

# University of Wollongong - Research Online

## Thesis Collection

Title: Managing synergetic momentum: a grounded theory of the management of public-private partnerships

Author: Gary Noble

Year: 2002

Repository DOI:

### Copyright Warning

You may print or download ONE copy of this document for the purpose of your own research or study. The University does not authorise you to copy, communicate or otherwise make available electronically to any other person any copyright material contained on this site.

You are reminded of the following: This work is copyright. Apart from any use permitted under the Copyright Act 1968, no part of this work may be reproduced by any process, nor may any other exclusive right be exercised, without the permission of the author. Copyright owners are entitled to take legal action against persons who infringe their copyright. A reproduction of material that is protected by copyright may be a copyright infringement. A court may impose penalties and award damages in relation to offences and infringements relating to copyright material.

Higher penalties may apply, and higher damages may be awarded, for offences and infringements involving the conversion of material into digital or electronic form.

**Unless otherwise indicated, the views expressed in this thesis are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the views of the University of Wollongong.**

Research Online is the open access repository for the University of Wollongong. For further information contact the UOW Library: [research-pubs@uow.edu.au](mailto:research-pubs@uow.edu.au)

2002

## Managing synergetic momentum: a grounded theory of the management of public-private partnerships

Gary Noble

*University of Wollongong*, gnoble@uow.edu.au

Follow this and additional works at: <https://ro.uow.edu.au/theses>

### University of Wollongong

#### Copyright Warning

You may print or download ONE copy of this document for the purpose of your own research or study. The University does not authorise you to copy, communicate or otherwise make available electronically to any other person any copyright material contained on this site.

You are reminded of the following: This work is copyright. Apart from any use permitted under the Copyright Act 1968, no part of this work may be reproduced by any process, nor may any other exclusive right be exercised, without the permission of the author. Copyright owners are entitled to take legal action against persons who infringe their copyright. A reproduction of material that is protected by copyright may be a copyright infringement. A court may impose penalties and award damages in relation to offences and infringements relating to copyright material.

Higher penalties may apply, and higher damages may be awarded, for offences and infringements involving the conversion of material into digital or electronic form.

Unless otherwise indicated, the views expressed in this thesis are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the views of the University of Wollongong.

### Recommended Citation

Noble, Gary I, Managing synergetic momentum: a grounded theory of the management of public-private partnerships, PhD thesis, School of Management, Marketing and Employment Relations, University of Wollongong, 2002. <http://ro.uow.edu.au/theses/310>

## **NOTE**

This online version of the thesis may have different page formatting and pagination from the paper copy held in the University of Wollongong Library.

## **UNIVERSITY OF WOLLONGONG**

### **COPYRIGHT WARNING**

You may print or download ONE copy of this document for the purpose of your own research or study. The University does not authorise you to copy, communicate or otherwise make available electronically to any other person any copyright material contained on this site. You are reminded of the following:

Copyright owners are entitled to take legal action against persons who infringe their copyright. A reproduction of material that is protected by copyright may be a copyright infringement. A court may impose penalties and award damages in relation to offences and infringements relating to copyright material. Higher penalties may apply, and higher damages may be awarded, for offences and infringements involving the conversion of material into digital or electronic form.

**MANAGING SYNERGETIC MOMENTUM:  
A GROUNDED THEORY OF THE MANAGEMENT OF  
PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS.**

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the  
requirements for the award of the degree

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

from

UNIVERSITY OF WOLLONGONG

by

GARY IAN NOBLE (B.Ed., MBA., M.Com.(Hons))

SCHOOL OF MANAGEMENT, MARKETING AND EMPLOYMENT RELATIONS

2002

## **DECLARATION**

I, Gary I. Noble, declare that this thesis, submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the award of Doctor of Philosophy, in the School of Management, Marketing and Employment Relations, University of Wollongong, is wholly my own work unless otherwise referenced or acknowledged. The document has not been submitted for qualifications at any other academic institution.

Gary I. Noble

24 April 2002

## **ABSTRACT**

This study uses an orthodox grounded theory methodology to discover the main professional concerns of managers responsible for the establishment and maintenance of public-private partnerships (PPPs) involving local governments and private sector firms. In addition, this study explains the social processes that these managers use to resolve these concerns over the life of a PPP project.

Orthodox grounded theory is an inductive research methodology capable of theory building. It was selected for use for several reasons. These included its ability to provide an explanation of the variation in the patterns of behaviour of respondents as they establish and manage a PPP project. Data was collected from ten PPP projects in both Australia and the UK through interviews with forty three respondents, non-participant observation and archival records. Data was analysed using the constant comparative method and involved the use of theoretical memos and theoretical sampling procedures.

The main professional concern of respondents over the managerial life of a PPP project involves the need to maintain the forward momentum of a project whilst also having to constantly resolve managerial issues through a process of seeking the cooperation of managers from the partner organisation. Key managers continuously resolve this concern through the social process of ‘managing synergetic momentum’ (MSM). The grounded theory of MSM suggests that in circumstances where there exists strong emotional bonds, mutual trust and respect, key managers are likely to make a conscious decision to manage a PPP project through largely informal methods that often rely on

the use of psychological contracts between individuals. In contrast, when there are low levels of emotional bonding between key managers, the style of management chosen by managers is often formal and bureaucratic in nature. This management style often involves the use of committee and other formal decision making processes to resolve managerial issues. An informal management style can be an effective means to address the issues of maintaining forward momentum of a PPP and managing in a cooperative manner with other key managers.

This study contributes to the extant literature in several ways. Firstly, it provides insights into, and an explanation of, the actions of key managers in the process of managing PPP projects. It provides another dimension in the PPP literature to the micro-management of PPPs. Secondly, it provides conceptual support to many of the themes contained in the cooperative inter-organisational relationship (CIOR) literature by contextualising the dynamics of the social processes that underlie these themes.

The grounded theory of MSM is also significant in that it provides practitioners in the substantive area of inquiry with a number of recommendations designed to assist in their control over the management of a PPP project. In addition, the grounded theory of MSM identifies a number of avenues for future research that may add further to our understanding of the management of PPPs.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

There are a number of people without whose support and assistance this study and thesis could not have been achieved.

To Jan, my best friend and wife, thank you for your patience and tolerance during this endeavour.

I was most fortunate in this study to have as a lead supervisor Associate Professor Robert Jones. He gave more than freely of his time and constantly encouraged me throughout the course of this research. His intimate knowledge of orthodox grounded theory methodology was of immeasurable benefit to me and I have learned a tremendous amount from my association with him. To my other supervisor Professor Peter Carroll thank you for your patience, support and guidance.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge the various managers and others who participated in this study and gave so generously of their time, personal thoughts and experiences in managing PPP projects.



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Abstract</b> .....	iii.
<b>Acknowledgments</b> .....	v.
<b>Table of Contents</b> .....	vi.
<b>List of Tables</b> .....	xi.
<b>List of Figures</b> .....	xii.
<b>Chapter 1</b>	
<b>Introduction</b>	
Introduction .....	1.
The Aim and Purpose of the Research .....	2.
Significance of the Study.....	4.
Context and Background to the Research.....	5.
Structure of the Thesis.....	7.
<b>Chapter 2</b>	
<b>Public – Private Partnerships: A Definition and Literature</b>	
<b>Review</b>	
Introduction .....	13.
What is a PPP? .....	14.
A Developing but Immature Academic Literature .....	26.
Conclusion.....	40.

## **Chapter 3**

### **Research Design**

Introduction .....	43.
Selecting a Research Design.....	45.
The Selection of a Qualitative Research Approach.....	48.
The Selection of a Research Paradigm .....	51.
The Selection of an Orthodox Grounded Theory Methodology.....	60.
The Guiding Principles of Orthodox Grounded Theory.....	65.
Theoretical Sampling Procedures .....	71.
Data Collection Methods .....	75.
Data Analysis Methods – The Emergent Theory.....	79.
Study Limitations .....	86.
Conclusion.....	87.

## **Chapter 4**

### **Trawling for a Partner**

Introduction .....	91.
An Overview of the Trawling for a Partner Stage.....	92.
Actualising a Need .....	95.
Trawling a Market .....	107.
Responding.....	119.
Conclusion.....	122.

## **Chapter 5**

### **Sizing Up**

Introduction .....	125.
--------------------	------

An Overview of the Sizing Up Stage .....	126.
Dimensions of Compatibility .....	129.
Assessing Compatibility .....	140.
Emerging Champions .....	147.
Cautious Commitment.....	154.
Conclusion.....	159.

## **Chapter 6**

### **Structuring the Partnership**

Introduction .....	161.
An Overview of the Structuring the Partnership Stage .....	164.
Position Idealising .....	167.
Position Levelling.....	179.
Position Formalising.....	191.
Conclusion.....	202.

## **Chapter 7**

### **Rolling**

Introduction .....	205.
An Overview of the Rolling Stage .....	207.
Delivering on Promises .....	211.
Confronting the Issues .....	222.
Closure.....	238.
Conclusion.....	247.

## **Chapter 8**

### **The Grounded Theory of Managing Synergetic Momentum**

Introduction .....	250.
A Substantive Grounded Theory of the Management of PPPs.....	252.
An Evaluation of the Grounded Theory of MSM.....	264.
Conclusion.....	272.

## **Chapter 9**

### **Literature Comparison**

Introduction .....	275.
Delimitation of the Extant Literature Area.....	277.
An Overview of the Extant Literature .....	281.
A Comparison with Previous Grounded Theory Studies of CIORs .....	284.
The Relationship of the Theory of MSM to Meta-Level Theories of CIORs .....	287.
A Comparison of the Main Conceptual Elements of the Theory of MSM with Corresponding Aspects of the CIOR Literature .....	304.
Conclusion.....	321.

## **Chapter 10**

### **Implications and Conclusions**

Introduction .....	324.
Achievement of the Research Aims .....	325.
Implications of the Research for Practitioners .....	330.
Implications for Further Research .....	334.
Final Thoughts.....	340.

<b>List of References .....</b>	<b>343.</b>
---------------------------------	-------------

## **Appendix A**

### **Data to Theory: Applying the Principles of Orthodox Grounded**

#### **Theory**

Introduction .....	374.
Data Analysis.....	376.
Concept Cards and Theoretical Memos .....	384.
Theoretical Sampling.....	390.
Conclusion.....	395.

## LIST OF TABLES

Table 2.1 A Comparison of Transactional and Collaborative Relationships .....	25.
Table 3.1. Dominant Paradigms in the Social Sciences and Related Domains .....	52.
Table 4.1. Actualising a Need – Its Categories and Related Properties .....	97.
Table 4.2. Trawling a Market – Its Categories and Related Properties .....	109.
Table 4.3. Responding – Its Categories and Related Properties.....	120.
Table 5.1. Dimensions of Compatibility – Its Categories and Related Properties ..	132.
Table 5.2. Assessing Compatibility – Its Categories and Related Properties .....	141.
Table 5.3. Emerging Champions – Its Categories and Related Properties .....	149.
Table 5.4. Cautious Commitment – Its Categories and Related Properties .....	154.
Table 6.1. Position Idealising – Its Categories and Related Properties .....	168.
Table 6.2. Position Levelling – Its Categories and Related Properties .....	181.
Table 6.3. Position Formalising – Its Categories and Related Properties .....	193.
Table 7.1. Delivering on Promises – Its Categories and Related Properties .....	212.
Table 7.2. Confronting the Issues – Its Categories and Related Properties.....	224.
Table 7.3. Closure – Its Categories and Related Properties .....	240.
Table 9.1. Each Conceptual Unit of the Theory of MSM and Corresponding Theme from the CIOR Literature .....	279.
Table 9.2. Conceptual Groupings of Meta-Level Theories of CIOR Based on Unit Analysis and Purpose .....	287.
Table 9.3. The Theory of MSM in Relation to the Main Theoretical Themes of the CIOR Literature.....	290.
Table A.1. Summary of Key Characteristics of UK PPP Projects .....	394.

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 3.1. Crotty’s Model of Selecting a Research Design .....	46.
Figure 4.1. Trawling for a Partner Stage of a PPP.....	93.
Figure 5.1. Sizing Up Stage of a PPP .....	128.
Figure 6.1. Structuring the Partnership Stage of a PPP .....	165.
Figure 7.1. Rolling Stage of a PPP .....	208.
Figure 8.1. The Main Conceptual Elements of the Theory of MSM.....	261.
Figure 9.1. The Process of Delimiting the CIOR Literature.....	280.
Figure 9.2. Adaptation of Ford et al Model of Relationship Development in a Business Market .....	298.
Figure 9.3. Process Framework of the Development of CIORs .....	302.
Figure 9.4. The Integration of Trust and the Sequential Development of CIORs ...	308.
Figure 9.5. Possible Negotiating Approaches .....	315.
Figure A.1. Concept Card titled ‘Different People’ .....	386.
Figure A.2. Early Memo Titled ‘Changing Managers’ .....	388.
Figure A.3. Final Memo titled ‘Managing Churn’ .....	389.