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## **Do Partners in PPPs View Public and Private Management Differently? Re-examining Boyne's Hypotheses in the Context of Collaboration**

### **ABSTRACT**

Differences between public and private management have been studied extensively by comparing sectors but not *within* cross-sectoral collaborative arrangements. As participants in such arrangements have *actually experienced* both management styles, examining their perceptions of how these styles differ may contribute innovatively to existing literature. This paper compares such perceptions between public and private sector project members (N=63) involved in four PPPs in the Netherlands. We assess (1) to what extent and under which conditions these project members *view public and private management differently* and (2) how they *evaluate these differences*. By triangulating quantitative and qualitative interview data, we examine Boyne's classical hypotheses and find that more than two thirds of the statements making reference to these hypotheses offer support for them; more so, the vast majority of such statements evaluate sectoral differences negatively. Intriguingly, type of PPP is a stronger determinant of perceived differences than the manager's sector of origin.

### **KEYWORDS**

public-private partnerships, public management, private management

## INTRODUCTION

For decades, colleagues have debated the assumed differences between public and private management (Boyne 2002; Bozeman 2004; Frederickson and Ghore 2005). Studies comparing the decision-making, goal setting, values, and motivations of public and private managers have produced mixed results (Bozeman et al. 1992; Nutt 2006; Rainey and Bozeman 2000). In a seminal article, Boyne (2002) examined existing literature on public–private differences along four dimensions: organisational environment, goals, structure, and managerial values. He concluded that ‘there is no clear support for the view that public and private management are fundamentally dissimilar’ (2002, 118).

However, as the 21<sup>st</sup> century unfolds, the organisational landscape demarcating sectoral boundaries has changed dramatically. Across the globe, we see increased ‘sector blurring’ (Bozeman 2004: xii), with many services and products now being delivered through various types of partnerships in which public and private sectors collaborate, sometimes with citizens and third sector organisations as well (e.g. Alford and O’Flynn 2012; Brandsen and Honingh 2016). Some even speak of a “collaboration cult” (O’Flynn 2009: 112). One type of collaboration, the public-private partnership (PPP) in which public and private partners bundle expertise, funds, and accountability to produce products and services, is widely employed by governments to manage large-scale infrastructure projects and utility services (e.g. Boyer et al. 2015; Hodge et al. 2010; Klijn and Teisman 2003; Reynaers 2014).

Surprisingly, research comparing public and private management has hardly adjusted to this new reality. Scholars have not empirically examined public–private differences *within* PPPs, while such examination may contribute more to public management scholarship than yet another comparison between public and private entities, for at least three reasons.

First, participants in partnerships have *actually experienced* both public and private management behaviour so their perceptions may be less unsullied than those of employees who are familiar with just one sector. As such, our respondents show resemblance to sector switchers, another unique “species” to examine public–private differences (Bozeman and Ponomariov 2009: 77; Hansen 2014; Su and Bozeman 2009).

Second, comparing perceptions of differences within partnerships may further contextualize and specify such differences. Indeed, perceptions may be highly dependent on the *role* of the actor within the partnership, the *sector* they’re initially from (whether they represent the public or private sector), the *type* of partnership (infrastructure, service, utility, and so forth) and whether they were only partially and marginally involved or throughout the *entire duration* of the process; all factors understudied in public–private comparisons to date.

Third and final, how partakers in PPPs *evaluate differences* between public and private management (and, thus, indirectly, between each other) may very well affect the effectiveness of collaboration and communication between the public and private partners. More empirical insight into the evaluation of these differences – and how they compare between public and private managers – will provide theoretical and practical implications for how to improve the management of perceptions and expectations in partnerships. Moreover, previous studies have consistently shown that mutual perceptions of differences exceed actual differences between public and private managers: they also display cliché-type differences more clearly (e.g. Van der Wal and de Graaf 2007; Van Steden et al. 2015; Van der Wal and Yang 2015).

This study seeks to address the issues by assessing (1) to what extent and under which conditions public and private partners collaborating in PPPs *view public and private management differently* and (2) how they *evaluate these differences*. Including the latter is relevant given that perceived differences between public and private management need not necessarily be problematic. In order to study the proposed, we re-examine Boyne’s (2002) hypotheses on differences between public and private management by analysing 66 in-depth

interviews with project members representing the public as well as the private side of four different types of PPPs in the Netherlands – involved in the construction of a water sanitation plant, a detention centre, a highway, and a ministry. In all, our study aims to answer the following basic research question: *Do partners in PPPs view public and private management differently?*

The structure of this paper is as follows. First, we specify the type of PPP under scrutiny, namely Design-Build-Finance-Maintenance-Operate (DBFMO) projects. Then, we review assumed differences between public and private management as specified through Boyne's hypotheses. Subsequently, the 'Method' section describes our case selection, respondent selection and the process of qualitative and quantitative data analysis. After discussing our findings, we conclude our paper by discussing the limitations of our study and providing suggestions for further research, as well as implications for public management practice.

## **PPPs AND DBFMOs**

The term PPPs is used to refer to various types of public–private cooperation that can differ on various dimensions (e.g. Sullivan and Skelcher 2002; Weihe 2008). For example, hierarchical and formal partnerships, also known as concession partnerships, are different from the more horizontal and informal alliance partnerships (Edelenbos and Teisman 2008; Klijn and Twist 2007). Here, PPPs refers to a specific type of concession partnership known as DBFMO projects that are used in many countries across the globe (e.g. Bult–Spiering and Dewulf 2008; Hodge 2010).

In DBFMOs, public procurers sign a long–term performance contract with a multi–headed private consortium. The consortium becomes responsible for the design, construction, maintenance, and operation of a public infrastructure or asset. The consortium pre–finances the project and is able to earn back its investment by complying with the output norms. Performance monitoring allows the consortium and procurer to assess whether performance indeed is in line with these norms. Performance determines the height of the periodical fee the consortium receives for provided services.

There is no consensus on whether PPPs are a manifestation of New Public Management (NPM) like privatization (Hall, de la Motte and Davies 2003, 2) or whether they form an alternative to it (Peat and Costley 2001). Either way, given the participation of actors from both the public and private sector it is inevitable they are confronted with each other's managerial techniques, values, and cultures. As such, DBFMOs form the perfect managerial context to re–assess Boyne's classical hypotheses on public and private management across such dimensions.

## **PUBLIC VERUS PRIVATE MANAGEMENT: 13 HYPOTHESES**

After reviewing academic literature, Boyne (2002: 99–100) examined the difference between public and private management across four dimensions: organisational environment, goals, structure, and managerial values. For each dimension, Boyne (2002) formulated various hypotheses, displayed in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Hypotheses on the differences between public and private management

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***Environment***

- H1: Public managers work in a more complex environment
- H2: Public organisations are more open to environmental influences
- H3: The environment of public agencies is less stable
- H4: Public managers face less intense competitive pressures

***Goals***

- H5: The goals of public organisations are distinctive
- H6: Public managers are required to pursue a large number of goals
- H7: The goals of public agencies are more vague

***Structure***

- H8: Public organisations are more bureaucratic
- H9: More red tape is present in decision making by public officials
- H10: Managers in public agencies have less autonomy from superiors

***Values***

- H11: Public sector managers are less materialistic
  - H12: Motivation to serve the public interest is higher in the public sector
  - H13: Public managers have weaker organisational commitment
- 

Source: Boyne (2002, 103).

With respect to the dimension environment, the hypotheses assume that the context of public organisations is more complex, less permeable, and less stable in comparison to private sector organisations. Besides, competitive pressure is assumed to be absent in public organisations. With respect to goals, the hypotheses assume that the goals of public organisations are distinctive, multiple, and vaguer in comparison to private organisations that only seek profit. In relation to structure, the hypotheses suggest that, in comparison to private organisations, public organisations are characterized by more bureaucracy, more red tape, and less managerial autonomy. Finally, with respect to values the hypotheses postulate that public managers are less materialistic, that they have a greater desire to serve the public, and that they dispose of less organisational commitment than their private sector colleagues. As Boyne (2002: 118) describes, critics argue that the incorporation of private sector management techniques into the public sector is inherently problematic because of these differences.

Boyne (2002: 97) tested these hypotheses by reviewing 34 published empirical studies on differences between public agencies and private firms and finds significant results for Hypothesis 8 (public organisations are more bureaucratic), Hypothesis 11 (public sector managers are less materialistic) and Hypothesis 13 (public managers have weaker organisational commitment) and concludes that “there is no clear support for the view that public and private management are fundamentally dissimilar” (2002: 118) and his findings ‘seem to be a narrow and uncertain foundation for rejecting the element of New Public Management’ (2002: 116). The author (2002: 116) argues, however, that these findings are indefinite because of methodological shortcomings.

First, the statistical evidence derived from the 34 published empirical studies use narrow measures of publicness (2002: 97) and second, the 34 studies are diverse and distinct in terms of methodology and focus (2002: 105). Further research on the validity of these assumptions should therefore be conducted according to Boyne.

The studies reviewed by Boyne (2002) consider differences between public and private management in either public and/or private organisations. As we argued in our introduction, there are strong arguments related to both public management theory and practice for re-

examining these 13 hypotheses in a PPP setting in which public and private management play out at the same time.

## METHOD

To assess (1) the extent to and under which conditions public and private partners collaborating in PPPs view public and private management differently and (2) how they evaluate these differences, we coded and analysed our interview data derived from a comparative study on four Dutch DBFMO projects with data analysis software Stata (Reynaers 2014). The following sections describe the background and process of the (1) case selection, (2) respondent selection, (3) data collection, (4) construction of the variables, and (5) data analysis.

The universe of our study consists of those Dutch DBFMO projects that, by the time of case selection (2010–2011), had gone through all three phases (preparation, construction, and operation). Selecting cases that are not yet in operation, do not provide any insight on the actual implementation of management instruments and the dynamics between procurer and consortium when services are delivered. Four projects met this requirement and they all had been in operation for at least 2 years. The first case concerns the construction of a highway for which the procurer signed a 20-year contract with a private consortium including the roads' design, construction, maintenance of the road and infrastructure such as viaducts, lighting, and tunnels. The second case is a detention centre used for the accommodation of those denied access and illegal foreigners that do not return to their country of origin voluntarily. Besides the construction of the centre itself, the 27-year contract includes the provision of infrastructure such as cameras and fire alarms, and services such as food supply and cleaning.

The third case is a wastewater purification plant. Besides the design and construction of the water purification plant, the 30-year contract also includes the purification process. The final case concerns the renovation of the accommodation of a ministry. The 25-year contract includes the actual renovation and provision of services such as catering, cleaning, waste management, and energy supply. Although the highway and water case are infrastructure projects, the detention centre and Ministry are utility service building projects.

In comparison to the findings derived by Boyne (2002) who compares 34 distinct studies, our comparative case study approach that only compares DBFMO projects allows for a better comparison of *findings between cases* (cf. Eisenhardt 1989). Moreover, instead of testing the hypothesis by comparing the interpretations of research results by authors (Boyne 2002: 107), the interpretation of interview data allows for a greater understanding and contextualization by comparing and interpreting the reference of respondents to the hypotheses and *the way in which* they made such references.

We selected our respondents using a non-probabilistic chain sampling technique that is also known as snowball sampling (Guest et al. 2006: 62) through which interviewees recruit or recommend other relevant interviewees. We adopted this strategy as it was impossible for outsiders to find out who were or had been involved. The implication of using a non-probabilistic chain-sampling technique is that we cannot statistically infer the results to the entire population (all the participants of the four PPP projects). Criteria for respondent selection were threefold. First, respondents were selected if they either were, or had been, directly involved in one (34%), two (19%) or three (11%) project phases. Second, given that most respondents are only involved during one phase of the project, the selected respondents taken together should cover the preparation, realization, and operation phase. Third, given that the partnerships consist of both public and private actors, it was necessary to include actors who worked for, or on behalf of, the state as well as actors who worked for, or on behalf of, the consortia.

In total, we conducted 66 semi-structured interviews (Patton 1987) with 63 respondents. Table 2 summarizes the characteristics of the respondents per case over five dimensions.

**Table 2.** Characteristics of respondents by case (n=63)

	<u>WATER</u>	<u>DETENTION</u>	<u>HIGHWAY</u>	<u>MINISTRY</u>
<b>Gender</b>				
Male	14	8	15	21
Female	1	3	0	3
<b>Sector</b>				
Public	7	9	10	13
Private	8	2	5	9
<b>Function</b>				
Manager	6	5	8	9
Project member	4	3	3	6
Others	5	3	2	7
<b>Type</b>				
Infrastructure	15	0	15	0
Service	0	11	0	22
<b>Phases</b>				
Partial	14	7	12	19
Complete	1	4	3	3
<i>Total</i>	<i>15</i>	<i>11</i>	<i>15</i>	<i>22</i>

Dimension two, ‘sector’ indicates whether the respondent work for the procurer (public) or for the consortium (private). Dimension three, ‘function’ indicates whether a respondent executed managerial tasks (manager), whether he or she was supervised by a manager and involved with, for example, the formulation of output specifications and the implementation of the contract (project member). Dimension four, ‘type’ indicates the difference between the infrastructure (highway and water case) and utility service buildings cases (the detention centre and Ministry). The fifth and final dimension ‘phases’ indicate whether a respondent has been involved in one or two of the three project phases (partial) or whether a respondent has been involved in all three project phases (complete).

The interview study was part of a large comparative study on various aspects of (the management of) PPPs. The interviews were transcribed verbatim, resulting in 230 pages of data (238000 words) containing valuable information on the management of PPPs. Respondents were, amongst others, asked to reflect on the success of the cooperation and management of the project (including the implementation of the contract, the use of output specifications, performance monitoring, and the use of financial incentives) and to provide explanations. When respondents provided explanations or examples, they were asked to reflect on them in terms of differences between the public and private partner/sector. In this study, we thus focus on these explanations and reflection and scrutinize to what extent respondents perceived differences between the public and private sector.

The process of data analysis consisted of two parts. First, we analysed the qualitative interview data through a process of coding for which we organized the text fragments into different categories (Boeije 2005; McMillan and Schumacher 1993). In this case, the 13 hypotheses formed these categories under which text fragments that coincided were placed. The second part consisted of a quantitative analysis using Stata for which we first coded the interview data in Excel. After identifying the references to Boyne’s hypotheses through

examining all interview fragments on public and private sector differences, we assessed whether the interviewee either agrees (i.e. confirmation) or disagrees (i.e. rejection) with the hypothesis. Table A1 provides the answers (agree, disagree, no answer) per hypothesis disaggregated by case.

Our findings show that over half of the references (68%) agree with the hypothesis (see Figure 1). Finally, we analysed how the interviewees value these hypothesis (neutral, positive or negative), separating agreements and disagreements. We observe that respondents tend to value hypotheses more positively when they disagree with them. Table A2 contains the coding scheme used during the process of data analysis.

Our analysis takes into account respondent characteristics. As such, we assess whether (i) the sector a respondent works for (public or private); (ii) their role within the project (manager, project member or others (advisors)); (iii) the type of PPP the individual works for (infrastructure or utility service building); and (iv) the duration of their participation in the project (partial or complete) influences their pattern of response.

During the second phase of the analysis, we conducted more exhaustive analysis to assess the net effect of those characteristics on the probability of whether a respondent agrees or disagrees with the hypothesis. In other words, we want to see which factors have a stronger influence on the response when taking into account the characteristics altogether. To do so, we have constructed a dependent variable: the respondents' tendency to agree or disagree with the hypothesis he or she refers to. This variable consist of three categories: 1) tendency to agree (when the number of confirmations of the interviewee is higher than the number of rejections); 2) tendency to not agree (when the number of rejections of the interviewee is higher than the number of confirmations); 3) neutral (when the number of confirmations and rejections is equal; see also Table A2).

To see the extent to which the interviewee's characteristics influence this dependent variable (the respondents 'tendency), we conduct a multinomial regression on the probability of agreeing or being neutral versus disagreeing with the hypothesis (category of reference). In the next section, we present the findings of analysis that we complement and illustrate with interview statements derived from our qualitative study. The findings are presented in concurrence with the different parts the data analysis process.

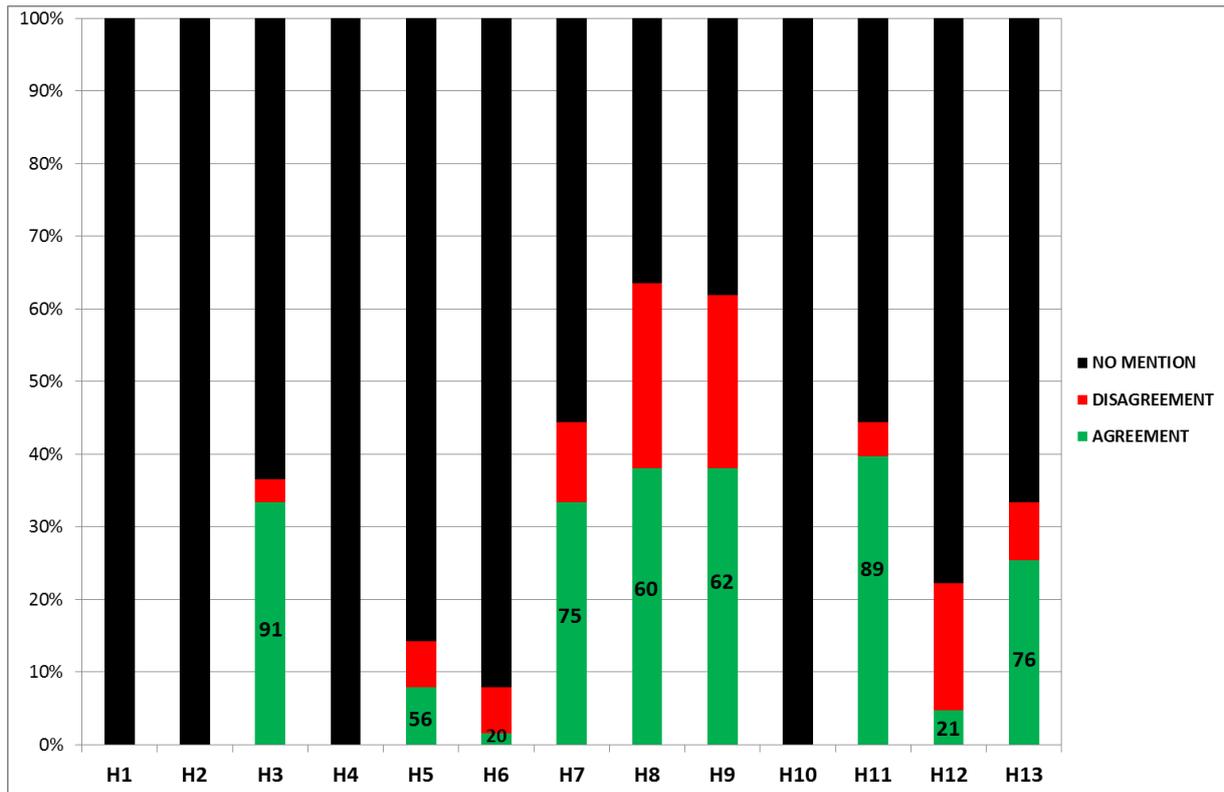
## FINDINGS

Respondents clearly do not make reference to all hypotheses (Figure 1). In some cases, we do not find any reference to them (Hypothesis 1, 2, 4, and 10). For others, the reference rate is close to or above 50% (Hypothesis 7, 8, 9, and 11). When we focus on those hypotheses mentioned by respondents, we find that the agreement levels vary, as shown in Figure 1. Clearly, Hypotheses 3 (The environment of public agencies is less stable) and 11 (Public managers are less materialistic) show the highest percentage of confirmation among respondents.

With respect to Hypothesis 3, a public manager from the detention centre project illustrated how changing political preferences challenge the continuity of the long-term contract:

*“When we started, the message was ‘sober’. ‘Make sure the detainees leave as soon as possible, so provide no luxury.’ Then the attitude changed: ‘Detainees are not criminals, so make their stay comfortable.’ So we painted the walls, and decorated things a bit, but imagine that the Socialist Party wins the elections. They are against detention centres so what do we do with the contract then?”*

**Figure 1.** Percentage of no mentions, agreement, and disagreement for each hypothesis with respect to the total potential mentions



\* The numbers in the green columns represent the percentage of agreements with respect to the total number of mentions for each hypothesis.

The instability of the environment of the public agency was also experienced in the water project. A project member from the procurers’ side argued, for example, that the ever-changing political configuration of the general board hinders the automatic continuation of the contract:

*“That political reconfiguration is sometimes very annoying. Every four years we need to explain that they cannot change whatever they want. It is difficult for politicians. They want to have something of their own and have an opinion about anything when suddenly they get confronted with a contract that is already in place.”*

With respect to Hypothesis 11, a manager from the procurer’s side of the highway project argued that in contrast to their own organisation, the consortium is indeed more materialistic in the sense that they are more money driven:

*“If you can earn money by thinking creatively, you do so. We [the procurer] don’t have that stimulus.’ Likewise, a manager from the procurer of the Ministry described: ‘The construction company was a bit like a cowboy. They want to earn their money fast and they are always looking for opportunities for optimization.’”*

In addition, statements of respondents on Hypotheses 7 (The goals of public agencies are vaguer), 8 (Public organisations are more bureaucratic), 9 (More red tape is present in decision making by public officials), and 13 (Public managers have weaker organisational commitment) were confirmed more often than they were rejected. On the contrary, Hypotheses 6 (Public managers are required to pursue a large number of goals) and 12 (Motivation to serve

the public interest is higher in the public sector) are most frequently disagreed with in statements referring to those hypotheses.

With respect to Hypothesis 8, an external advisor working for the procurer during the project of the ministry described the attitude of the contract management team of the procurer as follows:

*“They are very bureaucratic and hierarchical. But with these contracts you need flexibility; you have to be able to adapt. Sometimes you need people to respond quickly, to make decisions but they are bound to long procedures. They do it as they should, but this frustrated the process.”*

In the same vein, a consortium manager working for the water project illustrated:

*“Normally our clients decide very fast but the apparatus of the procurer uses to a fixed process of decision making and that causes delays. That’s sometimes very frustrating for us because the Banks expect rapid action. We also told the procurer in an evaluation that if they want to be a professional procurer they have to understand that they can’t let us wait that long. We also have responsibilities.”*

With respect to Hypothesis 9 our data indeed contains indications for more rep tape present in decision making by public officials. A project member from the procurer working for the ministry described:

*“The government starts with DBFMO because they want innovation and responsibility for the market but here, the procurer described the whole process in such detail that the market had no room at all. They thought ‘we are going to do this and we are going to do it good so we’ll bring ten lawyers so we can protect ourselves against any risk’. Well, that’s not how it should go ideally.’ A colleague project member added: ‘We are a public organisation and have a risk adverse culture. But by wanting to control everything we make it difficult to cooperate. We distrust rather than trust and that’s why we have so many lawyers and such big contracts.’”*

In addition to the different response patterns for each of the hypotheses, there are also differences depending on the characteristics of respondents (Table 3). The type of project in which the respondent participates seems to be a key determinant for higher or lower agreement scores. In particular, among those individuals working on a project based on the implementation of an infrastructure (water and highway), only 38% of the total mentions concern agreement. In the case of projects where a service is provided (ministry and detention centre), the percentage of agreement in relation to the total number of mentions is 91%.

**Table 3.** Percentage of agreements and disagreements by characteristic

	AGREE	DISAGREE	Total
<b>Sector</b>			
Public	71	29	100
Private	63	27	100
<b>Function</b>			
Manager	68	32	100
Project member	68	32	100
Others	67	33	100
<b>Type</b>			
Infrastructure	38	62	100

Service	91	9	100
<b>Phases</b>			
Partial	64	36	100
Complete	80	20	100
Observations			207

Thus, there is a much stronger perception of differences between the public and private management in statements coming from project members in service related projects. In addition, we also observe different response patterns depending on whether the respondent has participated in only one of the phases of the project or in all of them. Respondents who were involved in the collaboration during the entire project cycle perceive more differences between public and private management compared to those who weren't. Arguably, they have been exposed to such differences and how they work out in various aspects and phases of the collaboration much more extensively.

To examine the degree of association of each of these features with the respondents' tendency, this time considering all factors at the same time, we conducted a multinomial regression analysis shown in Table 4. The results show that the probability of confirming the hypotheses (i.e. perceiving differences between public and private management) varies strongly depending on the nature of the project. In particular, the analysis confirms our descriptive observation that respondents belonging to a utility service PPPs show a higher likelihood of agreement with the hypothesis compared to those in infrastructure PPPs. In contrast, perceptions vary little between public sector respondents (procurers) and private consortium members, regardless of whether they participated in all or only in some of the phases, and their function in the project.

**Table 4.** Odds ratios of a multinomial logistic regression on the probability of agreeing or being neutral vs. disagreeing with the hypothesis (ref. category)

	<u>Probability of confirmation</u>		<u>Probability of being neutral</u>	
	Coef.	z	Coef.	z
<b>Sector</b>				
Public (ref.)				
Private	-1.229	(-1.21)	-0.147	(-0.13)
<b>Function</b>				
Manager (ref.)				
Project member	-0.514	(-0.44)	0.443	(0.33)
Others	-1.960	(-1.45)	-0.237	(-0.21)
<b>Type</b>				
Infrastructure (ref.)				
Service	4.549	(3.51)	1.653	(-0.01)
<b>Phases</b>				
Partial (ref.)				
Complete	0.192	(0.13)	-14.820	(1.06)
Constant	0.404	(0.45)	-0.758	(-0.69)
Pseudo R2				0.4071
Log likelihood				-33.593
Respondents				63

Finally, in the last phase of the analysis we see how the statements that agree with hypotheses on differences between public and private management evaluate such differences. Overall, 80% of statements that agree with the hypotheses *evaluate differences between public and private management in negative terms*; that is, they speak negatively about one of both sectors or perceive differences as problematic, sometimes reinforcing cliché-type imagery. A consortium manager from the ministry illustrated for example:

*“It is very difficult for the procurer to follow our pace. They have their responsibilities and their decision-making models and it all goes very slow. Too slow when compared with the way we work and that can be quite complicated when you work together.”*

Those statements disagreeing with the hypotheses negatively evaluate differences only in 16% of the cases, stressing that differences can be stimulating, even producing productive tensions and mutual learning. An external advisor from the ministry illustrated:

*“Public and private organisations are different. There always remains a feeling of “us against them”. But I think that is good. It forces us to be careful and alert.”*

Once again, the negative perception of differences varies depending of the type of project (Table 5). In particular, we observe that project members in infrastructure PPPs studied are much less negative about differences between public and private management (5%) than their counterparts in utility service PPPs (8%).

**Table 5.** Percentage of appreciation for agreements by characteristic

	<u>POSITIVE</u>	<u>NEGATIVE</u>	<u>NEUTRAL</u>	<u>Total</u>
<b>Sector</b>				
Public	4	84	12	100
Private	2	73	25	100
<b>Function</b>				
Manager	1	79	20	100
Project member	3	85	12	100
Others	6	76	18	100
<b>Type</b>				
Infrastructure	9	57	34	100
Service	1	88	11	100
<b>Phases</b>				
Partial	3	80	17	100
Complete	3	79	18	100
Observations				140

## DISCUSSION

What do our findings mean for scholarly debates on differences between public and private management and how (perceptions of) such differences may affect PPPs? First of all, our study shows that whenever project members in the PPPs we studied referred to differences between public and private management, they agreed with most of Boyne’s (2002) 13 hypotheses. In addition, the vast majority of statements on differences between public and private management evaluate such differences in negative terms (cf. Frederickson and Ghere 2005; Terry 1995).

This might indicate that differences between public and private management indeed form an obstacle for the progress of these types of projects. However, and this is an important

nuance, the negative evaluation of management differences applies mainly to service utility building partnerships, whereas it is of less importance in infrastructure projects. The fact that public and private project members of utility service buildings interact more than is the case in infrastructure projects might explain this difference. Further research is needed in order to find out whether differences with respect to type of DBFMO (infrastructure or utility service buildings) are corroborated.

Whereas Boyne (2002) found evidence for only three of his hypotheses, our findings provide evidence for six of his hypotheses. A possible explanation for the higher perception of differences in the context of PPPs might be that project members in PPPs actually interact within the same project and, as such, have more opportunities for experiencing or perceiving actual management differences than is the case with public and private workers that do not collaborate. However, in order to account for these differences, further research is needed.

As the majority of statements on varying aspects of collaboration between individuals from the two sectors do not refer to differences between public and private management, and type of PPP proves to be more discerning factors than sectoral origin of project members, this finding is intriguing to say the least. In many ways, it harks back to previous studies into public and private sector employees and managers, which show how mutual perceptions of differences often exceed actually experienced differences (Van der Wal and Yang 2015; Van Steden et al. 2015;). Moreover, such mutual perceptions often reinforce stereotypes and cliché-type differences (Van der Wal and de Graaf 2006–2007).

Put differently: although the sector – public versus private – may not be any more relevant in respondents' answers than their professional role, the type of partnership they partake in, or the length of their involvement, this is not expressed by the images project members have of each other and each other's sector. So, there is still a world to win if public and private sector employees choose to work more closely together, and make a success out of PPPs, which unfortunately is more often the exception than the rule given the various structural, legal, and cultural barriers that need to be overcome (Malatesta and Van Slyke 2015). More understanding will ease collaboration.

## **LIMITATIONS AND ISSUES THAT MERIT FURTHER STUDY**

Before we conclude, we explicate three limitations which undoubtedly affected the outcomes of our study. First of all, our examination of interview statements on differences between public and private management should be positioned within the larger project the interviews were part of. The fact that only a number of the statements made reference to such differences, allowing us to test Boyne's hypotheses, may have biased our findings to the extent that the respondents providing these statements do not necessarily represent the entire sample of interviewees. Second, other sectoral and managerial differences not captured by Boyne's hypotheses may be manifest in PPPs and collaborative settings. Studies have pointed at different managerial styles in partnerships and required managerial behaviour in making such partnership work (e.g. Klijn, Steijn & Edelenbos 2010).

Third and finally, we cannot simply generalize our findings from four case studies in the Netherlands to other types of PPPs with different governance structures. Results on differences between public and private management in alliance partnerships that are characterized by horizontal and flexible relationships, might be very different from hierarchical and non-flexible DBFMO partnerships. However, given the similarities between DBFMOs, it is likely that our findings also apply to other DBFMO projects in different countries. Further research, however, is needed in order to affirm this assumption.

Our findings do give rise to intriguing questions that merit further study. We found differences between different types of PPPs (service utilities versus infrastructure), project

member type, and length of involvement in the PPP of the individual partaker. Much of the current research on PPPs does specify type in terms of design and outcome, yet often neglects individual characteristics of project members – or project members at all for that matter – as potential explanatory variables for the type of management chosen, and the success of the partnership.

Our study shows that much work lies ahead in terms of acquiring meaningful comparative data on public and private management by examining types of PPPs, or more specific, types of DBFMO and characteristics of individuals playing a variety of roles in designing, implementing, staffing, and managing PPPs across time, and how these characteristics affect outcomes – and ultimately success of partnerships in different contexts. If our study inspires more such scholarship, we have more than met our objectives.

## CONCLUSION

In this study we aimed to answer a basic question: *Do partners in PPPs view public and private management differently?* To do so, we assessed (1) to what extent and under which conditions public and private project members collaborating in PPPs view public and private management differently and (2) how they evaluate these differences. We examined 13 hypotheses on differences between public and private management in the discourse of 66 project members in four DBFMO projects in the Netherlands: two infrastructure projects and two utility service projects. Overall, our study produces three key conclusions:

1. When participants in PPPs make reference to sectoral differences, project members in PPPs confirm many classical hypotheses on how public and private management differ, for example, the environment of public managers is less stable, the goals of public agencies are more vague, public organisations are more bureaucratic, more red tape is present in decision making by public officials, public sector managers are less materialistic, and public managers have weaker organisational commitment.
2. When project members perceive differences between public and private management they usually evaluate such differences in negative terms – for example, by talking down individual conduct, structural features, or cultural dimensions from the ‘other’ sector – whereas rejection of traditional differences goes hand in hand with positive perceptions of differences, emphasizing creative tensions and mutual learning.
3. Finally, project members in infrastructure PPPs not only perceive fewer differences between public and private management than their counterparts in utility service PPPs; they are also much less negative about such differences. This is an intriguing finding that merits further study and provide food for thought for policy makers.

## IMPLICATIONS FOR PUBLIC MANAGEMENT PRACTICE

Cross-sectoral collaboration may very well be the biggest hype in public management these days – some even speak of a “collaboration cult” (O’Flynn 2009: 112). Our study shows that the mutual perceptions of partakers from different sectors in such collaborative efforts matter, as both groups view the culture and modus operandi of the ‘other sector’ with some suspicion and negativism. Awareness of such perceptual differences may aid managers in understanding why PPPs are not always effective and successful, and more importantly, what may need to change *a priori* in participants’ perceptions to improve future collaboration.

At the same time, when both public and private managers evaluate sectoral differences predominantly in negative terms – particularly those with long-term involvement in partnerships – one may wonder why many PPPs still produce meaningful outcomes, and are still enthusiastically pursued by political and administrative leaders across the globe. Smart

contracts mitigating potential collaborative complications may do their bit, yet trust is often cited as key success factor in collaborations.

Still, based on our study's findings we suggest that managers who design and lead partnerships would benefit from addressing key sectoral differences as well as mutual perceptions of those differences from the very start. Sitting down key decision makers in partnerships in dialogue sessions or focus groups to get acquainted with each other's styles, views, and prejudices may be a small time-investment with a potentially large pay-off.

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**Table Appendix 1.** Answers (agree, disagree, no answer) per hypothesis disaggregated by case\*

	WATER			DETENTION			HIGHWAY			MINISTRY		
	AGR	DIS	N/A	AGR	DIS	N/A	AGR	DIS	N/A	AGR	DIS	N/A
<i>H1</i>	0	0	15	0	0	11	0	0	15	0	0	24
<i>H2</i>	0	0	15	0	0	11	0	0	15	0	0	24
<i>H3</i>	1	2	12	5	0	6	3	0	12	12	0	12
<i>H4</i>	0	0	15	0	0	11	0	0	15	0	0	24
<i>H5</i>	0	1	14	5	3	3	0	0	15	0	0	24
<i>H6</i>	4	0	11	1	0	10	0	0	15	0	0	24
<i>H7</i>	1	6	8	8	1	2	6	0	9	6	0	18
<i>H8</i>	2	7	6	1	0	4	0	9	6	21	0	3
<i>H9</i>	1	7	7	3	1	7	0	7	8	20	0	4
<i>H10</i>	0	0	15	0	0	11	0	0	15	0	0	24
<i>H11</i>	5	1	9	7	1	3	5	1	9	8	0	16
<i>H12</i>	0	8	7	1	0	10	1	1	13	1	2	21
<i>H13</i>	3	2	10	2	0	9	7	0	8	4	3	17
	17	34	144	33	6	98	22	18	155	72	5	235

\*We only indicate whether a respondent agrees/disagrees/provides no answer. We do not take into account the number of references interviewees make to the same hypothesis.

**Appendix Table 2.** Coding scheme

<b>VARIABLE</b>	<b>LABEL</b>	<b>DESCRIPTION</b>	<b>CATEGORIES</b>
<b>id</b>	ID Person		(numerical)
<b>gen</b>	gender		Man=1
			Woman=2
<b>case</b>	Case		Water=1
			Center=2
			Road=3
			Ministry=4
<b>type</b>	Type	Type of DBFMO project	Infrastructure=1
			Utility service building=2
<b>part</b>	Part	Works for public or private side	Procurer=1
			Consortium=2
<b>func</b>	Function	Function during project	Manager=1
			Project team member =2
			Advisor=3
			Project director=4
			Other=5
<b>proc</b>	procurement	Active during this phase	Yes=1
			No=2
<b>const</b>	construction	Active during this phase	Yes=1
			No=2
<b>oper</b>	operation	Active during this phase	Yes=1
			No=2
<b>H1</b>	Mention H1	Metions Hypothesis 1	Yes=1
			No=2
<b>VH1*</b>	Value H1	Value assigned by respondent	Positive=1
			Negative=2
			Neutral=3
			No answer=999
<b>CH1*</b>	Agreement H1	Agrees with hypothesis	Yes=1
			No=2
			No answer=999

\* We used the same coding scheme for the other 12 hypotheses