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Boundary spanning communication strategy choice in the
 aftermath of a tragedy: a qualitative case study of the Morandi
 bridge collapse and the building of the Ponte San Giorgio in
 Genova.

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Notes on abbreviations

Autostrade per L'Italia

ASPI

Ponte Morandi Victim Remembrance Committee

PMVRC

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Abstract

This study examines the effectiveness of communication strategies used in boundary spanning activities in order to solve arisen conflicts within a case study. The study aims to gain an insight into the ideal choice of boundary spanning communication strategy after a tragedy. Therefore, the following research question was set up: *What communication strategies did boundary spanners use to effectively solve conflicts with different stakeholder groups after the collapse of the Morandi bridge and during the construction of the new Ponte San Giorgio in Genova?*. Prior research suggest a split in types of boundary spanning communication strategies between Innovator and Networker approaches. Data was primarily collected through a secondary literature review whereby the focus was aimed at direct quotes and opinions from the target group. This secondary research method was supported by some primary literature. Two interviews with experts (that did not have a stake in the issue) were conducted in order to gain further insight in the situation. The Morandi bridge collapse and the subsequent rebuilding of the Ponte San Giorgio case was used to examine this. Through a qualitative research approach, four boundary spanning activities were deducted from this case. The four boundary spanning activities were described and examined whereby it was determined whether the individual activities constituted an Innovator or a Networker communication strategy approach. After this, the reaction of the target group was examined which determined the result of the strategy. This research suggests that in the aftermath of the Morandi bridge case, the sole Networker strategy was the only communication strategy to receive positive results from the target group within that particular boundary spanning activity. Whereas the other three Innovator strategies all received negative responses.

Key words: Boundary spanning activities, Communication strategies, Networker, Innovator

1 Introduction

1.1 Background

On Tuesday, August 14th, 2018, the Morandi bridge, situated in the Polcevera valley in Genoa, collapsed and fell down onto the houses underneath and in the valley itself. This tragedy resulted in the death of 43 lives and a sudden homelessness of 600 others (Mattioli, 2019). The event sent shivers down the spines of many, and for a moment, the collapse of the bridge was worldwide news. This situation immediately urged the Italian national government to seek to terminate the contract with the company that was responsible for the maintenance of the bridge: Autostrade per L'Italia (ASPI) (Leccis, 2022). This conflict between ASPI and the Italian government was subsequently taken to court, along with the conflicts that emerged between ASPI and other parties. However, in the meantime, a new bridge was needed. The government employed two private companies for this: WeBuild (Salini Impregilo) and Fincantieri. These companies paired up to form a joint venture, PerGenova. They were able to construct the new bridge 15 months after initial construction began (WeBuild, 2023). The consequences of the tragedy combined with the emergence of these new parties resulted in various conflicts between affected parties on one side and (local) government and private companies on the other. For these conflicts, boundary spanning activities were implemented. The tragic nature of this situation can be an example to learn from when deciding upon communication strategies for boundary spanning activities in other cases with similar natures. This makes it useful to find out whether the communication strategies that have been initiated in this case have been effective. If there are communication strategies that turn out to be effective, it would be educational to find the common characteristics which these effective communication strategies could have in order to choose the effective strategy in future cases.

This research seeks to further the understanding of ideal usage of particular communication strategies in boundary spanning activities in case of a tragic event that has significant societal impacts. A tragic case can differ from a regular case in that responses from the target group to a boundary spanning activity can be influenced by different factors. This subsequently influences effectiveness of communication strategies. Practically, the findings in this study can therefore become useful when similar situations occur and boundary spanners are needed. This research is theoretically relevant as it aims to add a perspective of effective communication strategy choice for a boundary spanning activity in a tragic situation to the existing boundary spanning literature.

The research surrounding boundary spanning and boundary spanners often includes a conflict as this is practically inherent to the field. This existence of the conflict can be witnessed in a study by Williams (2002), where a suggestion for boundary spanners to (positively) manage a conflict is made. Examples of various forms of conflict management and performance are found throughout the boundary spanning literature. Dekker *et al.* (2019) suggest that among others, boundary spanning activities have positively influenced performance and reduced conflicts. (Role) conflict is also mentioned in a study by van den Brink *et al.* (2019) where this is highlighted with the role of a boundary spanner performed by an architect in a case regarding Dutch river management. All these studies stress the role of the boundary spanner in managing conflicts. In these studies, the boundary spanner attempts to solve these conflicts by bringing

parties together (thereby crossing boundaries). Few research has been conducted specifically on effectiveness of boundary spanning activities in the wake of a complex tragic event. This research seeks to position itself in that academic gap by examining the conflicts and thereby implemented communication strategies within boundary spanning activities in the case of such a tragedy.

1.2 Research problem

Concludingly, the aim of this research is to gain an insight into the effectiveness of communication strategies used in boundary spanning activities that have been implemented in conflicts that emerged after the collapse of the Morandi bridge and during the construction of Ponte San Giorgio. Based on this aim, the following central research question has been constructed:

What communication strategies did boundary spanners use to effectively solve conflicts with different stakeholder groups after the collapse of the Morandi bridge and during the construction of the new Ponte San Giorgio in Genova?

This research question has been deconstructed into four separate secondary questions that in conjunction can provide an answer for the central research question, these secondary questions are:

- 1. What types of stakeholders were involved and what were their interests regarding the collapse of the Morandi bridge and rebuilding of the Ponte San Giorgio?*
- 2. What were the communication needs and preferences of diverse stakeholder groups involved in the construction of the Ponte San Giorgio?*
- 3. What communication strategies did boundary spanners implement to facilitate communication with diverse stakeholder groups in the construction of Ponte San Giorgio?*
- 4. Were the communication strategies used by boundary spanners effective?*

1.3 Thesis structure

The next chapters are outlined in the following manner. Firstly the theoretical framework is discussed wherein the theory upon which this research is based is outlined. After this, the methodology, including coding scheme, is discussed. The results of this study follow this section. Thereafter, the conclusion and the discussion are placed. The references and the appendices form the end of this paper.

2 Theoretical framework

2.1 The stakeholder

A boundary spanner is often present where conflicts between two or more actors arises, given that boundary spanners often bridge gaps (Satheesh *et al.*, 2022). These stakeholders should therefore be characterized in order to find conflicts and their roles within the process. The results differ depending on whether the stakeholder is an initiator or whether they are part

of the target group. Deverka *et al.* (2012, p.5) characterizes stakeholders as “individuals, organizations or communities that have a direct interest in the process and outcomes of a project, research or policy endeavour”. This definition can be utilised to identify the stakeholders in the case of the Ponte San Giorgio. Deconstructing the definition by Deverka *et al.* (2012), leads to a selection based on two factors. These factors can be constructed into questions that can be answered. The following two questions are crucial in finding the individual stakeholders.

1: Is this actor an individual, organization or community?

2: Does this actor have direct interest in the process and outcomes of the project (in this case the Ponte San Giorgio)?

If the answer to both questions is yes, a stakeholder in this case is defined.

2.2 The stakeholders and the emergence of conflicts

As defined, stakeholders have interests, as this is inherent to their position. However, conflicts are not solely made up of interests. Elias *et al.* (2004) describe the presence of three components within a conflict, these are issues, positions and interests. Following Elias *et al.* (2004), a conflict emerges when stakeholders have different positions that stem from opposing interests regarding an issue. It is therefore also valid to conclude that within the existence of a conflict, there are multiple (at least two) interests present.

2.3 “Solving” the conflict effectively

Marsh and McConnell (2010) created a framework for policy success based on among other things stakeholder popularity and level of support. This framework has been widely used throughout recent studies and across dimensions, this is exemplified in a study by Mackie (2015). Schotter *et al.* (2017) concludes that organizational capabilities and individual characteristics determine effectiveness of boundary spanning. Following this literature, this research supposes that a conflict is effectively solved when a communication strategy within a boundary spanning activity receives a positive response from the target group. Following the same logic, this research will conclude that a negative response from the target group regarding the boundary spanning activity can be interpreted as failure to solve the conflict effectively.

2.4 The boundary spanner

Inspired by Satheesh *et al.* (2022), a boundary spanner is described as an individual or organization that aims to strengthen collaboration by keeping interactions between different parties flowing. The boundary spanner therefore deals with bridging a gap between two or more conflicting actors.

2.5 Who is a boundary spanner

The boundary spanner is not necessarily a single person or institution, rather, the boundary spanner can be seen as a role within the process. Boundary spanners facilitate the (communication) process by balancing the interests and values of the collaborating partners (Satheesh *et al.*, 2022). Therefore, a government, a private company or a single person can act

as the boundary spanner. The boundary spanning role of the government is characterized in an article by Guano (2023). An example of the boundary spanning role that a private company can take can be witnessed in the article by Leccis (2022). Lastly, the role of a single person as a boundary spanner is also possible. An architect (van den Brink *et al.*, 2019) or a spatial planner often takes this role as they take the wants and needs of different stakeholders as well as the laws into account.

2.6 The networker

A boundary spanner bridges a gap within a network. It does so by utilising two different strategies (or roles) recognised by Williams (2002). The first role which a boundary spanner can take is as a networker. “Cultivating inter-personal relationships” (Williams, 2002, p.109) is the manner in which the networker seems to operate. They individually “define the issue in relation to their own values and interests, knows what “outcomes” and processes each would value, knows who needs to be involved, knows who could mobilize influence, and so on” (Hosking and Morley, 1991, p.228). A boundary spanner does this effectively when the boundary spanner understands the (social) relation between stakeholders (Williams, 2002). The technique that encompasses the networker strategy can therefore be characterized by usage of strong inter-personal relationships. Moreover, the networker also brings together conflicting stakeholders by making use of strong verbal and non-verbal communication and participative initiatives.

2.7 The innovator

The second strategy or role which a boundary spanner can familiarizes themselves with is as innovator. In essence “complex public policy problems tend not to be amenable to tired traditional or conventional approaches. Their resolution demands new ideas, creativity, lateral thinking and an “unlearning” of professional and organizational conventions and norms.” (Williams, 2002, p.110). In those situations, a boundary spanner can be the innovator who is able to tackle complex issues by looking for opportunities to deconstruct and help find creative solutions. The innovator uses other techniques than a networker as the innovator makes use of creative solutions, trial and error and looks at problems from a different angle.

2.8 Expectations

Based on these studies and given that the content that is examined is based on a case where great tragedy has occurred, it is expected that the “networker” communication strategy will be more effective in comparison to the innovator strategy within the context of the boundary spanning activities. Networker strategies foster strong inter-personal relationships which are expected to be more effective in this case in comparison to innovative, “out-of-the-box” implementations that innovator communication strategies produce. This expectation stems from the networker literature which reveals that the aim is to know what outcome would be valued by any particular stakeholder. If this outcome is achieved for the target group stakeholders, the strategy is effective.

2.9 Conceptual model

The following conceptual model (figure 1) has been developed based on the theories from the theoretical framework, whereby first the distinction in roles is made and thereafter the assessment of the effectiveness of the activity can be found. This looks accordingly:

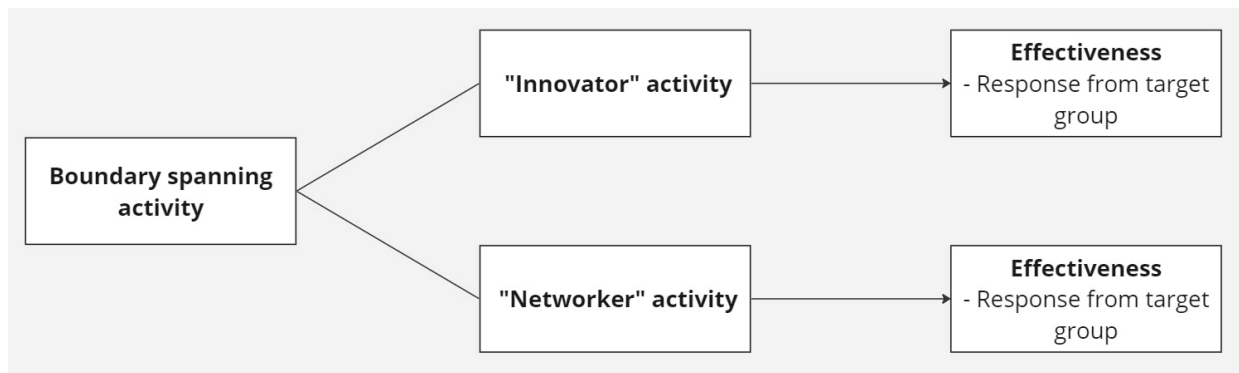


Figure 1: Conceptual model

3 Methodology

3.1 Operationalization and data collection

Initially, primary data would serve as the main form of data collection for this research. Deducted from the literal research- and secondary questions and with the theory from the theoretical framework, an interview guide was created which can be seen in Appendix B. However, after contacting many experts and stakeholders, getting a sufficient amount of relevant interviews turned out to be difficult. Various reasons for this encompassed emotional attachment to the case, difficulty to reach actors and conflict of interest for actors (and the unwillingness to therefore participate). Therefore, primary data was used in order to gain more background information regarding the case. The interview guide was very loosely followed given that the interviewees did not have a stake in the case and could therefore not answer the (research) questions. The fact that non-stakeholders provided the primary data also decreased the potential bias which the stakeholders could have as non-stakeholders would not lose or gain anything from providing the information. In total, 2 in-depth interviews were conducted which provided extensive background information. Prior to conducting the interviews, interviewees were presented with a set of preliminary questions. These inquiries primarily addressed matters concerning privacy and consent for data usage in the research. Notably, the interviewees expressed a preference for maintaining anonymity, a request that was respected throughout the study. While complete elimination of bias cannot be guaranteed, the employed selection criteria (of having non-stakeholders) aimed to minimize its impact to the greatest extent possible.

Thus, a secondary literature analysis was employed as the main chosen methodology for conducting the study. This was a more accessible way to do research in comparison to relying on primary data because setting up a sufficient amount of interviews with the right actors would be unrealistic given the timespan. Furthermore, by conducting an independent literature analysis, biases that could have occurred whilst utilizing primary data (stakeholders have a stake in the issue) would be eliminated. In the context of secondary research, alongside academic articles, particular emphasis was placed on incorporating direct quotations from stakeholders (Appendix A) to ensure the authenticity of their opinions. This approach aimed to prevent any

potential distortion of stakeholder perspectives by (online) newspapers, thus preserving the integrity and accuracy of their viewpoints within the study.

In order to gather enough data, a wide range of literature from various sources was examined. The predominant sources utilised included academic articles, newspaper articles, and online interviews. Academic articles were useful for providing definitions and laying the groundwork for the results. However, the newspaper articles and online interviews showed the greatest density of subjective information. Many of these sources were ultimately used in order to form the result of the communication strategy used within a boundary spanning activity. Data were collected utilizing online platforms, specifically academic institutional sites such as the website of the University of Groningen, Scopus, and Google Scholar, which served as reliable sources. The interviews were conducted via Google Meet, providing a convenient and accessible means of communication.

The data collection process was very structured. At the start, the Ponte San Giorgio bridge case was taken as a whole with the goal of identifying all stakeholders that were involved in the case. After all stakeholders were identified, a more thorough research was needed. The identification of stakeholders made it possible to identify all conflicts within the case (given that a conflict occurs between at least 2 actors). After this, boundary spanning activities per conflict could be identified as the conflicts were also identified. Lastly, more detailed research into the priorly identified boundary spanning activities could then be conducted. This consisted of identifying communication strategy and opinions regarding these. This process is outlined in figure 2.

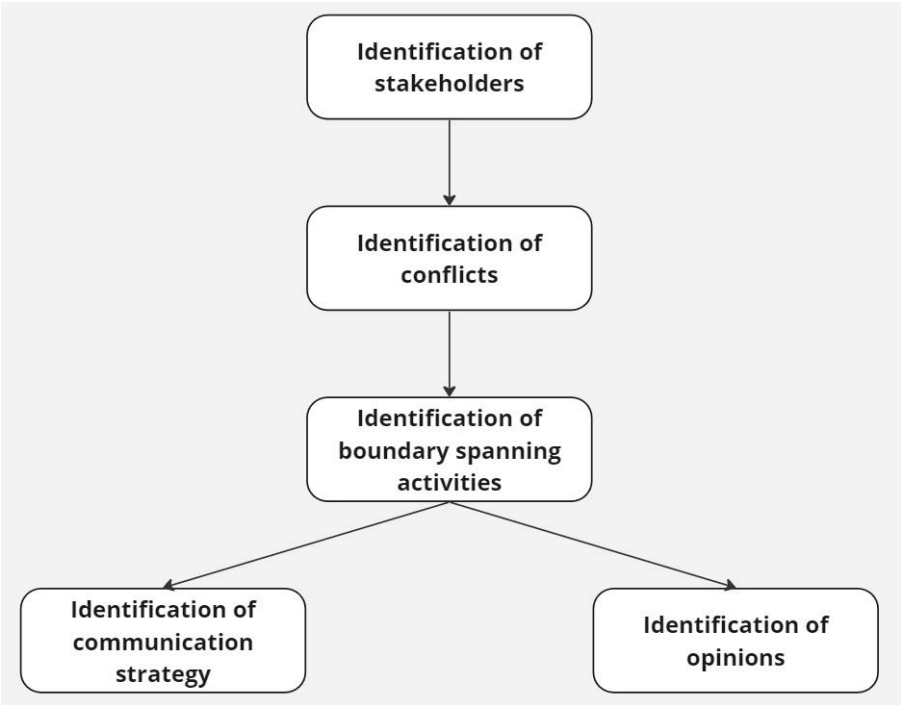


Figure 2: Data collection

3.2 Data analysis

For the data analysis, a coding scheme was created. Before this however, it became apparent that whilst the academic sources were primarily in English, the majority of the newspaper articles and online interviews were initially in Italian and were thus subsequently translated into

English. Translation happened via at least two different (online) sources to ensure quality of the translation. The translations of the used quotes can be found in Appendix A.

The coding scheme has been designed to fit the research questions and to answer the secondary questions. The primary objective of the coding tree was to ensure the coverage of relevant information, effectively organizing it according to the research questions and theoretical framework. By aligning the coding tree with the secondary questions, the aim was to make the data analysis process structured. In contrast to employing a frequency analysis, which would not be suitable for the specific requirements of this study, the coding scheme served as a tool for categorizing and grouping sections from the data. By employing the coding scheme, specific portions of the sources could be assigned to specific secondary questions. Therefore, when compared to the initial interview guide, (Appendix B) the coding scheme, provided in figure 3, shows many similarities. The sources that did not have a code or provided relevant background information were subsequently disregarded.

It is important to clarify that, within the SQ4 codes, the term "content" encompasses not only a positive attitude towards an activity but also a negative perspective. The term "content" is used to indicate the presence of either a positive or negative opinion, without implying a specific direction. This inclusive approach allowed for the identification and analysis of both favourable and unfavourable viewpoints. Additionally, it should be noted that an "other" category had been incorporated within SQ2, SQ3, and SQ4. This deliberate inclusion serves the purpose of identifying potential outliers or instances that do not fit into either of the binary categories (SQ2 or SQ3) or the three designated codes (SQ4). This thus ensured the comprehensive coverage of the data. In practice, this category has rarely been used.

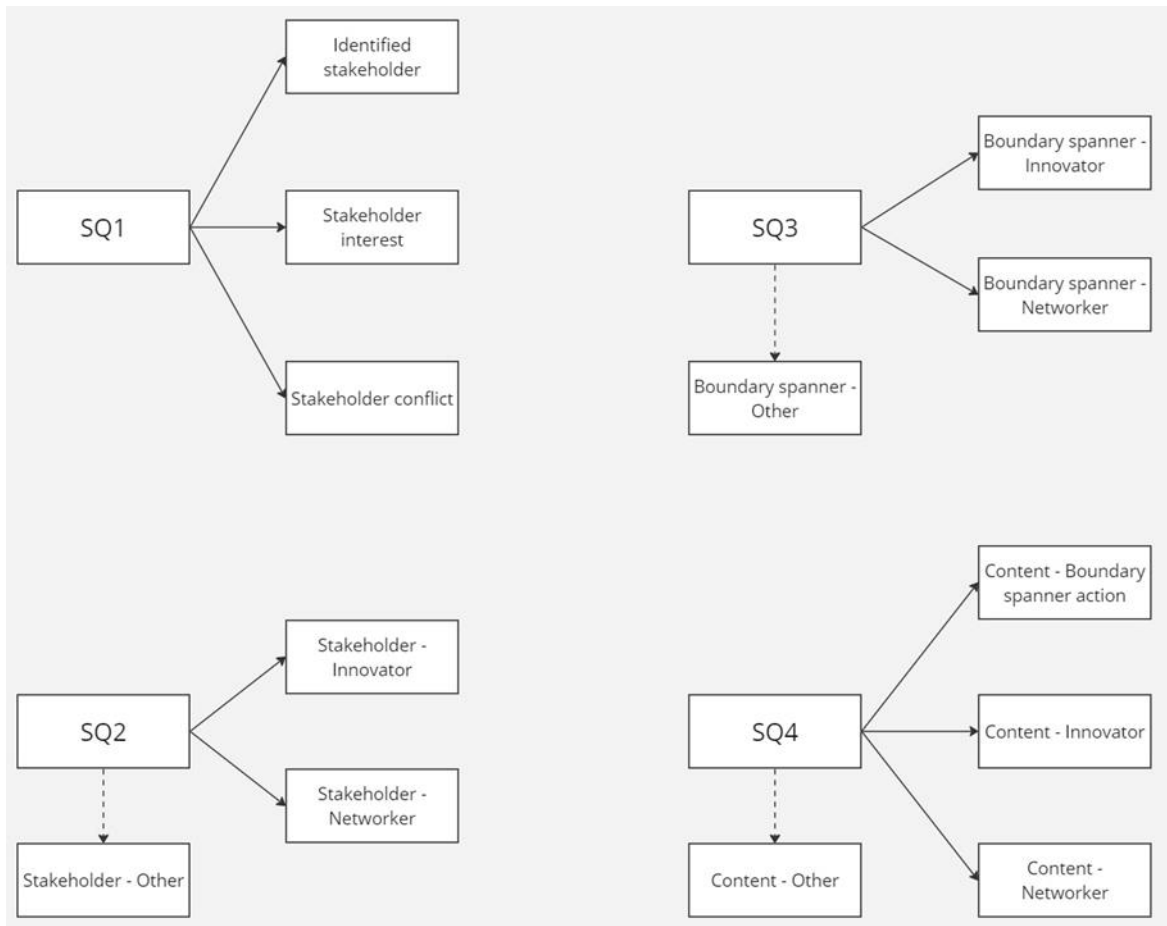


Figure 3: Coding tree

4 Results

4.1 Who are the stakeholders

As mentioned in the theory, there are two questions that are crucial in finding the individual stakeholders (Q1: Is this actor an individual, organization or community?, Q2: Does this actor have direct interest in the process and outcomes of the project?). Following these two questions a difference between stakeholders that exist in the legal realm and the stakeholders that exist for the physical responses is made. This was decided upon because in the legal realm, there was no boundary spanner as the “conflicts” were being handled in court. In the legal realm, the PMVRC held ASPI accountable for the bridge collapse based on a post-collapse report by the ministry of infrastructure and transport that highlighted ASPI's alleged failure to adequately maintain the bridge (MIT, 2018). Directly after the collapse, the Italian national government (with the leading Five-star movement) moved to terminate its contract with ASPI, which, in turn, prompted ASPI to file a legal complaint against the government's actions (Leccis, 2022)(Interview 2).

Conversely, the stakeholders involved in the physical responses, differed from those engaged in the legal proceedings. If the answer to Q1 is assumed to be yes, the answer to Q2 becomes critical in finding the stakeholders. For the physical and legal realms, this created a relevant split in stakeholders (as example: PerGenova has no stake in the legal realm, but did have a stake in the physical realm). This split has been schematized in table 4.

| | | |
|----------|---|---|
| Legal | Q2: Direct interest in legal outcomes? = Yes | ASPI, PMVRC, Italian Government. |
| Physical | Q2: Direct interest in physical outcomes? = Yes | PerGenova, (Local) Government, PMVRC, Inhabitants of Certosa. |

Table 4: Schematized split in stakeholders

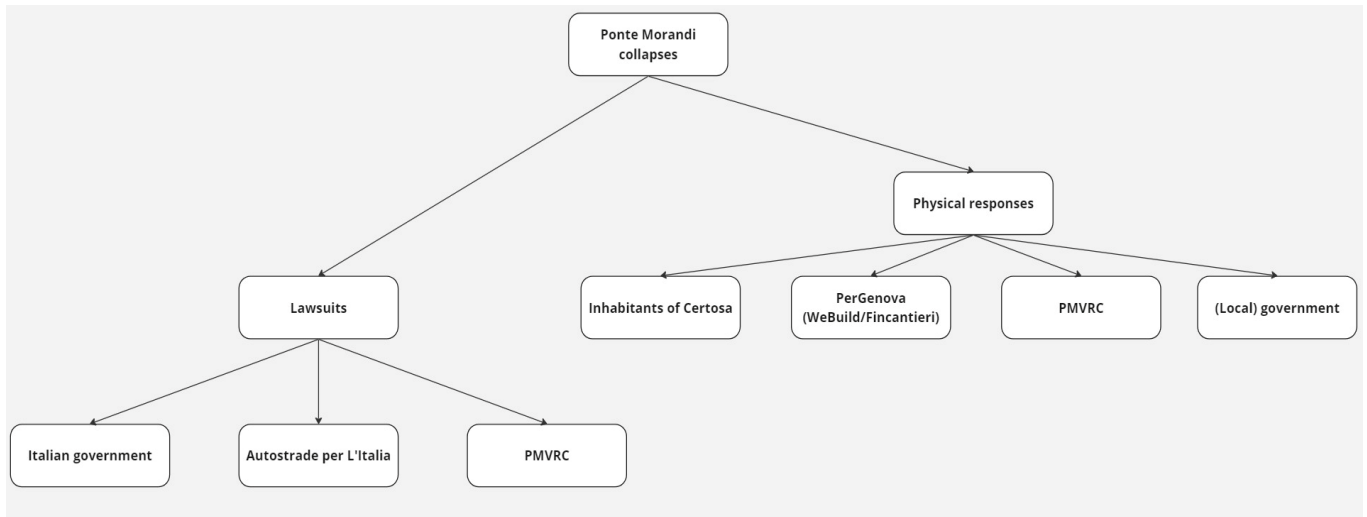


Figure 5: Split in responses after the collapse and stakeholders involved in those responses

4.2 What conflicts arose

Multiple conflicts (that later formed the basis for the boundary spanning activities that were implemented) arose subsequent to the physical responses following the bridge collapse. Within the case, three primary conflicts were identified. Firstly, in the Certosa and Sampierdarena neighborhoods situated directly beneath the bridge, “some blocks ended up on houses and industrial warehouses”(di Marco Lignana, 2018, p.1). Consequently, the inhabitants of this area were to evacuate and seek temporary shelter due to safety concerns. It took weeks before they were permitted to return, and even then, they were given only a brief window to gather their belongings before being instructed to vacate the area once again. The government's unclear communication in regards to the return dates during this period angered the residents of Certosa and thus led to a conflict (C1) with the residents (Guano, 2023).

However, this conflict was not the only one for the Certosa residents. During the reconstruction phase led by PerGenova, excessive noise pollution became a significant concern (Interview 1). Furthermore, business owners experienced substantial profit losses due to delayed return of residents, impacting their normal operations (Interview 1). Additionally, the Certosa inhabitants expressed discontent with certain government-initiated developments in the area, as they did not ask for such developments in this area (C2) (Guano, 2023).

The PMVRC also emphasized the importance of effective communication, they were disappointed that after a while, communication became more absent (C3). Quoted in an interview with the PMVRC “In the early stages, we felt a strong institutional warmth close to us, this hope was gradually lost. We sensed the estrangement.” (L'Indipendente, 2022, p.1). This put the PMVRC in conflict with the local government. In response to these conflicts, various boundary spanning activities with different communication strategies were undertaken

with the intention of resolving the aforementioned issues and restoring harmony among the stakeholders. In Appendix D, the labelled conflicts are schematized.

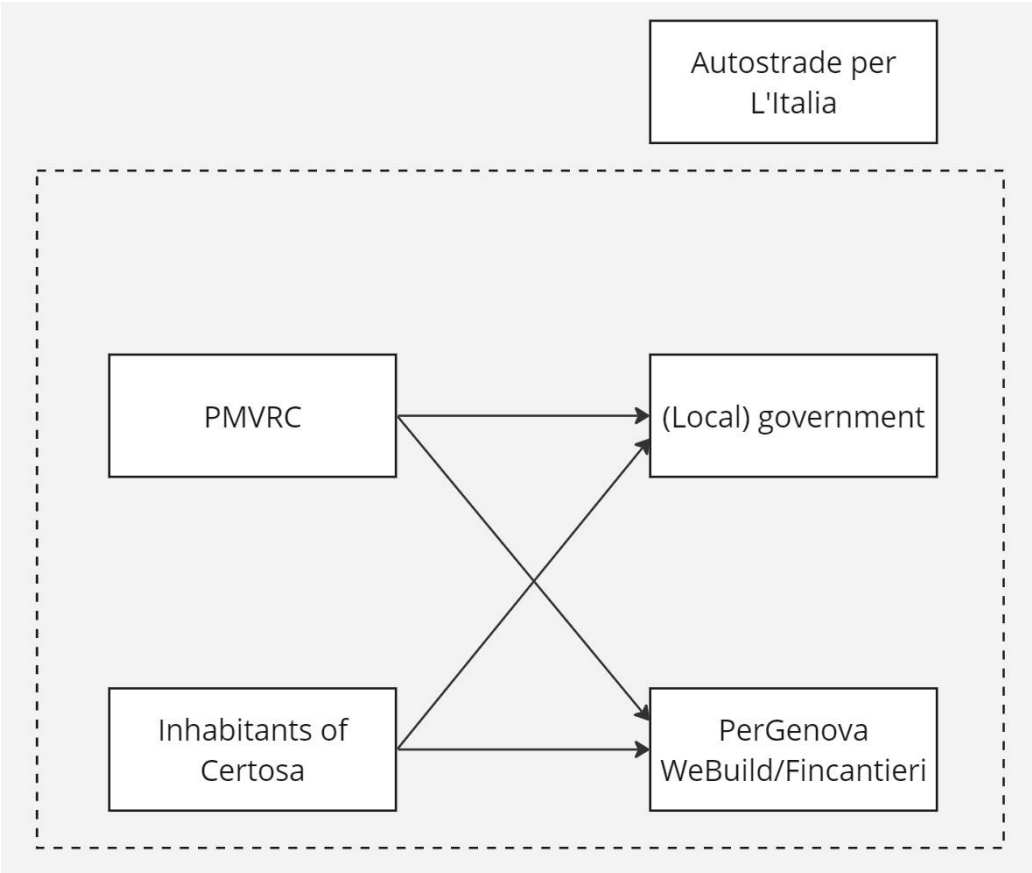


Figure 6: Conflicts (arrows) and stakeholders involved with a background role for ASPI

4.3 “On the wall” murals of Certosa

To “assuage residents’ anger” (Guano, 2023, p.1), “on the wall” project was initiated by the local government in the Certosa neighbourhood (VisitGenoa, 2019). The project was meant as a creative endeavour to revitalize the area and to calm down the angry Certosini that had suffered from the responses after the bridge collapsed, thereby targeting C1.

The project in question was undertaken as a creative initiative aimed at fostering community mobilization. However, according to Guano (2023), in reality, the residents of Certosa were not afforded significant opportunities for active involvement, and the murals were created with minimal input from the local community. Consequently, the communication strategy of this activity can be classified as innovator, primarily due to its creative nature and the limited presence of strong, interpersonal communication typically associated with a networker approach.

The response of the target group towards the project consisted of a range of reactions. In Interview 1, it became evident that a significant portion of the area's inhabitants held unfavourable views towards the initiative, with only a minority expressing a positive attitude. Furthermore, individuals residing in a neighbouring area, where a similar mural project was planned, indicated that they had heard negative feedback regarding the project in Certosa, characterizing it as a "fiasco." These individuals expressed a desire for more transparent and inclusive discussions concerning projects in the region (Interview 1). Many locals perceived

the project as a politically motivated manoeuvre by the local government, leading to their dissatisfaction with the murals (Guano, 2023).

Ultimately, the "on the wall" project garnered some positive responses; however, the majority of the feedback received proved to be unfavourable. Consequently, the overall outcome of the project was negative in nature.

| | |
|------------------------------|------------------------|
| Boundary spanning activity | On the Wall |
| Initiator (boundary spanner) | Local government |
| Target group | Inhabitants of Certosa |
| Communication strategy | Innovator |
| Result | Negative |

Table 7: "On the wall"

4.4 Spazio ponte

“A permanent, interactive and multimedia exhibition in Genoa’s “Porto Antico”” (WeBuild, 2023, p.1). This was what PerGenova envisioned its communication centre to become. The goal of the centre was to communicate transparently with the people of Genova, the victims and the involved residents (targeting C2 and C3) (WeBuild, 2023). The centre might have been meant as a networker strategy, but it did not become that. Conflictingly, the centre was meant as a communication hub, but it really did not turn out that way. The game (in which one could try their own at building a virtual new bridge) that was part of the centre was a creative endeavour (WeBuild, 2023). Furthermore, the centre was not much used to communicate with the stakeholders, but turned out to be more of a tourist attraction. (Redazione Ge24, 2019) For those reasons, the Spazio Ponte activity can be characterized as an innovator communication strategy, even though this might not have been its pre-set goal.

Spazio Ponte received three main critiques from various stakeholders. The gruppo Chiamami Genova della Valpolcevera, a group consisting of inhabitants of Genova and relatives of victims, critiqued the project and addressed those critiques to various organisations. The first critique that the group had was that the InfoPoint was placed in the wrong location “They should have done it in Valpolcevera” (Redazione Ge24, 2019, p.1) was the response of the group to the location of the actual point. On the map (figure 8), it is visible that the point was, contrary to the other initiatives, located in the centre of Genova, rather than the valley from the case study.

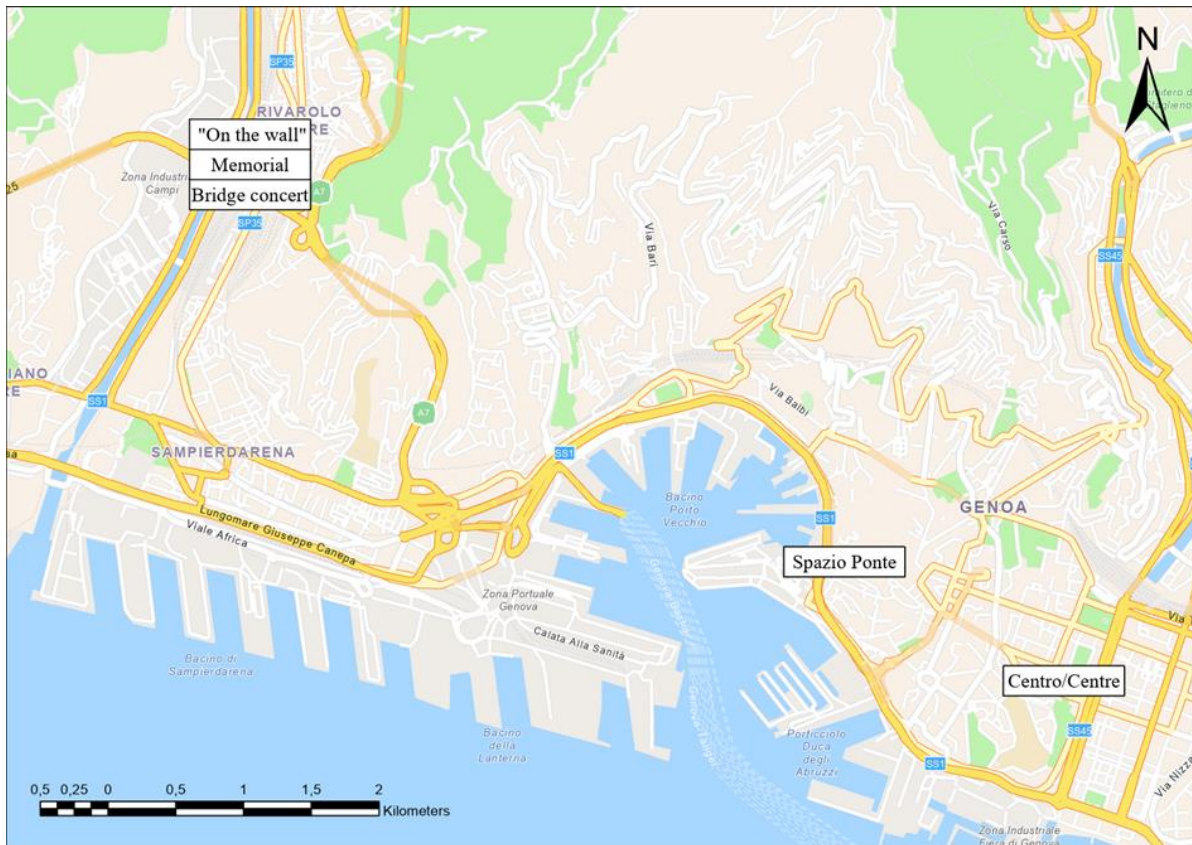


Figure 8: Location of the boundary spanning activities with Spazio Ponte as outlier

The critique on the location tied in with the second critique that the project got. Which was that the initiative was too touristy; “a tourist attraction” (Redazione Ge24, 2019, p.1) it was named. This led the group to believe that the project was not authentic. Lastly, the group criticized Spazio Ponte for having a lack of respect. “The lack of respect towards those who lost their lives in this massacre, caused by a system in which profit was privileged over the protection of people, is indignant, and towards those who live in this valley and are still suffering serious repercussions at the social, economic and mobility level” (Redazione Ge24, 2019, p.1). This was highlighted by a game that was part of the project: “This lack of respect reaches its climax with the video game made available, with which it is possible to try your hand at rebuilding the bridge with lots of bulldozers, worker cranes and planners who follow you along the way and, if the times are not respected, don't worry you can restart the game” (Redazione Ge24, 2019, p.1).

The initiative might have turned out differently than hoped prior to building it. The three critiques it received targeted the core of its being. If these critiques were dealt with prior to opening the facility, responses would most likely have been positive, however, they were not. Therefore, this project can be labelled as negative too.

| | |
|------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Boundary spanning activity | Spazio Ponte |
| Initiator (boundary spanner) | PerGenova |
| Target group | PMVRC and Inhabitants |
| Communication strategy | Innovator |
| Result | Negative |

Table 9: Spazio Ponte

4.5 Concert at the bridge

In order to celebrate the completion of the newly build bridge. PerGenova and the government wanted to celebrate the occasion by holding a concert at the bridge. The location of this concert was at the construction site (WeBuild, 2020). The aim of this concert was to celebrate the newly built bridge, but also to pay tribute to those of have lost their lives and the family of those who have (targeting C3) (WeBuild, 2020). The orchestral performance of Beethoven's music took place directly at the construction site. These “creative” aspects render the content of this activity as an innovator communication strategy. This classification is also given to this activity because the creative nature of the project is not combined with strong interpersonal communication that would be present if the initiative would entail a networker strategy.

After it became publicly known that there would be a concert at the bridge, an online petition launched stating that “a sober inauguration, without catwalks, with discretion and with enormous respect for the victims and for those who remained” (GenovaToday, 2020a, p.1) would be far better suited to this occasion. This petition was signed and supported by the PMVRC (GenovaToday, 2020a) who themselves stated that “for us, as for many Genoese citizens, the inauguration should have a low profile, a respectful profile, especially for the reasons that led to the new building” (Barsanti, 2020a, p.1).

Concludingly, it becomes clear that the target group did not like this initiative. The petition and the open critiques from the PMVRC make clear that the target group has responded negatively to this initiative.

| | |
|------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Boundary spanning activity | Concert at the bridge |
| Initiator (boundary spanner) | Government and PerGenova |
| Target group | PMVRC and Inhabitants |
| Communication strategy | Innovator |
| Result | Negative |

Table 10: Concert at the bridge

4.6 Participative remembering memorial

The last boundary spanning activity that was conducted was the creation of the remembering memorial and a park underneath the bridge. It was obvious from the start that a memorial as such needed to be created. It was however, not obvious how this memorial needed to look and what else it should include. The project also aimed to help revitalize the area (Participedia, 2019). The initiative came from the local government and targeted the families of the victims and thus the PMVRC (targeting C3) (GenovaToday, 2020b). The base of this activity was centred around the participative nature of the initiative by means of roundtables and video conference with inhabitants and architects. “Inhabitants, associations and interest groups have been invited to a shared path where they can get to know, listen and give a critical and planning contribution to the definition of the feasibility study, building together a tool that will accompany all phases of the work, from design to construction” (Redazione GenovaToday, 2019, p.1). The close contact and therefore strong interpersonal relationships that were aimed to be fostered show that this was a networker strategy rather than an innovator strategy. This becomes even more evident when as mentioned, the memorial was not a creative idea, rather it was clear from the beginning that a memorial had to be constructed.

The participative nature of the project was appreciated by the PMVRC, the organization was grateful that the municipality set the initiative up in this manner (Barsanti, 2020b). The PMVRC also stated that the memorial “is a sacred place, where our loved ones breathed their last air” (Barsanti, 2020b, p.1).

Overall, the remembering memorial was received in a positive light for those who had a stake in the memorial. The participative nature of the project seems to have contributed to this positive reaction given that the PMVRC concluded that "It was by no means obvious that we were consulted within the design of the park, and it is very important” (Barsanti, 2020b, p.1).

| | |
|------------------------------|----------------------|
| Boundary spanning activity | Remembering memorial |
| Initiator (boundary spanner) | Government |
| Target group | PMVRC |
| Communication strategy | Networker |
| Result | Positive |

Table 11: Remembering memorial

4.7 Effectiveness of Innovator activities and Networker activities

It becomes clear that there is a disparity between the effectiveness of the four activities. For “on the wall” the level of support and stakeholder popularity is relatively low. This also goes for the Spazio Ponte initiative which was criticised quite heavily. The concert at the bridge got even worse levels of support and was certainly not popular with the (target group) stakeholders. Conflictingly, the remembering memorial had positive level of support and was certainly popular with the stakeholder.

| Boundary spanning activity | Initiator (boundary spanner) | Target group | Communication strategy | Result |
|----------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|----------|
| “On the wall” | Local government | Inhabitants of Certosa | Innovator | Negative |
| Spazio Ponte | PerGenova | PMVRC and Inhabitants | Innovator | Negative |
| Concert at the bridge | Government and PerGenova | PMVRC and inhabitants | Innovator | Negative |
| Remembering memorial | Government | PMVRC | Networker | Positive |

Table 12: Summary of activities, type, initiators, target groups and results

The analysis of table 12 reveals a consistent pattern wherein all the innovator strategies were met with negative reception, while the solitary networker strategy stood out as the only positively received initiative by the target group. This finding, however, does not imply that innovator strategies in their entirety are an unsuitable choice for facilitating boundary spanning endeavours. Nonetheless, this research underscores the significance of prioritizing stronger interpersonal relationships, as it is evident that such an approach would likely have enhanced the projects' reputation and resulted in more favourable reactions. Multiple secondary sources as well as interviews 1 and 2 included this assertion both directly and indirectly. Addressing the criticisms directed at Spazio Ponte prior to construction by engaging in direct discussions with the target group could have mitigated these concerns. This proactive approach was successfully employed for the remembering memorial, which emerged as the sole project to elicit a positive

response from the target group. To summarize, following the Morandi bridge tragedy and throughout the reconstruction of the new Ponte San Giorgio, the implementation of innovator strategies garnered negative feedback, while the networker strategy received positive reception.

5 Conclusion and discussion

5.1 Conclusion

This study examined the ideal communication strategy choice for boundary spanning activities in the aftermath of the Morandi bridge collapse and during the rebuilding of the Ponte San Giorgio in the city of Genova. It distinguished networker strategies and innovator strategies as different options. The case was divided by four distinguished boundary spanning activities that occurred during the researched timespan. These were distinguished by looking at the conflicts between the stakeholders that took place during this time whereby communication strategies within boundary spanning activities were implemented. The first three were innovator strategies, namely “on the wall”, Spazio Ponte and Concert at the bridge. These three were all negatively received by the target group. The fourth activity from this case turned out to use a networker strategy, namely, the participative remembering memorial. This project was received positively by the target group. This research concludes that the networker strategy was the best received activity and was the only positively received activity from the four in total. The activities where the innovator strategy was used were all negatively received by the target group.

5.2 Discussion

It is difficult to conclude that Networker strategies are superior to Innovator strategies even in the context of this case. The Innovator strategies were all very top-down and the Networker strategy was the only activity from these four that involved active participation. This could be a determining factor in response from the target group. Furthermore, this case is exceptional as it also deals with the background issue of notoriously low trust from the communities in Italian institutions (governmental and private companies). This already places the institutions in a prior disadvantage. Lastly, during the timespan of this case, an ongoing lawsuit (discussed in 4.1) may have influenced responses of certain target groups that were also involved in the lawsuit (mainly PMVRC). Because of these implications, this research should be placed in a wider context within the boundary spanning literature as it cannot accurately give conclusions without this context. Nevertheless, this study still provides an insight in effective communication strategy choice in the aftermath of the Morandi bridge collapse and during the rebuilding of the Ponte San Giorgio. Therefore, this study has positioned itself in the aforementioned research gap as it adds a perspective of communication strategy choice within a boundary spanning activity in a tragic situation to the literature. Future research could focus on the innovator and networker strategies on an individual level and find out what aspects of these individual strategies are positively received and in which environment this happens. That would place this research into a wider perspective on communication strategy choice within a boundary spanning activity and could serve as a blueprint/guideline in future situations. Lastly, whilst this research portrays certain approaches by stakeholders negatively, it is important to stress that The local government displayed efficiency in reimbursing eligible individuals affected by the collapse with the money that was obtained from ASPI (Interview 1). Furthermore, the reconstruction of the bridge was successfully completed within a relatively short timeframe of 15 months from the commencement of initial construction (WeBuild, 2023).

These two feats were dealt with well, especially given the famously difficult Italian bureaucracy.

6 References

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Word count: 6429

6.1 Notes on interviews

Two interviews were conducted for this study, both interviewees wanted to stay anonymous due to various reasons. The interviews were used to paint a picture of the situation and to gather opinions from the inhabitants of Genova. The transcripts of these interviews are not included in this study to adhere to anonymity.

- *Interview 1* gained an insight into what happened after the bridge collapse in the affected neighbourhoods.
- *Interview 2* contextualized the role of ASPI and revealed the “law” side of figure 5.

6.2 Sources of the figures

Figure 1: Miro.com

Figure 2: Miro.com

Figure 3: Miro.com

Figure 5: Miro.com

Figure 6: Miro.com

Figure 8: ESRI ArcGIS

7 Appendices

7.1 Appendix A: Original translation of used quotes

| English (used in thesis) | Original (Italian) |
|---|---|
| some blocks ended up on houses and industrial warehouses. | <i>alcuni blocchi sono finiti su case e capannoni industriali.</i> |
| In the early stages, we felt a strong institutional warmth close to us, this hope was gradually lost. We sensed the estrangement. | <i>Nelle prime fasi, sentivamo vicino a noi un calore istituzionale molto forte. Questa speranza via via è andata persa. Abbiamo percepito l'allontanamento.</i> |
| They should have done it in Valpolcevera | <i>Dovevano farlo in Valpolcevera</i> |
| A tourist attraction | <i>un'attrattiva per turisti</i> |
| The lack of respect towards those who lost their lives in this massacre, caused by a system in which profit was privileged over the protection of people, is indignant, and towards those who live in this valley and are still suffering serious repercussions at the social, economic and mobility level | <i>Indigna la mancanza di rispetto nei confronti di chi in questa strage, causata da un sistema in cui si è privilegiato il profitto alla tutela delle persone, ha perso la vita, ed a chi vive in questa valle e sta ancora subendo gravi ripercussioni a livello sociale, economico e della mobilità</i> |
| This lack of respect reaches its climax with the video game made available, with which it is possible to try your hand at rebuilding the bridge with lots of bulldozers, worker cranes and planners who follow you along the way and, if the times are not respected, don't worry you can restart the game | <i>Questa mancanza di rispetto che raggiunge il colmo con il video gioco messo a disposizione, con cui è possibile cimentarsi nella ricostruzione del ponte con tanto di ruspe, gru lavoratori e progettisti che ti seguono nel percorso e, se non vengono rispettati i tempi, tranquillo puoi ricominciare il gioco</i> |
| a sober inauguration, without catwalks, with discretion and with enormous respect for the victims and for those who remained | <i>un'inaugurazione sobria, senza passerelle, con discrezione e con un enorme rispetto per le vittime e per chi è rimasto</i> |
| for us, as for many Genoese citizens, the inauguration should have a low profile, a respectful profile, especially for the reasons that led to the new building | <i>Per noi, come per molti cittadini genovesi, l'inaugurazione dovrebbe avere un profilo basso, un profilo rispettoso, soprattutto per le motivazioni che hanno portato alla nuova costruzione</i> |
| Inhabitants, associations and interest groups have been invited to a shared path where they can get to know, listen and give a critical and planning contribution to the definition of the feasibility study, building together a tool that will accompany all phases of the work, from design to construction. | <i>Abitanti, associazioni e gruppi di interesse sono stati invitati ad un percorso condiviso dove conoscere, ascoltare, dare un contributo critico e progettuale per la definizione dello studio di fattibilità, costruendo insieme uno strumento che accompagnerà tutte le fasi di lavoro, dalla progettazione alla costruzione.</i> |
| is a sacred place, where our loved ones breathed their last air | <i>Luogo sacro, dove hanno esalato l'ultimo respiro i nostri cari</i> |
| It was by no means obvious that we were consulted within the design of the park, and it is very important | <i>Non era assolutamente scontato che all'interno della progettazione del parco noi fossimo interpellati, ed è molto importante</i> |

7.2 Appendix B: Semi-structured interview guide

Initial interview guide Ponte San Giorgio case which served as a foundation for the coding scheme.

Questions regarding SQ1

Who were the individuals, organizations or communities that had an interest in this case?

What were the main interests of these stakeholders?

Was there a conflict of interest between these stakeholders?

What was the result of these conflicts?

Questions regarding SQ2

Did stakeholders **feel the need** for **strong personal communication** in regard to the conflict of stakeholders during the building of the new bridge?

- If yes:
- Which stakeholder felt the need for strong personal communication?
- In which conflict was this strong personal communication needed?

Did stakeholders **feel the need** for **creative solutions** in regard to the conflict of stakeholders during the building of the new bridge?

- If yes:
- Which stakeholder felt the need for creative solutions?
- In which conflict were creative solutions needed?

Did stakeholders feel the need for other means of communication?

Questions regarding SQ3

In cases of conflicts between particular stakeholders, boundary spanners can enter the playing field. In this particular research, a boundary spanner is described as an “individual or organization who aims to strengthen collaboration by keeping interactions between different parties flowing. The boundary spanner therefore deals with bridging a gap between two or more conflicting actors.”

Did the boundary spanner approach the stakeholder(s) with **strong personal communication**?

- If yes
- What strong personal communication (example) occurred?

Did the boundary spanner approach the stakeholder(s) with **creative solutions**?

- If yes
- What creative solutions (example) occurred?

Did boundary spanner approach the stakeholders in other manners?

Questions regarding SQ4

Were the stakeholders more content in regards to the conflict after the boundary spanner had acted?

Were the stakeholders more content in regards to the conflict when strong personal communication was used?

Were the stakeholders more content in regards to the conflict after creative solutions were used?

Were there other initiatives used by boundary spanners that turned out to be successful?

7.3 Appendix C: Notes on secondary sources

Every online source that was used (mostly newspaper articles) was saved as a pdf on the date it was accessed (visible in the references for the relevant articles).

An example of the following (Barsanti, A. (2020b) *Concerto per il Nuovo Ponte, i parenti delle vittime: "no a Feste, non fate I nomi dei nostri cari"*, GenovaToday. Available at: <https://www.genovatoday.it/cronaca/ponte-genova-concerto-parenti-vittime.html> (Accessed: 16 May 2023). saved newspaper article:

GENOVATODAY

CRONACA

Concerto per il nuovo ponte, i parenti delle vittime: «No a feste, non fate i nomi dei nostri cari»

Egle Possetti, portavoce del Comitato Parenti Vittime del Ponte Morandi, spiega le motivazioni contro l'evento organizzato da Webuild: «Troviamo assurdo un concerto stile Sanremo»

 **Andrea Barsanti** 
05 giugno 2020 10:18



I parenti delle vittime del Morandi durante la cerimonia di commemorazione

«Non possiamo farli diventare un ninno alla festa, non lo meritano»: Egle Possetti, sorella di Claudia Possetti, morta nel crollo del ponte Morandi insieme con il marito Andrea Vattuone e i due figli, Camilla e Manuele, prende

nuovamente la parola per difendere la memoria dei suoi cari e delle altre 39 vittime della tragedia del 14 agosto 2018.

Il riferimento è, ancora una volta, al concerto per l'inaugurazione del nuovo ponte che Webuild (Salini Impregilo) ha organizzato per il 27 luglio su Rai 3. Un concerto su cui i parenti delle vittime, e molte altre persone, avevano già preso posizione (contro) con una petizione che chiedeva un'inaugurazione sobria in segno di rispetto. E della questione proprio Possetti ha parlato, giovedì, con il sindaco Marco Bucci.

«Per noi, come per molti cittadini genovesi, l'inaugurazione dovrebbe avere un profilo basso, un profilo rispettoso, soprattutto per le motivazioni che hanno portato alla nuova costruzione, non è così per tutti, ma si sa, ognuno ha le sue idee che chiaramente possono essere influenzate dalla propria sensibilità e posizione», si legge in una nota del Comitato Parenti Vittime del Ponte Morandi, dove si precisa che «dall'incontro sono emerse delle grandi differenze sull'interpretazione di questo momento, e noi francamente non possiamo essere giudici di quale sia la verità, con il cuore però noi non possiamo aderire a questa "festa" anche se potrebbe avere a margine dei festeggiamenti, un ricordo dei nostri cari».

«Noi vorremmo un'inaugurazione sobria, pensiamo sia molto emozionante il concerto in piazza dell'orchestra - prosegue la nota con riferimento al concerto in piazza organizzato dal Carlo Felice - pensiamo sia d'obbligo il taglio del nastro sul ponte, pensiamo sia molto forte e d'impatto il suono delle sirene del porto, pensiamo sia doveroso l'inno nazionale, non riusciamo a capire la camminata sul nuovo ponte, ma sembra che molti cittadini la vogliano fare. Troviamo assurdo un concerto stile "Sanremo" (anche in fase 2 Covid inoltre) ma per festeggiare cosa?».

«Noi vogliamo quindi momenti distinti per la "festa" e per il ricordo delle vittime - conclude il Comitato - stante le premesse di cui sopra, abbiamo chiesto al sindaco ufficialmente di non nominare nella cerimonia di inaugurazione i nostri cari, il loro ricordo troverà spazio il 14 agosto ed in questa circostanza potranno avere il giusto rispetto che meritano».

7.4 Appendix D: Conflicts labelled

| | |
|----|---|
| C1 | Inhabitants of Certosa vs (local) government |
| C2 | Inhabitants of Certosa and PMVRC vs PerGenova |
| C3 | (local) Government and PerGenova vs PMVRC |