Participation and collaboration in construction projects: Exploring Stakeholder Integration Champions and legitimacy

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Abstract

It is well known in the fields of architecture and urban studies that the participation and collaboration of project stakeholders have important effects in both the process of project development (for instance the social capital that is created) and the quality of the final product - the built environment. However, little is known about the legitimacy of the participation of such stakeholders; more particularly, about how the legitimacy of stakeholders is taken into account when deciding who participates and collaborates. This research gap leaves unanswered several questions that are crucial for professionals working in architectural and urban projects of public interest: Who determines who is a participant in project decision-making and how do they perceive and take into account the legitimacy of these stakeholders?

This exploratory study permits to clarify the context in which the legitimacy of stakeholders is taken into account in decision-making. Theories borrowed from organizational science show that the level of legitimacy of an actor within a social system is created by the perception of two kinds of attributes: expectations and capacities (resources, authority, legal rights and expertise). An empirical study based on a case survey was conducted. Results show that there are several actors who act as Stakeholder Integration Champions and who have a crucial role in determining who becomes a legitimate participant and the context in which expectations and capacities are integrated in project decision making. However, these integration champions do not all operate in the same manner, and therefore a categorization of them is presented. This exploratory study proposes a framework for the analysis of stakeholder legitimacy; in doing so, it also proposes several research questions that must be addressed in future studies.

Keywords: Stakeholders, Legitimacy; Project governance, Integration champions, Projects of public interest.
1. Introduction

There is a consensus that stakeholder involvement increases the performance of both the project process and the outcome. This argument has been largely validated in project management in general (Freeman, 1984; Friedman & Miles, 2006; Steiner, 2008) and in the construction sector in particular (Chinyio & Olomolaiye, 2010; Olander & Landin, 2005; Walker, 2008). Reasonably, there is a growing interest in stakeholder collaboration and participation in the building sector: “Relationships are clearly a critical factor in delivering successful projects, yet paradoxically relationships are infrequently managed.” (p.11) (Pryke & Smyth, 2008). Stakeholder involvement becomes even more relevant in the case of construction projects of public interest, namely, public or private initiatives that have a direct effect in the general public. They include facilities for public services (universities, hospitals, governmental offices, etc.), and urban projects (parks, squares, projects of urban revitalization, etc.). These two types of projects – albeit different in scale and complexity – often involve a great number of stakeholders with divergent and contradictory claims and interests. In this context, stakeholder participation and collaboration – it is often argued - is crucial for “widening stakeholder involvement beyond traditional power elites, recognizing different forms of local knowledge, and building rich social networks as a resource of institutional capital through which new initiatives can be taken rapidly and legitimately” (p. 1531) (Healey, 1998). This objective has led to accept that “legitimate and valid stakeholders need to be identified and their power and influence mapped so that their potential impact on projects can be better understood” (p. 651) (Bourne & Walker, 2005). However, this statement poses more questions than answers. In fact, who needs to identify and involve these ‘legitimate and valid’ stakeholders? How are stakeholders involved and their legitimacy perceived taken into account?

This article explores the context in which the participation and collaboration of stakeholders is developed, while doing so it explores the concept of legitimacy, notably it addresses how the legitimacy of stakeholders is taken into account in order to determine their involvement in project decision making. The first section introduces the concepts of collaboration and participation. Theories borrowed from organizational science and philosophy are then used to explain the legitimacy of an actor within a social system. It finally explains the concept of Stakeholder Integration Champion. The second section presents the methods used in the empirical study. The “results” section shows that there are several actors who play a crucial role in determining who becomes a legitimate participant. Finally, discussion of these results and the findings of the article are presented in the last section.

1.1 Participation and collaboration in projects of public interest

Several definitions of project stakeholders exist; yet for this analysis we adapted the definition proposed by Freeman (1984) and thus we argue that a stakeholder corresponds to any group or individual who can affect or is affected by the project. By adopting this definition we acknowledge that stakeholders include both players who directly act in the project and individual and groups that are affected by the work of those players. It is therefore possible to distinguish two types of relationships between stakeholders: (a) Collaboration, which refers to the relationships between stakeholders who share a similar level of responsibility and authority (most often between professionals, or between them and contractors); and (b) Participation, which refers to relationships
between stakeholders that do not necessarily have the same level of authority and responsibility, notably the external participants that are not directly engaged in the design or construction of the project (residents, users, neighbors, members of the civil society, pressure groups, etc.). There are multiple types and levels of collaboration (Bouchlaghem, 2012; Kvan, 2000) and participation (Arnstein, 1969; UN-Habitat, 2009). Yet we will not address their different levels of intensity as it is out of the scope of this article.

1.2 Legitimacy of project stakeholders

Theories borrowed from organizational science claim that a stakeholder can be characterized by the combination of three attributes: its expectations toward the project, its capacities (material or immaterial) and its actual actions towards the project (Freeman, 1984; Mitchell, et al., 1997b). In sociology, the legitimacy of an entity depends on conformity to both the law and the desires of the society at large (Suchman, 1995). Philosophers believe instead that it depends on conformity to reason (Duran, 1990). In the context of this article, legitimacy corresponds to the quality that is recognized – albeit subjectively – in a stakeholder whose actions are pertinent within a project context. Considering that the actions of a stakeholder are based on its expectations and capacities, it is possible to argue that its legitimacy to intervene in a project, as a participant or a collaborator, may be attributed according to its expectations towards, and its capacities within, the project. Together, they become the attributes upon which legitimacy is recognized.

Based on early contributions on the concept of legitimacy (Weber, 1947), and more recent studies on stakeholder management (Freeman, 1984; Mitchell, et al., 1997a; Suchman, 1995), we can distinguish different kinds of expectations and capacities. Expectations can be rather high or rather low, implicit or explicit, conscious or not, immediate or long-term, perceived only by an individual or by the society as a whole. We also identify four kinds of capacities. First, material or financial capacities, as in the case of resources provided by a project sponsor. Second, recognized authority, obtained for example from democratic elections or charisma-based leadership. Third, legal rights, including privileges, titles and contractual links (for an example, the right of the municipality to expropriate a landowner, or a client who signed a contract to obtain a service). Fourth, the expertise, for instance, users’ expertise or the knowledge and experience of a professional that works in the project.

1.3 Stakeholder Integration Champions

Individual organizations and teams often benefit from individuals or groups who act as project leaders and enhance the participation and collaboration of stakeholders. They are often referred to as integration champions (Calamel, et al., 2011; Hoegl, et al., 2004) or as relationship promoters (Walter & Gemunden, 2000). They are responsible for (or assume the role of) fostering integration, facilitating communication, exchanging information and creating the conditions for the emergence of innovative solutions (Hartmann, 2008). They also play a crucial role in the integration of the supply chain and in enhancing inter organizational participation and collaboration. They “identify appropriate partners of different organizations, bring them together, and facilitate the dialogue and the exchange processes between them [they] solve inter-organizational conflicts [and thus] fulfill an important social task” (p. 86) (Walter & Gemunden, 2000). However, construction projects are a bit different; they do not
involve a clear team leader. Moreover – technically - construction project stakeholders do not constitute a ‘team’ but a ‘Temporary multi-organization’ (TMO). As such, they do not have a single authority responsible for the project but a group of heterogeneous organizations, gathered around a project promoter (often the owner), and mobilized to collaborate temporarily to achieve the project goal. Yet, this does not mean that authority and decision-making power is equally distributed among all the stakeholders (Viel, et al., 2012 (à paraître)). In fact, some authors have found that there are also integration champions within the construction sector (Hartmann, 2008). We will refer to them here as ‘Stakeholder Integration Champions’.

2. Methods

We conducted an exploratory work based on a case survey and literature review. The aim was not to provide final answers but to identify valid and relevant research questions for further analysis. During this work we were able to narrow the scope of the study and propose two initial research questions: Who determines the level of participation and collaboration of stakeholders in projects of public interest? How legitimacy is taken into account when a certain type of actor is responsible for - or assumes the role of - integrating other project stakeholders?

The survey was supported by a database of case studies conducted by our team during the last five years. By January 2012 this database had published 45 peer-reviewed case studies of projects or architecture and urban design in Canada (provinces of Quebec and Ontario). The cases were conducted by teams of graduate students within a period of 3 to 5 months and they were based on primary data, observations and two to six semi-directed interviews conducted with project stakeholders. Primary data includes budgets, project reports, construction schedules, construction documents, photos and press releases. Following Proverbs and Gameson (2008) and Yin (2003), we used various sources of information for triangulation, comparing printed data with qualitative information obtained from the interviews. The quality of the cases was validated by a peer review process in which an external expert and two reviewers were asked to assess the reports and to suggest improvements or reject the reports. The database includes only accepted and amended reports. All the reports follow a rigorous structure of analysis that included the identification of: (a) the project management methods following the nine knowledge areas proposed by the Project Management Institute (PMI, 2008); (b) the characteristics and strategic objectives of relevant stakeholders; (c) the procurement strategy of the project; (d) the project life cycle; (d) the organizational structure of the project; and (e) the main issues affecting the feasibility studies (including issues of innovation or technical challenges faced).

The database contains a wide range of projects executed within the last ten years and having different: uses (residential, education, religious), clients (private, public, mixed), funding options (private, public, mixed), interests (profit-oriented, non-for-profit initiatives) and scales. The identification of Stakeholder Integration Champions followed four iterative steps. In the first one we identified a reduced number of examples (projects) in which champions fostered collaboration and/or innovation. Secondly, we identified similar cases of champions that respond to the characteristics of the ones identified in step 1 (this was the first attempt of generalization). Thirdly, we revised the list of examples reading their characteristics under the light of possible generalizations. In the fourth step we
generalized the characteristics of the types from the results obtained from the examples. We repeated this process three times before producing the typologies presented here. Please note that additional results of this project and this classification were also published in the conference (reference temporarily eliminated for peer review process).

3. Results and Discussion

Several authors have previously noted that construction clients determine the most important characteristics of the TMO (Brandon & Lu, 2008; Cherns & Bryant, 1984; de Blois, et al., 2010; Green, 1996; Nahapiet & Nahapiet, 1985). By having an important authority on decision making (notably through the procurement strategy) clients create the conditions for the participation (or not) of external stakeholders and for the level of collaboration between internal ones (Davidson, et al., 1997; Rowlinson & McDermott, 1999). Our first finding reinforced this argument; however, we also found that determining the level of participation and collaboration of stakeholders might often surpass the influence of the construction client (the owner). In fact, Stakeholder Integration Champions play a fundamental role in it – yet these champions might or might not correspond to the project client. Instead, they can be delegated by the client in an attempt to integrate stakeholders and contribute to improve their relationships; or they can emerge naturally and even help create the TMO and the client organization itself. More specifically, we found that there are different types of Stakeholder Integration Champions and that they develop different mechanisms to mobilize the participation and collaboration of stakeholders. Table 1 presents the types that we identified and the most important examples of organizations and projects that helped us create the typology. A detailed analysis of how their existence influences the way in which stakeholder legitimacies are taken into account is then presented.

Table 1. Types of Stakeholder Integration Champions, examples, projects and characteristics.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Example</th>
<th>Project</th>
<th>Involvement in</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Mediation Partner</td>
<td>Convercité</td>
<td>Benny Farm</td>
<td>Particip. x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Integrated Client Team</td>
<td>NFP Corporation Client</td>
<td>Maison du DD</td>
<td>Particip. x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Delegated Project Manager</td>
<td>QIM</td>
<td>Quartier des spectacles</td>
<td>Collabor. x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Community Support Org.</td>
<td>GRT</td>
<td>Logements Bellechasse</td>
<td>Particip. x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Design Integration Team</td>
<td>Consortium de design</td>
<td>Complexe sportif NDG</td>
<td>Particip. x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Project Integration Team</td>
<td>Partenariat Public-privé</td>
<td>Centre des arts Shenkman</td>
<td>Collabor. x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Participation Organizer</td>
<td>OCPM</td>
<td>Musée des beaux arts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. Mediation Partner: This type of champion accompanies the client since the early stages of the project and contributes to create the proper conditions for collaboration and participation between stakeholders. Its main role and strategy is to mediate between them, acting as a partner that can reach consensus and alignment. This champion leads collaborative processes within community groups, and between stakeholders, professionals and the client, notably for the definition of the project’s objectives and program. A clear example is Convercité, an organization that is involved in “complex urban challenges, sensitive subject matters or multi-stakeholder projects”. Its strengths lie in « its ability to foster dialogue and cooperation through a flexible, yet rigorous approach focused on
concerted action». Its mission includes not only contributing to the project itself but also to the consolidation of the social environment around the project, covering social environments and the understanding of the contexts and dynamics that drive them. It also coordinates the preparation of the site development plans and may support the client through the process of approving and obtaining municipal zoning changes. Its activities include census and data analysis, surveys, interviews and consultations with key stakeholders, including end-users, the community and the client. This includes organizing various public presentations and soliciting feedback from the community via meetings and websites (Convercité, 2012).

2. Integrated Client Team: This type of champion integrates several stakeholders in order to create a stronger project client capable of commissioning larger and more ambitious projects, sometimes with higher levels of innovation. By acting in a collaborative way with other partners (both financial partners and professionals), this champion obtains additional resources and mobilizes enough interest and expertise around the project. Examples include the Centre for Sustainable Development is a complex client composed of eight non-for-profit organizations which gathered together to develop a green building aimed to become an example of sustainable development practices (The Centre for Sustainable Development, 2012).

3. Delegated Project Manager: This type of champion acts as a partner and a delegated project manager of public entities (for example municipalities) in order to conduct large urban interventions and other complex projects of public interest. This champion aims at integrating heterogeneous stakeholders and developing a consensus around the objectives of the project, often by the means of activities of collaboration. They begin their participation early in the project and conclude their role during the transfer of the project to the client, becoming in this way a pivotal hub of information during the whole project life cycle. These champions assume the role of identifying stakeholders and developing tools and methods to facilitate communication between them. For instance, the Society QIM is a small size organization that offers services of project management; its mission includes catalyzing public and private investment in projects of public interest and managing all aspects of project management, from procurement to stakeholder management The Board of Directors includes representatives from different partners, including the municipality, a public investor, a provincial ministry and private stakeholders. This organization is recognized for its experience in innovative methods of collaboration such as “partnering” and “visioning”. (Société Quartier International de Montréal, 2012).

4. Community Support Organization: This type of champion acts as an intermediary between individuals or groups interested in developing social or community projects, and public organizations. They facilitate the development of socially and economically viable projects of public interest. These champions integrate stakeholders in order to develop social projects. Their roles include creating or consolidating the client organization, for example stakeholder cooperatives. Examples in Canada include the Quebec’s Technical Resources Groups, which act as partners of the city and the government in order to implement housing programs. These champions contribute to the creation of housing cooperatives and accompany them through the process of obtaining public subsidies and financial assistance for the project. They offer technical support to conduct a “democratic” process integrating three levels: social development, real state development and financial feasibility.
(l'Association des groupes de ressources techniques du Québec, 2012). They create innovative financial structures, collaborative methods, and architectural solutions that often differ from the profit-oriented solutions proposed by residential developers.

5. Design Integration Team: This type of champion is not a single organization but private design consortiums created for the development of complex projects. Design consortiums seek to integrate professionals in order to respond to technical challenges and complex demands in tendering processes. However, their collaborative spirit might contribute to other ends, including integrating stakeholder needs and creating innovative solutions. As an example, consider the design consortium involved in the complexe sportif NDG. It is composed by two architectural firms, a landscape architecture firm, a project management and engineering firm and a mechanical engineering firm. In a recent case, community groups opposed the project designed by the consortium because of its impact on an open area of the neighborhood. In response, a committee for the creation of the technical project brief was created including participation of local residents. The integration of professionals facilitated the use of prefabricated components, the decision to build some sections of the building in underground spaces (to reduce the impact of the building) and the adoption of an environmental certification.

6. Project Integration Team: This type of champion is also a consortium of multiple companies but it includes not only design firms and consultants but also other partners with financial, managerial and construction credentials. These consortiums are usually created to respond to Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) or Design-Build contracts in which professionals of design and builders work in a concerted manner within one single contract signed with the project client. The consortium often has multiple mandates that are unusual for most construction and design companies: to finance, to transfer the facility, to own and operate the facility, or to act as a land developer. These consortiums are characterized by higher levels of integration between (a) designers and builders with stakeholders having financial, legal and managerial expertise; and (b) public and private partners. Multiple examples of PPP exist now in Canada, including the The Orléans Town Centre Partnership is led by Forum Leasahold Partners Inc. and includes a construction company, an architectural firm and engineering firms. Joint ventures were created with other residential developers and builders for specific aspects of the project (Ottawa City, 2012). Its role includes operating facilities and acting as a land developer.

7. Participation Organizer: This is a non-for-profit type of C&I champion that organizes public participatory debates on architecture and urban projects of public interest. Based on the consultation of the public, its recommendations may have a high influence on project approvals. This champion does not facilitate collaboration per se. However, it does develop participatory mechanisms to give voice to all project stakeholders. The objective is to establish credible, transparent and effective consultation mechanisms for projects of public interest. There are not many examples of this type, but we considered the Office de consultation publique de Montréal, a non for-profit organization that organizes public consultations for projects of public interest. This champion encourages participation, facilitates access to information for the citizens, and produces a report that acts as a recommendation for all stakeholders. It acts as an independent organization, a neutral third party between the public, the city and developers (Office de consultation publique de Montréal - OCPM, 2011).
In order to understand how stakeholders’ legitimacies are taken into account by these Stakeholder Integration Champions, it is important to examine their differences and similarities. The first difference concerns their scope of intervention in the project. In fact, we found that all, except type 7, contribute to collaboration between internal stakeholders. Types 1, 3, 4 and 7 facilitate participation of external stakeholders (see table 2).

Table 2. Types of stakeholders involved in different project phases.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Types of stakeholders integrated by the champion during each phase</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Concept Planning Design Approvals Procure. Const. Closing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Mediation Partner</td>
<td>ES, CO ES, CO ES, CO BS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Integrated Client Team</td>
<td>CO CO CO CO CO CO CO CO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Delegated Project Manager</td>
<td>ES, CO, BS ES, CO, BS ES, CO, BS BS ES, CO, BS CO, BS CO, BS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Community Support Org.</td>
<td>ES, CO ES, CO ES, CO, BS ES, CO, BS CO, BS CO, BS CO, BS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Design Integration Team</td>
<td>BS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Project Integration Team</td>
<td>CO CO CO, BS CO, BS CO, BS CO, BS CO, BS CO, BS CO, BS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Participation Organizer</td>
<td>ES</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* External stakeholders (ES); Internal to the client organization (CO); Building sector stakeholders (BS).

The second difference concerns the types of stakeholders that they involve and the phases in which they do it during the project life cycle. In order to do this we used the classification of stakeholders proposed by Lizarralde et al. (2011), which identifies three main groups with various subgroups: First, external stakeholders: including users, external pressure groups, control agencies and sponsors. Second, stakeholders internal to the client organization, including internal procurement, funding and operation units, sometimes professionals of design, and in the case of a public body, elected officials. Finally, building sector stakeholders, including design agencies, management consultants and construction companies. Stakeholder Integration Champions largely decide who participates and collaborates; by doing so, they also exclude other stakeholders and determine the conditions in which integration is conducted. Table 3 shows that types 1, 2, 4 and 6 participate in the whole life cycle – in all phases, namely: initiation, planning, design, approval, procurement, construction and closing. Instead, the Participation Organizer (type 7) has a limited intervention in the approval phase and concerns only external stakeholders, when projects are subject to public debate. The Design Integration Team (type 5) acts mostly during the design phase, integrating mostly building sector stakeholders.

The third difference relates to the attributes (expectations and capacities) that are naturally taken into account by the different mechanisms of collaboration and participation deployed by the Stakeholder Integration Champions (Table 4). Types 1, 2, 4 and 7 integrate project stakeholders, through participation or collaboration processes, in order to identify and take into account their expectations. This is not the natural objective of design integration activities led by type 5, though this champion deals with stakeholders’ expectations through the design process. Types 3 and 6 do not promote participation per se and thus identifying expectations of external stakeholders is not a central motive in their actions. Material and financial resources are key capacities for integration activities promoted by types 2, 3, 4 and 6. Though all types may empower stakeholders with a recognized authority (e.g.
charisma), types 2 and 3 specifically resort to the integration of elected officials (a kind of recognized authority) in their activities. Although legal rights are a source of legitimacy that all types of Stakeholder Integration Champions must respect (by law), it is a central one for types 1, 4 and 7, whose role is precisely to promote some of these rights (for example, the citizens’ right of expression). Eventually expertise is a key attribute recognized by all Stakeholder Integration Champions, but in different ways: types 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6 rely on the professional expertise of managers, designers, or builders, while types 1, 3, 4 and 7 promote users’ expertise through participation processes.

Table 3. Attributes recognized by the mechanisms deployed by Stakeholder Integration Champions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mechanisms deployed by:</th>
<th>Expectations</th>
<th>Capacities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Resources</td>
<td>Recognized authority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Mediation Partner</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Integrated Client Team</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Delegated Project Manager</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Community Support Org.</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Design Integration Team</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Project Integration Team</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Participation Organizer</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The results shown in table 3 need three additional explanations. First, attributes are taken into account to a certain amount in each type. For example, not only those involved into participation processes, but all Stakeholder Integration Champions give place to legal rights: for instance the legal right constituted by the contractual link between partners mobilized by types 2, 5, and 6 is a strong source of the legitimacy of their participation. Similarly, even though meeting external stakeholders’ expectations is not necessarily a central rationale of a project integration team (type 6), it is clear that not doing so may well lead to project failure; naturally, stakeholders’ expectations are always taken into account to a certain extent.

Second, various Stakeholder Integration Champions may participate in a single project and integrate different kinds of legitimacies. For example, in order to deliver a major urban design project, a municipality and a provincial government may create an integrated client team (type 2), hire a delegated project manager (type 3), whose role would include the recourse to a mediation partner (type 1) early in the project, to a design integration team (type 5) during the design phase and to a participation organizer (type 7) before project approval. However some types of Stakeholder Integration Champions are less compatible with others, such as the case of a PPP (type 6): though this model calls for material and financial capacities and professional expertise, critics of PPPs have questioned their capacity to take into account legitimacies based on expectations (as this type is rarely associated with a strong public participation) and elected authorities (as this type implies a transfer of much of the decision-process to the private partner) (Hamel, 2008; Noble, 2006). Third, the attributes identified here can be subdivided into additional subtypes. For example, expertise could be subdivided into users’ expertise and professional expertise. Moreover, all types and subtypes of attributes may be
subdivided into two categories; whether the legitimacy concerns the Stakeholder Integration Champion itself, or the other stakeholders. For example, the expertise of a delegated project manager is an attribute of legitimacy for himself, whereas users’ expertise promoted into a participation process organized by this delegated project manager is a source of legitimacy of external stakeholders. In both cases, type 3 involves legitimacies based on expertise.

**Limits of the study**

This is an exploratory study which aimed at identifying valid research questions; in fact, several of them still remain to be investigated: How conscious are these champions of the legitimacy of stakeholders while selecting who participates and collaborates in the project? What variables influence the decision of inviting stakeholders to participate in the project? How are legitimacies perceived differently in different countries and contexts? Other limits also exist. The first one concerns the legitimacy of Stakeholder Integration Champions themselves. According to Kliem, “persons in a position of formal authority can exercise power due to their legitimacy within the organization” (page 8) (Kliem, 2012). However, we did not explore in detail here the legitimacy of these champions. Secondly, the survey is limited to projects located in Canada – yet we believe that the transferability of results might allow for prediction and anticipation in other cases (results, however, cannot be generalized without considering additional patterns in other contexts). Finally, our cases do not exemplify all the possible variations of Stakeholder Integration Champions that might exist. They ‘just’ illustrate a comprehensive representation of them and permit to understand how they influence both participation and collaboration.

**4. Conclusions**

This article explored the context in which collaboration and participation are developed within construction projects of public interest, that is, public or private initiatives that have a direct effect in the general public. In order to do so we conducted a case survey of projects in Canada. The results permitted to answer two research questions. The first question aimed at identifying who determines the level of participation and collaboration of stakeholders in projects of public interest. We found that the project clients are not the only actors that determine these levels of participation and collaboration. Sometimes, Stakeholder Integration Champions assume, or are given this responsibility. Yet they are different in nature and they have different priorities, largely determining – through their own perception of attributes - who collaborates and participates. The second question enquired about how the participation and collaboration of stakeholders take into account their legitimacy. Along with identifying the main attributes of stakeholder legitimacies – namely stakeholders’ expectations and capacities, including material and financial resources, recognized authority, legal rights and expertise – we highlighted how stakeholder integration champions take into account these legitimacies, keeping in mind that it will always be submitted both to their own subjectivity and to their own legitimacy.

These findings have implications in construction project management. The typology of Stakeholder Integration Champions might help decision-makers identify the possibilities that are available for
enhancing participation and collaboration within projects. They also contribute to a better understanding of the role of key players within construction projects of public interest. However, more than providing final answers they open the field for a vast area of research that still remains to be fully explored.

5. Acknowledgements

We acknowledge the contribution of the students that conducted the case studies used as examples in this paper.

6. References


