Institutional work and infrastructure public–private partnerships (PPPs): the roles of religious symbolic work and power in implementing PPP projects

Mhamed Biygautane
School of Social and Political Sciences, The University of Melbourne, Melbourne, Australia

Stewart Clegg
Business School & Nova School of Business and Economics, Lisbon, Portugal and University of Technology Sydney, Sydney, Australia, and

Khalid Al-Yahya
Riyadh Economic Forum, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia

Abstract

Purpose – Existing public–private partnership (PPP) literature that explicitly adopts neo-institutional theory, tends to elucidate the impact of isomorphic pressures and organizational fields and structuration on PPP projects. This paper advances this literature by presenting the institutional work and micro-level dynamics through which actors initiate and implement a new form of project delivery. The authors show how actors enact responses to institutional structuration in the expansion and transformation of an airport from a public entity into a PPP in Saudi Arabia.

Design/methodology/approach – The authors use a single case study design that offers an empirically rich and thick description of events such as the dynamic processes, practices and types of institutional work carried out by actors and organizations to deliver the project under investigation.

Findings – Religious symbolic work as social integration triggered system integration work, which expanded the power capabilities of individual actors leading the project. Repair work then followed to alleviate the negative effects of disempowering the agency of actors negatively affected by the PPP model and to streamline the project implementation process.

Practical implications – This research offers several practical implications. For PPPs to operate successfully in contexts similar to the Gulf region, policymakers should provide strong political support and be willing to bear a considerable risk of losses or minimal outcomes during the early phases of experimentation with PPPs. Also, policymakers should not only focus their attention on technical requirements of PPPs but also associate new meanings with the normative and cultural-cognitive elements that are integral to the success of PPP implementation. In order to design strategies for change that are designed to fit the unique cultural and sociopolitical settings of each country, policymakers should empower capable individual actors and provide

them with resources and access to power, which will enable them to enforce changes that diverge from institutionalized practices.

Social implications – This research connected the PPP literature with theoretical frameworks drawn from neo-institutional theory and power. It would be valuable for further research, however, to connect ideas from the PPP literature with other disciplines such as psychology and social entrepreneurship. PPP research examines a recent phenomenon that can potentially be combined with non-traditional streams of research in analyzing projects. Expanding the realm of PPP research beyond traditional theoretical boundaries could potentially yield exciting insights into how the overall institutional and psychological environments surrounding projects affect their initiation and implementation.

Originality/value – The paper contributes new insights regarding the roles of religious symbolic work, allied with social and system integration of power relations in implementing PPP projects. It suggests a theoretical shift from structures and organizational fields – macro- and meso-levels of analysis – to individuals – micro-level – as triggers of new forms of project delivery that break with the status quo.

Keywords Public–private partnership, Neo-institutional theory, Organizational power, Institutional work

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

An emerging trend in the public–private partnership (PPP) literature is the adoption of neo-institutional theory to analyze PPP projects' implementation (Agyenim-Boateng *et al.*, 2017; Biygautane *et al.*, forthcoming; Jooste and Scott, 2012). PPPs are "long-term contracts or arrangements" in which the private sector is "involved in the design, building, maintenance and/or operation of a public infrastructure," which it co-finances (Koppenjan, 2008, p. 1991). Research has long emphasized influence of the institutional environment on performance of infrastructure projects (Clegg and Courpasson, 2004; Kadefors, 1995), and impact of institutions as the "shared rules, beliefs and practices. . .enacted and (re)produced by various actors" on project implementation (Scott, 2014; Tukiainen and Granqvist, 2016, p. 1835). The institutional approach encompasses the past experiences, values and social norms that underpin project organizing (Hodgson and Cicmil, 2007; Kujala *et al.*, 2014; Soderlund, *et al.*, 2017). Morris and Geraldi (2011) have stated that a focus on the institutional level can "improve the performance of projects" because their technical and strategic features are "conditioned, constrained and supported" by their institutional *milieu* (p. 28). Therefore, projects do not operate as "lonely islands," but are "contextually-embedded open systems" that function within complex organizational and historical settings (Engwall, 2003, p. 790).

A review of the PPP literature adopting neo-institutional theory reveals two central themes: (1) the impact of external isomorphic pressures on the choice of PPP for infrastructure delivery and (2) the role of PPP-enabling organizational fields and structuration in facilitating PPP implementation. As such, by focusing on macro- and meso-levels of analysis, these bodies of literature have left unexplored the activities that underscore the interplay between individual actors and their institutional structures (Lawrence, 2008; Scott, 2014). Overcoming this gap requires exploring the work and power relations through which actors navigate through their institutional environment to initiate and implement projects (Clegg, 2010; Clegg *et al.*, 2017). This paper adopts the approach of institutional work defined as "the purposive action of individuals and organizations aimed at creating, maintaining and disrupting institutions" (Lawrence and Suddaby, 2006, p. 215). Because this framework allows a micro-view of the activities and strategies of institutional actors and portrays them as "reflective, goal-oriented and capable" agents, it can potentially uncover the tactics actors use to acquire and use power to affect existing forms of project organizing (Lawrence *et al.*, 2013, p. 1024). As such, the two central research questions underlying this study are: (1) *What types of institutional work do individual actors perform to gain power to initiate PPPs* and (2) *how do the resultant modes of power drive the implementation process forward?*

We investigate these questions in the context of Saudi Arabia, which is a suitable empirical setting in which to answer these questions because PPPs were not the

institutionalized or legitimate form of infrastructure delivery in the past. When the extension of Medina Airport was privately financed and then transformed from a public entity into a private one in 2012, PPPs entered the scene for the first time in a transportation project. Exploring how individual actors navigated through their institutional structures to undertake a new form of project organizing is the story we recount and analyze.

In doing so, we advance neo-institutional theory and project management in three significant ways. First, we expand the means through which institutional work affects institutionalized forms of project organizing. We propose *religious symbolic work,* as a form of institutional work in which individual or organizational actors purposefully employ socially shared religious symbols and beliefs to persuade other actors to support their goals. Second, we broaden the analysis of power in projects and show how power can be a positive force for implementing PPP projects when triggered and guided by a form of symbolic work. Finally, we demonstrate the utility of shifting the focus of PPP literature from isomorphism and organizational fields and structuration, to analyzing the interplay between agency and structure that can produce analytical insight into the actions of actors inside projects.

The impact of institutional context on PPP projects
The following section reviews the evolving and disparate body of research that *explicitly* uses the label of "institutional theory" – isomorphism, organizational fields and structuration – to identify what factors affect the adoption and implementation of PPPs.

Isomorphic pressures and adoption of PPP
Why do governments adopt PPPs despite carrying political controversies (Khadaroo, 2005; 2008; Flinders, 2005), technical complexities (Zhang, 2005) and higher risks and uncertainties (Grimsey and Lewis, 2000; Agyenim-Boateng *et al.*, 2017), not to mention their dubious claims of value for money and efficiency gains (Biygautane, 2017; Carpintero and Petersen, 2015)?

Neo-institutionalism's "explanation of the similarity ('isomorphism') and stability of organizational arrangements" offers a useful framework to answer this question (Greenwood and Hinings, 1996, p. 1023). Governments worldwide adopt PPPs in response to several isomorphic pressures operating either within or outside their institutional contexts, sometimes forcing them to imitate existent practices within their institutional fields to acquire and sustain their legitimacy (Petersen, 2011; Scott, 2008). To illustrate, Khadaroo (2005) has attributed the emergence of the UK's PFI standard-setting process to three factors: coercive pressures exercised by the UK's Treasury, normative pressures stemming from the accounting profession and mimetic forces that saw public sector organizations plagiarizing each other's submissions to the Treasury. Similarly, Connolly *et al.* (2009) have found that, despite the certainty of government actors in Ireland that PPPs would not offer higher value for money as propounded by PPP enthusiasts, "indications from the UK government that PPP was the only game in town" meant that it became "the only option" for delivering school infrastructure (p. 10). The same study revealed that, while Ireland's local government knew about the "negative aspects of PPPs in the UK," they still "persisted with the PPP model and sought legitimacy through its adoption" (p. 12). Interestingly, Sheppard and Beck (2016) contend that, while Ireland's central government originally introduced the UK's PPP model as a voluntary option to modernize its public administration, it is now increasingly pushing the adoption of PPPs for infrastructure delivery. Ireland's public-sector organizations are now reported as reluctantly pursuing PPPs to maintain institutional legitimacy (Sheppard and Beck, 2016). Moreover, Jooste *et al.*, (2011) have found that mimetic pressures explain the diffusion of infrastructure PPPs from the UK into British Columbia (Canada), Victoria (Australia) and South Africa.

Organizational fields and structuration
As a result of cancellations of several contracts for high-profile PPP projects (Biygautane, 2017; Jooste and Scott, 2012) as well as reports of their failure to deliver the promised value for money (Connolly *et al.*, 2009), isomorphic pressures for adopting PPPs were insufficient to explain why governments adopt them or why PPPs ultimately fail in these cases. Many PPP scholars have resorted to organizational fields and structuration as units of analysis to examine how organizational fields and institutional contexts support or hinder PPP programs.

Organizational fields "constitute a recognized area of institutional life: key suppliers, resource and product consumers, regulatory agencies, and other organizations that produce similar services and products" (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983, p. 148). The field perspective enables a shift from "an organization-centric or dyadic to a more systemic level of analysis," that captures not only "organizations in environments but ... the organization of the environment" (Scott, 2008, p. 434). Fields thus serve as an intermediate layer between the organizational space of PPPs and the broader social context. Jooste and Scott (2012) have stated that the complexity of PPP projects requires developing an institutional field: they nominate the capacity of public-sector organizations, increasing PPP's legitimacy and balancing the interests of the public, private and civic sectors as key issues in its establishment. Such requirements, they suggest, can be provided only through "PPP-enabling organizational fields," that include sponsoring departments, PPP units, transaction advisors, regulators, advocacy associations and development agencies (Jooste *et al.*, 2011, p. 22).

As a result, several studies emerged that emphasized the significance of PPP-enabling organizations. Mahalingam *et al.* (2011) have suggested that the effectiveness of coordination agencies (PPP units) increases when they are involved in the entire project cycle, especially if they ensure the transfer of PPP-related expertise to government departments. Jooste and Scott (2012), however, have argued that a stand-alone PPP unit is insufficient. Instead, when groups of public, private and not-for-profit entities work together, they exert a stronger impact on PPPs' implementation. More recent studies confirm this claim while listing government strategies that effectively translated into increased adoption of PPPs in Ireland (Sheppard and Beck, 2016). Nonetheless, Verhoest *et al.* (2015) question the full impact of PPP-enabling organizations on PPP projects and found that, while organizational support for PPP was necessary, it was insufficient to account for greater uptake of PPPs.

Furthermore, the review of literature shows that PPP scholars have recently embraced the structuration perspective to explore how the socio-political features and blueprints of the institutional contexts are carried out in PPP-related fields (Scott and Levitt, 2017). The structuration approach states that social structures contain organized rules and resources that "are not brought into being by social actors, but continually recreated by them via the very means whereby they express themselves *as* actors (Agyenim-Boateng *et al.*, 2017). In and through their activities, agents reproduce the conditions that make these activities possible" (Giddens, 1984, p. 2). As cases in point, Jooste *et al.*, (2011) have analyzed why although governments in Australia, Canada and South Africa all gained insights from the "UK's Private Finance Initiative (PFI) as a first PPP-enabling field and an exemplar for other countries," their PPP-enabling fields ended up evolving differently (p. 12). The authors confirmed structuration theory's assertion that actors "bring about the formation of the field and change in it over time" (p. 22) in a manner that reflects prevailing political and social preferences. Likewise, several other scholars such as Mahalingam and Delhi (2012) and Matos-Castaño *et al.* (2014) offer valuable insights regarding how organizational fields affect PPPs.

To summarize, the extant literature's focus on isomorphic pressures, organizational fields and structuration limit the scope of the PPP debates to how the "activities and interactions of a set of organizations" determine PPP project implementation outcomes (van den Hurk; Verhoest, 2015, p. 4). Nonetheless, the role of individual actors has not been incorporated into these PPP debates.

Institutional work and power as micro-dynamics of individual agency

In this section, we argue that institutional work can provide a powerful theoretical framework to explore the micro-level perspective that is currently missing in the PPP literature. Specifically, this section borrows insights from neo-institutional theory and power literatures to reveal the institutional symbolic work adopted by individual actors to access and use power to alter existing forms of organizing.

Institutional and religious symbolic work

Institutional work is "the purposive action of individuals and organizations aimed at creating, maintaining and disrupting" institutional norms and rules that govern organizations (Lawrence and Suddaby, 2006, p. 215). It acknowledges that individual agency is neither the outcome of actors' institutional embeddedness nor is it immune to its influence. Instead, individual actors are endowed with the capacity to reflect on their institutional surrounding, "develop conscious intentionality" and plan strategic actions and activities to affect their social symbolic context (Phillips and Lawrence, 2012). Recently, institutional symbolic work has appeared as an essential form of work (Lawrence and Phillips, 2019) because organizations are not merely technical systems governed by rational decision making, power dependencies and actors' interactions, but organizations carry "symbolic aspects" as well (Scott, 1987, p. 507; Dandridge *et al.*, 1980; Lawrence and Phillips, 2019). Actors engage in institutional symbolic work to activate symbols through "discrete acts of persuasion and influence" (Hambrick and Lovelace, 2018, p. 111), which motivate certain actors to perform behaviors that "align with the exhilaration they derive from the symbol itself" (Hambrick and Lovelace, 2018, p. 118; Strati, 1998).

Institutional theory and project management scholars have recognized the significance of symbols in organizational life (Hampel *et al.*, 2017; Soderlund *et al.*, 2017). In institutional theory, the breadth of symbols is limited to the use of language and narrative rhetoric (Zilber, 2007), identity and practice work (Gawer and Phillips, 2013; Jones and Massa, 2013), emotion work (Watson, 2008; Barberá-Tomás *et al.*, 2019) or esthetic work (Warhurst and Nickson, 2007). Similarly, within project management, focus has been on how political symbols accelerate project implementation (van Marrewijk, 2017). For example, Lopez-Rego *et al.* (2017) argue that the timely completion of three necessary historical megaprojects in Brazil was driven by the political and symbolic importance of events such as the FIFA 2014. Likewise, van der Westhuizen (2017) provides a compelling analysis of how megaprojects as political symbols can be successfully implemented when they are closely associated with mythical discourses such as conditioning the hosting of the World Cup in South Africa on the delivery of a high-speed train project that connected different parts of the country.

Despite the centrality of religion in human and organizational life (Tracey *et al.*, 2014), existing research is yet to explore the influence of religious symbolism on actors' decision-making within organizations. Religious symbolism refers to the "ideas, beliefs, actions and interaction patters which concern extra-human entities and processes" and represents the metaphysical and supernatural forces that are embedded within a social and cultural order (Boyer, 1993, p. 4). Across Abrahamic religions such as Judaism, Christianity and Islam, religious symbols – that take the form of a place, a person, a subject or a ritual – play a substantial role in society (Johnson, 1990). Such symbols are powerful tools that "invoke deep loyalty, devotion, sacrifice, love of community, polity, the highest good, the totality and the unity of the world" (Lapidus, 2002, p. 870).

Furthermore, religious symbols enable individuals to associate themselves with the collective unconscious and gain personal integration and spiritual power, and connect with the 'God' they worship (Johnson, 1955). Several studies explored the use of religious symbols to pursue commercial goals (Zwick and Chelariu, 2006) or the use of religious symbols in

advertising to "generate positive/negative feelings" around a certain subject (Butt *et al.*, 2018, p. 387). Because a symbol only exists if "it can be invented, expressed, exhibited, evoked, revealed or indicated" (Strati, 1998, p. 1387), it is important to investigate how actors engage in religious symbolic work – how individual or organizational actors purposefully employ socially shared religious symbols and beliefs to persuade other actors to support their goals.

Institutional work and power
In this subsection we argue that the lens of power can uncover how institutional symbolic work undermines controlling effects of structure, and through which types of work individual actors' agency overpowers the constraining pressures of their institutional environment (Rye, 2015).

The concept of power is complex and heterogeneous, and its definitions vary depending on field of study. In this research, power is limited to its conceptualization within the organizational studies literature (Clegg, 1989; Lawrence *et al.*, 2011; Lawrence *et al.*, 2005), which delineates power as "a relational effect, not property that can be held by someone or something" (Clegg and Kreiner, 2013, p. 270). Hence, power is only explicit when it is exercised through relationships among individual or organizational actors (Clegg, 1989), and manifested in the ways that "the behaviors, attitudes, or opportunities of an actor are affected by another actor, system, or technology" (Lawrence *et al.*, 2013, p. 105). Institutional theory's overemphasis on isomorphism resulted in the "element of power . . . [being] largely absent from engagement with DiMaggio and Powell's work" (Clegg, 2010, p. 5). Most of the subsequent research based on DiMaggio and Powell's seminal work examined how the choices of actors or organizations were influenced by certain isomorphic forces within their institutional fields, but "left out an explicit consideration of power" (Lawrence, 2008, p. 175).

Power is postulated as operating through two modes: "episodic" and "systemic" (Lawrence *et al.*, 2011; Lawrence and Robinson, 2007). Episodic power consists of the "relatively discrete, strategic acts of mobilization initiated by self-interested actors," and represents the explicit expression of human agency (Lawrence *et al.*, 2011, p. 629). Systemic power, meanwhile, operates "through the routine, ongoing practices of organizations" and is embedded in the cultural and "social systems that constitute organizations" (Lawrence and Robinson, 2007, p. 384). Hence, this mode of power is embedded within overarching cultural and organizational systems.

To better articulate how these two modes of power function in a social context, we use Pitkin's (1972) concept of *power over* to describe systemic power, while we use *power to* in reference to episodic power, appreciating that power episodes do not necessarily have to be coercive or constraining, but could also be facilitative. Power over means power "over other people, [or] enforcement of one's intentions over those of others," while power to means "an ability to do or achieve something independent of others," including indirectly through routine and bureaucratic channels (Göhler, 2009, p. 28). As such, power over constantly restricts the choices of those subjected to it, "disempowers" their capacity and limits their fields of action (Rye, 2015). The focus of power to, in contrast, is not on its effect on others subjected to it but on its "empowerment" of certain actors to act coercively over other actors in the institutional field. Sometimes this is achieved in order to overpower the agency of others; other times it may conjoin with others to expand collective agency. The delicate interconnectedness between power over and power to means that, in order to access power over, actors need the capacity to exercise power to; however, exercising power to do something is contingent upon having access to power over resources and people (Clegg and Kreiner, 2013).

How are these modes and circuits of power used and how do they affect actors and organizations? Lawrence *et al.* (2011) have argued that when actors use episodic power and approach their targets as subjects with the capacity to choose whether to do something or

not (Clegg, 1989), they use *influence* to persuade them of the benefits of a certain action. Influence is carried out through informal networks and relies on persuasive accounts and negotiations that are particularly important to justify why a new trajectory or organizational model is essential, making this form of power particularly useful during the starting phases of new initiatives (Lawrence, 2008). However, when organizational actors are treated as objects (incapable of choice), *force* is applied coercively through formal organizational hierarchies to leave them no choice but to do something that they would not otherwise do, because it does not serve either a personal or organizational sense of their interests (Lawrence and Robinson, 2007).

Although systemic power may be empirically invisible, manifest through tacit pressures on actors and organizations, it differentially affects actors when they are considered as either subjects or objects. When actors are treated as subjects, power is exercised as *discipline,* which "shapes the identities of targets and...leads them to act in specific ways," and subsequently and indirectly affects the choices that those actors make (Lawrence and Robinson, 2007, p. 389). However, when actors are treated as objects, systemic power is manifested as a mode of *domination* that restricts choices through informal representations of systemic power in the guise of culturally taken-for-granted practices or symbols. Systemic power is also exercised through the controlling effects of bureaucratic systems in which the actors operate (Lawrence, 2008).

While earlier theorizations of power considered power relations as having a one-dimensional coercive perspective whereby one actor determines the choices available for another actor (Dahl, 1975; Lukes, 2005), Clegg (1989) argues that power relations are multi-dimensional and operate through three different and interconnected "circuits of power." The first circuit of power is episodic, and it represents the agency individual actors exercise to either constrain an action or to enable it, which results in resistance or acquiescence of affected actors. The second circuit of power is dispositional and it enables actors to reinterpret the rules within an organizational field, and it is exercised within a system of social integration whereby actors within a social system use shared meanings to justify and achieve their objectives (Clegg, 1989). The third circuit of power is facilitative and is exercised through system integration that entails reshaping or changing the routines and rules within an organizational setting to fit actors' interests and objectives.

While these forms of power are well-documented in the organizational analysis literature, what is unclear is the type of institutional work that triggers systemic power and in turn, legitimizes new forms of project organizing and how actors build upon this emerging power to implement projects.

Methodology
Research context
Saudi Arabia is a context in which public procurement via Engineering, Procurement and Construction (EPC) model has been the only institutionalized method of infrastructure delivery over the past 70 years (Biygautane, 2017). The existing legal and regulatory frameworks have been incompatible with the requirements of complex PPP contracts. Likewise, the normative pressures for global diffusion of PPP projects do not exist in Saudi Arabia. High government revenues from oil exports have meant that financial constraints driving Western governments to private finance did not exist in Saudi Arabia, nor were the promises of higher efficiency and value for money important either. Furthermore, the construction sector was tightly dominated and controlled by powerful business families with extensive networks of patronage, positioning them as the government's preferred bidders for large contracts (House, 2013). Foreign investors and bidders are disadvantaged when

competing for government contracts and corruption is endemic in the construction industry (Al-Riyadh, 2013; Ali, 2010). As such, the lack of effective mechanisms for monitoring the accountability and transparency of the construction sector result in many cases of exploitation of public finances, extensive delays and an environment that is incompatible with rudimentary requirements for PPP projects (Al-Riyadh, 2009).

The case of Medina Airport

Medina Airport represents a case of divergent organizational change for two reasons. First, the airport had operated under the government's umbrella since 1972 (IFC, 2013), and the choice of a build-transfer-operate (BTO) contract to expand and operate the airport meant disconnecting from the public sector template and *abruptly* introducing the untested market ethos. This shift affected not only the technical operations of the airport but also its identity and organizational culture by forcing a drastic change in how employees of the airport had worked for decades. Second, extending the airport through the BTO contract involved private finance, which required new legal and administrative requirements that the Saudi bureaucracy was unprepared to provide. The construction and delivery of this mega-infrastructure project – within time and budget – in such research context promises to uncover several empirical and theoretical insights about how power affects projects. It meant that the actors leading the project's implementation had to convince the top political pyramid about utility of PPPs, public organizations that did not understand or believe in the need for PPP at the airport and also manage resistance from private actors that dominated the construction sector. Finally, it meant coercing hundreds of employees within the airport to transfer to a private operator and give up all benefits associated with working for the public sector.

Research design and data collection

A single case study design is well-suited to the exploratory and inductive nature of the research (Parker, 2014; Yin, 2014). This method offers an empirically rich and thick description of events, such as the dynamic processes, practices and types of institutional work carried out by actors and organizations to deliver the project under investigation (Lawrence *et al.*, 2009). This study forms part of a larger research project that explores the phenomenon of PPPs within the Gulf region.

The data collection techniques used to answer our research questions were commensurate with the chosen case study design and relied on two sources. The first was archival data which was important to triangulate the interview findings (Lofland and Lofland, 1995) with more objective analyses of the factors supporting the project, as illustrated in Table 1. The second source of data is face-to-face, semi-structured interviews ranging from 40 to 90 min in length conducted with key interviewees who were directly involved in the project implementation process. In total, twenty-one face-to-face interviews were conducted by the first author in the Saudi Arabian cities of Jeddah, Medina and Riyadh between March 2016 and August 2017, with three supplementary interviews carried out in Riyadh in August 2019.

To ensure that many voices were included, to minimize retrospective bias problems and to confirm the reliability of the data (Yin, 2014), individuals from across different levels of the hierarchy and various sectors were interviewed, as shown in Table 1. The interviews were recorded (except in three cases where extensive notes were taken) and transcribed verbatim. We conducted purposive sampling (Lincoln and Guba, 1985), aiming to cover a diverse type of actors occupying different roles as first contact interviewees. Therefore, we explored Saudi news articles and published government and

	Interviews		Archival data		
	Face-to-face interviews	Royal and ministerial speeches	Consultancy reports	Government and policy reports	News and media coverage
Data items	21	7	13	29	43
Time period	March 2016– August 2019	2000–2015	2000–2019	2000–2017	2000–2018
Description of the data	Face-to-face interviews coded as: (1) 5 public sector officials (PS. 1 to PS. 5-including chairman of GACA and PPP Team Leader); (2) 3 Private sector representatives (PRS. 1, to PSR 3); (3) 6 consultants (CON 1 to 6) (5 and 6 conducted in August 2019); (4) 2 Bank representatives (BNK 1. and 2); (5) 2 Engineers (ENG 1–2); (6) 2 Senior representatives of international organizations (REP. 1 to 2); (7) 1- Saudi Airlines representative	(1) Reflect King's full support for project (2) Require organizations to adhere to ministerial directives	Published and unpublished reports by World Bank and international consultancy firms	General information about regulatory and administrative systems surrounding infrastructure projects	Arabic and English news' stories about importance and progress of Airport project (1) YouTube video about resistance and protest of airport employees (2)Arabic blogs where employees shared stories and grievances
Type of information provided	Original insights into roles of actors, religious symbolism and power in implementing Median Airport project	Reflect serious political commitment to project	Covered technical, financial and regulatory aspects of project implementation process	(1) Capacity of local private and public actors to deliver project on PPP (2) Process of project implementation	(1) Process of project initiation and implementation (2) Reactions of airport employees to change in airport management

Table 1.
Data sources

private sector reports to identify the names of actors who played a central role in the project. We then relied on our social networks to gain access to these interviewees, and a snowball technique was adopted later on by asking our initial interviewees to recommend further actors who leveraged influence in project implementation (Lincoln and Guba, 1985).

The semi-structured approach that was adopted during the interviews allowed flexibility in asking interviewees the same set of questions, but also asking further elaboration and follow-up questions when new themes or insights emerged during the interviews. Generally, our interview questions focused on three themes: (1) political, institutional and organizational actors that enabled the project implementation, (2) impact of existing legal and regulatory frameworks on the project and (3) the reactions of employees and management of the airport and how that affected the process of transforming the airport from a public to a private entity. Our interview questions (see Appendix 1) were generated from our readings of the PPP literature adopting the neo-institutional approach, particularly organizational fields and structuration. Although power was not reflected in our interview questions, but the semi-structured interview approach allowed for an immediate reframing of questions as unexpected information about role of power in Medina Airport emerged through interviews (Eisenhardt and Graebner, 2007). In the follow-up field research in August 2019, interviewees were asked explicit questions about religious significance of the airport and impact of power relations on the airport's employees.

Data analysis
Data analysis was conducted through four stages following a deductive and inductive approach congruent with common practice in qualitative studies (Parker and Northcott, 2016). The first step in our analysis was to sift through the data and read interview transcripts alongside secondary sources to develop a comprehensive understanding of how key events, activities and project milestones evolved and led to the airport's transformation. At this stage, NVivo 11 was used to conduct systematic analysis and assess the empirical prevalence of emerging analytical themes (Parker, 2014). While interview data was used to form thick description of events, we have supplemented our analysis with power quotes that we thought provided supportive evidence of our interpretation of data and emerging analytical themes.

Second, we applied open coding to the interview data (Van Maanen, 1979). We began by sifting through our interview data looking for reasons why PPP was adopted for this project specifically. We coded these factors as *trigger of change*. We then started looking for types of institutional work and instances and arguments used by individual and organizational actors who were promoting the PPP model and how they justified its need and relevance. The second author led data analysis at this stage, but all authors read interview data and sought guidance from institutional work as well as power literatures to identify the types and modes of power and their relational impact on actors. Initially, we found that institutional work representing instances of episodic power was carried out by the chairman of GACA and head of the IFC office to influence and persuade political actors of the importance of the PPP model for the airport. Their arguments were coded into first-order themes (Gioia *et al.*, 2013), and we identified "considerable delays face expanding the airport through EPC"; "arguing that facilitating pilgrims' journeys to visit the two Islamic holy mosques of Mecca and Medina is duty of Saudi Arabia towards Muslims" and "using PPP to increase the airport's capacity meant more landing slots for airlines and higher numbers of pilgrims."

Third, we performed axial coding (Strauss and Corbin, 1998), with the team going back and forth between theory and data to collapse first-order concepts into broader second-order themes. Our purpose was to transcend the descriptive statements from our data and establish more consolidated themes (Parker and Northcott, 2016). For example, consistent themes emerged such as "project's religious significance", "political actors with religious obligation" and "religious tourism".

Fourth, the final stage of analysis was to look for aggregate theoretical dimensions, guided by our readings of literature about symbolism and power. We used the label *religious symbolic*

Elements of religious symbolism	Forms of religious symbolism	Religious and social significance
Islamic Pilgrimage	Practice (ritual)	(1) 5th pillar of Islam and an essential obligation of every Muslim (2) Religious tourism offers massive economic gains and religious legitimacy to political leaders of Saudi Arabia
Two Holy Mosques of Mecca and Medina	Place	Holiest sites for Muslims to visit during pilgrimage
Medina Airport	Place	Enabler of extra millions of Muslims to land in Medina and perform their religious rituals
King of Saudi Arabia	Person	(1) Custodian of the holy mosques of Mecca and Medina and regarded as leader of Muslim community (2) Responsible for ensuring that Muslims have safe, affordable and enjoyable pilgrimage experience

Table 2.
Elements and forms of religious symbolism in the context of Medina Airport

work as social integration to categorize the episodic power represented by efforts and justifications used by actors to influence and activate political interest in the project. Such religious symbolic work was the substratum to their commitment that the PPP model was the *only* practical solution to deliver the project – given lack of such technical expertise in the local market – and emphasized the religious symbolism that the project signified as enabling Muslims to access the Holy Mosques of Medina and Mecca. We delineated elements of religious symbolism in Table 2.

Forms of power	Modes in which power operated	Effects of power on routinized ways of project delivery
Royal Order	System and social integration	(1) Provided political legitimacy and urgency of delivering project through PPP. (2) Enforced responsiveness and adherence of all concerned actors and organizations in project implementation
Decree from Supreme Economic Council	System integration	Exempted PPP project from regulatory controls of GPTL and allowed use of BTO agreement
Decree from Council of Ministers	System integration	Removed bureaucratic and administrative barriers blocking PPP project
Financial guarantees from Ministry of Finance	System integration	Made project bankable and increased trust of lenders and investors
Support from Ministry of Defense	System integration /episodic	Represented royal influence and power of Minister of Defense and provided letters of support whenever needed
Administrative Ruler of Medina	System integration/ episodic	Issued orders to facilitate administrative work required for project implementation
Executive powers of Steering Committee	System integration/ episodic	(1) Oversaw day-to-day requirements of project (2) Removed regulatory and bureaucratic obstacles facing project by issuing exceptions to them
GACA's president	Episodic	(1) Streamlined internal decision-making processes (2) Endorsed private sector's requests to government entities
Power of project champion	Episodic	(1) Decentralized bureaucratic pressures, with power to act autonomously (2) Led entire project implementation process from start till end

Table 3.
Forms of power and their impact on implementation of PPP project

The same analytical method was used to search for instances of systemic power and its manifestations. The research then sought out how systemic power led to the empowerment of the PPP project, and how this altered the institutionalized and routinized ways in which the Saudi bureaucracy administered infrastructure projects. We found that systemic power had two functions. We identified the Royal Order as the dispositional form of power (Clegg, 1989) that established the political legitimacy and urgency of delivering the project on a PPP basis. We also found that ministerial power freed the PPP project from regulatory and bureaucratic controls that might otherwise have blocked its implementation, while the PPP Team Leader at GACA (also labeled project champion) streamlined and supported the system integration of the entire implementation process. We labeled this type of institutional work "system integration work" which represented the systemic form of power. We present this analysis in Table 3.

We then moved to how the resultant forms and modes of power were used to force the implementation of the PPP project. It was clear to us that the empowerment of the PPP project meant the immediate "disempowerment" of the agency of several individual and organizational actors. We labeled this type of work as "work to disempower the agency of resisting actors". We focused our analysis on identifying the coercive consequences of systemic power for these actors and the type of work conducted by GACA and the winning consortium to alleviate the effects of forcing the PPP project on current the institutional structure. We identified *repair work* as the form of institutional work that comprised several activities such as maintaining dialogue, capacity building, identity work (Bailey and Raelin, 2015; Gawer and Phillips, 2013) and persuasion, which we derived from the broader literature of institutional work and emerging themes from our data. This information is synthesized in Table 4.

Finally, we developed a comprehensive data structure (Figure 1) to theorize the relationships between themes and aggregate dimensions, and most importantly to develop a process model (Figure 2) that demonstrates the recursive relationships between the types of institutional work, religious symbolism and different forms of power that affected the project implementation process.

Findings

We begin by demonstrating the two reasons why GACA decided to break away from the institutionalized form of project delivery (EPC) and tout PPP as an effective method for expanding and operating its airport. Next, we answer our first research question and present the two forms of institutional work that actors conducted to acquire power: religious symbolic work as social integration and system integration work. We then answer our second research question and illustrate how that power ultimately enabled two additional forms of work: work to disempower agency of resisting actors and repair work that drove the project implementation process forward.

Trigger of change
Familiarity with market-like practices. The empirical findings revealed that, although GACA was a government instrumentality embedded in Saudi bureaucratic inertia, its top leadership endeavored to instill market-like practices internally. GACA's newly appointed leadership had extensive experience working in the business sector, and aimed to apply this experience within GACA by improving the quality of its airports, enhancing customer services and satisfaction, eventually to corporatize and privatize airport assets. Such objectives, that would seldom be considered seriously in other Saudi government departments, guided GACA to greater engagement with the private sector in delivering services through competitive bids. A senior official at IFC said,

	Impact of system integration on actors and organizations	New PPP project requirements which changed routine ways of operating	Repair work to alleviate impact of system integration and implement project
Local private sector actors	(1) Local private construction companies lost project to international firm (2) Local private actors' capacity to influence project award decision was eliminated (3) Operation of project was handed over to international firm (4) Project awarded only to actors with specified technical capacity	(1) Sophisticated expertise in constructing and operating complex airport projects (2) High levels of efficiency in operating airport over 25-year period (3) High levels of transparency in bidding for project	*Establishing good project governance mechanisms* (1) Involving IFC during all stages of tendering, bidding, and awarding project, which provided strong governance and transparency-related mechanisms (2) Selecting only private actors with proven capacity to expand and operate airport efficiently
Bureaucratic and administrative actors	(1) Government departments were unfamiliar with concept of PPP. (2) PPP required different contractual and administrative measures that Saudi bureaucracy did not have (3) Government departments could not make decisions that were not aligned with existing policies (4) Handing airport management to private operator led to frustration among government entities	(1) Familiarity with PPP concept and implementation process (2) Capacity to administer legal and regulatory requirements for drafting PPP contract (3) Handover of project to private sector (4) Understanding of requirements of effective partnership with private sector.	*Maintaining dialogue* (1) Explaining importance of project for Muslims all over the world, and for local economy (2) Explaining that only this project would be implemented as PPP, and no changes were required for entire project implementation process (3) Making public sector entities part of project implementation process *Capacity building* (1) Helping government entities to administer PPP contracts with assistance of international consultants

(*continued*)

Table 4.
Effects of system
integration and repair
work on individual and
organizational actors

Table 4.

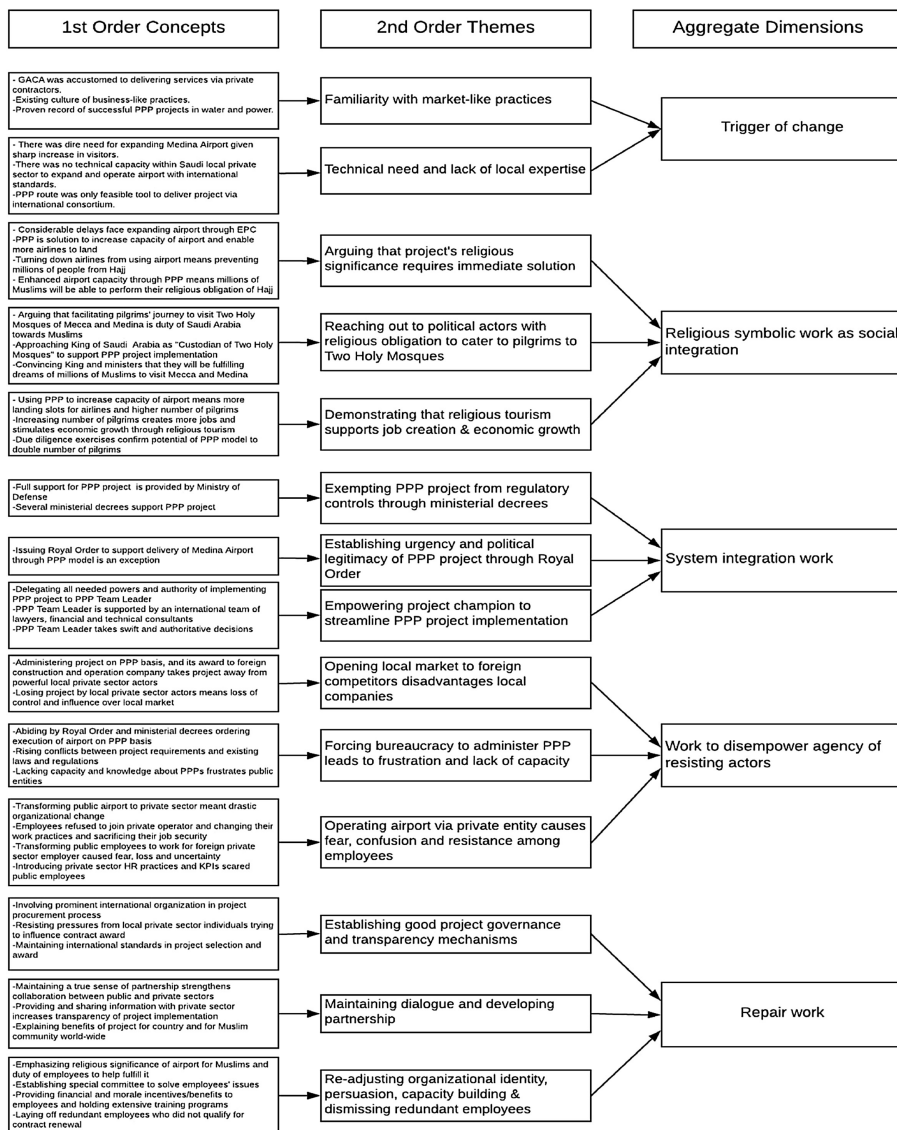|	Impact of system integration on actors and organizations	New PPP project requirements which changed routine ways of operating	Repair work to alleviate impact of system integration and implement project
Employees and management at airport	(1) Transforming airport from public entity into private operator meant government employees had to sign new contracts as private employees (2) Drastic changes in administration and operation of airport caused fear, confusion, loss, and resistance among employees who refused to join new operator	(1) Change of organizational identity and culture from public to private (2) Signing of new contract and abidance by new rules and regulations working for private sector company (3) Saudi employees having to work under a company owned by foreign businesses and 'bosses' (4) New sets of technical and administrative skills and higher expectations of performance, discipline, and attendance (5) Loss of job security and working under three-year renewable contracts (6) Longer working hours and fewer holidays (7) Salary increases and promotions based on strict measures and performance	*Identity work* (1) Adjusting government employees' organizational identity from public to private (2) Explaining to employees benefits of change for individual employees' careers and country *Persuasion* (1) Explaining importance of PPP model for increasing number of Muslims performing pilgrimages and for economy (2) Increasing salaries and introducing new benefits for employees agreeing to shift to private employer (3) Reminding employees of religious gratification resulting from serving pilgrims going to holy mosques of Mecca and Medina *Capacity building* (1) Providing training to employees on new organizational practices and equipment *Dismissing redundant employees* (1) Laying off unproductive employees as a last resort

Figure 1.
Data structure

> I think GACA was one of the leaders among the government entities in Saudi in terms of outsourcing its activities and working with the private sector and that was owing to its strategy to bring the private sector to the aviation sector. (REP. 2)

GACA's active engagement, trust and learning from the private sector has grown through several small-scale projects. The first experiment in collaborating with the private sector was in December 2006, when GACA awarded a 20-years BTO concession contract worth $249 million for the modernization and operation of Hajj Terminal in Jeddah to a consortium led by the Saudi conglomerate Bin Laden Group (IFC, 2013; Fenton, 2011). A senior IFC official
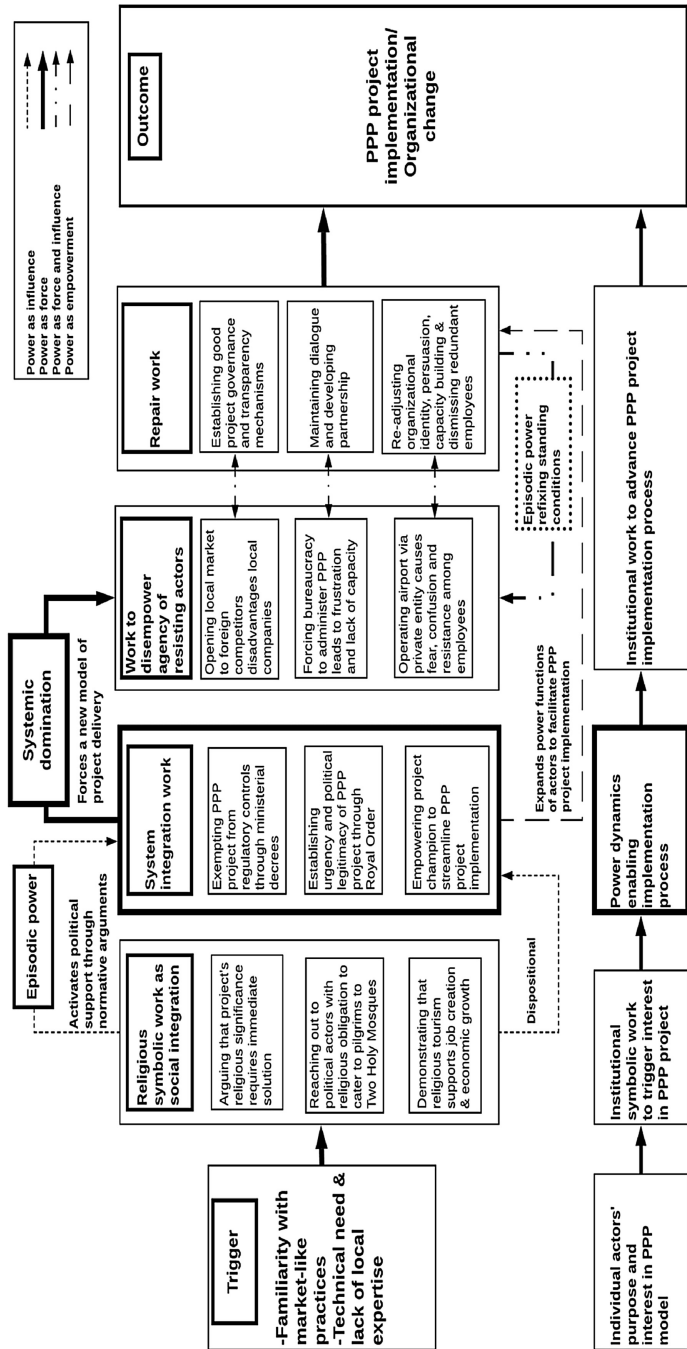
Figure 2.
Process model
displaying institutional
work and power
dynamics involved in
PPP project
implementation

asserted, "we had so many difficulties and there was no system and no understanding of PPPs, but it worked out. It was not the best example, but it was the first experience" (REP. 1). A BOT contract for the same airport was awarded to a private consortium to develop its water desalination plant (IFC, 2013). In those projects, GACA "conducted testing of the local private sector's capacity to deliver such a project in the market," as explained by the PPP Team Leader, and this made it realize its strengths and limitations. A former chairman of GACA puts it this way,

> In these two projects, we learned a lot about what the other side wanted and how the private sector performed. There were so many lessons we learned from the contractual setup and we went through many challenges that we managed to overcome and learn from.

Technical need and lack of local expertise. The dire technical need to expand Medina Airport made the PPP route the most feasible solution due to the lack of expertise and capacity of expanding and managing airports within the local private sector. PPP was the solution to attract international best firms that would competitively bid for the project, ensure the selection of the best company with the best technical and financial proposal, and maintain high levels of performance over the life of the contract. The PPP model that would attract an international firm to operate the airport would also curb the widespread corruption in management of the airport.

The facilities of the Medina Airport had not been refurbished or expanded since its opening in 1972 (Ballantyne, 2011). When the King of Saudi Arabia announced its transformation into an international airport in 2006 (Al-Riyadh, 2006) the airport "was in desperate need of an overhaul to cope with increasing arrivals," which exceeded 3.5 million in 2009 (a 50% increase from the previous year), "making it the largest increase across all the Kingdom's airports" (Fenton, 2011, p. 2). The airport is a major port of entry for the faithful making the *Hajj*. The airport management and operation could not cope with passenger growth, that averaged 21% annually at the time and predicted to reach 14 million by 2035 (Ballantyne, 2011). Although the airport operated year-round, as explained by a private sector interviewee, it experienced "the largest number of passengers for two months each year during the pilgrimage season, and the airport struggled to manage that process efficiently" (PSR. 2). Due to constrained capacity, considerable international traffic had to be turned away, with increasing requests from airlines to obtain landing permits being declined. Furthermore, lack of efficiency and good governance within the airport's old management led to nepotism and treating airlines differently as a representative of Saudi Airlines stated,

> …we used to suffer from nepotism, disrespect of the principle customer, preference of some companies over other ones. They were so slow, and they did not provide good services and we complained all the time to airport management, but in vain.

In light of GACA's experience with the private sector, such high sophistication in airport construction and management was nowhere to be found in the Saudi private sector, and this required looking for alternative solutions internationally. One public employee, this progressed sluggishly due to,

> the need for a contractor and operator with a proven record of managing and operating complex airport projects…and getting the budget for the project approved by several government entities. (PS 3)

The head of IFC explained to the GACA team the idea behind PPP and shared successful cases of international airports that were constructed and being operated under the PPP scheme in Jordan, Turkey, India and Europe. Such successful international and regional experiences of PPPs provided a strong ground for suggesting and promoting PPPs in Saudi, particularly this promising business case of Medina Airport. The proposal was

welcomed, and the GACA and IFC teams then analyzed the requirements for translating the PPP idea into actual practice. As ENG 1 and 2 informed us, several meetings were held between the teams to discuss the technical aspects of the project and form a group of advisors and experts who would examine the prospect of operating Medina Airport through a private company.

Religious symbolic work as social integration
The rigidity of the Saudi bureaucratic systems and lack of regulatory systems to support PPPs convinced the IFC head and GACA chairman that acquiring royal political power was the only means through which project implementation would be feasible. Those two actors then exercised a mode of episodic power that influenced and convinced the top political leadership, on an *exceptional basis*, to allow the use of a PPP model that promised better outcomes for the airport than the public procurement method. The elements of religious symbolism associated with this project are synthesized in Table 2.

Arguing that project's religious significance requires an immediate solution. A large number of high-profile projects had in the past been excessively delayed or unfinished in Saudi Arabia, with several past PPP proposals for subway systems and trains never materializing (Shaw-Smith, 2011). However, the airport project had a unique religious status for actors who were approached to support it. As one senior legal consultant (CON 3) stated, "Medina Airport isn't for air transport, it's for *Hajj* infrastructure." The key message repeatedly emphasized by the IFC head and GACA chairman when resorting to their social and political networks to form a coalition of actors to advocate the project was the *religious significance* of the project. The airport, as a gateway to the city of Medina, necessitated immediate action to increase its capacity and enable larger numbers of Muslims to perform their pilgrimage. The head of IFC office in Saudi took the initiative early on and approached the Prince of Medina to explain the benefits and opportunities of delivering the project through PPP as well the positive impact of religious tourism on the economy of Medina. The Prince accepted the idea, although no airport in Saudi had ever been financed, constructed or operated by the private sector, but the religious uniqueness of this airport made it a *religious obligation* to expedite its expansion. An interviewee from the private sector stated that,

> Medina Airport represents a different business environment and passenger profile because it is a religious airport. It is not like Riyadh airport, it is not always commercial or operational, and its clients are primarily pilgrims and mainly during pilgrimage seasons. (PSR 3)

The proposal to expand the airport had been with the Council of Ministers since the early 2000s, but its budget decision had yet to be completed, let alone the lengthy process of searching for qualified companies to deliver it. In fact, it took 11 years for the project to be started. In October 2011, a consortium entered into a contract with the GACA to build and operate the Prince Muhammad Bin Abdulaziz International Airport in Al Madinah Al- Munawarah under a 25-years concession. In 2018 it had 8,144,790 passengers pass through and 60,665 aircraft movements (source: TAV Traffic Results). As a member of the Saudi royal family with considerable political and administrative power and direct access to the King, the Prince's involvement from this early stage was critical. He endorsed the project and informally reached out to other ministers and high-level bureaucrats to advocate it as well. The chairman of GACA easily gained the support of the Minister of Defense for the project, since his organization operated under the umbrella of the Ministry, and he was able to raise the topic at Ministerial meetings. The motivation behind these actors' enthusiasm to support the project stemmed essentially from its religious symbolism. A public sector interviewee stated that,

Location of this airport in Madinah makes it very special. It is a place where all Muslims want to go to. All Muslims wish to visit Medina before anywhere else and this airport is their gate to it, and by extending it we will allow more Muslims to perform their religious rituals. (PS 4)

Reaching out to political actors with a religious obligation to cater to pilgrims to the Two Holy Mosques. As a part of their effort to build consensus and support for the project, the chairman of GACA and other ministers brought the proposal to expand the airport on a PPP basis to meetings of the Council of Ministers and Supreme Economic Council, which were headed by the King. They emphasized the duty of Saudi Arabia to facilitate Muslims' pilgrimage, and one government official confirmed this fact by saying,

Muslims save for years and years to come to Umrah or Hajj and being unable to host them because of the capacity of the airport is our responsibility. (PS 1)

Individuals promoting the airport expansion on PPP also cited the findings of an independent due diligence report carried out by the World Bank that showed how expanding and operating the airport on a PPP basis would increase the number of pilgrims from 3 million yearly in 2008, to 8 million immediately after its commercial operation, to 18 million by 2035 and up to 40 million in the third phase of expansion in 2050 (Sabq, 2015a).

The connection between the religious duty of the King to Muslims and Medina Airport is apparent in his speech in 2006, that announced, "…given the importance of Medina to the Islamic world and to the entire world, I announce the transformation of Medina Airport into an international airport" (Al-Riyadh, 2006). In this speech, the King reiterated his gratitude for having the honor of serving the Muslim community as the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, and stressed his determination to support any effort that would enable more Muslims to perform Hajj and Umrah rituals. As such, the religious element associated with the airport was crucial in approaching the King to support its delivery through non-traditional means. The relationship between the religiosity of the airport and the political support given to it constituted the substratum of embracing the PPP model. As a legal consultant stated: Hajj is fundamental to political legitimacy of the Kingdom, fundamental for its responsibility." A government official also stated that,

…increasing number of pilgrims is a very politically sensitive matter, it is part of delivering the Kingdom's obligation to the Muslim Community and it is the responsibility of the Custodian of the Holy Mosques, that's what we do as Saudis and that is who we are (PS 5)

Demonstrating that religious tourism supports job creation and economic growth. The head of IFC presented the PPP idea to the Minister of Finance and articulated its financial rewards, such as reducing the costs of expanding and operating the airport and expenses of employees, albeit with considerable financial guarantees to be borne by the ministry. The function of the airport as the gateway of the Hajj to the sacred sites of Islam meant that a flow of income was guaranteed, with the sharp increase in pilgrims each year being testament to that. The Minister of Finance supported the project and became an essential member of the coalition of actors who endorsed it, emphasizing its importance at the Council of Ministers and Supreme Economic Council meetings. The economic benefits of the project were highlighted, including drastically increased income flow through better management of landing slots and revenues. The increased volume of passengers that would be visiting the Medina and Mecca mosques would mean a massive increase in the city's economic activities and job creation in the tourism-related industries that formed the backbone of those activities. A private sector interviewee stated,

religious tourism is the reason that it worked in Saudi, and now the government is trying to increase the number of pilgrims, so there will be an extensive need for bigger airport infrastructure in the future. (PRS 2)

The World Bank's due diligence report evaluating the impact of expanding Medina Airport also showed that the city could potentially host one million visitors per month, with its revenues counting as the second-highest source of income for Saudi Arabia after oil revenues (Ouadou, 2000). This is supported by a management consultant's who said,

> . . .if political leadership of this country is committed to their religious duty to host Muslims, how can they increase people if they do not have enough landing slots for airplanes to take all these pilgrims. We needed the standing of government for such mega projects to feed the religious need of the country. (CON 2)

System integration work

This section demonstrates how gaining political support to carry out the project via the PPP model enacted several forms of power that played a facilitative role in project implementation, as illustrated in Table 3.

Exempting the PPP project from regulatory controls through ministerial decrees. One key factor that facilitated access to the highest echelons of politics was the support of the Minister of Defense. The systemic power of the Ministry of Defense was manifest in its position as the most potent Ministry in Saudi Arabia, with the Minister always one of the closest members of the royal family elected by the King (Kamrava, 2018), a crucial element of social integration. Since civil airports were, at that time, under the Ministry, other government entities could not dispute or otherwise oppose the Minister's support for the airport. The Minister wrote letters to any government entities that required additional documents, the lack of which could risk complicating the implementation process. The personal touch of the Minister smoothed the path for the airport. Similarly, the Ministry of Finance's support was a critical factor in the project's success because it assured system integration by issuing financial guarantees in excess of US$1.5 billion and also assuming liability in the event that the national airline might default on any of its payments, ensuring the project's bankability and making it attractive to the private sector.

The Council of Ministers and the Supreme Economic Council were two powerful entities that represented the tight nexus of social and system integration in the Kingdom. The concentration of episodic power capabilities vested there empowered the actors implementing the project. These councils comprised all of Saudi Arabia's Ministers and are chaired by the King. They are the obligatory passage point for decision-making. They issued decrees requiring all government entities to collaborate with GACA. Besides, they issued all the necessary documents to finance the project through a private consortium. Finally, they transferred the airport to the private operator when construction was completed. As one senior bank representative explained, the decrees ordering implementation of the project formed "an exceptional case because it was for a non-government contract" (BNK 1). As such, this contract by-passed all the routinized ways of writing construction contracts and delivering infrastructure projects. Such non-compliance with customary Saudi bureaucracy would have been impossible without the support of the system and social integration condensed in these important obligatory passage points.

The empowering of the project through two ministerial councils resulted in the creation of a high-level Steering Committee headed by the chairman of GACA and composed of eminent figures in the political and business sectors. Again, there was a fusion of system and social integration legitimating the Steering Committee because of the prestigious figures which it contained. The committee was created and empowered exclusively to make *any and all* decisions critical to the project's implementation. The committee held weekly meetings where project-related documents were signed, and letters of support provided to eliminate any bureaucratic or regulatory bottlenecks. The work of the committee was also backed up by the

Prince of Medina, who issued orders to facilitate any project-related administrative procedures at the Medina governorate. He also ordered all relevant entities to expedite the issuance of licenses or permits related to water, electricity and other services supplied by the Medina municipality. Royal writ is the highest form of legitimacy any project could achieve. The Royal imprimatur assured the smooth passage of the project through the byzantine bureaucracies of the state.

Establishing the urgency and political legitimacy of the project through a Royal Order. The ultimate representation of social integration and dispositional power, in this case, was the issuance of a Royal Order. The Royal Order epitomized the political support enjoyed by the project as a high-level national priority that needed to be delivered urgently. With a Royal Order, none would dare to be seen to impede the project. Although not directed to a specific organization or individual, the powers embedded in the Royal Order were implicit. Should there be cases of resistance against the project, the issuance of the Order would achieve consent. The drastic changes necessarily affecting all usual ways of operating national airports and developing infrastructure that the project entailed would not be resisted. Any necessary change in the behavior of individuals and organizations affected by the project came from the highest source of legitimacy in the land and irrespective of how members of organizations might think about what acting in accord with the Order entailed, no individual actor could be blamed for the actions they took. They were enacting the Sovereign's will. One senior government official explained that, "when a Royal Order is issued, nobody can resist or challenge it" (PS 5). The power of the Royal Order automatically removed any regulatory or bureaucratic barriers even before they arose. A representative of an international organization stated that when dealing with the government bureaucracy,

> The project did not face any critical obstructions because it had received a Royal Order early on. . . so we had the top-level kind of green light, and all government entities were aware that the project was a political priority and had to go ahead. (REP 2)

Empowering the project champion to streamline the PPP project implementation. Several interviewees stated that their preparatory institutional work was focused on creating coherent internal organizational dynamics to streamline operations and decentralize decision-making. A consultant described the PPP Team Leader, who was also leading the internal PPP unit in charge of the project's administrative duties, as "the oil in the gears ensuring that things were happening and pushing government stakeholders to get things done" (CON 6). He was referred to as the "project champion" who had an instrumental role in steering the project from its start till its delivery.

The practical implications of the political and royal support for the project were visibly manifested in the empowerment of the PPP Team Leader, who acquired the *power to* make all critical decisions and navigate all government agencies to gain the necessary approvals. He stated that, "PPP projects need one individual who has the power and guts to implement all projects and make good decisions." With the Royal Order as a backstop, this was not too difficult to achieve. Although most Saudi bureaucratic organizations are characterized by rigid hierarchical processes, GACA's chairman transferred a considerable capacity for making autonomous decisions to the PPP Team Leader and delegated many responsibilities to other senior members of the team to accelerate the decision-making process. These were innovations that severely challenged the business as usual of Saudi bureaucracy; without the social integrational elements of the project, the project would have likely failed.

Work to disempower agency of resisting actors

The political empowerment of the PPP project, by enacting systemic *power over* the institutionalized form of project delivery, destabilized the status quo. It entailed a new project

financing model, rigid project governance mechanisms that had hitherto not existed in the construction domain, a new procurement method as well as a drastic shift in status for government employees within the airport who were suddenly obliged be subordinate to a private employer. The effects of enforcing the PPP method on individual and organizational actors are summarized in Table 4, which also illustrates the repair work necessary to alleviate those effects.

Opening the local market to foreign competitors disadvantages local companies. The monopoly of a few powerful Saudi business families over the construction industry had in the past institutionalized a regime in which they were able to exercise dominance in the delivery of large infrastructure government contracts (House, 2013; Ali, 2010). The introduction of a PPP model with private financing and strict due diligence mechanisms exercised by international banks and investors meant that the processes of project procurement would be drastically different. Given the sophisticated technical requirements of airport expansion and the high complexity of its operation and management of the tremendous number of pilgrims visiting Medina, it was evident that local private actors would be immediately disqualified and lose ground to more advanced international companies. They could not rely on the traditional channels of patronage to deliver the contracts, and a consultant stated,

> In Medina, several local merchant families tried to push us so hard to give them the project contract, and many of them were very powerful, but we managed it, and everyone understood that the qualified consortium would win. This is one of the biggest challenges we faced with PPPs. I see it the biggest hindrance in this context. (CON 4)

Forcing the bureaucracy to administer the PPP leads to frustration and lack of capacity. The royal and administrative decrees to expand the airport and operate it through the private sector challenged standardized bureaucratic and administrative procedures. The most difficult challenge was shifting the bureaucratic mentality of delivering government projects through the traditional EPC method. The bureaucrats in control could dictate contracts and set specific deliverables. The consortia led by a private operator, flipped this assumption and set new rules of the game. There were no policies, procedures, templates, laws, regulations or guidelines that government departments and line ministries could rely on to respond to the requirements of GACA and its teams' formalization of the documentation for the BTO agreement, while the political backing that the project enjoyed meant that these government entities could not reject the project or challenge its implementation. GACA had social and system integration wrapped up and under these conditions seemed able to configure all the circuits of power accordingly. It had, in terms of direction from above and managing upwards, achieved both system and social integration. Managing down was another matter.

Operating the project via a private entity causes fear, confusion and resistance among employees. While it can be said that the institutional context of Saudi Arabia was the major problematic issue prior to signing the PPP contract, one senior government official explained that, after signing, it was the airport's management and staff who became the "biggest challenge the project faced, since they refused to transfer to the airport's new private operator" (PS 2). The transfer of the airport into the hands of a private operator had a dramatic impact on the management and employees of the airport. It meant a shift from being a public employer to one that was private. There was no evidence in the data to suggest that the employees and staff of the airport were a part of the change process from the outset, or that they had been consulted or properly prepared for it prior to the contract signing. The change caused not only temporary loss of status but also a permanent shift in their organizational identity and radical alteration of how they performed their daily tasks. Different and increased expectations of performance prevailed, and new uncertainties arose.

Employees felt that terminating their contracts and employment as public sector workers threatened their job security. Although public sector jobs paid much less, what was crucial for

the airport's management and the staff was lifelong job security, longer holidays and familiarity with the relaxed government system. Their posts were, in effect, sinecures. In contrast, private-sector jobs were more demanding and performance-based, and renewal of contracts every three years was predicated on meeting specific KPIs and competitive criteria. Furthermore, drastic changes would also be implemented in the form of rigid requirements concerning attendance and promotion, with new technical equipment being introduced to operate the airport. All of these changes required considerable skills that many employees did not have, which some of them were not prepared to invest time and effort to learn. The need for the changes was also unclear to many airport employees who demanded that they remain under the umbrella of GACA as government employees while working for the operator. The refusal of the airport's employees to transfer to the private operator was the biggest challenge the project faced, one that took considerable time. The PPP Team Leader stated that,

> . . .main challenges we faced after signing the agreement were with employees because they were used to working with the public sector and they felt secure, and protected, and no one could fire them regardless of performance. But with the private sector they must be on time, and attendance and performance are evaluated all the time.

Employees complained that the implementation of the project took two years, while they were given only one week to decide the option they would choose (Al-Sharq, 2012). They did not find the private sector offers attractive enough and refused those options, and expressed their resistance by writing letters expressing their contempt of joining the private operator to the King and human rights organizations and asking to keep their government contracts and benefits (Al-Sharq, 2012). Employees also lodged a legal case against GACA at the administrative tribunal complaining about the illegality of forcing them to transfer and terminate their government contracts, but after five months, the employees lost their legal case (YouTube, 2015; Mubasher, 2012). They were consequently forced to choose among four options: (1) transfer to the operator under a new contract and be subject to private employment law; (2) be seconded to the airport for three years and then begin a new contract with the private operator; (3) look for a new job and transfer to any other airport in the Kingdom or (4) seek a new job with other government entities (Al-Sharq, 2012). In absolutism, bureaucracy in Saudi Arabia is really perceived as patrimonial and employees' resistance, based on dispositions enculturated in the past pattern of indulgence that their sinecures had enjoyed, stalled the project and caused delays in the commercial operation of the airport. Nonetheless, employees were given four options that did not alleviate their fears of abrupt organizational change taking place at the airport.

Repair work
Disempowerment of public, private and administrative actors required *repair work* to alleviate the negative effects caused by the abrupt pressures of system integration work on them. In spite of their resistance, employees' choices were restricted, and they were obliged to transfer to the private operator. There were pecuniary advantages, but the expectations of the implicit effort bargain were radically different.

Establishing good project governance and transparency mechanisms. The involvement of IFC in the project offered a robust project-governance mechanism. Existing anti-corruption arrangements and institutions had yet to win the trust of international investors well-versed in Saudi corrupt and patrimonial practices (Ali, 2010). According to one representative of an international organization, during the tendering process for the airport project, some local construction giants attempted "to push the envelope very hard because they wanted the project badly," but were unsuccessful (REP 1). The envelopes being pushed were unlikely to have been purely metaphorical.

With the backing of its social and system integration, GACA was enabled to empower IFC, build strong project governance principles, increase the project tendering process's transparency and ensure that only a bidder that met all of the technical requirements and that had an attractive financial proposal would win the project contract. GACA outflanked local construction companies accustomed to exercising power to win projects one way or another, not always in transparent, ethical or scrupulous ways (House, 2013). The capacity to select a competent entity led to the choice of a private sector actor with extensive experience in constructing and operating airports.

Maintaining dialogue and developing a partnership. GACA's team worked to engage in effective communication and dialogue with private partners. At this stage, the number of actors increased significantly. The project's field included GACA's team, the IFC's team, representatives of local and international banks, insurance companies, prequalified bidders, plus a complex arrangement of technical, legal and financial consultants. A sense of partnership and dialogue was critical, as was transparency in presenting all data related to the financial, legal and technical components of the project. Hiring experienced international consultants overcame the lack of local expertise in administering PPP contracts. Something identified as a critical success factor by several interviewees. The role of the consultants was essential not only due to the absence of customary legal, financial and technical mechanisms for such projects but also because they translated international best practices in designing PPP contracts for airports into Saudi Arabia.

GACA did not base its strength just on the official decrees that empowered it, but also founded it on proper communications with all government stakeholders, by explaining to them the importance and utility of the project. They showed that the exceptions granted to deliver the project would not affect the overall institutional arrangements of the country. Such mechanism demonstrated the uniqueness of the project to all public entities. The method proved fruitful. The decentralization of decision-making allowed the PPP Team Leader to directly meet with government officials, sign necessary documents and enforce decisions. The private partners played an instrumental role in this process as well. Although GACA's team was on the front lines during negotiations with government entities, the private consortium was also equally flexible and supportive when they faced deadlocks.

Readjusting organizational identity, persuasion, capacity building and laying off redundant employees. The airport employees and staff did not have any other choice but to transfer to the private operator despite their resistance and dissatisfaction. They were subject to an unassailable episodic power. Despite the coercion mobilizing the employees' transfer, the actual process of implementing the change was more benign. A former head of GACA's PPP unit said that they "did not engage in conflict with the employees" but instead motivated them to accept the change in the operation of the airport by a private actor by emphasizing its benefits, particularly stressing that it would enable more Muslims to perform pilgrimages. A government employee stated that "we kept telling employees that their work and support for the project would be rewarded in the hereafter as they would be supporting Muslims to perform their religious obligation, and a lot of them resonated with this idea" (PS 1). To corroborate this point, during a regular visit to the Medina Airport during the pilgrimage season, the Prince of Medina was cited as saying to immigration officers: "you are gaining considerable reward from God by serving pilgrims in a good manner" (News24, 2018). The religious symbolism was not only persuasive and accorded with the vocabularies of motive of pious Muslims but also offered the comfort that they were working not just for the airport but for the praise of Allah.

A special committee was formed to listen and respond to employees' concerns, compensating those that wished to leave the organization and preparing those that had decided to stay for their new roles. The key factor ending the employees' resistance and facilitating their transfer to the private operator was that they would only transfer on a

secondment basis for three years as government employees. During this period, they would either adjust to the new work environment or have ample time to find new jobs at other government entities (YouTube, 2015). Workers would remain government employees with all of the accompanying benefits and job security, but at the end of the three years period they would need to decide whether to sign a new contract as private employees or resign. In addition to boosting morale, monetary incentives were also offered. Employee salaries were increased by 20%, housing allowances, health insurance and other benefits that had not existed within the old system were offered. Education and training of employees in the new organizational structures and practices were essential for their integration into the changing organizational identity and culture. One private-sector interviewee noted that "a total of 630 training days were offered both on-site in Medina and in Istanbul" where TAV, the consortia, had its headquarters. These training programs, targeting both the technical and psychological readiness of employees, were designed to enhance preparation for the new roles and responsibilities of employees under the private operator's management of the airport.

After initiating a program for building employees' skills and motivation to accept change, the institutional work of GACA and its partners shifted toward the progressive introduction of new structures and systems that would prepare the airport for a new managerial style. Key structural changes included the introduction of both mechanical tools and human resource management techniques. The establishment of new operational and organizational structures meant the birth of a new airport with new international standards and notably higher performance. The change was drastic, affecting everything about the way the airport had been run under the old administration, ranging from the quality of ground and passenger services to the equipment adopted to maintain and service aircraft. The introduction of these new techniques was gradual, with on-site training being offered to ensure that the same employees could operate new systems.

New human resource practices were introduced, as well as strict KPIs that employees needed to achieve. To guarantee the efficiency of the workforce, private-sector's business acumen and dynamism were injected into the airport's management style resulting in a novel break from the past. New practices were introduced regarding attendance, promotion and contract renewal, which were now determined by performance and output. These mechanisms enforced the private sector practices of conforming to rigid achievement criteria and reaching specific outcomes and targets.

Nonetheless, not all employees were prepared to embrace change nor invest the effort to support the Muslim community's pursuit of pilgrimage. Only 53% of employees transferred to the private company operating the airport when the three years secondment ended in 2015 (Sabq, 2015b). The remaining employees either transferred to other airports or took another government job or remained under the umbrella of GACA and worked for another government entity (Sabq, 2015b). Furthermore, the private operator of the airport laid off 200 employees in May 2017 and provided a few of them the chance of renewing their contracts provided that they agreed on lower salaries and benefits (Al-Madinah, 2017). The government did not intervene in the dismissal of the employees as the BTO agreement specified that the private sector could recruit and maintain only well-performing individuals, and only on this basis could the private operator maintain a positive return on investment in the long run by hiring more efficient employees.

Discussion and conclusions
The two central research questions guiding this study explored the types of institutional work that individual actors perform to gain the power to initiate a new form of project delivery, and how the resultant modes of power can be employed to relax the controlling

mechanisms of past institutional structures. By connecting the PPP literature with recent developments in neo-institutional theory, this research makes three contributions.

The first contribution is that it broadens the scope of the *means* through which individual actors aim to "achieve particular institutional objectives" (Hampel *et al.*, 2017, p. 570). We extend the institutional work debate by proposing *religious symbolic work*, as the work of individual or organizational actors to purposefully employ socially shared religious symbols and beliefs to persuade other actors to support their goals. The fundamental mechanism that the actors proposing the PPP model used to instigate interest in the project was by emphasizing its *religiosity*. This finding advances current literature on institutional work because it integrates the role of religion in organizational space. It is evident from the list of 15 types of institutional work developed by Phillips and Lawrence (2012) that scant attention has been paid to how religious beliefs shape organizations or institutions (See also Tracey *et al.*, 2014). Such lack of attention to the role of religion in organizational life is surprising, as religion plays a key role in institutional ordering at the societal level in the majority of societies.

In a similar vein, the findings of this paper reveal that religious symbolic work can be a powerful mechanism to drive megaprojects. The work to convince high-ranking officials to support the project was welcomed because there was a socially and culturally embedded common understanding among all actors that they were supporting a *religious cause*, rather than a standard construction project. The airport was not an ordinary piece of infrastructure, but an *enabler* that would allow millions of extra pilgrims to fulfill their religious obligations each year. Religious symbolism, therefore, is a powerful mechanism that can accelerate project initiation and implementation processes and offer project leaders influence over key political decision-makers. Our findings, hence, compliment existing theorization of political symbols as the predominant forms of symbolism in projects (Lopez-Rego *et al.*, 2017; van der Westhuizen, 2017).

Second, this research expands the discussion regarding the bases and the inter-dependence among several forms of power by demonstrating how power can be a positive force for implementing projects when triggered and guided by a form of symbolic work. Actors' initiatives to carry out institutional work and introduce organizational practices that diverge from the status quo encounter resistance from both the individuals and organizations affected by any deviation from the status quo (Clegg and Kreiner, 2013). Hence, to fully understand how actors use symbolic work to change organizations, it is essential to broaden the conceptualization of power within organizations. The discussion of power in organizational theory remains predominantly concerned with how actors use power to shape the formulation of organizational strategies. It is limited to how management exercises power to implement new strategic objectives (McCabe, 2009), how power circulates through discourse to shape the creation of new strategies (Hardy and Thomas, 2014) and the roles of episodic and systemic powers in radical organizational change (Lawrence *et al.*, 2013).

Furthermore, despite the crucial role of power relations in megaprojects, Clegg and Kreiner (2013) have noted that power remains a rare subject in project management research. When power is discussed in this field, it is often depicted as a "dirty word" (Clegg *et al.*, 2017, p. 7), or a negative force that obstructs projects. This paper is situated among the few studies that discuss how power dynamics can be a positive force that drives the project implementation process forward. Our findings complement those of Walker and Newcome (2000), who found that several individual actors built on their organizational power to successfully drive the development of the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology. They emphasized the power of external and internal coalitions such as the Jockey Club and the Planning Committee that collectively exercised organizational power in order to push the project forward while the role of the government remained passive. Similarly, Liu *et al.* (2003) have argued that power in projects can be represented in both interpersonal and organizational structural forms, and this is in line with our findings as well.

However, the interplay and tight connection of social and system integration through the symbolic capital of religious and royal/political interconnectedness are not documented in existing literature. The demarcation between Church and state and the boundaries between politics and administration are, in most cases, well-established in Western countries. The Muslim world, however, is different, a difference that has a significant effect on managing and organization, as this study demonstrates, even when the forms of organization that are being implemented have developed in a western context, as did PPP. In the absence of clearly defined institutional fields of Church, state, business and civil society, it is necessary to broaden the conceptualization of the power of systemic integration. It is important to shift theorization of power from organizations into broader environments in which heads of state and political actors play significant roles, and all are underpinned as manifestations of power by religious beliefs that make social integration cohere quite overtly. The case analysis shows that political elite's intimate involvement in the project reflects the intricate links between religious beliefs and how they affect the thinking and actions of political actors, encouraging them to support project practices that did not fit existing institutional structures. The political actors supporting this project, such as the King, fulfilled not only their obligation to facilitate the journey of Muslims to perform pilgrimage, but also sponsored spiritual gratification and enjoyment they derived from feeling that they meaningfully served their religious community (Johnson, 1955).

We developed a process model that not only depicts how the episodic and systemic forms of power are interrelated, but how religious symbolism fuels these forms of power. Proponents of PPP built and developed their sources of power on religiosity to convince elite political actors to legitimize the PPP model. As demonstrated in Figure 2, the religiosity of city of Medina and the airport functioning as facilitator to access this holy city formed an important segment of religious symbolic work as social integration. This form of power acted as an episodic mode of power that – with a dispositional function – that re-interpreted the roles of project implementation, and activated political support through normative arguments. It triggered system integration wok that led to the empowerment of the PPP project and *forced* the implementation of the project, regardless of its severe repercussions on numerous organizational and individual actors (Lawrence *et al.*, 2011), including private actors, the bureaucracy and the airport employees. The resultant systemic domination was not a process that had institutional legitimacy in the Saudi context, but religiosity seemed to overpower any other social considerations. The other form of power that emerged from this analysis is reflected in the force of the religious ethic behind social integration which disempowered resistant agency associated with the project, restricted their options and obliged acceptance of a new organizational reality that people were unaccustomed to. The project had unlimited authority and capacities bestowed on it by the congruence of social and system integration, despite being radical and creative destruction of conventional ways of doing things in the Saudi bureaucracy, the destruction that led to the necessity for repair work.

Systemic power is typically seen as embedded within social, cultural, bureaucratic and technological forms (Clegg, 1989; Lawrence *et al.*, 2011). In this research, systemic power is premised not only on the system integration but also the social integration encompassing the symbolic interconnectedness of religious with royal, political and administrative bases. The motivation to achieve religious gratification by supporting Muslims in their pilgrimage is due to the impact of religion as a power for social integration that is invisible in its causal workings but deeply contours beliefs and actions of individual actors. Ultimately, these forms and manifestations of power ultimately led to a drastic organizational change. By extending the empirical context to an absolutist state in which political power is top-down, this study addressed the call for research to demonstrate how power – as force – shapes organizational change (Lawrence, 2008). The use of social integration was critical in this case, since none of

the actors affected would have voluntarily accepted the private sector logic, nor supported the institutional work required to implement the project in a non-traditional manner (Lawrence *et al.*, 2011).

Third and finally, by extending Lawrence and Suddaby's (2006) typology of institutional work to a PPP project located in an adverse institutional environment, this article underscores the importance of an analytical shift from the macro- and meso-levels to the micro-level. We demonstrate the utility of shifting the focus of PPP literature from isomorphism and organizational fields and structuration, to analyzing the interplay between agency and structure that can produce analytical insight into the actions of actors inside projects. This shift is important because despite being described as the "most famous attempt to build the macro/micro bridge" (Clegg, 2010, p. 5) that could unite the classical divide between individual voluntarism and institutional determinism, it is evident that structuration theory "does not solve the agency/structure debate, nor does it substantially ameliorate [its] core issues" (Handel, 2003, p. 135). Many theorists have been incredulous that social structure "exists only in a virtual way, as memory traces" in the heads of actors (Giddens, 1989, p. 256). In contrast, such structures are manifested in social, as well as material contexts, and are embedded in relations between people regardless of whether or not they have any memory traces of them (Handel, 2003). Additionally, as DiMaggio and Powell (1991) have stated, while Giddens' theory of structuration portrays agents as knowledgeable, "his work thus far provides little insight into the sources of this knowledge" (p. 23). Similarly, although structuration theory endows its agents with cognitive capacity and a free will to diverge from their social context, it "provides little guidance on *how* to investigate the way in which everyday action reproduces an institution," or how to capture the "behaviors and decision-making processes that underwrite diffusion" (Barley and Tolbert, 1997, p. 112). Therefore, by underrating the significance and distinctiveness of structure, and overemphasizing the agency of individual actors, structuration theory did not "transcend the agency versus structure dichotomy," and instead landed squarely on the side of agency (Battilana and D'Aunno, 2009, p. 44).

We have addressed this gap in the structuration approach by exploring *why* (intentionality) and *how* (effort) actors purposefully engage in both the practices and processes of organizational or institutional change. Starting from the why and how is important, since this has addressed the structuration theory's silence concerning how actors' knowledge and awareness of their context develops, which micro-activities they adopt and how any resultant conflicts or tensions between individual agency and structural controlling mechanisms play out during project implementation processes (Lawrence and Suddaby, 2006). This research shows that undermining the forces of structure required the "knowledgeable, creative and practical work" of actors who disrupted the operational model of a public organization by acquiring and utilizing several forms of power (Lawrence and Suddaby, 2006, p. 219). In the present case study, we showed that the actors leading this change effort understood the influence of political and religious powers and how to mobilize the social integrational power of religious symbolism to force a change that was radical for its context.

While previous PPP research has adopted a top-down approach and shown that isomorphism and PPP-enabling organizational fields and structuration processes are critical drivers of PPP implementation (Jooste *et al.*, 2012; Verhoest *et al.*, 2015; van den Hurk and Verhoest, 2015; Mahalingam and Delhi, 2012; Matos-Castaño *et al.*, 2014), we argue that these analytical approaches are insufficient to capture the roles and work of individual and organizational actors during the implementation process. Instead, we adopted both a bottom-up approach that uncovered institutional workers' institutional work to gain power, and then a top-down approach that shows the strategic use of power to create a triumphant story of drastic organizational change. Doing so allowed the research to capture the invisible efforts of individual actors that are currently overlooked in the PPP and project management disciplines, as well as how a stable equilibrium between agency and structure was achieved.

It is clear, therefore, that the adoption of PPP goes beyond isomorphic pressures and can be driven by agentic actors who reflexively and purposefully aim to change existing forms of organizing and introduce new ones irrespective of the maturity or readiness of the institutional field for such change.

Implications for practice and further research

This research offers several practical implications. For PPPs to operate successfully in contexts similar to the Gulf region, policymakers should provide powerful political support and be willing to bear a considerable risk of losses or minimal outcomes during the early phases of experimentation with PPPs. Also, policymakers should not only focus their attention on technical requirements of PPPs but also associate new meanings with the normative and cultural-cognitive elements that are integral to the success of PPP implementation. In order to design strategies for change that are designed to fit the unique cultural and sociopolitical settings of each country, policymakers should empower capable individual actors and provide them with resources and access to power, which will enable them to enforce changes that diverge from institutionalized practices.

This research connected the PPP literature with theoretical frameworks drawn from neo-institutional theory and power. It would be valuable for further research, however, to connect ideas from the PPP literature with other disciplines such as psychology. PPP research examines a recent phenomenon that can potentially be combined with non-traditional streams of research in analyzing projects, including philosophy and psychoanalysis. Expanding the realm of PPP research beyond traditional theoretical boundaries could potentially yield exciting insights into how the overall institutional and psychological environments surrounding projects affect their initiation and implementation.

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Appendix 1: Interview Questions
Influence of political factors on implementation of PPP projects.

(1) What political institutions do you think are influential in PPP decision making?

- To what extent do these institutions ease or hinder the implementation of PPP projects?

(2) Do you believe that PPPs are (directly or indirectly) supported or opposed by the political elite of this country?

- Who are the main political actors you think are influential in PPP policy decisions?

- Who are the formal and informal political actors who resist or support PPP policies and why?

- Do you think members of the ruling families can influence the outcome of a PPP contract?

(3) What are the key political challenges does the private sector face in this country to partner with the public sector?

(4) Do you think that the political elites in this country have more power than the existing institutions and organizations?

- Do you think this power is used to change the outcome of a tendering of a government contract?

- Do you think there is a preference for local traditional merchants over international businesses?

- Have you faced any challenges while competing with the local businesses for government contracts?

The impact of government organizations on the implementation of PPPs

(5) What are the key institutions involved in the decision making of PPPs?

- Which institution has more power over others? why?

(6) Which network of organizations does this country rely on to administer PPPs at the project and program levels?

- Is there a dedicated unit that administers PPP projects?

(7) Do you think that the current bureaucratic system provides an enabling environment for PPPs?

Policy, legal and regulatory frameworks for PPPs

(1) Do you believe that government policies and regulations support the private sectors' efforts to partner with the public sector?

- What policies or strategies has the government implemented to support partnerships with the private sector?

- Are contracts' clauses respected by the public sector?

- Can the private sector rely on arbitration or local courts' systems when things go wrong with the public sector?

Reactions of employees to change

(1) How did employees of airport react to change from public to private entity?

(2) How did GACA manage this transition?

(3) What challenges appeared during this process?

(4) How did GACA and new management of airport handle resisting employees?

(5) What incentives were given to these employees?

Corresponding author
Mhamed Biygautane can be contacted at: Mhamed.Biygautane@unimelb.edu.au