

<http://hdl.handle.net/1765/131577>

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I have been looking forward to writing this part of my dissertation for a while. It means, first of all, that my dissertation is finished. I have done what I set out to do five years ago. Second - and even more important - it gives me the opportunity to thank the many, many people who have been guiding, inspiring, helping, and supporting me throughout the process.

First, and foremost, I am especially indebted to my supervisors Joop Koppenjan and Erik Hans Klijn. To the both of you: Thank you for support and supervision in the past years. Thanks to your open and accessible attitude, I never felt any reluctance to ask questions, express doubts, or disagree with you. In fact, your doors were always open for me to barge in with questions or concerns. Despite your busy agendas, there was always time to discuss research ideas, concept papers, or talk about the next step in my trajectory. The importance of good supervision for any PhD researcher should not be underestimated, and I am happy to say that I have had the best supervising duo I could possibly ask for. Joop: In the beginning of my PhD, your theoretical suggestions sometimes left me with the feeling that I had taken a step backwards rather than forwards. Where I was looking for a clear plan, you always gave me new ideas to think about and questioned the parts of my plan I thought I was certain of. Looking back, I can only say that our conversations and the suggestions you have made greatly improved the quality of my dissertation. You stimulated me to keep thinking about my work, improve my line of reasoning, and refine my ideas. Besides this, I would also like to thank you for your confidence in me and my capabilities both during my dissertation and immediately after. The fact that you expressed your hope that I would stay in academia has given me a lot of confidence in taking on my new role as assistant professor. Erik Hans: As a second promotor, perhaps you had initially planned to act a little more in the background. However, that does not seem to be in your nature. Thank you for the time and energy you have invested in this dissertation, your honest - but always well-intended - feedback, and your pragmatic approach to all my questions and concerns. I greatly admire your tremendous commitment and the way you manage to translate ideas into numerous research activities and articles. I hope that in these past years I have been able to take some of that commitment and vigour from you. It would definitely make me a better scholar.

Next, my thanks goes to all who have made this research possible. The NWO for funding our project 'Governance for smartening public-private partnerships'. Reset Management, for their help in distributing the questionnaire for my Q-method study. Rebel, one of the co-financiers of our project, took particular interest in my dissertation. Jeroen, Michiel and Sigrid, thanks for your support, interest, and constructive feedback on my research along the way. I am also grateful for all the respondents

who have participated in my studies. In this light, I would particularly like to thank the professionals working for the Beatrix sluice project who have taken the time to show me what the daily practice of governing PPP-projects looks like. You have given me a great opportunity to study the interaction between public and private partners up close. Although my study of this project was not finished in time to include in this dissertation, I hope it will inspire scholars and practitioners alike once it does get published.

In the past years, some scholars have played an important role in my academic journey so far. First, and may be to their own surprise, Thomas Schillemans and Kutsal Yesilkagit who were my teachers in the 2012-2013 master program at the Utrecht School of Governance. Although I had no intention of becoming an academic, they urged me to continue my studies, which eventually led to my enrolment in the research master. There I learned that doing research was not as bad as I initially thought. I would also like to thank the International Public-Private Partnership Scholar Network for their warm welcome during conferences, their interest in my research, and their willingness to accept a new, young scholar in their network. With some scholars I've had the pleasure to collaborate more closely in my research on public-private partnerships. I would like to thank Koen, Marlies, and Matti for this. Hopefully, this will not be the last time we work together. In 2017, I worked as a guest researcher at the Copenhagen Business School. Carsten, I would like to thank you for making this possible and hosting me during my research visit. It was a pleasure to work with a kind and experienced scholar who was willing to make my stay a success. I also like to thank Christina for her enthusiasm and efforts to force a closer bond between the PPP scholars in Copenhagen and Rotterdam. Lene, being an academic is not only hard work. It can also be a lot of fun. And whenever you are around, we are having a lot of fun together.

The interaction with my direct colleagues and fellow PhDs at the Department of Public Administration and Sociology is something I have always valued, and perhaps even more so now we are confined to working from home. Dear Babs, Alissa, Rowie, Rik, Reinout, Ewald, Bob, Margot, William, Alette, Shelena, Ilona, Warda, Liselot, Sanne, José, Vidar, Nathan, Astrid, Jannes, Hans, Robbert, Joëlle, Jitske, Daphne, Wouter – with whom I share an office now – and all the others, I do miss our daily talks, lunches, walks around the campus, and the mutual support during times when academic life is not all smooth and success. Noor, our research interests, methods, and personal style are all so different that we have never seen each other as competition. We do however share the believe that academic life becomes better if you support one another. Hanna, when I started, I got the desk next to you. Thanks for helping me with

all the practical questions I had when starting this journey. Malika, I have tremendous respect for your diligence, persistence, your eye for detail, and your unshakable belief that – in research – quality always comes first. I cannot wait to see what your dissertation will look like once it is finished. Bert, your enthusiasm made me almost like quantitative analysis. I still like QCA better though. Fortunately, we share some common research interests and I look forward to exploring new collaborations in those areas. Ingmar, you are always supportive. Thank you for including me in some of your recent research projects. I hope that – now my PhD is no longer dominating my academic life – we finally find some time to study the role of boundary spanners in PPPs. To my ‘new’ colleagues in the Public Management group of DPAS: Sandra, Jolien, Robin, Koen, Maarten, Mark, Martijn, I look forward to giving shape to Public Management research and education in Rotterdam together with you.

My two paranymphs, Ellen and Nele, are the type of colleagues you wish for any organization. Nele, our department should consider itself lucky with a bubbly, cheerful assistant professor like you. You are always willing to help your colleagues, you work like crazy, and never seem to stop smiling. Working when you are around makes life at the office so much better. Ellen, I never told you I once nominated you for the ‘best colleague’ award of our graduate school. Although you did not actually win, many colleagues agreed with me that you would have deserved that award anyway. We get along really well, and I hope that we now finally have time to finish our joint research project.

Closer to home, I am blessed with some great friends and family. Most of you might consider me slightly crazy for writing a dissertation and find the topic utterly boring. Even for those of you who do have an interest in the topic, my research findings often seem to be miles away from your daily experiences in the construction sector. I don’t mind, because spending time with you is the best possible distraction of endlessly transcribing interviews, rejections from academic journals, and the challenge to find some balance between teaching, research, and having weekend. To my sisters, Eline and Marit, you keep me firmly grounded. Any tendency to become a know-it-all will be taken down by the both of you immediately. And rightly so. Although we are very different in many respects, I could not be more proud of the both of you. Mam, the lessons you have learned me are more important than the lessons that came with writing this dissertation. In the past years, I have learned what it means to be a good scholar, but during my life you have learned me what it means to be a good person. Pap, in some respects we are a lot alike. One thing we have in common is our interest in public administration. Together with your professional experience in local government, this meant that, during the defense of my master theses, your questions usually

were more challenging than those of my teachers. This time, you will not be the one asking tough questions. Instead, I know you will be proudly watching in the audience.

My final words in this acknowledgement are for my husband. Wilfred, we have been joking about what I should write down as you never felt you deserve any credits or thanks in relation to this dissertation. That is a testimony of your reluctance to take the spotlight, your unpretentiousness, and your respect for the (hard) work of others. You never doubted I would complete my PhD dissertation, even though you must have liked it to be finished a little bit sooner. Your love and support are more important than you think. I am glad to have you by my side.

Rianne Warsen

December 2020