there might be strategic considerations for building a strong collective project organisation through reciprocal processes of value appropriation. Through this, the project organisation may become the catalyst for multiple collective projects performed collaboratively by the agency and the client. The red arrow indicates value appropriation outside of the agency-client collaboration. It may be regarded as non-conducive for the agency-client relationship. This process relates more to a competitive notion of value appropriation as value capture as discussed by Lepak et al. (2007).

In light of the value co-creation/value appropriation distinction, the next section discusses two front-end processes that have been identified as contributing to front-end value creation. These processes are referred to as decision-making and integration. It will be argued that decision-making can be mapped to value co-creation, and that integration can be mapped to value appropriation.

2.3. Decision-making and integration as front-end value creation processes

Defined as strategically driven (e.g. Edkins et al., 2013; Williams & Samset, 2010), the front-end comprises two value-creating processes that are particularly relevant in inter-organisational project settings, namely decision-making and integration. Decision-making refers to the strategic decisions that are made in the front-end, whereas integration refers to integrating or aligning the project with the parent organisation(s), including goal and strategy alignment.

Front-end decision-making has been discussed with a content focus, e.g. deciding on the right project concept or choosing the right idea (Koen et al., 2001; Williams & Samset, 2010) and with a process focus, e.g. forming inter-personal relationships that facilitate and support joint collaborative decision-making processes (Matinheikki, Artto, Peltokorpi, & Rajala, 2016; Williams & Samset, 2010). Front-end decision-making has been defined as a strategic effort aimed at fulfilling the organisation's long-term strategic objectives (Poskela & Martinsuo, 2009) and is considered to have great opportunity for creating value and, in turn, have significant influence on whether a project becomes a success or a failure (Edkins et al., 2013). In addition, front-end decision-making is characterised by very scant information and thus requires some level of judgement about the future (Williams & Samset, 2010). The combination of a limited information basis on the one hand and the strategic importance of the front-end on the other hand points to the importance and difficulty in managing front-end decisions. It may be particularly challenging in inter-organisational projects where the development of the project concept – that is, deciding on a concept over other potential concepts – is related to the social processes of developing a collective project organisation (Williams & Samset, 2010). Recently, Matinheikki et al. (2016) found that front-end value creation in inter-organisational networks depend on engaging the network project actors in joint decision-making processes.

Integration can be described as encompassing those front-end processes that support value creation by integrating the project and its parent organisation(s). For instance, Brady, Davies, and Gann (2005) propose an approach for creating value in projects that extends the project life cycle backwards into a phase of strategic engagement and forwards into a phase of operational services. They argue that a more explicit integration of the project from its earliest phases with the post-project operations phase, "profoundly alters the way a business handles its customer relationships and defines its value adding activities" (p. 364). Similarly arguing for extending the project life cycle, Artto et al. (2016) take a systems perspective to explore value creation from, "the front end of projects to the back end of operations" (p. 258). They identify four integration mechanisms supporting the integration between project and operations activities, arguing that, "value creation occurs when, during the project phase, the project management function builds and develops a network of multiple organizations that can transit from the project phase to the operations phase" (p. 267). Both of these studies

emphasise the central role of social interaction and joint collaborative decision-making, and Artto et al. (2016) even find support for developing shared identity and negotiating a shared vision as processes supporting front-end value creation. Matinheikki et al. (2016) also identify shared vision as a front-end activity supporting value creation in inter-organisational project networks.

Integration has also been discussed in terms of systems integration and the challenges experienced by project-based organisations in securing the cooperation between the project as a temporary system and the organisation as a permanent system. For instance, Grabher (2002a, 2002b) investigates project ecologies in the London marketing industry. He identifies dynamics between professional and organisational cultures and potentially conflicting loyalties between project participants *vis-á-vis* the project and their home base as challenges for integrating the temporary system (i.e. the project) and the permanent system (i.e. the organisation). Ojansivu and Alajoutsijärvi (2015) also explore temporary and permanent, but in the context of service-intensive projects. As a nexus of temporary and permanent systems, they argue, these projects experience issues related to perceptions of trust and lack of cooperation between different institutional logics represented by professional and occupational groups in the organisations.

Decision-making challenges are relevant in the context of inter-organisational projects, as strategically driven decisions will have to be coordinated by multiple organisations according to their strategic objectives. This challenge points to the need for engaging in joint collaborative decision-making. Because of this, decision-making processes in inter-organisational project settings may be understood as processes of value co-creation. Integration challenges are also relevant in inter-organisational project settings, as the integration of the project with multiple permanent systems may prove complex. Because of this, integration processes in inter-organisational contexts may be discussed as facilitating value appropriation, thus focusing on processes of appropriating the value co-created in the project organisation.

The next section looks at how communication has been treated across literatures on PCV, the strategic front-end, and inter-organisational project settings, demonstrating that communication is often out of focus, unpacked, or approached from a transmission view.

2.4. Communication as dealt with in project management literature

PM literature generally perceives communication as one of the most central aspects of managing projects (Kerzner, 1998; Wysocki, 2009). Despite this, PM studies often fail to unpack communication (Ramsing, 2013). As a consequence, PM research generally offers little detail on the role of communication for managing projects. This tendency is reflected across studies on PVC, the strategic front-end,

and inter-organisational project settings. This is discussed according to four ways of treating communication, which have been inductively constructed based on review of studies combined with a search on particular words using PDFs search function. Search terms included communication, communicate, interaction, interaction, collaboration, collaborate. Table 1 illustrates how the reviewed studies treat communication. The categorisations employed in the table may be summarised as:

- Central: communication is treated as a central topic of investigation and highlighted as an important factor for the particular focus of PM discussed by the article.
- Unpacked: communication appears as important, but is not comprehensively covered or discussed and thus remains unpacked.
- Transmission view: communication is covered from a transmission view which reduces communication to a manageable entity or instrument that may be transmitted from one person to another (Axley, 1984; Schoeneborn, Golob, & Trittin, 2013) and which views communication errors as technical in character, assuming that there is right information for the right people (Craig, 1999).
- Out of focus: communication is out of focus, explicitly or implicitly, that is, it may not even be addressed.

Table 1

How PM studies treat communication

Project management literature	Treating of communication	Studies
Project Value creation	Central	Winter et al. (2006b)
	Unpacked	Gillier, Hooge, and Piat (2015); Cooke-Davies (2002)
	Transmission view	Andersen (2014); Nelson (2005)
	Out of focus	Atkinson (1999); Svejvig and Andersen (2015); Winter and Szczepanek (2008); Laursen and Svejvig (2016); (Winter et al., 2006a)
The strategic front-end	Unpacked	Williams and Samset (2010); Artto et al. (2008)
	Transmission view	Edkins et al. (2013); Poskela and Martinsuo (2009); Morgan (1987); Artto et al. (2016)
	Out of focus	Joham, Metcalfe, and Sastrowardoyo (2009); Koen et al. (2001)
Inter-organisational project settings	Central	Matinheikki et al. (2016); Artto et al. (2016); Girard and Stark (2002); (Grabher, 2002a); Grabher (2002b)
	Unpacked	Lind (2015); Maurer (2010)
	Transmission view	Ojansivu and Alajoutsijärvi (2015); von Bernuth and Bathelt (2007);
	Out of focus	N/A

The studies included in Table 1 imply a tendency to not unpack communication, to approach communication from a transmission view, or to not have communication in focus. However, exceptions occur, most notably Winter et al.'s (2006b) article of Rethinking Project Management in which they specifically call for future research to focus more on social processes and communicative interaction. According to my literature review, their call has received little response, which is also reflected in recent structured literature reviews covering Rethinking Project Management (Svejvig & Andersen, 2015) and project value creation (Laursen & Svejvig, 2016) which indicate a very scant focus on communication in their reviewed contributions. As a full description of the studies included in the table is outside the scope of this TP, the remainder of this section seeks to highlight a representative sample

to support the main argument of this section, namely that there is a need for more focus on communication in PM research in general and, in particular, in research on front-end value creation in inter-organisational settings. This need is echoed in recent contributions that point out a continuing lack of understanding of *how* front-end activities contribute to value creation in inter-organisational settings (Artto et al., 2016; Matinheikki et al., 2016).

2.4.1. Project value creation and communication

Winter et al. (2006b) demonstrate a treatment of communication as central to PM. They present five directions for future research in PM. One of the directions suggests a shift from "Projects as instrumental processes" to "Projects as social processes" (p. 642) to focus on social interaction among people, and to enhance knowledge on intersubjective communicative interaction in projects. They also recommend future research to increasingly rely on a becoming ontology which stands in contrast to a being ontology by emphasising e.g. process, activity, and the human construction of entities. In this way, Winter et al.'s (2006b) contribution supports PM research perspectives that focus on communication and processual thinking, as also suggested in this TP.

In contrast, several studies imply an understanding of communication as important, but fail to unpack it. For instance, discussing value management in creative projects, Gillier et al. (2015) identify social processes as one of five ways to manage value, but do not engage in a discussion of these social processes. In a similar manner, Cooke-Davies (2002, p. 189) identifies 12 factors of project success, concluding that, "the "people" side of the success factors is woven into their very fabric." The people-side of projects is closely connected to inter-personal interaction and, hence, communication (Gemino, Reich, & Sauer, 2015). As such, Cooke-Davies (2002) does indicate that communication is important, but does not unpack it and only briefly mentions the people-side towards the very end of the article.

A transmission view of communication is demonstrated by Andersen (2014) who argues that "good communication" (p. 889) as part of the *Mission Breakdown Structure* can be used to establish a common understanding of the project's purpose. Nelson (2005, p. 364, italics added), too, reflects a transmission view, suggesting that, "project managers need to *clearly* communicate the inherent tradeoffs among the three process-related criteria: time, cost, and product (the project trade-off triangle)." Communication, thus, is seen as something that can be managed (i.e. ensuring "good" communication) and transmitted in a certain way (i.e. clearly communicating) with expected outcomes.

As previously argued, communication is often out of focus. This tendency is reflected in structured literature reviews on Rethinking Project Management (Svejvig & Andersen, 2015, covering 74

contributions) and Project Value Creation (Laursen & Svejvig, 2016, covering 111 contributions) which indicate that extant literature on PVC has largely neglected to explore communication aspects.

2.4.2. The strategic front-end and communication

Examples of front-end studies demonstrating an unpacked treatment of communication include Williams and Samset (2010) who argue that the social process underlying the development of project concepts plays a great role in the front-end, as constraints on communication flows often result in project failure. This argument points to an understanding of communication as central, but their discussion of communication remains at a superficial level. Another example of communication as unpacked is found in Artto et al. (2008). In developing their project strategy framework, they situate their problem partially as communicative, i.e. arguing that a project cannot adopt a single uniform goal "communicated by a top management representative of a single parent organization" (p. 5). Despite this point of departure, communication remains unaddressed throughout the remainder of the article.

Morgan (1987) exemplifies a transmission view of communication. He emphasises communication as one of the most important front-end "tasks" (p. 107) for project managers. He also highlights the importance of "good communication" and sharing information in a "simple, concise and familiar format" to establish collaborative decision-making in the front-end (p. 114). This quote further points to a transmission view, reflecting an assumption that the right information can reach the right people if communication is managed properly. Another example is found in Edkins et al. (2013), connect communication to delivery and control in the front-end, and thus point to an understanding of front-end communication as a manageable.

2.4.3. Inter-organisational project settings and communication

Examples of studies that treat communication as central mainly occur in research on inter-organisational project settings, in which communication is considered an important factor for e.g. building trust and shaping inter-organisational relationships. An explanation for this may be previous research on the role of communication in inter-organisational settings, for instance in relationship marketing literature in which communication has been discussed as a driver for business-to-business loyalty (Bardauskaite, 2014), proactivity within agency-client relationships (Beverland, Farrelly, & Woodhatch, 2007), developing relationship commitment (Cater, 2007), and reducing agency-client problems (Fam & Waller, 2008). Studying projects in inter-organisational networks, Artto et al. (2016) identify five integration mechanisms supporting value creation. One of these integration mechanisms relates to identity-building activities carried out in joint meetings. The authors argue that identity-building leads to many collaborative joint activities such a joint design of marketing campaigns which,

in turn, influences integration by enhancing rich communication between organisations. In another study, Matinheikki et al. (2016, p. 1237) argue that a "dense network helped facilitate open communication and information flow between the actors." They found that front-end value creation relies on social interaction to form relationships, align goals, develop a shared vision, and build relational trust among project participants. In other words, front-end value creation may be seen as dependent on social interaction and communication. In earlier studies, Grabher (2002a) has suggested that new communications technologies enable more rapid face-to-face interactions and cross-project learning in geographically dispersed project sites, which draws attention to the central role of communication for project interactions across time and space. Grabher (2002b) draws attention to the importance of dialogue in project-based work, pointing out that, rather than relying on unidirectional flows of information, advertising agencies increasingly work in project ecologies based on community-enabled dialogue. This entails using communicative codes to 'educate' clients, responding to potentially conflicting interests between factions in the client's management. Communication, then, plays a central role in supporting the agency-client relationship.

Contrastingly, the transmission view is reflected by Ojansivu and Alajoutsijärvi (2015). Studying buyer-seller communication in service-intensive projects, they highlight communication challenges by discussing how "poor" communication or "a lack of" communication negatively influences the pursuit of "securing" communication. Similarly, while von Bernuth and Bathelt (2007) briefly touches upon communicative complexities such as organisational context-specific use of language and metaphors, they restrain the discussion of these challenges to concepts of "open" or "efficient" communication.

In summary, and following Winter et al.'s (2006b) call for more research to focus on social interaction, a communication approach on front-end value creation in inter-organisational settings might contribute different perspectives from those offered in most extant literature. Based on this assertion, the following section presents the proposed communication framework consisting of CCO concepts.

2.5. Communication as constitutive: a CCO framework

A CCO framework affords a shift from a transmission view of communication towards a constitutive view of communication (Schoeneborn, 2011), and may thus provide new perspectives for exploring front-end value creation in inter-organisational project settings. So far, the TP has argued that front-end decision-making processes reflect value co-creation while front-end integration processes reflect the facilitation of value appropriation. It has also argued for the need for a communication approach. Based on these considerations, this section reconceptualises front-end processes of

decision-making and integration into a framework comprising CCO concepts of decision communication (Luhmann, 2005; Seidl & Becker, 2006) and co-orientation (Taylor, 2006). From this perspective, decision-making and integration are viewed as constitutive communication processes. In this way, these processes may be considered as supporting the development of a collective project organisation between project supplier (the agency) and project owner (the client) to enable more collective efforts of creating and appropriating value. The proposed framework draws on Luhmann's social systems theory, according to which the organisation is considered an autopoietic social system. As such, the organisation is a recursive, self-referential, and self-reproductive system (Luhmann, 1986), which is further discussed below. Regarding the notion of the temporary project organisation, the framework also draws on Dobusch & Schoeneborn's (2015) concept organisationality, which allows me to discuss how the project participants through their collaborative project work achieve a sense of collective organisational identity (see also Koschmann, 2012).

2.5.1. CCO and project management

CCO (Communication Constitutes Organisation) is a "larger stream of research that emphasizes the communicative constitution of organizations" (Dobusch & Schoeneborn, 2015, p. 1006). CCO covers three main "schools" of thought: the Montreal School of Organisational Communication, the Four-Flows Model (which is based primarily on Gidden's Structuration Theory), and Luhmann's Theory of Social Systems (Schoeneborn et al., 2014). The schools share both common ground and key differences, but are based on the same ontological foundation that communication is constitutive of organisation (for recent overviews, see e.g. Ashcraft et al., 2009; Cooren, Kuhn, Cornelissen, & Clark, 2011; Schoeneborn et al., 2014). Additionally, CCO subscribes to a dynamic and processual understanding of organisations (Blaschke, Schoeneborn, & Seidl, 2012), which, according to Sergi (2012), is appropriate as applied to projects, as it quite closely reflects the actual experience of doing and managing projects. While the three schools are often argued to be more or less incommensurable in their epistemological and methodological standpoints (Schoeneborn, 2011), this TP draws on concepts from both the Montreal School, i.e. co-orientation (Taylor, 2006), and the 'Luhmannian' School, i.e. decision communication (Luhmann, 1986; Seidl & Becker, 2006). The underlying argument is that both theories understand the organisation as an autopoietic system.

2.5.2. The inter-organisational project organisation as an autopoietic system

Understood as an autopoietic system, the inter-organisational project organisation is recursively constituted and re-constituted in communication events. Packendorff (1995) suggested a metaphor for conceiving of projects as temporary organisations. However, the emphasis on temporariness stands in contrast to the need for marketing agency-client projects to be strategically shaped and oriented. Thus, viewing the temporary project organisation as an autopoietic system reflects an approach

to performing projects with a more long-term but still processual outlook. Through this, the participating organisations can sustain their collective project organisation through ongoing interactions. Luhmann views organisations as autopoietic social systems (Seidl & Becker, 2005) that operate by means of an ongoing production and reproduction of communicative episodes, specifically decisional episodes. Luhmann describes social systems as: "[using] communications as their particular mode of autopoietic reproduction. Their elements are communications which are recursively produced and reproduced by a network of communications, and which cannot exist outside the network… Not only do they produce and eventually change their own *structures* but their self-reference applies to the production of other *components* as well" (Luhmann, 1986, p. 174, italics in original). From a social systems perspective, communication is assumed to consist of information, utterance, and understanding (as well as misunderstanding), the synthesis of which is situationally recreated, meaning that current communications refer to previous communications as well as potential future communications. This assumption is reflected in the notion of decision communication as discussed below. Communication and decision events, then, are understood as self-referential and self-reproducing.

In developing his co-orientation framework, Taylor (2006) also draws on an autopoietic understanding of organisation. As Luhmann, Taylor refers to the biologist Maturana who originally coined the concept of autopoiesis, defining autopoietic systems as: "systems that are defined as unities, as networks of productions of components, that recursively, through their interactions, generate and realize the network that produces them and constitute, in the space in which they exist, the boundaries of the network as components that participate in the realization of the network" (Maturana 1981, p. 21 as cited by Luhmann, 1986, p. 174). The definition puts focus on recursive interactions as producing and reproducing the boundaries which constitute a "network" or, in the context of social systems, an organisation. As recursive systems, organisations reproduce themselves through their own operations – that is, they exist only when operation as taking place (Luhmann, 2005).

In light of autopoiesis, the temporary project organisation may be understood as produced and reproduced in the interaction between project members from the participating organisations. From this perspective, marketing agencies as project-based organisations can be said to sustain and maintain a client relationship (i.e. their collective project organisation) only when they are actually carrying out activities and operations with the client as related to their collective project organisation. This point becomes especially relevant between projects, as these in-between periods represent a particular risk for the agency-client relationship to slowly disintegrate over time if the relationship is not sustained in ongoing interactions. As pointed out by Brady et al. (2005), it is in the close dialogue between organisations that relationships are developed and sustained and through which strategic

partnerships may eventually develop. They argue that close dialogue to collectively develop project solutions fosters a sense of shared responsibility of the project. This also means that in periods of low levels of interaction, the sense of shared responsibility may thus deteriorate. Thus, it is through ongoing communication that the agency and the client recursively reproduce their collective project organisation, in which value may be co-creation and from which value may be appropriated.

### 2.5.3. Organisationality, decision communication, and co-orientation

Based on an autopoietic notion of organisations, decision-making and integration may be reconceptualised as decision communication (Luhmann, 2005; Seidl & Becker, 2006) and co-orientation (Taylor, 2006) as communicative processes that constitute the project organisation. As a way to understand how the project organisation is communicated into being, Dobusch & Schoeneborn's (2015) concept of organisationality provides a processual take on organisation as gradually emerging. They define organisationality as "the degree to which a social collective displays three characteristics of organization: (1) interconnected instances of decision-making, (2) actorhood, and (3) identity" (p. 1008). Dobusch & Schoeneborn coined organisationality to examine how fluid social collectives, which are characterised by latent, contested, or unclear membership, achieve organisational identity and actorhood. Project membership in much the same way may be defined as latent, contested, or unclear, particularly in inter-organisational project settings. For instance, several studies have highlighted the issues of conflicting loyalties to the project (the temporary system) *vis-á-vis* the organisation (the permanent system) as experienced by members of inter-organisational projects (Grabher, 2002b; Ojansivu & Alajoutsijärvi, 2015).

This TP employs organisationality to help understand this arguably "fluid" membership experienced by project participants in inter-organisational project settings. The level of organisationality achieved by project participants, then, may be indicative of their capability to engage in value co-creation in a way that also supports value appropriation into their respective 'permanent systems'. The TP does not suggest employing organisationality as an analytical framework, but rather seeks to draw on its fundamental idea of a gradual achievement of organisational identity for cross-organisational project organisations. As Dobusch and Schoeneborn (2015) argue, their framework may be extended to organisations that are temporary in nature, as for instance projects (Bakker, 2010; Packendorff, 1995). From this perspective, decision-making as decision communication and integration as co-orientation are understood as communicative processes constituting the "temporary organisation" of agency-client projects within which processes are continuously established and re-established to facilitate value co-creation and value appropriation. In this way, processes of decision-making and integration may extend beyond the immediate project to constitute a more stable (in the sense of long-term) collective project organisation.

The concept of decision communication offers an approach to exploring front-end decision-making as communication events that contribute to the ongoing stabilisation of the project organisation. As decision communication, decision-making is viewed as the way in which organisations differentiate themselves and recognise what they are doing (Luhmann, 2005). From this perspective, decisions are understood as a form of communications, considered to be capable of stabilising the organisation as a formal system over time (Schoeneborn, 2008). Moreover, according to Ahrne and Brunsson (2011), organisations may even be defined as "decided orders" including one or more of the elements of membership, hierarchy, rules, monitoring and sanctions (p. 84).

Decision communication can be described according to two aspects: decision premise and uncertainty absorption. Decision premise refers to the structural dimension of decisions, according to which decision situations both create and restrict subsequent decisions. Every decision becomes a decision premise for subsequent decisions. This can also be described as the interrelationship between open and fixed contingency (Luhmann, 2005). Before a decision, the alternative is open and several decisions are possible. After the decision, the contingency becomes fixed to that particular decision. In a recursive process, this fixed contingency becomes an open contingency for subsequent decision events. This recursive process is illustrated in Model 2.
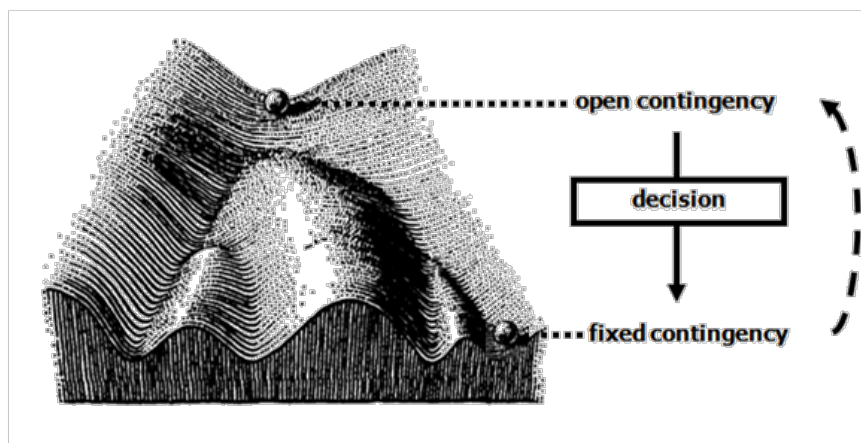
Model 2 – Open and fixed contingency in decision communication[3]

Uncertainty absorption refers to the process of uncertainty being reduced (i.e. absorbed) in the connections of decisions. When making decisions, all given information and remaining uncertainty is transformed into the selection of one alternative over other alternatives. As described by Seidl and Becker (2005, 2006), uncertainty is reduced as ensuing decisions cannot "see" (p. 41) the uncertainties connected to previous decisions. Uncertainty absorption relates to decision premise, as absorption

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[3] Thanks to Prof. Dennis Schoeneborn (CBS) for sharing this illustration with me.

takes place when a decision is used as a premise by subsequent decisions. According to Luhmann (2005), decision-making carries with it responsibility and authority. At the same time, a decision is based on the assumption that it will make a difference whether and how a decision is taken, and it follows that decisions make commitment visible, appearing motivated, intentional, and reasoned. In this way, it contributes to uncertainty absorption, particularly when subsequent decisions can be neither predicted nor determined (Luhmann, 2005).

Decision communication allows exploring front-end value creation from a perspective that may account for the uncertainty that permeates front-end decision-making. Williams and Samset (2010) emphasise how front-end decision-making is permeated by scant information, to some degree forcing decisions to be made based on judgement and calculation. As decision communication relies on the concept of uncertainty absorption, it inherently assumes that decisions can never be made based on complete information. On the contrary, it is *through* decisions and decision connections that uncertainty is reduced. At the same time, decision-making may be viewed not just as selecting a particular alternative, for instance among various potential project concepts. Rather, decision communication indicates a process of decision-making which communicatively constitutes a project organisation with a sense of collective identity among project participants. For this to continuously and recursively self-reproduce itself – in Brady et al.'s (2005) words, establish a long-term strategic partnership – decision communications appear as a critical process for supporting value co-creation.

Co-orientation

Co-orientation transforms processes of integration into being a matter not just of aligning goals and integrating systems, but also of achieving a sense of collective identity, or organisationality. The concept of co-orientation is concerned with constructing some sort of meta text to support the transformation of diverse interests of different communities into a common purpose and a collective identity Taylor (2006). Co-orientation is about subjects orienting towards a common object of concern. As Cooren et al. (2011, p. 1155) describe it, the process of co-orientation occurs as people "'tune in' to one another as they engage in coordinated activity." According to Taylor (2006), co-orienting towards a common object of concern requires interpersonal interaction to negotiate a common attitude, including the alignment of belief and intention. Paraphrasing Maturana, Taylor defines interpersonal interaction as "an ontologically established domain of recurrent interactions" (Maturana 1988, p. 3 as cited by Taylor, 2006), and argues that individuals engaging in recurrent interactions begin to exhibit the characteristics of a couple with its own identity.

Co-orientation is useful for understanding how integration may serve a purpose beyond defining project goals that are aligned with organisational goals and strategy. Rather, negotiating and

defining project goals in the front-end may also contribute to the establishment of a collective identity. Also drawing on co-orientation, Koschmann (2012) explores the communicative constitution of collective identity in inter-organisational settings, and argues that collective identity is not necessarily enduring or distinctive, but rather a discursive resource that is shaped and re-shaped through communication, and which can be drawn upon for strategic purposes. Collective identity in this sense is a dynamic concept that may be continuously altered by organisational (or project) members.

3. Methodology: how to investigate marketing agency-client interactions from a communication perspective

3.1. The interrelations between research questions and methodological considerations

The proposed study explores the research question:

How do front-end communication processes facilitate and support front-end value creation in Danish marketing agencies' client interactions?

Three sub-questions were formulated, each of which is proposed to guide an article. Table 2 summarises research sub-question, purpose, methods, expected contributions, and potential journal for publication for each of the articles. The following sections will detail the choices and motivations regarding sampling and data collection and analysis.

Table 2

Connections between research sub-questions, purpose, methods, expected contributions, and proposed journals for publication

Research sub-question	Purpose	Methods	Expected contributions	Proposed journal
1. How may front-end activities in inter-organisational project settings be reconceptualised from a constitutive communication perspective, and what implications might this have for our understanding of project value creation?	To address front-end value creation from a communication-centred, processual perspective, specifically focusing on challenges emerging in the context of inter-organisational project settings. To advance our understanding of front-end project communication and its potential role of supporting value creation.	Conceptual paper Synthesising and problematising studies project value creation, the front-end, and inter-organisational project settings to identify salient emergent themes. Synthesising CCO concepts to develop a lens for reconceptualising front-end activities identified in PM literature.	A process-based, communication-centred perspective on front-end value creation, exploring and seeking to understand 1) the role of communication in the strategic front-end of inter-organisational projects, and 2) the constitutive characteristics of front-end decision-making and integration.	Project Management Journal (PMJ) Special Issue on "Process Studies of Project Organizing"[4]
2. Which front-end communication processes do project participants from Danish marketing agencies perceive as useful in their client interactions, and how may these be understood from a communication-centred perspective?	To better understand the role of front-end agency-client communication processes, as perceived and experienced by project participants.	**Data collection:** 22 semi-structured interviews; Support from documents, e-mail correspondences, and website data. **Data analysis:** Template Analysis; Interpretative Repertoires focusing on rhetorical tropes	Empirically grounded insights on the perceived role of front-end communication for marketing agency-client interactions. Advanced understanding of whether and how agency-client communication is perceived to facilitate and/or support front-end value creation activities, and how. Situating communication in PM contexts to advancer our understanding of inter-organisational communication.	Management Communication Quarterly

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[4] Please follow the link to read the call for papers: http://www.pmi.org/-/media/pmi/documents/public/pdf/learning/academic-research/process-studies-project-organizing.pdf

3. Which front-end communication processes are used by Danish marketing agencies in their client interactions, and in what ways do they support front-end value creation?	To advance our understanding of which front-end communication processes used in Danish marketing agencies; to interpret these processes against the perceived role of communication; and to reflect on these processes from a constitutive communication to explore the potential connection between the communicative constitution of a collective project organisation and front-end value creation.	**Data collection:** Front-end documents collected in the agencies where interviews have been conducted; e-mail correspondences; website data Support from semi-structured interviews. **Data analysis:** Template Analysis; Interpretative Repertoires focusing on rhetorical tropes and/or identity claims speech acts as inspired by Dobusch and Schoeneborn (2015)	Empirically grounded insights on actual communication processes used and experienced by project participants in Danish marketing agencies. Advanced understanding of the ways in which Danish marketing agencies communicate with their clients for value-creating purposes. To offer conceptual nuance on front-end value creation based on a communication perspective to shed new light on the ways in which project value creation is discussed and practiced.	International Journal of Project Management

3.2. Sampling and data collection

Data has been collected in 22 marketing agencies across Denmark (please see Appendix 3 for an overview). The case organisations and respective interviewees were sampled utilising theoretical sampling (Corbin & Strauss, 2014), aimed at identifying emerging concepts (front-end communication processes) as related to the theoretical and analytical framework (various dimensions and configurations of PVC). Correspondingly, the sampling process relies on principles of appropriate sampling (Morse, Barrett, Mayan, Olson, & Spiers, 2002), focusing specifically on sampling participants that represent or are knowledgeable about the research topic to achieve reliability and validity. The sampling process utilised a combination of systematic searches[5], personal networks using Linkedin, and snowball sampling (Daymon & Holloway, 2002). The initial search on marketing agencies produced 245 results, which were screened and prioritised according to criteria such as type of service (e.g. traditional advertising agency or brand activation agency), size, and location. The aim was to pick agencies representing the Danish marketing industry, rather than zooming in on a particular type of agency. Relying to a certain extent on convenience sampling (Daymon & Holloway, 2002), snowball sampling was increasingly utilised after the first couple of interviews, as it yielded a higher success rate of positive responses from the interviewees contacted. Initially, I sampled project managers. However, after the second round of data collection (please see Appendix 3), I realised that project managers were not always involved in the issues of client interaction, and thus did not constitute an appropriate sample. Thus, I began to ask the agencies more openly who would be appropriate to interview, hence the varying job titles and job responsibilities of the interviewees.

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[5] Using Google as the main search machine, but also relying on lists and overviews of Danish marketing agencies such as http://funnelx.dk/marketing-bureauer

The data set consists of semi-structured interviews (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009), various types of archival material in the form of communication documents used by the agencies in their front-end client interactions, agency-client e-mail correspondences, and textual data retrieved from the agencies' websites using Windows' Snipping Tool (Kozinets, Dolbec, & Earley, 2014). Some of the interviewees did not share documents for different reasons, which is a limitation to the study. Issues of data saturation remain to be further explored, i.e. whether the current data set supports comprehension and completeness (Morse et al., 2002) or whether further data must be collected in order to be able to answer the research questions. However, owning to the iterative nature of the proposed methods for coding and systematising the data, this issue is expected to be resolved once the data has been analysed in more detail. As a guideline, Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) suggest that qualitative interview studies usually include between 15-25 interviews.

When doing interviews for discourse analysis, the interview as a method for data collection is concerned with understanding how interviewees use discourses to construct their version of the world (Daymon & Holloway, 2002). The interviews were guided by a rather detailed interview protocol (please see Appendix 4), which, however, functioned more as a guideline rather than a strict set of questions to be asked in a particular order or wording across all interviews. In line with discourse analysis and interpretative repertoires, although a detailed interview guide was developed, the interviews largely followed a conversational form (Potter & Wetherell, 1987) in order to capture the topics and discourses brought up by the interviewees. The creation of the interview guide is based on Kvale and Brinkmann (2009), according to whom the semi-structured interview guide consists of topics and suggested questions to be covered. To allow interpretative repertoires to emerge inductively, the guide was only loosely followed. The interview guide was revised based on a preliminary analysis of three interviews conducted from August to September 2016. The interviews were conducted at the offices of each interviewee's workplace to ensure a comfortable situation for the respondents.

3.3. Data analysis: current considerations

Currently, no interviews are fully transcribed and data has only been superficially analysed. All textual data will be coded using Template Analysis (King, 2004, 2012). An initial coding template has been developed (please see Appendix 5), which currently comprises three top-level themes (integration, decision-making, and aligning project and organisational goals) with three additional levels of connected sub-themes. The hierarchical organisation of codes enables a multi-level analysis of occurring themes, but is only a first step to a full analysis of textual data, hence the suggestion of further methods for data analysis as discussed below. Developing coding templates requires iterative and explorative revisions going back and forth between data and theory. This type of "hybrid process of inductive and deductive thematic analysis" has been demonstrated to support rigour (Fereday & Muir-

Cochrane, 2006, p. 80). I expect the coding template to be further revised once data is analysed in more detail and more work is done on reviewing and synthesising literature.

The next step is to thoroughly analyse the textual data using NVivo to further develop the coding template, specifically with respect to the proposed communication framework. Currently, the plan is to combine The Template Analysis coding with Interpretative Repertoires (Potter & Wetherell, 1987; Whetherell & Potter, 1988). Being a type of discourse analysis, interpretative repertoires corresponds with a CCO perspective as, "Discourse has become seen as a *social practice* in itself" (Whetherell & Potter, 1988, p. 167 , italics in original). Interpretative repertoires are defined by Potter and Wetherell (1987) as the building blocks used by speakers to construct versions of actions and cognitive processes, hence the precense of a repertoire is typically indicated by particular rhetorical tropes or figures of speech. Corresponding with Template Analysis, Interpretative Repertoires as a methodological approach include doing preliminary codes to search for patterns and recurring themes emerging in the textual data. The combination of Template Analysis and Interpretative Repertoires allows the analysis to identify salient discourses in the data, as experienced and used by the respondents, and employ these in interconnected iterations of making sense of the data while sharpening the analytical focus. An exmple of initial findings from preliminary data supporting identified themes in the literature can be found in appendix 2.

3.4. Theory of science: connecting a communicative ontology to a process-based view on project management

Drawing on CCO theories and concepts to study front-end value creation, the proposed study relies on a processual, communicative ontology of the organisation (Bisel, 2009; Schoeneborn, 2011). This approach responds to a number of calls in the PM literature, hereunder Winter et al.'s (2006b) call for a becoming ontology as previously discussed, and Pollack's (2007) call for more research based in a "soft paradigm" that employs an interpretative epistemology and qualitative and exploratory methods. A communicative ontology as afforded by CCO marks an understanding of communication as constitutive of organisation (Ashcraft et al., 2009; Schoeneborn et al., 2014; Schoeneborn & Vásquez, Forthcoming), and acknowledges organisational communication as co-constructed (Cooren et al., 2011). It follows that social reality is understood from a constructionist perspective, which coheres with a methodological approach drawing on in-depth interviews and interpretative analysis (Silverman, 2011).

CCO research has been criticised for failing to go beyond the micro level of communication (Kuhn, 2012). However, employing a combined perspective that utilises CCO concepts and Luhmann's social systems theory, the proposed study suggests a methodological approach which, according to

Schoeneborn (2011), enables a focus beyond the micro. This approach has guided the choice of data collection methods (i.e. semi-structured interviews, archival data in the form of documents, and textual website data) and the suggested interpretive methodologies for analysing data (i.e. template analysis and interpretative repertoires). Although CCO studies have traditionally been associated with micro-level analytical approaches, research drawing on CCO thinking may utilise e.g. semiotics, rhetoric, or discourse as long as it remains focused on and grounded in communication as the central social practice (Cooren et al., 2011). Regarding the micro-macro discussion, the connection between the proposed concepts decision communication and co-orientation needs to be further explicated, as co-orientation, for instance, is coined as a micro-oriented concept (Taylor, 2006). Potential subtleties and differences needs to be addressed in order to clarify the implications for combining them.

4. Progress report and plan ahead

Task	Status	Description
Teaching	***427/600 hours:*** I have covered 427 hours of the compulsory 600 hours of teaching. I will conclude my teaching in the Spring semester 2018 when I return from my stay abroad in Hong Kong. I am scheduled to teach Project Management at the 6th semester of BA in Marketing and Management Communication.	Courses taught: - "Projektledelse" (Project Management), 10 ECTS course for 3rd semester Master's students - Social Media Management, 10 ECTS election course for 5th semester Bachelor's students - Communication in a Marketing perspective, 10 ECTS course for 3rd semester Bachelor's students
Data collection	I have collected semi-structured interviews, archival data, and textual data retrieved from agency websites in 22 marketing agencies across Denmark.	Data collection is going according to plan. Once I have looked more carefully at the data that I currently have, I will consider whether additional data needs to be collected. If this is the case, I aim to finish my data collection before my stay abroad which starts September 1 2017.
PhD courses	**20/30 ECTS:** I have covered 20 out of the compulsory 30 ECTS points of my PhD programme. I plan to conclude the remaining 10 ECTS points during the academic year 2017/2018. I have not yet decided on which courses to attend.	Completed: - The Role of Theory in Business Research (5 ECTS points), Department of Management, AU - Perspectives on Communication, Organization, and Culture (5 ECTS points), Department of Intercultural Communication and Management, CBS - Research Design (5 ECTS points), BCOM, AU - Advanced Qualitative Methods (5 ECTS points), May 2017[6], BCOM, AU
Stay abroad	From September 1 to November 30, I will visit Professor Patrick Fong and his research team at The Hong Kong Polytechnic University. I have obtained additional funding from five different grants to help me finance and realise the stay, amounting to around 130,000DKK. To this end, I have submitted over 15 grant proposals. I now have enough funding to realise the trip.	Patrick Fong's research focuses among other things on Project Management, Individual/Team/Organisational Learning, Knowledge Management, and Value Management The goal of my stay abroad is to engage with Fong as well as his research team, gaining useful perspectives and feedback for my Ph.D., and potentially developing ideas for a joint article.
Conference	I have not yet decided which conference I will attend as part of my PhD programme, as I want to wait until I have progressed more with the analysis of my empirical data.	Potential conferences to attend: - IRNOP 2018 - CCI 2018 - EGOS 2018 - Project Management Institute (PMI) 2018

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[6] It should be noted, that I have not yet received my diploma for this particular course, as it was held recently (May 1-4)

4.1. Concluding remarks

As the TP represent a current glimpse into my Ph.D. programme, several aspects covered in this report remain to be further developed. For instance, the literature review is still in its early phase, and should be more advanced to more comprehensively cover, for instance, contributions on PVC. Similarly, once I get to look more closely at my data, I will get a more firm idea of which methods for data analysis are more useful, as well as whether additional data needs to be collected.

Currently, my primary challenge is to develop a strong enough line of argumentation to support the first article to be submitted for a special issue by the end of August (see footnote on page 24 for the call). The article may both be conceptual and empirical. For an empirical article, I soon need to dig more deeply into my data, whereas for a conceptual paper, my literature review may lack in scope and quality. Any suggestions for improvements in terms of this are warmly welcomed.

For the plan ahead, please refer to the GANTT chart in Appendix 1.

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