Initiating Collaboration: 
COLLABO

Tool design to help Vietnamese SMEs initiate collaboration

Master Graduation Thesis by:
Jip-kang Vuong
Master Strategic Product Design
Faculty of Industrial Design Engineering
Delft University of Technology
February - September 2012

Supervisory Team:
Chair: Dr. G. Gemser
Mentor: Dr. M.R.M. Crul
Company Mentor: MSc. S. Jin
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Involved parties:
Dear reader,

In front of you, you will find the result of a graduation project from the Master programme Strategic Product Design from the Delft University of Technology (DUT). This graduation project is supported by Sustainable Product Innovation (SPIN), an umbrella project focusing on sustainability and innovation.

While looking for a graduation project, an opening offered by SPIN attracted my attention. One of the privileges of this project was a three-month stay in Vietnam, the country of (part of) my ancestors. Because of my cultural background, I have always been fascinated by Asia so this was an opportunity I could not resist: it was a chance for me to go back where it all started and to contribute a tiny bit to the (economic) development of the country my family calls home.

During the start of this project, the initial goal was to make Vietnamese local products attractive (again) for local people. Not only would this support economic growth, but it would also help in the pursuit of sustainability (both environmentally and competitively). The focus was on Vietnamese SMEs since they often lack company size and resources for extensive marketing and branding activities or campaigns. One of the solutions to increase efficiency and to gain resources and facilities without losing their flexibility is through collaboration. The goal was thus to support SMEs in the development of their marketing- and, in parallel, their collaboration strategy. Research soon pointed out that Vietnamese SMEs are not ready yet for such a complicated undertaking since collaboration in general is still an issue. Thus the focus needed to be adjusted and a new assignment was formulated: “Develop a solution to support the initiation of collaboration among Vietnamese SMEs”. The design process of this solution, a tool, is extensively described in the Master thesis you are currently reading.

For this experience, I would like to thank Shauna Jin who gave me the opportunity to carry out this project and offered me support, and suggestions throughout. Furthermore, I want to thank my chair, Gerda Gemser and my mentor, Marcel Crul for all of their help, feedback, advice and guidance. Without their guidance this research project and thesis would not be the same, if possible at all. Also, I am very thankful for Long from SPIN/Green Office, Phuong from Danh Moc, Gerhard from HAWA and colleagues at FLS for their efforts, help and understanding. In addition I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the Western experts, Vietnamese or Western entrepreneurs in Vietnam, all other interviewees or test-participants and everyone else who have been supporting me, for their contribution to the project. Without their input, information and knowledge it would not be possible to develop and design the solution as described in this thesis.

Finally, all that is left for me to say is: this was a great project and I hope you will enjoy reading about it as much as I enjoyed conducting it.

Sincerely yours,

J.K. Vuong
11th of September 2012, DELFT
Vietnamese Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in general are relatively small in size and financially rather weak which are big challenges for these firms, especially when also considering the strong competition from both domestic as well as other international/Asian companies. One of the possible solutions to this problem for Vietnamese SMEs is to collaborate on one or several aspects of the marketing strategy or other aspects of business.

There are different forms of collaboration, but the focus of the project is limited to the initiating-phase of collaboration because during this stage many partnerships fail due to uncertainties, orientation and trust issues. It is one of the most crucial, yet complex and fuzzy stages of the collaboration process. The problem statement for this project is therefore formulated as:

“How could Vietnamese SMEs initiate collaboration to increase the effectiveness of their business strategies, while minimizing the risks of difficulties related to (and thus the failure of) collaboration?”

The goal of this project is to design a tool that will help Vietnamese SMEs initiate collaboration (plans) that fit their situation, position, culture and desires. The purpose of the project is not to prescribe a strategy, but to offer them the appropriate tools or framework to help these firms throughout the start-up phase of the collaboration development process.

One of the issues found in literature (Giroud, 2007; Viet Nam News, 2012g) is that the business linkage environment of Vietnam is not well developed which has a negative effect on the country’s competitiveness. Several solutions offered in literature are to support entrepreneurship, foster the creation of new industries and companies and to promote private investments (e.g. R&D and training) to strengthen the foundation for competitiveness of Vietnamese domestic firms.

Different collaboration processes and strategies are discussed which, together with the Vietnamese context, lead to the first decisions on the orientation of this project. After a literature review, the choice is made to attempt to encourage partnerships within supply chains of different firms to help increase the competitive edge of the involved parties.
This project goes back to the very start of the collaboration process when there is only the intention of engaging in collaboration: the initiation phase. An open attitude from Vietnamese SMEs during this phase is needed to create space for trust, honesty and commitment to grow and thus to increase the chance of a successful partnership. To achieve this, a tool is designed to open the mindsets and attitudes of companies towards collaboration; to prepare them for collaboration and increase the chance of success. Goal is to stimulate trust and develop a healthy relationship.

Furthermore, the tool should provide its users the elements needed to kickstart the initiation of collaboration. The tool will be used throughout the very first stage of collaboration and sensitive topics should therefore be avoided or approached carefully as much as possible. The tool should support the growth of openness and willingness to share thoughts on certain topics with its users. But at some point, it also needs to address more serious and in-depth issues to be able to offer concrete and usable outcomes for the more formal activities later on in the process.

For this research, the main form of data gathering is through interviews. Before interviewing local companies, more knowledge about collaboration and networks need to be gained. Since the Netherlands is more developed in the sense of collaboration, it is a convenient start of the research to gather experiences and knowledge from Dutch or other Western experts in the field of collaboration and networks. To get data and information about Vietnamese firms, their current (business) situations and Vietnam, interviews are held with owners or high-positioned managers from Vietnamese SMEs who joined the SPIN project.

**Results, interpretations & findings**

From the different interviews, a lot of data is gathered. This data is used, among others, to find the criteria for collaboration and a list of trends and influences on business management in Vietnam. The main trends mentioned by interviewees are about the changing market preferences, economy and the business environment. Especially the latter two shows why collaboration is becoming more important and could support companies to think about their starting points and shared interests for partnerships.

The found trends regarding the changing market could be seen as developments influencing the business of Vietnamese SMEs, but also as reasons for companies to collaborate. The identified influences need to be taken into account throughout the project since it explains a lot of the behaviour of Vietnamese business people. Especially the findings on the Vietnamese business environment – on mindsets, culture and customs – are needed to understand why Vietnamese business people act the way they do. The Vietnamese business environment – on profitability – shows some of the reasons why Vietnamese SMEs are struggling to survive and could be used as a starting point for collaboration.

According to the interviewees, collaboration requires understanding, trust and giving each other credit. Some interviewed companies are very protective and afraid to be robbed, that is why there seems to be no trust between companies operating in Vietnam and why they are very cautious and reluctant when it comes to collaboration.

Vietnamese SMEs are reluctant to collaborate, have a closed attitude and are not very committed to a partnership which is expressed by not fulfilling and meeting agreements. It makes collaboration in the context of Vietnam quite difficult for both local Vietnamese entrepreneurs as well as immigrated foreign
entrepreneurs. Especially among strangers it is hard to trust each other and to build a successful partnership. The “start”- phase of collaboration is the most difficult part because of the lack of trust.

When considering all the gathered data and information from literature and interviews, a list of criteria for the tool is derived. With these criteria, the author’s educational background, the research findings and other insights, alternatives for the tool are derived through brainstorm sessions. Through a selection process, one alternative is chosen to be further specified and developed.

**The tool: COLLABO**
The tool consists of two facilitated workshops: the first workshop focuses on increasing the understanding among participants, about the collaboration process and about the (business) context. This workshop is presented as a game and is rather general and informal. The first workshop could therefore be seen as a prolonged introduction into the second workshop.

During the second workshop, participants are supported to identify interdependencies with the other participants. Before that is possible however, participants need to analyze and reflect on their own firms by analyzing their Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT). Furthermore, participants are asked to think about possible solutions or tactics and the required resources. These analyses should be done in between the two workshops and will be used to look for interdependencies during the meeting of the second workshop. After the second facilitated workshop, the decision regarding whether or not to proceed with the development of the collaboration needs to be made by the participants themselves.

COLLABO, the tool developed in this project, offers Vietnamese SMEs guidance to initiate collaboration to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of business strategies while minimizing the risks related to collaboration. The tool is designed based on the results of research on the risks and difficulties companies have with collaboration and on the perceived success factors of partnerships. The tool focuses on increasing understanding, identifying interdependencies and building credibility and trust: this tool aims to (partially) solve these issues through interaction, discussions and sharing knowledge or experiences among Vietnamese SMEs. This should improve the understanding among participants and thus offer them a starting point to get past some of the uncertainties regarding their potential partners. By doing so, the space for trust to grow is increased which offers potential for the growth of credibility.
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PART I: Orientation & Focus
1. INTRODUCTION

The first chapter will give an introduction into this project, the umbrella-project SPIN/FLS and the client HAWA. Furthermore, this project will be about initiating collaboration in Vietnam and the introduction will therefore also give an image of the business context in Vietnam.

1.1 Project

1.1.1 Problem definition

Local Vietnamese Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in general lack the skills and resources to have effective marketing strategies (Scheela & Dinh, 2001; Giroud 2007), but they are flexible and account for a big part of the Vietnamese businesses and economy. They are relatively small in size and financially rather weak which are big challenges for these firms, especially when also considering the strong competition from both domestic as well as other international/Asian companies. One of the possible solutions to these problems for Vietnamese SMEs is to collaborate on one or several aspects of the marketing strategy or other aspects of business.

Collaboration allows SMEs to grow, share technologies, risks and costs and gain competitive advantages (Elmuti & Kathawala, 2001). Such collaboration can, however, bring along some difficulties, especially regarding sharing, brand identities, negotiations and responsibilities (Elmuti & Kathawala, 2001; Soosay, Hyland & Ferrer, 2008).

Collaboration is thus offered as a possible solution to the marketing or business issues Vietnamese companies have to face. The collaboration in this project is defined as the partnership(s) of one company (initiator) with other companies. These could be both up- and down stream (vertical oriented) companies in the same value chain as the initiator, as well as companies in other value chains (horizontally oriented companies). Examples of partners for a design and producing company are among others suppliers, buyers, retailers, distributor and (potential) competitors. They could collaborate in multiple ways, but the focus of the project is limited to the initiating-phase of collaboration.

The decision to focus on the start-phase of collaboration is made because of the difficulties regarding trust and orientation of both the project as well as the potential partners in the early stages of collaboration development (Kelly, Schaan & Joncas, 2002). The start-phase of a collaboration is most sensitive to changes, ambiguities and uncertainties which could lead to the failure of the partnership. There is also the issue that potential partners do not know each other on the
aspects of beliefs, desires and way of working yet. Furthermore, (company) cultures could and probably will differ. The initiation-phase of partnerships could thus be seen as one of the most complicated and ‘fuzzy’ stages throughout the collaboration process. The problem statement is therefore be formulated as follows:

“How could Vietnamese SMEs initiate collaboration to increase the effectiveness of their business strategies, while minimizing the risks of difficulties related to (and thus the failure of) collaboration?”

1.1.2 Goal
The goal of this project is to design a tool that will help Vietnamese SMEs initiate collaboration (plans) that fit their situation, position, culture and desires. These partnerships could be initiated for various reasons, but will mainly be aimed at improving the efficiency and effectiveness of company strategies and business operation. The purpose of the project is not to prescribe a strategy, but to offer them some guidance and support in the start-up phase of the collaboration development process.

1.2 SPIN project & FLS
The research as reported in this thesis is part of a broader research project SPIN. SPIN stands for Sustainable Product Innovation and its overall objective is to stimulate innovation in Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia. In addition, it attempts to increase social and environmental sustainability in the products that are produced in those countries. Institutes which are involved with the SPIN project include the Delft University of Technology, Vietnam Cleaner Production Centre, Asian Institute of Technology Centre, Cambodian Cleaner Production Programme, Lao National Chamber of Commerce and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). One of the projects of SPIN led to the start-up of Future Living Studio (FLS) in Ho Chi Minh City.
Future Living Studio (FLS) is a temporary design studio aimed at increasing the design capacity of participating SMEs in a learning-by-doing approach. The group of designers working at this studio consists of both Vietnamese and Western designers. FLS is set up to function as a case study within SPIN and wants to build a community of designers and handicraft and furniture companies to design high quality products for both the local as well as the export market. Within the SPIN-project, FLS adopts the role of design consultant throughout the design process and works with participating companies to develop new products by combining the expertise of each partner.

SPIN and FLS are important in this project because they provided the means, the facilities and the network to carry out the research (see Figure 1 - Relationship involved parties). As like SPIN, this project aims at stimulating companies to innovate, to improve Vietnam’s economical health and to attempt to inspire firms to share and build on each other.

1.3 HAWA

HAWA is an abbreviation for Handicraft and Wood Industry Association. The association is established in 1990 in Ho Chi Minh and could be regarded as a support organization for the Vietnamese furniture industry.

One of HAWA’s missions is to strengthen the cooperation among it members. In addition, the association wants to respond to the needs of both domestic as well as global markets by establishing international relationships. One of the ways to achieve this goal is by organizing the Vietnam International Furniture & Home Accessories Fair (VIFA) every year since 2008.

In this project, HAWA will be the client (Figure 1): the association will help to raise awareness for the final tool among its member-companies. Furthermore, the association will be the initiator and/or facilitator of the tool.

1.4 Business context Vietnam

Vietnam is often mentioned in media as an emerging economy. Its growth and development offer both opportunities, as well as challenges. The country’s GDP per capita has been doubled between 2002 and 2010 (Worldbank, 2012a) which means that Vietnamese have increased in purchasing power. The population of Vietnam is growing every year (Worldbank, 2012a) and in addition the life expectancy at birth for Vietnamese was almost 75 in 2010, while this was ‘only’ almost 73 in 2002 (Worldbank, 2012a). The country’s current income level is categorized by Worldbank (2012b) as lower middle income. All these developments are just a few examples of factors that lead to a growing demand for products and consumption. Collaboration seems to be one of the possible solutions that could increase companies’ efficiency and cost reductions to help them meet these demands.

According to Meyer, Tran & Nguyen (2006), Vietnam is emerging as a new centre of economic growth in South-East Asia and is seen as a good business opportunity by foreign investors. Positive for the investors are the low cost production sites and its domestic market with over 80 million potential consumers. Vietnamese SMEs should therefore increase the consumption of their
products by highlighting the consumer potential in the domestic market (Viet Nam News, 2012a). Although there are many opportunities, the business and investment conditions are not ideal: companies face high prices for materials, electricity, petrol, property rental and high exchange rates of Vietnamese and foreign currencies. Also labour and overhead costs are increasing (Viet Nam News, 2012b). Another issue is that many SMEs do not have experience in corporate management: they do not have long-term business plans, fail to gather market information and lack material supply sources. These SMEs are also struggling to access capital (Schwab & Sala-i-Martin, 2012) and to use this efficiently (Viet Nam News, 2012c) since they lack good management and strategic skills (Viet Nam News, 2012d). Schwab & Sala-i-Martin (2012) presented in the Global Competitiveness Report, that Vietnam ranks 100th (of the 144) on the overall business network and the quality of individual firm’s operations and strategies.

To improve the economy, Vietnam is looking for (foreign) investors and therefore needs to improve its investment environment and competitiveness (Viet Nam News, 2012e). In order to do so, Vietnam should look at its own business environment and linkage creation abilities to create incentives to attract (foreign) investors (Giroud, 2005).

In 1997 was the Asian crisis which only had a moderate effect on Vietnam. The economy and financial markets were less internationally integrated, so the impact was more indirect (Meyer, Tran & Nguyen, 2006). This situation has changed and now Vietnam is rather dependent on foreign investors and buyers compared to 1997. In the current Vietnam, the export and import rates are closely related to each other (Meyer, Tran & Nguyen, 2006). Because the available resources in Vietnam are scarce in comparison to the demand, especially for wood materials (Scheela & Dinh, 2001), Vietnamese companies often import materials for the production of export products.

Even though this change is good for the development of the country and the global as well as the local economy, the dependency on foreign capital implies that the vulnerability of Vietnam has increased. If local small firms would use locally made parts, they would reduce transport costs and risks while creating development opportunities for other local firms (Viet Nam News, 2012f). A stronger domestic market could further develop the economy of the country and the opportunities for local (and foreign) business linkages.

1.5 Project & Report Outline

The outline of this project and paper consists of four main phases: (1) Orientation & focus, (2) data gathering, (3) analysis & interpretation and (4) tool design. In the orientation and focus phase, a literature review was done which was the base for the identification and selection of problem areas. These results are reported in Chapter 2. Subsequently, Chapter 3 discusses the methodology of this research including the research approach and the data gathering process. Then, Chapter 4 presents the results, findings and insights from the data gathering and analysis process. Chapter 5 reports how the outcomes from the previous chapter are interpreted and used as points of departure for the development of the alternative concepts and the selection of one alternative for further specification. Next, Chapter 6 explains how the final concept is established and Chapter 7 presents the processes and findings from the pre-tests and user-tests. In Chapter 8, the final design is shown after which this project will be discussed and concluded in Chapter 9.
2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Existing literature about collaboration will be reviewed and will serve as a base for the orientation phase. First, a discussion will be held about what collaboration means. In Chapter 2.2 the risks, motivations and success factors of collaboration will be examined. Chapter 2.3 will then focus on the partner selection and negotiation, after which Chapter 2.4 will discuss the different collaboration processes and strategies. Subsequently, Chapter 2.5 will emphasize on collaboration in Vietnam and Chapter 2.6 will conclude, summarize and interpret the findings from literature.

2.1 What is collaboration?

According to Gray (1989) (in Jamal & Getz, 1995) collaboration could be used to solve conflicts, implement shared visions and is a process of key stakeholders making a decision together on the future of a problem domain. Thomson & Perry (2006) sees collaboration more like a process of formal and informal interactions and negotiations, involving shared norms and mutually beneficial interactions by autonomous actors. The negotiations include rules about how to structure the relationship, how to act and the issues that need to be dealt with. Collaboration could therefore be seen as a collective action rather than cooperation or coordination only. Gray’s definition is more focussed on the decision-making process, while Thomson & Perry’s seems to emphasize the relationship between actors and includes the informal aspect of collaboration as well.

A more specific form of collaboration is a strategic alliance. Elmuti & Kathawala (2001: 205) define strategic alliances as “partnerships of two or more corporations or business units that work together to achieve strategically significant objectives that are mutually beneficial”. Bronder & Pritzl (1992) define a strategic alliance as sustaining or achieving significant competitive advantages by combining value chain activities of at least two companies with compatible goal structures. Both definitions point out the importance of collaboration, shared interests and its application for strategic purposes to reach a goal or advantage.

Collaboration will play an important role in this project since it is offered as a possible solution to the business issues Vietnamese companies have to face. The collaboration in this project could be seen more general and simple: as the partnership(s) where one company (initiator) works together with other companies (on any aspect) to gain a competitive advantage collectively. These
could be both up- and down stream (vertical oriented) companies in the same value chain as the initiator, as well as companies in other value chains (horizontally oriented companies).

Examples of partners for a design and producing company are among others suppliers, buyers, retailers, distributor and (potential) competitors. They could collaborate in multiple ways, but the focus of the project is limited to the initiating-phase of collaboration.

### 2.2 Risks, motivations and success factors

Creating strategic alliances (but also collaboration in general) however does not come without any risks and challenges. Elmuti & Kathawala (2001) indicated several risks and problems when it comes to partnerships:

- Clash of cultures and “incompatible personal chemistry”
- Lack of trust
- Lack of clear goals and objectives
- Lack of coordination between management teams
- Differences in operating procedures and attitudes among partners
- Relational risk (partners lacking commitment and possible opportunistic behaviour of partners undermining the prospects of an alliance)
- Performance risk
- Strategic alliances might create a future local or even global competitor

Furthermore, Elmuti & Kathawala (2001) state that all involved parties must put in considerable time and energy to develop a successful alliance. Corporations should enter a strategic alliance with a plan outlining detailed expectations, requirements and expected benefits to increase the chance on success.

Looking at these challenges, why would organizations be willing to collaborate, thus risk the uncertainties and spend a lot of resources needed for partnerships? Several reasons are offered by Elmuti & Kathawala (2001):

- Growth strategies and entering new markets
- Obtain new technology and/or best quality or cheapest cost
- Reduce financial risk and share costs of research and development
- Achieve or ensure competitive advantage

These however, do not seem to be the only reasons. Eisenhardt & Schoonhoven (1996) combine both the social as well as strategic explanations for alliance formation. A reason for firms to form alliances is when they are in a vulnerable strategic position because of the emergent or highly competitive industries they are in or because they want to pioneer in technical strategies. Companies also form partnerships when they are in strong social positions; because of the scale, expertise and connections, top-management teams can learn from each other. Strategic needs as well as social opportunities could thus be the motivation for the formation of alliances.

Another question that arises is how a partnership could be developed successfully; what behaviour is expected from future partners, what resources or attitudes are required? In their research, Elmuti & Kathawala (2001) identified several success factors for alliances:
• Senior management commitment
• Similarity of management philosophies
• Effective and strong management team
• Frequent performance feedback
• Clearly defined, shared goals and objectives
• Thorough planning
• Clearly understood roles
• International vision
• Partner selection
• Communication between partners: maintaining relationships

Also Lorange, Roos & Brønn (1992) found several success factors for developing a successful alliance:

• Ensure that top management is involved
• Meet often and informally
• Use a third party advisor
• Keep you independence
• Do not permit any project where one of the parties scarified
• Use a steering committee that continuously supervises the alliance
• Assume that there are cultural differences

The factors found by Elmuti & Kathawala (2001) are comparable to the ones mentioned by Lorange, Roos & Brønn (1992). The first seems to be strongly focussed on the business related success factors of collaboration while the latter also shows success factors on the social, informal and emotional aspects.

2.3 Partner selection and negotiation

Lorange, Roos & Brønn (1992) found that in the initial phase, a company has to find a match in strategic partners while stakeholders need to be convinced to join. Elmuti & Kathawala (2001) state that organizations should select partners based on expertise and the cultural fit with the firm. After the selection, internal support and a strategic plan need to be formed in the intensive phase which should result in a contract. Throughout the process, negotiations need to take place to come to a consensus regarding the alliance.

Ahuja (2000) states that resources are an important trade asset for companies when negotiating partnerships and firms need to make sure that they get something in return for sharing their own resources which are usually difficult to obtain through markets. Mitsuhashi & Greve, 2009 have found that the more resources an organization has, the more attractive it becomes as alliance partners. Alliances are formed to obtain resources (an organization does not have itself); organizations with valuable resources therefore have more collaboration opportunities. To conclude, Mitsuhashi & Greve (2009) found that for firms with pre-existing alliances and/or many resources, forming alliances is easier.

Two criteria for collaboration initiation are thus pre-existing ties and resource endowment. Mitsuhashi & Greve (2009) mention that it is easier for organizations to initiate new collaborations with current partners or firms linked to those partners compared to organizations without such pre-existing ties. Mitsuhashi & Greve (2009) believe that this is due to the uncertainty whether a potential partner wants and could solve unexpected problems throughout the alliance. Because pre-existing ties offer firms information to judge potential partners’
 capabilities, intentions and risks of collaboration, companies prefer to establish new ties with existing partners.

Kelly, Schaan & Joncas (2002) offer a more elaborate explanation why companies would prefer alliances with existing partners: many of the barriers that obstruct successful alliances develop in the early stages of alliances. Relationship issues between partners in the first year of alliances are the most important challenges in the start-up phase of an alliance. The management of the early stages in an alliance determines the success of that alliance. The ‘take-off’ stage of an alliance will likely be challenging for most companies since during this stage (potential) allies need to deal with uncertainty and ambiguity while learning to work together and laying the foundation for a good working relationship. The parties involved need to face rather unfamiliar situations, the differences in assumptions, attitudes and expectations and their own private fears about their role in the alliance. This is probably made more difficult because of cultural differences, communication barriers, suspicions about the motives of partner(s) and latent opposition within the partner companies.

Social aspects like trust and a good relationship are important for collaboration. Kelly, Schaan & Joncas (2002; 18) developed several guidelines for the creation of the ‘relationship’ enterprise:

- Systematically evaluate the relationship dimension of potential partners
- Negotiate with relationship-building in mind
- Choose managers and staff for the alliance based on their interpersonal and collaborative skills as well as their substantive knowledge
- Start small – focus on projects that will provide fast feedback and serve as a means of building a collaborative culture
- Identify cultural differences and develop means to reconcile them
- Establish strong communication linkages between partners and staff involved in the alliance
- Create measures to evaluate the quality of the relationship and monitor them on a systematic basis
- Always be constructive in interactions with your partner

When considering partnership, social factors and relationships need to be taken into account, but at what time is this more critical than other times? Larson (1992) states that the social dimensions of transactions are very important while managing the exchange structures. Especially if potential partners have not collaborated before, social aspects play an important role. Chung, Singh & Lee (2000) found that status similarity and social capital have a stronger effect on alliance formation in an initial deal compared to secondary offerings. A first formation is more uncertain and has more doubts than in a second offering. Three sets of variables have been discussed: resource complementarity, status similarity and social capital of involved companies. All three variables discussed by Chung, Singh & Lee (2000) have an important role in the selection of partners. When facing greater uncertainty organizations tend to rely on other organizations they can trust and thus the status of a potential partner will be considered more.

Partnerships means managing relationships and these relationships change throughout a collaboration process. Dwyer, Schurr & Oh (1987) identify five general phases for the evolution of relationships: (1) awareness, (2) exploration, (3) expansion, (4) commitment and (5) dissolution. In each stage, the perception of how parties regard each other goes through a small transition. During the development of the relationship trust, commitment and disengagement are critical elements of the process.
Forming partnerships in turn is connected to forming and/or developing a network. Bronder & Pritzl (1992) discuss the change in corporate structures from an integrated unit with clearly defined borders to a network consisting of strategic alliances, operative cooperation with its own value chain activities. This is a big change: inter-organizational networks could help companies to find the appropriate partners (Gulati & Gargiulo, 1997). They even state that the network from prior ties could influence the emergence of future new ties. Networks could in that case thus be seen as the result of past organizational behaviour and influences or even drives future action. Larson (1992) states that in the formation process of a network, reputation, trust, reciprocity and mutual interdependence plays a significant role.

Trust and relationships are therefore very important elements within partnerships and networks. According to Uzzi (1997) trust is seen as an explicit and primary feature of a firm’s embedded ties. Trust is about the belief that a partner would not act at another’s expense out of self-interest and that a partner would not try to take advantage of another partner. Furthermore, it means that partners would assume and interpret each other’s motives and actions the best way possible. Assuming the best of each other is required to be able to speed up decision making.

Trust and willingness alone however are not enough. Lorange, Roos & Brønn (1992) suggests that to successfully develop a strategic alliance, planning as well as the pursued strategy needs to be suitable. Some critical factors for the (ongoing) success of a collaboration include the match between partners, the attention given to create the alliance team, the conviction of all important parties, both internal as well as external, about the alliance and the development of a solid business plan. Elmuti & Kathawala (2001) suggest that strategic alliance management should ensure the fulfilment of requirements and the early identification of potential problems. A management structure needs to be developed to fit the new organizational arrangement of a strategic alliance.

Eisenhardt & Schoonhoven (1996) summarize the findings in literature very well: firms could be cooperating because they needed to, were able to and maybe because it was popular. Strategic alliance formation is a complex phenomenon: it involves strategic as well as social factors which operate in a logic of needs and opportunities for cooperation. Firms were likely to form an alliance if they were in vulnerable strategic positions or strong social positions. Failing to take either strategic or social explanations into account leads to an incomplete image of alliance formation.

### 2.4 Collaboration process and strategy

To increase the success of an alliance, its objectives must be based on the corporate objectives beforehand (Holmberg & Cummings, 2009). Involved parties must take that into account during the design of the alliance, the search for partners and the analysis of partner-fits. This means that companies should first analyze their own position and find their objectives, vision and mission before engaging in an alliance. Holmberg & Cummings (2009) developed a partner selection process for strategic alliances (Figure 2): (1) align corporate and alliance objectives, (2) formulate critical success factors, (3) map current and potential partners and (4) analyze current and potential partners. Although this process
seems promising to find the ‘right’ partner, all the decisions are made from one perspective of the partnership: The initiator determines the alliance objectives, decides on the success factors, look for potential partners and analyzes them from their own perspective. It seems there is only little room for the eventual partners to give and implement their views into the base of the partnership.

Figure 2: A strategic management-based alliance partner selection process (Holmberg & Cummings, 2009: 172)

Figure 3: Management concept for strategic alliances (conceptual overview) (Bronder & Pritzl, 1992: 413)
Bronder & Pritzl (1992) outlines four critical phases to develop strategic alliances (Figure 3): (1) strategic decision for an alliance, (2) alliance configuration, (3) partner selection and (4) alliance management. Alliances between independent companies need to be understood as a continuous process of negotiation and finding agreements while dealing with different uncertainties: negotiation, management, adapting, learning and reviewing are therefore important elements in collaboration.

Gray (1989) proposed a model describing the three stages in which collaboration develops: (1) problem-setting, (2) direction-setting and (3) implementation. Problem-setting includes the identification of key stakeholders and issues. The goal of direction-setting is to identify and share interpretations about the future collaboration and common purpose. For the implementation phase, the stakeholders need to institutionalize the shared meanings arisen throughout the process. Whether or not implementation is required depends on the objectives of the collaboration.

Figure 4: Process framework of the development of cooperative inter-organizational relationships (Ring & Ven, 1994: 97)

Its outline is comparable to the model from Ring & Ven (1994) who identified (1) negotiation, (2) commitment and (3) implementation (Figure 4). These three stages are subsequently connected to each other, but each of them is also linked to (4) assessment throughout the process. Even though the outline is comparable, there is a difference in interpretation. Gray’s model implies a more technical and business driven approach, while Ring & Ven’s focus more on the human and psychological aspects. The latter seems to be more appropriate for Vietnam since Vietnamese attach a high value to informal meetings and personal relationships. Meyer, Tran & Nguyen (2006) found that during a first (business) meeting, Vietnamese prefer informal information about the person and the company first. Such an introduction to get to know each other is important since
Vietnamese are often reluctant to commit to anything before they know their (business) partners. This implies that the initiating-phase of the collaboration process consists of informal meetings and needs to be gradually shifted towards commitments.

Since collaboration requires a lot of resources, especially time and energy, an advice from Thomson & Perry (2006) is: “Don’t collaborate unless you are willing to thoughtfully consider and educate yourself about the nature of the process involved” (Thomson & Perry, 2006: 28)

2.5 Collaboration in Vietnam: why and how

There are many challenges in Vietnam’s furniture industry that makes it harder to improve the country’s business environment: the material shortage is increasing, the global (furniture) market share is still modest, Vietnam has little design expertise and above all many businesses are relatively small in size and financially relatively weak (Scheela & Dinh, 2001). To face several of these challenges, Vietnamese SMEs could collaborate and join hands to lower cost, increase capacity, share expertise and to improve their competitiveness.

Giroud (2007) stated that the past of Malaysia could serve as a lesson for Vietnam. Even though the goal of the article is to increase the investments of multinationals in Vietnam’s local suppliers, it does point out several useful motivations and suggestions related to this project to improve Vietnam’s business and collaboration environment. One of the suggestions was to promote Vietnam’s competitive environment and enhancing domestic firms’ capabilities. The chairman of the Vietnam Chamber of Commerce and Industry (VCCI) has said at a conference that “business linkage is key to sharpening competitive edge” (Viet Nam News, 2012). This implies that (domestic) business linkage increases the competition within the country which has a positive effect on partnerships with (foreign) multinationals.

Vietnam therefore has to strengthen its foundation of competitiveness of domestic firms by supporting entrepreneurship, fostering the creation of new industries and companies and promoting private investments in the form of, among others R&D and training (Giroud, 2007). Many local suppliers are small-scale (SMEs) and need to improve their production, marketing and distribution systems. Even though some of these weaknesses could be improved by collaboration with foreign companies, to achieve these partnerships Vietnamese SMEs first need to improve their preconditions for the creation of linkages with other firms and knowledge sharing. If these competitive foundations are in place, Vietnam could implement further policies to target partnerships and knowledge sharing between foreign and local firms. It could therefore be stated that local companies should first improve the domestic or at least the organisation’s situation for collaboration before being able to pursue partnerships with foreign firms.

Giroud (2007) explained that in Malaysia, a cluster-based approach was adopted to improve the creation of links between local firms (to attract foreign investors) and that this would also be possible for Vietnam once the local supply base is sufficiently developed. Clusters are companies and institutions in a certain field of expertise or industry, concentrated within a particular geographical area (Porter, 1998): participating companies will be able to operate on a bigger scale without actually merging with others and without sacrificing flexibility. Clusters
could improve the competition of companies by increasing productivity, driving direction and pace of innovations and by stimulating the formation of new businesses to expand and strengthening the cluster (Porter, 1998). Requirements for the forming of successful clusters are (1) locations with an efficient infrastructure, experienced suppliers, etc.; (2) local engagement by stakeholders for interpersonal relationships and social involvement to bind the cluster together; (3) an upgrade-able cluster to strengthen its competitive position and (4) collective collaboration of clusters to connect public and private sectors.

Ho Chi Minh is one of the biggest cities in Vietnam, many SMEs and many industries are centered around that area which offers opportunities and potential to create clusters to increase the local business linkage and develop the local supply base. This project deals with design and production firms mainly, which means that the supply chain is an important element within those firms. Thus it seems logical to focus on developing partnerships throughout the supply chain.

Collaborating on the supply chain offers advantages on the aspects of inventory control, purchasing and order fulfilment, but also benefits as increased efficiency and cost savings across many different business processes. Collaboration in a supply chain could help increase the competitive edge to allow all partners to prevail and expand (Sahay, 2003). Barratt (2004) and Simatupang & Sridharan (2002) discuss horizontal, vertical and lateral supply chain collaboration. Organizations engaging in horizontal supply chain collaboration are collaborating with one or more (unrelated or competing) organizations. The vertical supply chain collaboration takes place at different levels of the supply chain (Caputo & Mininno, 1996). According to Reid & Sanders (2007; 112) vertical integration is “a measure of how much of the supply chain is actually owned or operated by the manufacturing company”. A vertical supply chain collaboration strategy is thus a partnership between suppliers and buyers (or producer and distributor (Caputo & Mininno, 1996)) within the supply chain. The collaboration strategy regarding lateral collaboration/integration is a combination of the vertical and horizontal supply chain collaboration strategies (Soosay, Hyland & Ferrer, 2008): It combines the benefits and sharing capabilities of both vertical and horizontal collaboration within the supply chain. If organizations are able to set procedures in dealing with partners, share knowledge and processes, and jointly plan and invest with partners, organizations could improve operations, systems and processes in the supply chain (Soosay, Hyland & Ferrer, 2008).

Hoffmann (2005) argues that forming alliances would increase in importance when considering strategy implementation and company performance. This also seems to be the case in Vietnam (Viet Nam News, 2012g). When considering partnerships, Radas & Božić (2009) found that entrepreneurs prefer to collaborate with peers like other entrepreneurs or people from their social networks. A possible goal for Vietnamese SMEs is therefore to pursue cluster formation and supply chain collaboration which could help to increase inter-company collaboration.

2.6 Conclusion literature review

What is collaboration?
The reviewed definitions of collaborations all had a different focus, but they had some aspects in common. Collaboration is a process of multiple organizations negotiating, sharing and working together to achieve advantages or improvements for that organization. Strategic alliance is a specific form of collaboration and has a stronger emphasis on the mutually beneficial strategic
objectives.

**Risks, motivations and success factors**

Even though collaboration is the main focus of this project, it is not easy to achieve. Different kinds of risks and challenges are mentioned and most of them involves **failing to clearly define collaboration and cultural, management and social issues**. Furthermore, a lot of time and energy is needed to develop partnerships.

Organizations would not go through all this trouble if there would not be a desirable outcome. There are different motivations for different organizations to develop collaboration. Most of them are because **organizations want to gain new competitive advantages, cost reductions, quality improvement or to decrease the risk of doing business** in general and when expanding. These strategic explanations are not the only motivation for collaboration: social explanations, like **learning from each other, connections, scale and expertise** are also seen as reasons to engage in partnerships.

Despite the challenges, developing partnerships could be very beneficial if set-up and managed in the right way. This ‘right’ way could be represented by the success factors mentioned in different literature. These success factors include **commitment of involved parties, certain degree of similarity, capable management, evaluations and communication**, which are more pointed towards strategic factors. More social success factors are **involvement, informal meetings, assumed cultural differences, certain degree of independence and willingness to take risks** instead of scarified parties.

These risks, motivations and success factors need to be taken into account when initiating collaboration. They determine and influence the process and success of the operation and thus have a big impact on the outcome of partnerships.

**Partner selection and negotiation**

Part of the initiation phase of developing a partnership is that organizations need to find partners. After the selection, these potential partners need to negotiate about the set-up of the collaboration. During these negotiations, the resources each involved organization owns are important trade assets for the regarding organization. **Firms with many resources and pre-existing (network) ties get more opportunities for collaboration.** The first could be explained by the reason why companies would collaborate. As said before, companies collaborate because they want to gain an advantage. This advantage often is related to obtaining a resource an organization needs but does not possess itself. The reason that existing (network) ties offers more opportunities for collaboration is because pre-existing ties decreases the (chance on) uncertainties, relationship issues, mistrust, unfamiliar situations and ambiguities, especially in the start phase. Organizations without such pre-existing ties need to deal with these issues, their fear about their roles in the alliance and learn to work together.

This challenge becomes bigger because of cultural, communication and social barriers. Trust and relationships are therefore very important elements within collaborations. These social factors however, are not enough to make partnerships work: organizations need to plan and manage the collaboration process which among others includes the development of a business plan. To give a complete image of **collaboration and, more specifically, strategic alliances involves both strategic and social factors.**
**Collaboration process and strategy**

To develop a collaboration, all involved parties need to follow a (general) process to come to an agreement on the relationship, responsibilities and commitments regarding the partnership. Involved parties need to take into account that **the objectives of collaboration need to be based on the corporate objectives beforehand to increase its chance on success:** organizations first need to analyze their own position, objectives, vision and mission. It is therefore important to select partners and develop a partnership wisely. Several models or processes from literature are mentioned in this literature review.

Forming partnerships is an important way to build on a network. Several processes are reported by literature:

- Bronder & Pritzl (1992) outline four critical phases in their process to develop an alliance
- Gray (1989) (in Jamal & Getz, 1995) proposed a three-stage model describing the development of collaboration
- Ring & Ven (1994) presented a process framework of collaboration

Each one of them could be used to help Vietnamese SMEs to initiate collaboration. The process outlines of the latter two are comparable, but Gray’s model has a more technical and business driven approach while Ring & Ven (1994) put more emphasis on the human and psychological aspects.

Vietnamese attach high value to informal meetings and personal relationships when doing business. Because of that a more social focussed approach would be more suitable. The model of Ring & van de Ven (1994) will thus be used to assess whether the developed tool in this project satisfies the collaboration process of negotiation, commitment, implementation and assessment.

**Collaboration in Vietnam**

Vietnamese companies need to face many challenges in their business environment. A very important challenge is the relatively small sized and financially weak businesses. To improve their competitiveness, Vietnamese SMEs could collaborate to obtain resources and share risks.

One of the issues found in literature is that **the business linkage environment of Vietnam is not well developed which has a negative effect on the country’s competitiveness.** Several solutions offered in literature are to support entrepreneurship, foster the creation of new industries and companies and to promote private investments (e.g. R&D and training) to strengthen the foundation for competitiveness of Vietnamese domestic firms. These solutions could be the starting point for the tool offered in this project and form the motivation to focus on collaboration.

Malaysia could serve as a lesson for Vietnam when it comes to the improvement of the collaboration environment. In Malaysia, a cluster-based approach was adopted to improve the creation of links between local companies (and to attract foreign investors). That would also be possible for Vietnam once the local supply base is sufficiently developed. This suggests that Vietnamese SMEs should increase and improve partnerships in supply chains which could stimulate the development of clusters around one of its biggest cities, Ho Chi Minh. Many businesses are centered around this major city and thus clusters would fit this city’s situation well since it allows companies to share knowledge and facilities easily without losing their flexibility.
Most facilities however, are already clustered around Ho Chi Minh because it is one of the business centers in Vietnam. In addition, the future users of the tool developed in this project are member-companies of HAWA who mainly focus on the furniture industry and are engaged in production, and maybe even design, activities. Since such natural clustering is already present in Ho Chi Minh and because of the characteristics of these end-users, cluster-forming does not seem to be an appropriate objective for this project or tool. **This research project therefore focuses on the development of (local) supply chains through inter-organizational collaboration. The project aims to encourage partnerships within supply chains of different firms to help increase the competitive edge of the involved parties.**
This chapter will present the research method adapted throughout this project. Chapter 3.1 will explain the different phases of the project and Chapter 3.2 discusses the shifting focus of the research. Furthermore, Chapter 3.3 presents the data-gathering method of the project.

![Figure 5: Phases of the research project](image-url)
3.1 Phases of the research project

The outline of this project consists of four main phases: (1) Orientation & focus, (2) data gathering, (3) analysis & interpretation and (4) tool design (Figure 5). The first phase is about orientation and focus of the research project. This orientation and focus phase starts by finding inspiration through own experiences, interests and educational background, after which relevant literature is reviewed to find gaps which could be the focus of this project. These gaps could be seen as problem areas for which a solution need to be found. After the relevant problem areas are identified a selection needs to be made about the focus of the project. The focus in this project will be adjusted if needed according to the interviews with Vietnamese business people and Western experts. This will be an iterative process and changes in focus could also lead to changes in the (questions of the) interviews.

After gathering data through the interviews, the data needs to be organized and categorized to get an overview of the gathered data. Subsequently, in the ‘analysis & interpretation’ phase, the data relevant to the selected focus needs to be analyzed and interpreted so it is possible to apply these insights to the rest of the project. These insights will form the framework, criteria and context of the solution and will therefore support the development of several concepts or ideas. This search for alternatives will be done by looking for inspiration throughout this project’s process, by brainstorming and by looking for existing solutions for the problem. A concept needs to be chosen based on the determined criteria after which the concept will be elaborated on its design in the ‘tool design’ phase.

The design concept then needs to be pre-tested with individuals in the field of design and/or collaboration. In addition a test needs to be carried out with potential end-users to test its effectiveness in the Vietnamese business context. The possible adjustments derived from the different (pre-/user-)tests will be considered and implemented to improve the design of the tool. These improvements will lead to the final design of the tool in this research project. Even though this will be the final design for the project, the tool will stay open for adjustments in later stages to further develop and elaborate the tool and to ensure or improve its effectiveness.

3.2 Shifting focus of project

The initial goal of the project was to develop a (process) tool that would help Vietnamese companies to come up with a collaboration strategy and marketing strategy in parallel. Several interviews however, showed early in the process that Vietnamese companies are not able to collaborate properly yet which means that developing a collaboration strategy in this project and context is not appropriate. After all, companies do not really want to collaborate. Furthermore, the strategy for horizontal supply chain collaboration does not seem to be implemented in many current Vietnamese SMEs. This project therefore needs to take a step back to the very start of the collaboration process when there is only the intention of engaging in collaboration. This is the stage when a company decides that collaboration is needed to, for example increase efficiency, without knowing specifically with whom, about what, how and when. To increase the chance of a successful partnership, a Vietnamese SME needs to have a more open attitude towards collaboration to create an increased space for trust, honesty and commitment to grow.
Instead of developing a tool to create a collaboration and marketing strategy, a tool will be designed to open the mindsets and attitudes of companies towards collaboration; to prepare them for collaboration and increase the chance of success. Starting point would be to make Vietnamese SMEs realize the actual potential benefits and opportunities collaboration could bring. In addition trust- and relationship-building needs to be stimulated and the tool should provide its users the elements needed to kick-start the initiation of collaboration. The tool will be used throughout the very first stage of collaboration and sensitive topics should therefore be avoided or approached carefully as much as possible. It should support the growth of openness and willingness among users to share their thoughts on certain topics. The tool should at some point, also address more serious and in-depth issues to be able to offer concrete and usable outcomes for the more formal activities later on in the process.

3.3 Data gathering: Interviews

For this research, the main form of data gathering is through interviews. Interviews could be used for qualitative research to allow interviewees to tell their story (Christiaans et al., 2004). Interviews could be used to gain information about feelings, attitudes, knowledge, standpoints or opinions (Baarda & Goede, 2006). Since the goal of the research is to understand the current situation, attitudes and possibilities regarding collaboration, interviewing seems to be an appropriate method in this case to gather data. During the interview, the interviewer determines the specific questions to ask and to what extent a topic needs to be discussed (Christiaans et al., 2004). This method of data gathering could be called in-depth or open interviews and is a good approach for the interviews in this project. To provide more guidance during the interview, an interview guide will be developed to outline the meeting.

Before interviewing local companies, more knowledge about collaboration and networks needed to be gained. Since the Netherlands is more developed in the sense of collaboration, it is a convenient start of the research to gather experiences and knowledge from Dutch or other Western experts in the field of collaboration and networks (see APPENDIX A for interview guides for experts). These interviews were used as background information to offer general criteria, success factors, pitfalls and theories which could also be sources of inspiration for the development of the tool. In addition, these interviews could help to prepare for other interviews: some of the findings from Western experts needed to be checked to see if this is also valid in Vietnam. The interviews with experts would in that case provide a direction and some guidelines to set up the interviews with entrepreneurs in Vietnam.

The questions for the experts were formed based on their expertise, their focus of their work and the industry or field they are in. It was therefore not possible to have one specific interview guide for all experts; some questions however, were applicable to all Western interviewees which resulted in a general interview guide to which more specific and expertise related questions were added for each individual expert. The general questions from the interview guide are mainly about collaboration strategies, networking, success factors, pitfalls and the current trends and developments they observed lately.

To get data and information about the companies, their current (business) situations and Vietnam, more specifically Ho Chi Minh City, interviews were held with owners or high-positioned managers from Vietnamese SME’s who joined the
SPIN project. In addition to being a source of information about the company, its context and environment, these interviews also had the purpose to adjust the orientation of the project to fit the Vietnamese culture and situation. By interviewing people operating within the Vietnamese culture, more insights about the culture, values and customs in Vietnam could be gained. These insights were partially gained through the answers of the interviewees, but the more subtle and sensitive insights were found through observations during the interviews.

As a Western researcher and thus a relative outsider of the Vietnamese culture, the understanding about the country needed to be increased to be able to come up with a solution that fit well within the culture and its customs. By doing so, the chance of acceptance of the solution and its effectiveness will be higher. As a result, not only questions about collaboration and marketing were asked, but also country-related topics were addressed during the interviews (see Appendix B for interview guide for SMEs in Vietnam).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Topics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Vision &amp; mission of company</td>
<td>- Core activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Target market(s)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Core competences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Core values</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Mission &amp; vision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Marketing &amp; collaboration</td>
<td>- Willingness to collaborate (on marketing)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Possible improvements collaboration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Success factors collaboration</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Ideal collaboration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Perception on complementary products*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Possibilities collaboration with complementary producer*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Collaboration in value chain</td>
<td>- Draw value chain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Current collaboration on value chain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Negotiation process (agreements, terms, conditions, etc.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Bottle necks collaboration process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Business &amp; marketing</td>
<td>- Current marketing activities</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Distribution channels</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Market introductions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Market research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- General issues of marketing/branding in Vietnam</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Note: this question is added later in the process due to change of project focus

Table 1: Themes and topics of interviews local Vietnamese SMEs

The questions were divided into the following themes: (1) vision and mission of the company, (2) marketing and collaboration, (3) collaboration throughout the value chain and (4) business and marketing (Table 1 for the topics addressed per theme). The first theme was intended as an introduction into the interview to understand the company better. Because the interview was about collaboration, the solution developed in this project will influence the entire company. It was therefore important to know the ‘basics’ of the regarding company to be able to better understand the interviewee’s answers on the subsequent questions. The topics mentioned in Table 1 are part of the interview guide. This means that these topics were almost always addressed to during an interview.

In addition to the questions in the interview guide of SMEs in Vietnam (APPENDIX B) however, based on the answers of the interviewee new questions
arose and were asked during the interview as well. Because these questions were improvised and asked when relevant, they are not shown in the interview guide. Furthermore, changes to the interview guide were made throughout the project based on relevant and important findings from previous interviews.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interviewee</th>
<th>Company &amp; Position</th>
<th>Duration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Western experts</td>
<td>Bart (Delft University of Technology, IDE: Valorisation Manager)</td>
<td>65 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Jo (Delft University of Technology, IDE: Professor on Reliability &amp; Durability)</td>
<td>41 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Wouter (Enviu (Innovation): Manager Research &amp; Innovation)</td>
<td>64 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Wendy (Brabantse Ontwikkelings Maatschappij: Project Manager Development &amp; Innovation)</td>
<td>58 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Duygu (Delft University of Technology, IDE: PhD Graduate Design for Sustainability)</td>
<td>Approx. 60 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Eelco (SNV Nepal (Dutch Development Organisation): Senior Advisor / Team Leader)</td>
<td>72 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Westerners working in Vietnam</td>
<td>Gerwin (Green Office (SPIN Project): Design for Sustainability Explorer)</td>
<td>Approx. 45 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Gerhard (HAWA: Business Development Advisor)</td>
<td>110 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>James (Tre Vang (Bamboo Furniture Producer): Director)</td>
<td>119 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>August (UMA (Furniture Retailer): President)</td>
<td>120 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vietnamese business people</td>
<td>Phuong (Danh Moc (Kitchen Producer): Architect &amp; Owner)</td>
<td>100 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dung (Danh Moc (Kitchen Producer): Project Manager)</td>
<td>115 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tam (Gillimex (OEM Home Appliance Manufacturer): Project Manager – Lighting &amp; Metal)</td>
<td>102 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dung A Chau (Bamboo Furniture Producer): Director</td>
<td>90 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Son (Home and Garden (Furniture Producer/Retailer): Sales Manager)</td>
<td>Approx. 30 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nguyen (Nha Viet (Architectural Firm): Architect &amp; Owner)</td>
<td>Approx. 60 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tuyen (Artex Saigon: Manager handicraft department)</td>
<td>Approx. 30 min</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Overview interviewees and relevant information

Throughout the project, 17 interviews were held from which 6 with Western experts, 4 with Westerners working in Vietnam and 7 with local Vietnamese business people. Table 2 will show an overview of the interviewees including their name, company, position and duration of the interview. During the interviews, notes were taken by the interviewer and most of the times the meetings were also audio recorded. All conducted interviews needed to be documented in written summaries which were used to create an overview of the results and data.

Subsequently, the information needed to be organized, categorized and clustered to create an overview of the (relevant) findings and to find valuable insights from the interviews for the conceptualization and design of the tool. The categorization and clustering process will be discussed later in the next chapter.
PART II: Data Gathering
4. RESULTS & INSIGHTS

This chapter discusses the results and insights of the data gathering phase of this project. First Chapter 4.1 will discuss the criteria for collaboration indicated by interviewees. In Chapter 4.2, results regarding the Vietnamese (business) context are presented. Chapter 4.3 discusses other relevant findings from the interviews, while Chapter 4.4 shows how these results are organized and categorized to be able to use them for the development of the solution.

4.1 Results: Criteria of collaboration

The summaries from the 17 interviews with experts and entrepreneurs (Table 2 - Overview interviewees) could be found in APPENDIX C. This chapter will only describe the main findings and insights from the interviews. First of all, the interviews led to a list of criteria and requirements for collaboration (see APPENDIX D). The criteria mentioned in the appendix should be seen as case-specific; criteria that only apply to the industry and/or the company of the regarding interviewee. Some of them are therefore very specific and concrete. In addition, in many cases all interviewees together have mentioned the same or similar criteria multiple times. An overview of the most common and significant criteria for collaboration is therefore shown in Table 3. The criteria in this table are selected from the list in the appendix and will be used for the tool development. The selection is based on the following:

- Is the criterion mentioned by multiple interviewees?
- Is the criterion general enough to apply to Vietnam?
- Is the criterion general enough to apply to the entire furniture industry?

“Without trust there is no collaboration possible” - Phuong, 2012

Criteria that got a positive answer on any of the above mentioned questions are selected as guidelines for the tool development to increase the effectiveness of the tool to initiate collaboration. All ‘final’ criteria need to be considered ‘important enough’ to be added to the selection. This is the activity for the next phase: Whether or not a criterion is important enough is determined by looking at its potential impact on collaboration. This is only done by considering the causality of the criterion; what would happen with a partnership if that criterion is not present and is that effect significant on the success of the partnership? The final step is to look at all the selected criteria and to see if some of them
shows significant similarity to be joined together into one term. The result of this selection procedure is shown in Table 3 - Criteria for collaboration. Even though more interpretations are made in this stage than usual, it is needed to be able to offer an overview of all the relevant results without including a several pages long table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criterion</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>An initiator</td>
<td>The initiator is the person who is very committed to the project and makes sure progress is made (usually it is the person who started the idea or the project). The presence of an initiator will increase progress of the collaboration process. Through his/her commitment, the initiator is the driving force that keeps the project going. Without an initiator the project will be and stay open-ended because no one is especially committed towards the project or collaboration (Persoon, 2012).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A common goal among participants (including interdependencies)</td>
<td>A common goal is needed to keep participants committed. This includes the presence of interdependencies; without them there is no reason for people to collaborate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interests or benefits for all stakeholders</td>
<td>When initiating a collaboration it is important to make sure that all stakeholders have an interest in the project, otherwise they will not be willing to spend resources on it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trust</td>
<td>Trust is one of most important requirements for collaboration: without trust there is no open communication, no transparency and no commitment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open and clear communication</td>
<td>Open and clear communication is needed to build trust over time, in addition it is important to make clear agreements on issues to prevent confusion and frustration.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honesty and transparency</td>
<td>Honesty and transparency is necessary to build a long-term and healthy relationship with partners.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allow others their (beneficial) results</td>
<td>Being able to allow others to gain their interests is required for collaboration since gaining interests is one of the motivations for companies to collaborate. If you do not allow others their gain, then others will also obstruct you in your pursuit, eliminating the goal of partnerships.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Perception of) a durable relationship (so, friends first, business later)</td>
<td>Allowing partners to perceive of being in a durable relationship will decrease the chance of them breaching contracts or agreements. If partners feel that they are in a trustworthy and healthy relationship, there is no reason for them to spoil that for a fast, but short-term gain (Baan, 2012)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competence and capacity</td>
<td>Companies’ competences and capacity is what they can add to a partnership. Interdependencies form collaboration: whether or not it is useful to collaborate depends on the potential-partner’s available competences and capacity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding; in each others interests and characteristics (personalities)</td>
<td>Understanding each other is one of the factors that could increase trust among partners.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Understand the benefits of collaboration

Understanding the benefits of collaboration is necessary to understand why all that time, energy and resources are spend on a partnership with others. Without that understanding, collaboration seems pointless and there will be no commitment to the project.

Commitment to project

Commitment to collaboration is what gets ideas and plans going. Without commitment every aspect of the collaboration will stay rather superficial and no one will be driven enough to face the occurring challenges.

Credibility

Interdependencies are what bring potential partners together on the short term: they show that partners need each other. To sustain partnerships on the long term however requires credibility. Credibility could therefore represent trustworthiness, but also giving each other the benefit of the doubt and believing that partners' actions are based on good intentions.

Independent party as mediator/facilitator

An independent party is needed to guide the process and offer help in case of conflict to prevent respectively stagnation and escalation.

| Understand the benefits of collaboration | Understanding the benefits of collaboration is necessary to understand why all that time, energy and resources are spend on a partnership with others. Without that understanding, collaboration seems pointless and there will be no commitment to the project. |
| Commitment to project | Commitment to collaboration is what gets ideas and plans going. Without commitment every aspect of the collaboration will stay rather superficial and no one will be driven enough to face the occurring challenges. |
| Credibility | Interdependencies are what bring potential partners together on the short term: they show that partners need each other. To sustain partnerships on the long term however requires credibility. Credibility could therefore represent trustworthiness, but also giving each other the benefit of the doubt and believing that partners' actions are based on good intentions. |
| Independent party as mediator/facilitator | An independent party is needed to guide the process and offer help in case of conflict to prevent respectively stagnation and escalation. |

Table 3: Criteria for collaboration (derived from interviews)

4.2 Results: Vietnamese (business) context

Following the interviews certain trends and possible (undesired) situations in the business context are identified. Trends are in this project defined as developments on the national or even global level. The (undesired) situations in the business context that could occur or is already present could influence the success of running a business and will be called 'influences'. For now, 'influences' is still a very general cluster of findings but it will be further specified and filtered later in the process. An overview of the trends and influences derived from all interviews are respectively shown in Table 4 and Table 5. These trends and influences are (personal) statements from interviewees who were born in Vietnam or have been living and working there for significant amount of time. The statements should therefore not be seen as facts, but as issues or situations perceived by interviewees who work and live in Vietnam.

The main trends mentioned by interviewees are about economy, the changing market preferences and the business environment (Table 4). Especially the findings about economy and the Vietnamese business environment show why collaboration is becoming more important and could support companies to think about their starting points and shared interests for partnerships. The found trends regarding the changing market could also be reasons for companies to collaborate: e.g. if a company wants to start promoting their products through smart-phones by developing an app, it might be more efficient to outsource or to jointly develop to share costs (and thus collaborate) instead of developing it themselves. The same holds if a company for example wants to produce more natural products to address to the market needs, it needs new suppliers and new production processes. The company could then build up a relationship with its new suppliers to increase its knowledge on the new materials and how to treat the materials to get the best out of it.

The influences shown in Table 5 need to be taken into account throughout
the project since it explains a lot of the behaviour of Vietnamese business people. Especially the findings on the Vietnamese business environment – on mindsets, culture and customs – are needed to understand why Vietnamese business people act the way they do. The Vietnamese business environment – on profitability – show some of the reasons why Vietnamese SMEs are struggling to survive and could be used as a starting point for collaboration. This project focuses on collaboration initiation in general, but for many companies increasing profitability and turnover are reasons for them to change and adapt. The market (share) of companies could therefore be a good incentive for the SMEs to consider collaboration.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trends:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Economy</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• High inflation in Vietnam: Prices of products, goods and materials are increasing every year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• High fees for retailers in Vietnam: It is becoming more expensive to ask retailers to put a producer's products into the shelves because of inflation and the costs are not justified due to low sales</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• High fees for market research in Vietnam: It is becoming more expensive to do market research while the results do not always represent reality and thus are not always usable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• High transportation costs: Transportation costs are higher due to increasing oil price</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Insecurity due to economic crisis: The economic crisis causes many insecurities regarding a person's financial situation and the related personal stress, but also regarding organisation structures of companies, to grow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Less stable market: Because of the high inflation in Vietnam, the market becomes less stable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Market</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Preference for natural products: Vietnamese people's preference is shifting towards more natural products</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Increasing family orientation: Family is becoming more important for Vietnamese</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• DIY: Do-It-Yourself furniture, like self-assembly kits are becoming more popular in Vietnam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Increased importance of heritage: (Cultural/Traditional) heritage becomes more important for Vietnamese</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Sampling: It becomes more common to offer samples to (large-scale) clients for quality-checks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Transition from mobile phone to smart-phone: Smart-phones are becoming more common and are replacing mobile phones</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Increased importance of sustainability: Worldwide attention for sustainability slowly starts to reach Vietnam as well</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Use of social media: The use of social media becomes more popular and common</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Vietnamese business environment</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Increasing amount of competitors in Vietnamese market: The amount of SMEs in Vietnam is increasing, also competition from international brands is becoming stronger</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Changing perception of partnerships: Partnerships are starting to be seen as a more dynamic phenomenon in Vietnam but is not very common yet (in Western countries this is already a rather common view)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• On collaboration: transition from Do-It-Yourself to Do-It-With-Others: The belief is starting to emerge in Vietnam, that companies could/should not do everything by themselves (DIY) but this belief is not widespread yet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Companies’ need to change from passive to pro-active: Companies need to reach out to (end-) customers to find out what they want so companies could address to those needs and improve business (indirectly, customers therefore influence the direction of those companies). This becomes more important to able to attract customers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4: Trends (derived from interviews)
### Results: Other relevant findings

Next to the criteria for collaboration, the trends and the influences, there are also other findings which offer insights in collaboration in a more abstract way: it is about what collaboration really means and what it is based on. In addition, as part of the findings, possible solutions to overcome the complicated market situation and dynamics of Vietnam are shown in Table 6.

### Table 5: Influences (derived from interviews)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Influences: Vietnamese business environment – on mindsets, culture and customs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Setting up collaboration in VN is hard if companies can do things themselves</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Vietnamese companies are order-oriented and not willing to engage in R&amp;D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Vietnamese business persons have closed mindsets, are hierarchical and authoritarian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Vietnamese companies tend to compete and differentiate themselves on price rather than on design</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Vietnamese do not have a clear structure, plan or strategy for their design process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Vietnamese companies make decisions along the way and take small steps since their main goal is to survive; they often lack clear vision/mission which are seen as advertising or marketing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Vietnamese companies do what is already proven to work, they are not willing to change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Vietnamese are very protective of themselves and thus reluctant to collaborate, especially with competitors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Employees switch jobs easily based on salary because of lack of loyalty, commitment and understanding of their role in the value chain (what do they contribute to?)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Market related influences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• More advertisements needed since character of products is not clear to market/customers yet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Local market is quite small: Vietnamese do not spend a lot of money on furniture compared to Europeans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Perception of Vietnamese that bamboo is cheap</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Vietnamese use products for very long time (Europeans for relatively short time)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Vietnamese cannot see the difference between high class vs average class products: they do not care about origin, design &amp; materials so they make their purchase decisions regarding furniture based on affordable price and personal preference regarding looks, functionality, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Women make more emotional purchases while men look at technical and functional aspects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Vietnamese are loyal to brands when they find something they like</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Vietnamese are more need-driven and thus sometimes more demanding customers (Westerners buy brand for the brand sometimes)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Vietnamese have better skills in determining/estimating the price and quality of a product compared to Westerners</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vietnamese business environment – on profitability</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• High media costs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• High promotion costs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Protection by law regarding intellectual property, patents, etc. is limited</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Copying behaviour of products (counterfeit/fake) and business approaches is very common in Vietnam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Sometimes (partner) companies do not want to change their organisation or production process to meet their (other) partners’ quality standards</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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4.3 Results: Other relevant findings
Other relevant findings:

**Collaboration is ...**
- Collaboration is understanding each other’s characteristics
- Collaboration is understanding the benefits of collaboration
- Collaboration is trust (building): become friends first, do business later
- Collaboration is giving each other some credit to increase trust and to have a partnership
- The main question is: “How will people in a group behave in the interest of the group and thus in the interest of themselves instead of in the interest of themselves and thus not in the interest of the group?” (Engelen, 2012)

**Possible solutions**
- Vietnamese SME’s should find connections to the (local) market for their products
- Vietnamese SME’s should collaborate with (local) retailers since retailers know what is desired and for what prices
- Interests of small companies should be combined for them to be able to access or gain something for which they do not have the resources to get it themselves (Group Access Power / Group Purchasing Power)

Table 6: Other relevant findings (derived from interviews)
Following the findings regarding what collaboration is according to the interviewees; collaboration requires understanding, trust and giving each other credit (Figure 6). It seems that the question of Engelen (2012) could be answered with these three elements. The dilemma Engelen (2012) formulated is: “How will people in a group behave in the interest of the group and thus in the interest of themselves instead of in the interest of themselves and thus not in the interest of the group?” When considering the interview findings about what collaboration is, the answer to this dilemma could be: (1) people need to trust each other, (2) people need to be able to empathize with others, in this case ‘the group’ and (3) people need to think others would do the same for them (reciprocity).

Table 4, 5 and 6 consist of findings found explicitly in interviews, but the observations from the researcher could offer subtle yet insightful findings as well. Throughout the interviews it becomes clear that most Vietnamese SMEs do not have a clear vision, mission, process or marketing strategy. Some interviewees explicitly say so; others are convinced they have, but in their answers it becomes clear that it is actually not the case. Most companies also do not seem to think it is important yet. The value of targeting local market is not clear or too hard to achieve and most companies aim to export. Risks of copycats, stealing, employees leaving and sometimes the lack of clear agreements/expectations lead to failures of partnerships and projects.

Some of the interviewed companies also do not seem to see the benefits of collaboration; they think that it is just not that easy or they do not trust other companies. Furthermore, the companies who indicate to collaborate mostly describe a supplier-buyer relationship which is only based on the delivery of goods and/or sales. A network specialist from the TU Delft indicated that the perception of partnership is changing into a more dynamic, equal and open one (Engelen, 2012). This is however not the case in Vietnam yet. Sometimes, the supplier-buyer relationship includes the retailers, but this does not happen very often. The companies who do work together with retailers indicated that it is not going so well because it is not effective and efficient: the benefits do not compensate the costs. Usually a company has its own showroom and otherwise it is engaged in B2B local or export sales.

It is remarkable that many of the interviewed Vietnamese SMEs cover the entire value chain themselves except the production of raw materials and the retailing or dealership: firms buy the raw materials, produce (some of) the elements themselves, assemble the elements within their own production plant and distribute the end-products to their client. This is a big difference with the Western outsourcing behaviour.

During the interviews it becomes clear that reaching out and communicating with the final customer is not very common as well. Only the companies who have a showroom ask for feedback from visitors once in a while, but often Vietnamese SMEs go with their gut feelings or experiences. There is no real
market research to identify latent market needs. Companies are not market oriented, but rather very production focussed. As said before, most commonly mentioned collaborations are those between suppliers and buyers and, to a limited extent, sometimes involves retailers.

“Vietnamese companies are very protective of themselves and therefore could be reluctant to collaborate with others, especially competitors” - Tam, 2012

Some interviewed companies are very protective and afraid to be robbed, that is why there seems to be no trust between companies operating in Vietnam and why they are very cautious and reluctant when it comes to collaboration. It makes collaboration in the context of Vietnam quite difficult for both local Vietnamese entrepreneurs as well as immigrated foreign entrepreneurs. A Vietnamese entrepreneur states (Phuong, 2012): “It is hard in Vietnam to set up collaboration if companies can do things themselves” and another local interviewee indicates (Tam, 2012): “Vietnamese companies are very protective of themselves and therefore could be reluctant to collaborate with others, especially competitors”. An immigrated entrepreneur in Vietnam even says that he “have had no real positive experience with collaboration”, he “always felt cheated one way or another” (Wingardh, 2012).

“I have had no real positive experience with collaboration; I always felt cheated one way or another” - Wingardh, 2012

Interviews with foreign entrepreneurs in Vietnam were easy, relaxed and open: this could be due to the interviewee’s as well as the author’s Western (cultural) background. During the interviews with Vietnamese entrepreneurs, however some interviewees seem to be cautious and careful with their words. They were glad to participate in the interview and it was very useful, but the feeling arose that not everything on the interviewee’s mind was told. All these findings lead to the belief that Vietnamese companies are not ready yet for a project that requires extensive collaboration between the participants.

4.4 Organization & Categorization

All the findings and insights mentioned earlier are highlights from different interviews. To be able to use these insights, they need to be organized and categorized into different clusters based on their relevance after which the clusters are used for the development of the solution. To come to these clusters the following steps are taken: The highlights of the interviews were first written on a post-it with the name of the regarding interviewee on top. These post-its were then clustered based on similarity or relevance and each cluster was given a name (APPENDIX E - Clustered findings & insights). The main clusters or categories are:

- Current ‘marketing’
- (Negotiation) process
- Problems & pitfalls
- Vietnam vs West
- Trends
An overview of all the interviews together is then created. The main goal of organization and categorization is to get a clear overview of all the relevant information gathered through the interviews and to be able to emerge boundaries for this project and the solution (Figure 7).

The findings in ‘current marketing’, ‘(negotiation) process’ and ‘problems & pitfalls’ represent the business and collaboration context while the insights about ‘Vietnam versus West’ and ‘trends’ form the cultural context (of Vietnam). The findings categorized in ‘success factors’, the ‘ideal situation’ and ‘ideal solutions’ could be seen as the goals of this project. The insights will be used to form the boundaries of this project. In addition, the findings will also be integrated into the solution to enrich the tool, to stimulate usage and to increase the acceptance of and the commitment to the outcomes of the tool within the Vietnamese business environment. Criteria, requirements, conditions and boundaries for the tool are formulated based on the findings from the interviews and the observations (of the context).

This approach is chosen because information from the interviews first needs to be structured and organized to be able to find usable insights. A part of these insights will then be used to develop design criteria, boundaries and framework for the tool, while other findings will be integrated as part of the tool for tool-enrichment.
PART III: Analysis & Interpretation
5. CONCEPTUALIZATION

The development and selection of alternatives will be described in this chapter. First, Chapter 5.1 discusses the different points of departure for the development of alternatives; these points are interpreted and following from the data gathered in the previous stage. Subsequently, Chapter 5.2 presents the methods that will play an important role within the tool. Chapter 5.3 explains the generation process of the concepts and the ones that were considered for tool design, while Chapter 5.4 will report the selection process of the concept that will be further specified, designed and tested.

5.1 Points of departure

The most important and influential finding throughout this project is about ‘trust’. Most of the interviewees stated that trust is very important in a collaboration: “Without trust there is no collaboration possible” (Phuong, 2012), but most of them also indicated that there is no trust due to copy-cats, poor to no protection of the law and past experiences. If Vietnamese companies can, they will do everything themselves which explains the (individual) coverage of almost the entire value chain by most interviewed companies. Vietnamese SMEs are reluctant to collaborate, have a closed attitude and are not very committed to a partnership which is expressed by not fulfilling and meeting agreements.

“First become friends, business comes later” - Phuong, 2012

From the findings it shows that there is a lack of trust and commitment of Vietnamese companies regarding collaboration. Especially among strangers it is hard to trust each other and to build a successful partnership. The “start”- phase of collaboration is the most difficult part because of the lack of trust. This is the phase the tool should support and focus on. Because of that, the tool needs to be light-hearted, playful, enjoyable and informative to keep the participants’ attention without being too direct. Being too direct, serious and formal at the start could trigger a participant’s cautious behaviour and closed attitude, and result in detachment from the other participants. The tool should therefore offer a friendly game-experience in a context perceived to be safe by the participants.
Another important condition of the tool is for it to be informative and useful, but to hold a participant’s attention and to induce a positive attitude towards the tool, it should be enjoyable and entertaining as well. Enjoyment however is a subjective and emotional factor. To be able to measure enjoyment of different media and games, Tamborini et al. (2010) argued that enjoyment could be seen as need satisfaction. The set of needs that Tamborini et al. (2010) revised are from the Self Determination Theory (SDT) which states that individuals are motivated to pursue activities that satisfy basic psychological needs called intrinsic motivations. The set of needs includes the satisfaction of autonomy, competence and relatedness. Autonomy is the sense of making his/her own decision or willingness to do a task; competence is about the need for challenge; and relatedness is about feeling connected or related to others. This finding is applied to recreational activities based on intrinsic rewards (and regardless of extrinsic rewards) as a driving factor. The tool that needs to be developed in this project should be on the border of being a recreational activity and a business tool. From the interviews it is clear that potential partners need to be approached with care and that the start should be carefully shaped to avoid closed attitudes of participants. In that respect, the tool needs to be perceived as an informal activity so participants are not threatened or cautious about what they say or do. Because of this aspect, it seems fair to conclude that the tool to be designed should attempt to satisfy the participants’ needs of autonomy, competence and relatedness to make it enjoyable for them.

![Diagram showing the increase of trust and commitment](image)

Both Vietnamese as well as Western interviewees imply that creating an open attitude requires trust and commitment which could be increased by understanding, interdependency and credibility (Figure 8). Understanding is about understanding the partners, but also about collaboration and the context. Interdependency is what links potential partners together on the short term while
credibility is needed on the long term to keep the partners together. Potential partners could stimulate the process of gaining understanding, interdependency and credibility by sharing experiences, knowledge, opinions, etc.

Another issue found in the interviews held in Vietnam, is that Vietnamese SMEs seem to lack a long term vision: Most of them do not have a clear vision, mission, plan or strategy. Not many companies reflect on, evaluate or explore their own possibilities, strengths, weaknesses, threats and available resources extensively. This could be due to the fact that there is no clear process to follow; ‘Whatever is needed to sell the products’ an employee from Home & Garden (Son, 2012) said. For the tool this means that it should contain an element that introduces Vietnamese companies to following a process, more specifically the collaboration process, and that shows them what a process could consists of.

The criteria for collaboration, the trends and influences could form the framework, conditions or context of the tool which will contribute to the tool’s representation of reality to a certain extent. When considering all the information and data gathered so far, a list of criteria for the tool could be summarized. The tool needs to:

- Open the mindsets and attitudes of companies for collaboration (increase willingness, commitment and enthusiasm)
- Build understanding and trust (incl. credibility) by sharing experiences, opinions and knowledge among participants
- Identify participating companies’ interdependencies
- Increase understanding about how to collaborate and how to develop a partnership
- Increase understanding of how to find possibilities and/or to form strategies
- Identify participating companies’ own strengths, weaknesses, possibilities, threats and available resources
- Offer the opportunity for participants to explore possibilities (in their own context)
- Satisfy the needs of autonomy, competence and relatedness

### 5.2 Methods integrated in tool

#### 5.2.1 Prisoner’s dilemma

The interviews with local Vietnamese and Westerners living in Vietnam show, that overall Vietnamese SMEs do not like collaboration. This often had a lot to do with their past experiences in which they were cheated or lied to. As said before, Vietnamese SMEs are not long term focused and it is therefore understandable that sometimes they decide to choose for short term private interests over collective interests when such a one-time opportunity in a collaboration is offered. By making this decision the companies receive a one-time reward on the short term, but sacrifice a partnership that could have led to long term benefits. Often mentioned issues are copy-cats, excluding a partner halfway the project when (s)he has served his/her main purpose, failing to meet (quality) expectations and agreements are all reasons interviewees have mentioned for not wanting to collaborate. That is also the reason why it becomes tempting to cheat: After all, you never know what will happen in the long run and if you do not take this opportunity now to earn something, you might lose it all if your partner decides to breach the contract.

Because of this mindset Vietnamese SMEs are sceptical about partnerships, especially with people they do not know and did not get introduced to by another
acquaintance. Participants of the workshop therefore need to learn to trust each other and to improve their trustworthiness as well during collaborations since that is the most beneficial situation for all parties. That however is also the issue in this project: How do you get people to trust each other enough to choose for collective interests (related to collaboration) over private interests (not related to collaboration). This situation is comparable to the one in the Prisoner’s Dilemma game.

In the Prisoner’s Dilemma game each participant has two options: “cooperate” or “defect” (Figure 9 - Options & outcomes Prisoner’s Dilemma Game: Kuhn, 2009). The original game starts with two people (person1 and person2) being arrested by the police for a crime. There is not enough evidence so the suspects are interrogated: they each have to decide individually whether to confess (defect) or to remain silent (cooperate). They have to make this decision independent from each other and no communication between the two persons is possible. If person1 and person2 both decide to remain silent, the police have to let both of them go because of lack of evidence. If only one person confesses, then that person will get his/her punishment reduced to community service for helping the police. The one who did not confess will then also be punished for obstructing the police and need to go to prison for 5 years. If both person1 and person2 confess, then they need to share the punishment and each go to prison for 2 years.

In this dilemma it is most beneficial if the two persons cooperate and remain silent (Kuhn, 2009). No matter what the other chooses however, it is always more beneficial to defect (confess) anyway. There is also the Repeated Prisoner’s Dilemma game in which participants will play, and thus make the decision to cooperate or to defect, multiple times in rounds. This way, participants can
base their decision in the next round on the outcomes of a previous round. By choosing this variant of the Prisoner’s Dilemma game, participants get the opportunity to learn that mutual cooperation (in the game) is much more beneficial. This learning curve might let participants realize that maybe this could also be the case in real life.

5.2.2 **SWOT-analysis**

Alliance objectives need to be based on the corporate objectives beforehand to increase the success of collaboration (Holmberg & Cummings, 2009). This implies that before initiating collaboration, companies need to know their position, objectives and direction. From the interviews however, it emerged that in general Vietnamese SMEs do not think about business strategies, vision, mission or long term planning. This means that these firms do not often take the time to evaluate or reflect on their companies. These findings show that including such an element in the tool could be very valuable for its users.

An often used method is the SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities & Threats) analysis. A SWOT analysis is used to analyze a company and its context or environment. A company analysis consists of an internal and an external company analysis (Figure 10). A SWOT analysis represents both internal and external elements of a company. SWOT stands for Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats. The strengths and weaknesses from this method represent the internal company analysis, while the opportunities and threats are the external company analysis. All factors identified as strengths or weaknesses

Figure 10: SWOT analysis - Internal & external company analysis
in the analysis should be seen as relative strengths or weaknesses compared to competitors: strengths are a company’s relative competences compared to its competitor(s) and weaknesses are a company’s relative flaws compared to its competitor(s). Definitions of the elements addressed in SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) (Harvard Business School Press, 2006):

- **Strengths**: “Capabilities that enable your company or unit to perform well – capabilities that need to be leveraged” (Harvard Business School Press, 2006; pp. 2). Those are core competences at which the regarding company is exceptionally good/strong compared to its competitors. Strengths are the business aspects at which the company is better than its competitors and which are also perceived as such by its customers. Strengths or core competences could be a foundation for new or adjusted strategies.

- **Weaknesses**: “Characteristics that prohibit your company or unit from performing well and need to be addressed” (Harvard Business School Press, 2006; pp. 2). Weaknesses in the SWOT analysis are aspects within the regarding company on which performance is relatively low and improvements are needed.

- **Opportunities**: “Trends, forces, events and ideas that your company […] can capitalize on” (Harvard Business School Press, 2006; pp. 2). Opportunities are positive developments or factors in the environment (outside the company) which cannot be controlled by the regarding company (thus external environment). These opportunities or possibilities could and should be identified so it becomes possible for the company to seize these chances to improve business.

- **Threats**: “Possible events or forces outside of your control that your company […] needs to plan for or decide how to mitigate” (Harvard Business School Press, 2006; pp. 3). Threats are negative developments or factors in the environment (outside the company) which are out of the regarding company’s reach of control (thus external environment). These threats are not good for company and business. By identifying them, these developments could be kept into account or monitored to avoid being caught off-guard by them or even to come up with a solution to face these threats effectively.

### 5.3 Concepts of tool

To come up with several alternatives for the tool, inspiration is sought in the interviews held with Vietnamese business people and Western experts, existing solutions for the problem and educational background. First, interesting theories mentioned during interviews and from the author’s educational background are selected for inspiration and starting points:

- Effectual reasoning
- Sinfonie
- Group access / purchasing power
- Market access for the poor
- Objectives & means tree / goal tree
- Scenarios
- Mind-mapping
- Context-mapping

With these theories in mind, brainstorm sessions are held to come up with possible concepts for the tool. The most promising ones, the ones with a high potential to improve understanding, exploration and collaboration are selected.
• **Role play**: Role play between potential partners to understand the different roles and individuals’ behaviours within collaboration. Potential partners will do a role play about initiating a collaboration and the decisions they would make. This would increase the understanding among the participants and about what collaboration is about.

• **Serious gaming (virtual)**: To simulate real-life situations in a fictive, virtual environment to allow potential partners to learn about consequences of making certain decisions. A program needs to be built to simulate initiating a collaboration in the real world. Decisions made in the simulation will have consequences which could be shown within the game.

• **Board game**: Physical board game creating a fictive, general and game-like situation to offer a safe environment for potential partners to get to know each other and explore the possibilities offered by the game. The board will give players a starting point and structure to use as guidance. The board could provide information about the collaboration process and the overall game could offer the participants insights into each other and the collaboration context in Vietnam.

• **View & Just imagine sessions** (Persoon, 2012): First, experts will be consulted to explore different directions (based on developments in the field etc.) which lead to certain themes. Entrepreneurs will then be invited to a session to brainstorm about these themes and about possible actions to undertake. These sessions are helpful to explore possibilities, interdependencies and different scenarios.

• **Card game**: Card game is a physical game to create a fictive, general and game-like situation to offer a safe environment for potential partners to get to know each other and explore the possibilities offered by the game. Cards are versatile and many different combinations or variations are possible. Many factors (cards) could influence the outcomes and thus be a better representation of reality. Cards could be drawn randomly from different stacks which will form the context for participants to think about solutions and possibilities. The more factors or issues, thus the more cards in a round, combined in a scenario, the more points a participant can get.

• **Scenario building workshop**: With scenario building, participants look at current trends and developments to explore possible future scenarios. The goal is not to predict the future, but to explore and identify different scenarios. These scenarios could be used as a basis to develop robust and flexible strategies for collaboration. Possible scenarios and future developments will then be taken into account which means that some flexibility is integrated in the strategy to be able to anticipate on certain changes.

• **Team building workshop**: Team building workshop consists of activities to help participants bond and to collaborate as a team. There are many different exercises; examples are survival-, building-, create- and team-exercises. Usually these are physical assignments rather than digital ones.

### 5.4 Selection concepts

Not all discussed concepts fit the Vietnamese SMEs’ context and situation. The following solutions are therefore not selected:

• **Serious gaming (virtual)**: this alternative requires a certain technical level of companies. Even though almost all companies have computers or laptops, the required level and electricity supply services might not be sufficient. Furthermore it lacks the human and real life interactions needed to understand each other better. It is a virtual world and therefore does not
stimulate a personal interaction and dynamics between potential partners. People behind a computer could be showing totally different behaviour and personality than when in real life. It is easier to pretend or hide your true self in a virtual world.

- **View & Just Imagine session** (Persoon, 2012): The ‘View & Just Imagine’ sessions from Brabants Ontwikkelings Maatschappij (Persoon, 2012) is about brainstorming on different themes and developments selected as important by experts. In this case, the discussions will be about exploring possibilities, interdependencies and different scenarios of collaboration with potential partners. Even though this is an interesting option, it might be too open and abstract for Vietnamese companies since no real or concrete questions will be asked: participants are asked to ‘just imagine’ possibilities on certain themes.

- **Scenario building workshop**: scenarios are usually not used in the initiation of collaboration. It offers potential partners too little guidance on how to develop a collaboration from the start. It could be used later in the process but it is not appropriate in the early stage of collaboration where it is not only important to explore the (business) context, but also to get familiar with each other and the process.

- **Team building workshop**: Team building workshop focuses on the interaction within the team. Even though this is important as well, research has shown that Vietnamese SMEs are not used to working with processes, strategies, visions and missions. It is therefore important to also introduce them to the collaboration process rather than ‘just’ looking at team dynamics.

Three high-potential alternatives are selected to be compared with each other on the criteria for the tool. First an explanation will be given about why these alternatives are chosen:

- **Role-play**: It allows personal interaction in an informal and dynamic way. It helps participants to place themselves in certain situations and ‘play’ what they would have done if such a situation occurred. It is also possible to ask participants to play and pretend to be another participant than themselves to get a feeling of how others would feel, behave or act in a certain situation. The focus is more on the team, but the play could be positioned in the context of collaboration: it would be possible to ask participants to envision and play the situations throughout the collaboration process. The collaboration process will thus form the different situations the participants will play in.

- **Board game**: A board game creates a ‘safe’, informal and game-like atmosphere for participants to get to know each other through playful and dynamic interaction. It will be more business-like than playing family board games, but it is still supposed to be fun, informal and dynamic. The board will offer the participants some guidance about the collaboration process while additional cards could enrich the context and story-line of the game. This way participants could gain understanding of each other, the collaboration process and the (business) context they are operating in.

- **Card game**: The same as with board games, card games create an informal atmosphere because it is often known as a ‘family and friends game’. This of course depends on the design of the game but in this project the game should be playful, informal and dynamic. The different cards offer many possibilities and create different issues for participants to discuss while keeping some of the game elements.

The three most promising concepts are compared to each other in Table 7 on the earlier formulated tool criteria. The scale ranges from -- = does not fulfil the criterion at all, to ++ = fulfils the criterion completely. The concept scoring highest meets the tool criteria best and is most likely to be chosen for further
development. An explanation for the decisions regarding the scores will be given per criterion.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Role play</th>
<th>Board game</th>
<th>Card game</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Opening mindsets</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building understanding</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identifying interdependencies</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+/-</td>
<td>+/-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding collaboration</td>
<td>+/-</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding finding possibilities/strategies</td>
<td>+/-</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+/-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identifying SWOT &amp; resources</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exploring possibilities</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>++</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Autonomy</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competence</td>
<td>+/-</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relatedness</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7: Score card - Alternatives on criteria for tool

**Open the mindsets and attitudes of companies for collaboration**
Each concept scores well on opening up companies’ mindsets. They stimulate participants to interact and share ideas with one another about collaboration. New insights could be gained which could help change their attitudes towards collaboration and increase willingness, commitment and enthusiasm.

**Build understanding and trust**
All three concepts also have a positive influence on helping participants to build understanding and trust by sharing experiences, opinions and knowledge. As described before, trust is a very important factor in collaboration. This could be improved by sharing experiences, opinions and knowledge which supports participants to bond with each other and to increase their understanding of one another.

**Identify participating companies’ interdependencies**
To identify participants’ interdependencies, role play is a more effective alternative than a board- or card-game. Role play focuses on the interaction and the participants: how to react on each other? How to react when placing yourself into someone else’s situation? During the role play participants need to play as if they are going to initiate collaboration, make decisions and improvise their reaction along the way depending on the other participants’ lines. Playing the initiation of collaboration, including identifying interdependencies, stimulates the participants to think about their interdependencies and how they could use them. These elements are not explicitly addressed to in board- and card-games where the main goal is to share thoughts, ideas, experiences and opinions in reaction to different situations drawn or given by (context) elements of the game.

**Increase understanding about how to collaborate & develop a partnership**
The board-game has the most positive effect in increasing understanding of participants regarding how to collaborate and how to develop a partnership. The understanding of collaboration and developing a partnership refers to the understanding or knowledge about the collaboration process. The board game introduces participants to the collaboration process by showing the process on the board as the framework of the game. Role play scores neutral on this criterion compared to the other alternatives, since it asks participants to play and improvise throughout the initiation of collaboration. This offers participants
a clear understanding of the initiation phase. This alternative however focuses mainly on the beginning of collaboration and not so much on the subsequent steps of the collaboration process. The card game scores lowest on this criterion: the focus is on what participants would do in situations or scenarios as described by the drawn cards. In a random order different stages of the collaboration process will be discussed. The collaboration process however, is not clearly shown and there is no specification of the different stages.

**Increase understanding of how to find possibilities and/or to form strategies**
Because the board game both explains the collaboration process as well as stimulates participants to think about different situations or issues, it has a positive effect on participants’ understanding of finding possibilities and forming strategies. In each stage, participants are shown what information and actions are expected from them to find possibilities and form plans. Role play and card game score neutral on this criterion since these alternatives do not explicitly show participants how to do this. Instead, these two alternatives ask participants to think and discuss about different situations and challenges which could be a source of inspiration for possibilities and strategies.

**Identify strengths, weaknesses, possibilities, threats and available resources**
Since the focus is on the very early stage of collaboration, none of the alternatives scores positive on identifying participating companies’ strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats and available resources. The concept tools are supposed to be used during the first meeting of potential partners which means that the identification (and sharing) of in-depth company information is not appropriate yet, especially in the case of Vietnam where trust among SMEs is low. Company information thus cannot be identified and shared until understanding and trust among potential partners have increased. This implies that another meeting or workshop is necessary for the companies to analyze and reflect on themselves and subsequently the partnership.

**Offer the opportunity for participants to explore possibilities**
Role play scores negative on the opportunity for participants to explore possibilities because a role play does not directly offer participants the possibility to brainstorm and discuss freely about different options and explorations. They need to form a coherent play and sometimes pretend they are someone else, making it hard to have real discussions about multiple possibilities. The board game offers more opportunities: because of the challenges shown to participants during the game, they can extensively discuss about possibilities to face these issues and react on each other on feasibility and other possible solutions. Furthermore, there is a focus within the discussion, a (example) problem to be solved. Opportunities to explore possibilities are even more present in the card game alternative. Where the board game offers clear, singular challenges, the card game forms more complex challenges: multiple factors and elements form a scenario which participants need to face by offering different possibilities and solutions through discussions.

**Satisfy the needs of autonomy, competence and relatedness**
All alternatives score positive on autonomy because it is the participant’s decision to join in. Participants need to be willing to engage themselves since forcing them would not be beneficial for the subsequent phases of collaboration: commitment and enthusiasm will be low and they will not be willing to be open and share information. Based on the companies’ core activities, participants will be invited rather than forced. Since the board- and card-game keep scores throughout the game and have a ‘winner’ at the end, these alternatives score
higher than role play on competence. All three alternatives score positive on the
criterion for relatedness: the different alternatives are all focused on real-life,
personal interaction and offer participants the possibility to discuss and share
experiences to increase understanding about each other. Furthermore, to some
extent, goals need to be reached together.

**Conclusion score-card**
When looking at the score card in Table 7, the board game alternative scores
most positive on the set of criteria for the tool. This board game will be integrated
in the tool to deal with the early stage of collaboration; the potential partners’
first meeting.

As said before, this game aims at changing the attitudes of participants and
alone it is not sufficient to help them towards a successful collaboration.
Workshops and sessions need to be developed as well, to be able to offer a
consistent solution-package that will kick-start a potential partnership. The
workshops should build on and utilize the gains from the board game. These
gains include understanding among participants and space for trust and
commitment to grow.

After the board game, more guidance of the potential partners is needed to help
them find interdependencies. Interdependencies act as the short-term glue
to bring potential partners together, but the board game does not sufficiently
stimulate the identification of these interdependencies. The tool therefore
consists of two extensive facilitated meetings (workshops) and general guidelines
for the third meeting which will be the first non-facilitated meeting for the
potential partners. The guidelines only offer minimum support for participants
during the transition of facilitated to non-facilitated meetings: it only shows
them the issues or topics that could be addressed during the third meeting. The
focus in this project is mainly on the content of the two facilitated meetings or
workshops.
PART IV: Tool Design
6. CONCEPT DESIGN

Chapter 6 presents the specification and development of the concept selected in the last chapter. Chapter 6.1 discusses the development of the workshops in general. Next, Chapter 6.2 will further elaborate on the specifics of Workshop 1, while Chapter 6.3 is dedicated to the content of Workshop 2.

6.1 Development of the workshops

The tool consists of two facilitated workshops in which the first one is an introduction to the second one. Workshop 1 is mainly about introductions: Its purpose is to change participants’ attitudes and mindsets towards collaboration. When looking at the score-card that was used for the selection of a concept, it became clear that only having a board game was not sufficient to cover all the criteria for collaboration. Since workshop 1 is too general to offer participants concrete insights and guidelines on identifying interdependencies, SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) and (available) resources, a second workshop is needed.

Workshop 2 will help participants to further develop their collaboration (initiation) after the first meeting and help them to find potential interdependencies. The decision to split the two workshops, instead of combining them into one long workshop, is based on the fact that Vietnamese are not willing to share (sensitive) information during a first meeting. Since trust is low, Vietnamese business people need to get to know each other first before they are willing to share anything.

As the criteria for collaboration argued; an independent third party and an initiator are both desired to increase the chance of success of a partnership. These workshops will therefore be facilitated by the client of this project; HAWA who will function as an independent third party. Among its members the association could offer training sessions about collaboration: HAWA could attract members who are interested, but members could also ask HAWA for help to find and initiate collaboration. In the first case, HAWA will be both the initiator as well as the facilitator. In the latter case, HAWA will only be the facilitator, while the member approaching HAWA will be the initiator.

The most important step in the development of the workshops is the formulation of goals for each workshop: what should the workshop achieve? The goal of the first workshop is to stimulate participants to open their attitudes and to gain understanding of each other. It is focused on introductions to
project and tool, introduction to the collaboration process and stimulation of understanding among participants. The second workshop is focused on finding interdependencies between the companies by company-analysis (self-reflection). The gained understanding of the first workshop improves and sensitizes participants’ mindset for the second workshop. The first meeting will thus be an informal one to get to know each other and to improve the attitudes of participants towards the second meeting. The different steps of the tool will be explained and motivated; an overview of the steps, motivation and outcomes per step can be found in Table 8).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Find participants</td>
<td>Facilitator looks for participants for the tool who are potential partners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Workshop 1 – Proper introductions</td>
<td>Introduction into the project, tool, goals and purposes of the workshops and introduction of participants/facilitator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Workshop 1 – Board game</td>
<td>Playing the board game as part of the first workshop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Workshop 1 – Wrap-up</td>
<td>Wrap-up discussion to evaluate what participants have learnt and how to use it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Homework – Follow up</td>
<td>Homework: follow-up of the first workshop and preparation for the second workshop which offers more concrete and in-depth insights for participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Workshop 2 – Introduction</td>
<td>Introduction activity to break the ice at the start of the second meeting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Workshop 2 – Finding interdependencies</td>
<td>Presentation and discussion of the homework assignment(s) after which the assignments will be further processed and used to find interdependencies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Workshop 2 – Wrap-up</td>
<td>Wrap-up discussion about what participants have learnt and how to use it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. How to proceed:</td>
<td>End of the scope of the tool: Participants need to proceed without a facilitator and further develop collaboration themselves with what they have learnt from the tool (both workshops)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8: Overview steps, descriptions, motivations and outcomes of development workshops
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Why</th>
<th>Outcomes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To find participants who could benefit and learn from the tool</td>
<td>Participants for the workshops</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To bring potential partners together</td>
<td>Potential partners learning about initiating collaboration together</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To introduce involved parties to each other</td>
<td>Participants knowing what is expected and why</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To explain what is going to happen and why</td>
<td>Participants knowing the basics of each other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To increase understanding among participants, about (business) context and about collaboration process</td>
<td>Participants prepared for the second workshop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stimulate discussions and information/experience sharing</td>
<td>Basic understanding among participants on behaviour, attitudes and way of thinking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To evaluate and reflect on process and participant him-/herself</td>
<td>Participants have a clear image of what they have found or learnt and what they can do with these insights from the workshop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To summarize and conclude insights and findings from participants and how these could be helpful for them</td>
<td>Workshop 1 is evaluated and reflected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To reflect, research and evaluate their own companies as a basis to find interdependencies</td>
<td>Insights and information about participating companies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stimulate informality among participants</td>
<td>Informal atmosphere</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allow participants to feel more comfortable</td>
<td>Participants are comfortable and relaxed and thus more open</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To find interdependencies among potential partners (in this case the participants)</td>
<td>Understanding about finding interdependencies and its process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Concrete interdependencies participants (potential partners) could work with</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To evaluate and reflect on process and participant him-/herself</td>
<td>Participants have a clear image of what they have found or learnt and what they can do with these insights from the workshop(s)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To summarize and conclude insights and findings from participants and how these could be helpful for them</td>
<td>Workshop 2 is evaluated and reflected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facilitator offering guidelines for next non-facilitated meeting</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Further development of collaboration by (potential) partners themselves</td>
<td>Start-up or beginning of (initiation of) collaboration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finding their own way</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6.2 Workshop I: specifics

This sub-chapter discusses the specifics of workshop I. First, the board game and its different elements will be explained. Second, an outline of the content of the first workshop will be presented.

6.2.1 Board game

6.2.1.1 Content & purpose

Understanding among participants

The fundamentals for collaboration are trust and commitment. As said earlier, trust could grow through understanding among the participants, the presence of interdependencies bring potential partners together on the short term and the presence of credibility allow for long term partnership. Trust could be increased through time and understanding. Before there is trust people need to get to know each other on a personal level. Whether people trust each other depends on what they say and do; they need to understand what kind of person the other party is. People need to discuss, interact and spend time with each other to get to know each other better. They need to share information, experiences, opinions and knowledge to be able to understand how the other person thinks, behaves and acts. In other words, the tool needs to stimulate communication, discussions and interaction among participants.

Collaboration process

Another issue with Vietnamese companies is that they do not follow or work with processes or strategies and that they “take shortcuts in processes” (Tam, 2012). Vietnamese usually do not engage in long term planning, so helping them to follow a process in this collaboration project could inspire them to think more in advance and over a longer period of time in future projects. Because of that, the game could become more informative and helpful if it includes clear process stages that functions as a background element in the beginning, but could be extended into guidelines helping potential partners to develop a collaboration later.

Company & Context

Vietnamese SMEs have some issues with finding and seizing opportunities. Jansen (2012) stated that Vietnamese companies do what is already proven to work and that they are reluctant to try new things: they tend to do what competitors do and therefore research the competitors’ product portfolio and customers (Son, 2012: Dung, 2012). Most interviewees state that they spend little attention to market research, but to be able to develop an effective strategy they need to know what current developments are important for their customers so they can seize these opportunities. The tool that will be developed with this project is a good opportunity for the users to conduct a self- or company-reflection to stimulate them to think about and react on changes within their business context in a more market-oriented way. This leads to another insight for the tool: the tool should include elements that asks participants to think about (current) trends and developments and about how to face them.

6.2.1.2 Lay-out game elements

Collaboration process

The tool needs to contain an informative element that introduces participants to the collaboration process. The collaboration process in this game is based on literature (Gray, 1989: Ring & Ven, 1994: Bronder & Pritzl, 1992) and on interviews with Dutch experts in the field of network and collaboration. The collaboration process adapted in this concept will pay more attention to the
“start”-phase than the processes shown in literature and business websites. For example, the collaboration process in the concept will include the informal meetings before the collaboration because partners should “first become friends” (Phuong, 2012).

The process as integrated in the concept is meant as a basic and general introduction to the collaboration process. In addition, the process is integrated into the concept as background information for its users and should be seen only as a proposal of what steps a collaboration process could contain based on literature and country-specific findings from this research. Companies and users could adjust this process according to their own situation, logic and preferences.

According to Ring & Ven (1994) the collaboration process consists of four stages: negotiation, commitment, implementation and, throughout the process, assessment. The assessment in this model is seen as an emotional assessment rather than an evaluation. For this project, this is considered undesired due to its abstractness and therefore another definition will be used for the assessment-stage in this model: in this project, assessment will be seen as an evaluation of how well or bad a partnership is doing based on monitoring and indicators.

The stages of the collaboration process are specified as:
1. Introduction meeting
2. Identify shared interests and possible interdependencies
3. Identify capabilities each company
4. Align wishes, desires, interdependencies and goals to focus on
5. Identify required activities to achieve goals
6. Plan the required activities
7. Develop an action plan including responsibilities per partner
8. Make clear agreements (through contracts)
9. Execute and implement activities as agreed on
10. Monitor, evaluate, reflect and report findings throughout process

When comparing to the model of Ring & Ven (1994), the specified collaboration process fits the model from theory well. The negotiation-, commitment-, implementation- and assessment-phase could be further specified in smaller steps by the collaboration process used for this tool (Figure 11).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Negotiation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Introduction meeting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Identify shared interests and possible interdependencies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Identify capabilities each company</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Align wishes, desires, interdependencies and goals to focus on</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Identify required activities to achieve goals</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Commitment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6. Plan the required activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Develop an action plan including responsibilities per partner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Make clear agreements (through contracts)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Implementation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9. Execute and implement activities as agreed on</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10. Monitor, evaluate, reflect and report findings throughout process</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 11: Collaboration model Ring & Ven (1994) versus collaboration process in tool
As could be seen, the emphasis in the collaboration process integrated in the tool is on the start-phase or, in the model from Ring & Ven (1994), on the negotiation phase. This project is focused on initiating collaboration so it is no surprise that the first phase receives more attention throughout the design process of the tool. The tool, consisting of workshop I and workshop II, will focus and elaborate mainly on the first two stages of the earlier specified collaboration process. The other stages will be mentioned in the tool to offer guidance to its users, but will not be treated extensively in this project. Adjustments to this collaboration process according to users’ preference or logic are welcome since the process shown in this project is ‘just’ a suggestion of what is possible.

**Trends & events**

Based on the analysis, the board game should stimulate discussions and preferably be both enjoyable as well as informative. Vietnamese SMEs do little market research and marketing, this means that most trends in Vietnam are not being addressed to. Furthermore, Vietnamese tend to think only of the short term; no or limited resources are spend to make a planning or strategy that prepares them of what will happen in the future or sudden events.

This finding makes it interesting to let the discussions in this game to be about current trends and what to do when something unexpected happens. This thought led to the development of two kinds of cards with questions; one is about the trends found in this research and the other one is about the unexpected events. The cards will explain briefly the trend or event and ask the holder of the card what (s)he would do in such a situation. This way the holder of the card is stimulated to think about developments and to think about his/her own actions based on a given situation.

When looking back to the main findings of categorization and organization, the following categories could be recalled which are used to build up the elements of the game (See Figure 12 - Game elements: content):
• Current ‘marketing’
• (Negotiation) process
• Problems & pitfalls
• Vietnam vs West
• Trends
• Success factors
• Ideal situation
• Ideal solutions

The input for the ‘trend’- and ‘event’-cards is obtained from the interviews, literature research and its analyses (see APPENDIX F for findings used for ‘trend’- and ‘event’ cards). The eventual trends for the cards were found through a selection process; relevant and appropriate findings on industry-, country- or global-level are included in the game as ‘trend’-cards.

It is clear what findings of the interviews form the ‘events’, but what exactly are they? These events are basically anything that could happen (unexpectedly) when doing business or engaging in collaboration. The difference with trends is that events could, to some extent be influenced by the companies themselves. Business and collaboration could also be influenced by certain characteristics of the Vietnamese or Western cultures. Some of the interviewees mention characteristics of Vietnamese people (compared to Westerners) which give insight into the culture, habits, traditions and customs of Vietnam. Some of them will mainly function as background information on Vietnam for the author but others will be used as part of the ‘event’-cards. The division is made based on several questions:

• Is the found insight about Vietnamese relevant to the collaboration (process) or business context?
• Would potential partners (participants) be able to change anything themselves? (Or is it an external force)
• Is the found insight about Vietnamese generalizable to all industries?
• Is the found insight about Vietnamese already targeted by developing the tool in this project? (In other words, is the to-be-developed tool going to solve or address to the found insight?)

The answers to the first three questions should be ‘yes’ and the answer to the last question should be ‘no’. If that is the case, then that specific insight about Vietnam will be categorized as an ‘event’. Otherwise, the finding is not suitable to be an event-card and will be seen as background knowledge.

Gaming board
The next step is to combine and turn all the identified elements into a consistent game. The collaboration process will be shown on the gaming board as ‘the road’ for participants to walk down from when developing a partnership. Since the framework of the game is the collaboration process and collaboration requires investments and resources, it makes sense to add an investment-element to the game. While following the collaboration process, participants can invest resources in a specific stage of the process based on how important they think it is. It asks participants to think about every step of the process and to assess how important it is for their situation. In the end it will provide the participants an overview of what stages they think are most important and what requires more of their attention. It shows the priorities of each participant regarding the collaboration. It also shows imbalance of investments if it is applicable. This could be a reason for participants to reconsider their allocation of investments later in the process when developing a partnership.
The board therefore needs to contain the different stages of the collaboration process and sufficient space in each stage for participants to ‘invest resources’ throughout the game. Furthermore, the board will show the title and logo of the game and provide enough space to stack the ‘trend’- and ‘event’-cards.

**Before testing**

The main elements of the game are identified and specified. Through several iterations the game evolved from a simple sketch to the version used for pre-testing (Figure 13 - First sketch vs. pre-test version boardgame; APPENDIX G - Decision making process boardgame).

![Figure 13: First sketch vs. pre-test version boardgame](image)
Even though the game is an important element of the tool, it is not enough to achieve everything required in the tool. Workshops are therefore needed to offer a consistent solution-package to go more in-depth and to develop more concrete outcomes for the participants. The game is meant as a sensitizing or introductory element of the tool to prepare the participant for a more serious approach in a subsequent meeting. The workshops in this tool are supposed to be used for training sessions and are therefore facilitated (first by the author, later by HAWA).
6.2.2  **Content workshop I**

The final outline of workshop 1 (in the form of facilitator’s notes) will be discussed later. For the purpose of developing and testing the workshop, a short outline of the content of workshop 1 will be given below:

1. Preparation of facilitator: the facilitator needs to prepare the workshops by looking for suitable and, to some extent, matching participants who will be seen as potential partners throughout the workshops. The facilitator should look for companies which could complement each other in their core activities, have similar goals or share the same interests. The facilitator should be careful with competitors though, since the local SMEs do not seem to be ready for collaboration with competitors yet.

2. Introduction of the project: the goal and objectives of the project and the workshop needs to be shared with participants so they know what is expected from them. It also shows participants why this workshop or tool might be useful for them.

3. Introduction of the participants: cards are passed around on which participants are asked to write down the information that is asked on the cards. This includes their name, age, education, occupation, company they are working for and its main activities. After this information is written down, there is an introduction round in which each facilitator, observer and participant introduces him- or herself.

4. Prisoner’s Dilemma Game: this element of the tool is added to increase the learning curve about collaboration. First the participants are divided into two teams which are not allowed to communicate with each other. Then an explanation of the game is given to the participants, including the two options each team has. The possible outcomes are shown and explained to the participants, after which the game could start.

5. Boardgame: The rules of the game and a part of the winning or losing decision rules are shared with the participants. After that, participants start playing the game; each of them take turns in rolling a dice, answers a question and invests resources in process stages. After the game is finished, additional winning or losing rules are explained and a decision is made whether or not the collaboration in the game was a success.

6. Evaluation & wrap-up: after the game, an evaluation is held to get the opinions of business people about (the first workshop of) the tool. The evaluation is meant to get input for improvements, but also to see how the end-user feels about (using) this tool: Did it evoke the feelings and emotions that were intended? Did it help to achieve the goals that were set? And was the process / tool informative and useful for them? The wrap-up is intended to discuss, summarize and conclude the findings and gained knowledge from this first workshop. In addition it is meant to give an introduction into the second workshop.

6.3  **Workshop II**

Sub-chapter 6.3 presents the content of workshop 2. First, the main element of the second meeting is discussed; the SWOT-map. After that, the specifics of the second workshop will be explained.

6.3.1  **SWOT-map**

6.3.1.1  **Content & purpose**

The main part of the second workshop is the SWOT-analysis in the form of a map. During the evaluation of the different alternatives it became clear that the
board game from the first workshop does not sufficiently target the identification of interdependencies, SWOT and (available / required) resources. Before potential partners could find interdependencies, they need to know themselves, their capabilities and their desires first. A SWOT-analysis is an appropriate method to analyze the participating companies and the situation or context they are in. Even though a SWOT-analysis is a good start, it does not cover everything needed to find interdependencies: a SWOT-analysis only analyses the current situation, but to find interdependencies it is also important to look at potential future solutions and possibilities. To be able to visualize, organize and use all that company information, the extended SWOT-analysis should be performed in the form of a map. It looks similar to a mindmap (thus a SWOT-map): the name of the company is put in the middle with several branches attached. These branches have their own sub-branches and so on. Another advantage of putting the SWOT analysis into a map-form is that it becomes easier for participants to link different branches together. Since the factors in the map are not seen or thought of as just a list, but are rather organized in relation to each other, it becomes easier to identify structure and make linkages; not only within their own company-map, but also with maps from other companies. The links between branches of different companies could be seen as touch-points on which these different companies could collaborate or complement each other.

As part of the tool, participants of the second workshop need to develop a SWOT-map of the company they are representing before the actual meeting. It will be given as ‘homework’ in between the first and second meeting so participants could take their time to think about their company and to sensitize and prepare themselves for the next workshop. Since Vietnamese SMEs are not used to do company-analyses and self-reflection, a start of the SWOT-map and an attachment with the explanation about the SWOT-map was therefore developed and handed out to the participants. The first version of the SWOT-map is shown in Figure 14 and the final version of the attachment for the SWOT-map will be presented later. This way, participants will know why they are doing this and have some guidance during the assignment. The SWOT-maps of the participants need to be checked and compared to each other by the facilitator before the workshop. The facilitator could check for completeness, consistency and ambiguities within the maps and refer to the regarding participant if necessary. Furthermore, the facilitator could already look for some promising linkages and touch-points to prepare for the meeting so (s)he will be better able to offer guidance and support if participants need it during the workshop-assignments.

These fulfilled SWOT-maps will be further elaborated and processed during the 2nd workshop. The identification of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats, which is done in the homework assignment, forms the basis of the search for measurements and strategies for the analyzed company. The identified factors need to be confronted with each other to find possibilities and solutions: strengths could be confronted with threats to avoid the negative effect of a threat; weaknesses could be confronted with opportunities or strengths to change the weakness into a positive factor for the company, while strengths could be further improved by seizing opportunities. These confrontations should lead to the identification and development of measurements to utilize possibilities or to find solutions for problem areas. Furthermore, these findings regarding a company could offer valuable insights into the current situation and context of its operational activities. The confrontation of factors is partially done individually during the homework assignment where participants are asked to find linkages within their own map. Furthermore, there is a confrontation among several, but at least two, SWOT-maps: participants need to compare their maps to find similarities, differences, touch-points and other possible interdependencies.
These linkages and touch-points could be used to find interdependencies to focus on and to determine how participants could collaborate with each other.

6.3.1.2 Lay-out SWOT-map
In the SWOT-map, the name of the company from the participant will be put in the middle with several (sub-)branches already attached to it. Important elements for the SWOT-map are the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats of the company. For this tool, the SWOT-analysis will be elaborated: participants need to research what is already done to improve or strengthen the company. Furthermore, participants already need to think about possible solutions or improvements for their company and they need to try to identify the (kinds of) resources, knowledge or facilities required for a specific measurement. By already thinking about what is needed, it becomes easier to look for linkages with other companies (see Figure 14 for the first version of the SWOT-map).

6.3.2 Content workshop II
As with the content of the first workshop, the final outline of workshop 2 (in the facilitator notes) will be presented in a later stage of this project. For the further development and testing of the workshop, a short outline of workshop 2 is discussed:

![Diagram of SWOT-map](image-url)
1. Homework participants: the homework assignment for participants to prepare for the second workshop is to do a SWOT analysis on their company. They need to visualize the findings in a SWOT-map (figure 14).

2. Homework facilitator: after the SWOT-maps are finished and handed in before workshop II (deadline to be determined by facilitator), the facilitator needs to study the SWOT-maps and check if they are appropriate or usable for the second workshop.

3. Introduction workshop II: the introduction of the second meeting involves a collectively visualized map which identifies participants’ views on collaboration. In turns, participants add images or words to a big sheet of paper pinned on a board to show and explain what collaboration means to them and why. Conclusions will be made based on the outcomes.

4. SWOT-maps: participants need to present their SWOT-maps first, after which they try to find touch points and linkages between the individual SWOT-maps. Individually, they need to indicate which touch points are most important to them and try to combine all the different maps into one SWOT-map for the collaboration.

5. Wrap-up: discussion round, explanation what participants should have learned, what they can do with the results and, if desired, a brief outline for the third meeting (the first non-facilitated meeting).
Chapter 7 discusses the testing phase of the tool and shows what adjustments have been made according to the tests. In Chapter 7.1 the pre-test for workshop 1 will be reported and Chapter 7.2 will show the results of the user-test for workshop 1. Subsequently, Chapter 7.3 outlines the pre-test of workshop 2 while Chapter 7.4 documents the user-test of workshop 2.

7.1 Pre-test workshop I

7.1.1 Pre-test workshop I: Set-up & process

For the pre-tests, only the board-game is taken into account and the rest of the activities from the first workshop is ignored. In total there are 5 pre-test sessions for the game only. The purpose of these pre-tests is to find points of improvements for the game. By executing pre-tests, several iterations will already have been done before conducting a user-test. This means that the main issues could already be identified and improved or resolved before the actual user-test.

In all sessions, the author is one of the participants playing the game: In 4 of the described cases the game is played with only two participants and in 1 case there are three players. The game was in all test-sessions played for around an hour only or until the test-participants understood the game well enough to give feedback. This means the game-sessions were not finished during the pre-tests. In all cases, the game rules were explained beforehand, after which the test-participants started to play. The test-participants consisted of two company owners both with architectural background and both Vietnamese, two designers from which one is Vietnamese and the other Dutch, one Canadian writer and an Austrian business advisor from HAWA (Table 9).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nationality</th>
<th>Pre-test Participants (W1)</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vietnamese</td>
<td>Mr. Phuong</td>
<td>Architect &amp; Owner Danh Moc (Kitchen producer)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vietnamese</td>
<td>Mr. Nguyen</td>
<td>Architect &amp; Owner Nha Viet (Architectural firm)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vietnamese</td>
<td>Ms. Tuyen</td>
<td>Designer at FLS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dutch</td>
<td>Mr. Thomas</td>
<td>Designer at FLS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canadian</td>
<td>Ms. Claudine</td>
<td>Freelance writer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Austrian</td>
<td>Mr. Gerhard</td>
<td>Business advisor from HAWA</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 9: Overview participants of pre-test workshop 1
The main point of focus during these tests is the (changing) behaviour and attitudes test-participants have throughout the game. These test-participants are not all Vietnamese and it cannot be guaranteed that the results of these pre-tests will apply to Vietnamese SMEs as well. When considering and comparing the (re)actions of Vietnamese and Western test-participants, it could be concluded that even though there are differences, their main behaviour and the way they react to the game(-elements) show many similarities.

7.1.2 Pre-test workshop I: Observations, feedback & adjustments
First the observations from the different pre-tests will be discussed. Second, the feedback and evaluations from pre-test participants are presented. The feedback from participants is clustered into points of improvements, other issues and benefits participants perceived. If the case, the relevant adjustments will be described directly below the regarding feedback (for a complete overview of feedback, adjustments and motivations of the pre-tests, see APPENDIX H).

Observations
- The game (cards) were provoking discussions and participants were very willing to talk and share their stories.
- Participants were very willing to explain their (potential) solutions to the challenges offered to them by the cards which sometimes also led to other interesting discussions on sub-topics throughout the game. The challenges were helpful to get discussions going.
- Participants often used their own experiences and point of views when explaining or discussing the challenges during the game. In one test-session the participants were not directly related to a company and were therefore given a company-profile which helped them to think from a certain perspective.
- Jokes were made throughout the tests and excitement was noticeable during most of the test-sessions.
- The rules, goals and explanation were complicated and difficult to understand. Usually however, participants understood quite fast how to play the game after just starting the game.
- Sometimes, the facilitator needs to ask further and elaborate on an answer given or a decision made by a participant to find their true motivation for a specific action. This is useful for the regarding participant to reflect on his/her own decisions, for other participants to understand each other and to stimulate more discussions on an interesting topic.
- Some turns tended to take a lot of time resulting the game to be too time-consuming.
  - A time limitation of 2 minutes per turn is inserted and more attention is paid on maintaining this limit.
- In some turns participants did not know where they left off after their last turn and were confused about where they were in the game.
  - Game pawns which participants could use to keep track of where they left off is added to the game.

Feedback & Adjustments
Points of improvement:
- The game is complex and confusing: there are many steps and rules which are not very clear, especially the winning / losing rules and the goal of the workshop / game are not clearly explained.
  - More emphasis is put on the explanation that the game is about collaboration, the discussions and about reaching the goal together while keeping into account the private interests.
  - More elaborate explanation is given about the goal, expected outcomes
and the direction of the game.

- **The game is very academic because of the used terms and there are too many stages on the board. It should be easier to play and be less academic.**
  - Board: amount of steps is reduced by combining/simplifying different process stages to make the game less complex and faster to play.
  - Board: content of process stages is reduced by making it less elaborate and keeping sentences simple and rather general/superficial.
  - Board: text is made easier (less academic, formal & serious) to improve game-play.
  - Storyline and less formal words/sentences are used to explain the game.

- **The text on the board is unclear; the font could be made bigger and bold.**
  - Board: text of the process stages on the board is made bigger for readability.

- **The title of the game / tool is too long and needs to be changed, maybe “Collabo”?**
  - Changed title of the game to Collabo (for now).

- **The start and the end of the (collaboration) process stages is not clear: explain why it is organized like that.**
  - Explained more elaborately what the start/end of the game is and why.

- **Commitment and enthusiasm could be increased by including strategies to gain both private interests as well as collective interests. Currently the choice between private and collective interests is too easy and thus does not prepare participants for the real pitfalls of collaboration.**
  - Strategies for both private and collaborative gains within collaboration is added to increase commitment; a distinction is made between investments in private and collective interests.
  - More elaborate explanation is added about collectively losing if they are not committed or on the same page which leads to failing the collaboration.
  - A part of the rules about winning/losing will be explained after the game (otherwise they will play strategically).

- **The game is just the beginning; follow up is needed to find out how to implement collaboration within the organization.**
  - Brief explanation is added about starting the development of an implementation plan to offer some support after the facilitated workshop(s).

- **The “start-over” cards are not working; going back one or two stages back into the process on the board is fine.**
  - Event-cards: took out the ‘start-over’-cards and changed them into other instructions (“go back one / two stages” or “skip one / two turns”).

- **There is just a stack of “resources” which are put into the game; there is not really an overview so maybe an extra (overview-)card could be used to keep track of the resources.**
  - Added an overview card to show participants’ their available resources and to keep track how many resources are invested in private projects.

- **The time consumption of the game is quite high.**
  - Some turns take a lot of time, so a time limit per turn is added to control the session a little bit more.

**Other issues:**

- **Better game pieces, e.g. pawn players, could be used during the game to keep track of the game.**
  - Added game pieces to show participants at what process stage they are throughout the game.

- **Think about what happens if a participant runs out of resources.**
• Added a rule: if you run out of resources, you will be dependent on other participants. You could make a deal with them to lend/give you a part of their resources. Also the question “what would you have done in real life?” will be asked.

• **How will the results from the game be utilized?**
  • More elaborate explanation is added about how to proceed after increasing mutual understanding and how this understanding will be utilized (this could be done by giving an introduction about the second workshop).

**Benefits:**
• The game is effective because it clarifies the way of thinking, helps in sharing content throughout the stages and shows the link between partners.
• The game is fun / enjoyable because you need to come up with ideas and think to solve the problem. It is a playful way to introduce collaboration.
• The game shows how the process should be, it offers a vision.
• The game is provoking in the sense of collaboration, tactics discussion and team building. It integrates participants through the discussions and allows them to help each other because it stimulates participants to express their opinions.
• The game helps to increase understanding on a social and business level and to think about participants’ own positions. It helps participants to brainstorm about opportunities.

## 7.2 User-test workshop I

### 7.2.1 User-test workshop I: Set-up & process

The test-session for workshop I was conducted with 4 participants: two architects, a business woman and a painter of rooms (see Table 10). Because it was not possible for all participants to communicate in English, all the required materials were translated and the session was carried out in Vietnamese. A translator was therefore asked to help with translations before, during and after the workshop. In addition an observer was invited to observe and make notes throughout the session. To summarize: 4 participants, 1 facilitator, 1 translator and 1 observer were present during the test-session of the first workshop. Throughout this session mr. Phuong from Danh Moc is considered the initiator. This user-test was carried out as is described in Chapter 6.2.2 Content workshop I.

<table>
<thead>
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<td>Danh Moc (Kitchen producer): Architect &amp; Owner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vietnamese</td>
<td>Mr. Xuya</td>
<td>Thien Nhan Loc: Architect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vietnamese</td>
<td>Ms. Phuong</td>
<td>Phuong Vu: Business Woman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vietnamese</td>
<td>Mr. Phi</td>
<td>Ho Chi Minh City Art Association: Painter</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 10: Overview participants of user-test workshop I

### 7.2.2 User-test workshop I: Observations, feedback & adjustments

The outcomes of this test-session are the observations and evaluations of participants and the process throughout the workshop. The observations and evaluations of participants determine if the tool was effective regarding its goals. This chapter discusses the outcomes of the test-session from the first workshop; first the observations, second the evaluations. Based on these observations and
remarks of participants, several adjustments are made. Information about these changes is given throughout the observations and participants’ evaluations when applicable. These adjustments resulted in the final design of the first workshop in this project’s tool.

**Observations**

In this workshop, the process of how the tool is used is more important than the actual outcomes. One of the tasks was therefore to observe the process and the participants’ attitudes, behaviours and actions. Notes were taken throughout the workshop and checked with the initiator of the workshop later, to make sure that the observations are valid and could be confirmed. Another reason to check the findings is to see if any of the observations were culture-based rather than tool-based.

Throughout the workshop, there were several misunderstandings or misinterpretations of the purposes and rules. It was also obvious that the Prisoner’s Dilemma Game caused a lot of confusion among the participants and did not work out for this workshop. According to the initiator of the workshop, this was due to the language problem and because the (Prisoner’s Dilemma) game itself was a bit confusing.

- *The Prisoner’s Dilemma Game is removed: it was very confusing during the test-session and participants did not seem to get the purpose of the game.*

A good, dynamic and open interaction could be observed and the participants seem to have fun. Even though dynamic discussions were held, the participants were speaking in turns and were listening to each other as well; several observations were made in which the participants were leaning towards each other. The initiator agreed that the interaction was indeed good and that the atmosphere was informal and casual. The probable reason is that the participants have similar jobs, work in similar industries and are about the same age: participants had things in common. Furthermore, the questions in the game about the trends and events helped as well since the answers allowed them to learn about and understand each other’s mind. Also, the participants were discussing straight forward; there were no conflicts in vision and ideas which is not always the case. The reason for this however, could be that even though they did not know each other, all the participants know the initiator which could have made the communication, participation and information sharing (etc.) easier.

- *Preparations for the facilitator were included: these preparations are about searching, selecting and matching potential-participants.*

Both the facilitator and the initiator observed a high level of enthusiasm and participants showed open attitudes and informality throughout the session: jokes were made, people laughed and seem to have fun. This could be because everyone was very willing to help with the project, but the fact that the workshop was held in an informal setting, a café, was also helpful. People are more honest because it is less formal and threatening; they were ‘just’ playing a game. If the meeting was held at a meeting table at a company, this might have influenced the honesty of the participants. The informality actually already started when the initiator asked the other participants to join; they were asked in a not too serious and formal way.

As said before, jokes were made throughout the workshop. Apparently this might have been a cultural aspect: the initiator explained that Vietnamese people always make jokes to make other people happy. This could also explain why
participants after reading the question sometimes first made a joke (observed by laughter) before actually answering the question (observed by a monologue) on which another participant reacted. It seemed like there were several interesting discussions going on, participants had an open attitude towards each other and they were willing to share their own experiences and knowledge. One of the participants however, was quite silent and did not want to answer a question during the start of the game. Throughout the game, he started to open up as well and participated. Since his occupation is being a painter, maybe he fell insecure about the game and his (for this game, irrelevant) expertise. Another possibility is that during the start of the game, the regarding participant did not fully understand it. Throughout the game and the questions, the understanding of the game increased and might have stimulated him to participate fully later.

The initiator was well involved in the workshop, but during the game he was very careful with investing the resources into the collaboration. There was no specific reason for that though: he just wanted to save some resources in case this collaboration project fails. Then he would still have resources to invest in another project. Instead of investing everything in one project, he wants to spread the risks.

- Participants are asked to make a decision between a private project and the collaboration in every turn. This way a participant’s moves can be based on what other participants do.
- The winning/losing rules were changed: now there is a long- and short-term winner to increase the importance of private interests to make defecting more attractive.

The last round of the game went very fast; short and quick answers were given and others agreed easily with the given answers when compared to previous rounds. This could be due to time limitations and because previous rounds were quite time-consuming.

- The “go-back-several-stages” cards are removed from the game: this should decrease the time needed to finish the game

Another observation was not made until after the workshop: when looking at the result of the game board with the process stages, it was noticeable that participants focused their investments on the start of the collaboration. After the stage of making clear agreements, the investments in the subsequent stages were strongly decreased. This was caused by the perceived importance of the start of the collaboration which could be explained by the need to trust people first, before actual collaboration is established. Since trust still needs to be built in the initiating-phase, these relatively informal stages are considered to be very important. The decline of investments in the latter half of the process however, seems to imply a decreased commitment over time. According to the translator this is a plausible situation.

Feedback
During the workshop some aspects of the tool went as expected, but some aspects did not go as planned. A summary of the interview evaluations and the feedback forms will be given in this (sub-)chapter.

The tool works very well as a conversation starter. Above all, all participants indicated in their interview evaluations that the game increases their understanding of the other participants’ personalities, strengths, weaknesses, knowledge and the way they collaborate. Some of them also indicated that they
have gained knowledge about the collaboration process and learned what (basic) steps to take when collaboration is desired. This could help (potential) partners to focus on the most important stages. Most of the goals of the tool are thus achieved.

Points of improvements according to the participants were mostly regarding the explanation of purposes and goals and the clarity of the game rules. The purposes and goals of the workshop (and the game) were not clear to some participants. Also understanding the rules of the (COLLABO and Prisoner’s Dilemma) game was difficult; maybe it was because of the language barrier, maybe it was the explanation itself or maybe it was both.

- The “additional resources” cards are removed from the game: they hardly occurred during the test-session and only created unnecessary confusion.
- The Prisoner’s Dilemma Game is removed: it was very confusing during the test-session and participants did not seem to get the purpose of the game.

Furthermore, several participants seem to worry that the tool or actually the game is too informal and not taken too seriously. The initiator however indicated that this particular session went easier because every participant knows him and because they are all in the same industry. In other situations it might be hard to stimulate participants to share their thoughts, knowledge and experiences on issues. He also stated that the game is not suitable for big, formal companies; instead it is only usable for SMEs and companies who are not too serious. As expected, participants reviewed this workshop mainly as covering the basics and for information only. Throughout the game participants felt interested, happy but a little bit stressed, or that the game was for entertainment only.

Overall the evaluations were positive; the questions with the trends and events were well received and were found interesting by some participants. Most participants found it useful that the tool showed them the basic steps and stages of collaboration. The initiator, in this specific user-test the owner of kitchen producer Danh Moc, thinks that those stages could help companies to follow a process rather than base their activities on experiences as it happens often now.

One of the participants, who was a painter, found that he had learned a lot about collaboration and the other participants. This was a rather surprising finding since as a painter, with no relevant education or occupation, the participant seemed to be very able to join the discussions, follow the game content and learnt something from it. Another participant (architect) indicated that he got a new idea from this workshop: At first he thought that collaboration is only from networking and he never collaborated with strangers since he never trusted them. Currently, if he wants to collaborate, he will first carefully research the potential partner-company on its characteristics and its people. He also indicated to use what he has learned and to try to follow the entire process (if there is time) and use the game to evaluate the trust of partnerships. The business woman was less positive because she is too professional and not the target group for the tool: she already maintained many collaborations and the tool only functioned as a reminder for what she already knew. Even though the business woman was not positively impressed with the tool, she indicated that it helped her to increase understanding in the other participants through observations.

- A discussion round to reflect on what is learned throughout the game is added to the wrap-up of the first meeting.
- Homework for participants to prepare for workshop II is added to the tool which will be explained and handed out after the first workshop.

Also changes to the lay-out of the game were made after the user-test to make it
more attractive, inviting and clear:

- **Colours are changed to make the game more inviting:** Vietnamese tend to prefer warm and bright colours.
- **The page set-up of the game is changed from portrait to landscape to make the game clearer from a wider angle.** Since the game is played with max. 4 people, this prevents the fourth participant to have to read upside-down.
- **Icons are added to the board to give examples of resources.**
- **Numbering of the process stages is inserted onto the board to offer participants more clarity and a reference point when playing the game.**
- **A logo is integrated within the name of the tool “COLLABO”.** The logo replaced the first “O” of the name. It is a simplified gear-wheel which symbolizes (the need of) synergy through collaboration.

### 7.3 Pre-test workshop II

#### 7.3.1 Pre-test workshop II: Set-up & process

For the pre-test, test-participants are invited to help evaluate and give suggestions for the second workshop. For the second workshop, two test-participants reviewed the content of the meeting (Table 11).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nationality</th>
<th>Pre-test Participants (W2)</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vietnamese</td>
<td>Mr. Cuong</td>
<td>Delft University of Technology: PhD Student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vietnamese</td>
<td>Mr. Phuong</td>
<td>Danh Moc (Kitchen producer): Architect &amp; Owner</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 11: Overview participants of pre-test workshop 2

First, a Vietnamese computer engineering PhD-student at the faculty of Electrical Engineering, Mathematics and Computer Science at the Delft University of Technology was asked for feedback. Prior to his PhD, he was a lecturer at the faculty of Computer Science & Engineering at the Hochiminh City University of Technology. He has limited knowledge about doing business and has never done a SWOT analysis before. The participant was born in and spent most of his life in Vietnam which is why he was asked to participate in the test-session. The main goal for the meeting is to understand how (local) Vietnamese participants would perceive the assignments before and during the workshop. It was therefore not necessary to look for a Vietnamese (wo)man in the field of business or entrepreneurship for this pre-test session. The participant was asked to develop a SWOT-map of the faculty he used to work for in Vietnam. Since it was an individual session aimed at getting feedback about the workshop, the author also made a SWOT-map so comparisons could be made during the meeting. This map was about the faculty of Industrial Design Engineering from the Delft University of Technology. Due to some misunderstanding about the assignment, the participant did not manage to entirely finish the SWOT-map before the meeting. The author/facilitator still was able to identify some similarities and possible linkages between the two maps prior to the test-session. The map from the participant was finished together during the start of the meeting. After the map was completed sufficiently in the eyes of the test-participant and the facilitator, the workshop was started with the introductory exercise to define collaboration with images.

The second pre-test was held with Phuong, the architect and owner of kitchen producer Danh Moc. Since the participant lives in Vietnam and the author was already back in the Netherlands at the time, a video conference meeting was
held to ask for feedback. It was therefore not possible to observe the participant during the meeting. At first the participant was supposed to be part of a test-workshop in Vietnam together with other participants; unfortunately due to time constraints and the long-distance organisation the user-test in Vietnam was not able to take place. Phuong however, had been able to make the SWOT-map, prepared for the workshop and already read the facilitator’s notes. Instead of a test-session, Phuong was therefore asked to give feedback about the workshop and the rest of the tool as part of the pre-test. This was done in the form of an interview.

7.3.2 Pre-test workshop II: Observations, feedback & adjustments

First the observations of the first pre-test participant will be discussed. Next, the feedback from both test-participants on the second workshop will be presented. This feedback will be divided in points of improvement and benefits perceived by participants. If any adjustments in the tool are necessary this will be mentioned directly below the regarding observation or comment.

Observations test-participant 1:
- The second workshop stimulates discussions, finding common ground and knowledge/experience sharing.
- The workshop is useful to find interdependencies.
- Understandable for people from different educational backgrounds (not related to business).
- After some guidance participant became more talkative and started offering solutions/thoughts more.
- It was good that participants are supposed to make the maps themselves, otherwise they would be similar, but because of that there were big differences in points of focus. So more time was needed to discuss the individual SWOT-maps before comparisons.
  - Emphasized more on discussing the SWOT-maps so participants have time to add things they overlooked (added as tip in facilitator’s notes).
- It seems this method is rather open: there are many possibilities, variations and no specific numbers or information about the company is asked.
- Hard to keep overview when comparing maps: it is easy to overlook, hard to ‘re-find’ branches you once saw and need again.
- There were concrete discussions about possible solutions and opportunities.
- Specific opportunities/solutions/possibilities for collaboration are found.

Feedback
Points of improvements:
- When you have never done a SWOT-analysis before, it is difficult to make the SWOT-map. It was however very useful and increased the understanding about the organisation. To make the development of the SWOT-map easier, examples could be given beforehand.
  - Examples or relevant areas are shown in the appendix of the SWOT-map: this is made more explicit on the attachment, that examples could be found in the appendix.
- To improve the process of comparing the maps and finding linkages, you need to look at how the SWOT-maps are made: the identification would be more effective/efficient/thorough and less difficult if guidelines were given to participants about the different focus points of the SWOT-maps. Now everyone makes it individually; the one focuses on economy and the other on social aspects. By giving guidelines about different possible focus points (e.g. environment) the maps will become more comparable and it will be easier to find touch points.
  - More guidelines are added in the SWOT-map attachment on possible
aspects participants could look at (e.g. economy, financial, new regulations, sustainability, social aspects, etc.)

- **It was not easy to draw out or come up with the different elements (asked in the SWOT-maps) of the company.**
  - Made it more explicit on the front page of the attachment, that there is a list with examples of areas to focus on in the appendix of SWOT-map.

- **There is no clear linkage or relationship between the first and second workshop: the first one is for understanding each other, to find common things (to talk about). The second workshop is very practical, more specific and helps participants with the specification of general ideas.**
  - The second workshop is found more helpful than the first: when using this tool among friends (as in the case of the user-test of the first workshop), participants already understand each other and already have found common things. When the tool is used among strangers, the first workshop would be helpful as well.
  - Explained more clearly in facilitator’s notes that first understanding needs to be increased (workshop 1) before it is possible to look for interdependencies among participants (workshop 2).

**Benefits:**
- The introduction assignment of the workshop added value to the existing view of participants: the participant realized that there are different points of views. It showed the participant new perspectives about collaboration.
- The SWOT-map offers an overview: normally, companies think a lot but does not make an overview of all possibilities. Without such an overview, you only think and discuss with one partner, but you do not see the total image which makes it easy to make mistakes by overlooking things. When they would consider the SWOT-map, good ideas could become better ideas.
- One of the participants likes the SWOT-map because he likes to draw and write things down shortly and he likes to use visuals to create something to show to people. This way it becomes easier to convince or persuade others.
- Comparing the SWOT-maps is a good exercise to find common things within different organisations to develop collaboration. It was unexpected that it would be possible to recognize a common situation which could be used for collaboration. Furthermore it taught the participant to recognize the SWOT-elements of his organization.
- Overall, the workshop helps with defining collaboration purposes and it was surprising to find that two different organizations from two completely different cultures would be able to find common ground and similar aspects / problems.
- The workshop helps participants to identify their capabilities and needs
- The workshop stimulates participants to share knowledge, experiences and SWOT-maps and to explore different possibilities together. This also helps them to increase understanding about each other.
- This tool helps participants to discover other participants’ attitudes.
- The tool does not change participants’ behaviour, but it would make collaboration stronger and/or help them to be more confident or faster throughout the decision-making process.
- According to one of the participants, the goal is to let participants to get to know each other and each other’s companies. It helps participants to identify an organization’s strengths, weakness, opportunities and threats and to find / specify business opportunities.
7.4 User-test workshop II

7.4.1 User-test workshop II: Set-up & process

The idea was to do a user-test with Vietnamese entrepreneurs in Vietnam; unfortunately due to time constraints and the long-distance organization it was not possible to organize the user-test in Vietnam on time for this thesis. Instead, feedback was asked from two Vietnamese entrepreneurs in the Netherlands (Table 12).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nationality</th>
<th>User-test Participants (W2)</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dutch/Vietnamese</td>
<td>Mr. Yeri (participant 1)</td>
<td>Sisi Nail Salon: Son of Owner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dutch/Vietnamese</td>
<td>Ms. Long (participant 2)</td>
<td>Briljant Nail Salon: Owner</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 12: Overview participants of user-test workshop 2

Individual (simplified) sessions or interviews were held to test the second workshop. Both participants are owners of nail salons and are part of the personal network from a close family member which for one of the participants was the main reason to commit. The other participant joined because of his aspirations to expand his (and his mother’s) business. All the shops of the participating entrepreneurs are located in the area of Dordrecht, the Netherlands. The fact that both participants are owners of nail salons is a coincidence: the goal of this user-test is to see how participants deal with the homework assignment, how they perceive the search for interdependencies or, in this case, the search for new opportunities or needs through existing (in-)capabilities and current developments. Feedback will be asked from participants regarding the homework assignment, the workshop process, the introduction exercise and the goal achievement of this workshop.

Individual sessions were held because the shop-owners were not willing to follow the workshop together. This lead to several changes in the process of the workshop for this particular user-test only:

- **The introduction assignment of the workshop became simpler:** Since the user-tests would be held individually with entrepreneurs, an introduction assignment to define collaboration would not be necessary. The goal of this introduction is to stimulate discussions and to break the ice by talking about each participant’s standing point regarding collaboration. Since this is less important during individual discussions, an explanation is given to participants about the introduction assignment after which a picture is randomly selected from the pages to illustrate how the assignment should be carried out. After that, participants could ask questions or pick out and explain an image themselves as an example to understand the exercise better. Subsequently, participants are directly asked for their opinion, suggestions and advice which would be ‘the end’ of the introduction.

- **The SWOT-map comparison:** Since there are no other SWOT-maps, it is not possible to make comparisons. Instead, the SWOT-map of each test-participant is extensively discussed and attempts are made to find internal linkages within one map to find new solutions or measurements for the regarding participant. Not only does this offer the author valuable insights about how participants perceive the development of, work with and explore the map, but it might also help participants gain surprising or unexpected possibilities they have overlooked (in the past) to improve their business.
7.4.2 User-test workshop II: Observations, feedback & adjustments

Since individual user-tests were carried out, the observations from these tests will be discussed separately. The main reason for this decision is because there were significant differences in the impression each test made: with one test-participant there was a lot of misunderstandings due to the language barrier, while the other test-session was perceived as easy and comfortable. The individual observations will thus be discussed first, after which the feedback and evaluations will be presented together (these did not show significant differences between the participants). The feedback consists of points of improvements, other issues and benefits participants perceived. In both cases, the derived adjustments following from the observations and feedback will be shown below the regarding comment.

Observations

Observation user-test workshop 2 - Participant 1:
• Easy and relaxed conversations: easy to talk to.
• Informal atmosphere (maybe also because of the location which was a lunchroom, rather than in the salon).
• It was difficult for him to find linkages at first, but after giving examples it became easier: it became a discussion and sort of brainstorm about what they could do to improve their business.
• Sometimes the participant had some trouble with understanding what exactly I was asking for, but that might be because this test was set up slightly different than the original test where multiple participants are present.
• The images from the intro assignment seem to be inviting to talk about; as a good conversation starter.

Observation user-test workshop 2 - Participant 2:
• There was a language problem: misunderstandings, mismatches between questions and answers, etc.
• It felt less informal/relaxed: we were sitting in her nail salon while sometimes customers walked in or employees asked questions, etc.
• It felt like she missed the point of the workshop (probably because of language problems)
• She was very enthusiastic when talking about her SWOT-map and explaining how and why she does certain things the way she does in her business. She later also said: “I find it interesting to talk about this [the SWOT-map]”

Feedback

Points of improvements:
• The intro assignment seems like a good way to introduce the meeting, such an exercise is also necessary to break the ice. It could be a bit more personal though: ask them to bring something personal to talk about or to use the given images as examples but they should draw something themselves. Another possibility is that you ask what collaboration consists of.
  • Added as tip for facilitator in facilitator’s notes: emphasize during explanation intro assignment that participants should present their personal opinion or standing point.
• The lines from the map are not clear; you cannot directly see which lines goes were and where they exactly lead to.
  • Each line from each factor/topic is separated which makes it rather messy; adjusted in SWOT-map.
• There are some weird lines within the map: e.g. in the topics weaknesses and threats there is a line that makes a weird and rather hard to follow curve.
• These weird lines are because space needed to be left open for participants to add their own input or to make extra linkages, but within the tests so far no one really makes these linkages in the homework-assignment. Therefore the map is more balanced now to make it easier to follow the lines.

• The strengths and opportunities are too close to the weaknesses and threats: it is hard to make a distinction between which sub-branch or sub-topic is part of weakness and which is part of threats. It is also hard to see where the internal and external analysis branches start/end
  • This feeling probably derived because space was tried to left open for participants’ own input, but this should be more balanced; the different brands / topics are spreaded more over the entire page.

Other issues:
• The first impression of the homework was that it took a long time; these aspect were never thought of before, so more time was needed to think about it.
• The workshop is very practical; but participants need to write down the factors clearly for this to be practical.
  • Added as tip for participants facilitator’s notes / Appendix SWOT-map.
• The workshop is very helpful; but participants need to discuss existing issues together for it to be helpful.
  • Added as tip for participants facilitator’s notes.
• This workshop helps participants to identify their capabilities and needs, but discussion is needed to solve and tackle issues.
  • Added as tip for participants in facilitator’s notes.
• This workshop increases understanding among participants, but important points (content and purposes) about the workshop needs to be clearly explained.
  • Added as tip for facilitator in facilitator’s notes.
• Enthusiasm and commitment could be increased by encouraging participants to follow up on what was discussed and agreed upon in the workshop.
  • Added as tip for facilitator in facilitator’s notes.

Benefits:
• This workshop actually has been identifying and showing the different problems that still need to be tackled within the firm.
• This assignment taught the participant to look broader than just the salon and also to take into account or focus more on the (target) customers rather than just looking at what is happening within the salon to improve the salon for both clients as well as employees.
• Putting this map in a table is dull and boring. Furthermore, the map makes it easier to compare the branches/topics and to find possible linkages.
• The first impression of comparing and looking for similarities or linkages within the map was quite a surprise: the participant had no idea that these factors needed or could be compared and matched. The participant learned about another working method.
• The main benefits of this workshop is that you learn about yourself, get ideas for the store and get to know each other when multiple participants are present. Interdependencies could indeed be found by this workshop because you can learn from each others mistakes, the good and bad points and learn from each other('s experiences).
• The part the participant likes most is the conversation: you can map out anything you want, but you need to talk and discuss about it to further develop it and come to solutions. The map, however, did help to have a more
in-depth and focused conversation; it was a good starting point.

• The workshop was valuable because through the conversation and discussion new insights and in-depth topics could be found to expand the salon. It also helped to identify defects/mistakes in current business organization.

• The workshop is very valuable; the workshop is about collaboration and as an organisation you need someone to help you achieve your needs & interdependencies. You get a better result if someone helps you.
“If you want to develop, you need to collaborate” - Long, 2012
After the different test-sessions and adjustments, the final tool will be presented in this chapter. Chapter 8.1 discusses the facilitator notes which will be used by the facilitator as guidance throughout the workshops. Chapter 8.2 presents the final result of the documents required for workshop 1 and Chapter 8.3 showcases the eventual design of documents used in workshop 2.
8.1 Final design: Facilitator notes

The entire document of the facilitator’s notes could be found in FACILITATOR NOTES (after the references). In this chapter, the table of contents of the notes will be presented and a short explanation will be given about each chapter and sub-chapters.

Content facilitator notes:

1 Preparations facilitator
This chapter of the facilitator’s notes explains what preparations the facilitator should take before the workshops. The main issue is the selection of participants: a well-considered decision increases the chance of an actual partnership after the workshops. Whether or not to proceed after the workshops is up to the participants, but this decision could be positively influenced if the participants have obvious relations and linkages with each other. Furthermore, the point of the tool will become much clearer when presented with a concrete and specific example-case which is represented by the participants themselves. If they decide not to proceed with the potential partnership from the meetings, then participants will still have gained knowledge, understanding and the appropriate tools through the workshops to develop collaborations in the future.

2 Workshop 1
Chapter 2 discusses the content of the first workshop. This workshop is focused on increasing understanding and trust and should be seen as the informal first meeting of Vietnamese SMEs.

2.1 Introduction workshop 1
Project – What is the goal of this research project?

Objectives of the tool – Introduction into the tool designed in this research project: it discusses the objective of this tool and offers a short explanation of what each of the workshops is about.

Goal of first workshop – Introduction into the first workshop: this explains what the purpose, goals and motivation of workshop 1 is. It also presents why participants would want to participate in this tool or the workshops.

2.2 Introduction participants & facilitator
This chapter of the facilitator notes explains the introductions exercise for the participants and the facilitator to know one another. Every participant and the facilitator need to present themselves in front of the others.

Needed – Summarizes what is needed to carry out the introduction exercise of participants and facilitator.

Process – Discusses how the introductions exercise is to be carried out. It gives a step-by-step plan of what, how and why something needs to be done.

2.3 Boardgame
This chapter of the facilitator notes discusses the boardgame-element of the first workshop. It offers some tips for facilitator and participants, explains the game rules and the process of the game.

Tips for facilitator – These are tips for the facilitator when facilitating the
boardgame exercise of the workshop. These tips usually asks the facilitator to explain certain issues more clearly or to put more emphasize on a certain topic when explaining the game.

*Tips for participants* – Also tips will be given to participants about how they could behave throughout the boardgame to get the best results and why.

*Needed* – Summarizes what physical elements are needed to carry out the boardgame exercise.

*Game rules (part 1)* – Explains the first part of the game rules: since it is desired to avoid strategic behaviour when playing the game, only a part of the game rules will be explained beforehand. The other game rules, mostly about winning or losing, will therefore be shared after the game is finished.

*Game process* – Outlines the different steps participants need to take to play the boardgame; it is a step-by-step outline which explains what, how and when participants need to do throughout the boardgame.

*Game rules (part 2: Winning/losing)* – After the game is finished the remaining game rules about winning and losing will be explained. It explains how to determine who the short term / long term winner of the game is.

### 2.3 Wrap-up workshop 1

*Needed to hand out* – Summarizes what needs to be handed out at the end of the first meeting: the homework assignment and its attachment need to be handed out to the participants before they leave. Also a short explanation needs to be given about what is expected.

*Discussion* – Explains what the facilitator could do to stimulate discussion about what participants have learned and what they would do differently another time. In addition, an explanation will be given about what participants could do with what they have learnt and why these insights are valuable for them.

*Conclusion* – Concludes what the goal and the purpose of the first workshop is and briefly explains what else participants could expect.

### 3 Homework participants & facilitator

*Tips for facilitator* – Tips for the facilitator to explain the homework assignment – SWOT map – to the participants.

*Tips for participants* – Includes tips for participants to fill in the SWOT map and information about where they can find additional explanation about the assignment.

*Needed* – Summarizes what physical elements are needed for the homework assignment for participants.

*Process* – Explanation about what is expected from participants regarding the homework assignment; what do they need to do, how and why. Furthermore an explanation about what the facilitator is supposed to do before the meeting is also given; what are the tasks for the facilitator to make sure participants have filled in their SWOT-map before the meeting and how could the facilitator prepare for the workshop.
4 Workshop 2

4.1 Introduction workshop 2
Goal of second workshop – The goal and purpose of the second workshop is presented in this part of the facilitator notes.

4.2 Introduction assignment
This chapter is about the introduction assignment of the second workshop. It is about participants sharing their point of view on collaboration.

Tips for facilitator – Tips for the facilitator to facilitate throughout the introduction assignment: what could the facilitator do to successfully carry out the introduction of workshop 2.

Tips for participants – This part of the notes consists of tips for participants to make the results of the introduction as valuable and useful as possible.

Needed – Summarizes what physical tools are needed to conduct the introduction assignment.

Process – Explains the process of the introduction assignment: what is expected from whom, when and how?

Conclusion – Concludes the purpose of this assignment, explains why this assignment is chosen and what result is expected from it.

4.3 SWOT-maps
Making a SWOT-map is the homework assignment for the participants. Every participant should have filled in and send their map to the facilitator prior to the actual meeting. These maps will be used as a starting point to find interdependencies among participants for the development of potential collaborations.

Tips for facilitator – Tips are given to the facilitator about how (s)he could facilitate this process of finding interdependencies to achieve valuable and useful results.

Tips for participants – Participants are offered tips about how they could behave throughout the process of finding interdependencies to get interesting insights and solutions. Also, a brief overview is shown of what this assignment could offer them.

Needed – Summarizes the physical tools needed to identify interdependencies in the second workshop.

Process – Outlines what needs to be done to be able to find interdependencies among the participants.

4.4 Wrap-up workshop 2
Describes how the second workshop should be discussed and concluded.

Discussion – Shows how the facilitator could stimulate discussions among participants about what they have learned and how they could apply this in their own situation.

Conclusion – Concludes what participants have learnt from the two workshops.
and gives examples of how these findings could be used by the participants.

### 4.5 Examples & scenarios

In this chapter of the notes, example scenarios are sketched to give an image of the consequences of (non-)collaboration. Scenarios are made for when firms fail to collaborate, when firms succeed in collaboration and about finding the right balance.

*Scenario without collaboration* – Describes the consequences of non-collaboration.

*Scenario with collaboration* – Describes the consequences of collaboration.

*Scenario with moderate collaboration* – Describes the (im)balance of collaboration versus non-collaboration

### 5 How to proceed? – Workshop 3

The third meeting is only applicable if participants decide to further develop the collaboration. It is the first meeting without a facilitator and in which companies need to further elaborate and decide on possible collaboration specifics for the near future. Since this is outside the scope of the tool and project, the facilitator notes will only explain briefly the possible subsequent steps potential partners could take (if applicable).

### 8.2 Final design: Documents workshop I

#### 8.2.1 Final design: Introduction - Participant-cards

The participant-cards are used during the introduction of participants and facilitator. It is mainly used as an overview tool for the facilitator, but also helps participants to present (at least) this information of themselves (Figure 15 - Final design: Introduction - Participant-cards).

![Figure 15: Final design - Introduction: Participant-cards](image-url)
You and your partners are making a planning for the activities mentioned before (when will what be done?)

You and your partners are identifying the activities that are needed to achieve the goal on collaboration

You and your potential partners are making a planning for the activities mentioned before (when will what be done?)

You and your partners create an action plan which states what, when, how and by whom activities will be done

You and your partners are identifying the activities that are needed to achieve the goal on collaboration

You and your potential partners are trying to align wishes & desires (scope, expectations, interdependencies, goals)

You and your potential partners need to look at what each partner could bring to the table (SWOT & available resources)

You and your potential partners try to find shared interests & goals to identify possible interdependencies

Figure 16: Final design -
You and your partners make clear agreements on what is said before to avoid uncertainties and confusion

The activities mentioned before are included in the organisation structures of the participating companies

To understand the impact, you and your partners monitor, evaluate, reflect and report the findings during the process

You and your potential partners are meeting each other to get to know each other and the companies

Boardgame COLLABO
8.2.3 Final design: Trend- & Event-cards

The trend- and event-cards are the question-cards of the boardgame. Their purpose is to stimulate and provoke discussions and interaction among participants. Examples of how the card would look like are shown in Figure 17 - Final design: Trend- & Event-cards. The content of the remaining cards are presented in the lists below.

**Content Trend-cards**

- There is a transition from mobile phones to smart phones. How could you use this development? (*Think about marketing, profits, costs reductions, branding, etc.*)
- To reach the market, companies have to change from passive to pro-active. You need to go to your customers. How would you do this?
- The income of Vietnamese people and thus the purchasing power is increasing. What would you do to attract these people to buy your products?
- The demand for products is growing in Vietnam. How could you keep up with these demands?
- A growing number of competitors emerge onto the market and saturate the market you are in. What would you do to make yourself stand out from the crowd?
- The costs of raw materials and transportation are increasing. How can you keep offering products at competitive and affordable prices?
- The market’s interest towards natural products increases. How would you react on that?
- Inflation in Vietnam is increasing. How would this influence your company and the collaboration (think about sales & marketing for example) and what would you do to face this trend?
- The insecurity due to the economic crisis increases; people are postponing big purchases. How can you convince your market that they should buy your products?
- The importance of family, heritage and sustainability is increasing. How would you use this trend in marketing?
- The market is less stable due to the high inflation and economic crisis. What benefits would collaboration have in this situation?
- The use of social media is becoming more important. Give several examples of what you could do to reach your market?
- Natural resources are becoming scarcer and thus more expensive. What would you do?
- People in Vietnam have a higher life expectancy. How could you utilize this trend?
Content Event-cards

- You and your partners underestimated the required resources. How could this be solved?
- Because of the improved relationship with (other) retailers, your brand has increased market awareness. What would be the next step?
- Women make more emotional purchases while men mainly look at technical and functional aspects. Knowing this, which market would fit your products better and why?
- Your company has a small group of loyal customers. What would you do to keep them satisfied and to maintain/grow this group?
- Vietnamese people are more need-driven and sometimes more demanding customers (compared to Western people). What would you do differently to attract those customers?
- Vietnamese companies tend to compete mainly on price to survive. Imagine your company is competing only on price, but you want to change this. On what aspects do you want to compete and how?
- One of the collaborating partners is very protective of him/herself and thus reluctant to collaborate. Explain what you would do to improve your partner’s behaviour and skip the next turn.
- The message and character of your products are not clear to your customers. What would you do to improve this?
- Vietnamese people like to use products for a very long time (compared to for example the European market). Your company makes long-lasting products, but how do you communicate that to your customers?
- Vietnamese people do not spend a lot of money on furniture (compared to Western people) so the local market is quite small. How would you be able to grow your business?
- There is not much loyalty among your employees and they start to leave you for a job with a higher salary. Explain what you would do and skip the next turn.
- One of your products is being copied by a competitor and the protection by law is limited. How would you deal with this?
- One of the collaborating partners is closed-minded and show hierarchical and authoritarian behaviour which causes the collaboration to fail. Explain what you would do to prevent this next time and skip the next turn.
- Non-transparency and ill communication in the decision making process of one of the companies causes you to reconsider this partner. Explain what you would do to improve this and skip the next turn.
- One of your potential partners feels reluctant to change his/her organization structure and needs more time to think about it. Explain what you would do and skip the next turn to create some time for your potential partner to consider.
- One of your partners is working on an important project and does not have time to finish its collaboration responsibilities in time anymore. What would you do?
- One of your key partners is declared broke. This leads to serious delays in the project. Explain what you would do and skip the next turn to recover from this.
- One of your partners keeps delaying the delivery. What would you do?

8.2.4 Final design: Resources overview cards

These cards are used during the boardgame of the first workshop. Their purpose is to help participants to keep track of their remaining or invested resources. For each participant there is a different colour (Figure 18 - Final design: Resources overview cards).
8.2.5 Final design: Luck cards

These luck cards determine how much ‘profit’ participants make from their ‘investments’. The main reason these cards are inserted is to have a game- or luck-element which has a significant effect on who will be the winner of the boardgame (Figure 19 - Final design: Luck cards).
8.3 Final design: Documents workshop II

8.3.1 Final design: Introduction assignment workshop II - Images
For the introduction assignment a collection of images and terms/words is selected (Figure 20): These are used to define collaboration among participants.

Figure 20: Final design - Introduction assignment workshop II (images)
8.3.2 Final design: SWOT-map
The SWOT-map is designed to help participants evaluate and reflect on their companies' (in)capabilities, current developments and possibilities (Figure 21). This map is given as homework to participants to be filled in, in-between the two workshops.

Figure 21: Final design -
Because this could be a new approach for (some) Vietnamese SMEs to look at their business, an attachment is written which will be handed out together with an initial outline of the SWOT-map. The attachment to the map presents SWOT-analysis as a method, how to develop a SWOT-map and examples of areas or topics participants could use as guidance when filling in their own map. The attachment could be found in ATTACHMENT SWOT-MAP (after facilitator notes).

**Figure 21: Final design - SWOT-map**

- **Strengths**
  - 1
  - 2
  - 3
  - ...

- **Challenges / weaknesses**
  - 1
  - 2
  - 3
  - ...

- **How is this strength currently used?**
  - 1
  - 2
  - 3
  - ...

- **How to stimulate this strength?**
  - 1
  - 2
  - 3
  - ...

- **Required resources**
  - 1
  - 2
  - 3
  - ...

- **How to strengthen this weakness?**
  - 1
  - 2
  - 3
  - ...

- **Current solutions to compensate this weakness?**
  - 1
  - 2
  - 3
  - ...

- **Required resources**
  - 1
  - 2
  - 3
  - ...

- **Company:**

  - Strengths
  - Challenges / weaknesses

- **SWOT-map**
9. DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION

This project’s main focus was to help Vietnamese SMEs to initiate collaboration by designing a tool that would support the process. The research project has been described and reported in previous chapters, but several issues still need to be dealt with. Chapter 9.1 therefore evaluates the outcomes of the project and discusses the limitations and the possibilities for future research and Chapter 9.2 draws the final conclusions.

9.1 Discussion

Evaluation tool
The goal of this project is to design a tool to initiate collaboration among Vietnamese SMEs. A part of the research was devoted to finding criteria for collaboration. Several criteria have been identified on which the final tool is evaluated on its capabilities to induce collaboration:

- **Presence of an initiator**: the tool does not require, but allows for an initiator if this is relevant. If a company asks for the tool with the idea to initiate collaboration, that company will be the initiator. If the tool is used for training purposes only, the role of initiator will also be fulfilled by the facilitator (throughout the tool).
- **A common goal / interdependencies**: the second workshop of the tool is focused on finding interdependencies among participants.
- **Interests or benefits for all stakeholders**: by looking for interdependencies, interests for all stakeholders are sought.
- **Trust**: the first workshop of the tool increases participants’ understanding of each other, collaboration process and business context, while the second workshop helps participants to find interdependencies. Through the interaction and communication the credibility among participants is stimulated. Together this could support participants to build trust.
- **Open and clear communication**: this depends partially on the participants, but through the content and set-up of the workshops participants are stimulated to engage in discussions and conversations. This could be seen as the first step towards open communication.
- **Honesty and transparency**: this also depends partially on the participants, but by presenting the first workshop as a game, participants will behave less wary and thus tend to be more open and less cautious about what they say.
- **Allowing others their (beneficial) results**: this also depends partially on the participants, but by seeking and exploring interdependencies participants...
could focus on, they learn that in a partnership their profits depend on each other. If one partner is doing well because of the partnership, the other one could gain success as well.

- **(Perception) of a durable relationship**: from research it appears that potential business partners first need to be friends (or at least acquaintances) before becoming partners: having a personal relationship first, decreases the chance that the other partner will cheat or steal from them. Since the first workshop could be seen as a prolonged introduction into the second, the focus is first on getting to know each other, before focusing on what they can do for each other. This follows the preferred sequence of Vietnamese people.

- **Competence and capacity**: the tool does not immediately increase a company’s competence or capacity, but the second workshop does attempt to identify these competences or capacities. By identifying them, companies could use these assets to gain leverage and to negotiate what each potential partner could bring to the potential partnership.

- **Understanding in other’s interests and personalities**: the first workshop attempts to increase the understanding among participants and their personalities, while the second workshop tries to identify participants’ needs and interests within collaboration.

- **Understanding in benefits of collaboration**: the second workshop shows potential partners why they need each other and on what aspects they could collaborate to create a win-win situation.

- **Commitment to project**: during the second workshop interdependencies should emerge. Finding these interdependencies means that participants or potential partners need each other to e.g. increase profits or expand the business. These personal interests within a partnership should increase participants’ commitment towards a collaboration project. Although the tool tries to support this criterion, the decision of whether or not to commit is still to be made by the potential partners.

- **Credibility**: by identifying interdependencies, potential partners should realize their success partially depends on each other. This realization together with time and trust should allow them to believe that whatever the other does, is with good intentions for the partnership.

- **Independent party (mediator / facilitator)**: the tool consists of two facilitated workshop. The facilitator role will ultimately be fulfilled by the client of this project, the Handicraft and Wood Industry Association (HAWA) whose mission is to strengthen cooperation among its members.

Although not all criteria are directly addressed to, it does support or at least does not obstruct any of the criteria. Some issues take time to solve and do not have to be immediately tackled during the initiation phase of a partnership, especially issues regarding trust and credibility. These factors need space and time to grow before they start to show result. This tool therefore could not immediately increase trust or credibility since it only focuses on the start of collaboration which has always been a complicated, insecure and fuzzy stage. The tool however, does support and allow space for trust to grow by trying to stimulate understanding, communication and interaction which could be seen as a small step into the direction of relationship-building. Being able to successfully build a durable relationship implies the growth of trust, commitment, credibility, open communication and understanding.

**Limitations of project**
One of the main issues in this project is to find interviewees: the language barriers, busy schedules and communication issues made it more complicated to organize an interview. These problems also occurred when looking for participants for the user-test of the two workshops. Because of the difference in
language, all related documents needed to be translated to fit the participants’ context which means that documents could be misinterpreted by participants or author due to the difference between the English and Vietnamese language.

The test of the second workshop had some additional difficulties because the author was not in Vietnam anymore: with everyone’s busy schedule it was hard to find a facilitator; a date on which all involved parties could make it needed to be picked; and there was no direct communication between the author, participants, initiator and facilitator. In the end the test of the second workshop did not take place because participants were unable to finish the homework assignment in time and because they failed to show up at the meeting. Even though this was not a positive event for this project, it did confirm and give insight into the (business) context of Vietnam: Vietnamese do not like to say ‘no’ and do not like to ‘admit’ that something is not possible, which is part of the communication problems Vietnamese, but especially foreigners in Vietnam have (difficulties) to face. Furthermore, this also means that everything seems fine until things are not anymore. Vietnam is thus a difficult context to collaborate in due to these communication and transparency issues. This situation showed that improvements in the business and collaboration culture of Vietnam are needed and that entrepreneurs need to learn to collaborate. Furthermore, this situation also showed that organization of workshops could require a lot of time and energy unless there is sufficient commitment from the entrepreneurs. They, however only seem to be committed if there are some direct benefits and advantages for them; it showed that companies do not seem to want to learn new methods to increase long-term results and that the present is most important. Entrepreneurs therefore need to be guided throughout the initiation phase and they need to be stimulated to commit to the workshops until they see the values themselves. For this tool, it takes a lot of energy to keep them involved in the process since there are no direct benefits: the tool is rather general because of the focus on the initiation phase.

This effect of non-commitment could have been increased because the facilitator was not in contact with all participants. It was the initiator (in this case Phuong from kitchen producer Danh Moc), who found and communicated with the other (test-)participants about the workshops. The reason for this was because the other participants only speak Vietnamese, making communication between facilitator (the author and/or the contact person at HAWA) and the other participants nearly impossible. As found in the research, trust and commitment could be increased by understanding, interdependency and credibility which could be enhanced by interaction and communication. Since this was not possible because of the language barrier, this could be an explanation for the lack of commitment and thus the no-show of participants during the test of the second workshop.

When looking at the generalizability and usability of this project and/or its outcomes several limitations need to be taken into account before applying to other situations and contexts. This project’s results could and should not be applied without considering these limitations. They determine in which (problem) areas and situations the results could be applied to and how. If either of the limitations applies to the situation, additional research needs to be done to deal with these (relevant) limitations before applying the outcomes to the specific situation. Furthermore, limitations could be seen as the issues throughout the project which influence its process, its accuracy and usability of the results.

One of the aspects to take into account is that the interviews in Vietnam are held with relatively non-traditional companies: around half of the interviews
were held with Western entrepreneurs operating in Vietnam and the other half of the interviewees were Vietnamese entrepreneurs with a relatively open attitude and mindset towards change. This means that when applying the outcomes to more traditional companies, the applicant needs to take into account that the result might be different than expected. Furthermore, the amount of interviews held in Vietnam is limited due to the constraints in time, language and available or appropriate interviewees (network). All interviews were held with companies located within Ho Chi Minh City: the business culture and attitudes of people could be different in other parts of Vietnam. When applying the tool to another region, some research is needed to check whether this is appropriate and what changes are needed to fit the new context.

The interviews led to the events and trends used for the tool, but this list is not exhaustive since not all aspects could be addressed during the interviews. The ones mentioned in the tool are the ones that came up during interviews and/or (literature) research and are thus just many examples of an extensive list existing in real-life. Because the tool is focused on the initiating phase of collaboration, it targets rather general and basic issues. The tool is therefore rather general with few links to the targeted areas of expertise or industries, but could be applied in multiple situations, companies, industries and maybe even regions or countries. Before applying the tool in another context however, research needs to be done to check whether this tool is appropriate for that given situation.

Although this project presents collaboration as something simple: in reality it is however much more complex and more difficult to set up a complete partnership. Potential partners need to take much more issues into account than is mentioned throughout this project. Many of these issues however are not discussed since they often are outside the scope of this project; collaboration initiation. The developed tool is therefore also a simplification of reality which for this situation is appropriate because of the goal of the project; it is about how potential participants should work together to build a relationship in which the changes of attitudes, behaviours and actions in the present and near future are more important than the actual collaboration contracts, plans and strategies. This means that the outcomes of this project could be used as general guidelines to develop collaboration, but should not be considered as strict rules or prescriptions for specific partnerships. Readers should also keep in mind that even though collaboration is offered as a solution here, this does not mean it is an appropriate solution for all cases. Future users and readers should thus evaluate and reflect for themselves if the offered method is the best for his/her own situation. In addition, the presented collaboration process in this tool is an example of what is possible and should be adjusted, interpreted and altered in a way that works best for its users: the tool is open for case-specific changes according to the context, needs and wishes of its users.

As said earlier, the tool is quite general, fits many situations and is flexible for adjustments. It therefore is appropriate to initiate many different collaboration strategies or approaches. As intended it could be used to kick-start (horizontal/vertical/lateral) supply chain collaboration, but also to develop co-branding, a joint daughter enterprise, collaboration to increase market impact, etc.

**Future research**

This project researches the current attitudes, mindsets and situation in Vietnam regarding collaboration with the focus on the initiation phase. The findings and insights were used to develop a tool that offers support, guidance and knowledge during the start-phase where human, social and cultural (both country and company) aspects and collaboration purposes are still fuzzy and
full of uncertainties. The tool teaches the participants to get through this tough first stage by stimulating them to share knowledge, information and above all experiences to learn from, but also about each other. This decreases the uncertainties, awkwardness and fuzziness in the early stage. Furthermore, to increase commitment and enthusiasm, participants are expected to come to solutions and results themselves which are a result from engaging in guided discussions about issues. Instead of prescribing a general strategy or plan, participants need to make their own plans, define their own goals and purposes. Future research is however needed to further develop, enrich and enhance the tool to increase usability and effectiveness.

One of the possibilities for future research on this issue is to include regions or areas from Vietnam other than Ho Chi Minh. The tool could also be further generalized by researching other industries on collaboration: even though this tool’s link with the furniture industry is very weak, it does not change the fact that all interviews were held with furniture related companies and that the findings are thus the perspective of companies in the furniture industry. This industry could be perceiving issues completely different than other industries. In addition, different industries are influenced by different factors, in a different way and to another extent.

As said before, this project focuses on the initiation phase of collaboration in Vietnam. Future research could thus be about the subsequent stages of the collaboration process, for example; the research could investigate how this or another tool could support the other stages in the development of collaboration in Vietnam. Future researchers could for example start with further specifying the (very) briefly discussed third meeting, the first non-facilitated meeting after the workshops of the current tool. Further development could be done in complementation of the current tool to provide a total-package solution of how to deal with collaboration from the beginning to the end. The tool could then guide its users throughout the entire collaboration process: to come up with activities to implement the collaboration, planning, evaluation and assessments, etc. Also, future research could emphasize on the different possible collaboration strategies (in Vietnam): how should the tool be altered when users want to pursue another collaboration strategy? Would it change the content of the tool at all? If so, how does the choice for a collaboration strategy influence the tool? Etc.

9.2 Conclusion

When recalling the research question from the introduction:
How could Vietnamese SMEs initiate collaboration to increase the effectiveness of their business strategies, while minimizing the risks of difficulties related to (and thus the failure of) collaboration?

To answer this questions, different criteria for collaboration are identified and could be used to prepare the development of collaboration. Collaboration evolves around three key factors: (1) understanding, (2) interdependencies and (3) credibility. Understanding could be seen as understanding among participants, understanding about (the benefits of) collaboration and understanding about the (business) context. Interdependencies are the linkages of different companies on which they could connect (collaborate) to help each other. These interdependencies are needed, especially on the short term to bring potential partners together, but without credibility this partnership could not develop. Mutual trust and belief is needed to keep potential partners together and to build
COLLABO, the tool developed in this project, offers Vietnamese SMEs guidance to initiate collaboration to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of business strategies while minimizing the risk of collaboration failure. The tool is designed based on the results of research on the risks and difficulties companies have with collaboration and on the perceived success factors of partnerships. The research is based on interviews with Western experts on networking or collaboration and with entrepreneurs, both Western and Vietnamese, located in Ho Chi Minh, Vietnam. The tool focuses on increasing understanding, identifying interdependencies and building credibility and trust. The interviewed entrepreneurs in Vietnam have indicated to have difficulties with these factors, especially trust: this tool therefore aims to (partially) solve these issues through interaction, discussions and sharing among Vietnamese SMEs. This should improve the understanding among participants and thus offer them a starting point to get past some of the uncertainties regarding their potential partners. By doing so, this creates space for trust to be able to grow which offers potential for the growth of credibility.

The tool consists of two facilitated workshops: the first workshop focuses on increasing the understanding among participants, about the collaboration process and about the (business) context. Because it is rather informal, general and presented as a game, this first workshop could be seen as a prolonged introduction into the second workshop. During the second workshop, participants are supported to identify interdependencies with the other participants. Before that is possible however, participants need to analyze and reflect on their own firm by analyzing their Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT). Furthermore, participants are asked to think about possible solutions or tactics and the required resources. These analyses will be used to look for interdependencies. After the second facilitated workshop, the decision regarding whether or not to proceed with the development of the collaboration needs to be made by the participants themselves.

The tool will be presented as a training session by Handicraft and Wood Industry Association (HAWA): companies could contact the association, but it could also be given as a general training session initiated from HAWA to its members. During the use of this tool by HAWA to reach its mission, the association could also consider to further develop and enhance the tool to offer additional support to its members after the two facilitated meetings of the current COLLABO tool (e.g. the in this thesis briefly mentioned ‘third meeting’). In that regard, COLLABO could be seen as the start of an extensive support tool which could offer Vietnamese SMEs guidance throughout the entire collaboration process.
FINAL NOTES
HAWA is established to offer support to the Vietnamese furniture industry and one of their missions is to improve cooperation among its members. This project aims to support Vietnamese SMEs in their development of collaboration, more specifically during the initiation phase. The early start-phase is chosen because it is one of the most complex, insecure, intransparant and fuzzy stages in the collaboration process due to the social and (company) cultural differences and the uncertainty about the potential partner.

Vietnam is a fast-developing country; currently its income level is categorized by Worldbank (2012b) as lower middle income, its economy is growing quickly and the country is very interesting to (foreign) investors. The latter has a positive influence on the development of Vietnam, but it does make the country rather dependent on other countries and increases the international competitive threats for Vietnamese SMEs. To improve their competitiveness, Vietnamese SMEs should join hands (Viet Nam News, 2012g).

After different interviews with Western experts, Vietnamese business people and Western entrepreneurs in Vietnam, a general specification of what collaboration means and requires is formed. After the data gathering, analyses and interpretation of the findings it is found that collaboration is about understanding, trust and giving each other some credit. This might not seem very surprising, but another much more interesting question is how this state should be reached. After the research, several criteria for collaboration are formulated which should be stimulated and taken into account when trying to initiate collaboration:

- Presence of an initiator
- A common goal / interdependencies
- Interests or benefits for all stakeholders
- Trust
- Open and clear communication
- Honesty and transparency
- Allowing others their (beneficial) results
- (Perception) of a durable relationship
- Competence and capacity
- Understanding in other’s interests and personalities
- Understanding in benefits of collaboration
- Commitment to project
- Credibility
- Independent party (mediator / facilitator)

With the help of these and other findings, a tool is designed to help Vietnamese SMEs initiate collaboration. The tool, COLLABO, consists of two facilitated
workshops; the first workshop focuses on increasing understanding among the participants, about the collaboration process and about the (business) context. To increase this understanding, participants play a game in this first workshop. This workshop is the first meeting for participants and during a first meeting informality is important in Vietnam. Only understanding about collaboration issues however is not sufficient; a second workshop is needed to be able to provide more concrete and specific guidelines or solutions for potential partners to further collaborate on. The second workshop therefore emphasizes the identification of interdependencies. Before interdependencies can be found, participants need to analyze and reflect on the company they represent by the means of a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) analysis, elaborated with several brainstorm elements. This will be given as a homework-assignment to the participants. These individual analyses need to be compared and discussed to find interdependencies during the second meeting.

The tool could be facilitated by HAWA which means that HAWA will prepare, facilitate and if necessary initiate the workshops to guide Vietnamese SMEs through the early initiation stage of collaboration. Individual companies could ask HAWA for help in which case that company will become the initiator of the potential collaboration. In other cases, HAWA could offer the tool to its members as a training session which means HAWA will then be both facilitator and initiator of respectively the workshops and the potential partnership (throughout the tool). The goals of COLLABO and the mission of HAWA are comparable, but have a different focus: where HAWA in its mission statement does not make a distinction on which stage of the cooperation to focus on, the tool is explicitly designed to help participants to kick-start their partnership, to give them the very basic tools needed to increase the chance on success. Whether or not they decide to proceed with the development of the partnership is out of the scope of this project and the tool.

With this tool, HAWA could further pursue its mission to connect its member-companies to help the Vietnamese furniture industry to develop and grow. HAWA has the tools, the knowledge and the network to introduce this approach of initiating collaboration to the Vietnamese firms. The development of this tool was limited by time, (cultural) knowledge, network and resources; this means further development and fine-tuning of the tool is desired to improve it to become more effective and valuable to Vietnamese firms. Examples of questions the association could ask itself are: how should participants of COLLABO further proceed after the tool? How could HAWA continue to offer support after the two facilitated workshops as described in this thesis? Is it possible to support members from the start to the end of the collaboration process; if so, how? What could be done to make the outcomes of the tool more effective and valuable for its users? Etc.
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Facilitator’s guide: COLLABO
Overview of workshops, processes and rules

By Jip-kang Vuong, Delft University of Technology
2012
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Facilitator's guide: COLLABO

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1 Preparations facilitator

The facilitator needs to find participants. The goal is for them to collaborate which means that when looking for participants the facilitator needs to keep in mind that collaboration between the participants should be possible and beneficial. One of the main conditions for collaboration is shared interests and goals. When looking for participants the facilitator needs to ensure that there is already the existence of some potential benefits for all parties. This means that the facilitator could look for companies who have a lot of potential to complement each other on for example their core activities, production, marketing, etc. Because collaboration is still difficult to establish in Vietnam, the facilitator should look for natural and ‘easy’ collaborations. In other words, interdependencies among participating companies should be able to be identified almost immediately on first sight and it is clear that they could and will benefit from collaboration with each other. This will increase the progress of the collaboration process and make it easier for participants to talk about it. The project and interdependencies are in that case more concrete and therefore it becomes clearer what the meetings are about or why they are participating. Because of all the previously mentioned reasons, it is easier for companies to open up and share their thoughts which stimulate trust and commitment.

A participant could also look for the COLLABO facilitator if (s)he finds it useful. In that case the regarding participant will be the initiator throughout the tool. Since the initiator already has an idea about partnerships or collaboration suitable for his/her company, the initiator could play a role in the decision of which other organizations to invite for participation. The goal of the tool is, in both cases, to initiate collaboration by increasing understanding in potential partners, about the collaboration process, about the business context and about finding interdependencies.

Number of participants: 2 – 4 participants per session tool (workshop 1 & workshop 2)
2 Workshop 1

2.1 Introduction workshop 1

Introduction workshop 1: to explain what this workshop is about and why it will help participants

Project
Helping Vietnamese companies to initiate a healthy and fruitful partnership in the current market and business dynamics.

Objectives of the tool
Discussions and sharing knowledge and experiences are key factors in this tool. Only when companies are open and honest, interdependencies can be found and used. This tool is about reaching a common goal that will benefit everyone. The results and increased mutual understanding after the first workshop could be used in a second meeting as a (solid) base to build on from. The second meeting is about finding interdependencies that binds potential partners together. Again, discussions and sharing experiences are important during this meeting since interaction with others will increase the understanding on a personal, emotional and business aspect.

Goal of first workshop
This is the first meeting towards a partnership and is meant to help participants to kick-start the collaboration, not to help them develop a collaboration plan. The main goal is to stimulate them to collaborate, to open up their attitudes towards collaboration in Vietnam and to create space for relationships, trust, communication, commitment and understanding to grow through interesting discussions and by sharing experiences. Furthermore it will increase the understanding of the collaboration process and challenge the participant to think about current trends and events. By collaborating with other companies, costs and risks can be shared, market impact increases, efficiency within the company could increase and therefore lower the costs. For a dynamic environment like Vietnam, these advantages are important to pursue. Non-collaboration on the other hand could lead to higher costs (inflation and lack of economies of scales for example), vulnerability for market changes and a slower learning curve.
2.2 Introduction participants & facilitator

Introduction participants & facilitator: to get to know each other

Needed
- Participant’s card

Process
- Write down the information asked by the participant’s card.
- Make a round and ask them to share (1 – 2 minutes each):
  - Name
  - Age
  - Education
  - Occupation
  - Company name
  - Company’s core activities

2.3 Boardgame

Boardgame: to increase understanding of collaboration (process), among participants and of the (business) context in Vietnam

Tips for facilitator
- Explain the goals of this boardgame explicitly.
- Present the relationship between first and second workshop: First understanding among participants, about collaboration process and about (business) context needs to be increased, before it is possible to look for potential interdependencies among participants. The understanding is raised in the first workshop, while the interdependencies are found in the second workshop of the tool.
- Explain what is expected from participants; what are they expected to do?
- Explain that this is a discussion game: facilitate to stimulate discussions.
- Explain that the ‘trends’ are found through research and are derived from the perspectives of other entrepreneurs operating in Vietnam. Also explain that the ‘events’ are identified with the help of interviews, but should be seen as possible situations only.
- A part of the rules is explained after the game to avoid strategic behaviour of participants during the game. When explaining the last part of the rules, try to emphasize private versus collective interests, why the collaboration in the game succeed/fail and what effects the success/failure have on the businesses (in the game). When explaining this,
try to address to it as part of the game context instead of real-life success/failure and effects.
- Observe participants: when they become more used to the game and start to open up, more specific and personal questions could be asked. Until then, be careful with personal and sensitive topics.

**Tips for participants**
- The rules of the game will be shared, but do not focus on them too much since almost everything will become clear when starting to play the game.
- When discussing a (game) issue give examples from your own expertise/business/experiences to illustrate the situation and your point of view.
- You do not have to share anything you do not want to; participants should not feel pressured to say/do anything. It is about your genuine opinion and standing point regarding different given challenges and situations.

**Needed**
- Board of boardgame (with outline collaboration process)
- Overview cards for (invested) resources
- “Trend” and “Event” cards
- Coloured dice
- Resource representatives (resources per participant & additional resources)
- Pawns to indicate where participants left off
- Percentage card (determines market share)
- Optional: Elaborated process stages (to hand out for extra information)

**Game rules (part 1)**
How can you win?
- If everyone successfully faces all trends (by collaboration & discussion)
- If everyone can overcome all events (by collaboration & discussion)
- If everyone pass through all the different process stages
- Other rules will be explained later

**Game process**
This game is about the discussions and the (related) decisions made by each participant. Everyone more or less knows the benefits of collaboration, but developing and maintaining one is easier said then done: personal, cultural and external factors all influence the outcome of an
attempt towards collaboration. Trust is a very important aspect in a partnership and could be
grown over time and by increasing understanding: understanding of the process, of each other
and of the context. In this game each participant represents an employee of a different company.
They decide to collaborate for the first time. A lot of uncertainties, developments and other
factors cause collaborating with each other to be a real challenge. The goal of the collaboration is
to attract a new promising market. Conquering this market will offer many opportunities and
business growth is guaranteed. This market however, is very dynamic and currently going
through a lot of changes. To share some of the risks and costs and to increase the chance of
attracting this market the collaboration needs to be a success. The potential partners need to
learn the values of long-lasting relationships opposed to one-time deals. Furthermore, they need
to increase their understanding of each other to be able to let trust grow. The question is: how
could a long-lasting partnership be developed?

- Each participant picks a coloured overview card (Participant 1, Participant 2, Participant
  3, Participant 4). The post-it tags are your available resources for this collaboration; each
tag is one unit of resources, this could be time, budget, capacity, anything. If a participant
runs out of his or her resources, the participant becomes dependent on the other
participants: a deal could be made to lend the participant several units of resources in
return for a specific amount of market share at the end of the game (the amounts or
resources or market share needs to be discussed and decided on among the participants).
Also the question “What would you have done in real life?” should be asked to the
participant who ran out of resources.
- Decide who starts first, (s)he will be the initiator
- Everyone starts at ‘start’ and the game is finished when everyone is back at start again.
- Throw blue or yellow; get respectively a trend or event card. These cards can contain a
question or instruction. If you get a question; discuss the issue on the card with other
participants. Look at the next process stage; do you want to invest in another private
project (short term gain) or do you want to invest in that specific stage of the
collaboration process (long term gain)? Choose either and decide how much you want to
invest. If you choose to invest in a private project (unrelated to the collaboration) then
put the resources on your own overview card; the more invested here, the bigger the
chance in gaining more market share in your current (private) market (= higher private
gain). If you decide to invest in the collaboration then the resources are added into the
game’s overview. It is also possible to not invest any resources if a participant thinks that
that specific process stage is not important enough to invest in. By (not) putting in
resources in the process stages, participants can indicate how (not) important a specific
process stage is. At the end of the game an overview is created that shows the relative importance of each stage according to the participants; it shows what stages are more important, what needs more attention and where the focus should be. The overview could also function as a tool to reconsider the investments throughout the process stages; a tool to balance the investments and to make sure each important stage gets the resources it needs to be carried out appropriately.

* Note: sometimes participants will get the assignment to ‘skip the next turn’. It means that the participant finishes this turn (in which (s)he got this assignment) first including investing, then skip the next turn (which includes rolling a dice and investing in a process stage) and wait for the turn after.

- Throw green; you do not need to pull any cards, go directly to the process stage and determine whether you want to invest in a private project or in the collaboration. Determine how many resources you want to spend and respectively put the amount of resources on your own overview card or into the game.

- Each turn takes max. 2 minutes

- Throw, play and discuss until everyone is back at ‘start’ again (discussions and help from people who already finished are allowed, if not desired)

**Game rules (part 2: Winning/losing)**

The focus of this game in collaboration; attracting the new market is a group effort and requires the commitment of every member. Even if only one or two partners fail to do so, the collaboration is not a success and the market cannot be conquered. Thus the ultimate goal is: Making the collaboration a success (long-term achievement), while taking into account the private goals (short-term achievements).

- Each pick a luck card

- Count the resources invested in a private project and invested in the collaboration (separately)

- Multiply the percentage on your luck card with the invested resources in your private project and in the collaboration. Calculate them separately

- How much market share did you gain on your private project? And in the collaboration (if it were to be a success)?

- Look at the gained market share from your private project: the participant with the highest number wins (in gaining private interests). This is the winner on the short-term.

- How about the long-term goal? For that we need to determine: was the collaboration a success?
- Count all the resources left on your overview card (invested in your private project and left-over resources). Pick the player with the highest amount as reference.
- Count all the resources which are put into the game and divide that with the amount of players.
- Is the calculated amount smaller than the reference? More resources have been spent privately rather than into the collaboration. Participants are not all on the same page and the collaboration failed. Evaluate and discuss what happened and how this could be prevented next time while keeping the goals (pursuing private & collective interests) into account.
- Is the calculated amount bigger than the reference? Then the collaboration is a success. Evaluate and discuss what happened and how the results could have been improved.
- *The one with the highest summarized gain in collective AND private market share is the long-term winner*

### 2.4 Wrap-up workshop 1

**Needed to hand out**

- Sheets of paper with the start of SWOT-maps
- Attachments of SWOT-maps for explanation

**Discussion**

- What is the most important insight you got from this session?
- What have you learned about collaboration and the related process (stages)? How?
- What have you learned about the other participants? How?
- What have you learned about the (business) context? How?
- What are the pitfalls and success factors of collaboration? Explain why.
- Now knowing the game; what would you do differently next time to improve the outcome? Explain why.

- What to do with increased understanding among potential partners?

Vietnamese people prefer an informal relationship prior to collaboration; trust and commitment are important issues Vietnamese entrepreneurs need to face. One of the ways to stimulate this is by interaction among potential partners to increase their understanding in each other. This includes their thoughts and opinions on issues, their behaviour, actions and other personal characteristics. The increased understanding in this tool will be used to create a basis for another workshop during which more company-related and in-depth
topics will be dealt with. Without basic understanding and trust it will be difficult for participants to open up and share information or knowledge.

- What to do with increased understanding in collaboration process?
Vietnamese do not like to follow processes or strategies; survival is most important and that involves (only) taking action when there is an obvious reason for it. Following a clear process or strategy plan could therefore be rather unfamiliar for some SMEs. By showing a general (example) of the collaboration process, participants learn how such a process could look like and what steps they could take to reach a partnership. Even though this understanding only consists of the basics, it is a start and could show participants the advantages of mapping out a process or making a planning. The general collaboration process as shown in the tool could form guidelines for participants to use after the workshops, but it will only be used if they understand the values of a (collaboration) process.

- What to do with increased understanding in business context?
Research has shown that doing market research is not very common yet in Vietnam: it is expensive and sometimes it does not guarantee useable results. It could therefore be questioned if Vietnamese SMEs know their market and its needs. The tool is developed to stimulate participants to think and discuss about the business context which in the tool consists of trends and possible events during collaboration. Discussing about the trend stimulates participants to think about current developments perceived by other entrepreneurs operating in Vietnam. The events allow participants realize what could happen during partnerships: already talking about what they would do in each situation is an incentive to talk about their past experiences and to anticipate on such an event. It does not prepare participants for these situations, but the tool stimulates them to think about it and discuss different possible solutions.

**Conclusion**
The goal of this workshop was to give you a kick start into a new collaboration which will create space for trust, commitment and understanding to grow. You should have gained an increased understanding of the collaboration process, of each other and of the context (trends & events) you are all operating in. The knowledge of the collaboration process should help you to take into account multiple important aspects when making decisions about the partnership. It gives you an overview of themes that could be important for you to take into account, maybe even to reconsider decisions you made.
By increasing the understanding among the participants, characteristics of participants, their roles within a potential collaboration, behaviours and actions of people could be better understood.

Increasing the understanding of participants in the context they operate in could remind or even introduce them to aspects that they overlooked and let them think about these issues that could occur when operating a business. By letting them think and discuss about issues, participants can share their knowledge and experiences which are the key factors to collaboration.

This game supports a learning curve in a game-like, non-threatening environment; it shows participants that mutual trust could lead to a more beneficial and long-term outcome (in the game: attracting a new market). It stimulates participants to think about the long-term vision and to avoid breaching agreements with a partner for a short term deal. By not trusting each other and thus playing for private interests, only short term profits can be made. But by trusting each other and playing for the collective interests could allow you to gain more. These collective interests could be market growth or profits they would not have been able to acquire when operating individually.

The increased understandings on personal- and context level should form the basis in the second meeting to build further on; the topics and content of the meetings will be more elaborated and in-depth. For this second meeting participants need to do an assignment at home. After the second meeting, there could be another meeting in which a first draft of the overall plan for collaboration could be developed, but that is outside the scope of this tool.

[Hand out homework assignment and briefly explain what it is expected from participants]
3 Homework participants & facilitator

Homework participants: Create SWOT-map of company to increase understanding of own capabilities and possibilities

Tips for facilitator
- Emphasize that there is a table with examples and relevant areas in the Appendix of the SWOT-map which participants could focus on or use for guidance when creating their SWOT-map
- Briefly give several examples of aspects participants could look at or discuss in their map: e.g. economy, financial, regulations, sustainability, social aspects, resources, etc.
- Explain what would be done with the maps: they will be discussed to find linkages, touch points and eventually potential interdependencies participants could work together on.

Tips for participants
- Be honest and open: Not only is this map used to find interdependencies, but it is also a moment of self-reflection and analysis. It could help you to find your target market, your vision / mission and new ways or strategies to improve your business or products. Interesting insights and useful results can only emerge if the SWOT-map is clear, representing reality and specific enough.
- Read the SWOT-map for explanations and examples to help you fill in your map.
- The map does not ask for numbers or company secrets; it is a summary of what is already there and visible to others, so it only asks you to do a small inventory about what you have or do not have and what you maybe could do with that.

Needed
- Sheets of paper with the start of SWOT-maps
- Attachments of SWOT-maps for explanation

Process
- After the first meeting each participant will get a sheet of paper with the start of the SWOT-map. Four branches are already on the map: strengths, challenges (weaknesses), positive developments and negative developments.
- Participants add their company name in the middle and start mapping their strengths, weakness, opportunities and threats (SWOT). In a very subtle way, the game prepares and sensitizes participants to develop their SWOT-map: the questions in the cards of the game are based on trends, developments and possible issues in the context of
Vietnamese companies. By answering them participants think about possible solutions and consider what they would do if this would happen to their company. Identifying the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats forms the base of their individual SWOT-map.

- Where possible participants add associations, sections and branches to the base: what could be done and what is needed to strengthen a company-strength, to compensate for a weakness, to exploit an opportunity or to face / use a threat to its advantage? Can certain strengths compensate for a weakness / threat or increase the positive effects of an opportunity? Can certain opportunities solve existing problems in the map? What is already done or solved? What kinds of knowledge and resources have been used for that? What kinds of knowledge and resources are available at the company? What other resources or facilities are needed? Where and how can these resources or facilities be gained? What kind of companies could be potential allies or competitors? Are associations and links possible between the previously formulated branches? Etc.

- Not only is this used in the second meeting, but is also very useful for the participant and his/her company: such an analysis is very insightful for the company as the participant is researching available resources, opportunities and possibilities within the company first, before identifying what is needed. This is more efficient and gives more guidance on how to organize their business and how to deal with the context.

- (An explanation and a list with categories in which Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats can be found are offered in the attachment. The list of categories is not exhaustive and participants are free to think of and add any factors outside the listed categories.

**Homework facilitator: Study SWOT-maps**

- Make sure participants send in SWOT-maps in time (mail: hardcopy / e-mail: scan / fax). Send reminders if necessary and ask if they need any help or have any questions.

- After the participants have sent in their SWOT-maps, the facilitator needs to study them: are they complete? Have they understood the assignment? Are there other links and branches the participants have overlooked?

- When all the individual SWOT-maps are studied and blanks are filled in (by re-contacting regarding participants) try to link the different maps by finding similarities, differences, interdependencies, complementing factors, sharing possibilities, counteracting aspects, etc. as preparation for the second meeting. This way the facilitator will be able to offer some guidance when participants get stuck or tend to get distracted by (relatively) irrelevant aspects.
4 Workshop 2

4.1 Introduction workshop 2

Introduction workshop 2: to explain what this workshop is about and why it will help participants

Goal of second workshop

The goal of this second workshop is to find out how each participant thinks about collaboration to increase understanding among participants. Furthermore, the key for this meeting is to present, compare and discuss the SWOT-maps as prepared by the participants to be able to find potential touch points and interdependencies among them. These interdependencies links potential partners together on the short term and could be the starting point for a partnership.

4.2 Introduction assignment

Introduction assignment: to identify participants’ view on collaboration and to increase understanding among participants (incl. facilitator)

Tips for facilitator

- Emphasize explicitly that it is about what participants think: they should present their personal opinion and point of view regarding collaboration.
- Ask for examples, past experiences and other opinions throughout this assignment.
- Take into account the time!

Tips for participants

- Explain clearly and honestly why you chose a specific image: it is about finding out how you see collaboration and why. It is not about having the most positive or socially accepted view, but about your opinion, your past experiences and your take on partnerships; what does partnership mean to you? What kind of behaviour is desired? Etc.

Needed

- Big sheet of paper pinned on a board
- Two sheets: one with images, one with words
- Markers
- Glue / scissors
Process

- One big sheet of paper with only the written words “Collaboration is ...” will be pinned on a board.
- Every participant gets two sheets of paper; one with images, the other with words.
- Participants are asked to define and visualize collaboration together: the facilitator will ask each participant to choose an image or a word that represents what collaboration is (for the participant). Since the two sheets with images and words are probably not complete, participants are allowed to draw or write on the board when they feel something is missing.
- The process will be facilitated by the facilitator and is as follows: one participant will paste, write or draw an image or a word on the sheet of paper on the board. After putting something on the board, (s)he needs to explain to the others why (s)he chose that word or image. Others might react on it. After a brief discussion or explanation, the next participant puts something on the board and explains why.
- This continues until time is up (20 minutes) or when participants feel they cannot add anything valuable to the board anymore. Together they will create an overview that shows what collaboration means to the participants.
- Discuss: What is the conclusion? What is collaboration about?

Conclusion

It gives participants a clearer view of what they think collaboration is. Usually participants will already have a good idea or at least a gut feeling about collaboration. It is helpful to visualize and reflect on it and to see what others think of it. By making the visualization together, there is much more interaction and participants will react on each other’s decisions or answers. Because of this interaction it is more fun to do. In addition to the benefit that participants can learn from each other about collaboration it also shows to the involved parties (including the facilitator) where everyone stands. Knowing how participants see partnerships, offers possibilities for anticipation or understanding for that person’s actions and behaviour. Furthermore, it is a good way to break the ice at the start of the meeting; it stimulates conversations and discussions between participants and the method is quite playful which induces a more informal atmosphere.
4.3  **SWOT-maps**

**SWOT-maps: to find interdependencies and touch points**

**Tips for facilitator**
- The second workshop could help increase understanding among participants, but important points regarding content and purposes of the meeting needs to be clearly explained.
- If necessary, spend more time on discussing the presented SWOT-maps so participants have time to add things they initially overlooked
- After the workshop: encourage participants to follow up on what was discussed or agreed upon in the workshop (if this is relevant for the situation)

**Tips for participants**
- This second workshop is quite concrete and practical and could offer participants interesting insights. In order for results to be useful however, participants need to be honest, open and concrete during the workshop
- This workshop could help in finding solutions for problems and in identifying capabilities or needs, but participants must be willing to discuss existing issues openly together to be able to tackle them.

**Needed**
- Pens and markers
- Stickers
- Filled in SWOT-maps from participants
- Big sheets of paper

**Process**
- Each participant presents his/her SWOT-map to the other participants (potential partners)
- After the maps are presented, the different individual maps need to be compared
- Pin the maps to a big sheet of paper. Participants need to try to find touch points and make linkages between the maps: similarities, differences, complementary and opposing aspects among the different individual maps (the facilitator, who has prepared this second meeting by finding some linkages beforehand, can offer some guidance and help if the participants are struggling). Participants are asked to draw and create linkages on and in-between the maps.
- After the touch points are found, participants need to indicate (with stickers) what parts of the maps or what touch points are important or influential for them or the collaboration.
- Based on the touch points, linkages and indicated important aspects, participants will try to combine the relevant and important points from the individual SWOT-maps into one SWOT-map for the collaboration. They could draw this on another big sheet of paper.
- In the collaboration SWOT-map, next to the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of the collaboration, participants also indicate how every important aspect (= touch point indicated to be important / influential) could be dealt with and on what level participants can help each other out.

4.4 Wrap-up workshop 2

Discussion
- What have you learned from this session?
- Most unexpected and surprising finding?
- How could you apply what you have learnt into your own situation or firm?

Conclusion
The goal of this meeting is to use the gained mutual understanding and trust in the first meeting as a basis to further develop the collaboration. This second meeting is meant for the participants to find similarities, differences, touch points and interdependencies of the companies they represent. The homework after the first meeting prepares participants to think about their own situation and abilities first. During the second meeting, the results of the assignment will be used by participants to try to find touch points and interdependencies on which they could collaborate. Furthermore, the session will also ask participants to identify the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of the collaboration (as a whole). Together these analyses will help participants to get a clearer view on their capabilities, facilities, resources and possibilities as an individual company, but also as partners. The findings could be used in the following ways:
- The insights about yourself and your partners could be guidelines when developing a collaboration with your partners. Since this session is to find interdependencies and goals, knowing what you and your partners want or need will help the participants to come up with a collaboration plan that will fit everyone’s needs and wishes.
  Furthermore, it helps to make sure the partners are focusing on the most relevant goals and targeting the most important problems.
- It helps companies to find and focus on goals, targets and purposes in the collaboration.
4.5 Examples & scenarios

Several examples and scenarios will be sketched to offer the participants and facilitator an idea of what the consequences would be for a company if collaboration constantly fails or succeeds. Furthermore a moderated situation will be discussed in which (non-) collaboration is balanced.

Scenario without collaboration

Imagine the partnership in the game failed, what would be the results and consequences? Without understanding among potential partners, about the collaboration process and the business context, trust among potential partners would be minimal and firms would not seek partnerships. If firms would not pursue collaboration, each firm needs to make and process the same elements separately which means that each firm need to find their own facilities and pay for these costs. Some actions and processes could be done jointly which would increase efficiency and economies of scales (e.g. buy supplies, operation costs (use of machines or capacity), accessing available (transport) services, etc.) and divide risks and costs among partners. Since this is not the case, the firm needs to spend more and is left with less financial resources to be invested in the firm and to face (environmental) challenges (the most recent example is the economic crisis and high inflation in Vietnam). Surviving by oneself is difficult when there is a lot of competition within a critical and demanding market (like in Vietnam).

Scenario with collaboration

Imagine the partnership in the game succeeded, what would be the results and consequences? A successful partnership within the game is represented by understanding among potential partners, about the collaboration process and the business context. A successful collaboration could have several advantages: the partners together will have a bigger market impact and market penetration than when they are trying to enter/maintain a market individually; because of sharing facilities, resources and knowledge, the cooperating businesses increase in efficiency; and another possibility is that partners look for joint investment projects (e.g. for promotional purposes, market research, etc.) to share the costs and risks which makes them less vulnerable.
to the outcomes and increases commitment among partners. These advantages only emerge if partners are honest, open, committed, trustworthy, understanding and have interdependencies. It needs to be pointed out however that, depending on how issues are dealt with and the decisions made, the image and brand clarity of an SME could be influenced negatively. This however, is not immediately relevant yet and depends on a company’s decision making process.

Scenario with moderate collaboration
This could be seen as moderation between the scenarios without and with collaboration. Even though collaboration is offered as a solution throughout this tool, entrepreneurs should look at their own situation and context to see if this is also a good solution for the specific areas the entrepreneur wants to apply it to. Also companies need to find the balance between collaboration and doing things themselves: they need to collaborate to share resources, knowledge and facilities to decrease costs, but they should not end up in a web of administration, contracts or bureaucracy. Companies should therefore not forget about their core activities. To be able to find that balance firms first need to identify their vision, mission and target market. The ones being able to find that balance and being able to successfully collaborate with others will have a big advantage over its competitors.
5 How to proceed? – Workshop 3

Workshop 3
Homework before meeting 3: evaluate available amount and sorts of resources within each participating company for this project

Needed:
- Elaborated process stages
- Homework outcomes

Process:
- Study and organize the elaborated process stages according to partners’ wishes, desires and logic
- Decide per stage with the partners how much resources to spend each
- Reorganize the sequence of the process stages if necessary
- Try to fill in all the aspects mentioned in the elaborated process stages to develop a first draft of your collaboration process.
ATTACHMENT SWOT-MAP

Workshop COLLABO: Attachment SWOT-map

Examples & Guidelines

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2012
Attachment SWOT-map: Explanation, examples & guidelines

Workshop COLLABO: homework

A SWOT-map is a SWOT analysis developed and visualized in the form of a map. SWOT stands for Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats and could be used to analyze your company both internally as well as externally. The strengths and weaknesses from this method represent your internal company analysis, while the opportunities and threats are your external company analysis. Definitions of SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities & Threats):

- Strengths: "Capabilities that enable your company or unit to perform well – capabilities that need to be leveraged"\(^1\). They are your core competencies at which you are exceptionally good/strong compared to your competitors. Strengths are the business aspects at which you are better than your competitors and which are also perceived as such by your customers. Strengths or core competencies could be a foundation for new or adjusted strategy.

- Weaknesses: “Characteristics that prohibit your company or unit from performing well and need to be addressed”\(^2\). Weaknesses in the SWOT analysis are aspects within your company on which performance is relatively low and improvement is needed.

- Opportunities: "Trends, forces, events and ideas that your company [...] can capitalize on"\(^3\). Opportunities are positive developments or factors in your environment which cannot be controlled by your company (thus external environment). These opportunities or possibilities could and should be identified so it becomes possible for you to seize these chances to improve your business.

- Threats: “Possible events or forces outside of your control that your company [...] needs to plan for or decide how to mitigate”\(^4\). Threats are negative developments or factors in your environment which are out of your company’s reach of influence (thus external environment). These threats are not good for your company and business. By identifying them, you can keep these developments into account to avoid being caught of guard by them or even come up with a solution to face these threats effectively.

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\(^2\) Idem as reference \(^1\)

\(^3\) Idem as reference \(^1\)

Making SWOT-maps

In this workshop you will be asked to make SWOT-maps. This way, participants can create an overview and maybe even get new insights in what they can or cannot bring to a partnership. It is helpful to analyze your company when trying to identify your core activities, mission, vision, and target market. Furthermore it could help developing (business) strategies for your firm. Knowing yourself means that you know your own capabilities, but also on which points you need improvement or help from others. By performing such a SWOT analysis it becomes clear for you and your partners where the focus of the collaboration should be. In addition, having these insights, looking for interdependencies becomes more thorough and structured which decreases the chance of overlooking important aspects. What are you supposed to do:

![SWOT-map](image)

**Figure 1: Start SWOT-map**

- You get a sheet of paper with already a start of the outline of a SWOT-map (figure 1)
- You start with the main branches: Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT). Try to fill them in as complete as possible, you are free to add extra branches if needed. For a list of the categories you can think of when formulating your strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats see table 1; the first row of the table consists of categories regarding the strengths or weaknesses (internal) and the second row contains categories for your opportunities or threats (external). It is not compulsory to use or
follow the list, nor is the overview exhaustive. Feel free to think of your own strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats outside the given categories. Try to think of different (business) aspects like economy, financials, (new) regulations, sustainability, market, facilities, resources and social aspects. Be open, specific, clear and honest.

- You can add as many factors (SWOT) as you think is necessary for your map, but please try to limit them to the most important factors.

- After filling in the main branches, try to think of current and already existing measurements to use the strengths, to compensate for weaknesses, to exploit opportunities and to compensate for threats. Add new lines and branches if necessary. Do this for each factor mentioned in the main branch (your strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats).

- After making an inventory of existing measurements, try to come up with possible (future) solutions; how could strengths be stimulated, how could weaknesses be strengthened, how could effects of opportunities be optimized and how could you minimize the effects or even benefit from threats? Add new lines and branches if necessary. Again do this for each factor mentioned in the main branch.

- After identifying possible solutions, you need to try to sum up the resources you would need for these possible (future) solutions. In this project, when talking about resources, the different kinds of resources are meant rather than the amount of resources (except when it is mentioned otherwise). These 'kinds of resources' could be: specific kind of knowledge, employees in a specific department, budget (if applicable: from a specific department), time (required from each department), specific kind of facilities and capacities, specific kind of expertise or capabilities, etc.

- Now an overview from the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats, existing measurements, possible future solutions and required resources for your company is created. Try to expand your map with other relevant (sub-)branches or topics: Add anything else you think is valuable, informative or important to have in your overview which would make sense for you and/or the collaboration. Again, feel free to add any lines and branches you want to create a complete map of the capabilities, challenges and relevant developments for your company.

- Try to find links within the branches and topics you formulated: for example, is there a threat you could overcome with one of your strengths? Can you compensate a weakness with one of your strengths or an opportunity? Who could help you to overcome a threat, to improve a weakness or strength or to fully utilize an opportunity?

- This map will support you in developing a long term plan or vision and will help you to decide on your future direction to go.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strengths / Weaknesses &amp; Opportunities / Threats</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Strengths &amp; Weaknesses</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Brand identity of products</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Brand image of products</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Willingness to collaborate</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Loyalty employees</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Availability Research &amp; Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>- (Over) protectiveness</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Finding market needs</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Targeting market needs</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Target market</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Communication with employees</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Organisation structure</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Efficiency of advertising</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Differentiation on price</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Differentiation on quality</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Differentiation on design</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Strategies, structures or planning</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Vision &amp; mission</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Opportunities &amp; Threats</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>- Natural products</td>
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<td>- Sustainability</td>
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<td>- Family orientation</td>
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<td>- Do It Yourself</td>
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<td>- Heritage</td>
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<td>- Sampling</td>
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<td>- Perception of partnerships</td>
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<td>- Social media</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Smart-phone</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Collaboration</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Company behaviour</td>
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<td>- Men versus Women</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Brand loyalty</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Market needs</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Demand for products</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Purchasing power</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Life expectancy</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Threats</strong></td>
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<td>- Planning</td>
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<td>- Marketing (department)</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Willingness / commitment / motivation</td>
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<td>- Retailers</td>
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<td>- Local market connections</td>
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<td>- Supplier-buyer relationship</td>
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<td>- Partnerships</td>
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<td>- Value chain</td>
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<td>- Capacity</td>
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<td>- Facilities</td>
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<td>- Expertise / knowledge</td>
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<td>- Education staff</td>
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<td>- Motivation staff</td>
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<td>- Geographic location</td>
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<td>- Materials</td>
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<td>- Communication</td>
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<td>- Inflation</td>
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<td>- Retailers</td>
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<td>- Promotion media</td>
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<td>- Promotion costs</td>
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<td>- Market research</td>
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<td>- Transportation</td>
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<td>- Costs raw materials</td>
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<td>- Natural resources</td>
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<td>- Economic crisis</td>
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<td>- Competitors</td>
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<td>- Market stability</td>
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<td>- Copy-cats</td>
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<td>- Protection by law</td>
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<td>- Infrastructure &amp; traffic</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Product usage</td>
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<td>- Price versus quality of products</td>
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</tbody>
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Table 1: Examples of Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats
APPENDIX A: Interview guide - Western experts (general)

Introduction
• What do you do for your job?
• How are you involved with network strategies/innovations?

What happens now?
• What kind of collaborations structure do you usually develop or pursue?
• How do you look for appropriate partners/relations?
• Why are you looking for those specific elements?
• How do you approach potential companies for collaboration? What is the general process in finding, engaging and binding a partner?

Goals and motivation?
• What are the goals for collaboration? How do you pursue them in your collaboration? (clear agreements from the start or developing and re-evaluating along the way?)
• What are the (usual) advantages of collaboration for companies?
• Would it increase those companies’ brand recognition or awareness? How? Why?

Issues?
• What needs to be discussed and agreed upon before a collaboration can be made final?
• Where are the bottle necks during this negotiation process?
• What elements or topics need more attention/carefulness/discreteness compared to others (sensitive topics)?
• Are there any other issues on the aspect of making agreements/setting up a contract?
• Are there any other issues on the aspect of communication?
• Are there any other issues on the aspect of collaboration?

Improving network:
• How could a strong collaboration be developed? What aspects/factors contribute to an improved and healthy collaboration?
• What do you think is important to take account when trying to improve the relationships between the different parties/actors of the collaboration? What have positive influences on the relationships?
• What do you think is important to take into account when looking to improve at supplier-buyer relationship?

Conclude:
• What are the success factors of a collaboration?
• What are the most important pitfalls of a collaboration?
• What do you think will be upcoming important trends and why?
• Anyone else I could interview on the topic of cross-cultural teamwork, network strategies/innovation?
• Any literature recommendations?
APPENDIX B:
Interview guide - SMEs in Vietnam

APPENDIX B: Interview guide SMEs in Vietnam (general)

Questions interview Vietnamese SME
• Vision & mission of company
• Intro company: What does your company do? What business are you in? Core activities?
• Who are your clients? Different market segments? What do you want them to know about your company?
• What are your benefits over others (core competences)?
• What values are important for you when doing business, examples: Sustainability, authenticity, quality, etc.? And why (core values)?
• Mission statement?

Marketing & collaboration (what would they think of the IDEA of working together on marketing?)
• Would you want to collaborate with other companies to improve effectiveness of marketing [suppliers, dealers, retailers, competitors]? If yes; why and how? If no: why not and what would you do to improve marketing/branding instead?
• According to your opinion, how do you think you could improve the collaboration relationships among different SMEs, such as yourself? How to improve that?
• What is required to make collaboration a success (level of trust, communication, etc.)?
• What would be the ideal collaboration relationship for you on the aspects of making agreements, quantity of meetings and communication methods?
• What companies do you see as complementary to your products (e.g. wooden products)? What do you think of collaborating with them and how? What would be the ideal collaboration for you?

Collaboration throughout value chain
• Draw and explain your value chain (from supplier to product development to market intro)
• What do you do yourself and what do you outsource or share with partners?
• Have you worked in a collaboration relationship before? With who/what kind of companies? On what parts of value chain did you collaborate? What could be improved in the sense of timing, making and fulfilling agreements, delivery, payment, etc.? Why?
• Why did(n’t) you cooperate with others? What makes you think that?
• How was the negotiation process towards collaboration? What was discussed? What topics require more time and attention? (bottle necks)
• How and when do you think clear agreements about terms and conditions need to be made [contracts beforehand/agreements on the go whenever needed/(in)formal agreements]?

Business & marketing
• How do you sell your products: Sales through traders? Other distribution channels?
• How do you introduce your product to the market? How do you market your products in general? Do you do market research?
• And what are the issues/implications (processes) of marketing/branding in Vietnam? How do you deal with those?
### APPENDIX C: Summaries of interviews

#### Interviewees & Company Positions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interviewee</th>
<th>Company &amp; Position</th>
<th>Duration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bart Del/ft.</td>
<td>Delft University of Technology, IDE: Valorisation Manager</td>
<td>65 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jo Del/ft.</td>
<td>Delft University of Technology, IDE: Professor on Reliability &amp; Durability</td>
<td>41 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wouter Enviu (Innovation):</td>
<td>Manager Research &amp; Innovation</td>
<td>64 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wendy Brabantse Ontwikkelings Maatschappij:</td>
<td>Project Manager Development &amp; Innovation</td>
<td>58 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duygu Del/ft.</td>
<td>Delft University of Technology, IDE: PhD Graduate Design for Sustainability</td>
<td>Approx. 60 min</td>
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<tr>
<td>Eelco SNV Nepal (Dutch Development Organisation):</td>
<td>Senior Advisor / Team Leader</td>
<td>72 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gerwin Green Office (SPIN Project):</td>
<td>Design for Sustainability Explorer</td>
<td>Approx. 45 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gerhard HAWA:</td>
<td>Business Development Advisor</td>
<td>110 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James Tre Vang (Bamboo Furniture Producer):</td>
<td>Director</td>
<td>119 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August UMA (Furniture Retailer):</td>
<td>President</td>
<td>120 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phuong Danh Moc (Kitchen Producer):</td>
<td>Architect &amp; Owner</td>
<td>100 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dung Danh Moc (Kitchen Producer):</td>
<td>Project Manager</td>
<td>115 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tam Gilimex (OEM Home Appliance Manufacturer):</td>
<td>Project Manager – Lighting &amp; Metal</td>
<td>102 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dung A Chau (Bamboo Furniture Producer):</td>
<td>Director</td>
<td>90 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Son Home and Garden (Furniture Producer/Retailer):</td>
<td>Sales Manager</td>
<td>Approx. 30 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nguyen Nha Viet (Architectural Firm):</td>
<td>Architect &amp; Owner</td>
<td>Approx. 60 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuyen Artex Saigon:</td>
<td>Manager handicraft department</td>
<td>Approx. 30 min</td>
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### Western experts

**Interview Bart Ahsmann (TU Delft, Valorisation Center)**

Valorisation is the application of knowledge to the practice. In the case of the TU Delft this could be done by organizing students’ projects or by applying patents in projects.

TU Delft often engages in Ad Hoc collaboration in which the value chain is outsourced. For the collaboration to be successful, companies and the TU Delft have to be open-minded. Furthermore they need to have sufficient self-knowledge.
and they have to be willing to outsource activities and to make investments.

In the ideal situation the TU Delft would visit companies with their portfolio, but in reality companies seek contact themselves for either small projects which could be executed by students, or bigger projects in which case government subsidy is often involved. The latter means that there is a demand from the market side for that specific kind of project. Another means the TU Delft and companies find each other for collaboration is through a fair.

When looking for partners for a project, the TU Delft looks at several aspects:
(1) Who do we know?
(2) Who is appropriate to work with during this project?
(3) Platform matchmaking?

There are different kinds of collaboration the TU Delft could engage in: (1) chain (vertical) collaboration, (2) horizontal collaboration. The goal of collaborations is to produce knowledge, to educate students and to support companies. At the same time this will generate means or resources for other researches and it is also beneficial for the image of both the companies as well as the TU Delft. Companies will gain more knowledge on the subjects, inspiration (especially from students’ projects), experience with new methods and the independence of the TU Delft that will ‘proof’ the independence of the project and its results. Furthermore, the TU Delft will also function as an independent mediator when there are conflicts. When trying to establish collaboration it needs to be determined who the problem owner is, (s)he will be the owner of the outcomes and the intellectual property. A contract needs to be drawn to document agreements. This contract include decisions made on (1) definitions of terms used, (2) description of content of the project, (3) costs, (4) secrecy, (5) the owner of the intellectual property, (6) liability, (7) what to do when there is a disagreement, (8) rights for publications, (9) terms of payments. Next to this contact, the partners need to take into account the general terms and conditions of the companies.

The pitfalls of the negotiation process for the contract are usually the costs and the owner of intellectual property. Issues like secrecy, ethical problems (although usually not applicable in the Netherlands) and what to be published in scientific articles are more sensitive topics and need more discreteness when addressing to them. Other important pitfalls of a partnership are process management, administration (bureaucracy), finance, meeting intermediate goals and responsibilities. A success factor for the negotiations and the project is the presence of an initiator (content wise) directly from the start of the project. Also important to develop a strong and healthy collaboration is trust, open communication and the presence of a win-win situation for every stakeholder. To improve the relationships of different parties of a collaboration, each stakeholder needs to be able to allow or not begrudge others their benefits and they need to share their ambitions and goals.

**Interview Jo van Engelen (Delft University of Technology)**

One of Jo’s specialisations is on social network analysis for SMEs; he applied this on innovation network in the aspects of team creation and interaction between companies. He researches and apply the outcomes on a scientific level.

There is one very big trend strongly influencing the way people do business in current days. In the 1920s collaboration was mainly found between people within the same field of expertise. This is called a functional organization
and still applies to most companies (think about HR departments, marketing departments, developing departments, etc.). In the 1950s people found out that different disciplines shared methods and techniques. Designing, for example, could be applied to products and buildings, but could also be used for the development of theories. This led to the systems theory and the set up of an association called the General Society of Systems Theory. From this, several interdisciplinary fields like MBA and social psychology emerged. The system theory was the starting point for the use of laws of conservation when managing a business. This approach treated managing a business as a closed system with clear borders. This closed character was opened during the second half of the 1990s, the view on how to manage a business changed: closed systems changed into open systems and the system theory changed into the complexity theory. The application of this theory is still in development. A part of this theory is the social capital of an organization which is the ability of capital to communicate openly with its environment including researches to buying behaviours and the inclusion of customers in the (development) process. The former approach was that designing or developing a product was ‘only’ the job of the developer; the developer decided on what was best without any input from anyone besides developers. The change is therefore a revolution, since currently developers need to think about their market as well while they are developing. The application of the complexity theory in business management is a big trend that is currently in progress. Other changes are that workforces and partnerships are more dynamic; temporary contacts are drawn up and business management became more complex since the belief that there is just one method has disappeared. This change influenced the perception of business regarding, for example marketing; marketing as we know it now will stop existing, instead there will be a new sort of marketing since all employees will think about the users rather than the market. The term ‘market’ will therefore disappear.

The boundary conditions of a system have been applied for quite some time and it was believed that the system was defined by its boundaries. Currently there is the concept that systems do not have boundaries: this is the open system approach. To make the change gradual, researchers and experts developed the soft system methodologies which limited the openness of the open system approach. This meant that descriptions would be given in rich pictures which do not exactly describe what is meant but use visualisations and keywords.

The complexity theory does not aim to manage, but to influence in a goal oriented way. People from the previous generation (there is only a difference of ten years), have trouble with understanding this disappearance of boundaries because it is such a fundamental change. For collaboration this change meant that instead of handing out tasks to someone, this person becomes a partner who thinks with you and assists you so the problem could be tackled together. In other words, people become partners rather than just being hired. In that sense stakeholders along the value supply chain are partners rather than suppliers and client: the perception of partnerships changed.

Previously households were meant by market while now we speak of users and companies co-develop with these users for (new) products. Currently, in some cases the ‘market’ develops rather than the company. Companies become much more market oriented and involve the users in their development (e.g. Lays, Inshared insurances). Product development processes become more personal. The advantage of this is that the social capital grows; it is easier to find and attract each other harmoniously. The society comes closer together, they communicate more intensively and there is more interaction.
Social capital is the way you let communication and ideas grow quickly in a network in the pace that you want. It is therefore more than ‘just’ a network. It is about how fast you can address to that network when you want to. This includes the flexibility and usability of a network and the ability of a network to react quickly.

Related to social capital is the carrying capacity. The carrying capacity from a certain system is your capital and it represents the flow that comes out of product. An example of a development team is given: in a team you might have capable and appropriate people (capital stock), but what matters is how you direct people in a certain way for the best returns (carrying capacity). It is therefore better to steer on carrying capacity rather than on capital stock.

The trend of open systems and complexity theory increases the social capital and shows that you need social capital to be able to compete.

You should think about the quality of a network that you build in a team by considering structural issues. For example, Jo collaborated with Philips to research why certain projects are successful and other similar projects are not. The research revealed that there is a difference in qualities and capabilities a project leader during a running project and a project leader during the start up of a project should have. They implemented the concept of a start-up manager who got another education than regular project leaders and focused especially on the start-up phase of the project. This way the start-up of a project received special attention and the running-phase of the project received a different kind of attention. The main issue here was that the two phases and the attention each required are just very different: during the start-up the project leader should be focused on the people and the team. Once the project is running and people are used to the situation, then the project leader could focus on the content (e.g. the product). In other words, the start-up manager focuses on the people and their mutual relationship and the regular project manager focuses on the products. At the very start of a project, a network needs to be built up and people need to discuss: through discussions the specifics of a project should emerge.

(I wanted to talk a bit more on the social capital topic, so I asked again about that and got back on that topic)

Social capital is how fast companies can react together on an external influence, for example new regulations or disappointing results. They could overcome these influences by preparations and scheduling in unforeseen circumstances. What differentiates good and bad organisations are their preparations, if this preparation is embedded in the relationship between people. For example, during a fire drill people are laughing about it, talking to each other while moving to the checkpoint and everything proceeds very easy and calm. Under stressful circumstances however, the situation is different: people are pushing and rushing to get out of the building. The main question is therefore, how will people in a group behave in the interest of the group and thus in the interest of themselves instead of in the interest of themselves and thus not in the interest of the group. That is the essence of the story: that you include the stress factor in the calculations since it is about achieving under stress.

Jo is currently doing research on sustainability in design. Besides TUD, he also has his own job(s): he is in 7 supervisory Boards, has 3 companies in Groningen and is in the managing board of Robeco Rotterdam. He thinks that his different occupations are comparable: he looks very methodical at what he does. At Robeco he is focussing on retailing which is a design issue. The positive thing about working there is that he does not have shortage of budget. At the TUD he needs to
collect funds and at Robeco he does not have to since he will also earn the money back.

**Interview Wouter Kersten (ENVIU)**

ENVIU is looking for sustainable ideas. As a foundation it is quite unusual that they are involved in the start-up of companies. During the start-up ENVIU wants to be part of the development of the business so they know what is going on, they could generate additional resources and maybe use some of the findings or experiences for other projects.

ENVIU’s process towards sustainable business is as follows:
1. Collect information (both structured as well as unexpected information that just comes their way)
2. From that information an issue could be formulated
3. The issue then needs to be elaborated until an idea or solution emerges
4. From that idea a concept is developed

After the concept phase, budget and funding needs to be found or generated. For getting this funding, the concept needs to fulfil certain criteria: (1) the concept must solve a sustainable or social issue, (2) business model must be present, (3) it needs to meet requirements for the entrepreneurial model (e.g. possibility of starting up a company and be self sufficient in time), and (4) the assignment needs to be scalable which means that it should be applicable on a bigger scale. Ideas which are able to meet those requirements are called WOW-ideas within ENVIU. Next to those criteria, there are also more flexible terms which include the involvement of ENVIU’s community and limited financial risk during the run-up of the company. The latter is the start-up investment, in general for example office space, machinery, production plants, etc. Because of these criteria ENVIU often help develop companies offering services, rather than products. Within ENVIU there are two segments the organisation focus on which are Base of the Pyramids projects and the more Western countries oriented companies (e.g. lifestyle). The foundation does not focus or select based on the theme or category of the project.

The community of ENVIU grows by people or companies looking for (support or help from) the foundation, but the foundation also looks for companies themselves. Besides that the community is much broader and includes also people from fairs, exhibitions and other indirect collaborations. Members of the community are usually people who are interested in sustainability and entrepreneurship.

ENVIU has partnerships with universities, but also with different companies. In the case of companies there are several relationships that could be defined with the foundation. A company could collaborate with ENVIU through co-financing, sponsorship or be a commercial client. For its investments, the companies usually ask for shares from the new-found company. Sometimes companies want to use the results, but that has to be negotiated per situation. The thing with services is that they cannot be patented. In some cases however, usually with very big companies, they are willing to support a project but do not want to stand on the foreground. They do not want to be associated with the project until it has proven to be successful. The reasons for this could be that the project at that moment does not fit the company’s image and other occupations or the company wants to limit the risks when the project does not turn out to be successful.

ENVIU does not especially focus on being a mediator of several SMEs or start-
ups, for this purpose there is Dnamo that serves as an incubator for start-up entrepreneurs. They bundle small companies and facilitate processes. This is however not ENVIU’s priority. ENVIU does combine the interests of small companies, it is even new companies’ business model to combine their needs and desires. SMEs with the same goals and orientation should join together. ENVIU wants to give small companies access to something they do not have the means for individually.

The foundation is trying to reach external parties by posting their ideas on a platform (this however, still needs to be tested). At least one external party is always involved at the start of a project. ENVIU is working to increase its network, they usually look for other companies themselves. In their search, the foundation avoids companies with a bad reputation or who do not have a sustainability goal and wants to use ENVIU to look sustainable. Companies are selected based on whether they are in a similar sector and whether or not they could have an interest in the project. The search starts at the foundation’s own network which besides their professional network also involves employees’ personal networks. That way they could combine practicality with value; easy to approach and more trust at start.

Wouter is an innovation manager. His tasks include mentoring students and finding new methods and ideas on the innovation (process). Regarding the innovation process, Wouter has several focus points. He is involved in (1) promoting crowd sourcing, (2) the start phase of the innovation process in which he tries to relate the innovation to ENVIU by generating ideas on a concept level and (3) AIDA where he is an intermediary facilitating between Zuid-Holland and students.

Trends:
On the field of marketing, the current trend is to use social media, but in the context of Vietnam this might be a low-tech equivalent. Another thing they could do is to collaborate and jointly become like a short of Ikea for example. Individually they just have to little ability to reach a big market. What you really should do is to figure out what they do or do not do and why. You need to involve the company from the start and in multiple phases during the process to prevent you from working with mainly presumptions. Another interesting trend is the shift from the mobile phone to the smartphone. If multiple companies work together, they could for example jointly develop an app or something. It is about the Group Access Power, this is a term thought of by ENVIU and is an improved version of Group Buying Power (e.g. Groupon) or Group Purchasing Power. Purchasing power sounds better as it implies that they are getting access to something that they could use.

On the field of collaboration there is the shift of trend from Do It Yourself to Do It With Others. Crowd-funding for example is a new form of receiving donations. You basically ask for a small amount of money per person to help you to reach a certain goal. Achieving the goal is then what people are paying for. The Vietnamese companies could use that to collaborate on a crowd-funding site. Local marketing and crowd-funding could be combined on the aspect of the sale of goals and on advertisement. On the crowd-funding site one can advertise its company or partnership and sell their goals for donations.

In a collaboration model, attention needs to be given to each organisation’s interests which are not reachable because of their scale. Furthermore, understanding about what they want and what they are striving for is important.
Interview Wendy Persoon

Brabantse Ontwikkelings Maatschappij has been called to life to strengthen the economy mainly in Brabant. This region has always been a weaker region in the Netherlands. One of the solutions is to stimulate companies to develop and innovate to strengthen the position. A couple of years ago this initiative received governmental funding.

The collaboration between the different companies and BOM are organized in the form of a network in which BOM is a significant node. BOM has to know the actualities in the market to be able to undertake different initiatives. BOM could be seen as an initiator trying to push companies forward to collaboration. Collaboration among companies could be stimulated by showing them in a business case that there is money to earn. When companies can earn money from a specific project, these companies are much more willing to collaborate with each other. In general, all that is left to do is to initiate/push collaboration so things will start running. When that happens, a contract will be composed and the collaboration needs to look for financing. The initiator, in this case BOM, plays a more important role at the beginning after that, the collaboration between the companies should occur automatically. Without an initiator there is an increased chance that the collaboration becomes very open-ended because no one is especially committed to the regarding project. Depending on the type of financing, there are different sorts of collaborations. There are for example collaborations between Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs), collaboration with different institutes, but also projects in which there is a clear problem owner in which the collaboration solves that specific problem. BOM works mainly with the open innovation model. They select companies by announcing a project on a certain platform, after which they wait for interested companies who respond to the announcement.

BOM is constantly looking for contacts to expand its network. The network is being developed mainly within the region of Brabant. Next to the search of BOM for new contact, companies can also contact BOM themselves for help or projects.

There are several problems which could lead to failure of collaboration:
- A company could be declared broke, if this is one of the key companies the collaboration could not continue to exist.
- A difference in opinion about the execution of the project could lead to a collaboration to fall apart
- Companies might also overestimate the development of technology and therefore not be able to meet the promises they made

In those cases it is the job of BOM to help find a solution by finding new companies, mediating or, depending on the contract, forcing companies to take specific actions. Collaboration failure usually occurs during the development phase of the technology. There are not many examples of failures though since companies are already selected at the beginning to see whether or not they are appropriate to join.

The success factors for a good/healthy collaboration are:
• making a plan beforehand and formulating milestones so people know what they are agreeing to
• reporting throughout the project
• extensive knowledge of the project manager; insight of who are able to work together on a project
• communication throughout the project
For BOM the required skill is to being able to get personal information from companies. Employees are therefore trained to be able to deal with companies and people because when there is trust between BOM and the regarding companies, it is easier to build up trust among the participating companies. If one company trusts BOM it is easier to connect to another company introduced by BOM. The organisation therefore invests in trust and networking. Since BOM wants to avoid group forming of 'friends', which usually happens during traditional networking drinks, BOM tries to organize events with a certain direction or aim. This way there is a purpose for companies to try to find each other during such an event.

Existing relationships or collaborations could be improved by letting companies evolve on their own. They should take conflict management, trust, etc. into account and base their hypotheses on literature research. Also collaboration could also be improved by increasing the trust of the companies. A communication graduation student from University of Tilburg is currently researching organisation structure. She focuses on how the sense of status (of a person) will influence his/her relationship with people.

The process of setting up a collaboration does not include a vision and mission, project plan, strategy and other specific fixed process phases. They are very goal-oriented and adjust the process to a specific project rather than just going through a pre-determined process.

The main pitfalls during such a process are:
- an inadequate problem manager not being able to identify problems in time
- the (sudden or unexpected) disappearance of finance or key project partners

This could be solved by for example:
- assigning an independent party (in this case BOM) to the an objective outsider
- clear contract agreements about non-disclosure, obligations regarding goals to be met, conflicts and communication commitments

BOM could do several things to push collaboration and/or to persuade companies to join a project. They could:
- develop roadmaps with clear goals and achievements through the process to show companies where they could end up when taking which actions
- organize meetings with “view & just imagine” sessions
  - first, experts will be consulted to see what directions companies could focus on, this leads to certain themes which function as guidelines
  - second, entrepreneurs could be invited in to brainstorm about the different themes and about what actions could be undertaken

Marketing is not explicitly determined in the case of BOM-projects, so there are no clear customers or positioning statements. BOM usually engages in proof-of-principle projects in which development and innovation is the main focus. They do think about the eventual users and try to formulate a concrete vision & mission to make sure that the end-results will fit to the companies’ other products.

**Summary meeting Duygu Keskin (PhD. Delft University of Technology)**

There are two gaps Duygu wants to solve in her research:
1. the incorporation of sustainability and increasing the ambition of
sustainability
2. increase product innovation in the entrepreneurial context

Duygu research is about effectual reasoning, but what is lacking are the sustainability and innovation aspects. During her research she wants to adjust the existing current model to include sustainability and innovation.

This is done by developing a goal and analysis based process. The goal is to bring stakeholders together. Entrepreneurs usually just look for the first customer that is interested in their products. They therefore have no fixed goals and are very flexible towards changes. By looking at the means first and the goals later, entrepreneurs are flexible and do not define goals until the first company set up has been made. This entrepreneurial thinking is called effectual reasoning and could be used to deal with highly uncertain markets and situations. Usually it is used in the first phase of entrepreneurship. It could also be used during the embodiment process of product design as well since goals (or the to be used technology) is constantly changing.

A SPIN workshop could use this method of reasoning to think about their means (stakeholders, etc.). After the stakeholders are identified, they could be combined in some way to fit the entrepreneur’s situation. Effectuation could be used as a tool to sensitize companies and to let them think about what they can do with existing technology. Collaboration with stakeholders however, could change and influence the outcome strongly and it could lead to a change of product, market, goals, etc. Effectual reasoning is aiming to execute short term events which become beneficial for the company on the long term. Gerwin: “Entrepreneurs however do not have time to learn new tools. Instead they prefer more specific support tailored to their needs, rather than a general approach.”

Interview Eelco Baan (SNV Nepal)
Eelco studied business, but had always had some touch points with development collaborations. In his current job he looks at how to achieve competitive advantage between business communities and farmers. When thinking about development projects, people often forget the market aspect of it. Eelco tries to connect the farmers with the demands of the market to make sure that they actually supply a market.

SNV tries to stimulate collaboration, offer technical support to farmers, wants to increase added value on a small scale and tries to create a better business environment regarding governmental policy and regulations. The goal is to create a dynamics between farmers and the business community. SNV helps in market assessments to determine the value of offerings of services through associations.

Farmers are willing to collaborate with each other because they have a collective interest. When collaborating they will get bigger orders and be able to provide high quality. Also since there are more products they can sort (and sell) on quality. Furthermore collaborating offers possibilities to share facilities. Usually such projects have no market, but are mainly focused on the supply aspects. A reason for farmers not to be willing to collaborate is because there might be a deal made among the farmers: an external company might be looking for a supplier and offers a higher price for the supplies, the farmer could then decide to take on that order and ignore the contract/deal with he partner-company. Solutions to prevent these and similar events are appropriate price offerings for the goods. Also trust and relationships should be stimulated since a good relationship will increase the perception of a durable relationship and will
decrease the chance of farmers willing to throw away the partnership for a one-time deal. In some cases, it is possible to enforce contract-obedience.

Networking has several roles: (1) influencing policies, (2) import supply (buying supplies together) and (3) information exchange (networking). Those are the roles for networking; the service offerings to members have a variety of other roles.

SNV’s approach to stimulate collaboration has several steps: (1) increase the interest of farmers, (2) bring the farmers together to make agreements on organisation and technical issues (this is facilitated by SNV and/or NGOs). These agreements can be made among the producer’s group themselves which has an informal nature or they can be made as a cooperation and have it officially registered to obtain a legal status (formal). During these negotiations, SNV guards the transparency of the agreements and deals. The NGOs have the knowledge to offer technical support, e.g. how to grow crops and harvest them efficiently/effectively. The services offered by the government and NGOs are however not focused on sustainability. Service offerings are embedded within the collaboration of companies and farmers.

In the collaboration, companies get stuck if the goods supplied are not what they had hoped for. They, for example, do not get the quality they expected. Farmers on the other hand, are disappointed if they do not get the price they had hoped for and if they are not able to offer their highest quality. Because of these issues, spreading the risk and offering a reasonable deal are desired. (These issues emerge after the collaboration is set up and operated)

(What are the issues before the partnership?)
Before any agreements are made, farmers are hesitant and have their doubts about the project. SNV therefore starts with farmers who are able to take more risks to use a more gradual and phased approach. These farmers could be seen as the pioneers. If they are successful and prove that collaboration works, other farmers will follow and the network would increase.

The success factors of collaboration are therefore:
(1) Having a collective interest
(2) Benefits for actors ("What’s in it for me?)
(3) Trust between the collaborating parties (usually SNV tries to look for existing relationships for the collaboration project)
(4) Technical and organisational capacity

The pitfalls of collaboration are:
(1) Making agreements and accomplishing these agreements
(2) Not knowing what the investment is worth (or why they are investing)

External factors influencing the collaboration (and agriculture):
(1) Weather
(2) Regulations (legal status)
(3) Politics
(4) Approval for loans at banks

Eelco thinks the collaboration between Westerners and locals is an interesting interaction. In Nepal you need to go with the flow, but be aware that you will not be too relaxed.
**Westerners working in Vietnam**

**Interview Gerhard Rainer (HAWA)**

Vietnamese companies are currently mostly Original Equipment Manufacturers (OEM). This means that they get a specific description of the product from their clients for the production. The manufacturers do not have to design anything and are only responsible for producing the products. Around 60% are FDI companies and their clients are looking for cheaper ways for production which means that the threat of foreign companies shifting their production process to another country is highly present causing Vietnam to be and probably stay a low price segment if nothing happens.

Gerhard tries to create awareness about this and want them to learn about market demands so they can start making their own design and turn into an Original Design Manufacturer (ODM). The companies need to be taught what a market is, how a market functions, what market research is and how to execute such a research. His prediction is that in the next one or two years, foreign companies will move their production somewhere else. There are already companies complaining that it is hardly profitable for a company to have the production of their products in Vietnam: with around 18,5% inflation the break even point tends to be negative in time. Foreign companies will then move their production process to another company who is cheaper (e.g. Combodia, Laos, etc.).

The goal is to increase the independence of Vietnamese companies from foreign companies. For this purpose, Vietnamese companies need to be sustainable, innovative and market oriented. Also increasing transparency is an important step in this process and companies should aim for a combination of top-down and bottom-up organizational structure. This could be achieved by separating strategy and control. Control in this context means monitoring and evaluation, but also having periodically reports and rectifications made. The separation is required to decrease the conflict of interest, e.g.: there is an example in which one employee was both the vice-president as well as the manager. This meant that he had to monitor and evaluate himself which is very weird and conflicting. Gerhard does not focus on the production process, but rather on the marketing aspect. His background is in product marketing. Vietnam has a closed and hierarchical mindset, it is very authoritarian and Gerhard wants to open up Vietnamese’s mindset.

HAWA does not have any assessment for companies; they join totally on a voluntary basis. During exhibitions HAWA also does not give exhibitors any information or guidelines on how to display their products and organisation. HAWA collaborates with companies through (technical) seminars and training in which basics are taught. The association is not a consultant and therefore does not help companies to, for example, identify the right market. The companies usually aim at the American and Australian market and the buyers of their products usually tell them in advance what they have to do. HAWA also strives to help companies reduce their independence on import. Currently companies import materials from other countries, manufacture products with those materials and then export those products again to the country of origin. The reason for import is not entirely because locals like imported products: the local market is quite small since Vietnamese relatively do not spend a lot of their money on furniture, like Europeans or Americans do.

Another problem that Vietnamese companies encounter are that their employees switch jobs easily based on salary: wherever they earn most, they will work. The reason for the lack of commitment is because they do not understand the value
chain they are working in. They do whatever they are told to do, but do not fully understand why they are doing it.

As mentioned before, HAWA is an association that has the role of giving training and seminars to its members. After a training or seminar there is no follow-up or monitoring: it is completely up to the companies themselves to determine what to do with the new knowledge. HAWA does not have a consulting function: companies perceiving problems have to look for solutions themselves. What HAWA does do is mediating; they offer the services of, for example consultants, since many companies do not know how to access that kind of service. That would then be a freelance project between the requesting company and the consultant. Furthermore, HAWA is trying to intensify the collaboration of corporations with design schools to offer students a better understanding of the reality of doing business in which they have to take time and costs into account during their design process. Some companies understand why they are collaborating with design schools and offers competitions in which the company pays for almost everything.

According to Gerhard it is hard to collaborate with Vietnamese people. Of course there is the language problem, but also cultural obstacles. Gerhard is from Austria and he was brought up in an open society with a different kind of mindset. Vietnam on the other hand is very closed, hierarchical and authoritarian which also affects the decision making process. The more status and power they have, the harder it is to interpret what they are saying and meaning. The companies in Vietnam are not transparent and hierarchy is very important. Gerhard feels that there are hidden agendas sometimes. What he therefore wants to achieve is to induce democratic thinking into the organisation. His tactic is to send papers once in a while on how to do business, but also by taking on the role as a moderator letting companies coming up with scenarios and strategies themselves rather than telling them what to do. For this purpose he uses the SINFONIE approach from Denkmodel. This approach give guidelines to companies to form their own strategies, the steps are as follows: (1) formulate a vision, (2) identify factors, (3) select critical factors, (4) form scenarios and (5) develop strategy maps. The last step is added by Gerhard himself to give companies a more tangible and action oriented outcomes. The goal of this method is to steer companies to be more transparent, avoid conflicts of interests, prevent personal financial gain and to *...*.

The decision making within Vietnamese companies is intransparent, personal interests are involved and power structure is present. In companies there are people with power and people who are scared to speak up to that power.

Vietnam joining WTO led to the emergence of tariff related obstacles of trades (e.g. disappearance of import duties/taxes) and non-tariff related obstacles of trades (e.g. quality assessment/criteria and safety regulations). The latter requires companies to study the market since they have demands regarding quality and safety.

There are several reasons for the inflation in Vietnam; there are political reasons (internal), but also external reasons. Examples are the growing demand for products which manufacturers cannot meet due to lack of capacity and the growing demand for food because of a growing number of citizens. There are many reasons for the inflation and Gerhard has not done much research on that, but he thinks that for the coming years inflation will stay rather high.
Summary meeting Gerwin Jansen (TU Delft / Green Office – SPIN)

The SPIN-project has workshops for companies in the field of sustainable design and marketing. Besides workshops for companies, there are also sessions for consultants on innovation tools. The goal of ‘teaching’ these consultants is so they can teach and pass it through to companies. The workshops SPIN offers are meant as an advice, but there is a difference in expectations between the companies and SPIN: many companies hope to get a new design or concept which they can use to produce, SPIN however, wants to be a consultant to improve design and development processes. The workshops SPIN offers are usually B2B based because designers of companies need to work with merchandisers or dealers instead of directly to consumers. In other words, insights into the (target) market are only gained through a mediator. The workshops are given in a systematic way and small steps are taken.

During the workshops, there are clear distinctions with the Western world: (1) Vietnamese companies are falling behind on a professional level since they do not have a clear structure, plan or strategy for their design process. (2) Vietnamese companies are behind on a qualitative level since they usually go along the way. This means that they take (small) steps whenever the situation asks for it or when a problem arises. The reason for these small incremental decisions is because the main goal is to survive; they need to generate income to support and maintain their family. (3) Vietnamese companies often lack a clear vision and mission. What they propose as a vision or mission on their website is usually what that company think that people, their customers, want to hear. Vision and mission are merely seen as advertisement or marketing.

What is also noticeable is that during consultations, Vietnamese companies prefer to communicate in their local language. There is however, much interest in the international way of doing business; they are interested to know how things are done internationally.

The nature of the SPIN workshop has a high level of interaction. Participants can react on the relevance and feasibility of a topic by giving examples of their company showing if and why something will or will not work.

The problems that SPIN encounter with these workshops are that the communication decreases both on the level of quantity as well as on commitment. It is not certain, but Gerwin thinks that because companies are so much focused on survival, the participants do not get the time from their boss to communicate with a SPIN consultant. They have to be productive and earn money to survive. Talking to a consultant does not fit within that image. There is therefore little follow-up after the workshop, because employees are not motivated by their boss to spend time on SPIN.

The current situation could be seen as SPIN pushing the knowledge to the company. Instead, what SPIN wants to achieve is a pull of knowledge: companies asking for support, knowledge or capacity from SPIN. The companies however are not specifically looking for process innovation or structural improvements; they are hoping or seeking a product (concept) that they can use for production. Currently SPIN is adjusting a lot to the Vietnamese culture, but it is still an innovation process and that needs to come from the companies themselves. What SPIN is now aiming at is therefore to persuade several companies to implement the design process SPIN teaches during workshops. Those companies will then become (innovation) leaders and hopefully at some point others will follow.

Companies in Vietnam are very focussed on survival, they therefore need to be quite certain that any investments they make are worth it and that it will pay
back in the longer run. The method could be proven if several companies who adopted SPIN’s method are successful. In that case other companies are less reluctant to follow. Currently companies do what is already proven to work and are therefore not willing to ‘just change’. Because of that companies are mainly differentiating themselves by means of prices rather than on quality. Companies should cooperate more with retailers. Sometimes the demand comes from the wholesalers (e.g. Ikea) and then companies know that their products will be bought. Their own designs however, sometimes end up in storage because no merchandiser, trader or dealer wants those products for resale. The reason for that is because they do not have a good marketing strategy and sometimes their prices are too high which affects their reputation causing them not to be taken seriously anymore. The latter could be prevented if companies are working with retailers. Retailers know what is desired in a product and against what prices. Thus companies should try to find connections to the market for their products. A lot of products are currently sold at fairs because of the quantity of companies and dealers visiting and the networking possibilities.

The vision is to be able to introduce high-end products on the local market. Vietnam should differentiate by quality since the country’s production scale is quite small which means they could not compete with, for example, China.

You could stimulate companies to be open about their current occupations by asking for feedback (e.g. “How do you think that this model fits within your company and why?” and “Why would this work or not work?”). Another way to stimulate discussions is to put all companies in one room. For the participants it is a chance for self reflection (on the company) as well. That is something they do not often get the chance to do.

**Interview James Wolf (Tre Vang)**

There is not much loyalty among employees in middle management. James wants to protect his company. There are therefore just three people in his management team: himself, his wife and one female employee who is doing administrative tasks mainly. Also important to know is that the protection offered by law is limited. That is also why the company is very protective and cautious. He is mainly engaged in B2B projects. For one project, there is one customer and one product. This means that a product designed for a customer is not sold to someone else as well. Selling it to a client in another country is fine though since the design is still owned by James. This will however be communicated to the regarding customer. James wants his clients to do their best to sell his products and therefore do not want to offer that design to others as well (except when they are in other countries).

The core activities of Tre Vang are design, produce and supply high quality products with good service and clear *....*. There are both local as well as foreign customers. Local customers are restaurants, resorts, concerts, bars, shops, etc. Foreign customers are mainly distributors who try to get Tre Vang’s products to retailers and subsequently to end-consumers. The main benefits they offer their customers are quality and design. James even got a reputation as Bamboo James. Tre Vang values high quality, design and a lasting relationship when doing business. Some projects however, are just for one time. Their mission statement is shown on their website: “We combine innovative design, the world’s finest bamboo and local talent to create unique products, components, furniture, architecture and building materials. (...) Our factory is committed to environmental and social responsibility, and sustainable design.”
Tre Vang wants to target the local market because it is faster and it is possible to engage in tailor-made projects. The profits of most local projects are varying between 200$ and 2000$. Export markets however, take months before Tre Vang get their payment. This means that the company needs to advance the payment for production and transport and do not get this back until the clients pay. With transport and planning this might take a very long time.

James sees a collaboration opportunity in using different material and combining them into one product. This way a product could be differentiated from other bamboo products which usually only uses bamboo.

Relationships between partners could be improved by account management and openness to take risk regarding finance, money and design. Vietnam however is very order-oriented; all they want is just an order (your money) and are not willing to engage in R&D. Some companies even told them that they do not want to be involved in the development, but rather are just waiting for orders. Furthermore, a relationship could also be improved if Tre Vang is concerned with the collaborator / the end-customer. The partner should follow through with decisions made, show commitment and be enthusiastic. They should be excited to buy a product from Tre Vang. This excitement could be achieved by executing a custom, tailor-made project.

The value chain of Tre Vang consists of suppliers (Tam Vong, Tre Gai, hardware and expendables). Tam Vong is the supplier of the thin bamboo and Tre Gai is the supplier for the thick bamboo. Once the bamboo is harvested, it needs to be taken to another place to get straightened, treated and sun dried. After that the bamboo is brought to Tre Vang for production (labor) for which hardware and expendables are needed. The final products will then be exported to importers and/or distributors in other countries or be delivered to the local market. There are two types of local markets Tre Vang produces for: (1) the final user and (2) on project-base. The latter includes projects with or regarding bars, hotels, music concerts, companies (pop/display), fencings, custom furniture, kid’s toys and kid’s furniture. Almost no marketing or branding activities are involved in this chain. Advertisement of Tre Vang consists mainly of word-of-mouth. Besides this chain Tre Vang also sometimes outsource the production to another company (a friend of James and carpenter) if it is cheaper to do so. After delivery, the products are exported by Tre Vang.

Companies Tre Vang cooperates with throughout the value chain includes therefore suppliers and the carpenter to whom Tre Vang sometimes outsource to. Other than that, Tre Vang’s collaborations are usually with clients on custom-made projects. The reason that Tre Vang has limited partnerships is because the company is very protective of its designs and is afraid that they will be robbed or cheated. James has seen and experienced this often. The main issue during negotiations with suppliers/collaborators is the price. One of the terms of pricing is that the client pays a 50% deposit and the remaining payment is to be done after delivery. A sensitive topic during the negotiation project is that companies do not want to pay for design. They assess the job on profit versus time to see if the project is profitable and then find that design and development is too risky.

Whether agreements are made formal or informal depends on the project: if there is a lot of time pressure, the company first start developing and preparing before clear agreements or a contract is drawn up. If there is sufficient time, agreements will be made first. It also depends on the person Tre Vang is working with; if it is someone James knows, trusts and has a good relationship with, the chance that informal agreements are made is bigger. If it is someone James does not
trust because he knows that the person is not liable, then formal agreements and documentations will be made. Mostly however, Tre Vang already starts the project before there is a contract.

Tre Vang does not really engage in market introductions; the company operates in the business-to-business and business-to-personal market and advertisements or marketing are only based on word-of-mouth reputation. Tre Vang does not go to local tradeshows, but his customers do take some of the designs to the tradeshows. Even though the customers market the products, the ownership of the designs is still Tre Vang’s.

The main issues of marketing or branding (bamboo) products in Vietnam are the copying behaviour of competitors and the perception of the (local) market that bamboo is cheap and for poor people. Tre Vang tries to disassociate themselves from that perception and deals with these issues by offering design and high performance (e.g. bamboo bikes). The reason that bamboo is seen as cheap and represents poverty is because of copying behaviour of bamboo manufacturers which led to the lack of (design) differentiation. Since everything is the same, they can only differentiate by price and this lead to the start of a price fight between bamboo manufacturers. These price fights led to companies taking measures to reduce the costs, which is the reason for the drop of quality of bamboo products. Because of this, the perception that bamboo is cheap, for the poor and of low quality arose among the (local) people.

**Interview August Wingardh – UMA**

Too much emphasis is paid to the technical side of product design, but do not sufficiently focus on the profit of the 3 p’s. August gives an example of a past design competition; many beautiful things were made and some looked like art, but most of them did not think about the commercial attractiveness.

The core activity of UMA is to sell a dream, to sell furniture. They are therefore limited in production and focus more on retail. Some of the products sold in the store are UMA’s own designs; from the 3000 products they sell, around 700 or 800 are designed by themselves. In the beginning, the company started with only their own design. But now some of the products are designed by others and picked by UMA. In 2006 (first of July), UMA was established. August used to work for Ikea before starting his own company. At Ikea, big buyers need design and export instead of big distributors and furniture lines. First they had a warehouse to store the products, but because they wanted to start their own brand and open up a store, this warehouse became their first store. The name UMA is an assembly of the first letter of the names of people involved in the brand (U = his ex-wife, M = his previous partner / his current partner, A = for August himself). What UMA wants its customers to know about the brand is the quality for its price, that it has a good value. UMA spends little costs on marketing since according to August, an important advertising method in Vietnam is mouth-to-mouth advertisement. Also they try to follow different trends in Vietnam, e.g. colours are more important in Vietnam than in Western countries so their designs usually have relatively more colour than the designs in Europe for example. The target customers of UMA are mid to high income women. The reason that the company target women specifically is because women make more emotional purchases and envision a specific piece of furniture into their homes while men look at the technical and functional sides of a product. The products are quite Western and are intended for people who want to change towards more modern furniture. UMA wants its clients to know that the quality of the products and the service of the company are good. The
company however wants to have more dialogue about sustainability with their clients. Besides the local market, UMA also have some exports. The people who buy the products own the design since UMA is in that case selling the design to the client. These products are not branded as UMA products, but will be branded by the customer him/herself. Products sold to one client are not sold to another customer. The main benefits of UMA over its competitors are, besides the good quality and service: (1) the wide product range, which enables UMA to be a one-stop shop for people looking for furniture in different parts of their house (e.g. bathroom, bedroom, etc.); (2) their design capabilities allow them to design products customers like: the products have a clear and basic design; (3) the relative good (low) price for the quality they offer. Important values for UMA are good service in the sense of delivery, knowledge of materials and giving advice, design and quality. For now, the upstream sustainability is an internal value for UMA. This means that they do not communicate this value to their customers, since the Vietnamese market is not yet ready for that. The reason that UMA has these values is because it is what the customer expects. That is why they have to be decent. Furthermore, the market of UMA is rather small which means that UMA should be taking care of them. They sometimes try to increase this market by participating in home styling programs (on TV). The brand identity of UMA is to create a happy and/or good feeling when customers see UMA products which on their turn need to be functional. Their slogan is: “Turn your house into a home”. There is a difference in how the brand is perceived in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh. In Hanoi people are proud to give a gift with UMA’s wrapping paper: the shop is perceived as trendy and design. In Ho Chi Minh, people are positively surprised about UMA. The company still has little awareness which could be due to more competition in Ho Chi Minh. Furthermore, maybe people see UMA as a copy since they are not that different from many other furniture retailers. The reason for this big difference between the two areas is because there is a difference in time: Ho Chi Minh is more developed (Hanoi is now where Ho Chi Minh was a couple of years ago) and thus has more influences.

Currently UMA works together with non-competing companies; companies who have the same customer, but other products (e.g. lights), moving (transport & logistics) companies and schools. Collaborations should have trust, openness and honesty/communication. To improve this, collaborators need to be honest. UMA wants to improve that behaviour by being an example to show them that being honest has benefits in the longer term. It is fine to work with competitors as long as it is fair and they are still distinctive. UMA does not collaborate with associations because August thinks that it does not help a lot. He also says that he has not had real positive experiences yet with collaborations. He always feels cheated one way or another; this could be due to copy-cats, but also people who do not fulfil their agreements. UMA does not really deal with copy cats; if August finds out that he has been copied, he just sells the design for almost nothing and then continues to do something new. Examples of complementary products to the products UMA sells are floors, walls, light, bathroom, kitchens, detergent, wallpapers, moving (transport) companies and paint producers. UMA could collaborate with these kinds of companies by combining the goods they make, e.g. using the paint from a partner paint company for the furniture. The ideal collaboration is if together they are able to do more than when working separately (synergy), but in Vietnam people do not understand synergy.

UMA has several distribution channels; they have a website (webshop) and several shops in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh. Furthermore they are looking into the possibilities of tv-shopping and looking for other retailers who want to sell their products. For the latter they are mostly looking to the international market. Since UMA has a good base in Scandinavia some retailers there are interested in
selling some of UMA’s products. UMA has hired a freelance marketing manager for their marketing activities. In the past UMA has always skipped advertising since they doubt the efficiency of that. They do have a catalogue and use social media (website and facebook). For the social media, UMA has hired a new marketing assistant to help them to make better use of those possibilities. UMA has found that a good way to reach the customers is through television (e.g. home programs and reality shows in which UMA provides the furniture of houses (Next top model; Dancing with the stars; late night shows about living and homes; etc.)). August says that they are not doing very well yet in introducing their new products to the market; they want to use their website and facebook page for that purpose. Currently they have a special poster/price tag on each new product in their showroom so customers who go to the shop know what is new. They currently do not do market research, but some market research companies contacted UMA to ask whether they are interested. August tries to follow the trends by networking; he trusts what others are telling him is going on and uses his intuition to select certain trends. A big trend right now is sustainability, not just in Vietnam but globally; being sustainable and ecological are becoming more important. Furthermore, the insecurity due to the economic crisis has a strong influence on finances, personal stress (“will I still have a job in 2 months) and organisation structures of companies. Also, the importance of the family is increasing as is DIY and heritage. Sampling, in which parts of the already existing are taken, is playing a bigger role as well. August says that he pays attention to the fashion industry as well since everything comes from fashion. From the fashion industry he could for example know what colours are trendy and people would want so he could use that in de production and design of the furniture. One of the problems of branding and marketing in Vietnam is that it is hard to create brand awareness and trust. Furthermore, Vietnam has a corrupt society regarding politics which also makes doing business harder. Also, it is not known what to do in marketing since there is a lot of disturbance in the Vietnamese market (regarding competitors and politics). Currently August is not dealing with it yet. He is trying to learn from Ikea since they seem to do their advertising and/or marketing efficiently. Vietnamese are loyal to brands, at least when they find something they like. Whether or not the market is stable (not whimsical) is hard to tell since Vietnam is an immature market, but the inflation makes the market less stable. The difference between the Western (Swedish) and the Vietnamese market is that Vietnamese people have much better skills in determining the price and quality of a product. It is easier to stay focused in a very product-crowded environment and choose the good products from it. Westerners on the other hand sometimes buy a brand for the brand. They are also less skilled in staying focused and choosing in a place where a lot of products and goods are placed. Vietnamese are more need-driven and more demanding customers.

<< Value Chain UMA>>
It starts with the market needs and the identity of UMA, these are the input for the design or product choice. To get to the design or product choice, Western and Vietnamese freelancers are hired as well next to regular designers at UMA. Then the design goes to an outsourced production plant where the sampling process starts, the raw materials are ordered and production technique is determined. After production, the products stay in a warehouse until an order arrives or it goes to a wholesaler or distributor for export. Order could come in from different channels, people can order a product from the showroom (retailer) during which they can get advice from the sales crew or order online through the website. If customers order from showroom, the products are delivered from the warehouse to the customer, except if the customer wants the showroom model (s)he has checked on faults. Then a new product goes from the warehouse to the
showroom/retail, switch with the current showroom product which will then be sent to the customer. If people order on the website, the products are delivered from the warehouse to the customer. Customers get their products delivered and assembled and they could on their turn give feedback in the store to increase UMA’s understanding of the market needs. In the case of export, the products are delivered from the warehouse to the wholesaler or distributor who tries to sell it to retailers. After that the retail and marketing will be done by the wholesaler and retailer.

The customer can give feedback in the store by means of a survey or several short questions. Transportation and the production of the products are outsourced to other companies. The problems UMA sometimes have with the production is that they have late deliveries, wrong deliveries and/or payment problems in which the products need to be paid before the delivery. Sensitive topics during the negotiation process are the costs (who pays what) which need to be described very detailed. Also what the benefits and advantages are, needs to be determined clearly especially since service is not perceived as a good, but rather as something that should be free. UMA hires some freelance designers to design the products. The freelancers receive royalties for the products sold so they get paid according the product’s popularity. To prevent many of the problems that occur during the production, UMA tries to be more specific in what they want and expect. They sometimes get the wrong products, probably the explanation was not clear enough or hard to understand.

*Vietnamese business people*

**Interview mr. Vu Dung – Danh Moc**

Danh Moc’s core activities are producing shelves for which they have two categories: (1) cabinets production for big products and (2) Carpenter kitchens for high-class customers which are custom made. The latter however was not selling well. Danh Moc did not get many new Carpenter projects so they decided to create a new brand targeting medium- and low-end customers, BepModul. The company switched from mass production of high-class products to mass production for the middle- and low-class segment. With declining demand for Carpenter products, this seemed to be the most advantageous way to utilize the already existing facilities. BepModul was started as a new brand of Danh Moc 2,5 years ago.

The clients of BepModul are (1) people buying apartments without kitchens to rent to someone else (landlords) and (2) normal users, households who want a kitchen which is just enough and do not want decoration.

One of the benefits of Danh Moc over its competitors is (1) the brand; other companies do not make a brand and have no market. The second advantage is (2) design; they have many colours and materials available that could be used. Because of (3) mass production costs are reduced because of the scale. Furthermore Danh Moc has (4) five chain stores or showrooms, but this is not very effective because the showrooms are big, but the product relatively small and not standing out. Not everything that is in the folder is available in the showroom, so the folder contains a much bigger part of the portfolio of the company.

When doing business, Danh Moc values highly their ability to offer a competitive price and diversity. They do not have clear values which are aligned throughout their management and production. The reason for this is because the company
does not have a clear vision and/or goals. The scale of the company is not that big, so sustainability does not matter yet. For now Danh Moc is focused on their market fit and sales; that they offer the right product for the market.

Marketing & Collaboration
According to mr. Dung, Danh Moc is willing to collaborate with retailers and suppliers. Whether or not they are willing to work with competitors is not known; they do not know who their competitors are since this is not really defined. It depends mainly on the specialty: Danh Moc focuses on the wooden parts of the products, that is there specialty and what they focus on. For the other required elements, the company has several suppliers.

There are two types of relationships Danh Moc is currently involved in. They collaborate with companies which are already successful like Häfele and with them Danh Moc usually just exchange information and offer each other support in branding. Other collaborations Danh Moc engages in are production focussed: Danh Moc offers technical information to get a better quality. These are usually suppliers and the more orders you give them, the more willing they are to process that order. Furthermore, money issues should be transparent and relationships are important. If the relationship is good, this offers possibilities for future collaboration. For example, Danh Moc has worked with another company before and later they are looking for (kitchen)producers again. If the relationship is good, then Danh Moc will get the order.

The requirements for a successful collaboration depend on the type of companies Danh Moc is working with. Currently they work with two types of companies: (1) Vietnamese companies and (2) foreign companies and (big) retailers. With the Vietnamese companies it is the same as with the suppliers: (1) more orders increases their willingness to work. (2) Transparency in the sense of fast payments and being on time, which also increases the credibility, is also required. (3) Vietnamese companies do not like to be taught in what they do, so they do not appreciate training and technical support from their clients since that makes them look like as if they are not capable. In the case of foreign companies they need to be supporting Danh Moc in the sense of more orders and transparency.

The ideal collaboration has certain characteristics. The quality of the products/materials is high, the timeline as promised needs to be followed tightly and also credibility (do as promised) is important. Furthermore, the willingness to solve problems when they occur is required as well. Parties should solve the problems together instead of running away.

Value chain:
There are several suppliers; some of them supply raw materials, other supply elements of the final product. Those supplies go to Danh Moc factory which will produce Danh Moc BepModul products. Those products are branded and go to several different kinds of retailers. The products could go to the retailer who also cooperates with other showrooms, retailers who sell the products themselves or retailers cooperating with architects. Some of the retailers will get a sample of the products to examine. In those cases the retailers provide technical support, transport and other costs. The brand of the products is made by developing a website, participating in fairs, publishing paper ads in magazines and developing a brochure.

In big projects, Danh Moc seeks for raw material suppliers who are also willing and able to make the elements directly for them. This was however in the past;
now they have no more big projects, so they have to go through another layer of supplier. Sometimes they do ask the raw material supplier to produce an element directly, but the quality is not as good as at first. Furthermore, suppliers are not so happy because of the small quantity Danh Moc offers. They used to have 500 kitchens per order, so then suppliers were happy to manufacture the elements. Now Danh Moc orders one or two cabinets each time. They do reach 500 kitchens per year, but it is not concentrated anymore so it is not very efficient. Danh Moc went from mass-production to a more spreaded way of producing. Currently Danh Moc has a wood stock in the factory and waiting for private orders. Once the customer has chosen, the kitchen will be produced.

Danh Moc collaborates mostly with suppliers who want a long term relationship. Most of them are good, but some do not live up to the expectations. Danh Moc however, has not been able to find other suppliers so they are still collaborating with those regarding companies but are paying more attention and being stricter towards those companies.

The reason that they are not collaborating with other producers is because it is an old factory in which they must produce and must provide work for the employees. Kitchens are more special, they require more knowledge from the employee and his/her tasks could therefore not be done by just any other. It is therefore better to do the production themselves (rather than to outsource).

For branding, they do collaborate with printing companies and website developers, but there is no co-branding. Their boss is thinking about hiring agencies or consultants to develop a brand strategy rather than to do it themselves.

During the negotiation process certain aspects are very important: (1) the specialty of the partner needs to compensate for what is needed, (2) there should be sufficient facilities and producing capabilities and (3) the price they are asking needs to be affordable. Dung has been working there for 1 year, but he has never seen big changes in supplier; there is no quitting of suppliers, only a shift in attention from one supplier to another. Danh Moc researches suppliers before they start making agreements for the collaboration. If they need a supplier for a quick collaboration, Danh Moc usually just asks for a prototype for a quality reference. After the production, the company compares the products with the prototype to see if they match.

For big suppliers, they make clear contract agreements. It is possible for BepModul products to just call or email for orders. Danh Moc has already gained credibility because of the collaboration before in big projects.

The products have several distribution channels: (1) showrooms, (2) website, (3) ad newspaper and (4) fair. They sometimes deliver brochures to other ongoing projects as part of marketing. The website shows images and the estimated price of the kitchens. But since the kitchens are modular, an interested customer can contact the company for more consultation. After that, the customer can order his/her choice right away. For the introduction of new products to the market, the company is not big enough to organize an event. They therefore launch their product at the end of the year, when people are thinking about buying things. Danh Moc also engages in fair building and networking (on fairs/exhibitions) so they can seek contact with potential customers later. They do not do any market research and they do not really get any information about their market. Based on their experience of 7 years, they know whether the style of the house and the kitchen style are compatible.
One of the main issues of branding and marketing in Vietnam is that high fees need to be paid for market research. The results of the research however, do not reflect reality; surveys ask about customer’s willingness to buy and buying behaviour, but the answers they give are different from the actual buying willingness and behaviour. Furthermore BepModul is a relative new brand. This means that the company is focused on stocking products which lead to a limited budget for marketing. There is a problem in budget allocation and to find a balance between marketing/branding budget and production/stocking budget.

In the past there was a long period of time to pay for supplies, but this time is shortened due to economic crisis and a high interest of banks. Suppliers want to get their payment fast, but Danh Moc’s buyers are not that fast with their payments because of the lower sales to consumers. This resulted in faster payment of Danh Moc to suppliers, but the incoming payments are not that fast.

There is a problem with the retailers: Danh Moc has to pay a fee for retailers to sell their products. These are high costs, but result in low sales which means that the costs are not compensated efficiently.

Danh Moc targets mainly the local market. They started in Ho Chi Minh City first and now they reach the southern part of Vietnam. They do not target the northern part yet because of transportation problems: transportation costs are high and there is a high risk of damaging the products as well.

Mr. Dung’s expectations are to become a big and well-known brand. Furthermore he wants to sell more products. Currently BepModul exists 2,5 years and they are selling approximately 1 product per day. He would like to increase that to 5 products per day. Mr. Dung thinks that there is lots of demand for these kitchens. Whether or not these expectations will be met depends on the budget and the staff. They started good last year, but now there is no more focus in that line; not sufficient attention is paid to this line.

Interview Phuong Nguyen – Danh Moc
Collaboration is just a possibility to improve marketing. It is hard in Vietnam to set up collaborations if companies can do things themselves.

For this project, mr. Phuong wants me to look at their middle- and low-class range, Bepmodul. The core activity of this business is to produce and provide affordable, modular kitchens.

The target clients are more middle-class, than low-class. Maybe the low-class consumers will be targeted later. Currently Danh Moc is focusing on middle-class consumers who are young (29 – 40), have a simple job (no office job) and live in a family context (one husband, one wife and one or two children, but who are not living with their grandparents). Customers should know that Danh Moc kitchens are modular and that they can design the kitchens by themselves. By doing so, they can reduce the costs. The kitchens are affordable and of a standard quality that lasts for an acceptable amount of time. The benefits of these kitchens over its competitors are the comfort of the kitchens, their functionality and looks (design). Danh Moc wants to make their kitchens fun (with different colour options etc.). The values of the company include designing fun and comfortable kitchens (value of design) and sufficient quality of manufacturing. The company does not have a formulated mission statement yet.
Danh Moc is willing to collaborate with others; it is a big market with many opportunities, but it takes many efforts to target those opportunities. The company sees collaboration possibilities in rearranging products together with partners. Another possibility could be to collaborate on the aspect of market research because doing market research in Vietnam is costly. Mr. Phuong compares collaboration with living together: you need to understand each other’s characteristics. The involved parties need to understand the benefits of collaboration and trust among those parties must be built. To build the required level of trust for a successful collaboration, parties need to become friends first and do business later. In business you need to give others some credit to increase trust and to have a partnership.

For an ideal collaboration associations need to be made. Furthermore, parties should not make agreements in an early step of the process, because in that stage you miss the trust. The first step is to build trust and to share experiences. After creating the supply chain it is time to draw up very informal agreements which are trust based.

The ideal collaboration would have regular meetings, because in the beginning trust is not there yet. These regular meetings would help to build trust. Email communication alone is not sufficient and should only be used as *...* next to the regular meetings.

Other to Danh Moc complementary companies could be suppliers (Danh Moc could be partners with them), manufacturers of components and manufacturers of other materials are also possible. In the latter situation, mr. Phuong emphasizes that whether or not that is possible depends on the designers and the architects since they design and draw the kitchens. Other complementary companies, for example manufacturers of chairs, could also be possible, but for now Danh Moc wants to focus on kitchens first. They currently do however, are in collaborations with accessories producers; those accessories are put in Danh Moc’s showroom kitchens.

Value chain:
The value chain of Danh Moc starts with the suppliers of the raw materials. The raw materials go to the factory of Danh Moc for production of shelves. These will be stored in a stock warehouse which will be customized to the customer(s) wants. After an order comes in from the internet (their website), the showroom or from the distributor, the kitchen will be assembled and delivered. Throughout this chain, Danh Moc do a lot themselves; they do not outsource to other companies. Collaboration with other SMEs was for other range (Carpenter) in Italy, but not for Bepmodul. Danh Moc did the packaging and assembly, while the Italian company made the doors. The collaboration was not a success because of (1) the long delivery time, (2) the high price, (3) not enough distribution capacity and (4) the quality standard of the Italian company was too high. Mr. Phuong met the Italian company through an exhibition and he knew that if he wanted a high-quality production, he needed to collaborate with Italian manufacturers. They immediately got orders and no clear agreements were made, just post-it agreements. The main issue that arose from this was that the Italian manufacturers delayed the delivery. They did have a contract, but a partnership is not only a contract.

The reason that there are no collaborations for Bepmodul is because there was not much time to make a strong strategy for it. Instead, mr. Phuong wants to make a big network of architects and designers on a platform. Mass-production is cheap and opening a showroom is not possible because of the costs, by
creating a platform people could collaborate on these aspects. The goal is to
create people to design or make the kitchen, afterwards Mr. Phuong wants to give
them training on how to sell. The access to these people will be gained through
the network of architects and designers. The selection will be made by going to a
university or by visiting a known designer for an interview.

The reason companies would decide to collaborate is because they lost their
advantage. It is therefore more important during the negotiation process to
develop an overview of the market and the collaboration rather than the details.
Topics as delivery, payment, ownership of design and copyright could be seen as
details. The aspects of payment and pricing are sensitive topics and should not
be discussed early in the process.

Danh Moc distributes their products through dealers, retailers and showrooms.
They own one showroom in Ho Chi Minh City. New products are introduced
to the market through exhibitions and/or ads in papers. Generally, marketing
activities of Danh Moc include participating in exhibitions, publishing ads in
papers and sometimes by letting customers interview them. They do not organize
special event yet since they need to provide training first. This will be done after
opening up the network of designers and architects mentioned before.

Danh Moc sends their marketing staff to the market to study their competitors
only. They do not do market research about their own market. They give out
short surveys to customers of competitors and ask questions about their
competitors’ products. Furthermore, Danh Moc asks experts how a product
could work, usually these experts are friends from Mr. Phuong. Companies
producing a combination of kitchen, bathroom and living room products are
seen as competitors, but also small shops (workshop owners) and import
kitchens are seen as competitors. The main problem when trying to do marketing
or branding in Vietnam is the costs of media and promotion which are very
high. Furthermore, more advertisements are needed since the character of the
products is not clear to the market and customers yet.

**Interview Tran Tam - Gilimex**

Currently Gilimex is networking with two other big companies who make
lightbulbs. Gilimex tries to control the entire value chain to be able to control
pricing. Mr. Tam thinks that for collaboration in Vietnam to work, the
collaborators need a strong connection with each other or be working under
one umbrella (e.g. governmental decision that some organizations need to work
together).

Gilimex started out as a small carpenter that expanded to garment and
textile (e.g. bags, jewellery and clothing). Currently their core activities are the
construction of textile garment, metal manufacturing for home furniture, food
and culture, and medical tools. There is also the idea to look into cutlery. The
company also sometimes combines the different materials they produce into
a complete product. They are a home appliances manufacturer, but do not
have their own brand since, as an OEM, they depend on the export. The aim
is to go to the local market as well in two years from now. Gilimex is currently
working with B2B markets. Their main client is Ikea who is about 60% of their
incoming orders. For Ikea, Gilimex produces bags and trolleys, the Ikea Family
(household products) and the Ikea Children department (storages). Furthermore,
Gilimex gets also small order for making backpacks and electronics bags (e.g.
phone, photocamera, laptop sleeve). People should know that Gilimex is ..., has
sufficient capacity and more than 10 years of know-how. They have two
main competitors Po Yuen and Sido. Po Yuen is a shoe factory which uses their remaining capacity to produce other products for clients as well. Sido is a Korean company that produces the same as Gilimex. Gilimex has two main benefits over its competitors: (1) Gilimex has product development capabilities and (2) a stable capacity. The first advantage means that clients can give Gilimex a simple sketch of what they want, and Gilimex can then further develop it into a sample product. Because this is development is done in-house, Gilimex can provide a short delivery time of samples. The second advantage is about a stable capacity that meets the social and environmental requirements. An important value for Gilimex when doing business is sustainability. They are involved in commitment management. This focus of sustainability mainly started because of Ikea. After a while they changed this into their own focus because they found that it is beneficial. They see it as an investment on the short-term, but beneficial on the long term. Furthermore, Gilimex tries to keep employees' wages transparent. The mission statement of Gilimex could be formulated as follows: to become a leading manufacturer in Vietnam in home appliances to meet customers' needs.

Currently Gilimex is in the process of setting up collaboration with companies from different categories. The main purpose of companies deciding to collaborate is because there is a common interest. Mr. Tam does not know how collaboration along the value chain should look like so he asks for some time to think about it and he could come back to me later with his answer. Gilimex is not really marketing their products yet. They are trying to develop a marketing department by the end of this year. Currently the R&D manager is doing some local marketing and develops the website as well. In the past they tried to do marketing by opening one shop in 2012. This was not successful so they decided to be as good as possible in manufacturing. In his personal opinion, mr. Tam thinks that trust, communication and expertise are needed to improve collaboration. Trust increases if there is interdependence between the different parties. Furthermore, trust needs to be built up over time. Communication is needed as well: companies make a lot of assumptions and image is important. Expertise is needed to show competences. Currently middle management hires competent people, build up the system and recruit potential people. They do this by education programs. They also have seniors who have much expertise in different fields to be advisors. They are trying to improve their human resources, which they call competence management. For manufacturers, the future plan is decided by customers so they need to shift from being passive to proactive. Mr. Tam thinks that small companies, however, do not think about this since they are a one-man show. It is about minimal overhead costs. To make collaboration a success, trust, which is not always there and commitment are required. Commitment means the willingness to drive through, to make things happen and to spend resources. Whether formal or informal agreements are made is depending on the culture: in China and the south of Vietnam it is enough to just send an email, but in the north of Vietnam, results might not reach expectations even when legal agreements are made. In the ideal situation there should be periodic meetings since that is needed for good follow-up and evaluation. For communication, physical communication is preferred with email and phone for support or small issues. Collaborating with companies producing complementary products to Gilimex's products is a great idea, but mr. Tam does not know how to collaborate with them.

Value chain of Gilimex, construction of textile:
The value chain is divided in three categories: raw materials, production and logistics. Suppliers deliver the raw material and components, in this case the textile, plastics and fittings. The production consists of labour costs, fixed costs
and packaging. Labour costs are the salaries of production employees: they have 3700 employees and they cost around 42 million. Fixed costs include among others, the salaries for management. For packaging they need cardboards, pallets and accessories. Within Gilimex there are several kinds of logistics: internal logistics, local (inbound) logistics and export. Currently Gilimex is only able to control the production, but not the raw materials and logistics phase. What the company wants to achieve is to expand their reach of control over their value chain so they could control the price better as well. Currently they try to control the raw materials costs by already ordering for half a year or one year of materials and by doing a down payment in advance. This way, the costs and thus the price of their products stay stable for a certain period of time. For the last part of Gilimex’s value chain, the logistics part, they do not have any plans for that yet. Gilimex does the middle part of the value chain (production) all by themselves. They only outsource the production of the raw materials and the logistics. Suppliers are not much on time; there have been a lot of mismatches like late delivery and quality. It is therefore important for Gilimex to have a follow-up of the suppliers. During the negotiation process topics discussed are the production capacity, sustainability, product range and price. Price is a sensitive topic because some people bargain and some calculate the cost to rationalize the cost structure (e.g. Ikea). Especially with new companies, Gilimex makes clear agreements before starting the collaboration. With known, bigger companies, it is possible to make agreements a little bit later.

Products are sold by Gilimex’s clients. Sometimes they also sell product through traders like Lee Fung, but they also get inquiries from others who will get a commission if they sell something. Gilimex currently does not do any market research at all. Since the company is an OEM manufacturer they do not need to market their products B2C, but rather B2B. 80% of the clients however, come to Gilimex themselves. Gilimex is trying to develop a new department to look for new clients. Currently they reach their market by approaching retailers and going to exhibitions and fairs as visitors. They present themselves as an OEM manufacturer instead of a brand. In the future they want to develop their own products and market them with their own brand to the B2C market, but they want to get control of the value chain first and do marketing and branding later. The main problems in Vietnam regarding marketing or branding is that there are a lot of short cuts people take and do not have a specific process to guide them. For example, companies do not do market research which leads to a trend-following behaviour rather than making/leading a trend. Furthermore, companies do not have new ideas and are not very creative. Instead they follow certain routines: e.g. Mr. Tam thinks the advertisements in Vietnam are not very interesting and creative. The good ads are copied and translated from the original. This however, will change; companies are hiring people from abroad with a fresh view to help them.

Vietnamese companies are very protective of themselves and therefore could be reluctant to collaborate with others, especially competitors. It is therefore important to research the feasibility of the method/goal.

**Interview Van Dung Dang – A Chau**

Currently marketing the local market is getting minimal attention from mr. Dung. For the local market, a showroom is needed because people in Vietnam like to see before they buy anything. They could also choose for an agency (I think he meant another retailer), but they charge high commissions. To target the export market you need different lines than for the local market.
A Chau started in 2000 and their main activity is to manufacture bamboo furniture. About 30% of the products are A Chau’s own design and about 70% of the products are designed by their clients. At first they had design staff to develop products, but now they hire freelancers instead. The gardening segment is new and they hire freelancers to develop the products. Most of A Chau’s products are for export, but also a small amount is sold to the local market (around 3% – 4%). A Chau targets B2B as well as B2C customers both for the local and export market, but as said before mostly export). Examples of their clients are home-centres, importers and retailers. A Chau focuses on the mid-high end customer and their high end products are just intended for retail. The message A Chau wants their customer to know is that there is a difference in quality in the high and mid-high end products because it explains what they do; sell products. By having their customers to know this difference, the customer could understand what they want to buy (high or mid-high). To improve a relationship, trust is important; this could be done by increasing the quality, the right delivery time and the right pricing. The benefits of A Chau over its competitors are their products, their pricing, their service and their understanding and involvement in products. The value Truc Xinh offers is that they offer good quality for the normal customers (not high-end). The company wants to increase the use of bamboo so instead of the high-end market, they target the normal customers. Other values that are important for A Chau is sustainability and to make people feel comfortable. They make products for the user and the company believes that when people use more bamboos, more jobs in VN will be created as well. A Chau want their brand to be perceived as creative, sustainable and as a Vietnamese brand by their customers. On their brand image, mr. Dung believes that they need to do better. The image customers have of A Chau now is that the products are good looking, nice and beautiful. But customers would also think about the price and might find it too high, which according to mr. Dung is because of the quality of the products. The mission of the company is to sell more products. To do this, they need to expand the use of bamboo and restructure the company for growth.

Interview Thai Son Truong (Home&Garden)
Every company has to deal with high costs to put products on the market. These costs include advertising costs and costs to run a company. Brand is important; the company is quite new, so when people see “Home & Garden” they do not immediately know what it is about. When asked what their brand is, the answer was: our brand is about offering furniture and everything else people need to decorate their house and garden. Currently most companies do not have a design team yet, but they will need one eventually. The price of Home & Garden products cannot be too high because then nobody will buy it. It cannot be too low either because then it is too cheap. They need to find a balance in the pricing. The company targets high-end customers with their products. They work with other suppliers for certain elements of their products (e.g. stainless steel) but do the assembly and design themselves. They do “whatever is needed to sell the products”. They have a website, a webshop (which is not ready yet), a catalogue and their own room in 30 km from the Lifestyle fair 2012. They do not work with
other retailers to sell their products, because it is easier to work on your own (less problems). They have thought about the benefits of collaboration, but do not think that it is needed for now.

The difference between the domestic market and the export market is that Europeans use products for one season while Vietnamese use products for a very long time. Vietnamese therefore want something more long-lasting and are sometimes more demanding. One of the difficulties the company has with the domestic market is that the knowledge level is not so high. People cannot see the difference between a high class and an average class product. They do not care about the origin, design and materials and buy just whatever they think looks nice for an affordable/low price. There is therefore a difference between what is wanted and what is needed. Of course when selling the products, the sales employees see different trends passing by; some companies follow the customers’ needs, Garden & Home does that too but they also have their own designs which customers end up to like as well. A few years ago (5 years) people liked natural (woven) products a lot, then they preferred plastic and now the company sees that people like natural again. They know this because they observe trends and check them as well. This is done by checking what the bestsellers of competitors are. For this purpose they check other suppliers by means of catalogues for example. Home & Garden also just ask for feedback in their showroom. Often however, customers just give their feedback without asking as well; they just come to them telling their likes, dislikes, preferences, etc.

**Interview Nguyen – Nha Viet**

Core activities:
- Designing residences, houses and offices
- Constructing residences and interior design

Collaboration:
In design projects, Nha Viet does the design and the lay-out, electricity, water, etc. are done by others (specialists)
In construction projects, Nha Viet does the lay-out and manages the process; the more concrete things, like walls are done by others.
In big projects they sometimes have to collaborate with 10 other companies, those are usually specialized companies (water, electricity, wiring, etc.).
A good example of collaboration is when Nha Viet acts as a coordinator when each part was taken care of by a separate specialist. This way they had the expertise in each part of the project (the right employees, the right machines and the right expertise).

A bad example of collaboration: in small projects, partners are usually known and have credibility, but in bigger projects new partners are needed and they sometimes fail expectations. One of the most common issues is the time delay. Also, sometimes companies have low capacities because they are too small in which case they act as a mediator causing the network to become more complex. From the outside, a collaboration looks complicated, but there are contracts and subcontracts for every layer of collaboration. Whether or not collaborating is complicated depends on the coordinator; (s)he needs to find the right time and the right job.

Cultural differences: for a national project drinking, bribing or gifting is required, for private projects the choice for partners depends on abilities (if they can do it, they are hired). In the latter case, informal and personal relationships improvements/strengthening are not necessary.
Interview Tuyen Pham (Artex Saigon)

Artex Saigon was focused on the handicraft sector and established in 1976. The company was founded to improve the handicraft sector and was government owned before 2002. The government provided the company land and store to support handicraft products. Now Artex is partly government owned and partly owned by stakeholders who want to use the land provided by the government to do business (putting buildings for rent, doing business, etc.). This space was first intended to be a showroom for handicraft products. Since that space is used for something else, there are no showrooms anymore. It is hard however, to sell handicraft products without a showroom or factories. The focus and department of handicraft in Artex decreased and in 2011 they hired Tuyen for the handicraft department. Artex now focus on trading and not on manufacturing anymore. The company used to have suppliers and customers, but these were taken away by some salesmen as they left Artex. The clients of Artex are all wholesalers, not consumers. One customer is in USA (Ross), they are into small home accessories and buy mainly baskets from Artex. Furthermore Artex has clients in Europe and South-America and the company mainly focuses on import and export. There is no local market. Tuyen would like to be on the domestic market but since the company is (partly) funded by the government and the boss is not so much interested in handicrafts, the handicraft sector became a duty for Artex to show to the government. The company therefore has not interest to expand their market. Furthermore, the company is very profit oriented and they do not think that the domestic market is very profitable. Some of Artex’s current clients are in furniture, some in home accessories and some are in ceramics sector.
APPENDIX D: Criteria & requirements collaboration

Criteria
Bart:
• open-minded
• sufficient self-knowledge
• willingness to outsource activities
• willingness to make investments
• trust(worthy)
• open communication
• presence of win-win situation for every stakeholder
• share ambitions
• share goals

Dung (Danh Moc)
• competitive price
• diversity
• transparency (fast payments and punctuality)
• credibility
• willingness to receive training/technical support if needed
• high quality
• do as promised (timeline)
• willingness to solve problems together
• flexibility/responsiveness
• long term relationship (??)
• complementing/compensating specialties of partner for what is needed
• sufficient facilities and producing capabilities
• affordable price

Eelco:
• appropriate price offerings/reasonable deal
• trust/relationships: existing relationship/acquaintance?
• transparency of agreements
• transparency of deals
• ability to take risks (pioneers?)
• collective interest
• benefits for actors
• technical capacity
• organisational capacity
• communication regarding (return on) investment

Gerhard:
• sustainable
• innovative
• market oriented
• transparent organizational structure (less hierarchy, democratic thinking, power structure, etc.)
• open mindset
• good working conditions employees (incl. communication to reduce fluctuations in capacity/employees)
• sufficient capacity

Gerwin
• willingness to invest in vision/mission
• commitment to project
• willingness to ask for help (put aside pride)
• willingness for process/structural improvements and changes
• willingness to change and try new things
• high quality
• willingness to give/receive feedback from others
• willingness for (critical) self reflection

James
• loyal employees
• high quality
• design
• willing to commit to lasting relationship
• environmental and social responsibility
• sustainable design
• openness/willingness to take risks (regarding finance, money and design)
• willingness to invest in R&D
• concerned with partners and/or end-consumers
• follow through with decisions made
• commitment
• enthusiasm
• collaboration should lead to increase of value/profit (benefits of collaborating)
• trustworthiness
• willingness to invest in design
• disassociating bamboo from being cheap
• high performance

Jo
• tackle problems together
• more personal product development processes
• more communication
• more interaction
• flexible and usable network
• quick reaction abilities (flexible)
• considering structural issues
• willingness to build and share network
• operate in the interest of the group (and thus of themselves)

Phuong
• willingness to share/outsource value chain
• fun & comfortable design
• sufficient quality of manufacturing
• open to understand each other’s characteristics
• understanding of benefits of collaboration
• trust building
• willingness to give others some credit
• willingness share experiences
• acceptable delivery time
• acceptable price
• sufficient distribution capacity
• quality
• willingness to develop an overview of the market and collaboration together

Tam (Gilimex)
• strong connection among partners
• (stable capacity)
• sustainability
• transparent costs (employees wages e.g.)
• common interest
• trust
• communication
• expertise
• interdependence
• development trust through time
• (good image)
• competences
• pro-active rather than passive (regarding (attracting) customers)
• commitment (= willingness to drive through, to make things happen and to spend resources)
• (contributing to) expand reach of control over value chain to control price
• commitment regarding delivery and quality
• sufficient production capacity
• product range
• price
• make clear agreements
• presence of process/rationale for choices
• creative / fresh view
• general: open companies = willing to collaborate/not very protective

Wouter ():
• solve a sustainable or social issue
• business model
• requirements of entrepreneurial model
• scalable
• combining needs and desires
• companies with same goals and orientation should join
• similar sector?
• Could they have an interest in the project?
• Group buying/purchasing power
• Shift from DIY to Do It With Others
• Attention to each organisation’s interest
• Understand what actors want and striving for

Wendy:
• profitable (and the communication)
• iniatior (esp. at beginning of project, otherwise open-ended)
• commitment
• be realistic about promises (do not overestimate)
• planning (and milestones formulation)
• reporting and communication
• competent employees
• communication
• trust between iniator and each other company (to increase trust among the
companies themselves)
• trust
• networking
• ability to evolve and survive on their own
• trust of the companies
• competence employees (to identify problems in time)
• include independent party/objective outsider
• make clear contract agreements
• clear communication of benefits
• organize meetings (with view & just imagine sessions)
APPENDIX E: Clustered findings & insights

Others:
• Main question: How will people in a group behave in the interest of the group and thus in the interest of themselves instead of in the interest of themselves and thus not in the interest of the group? (Jo)
• Effectual reasoning (1) could be used to bring stakeholders together, (2) has no fixed goals, (3) is flexible, (4) could be used to deal with highly uncertain markets, (5) combines stakeholders to fit a situation and (6) is about a short term event benefiting on the long term (Duygu)
• Goal of complexity theory: It does not aim to manage, but to influence in a goal-oriented way (Jo)
• The perception of partnerships is changed; the way workforces are utilized and partnerships are more dynamic (Jo)
• Collaboration is (1) understanding each other’s characteristics, (2) understanding the benefit of collaboration, (3) trust (building); friends first, business later and (4) giving each other some credit to increase trust and to have a partnership (Phuong)

Trends:
• Inflation will stay rather high the coming years (Gerhard)
• Sustainability (August)
• Insecurity due to economic crisis (finances, personal stress & organization structures) (August)
• Family becomes more important (August)
• Do It Yourself (like Ikea) becomes popular (August)
• Cultural heritage becomes more important (August)
• Sampling: giving items away as sample is more common (August)
• Immature market (August)
• Less stable market due to high inflation (August)
• Use of social media becomes more common/popular (Wouter)
• The transition from mobile phone to smart phone (Wouter)
• Trend on collaboration: from Do It Yourself to Do It With Others; instead of doing things yourself, you collaborate with others (Wouter)
• Preference from market for natural woven product to plastic products and now natural products again (Son)

Process & Negotiation:
• During negotiation: First develop an overview of the market and an overview of collaboration first and discuss details later (Phuong)
• Sensitive topics like payment and pricing should not be discussed early in the process (Phuong)
• First step of collaboration is building trust & share experiences, then make informal agreements which are trust based; partnership is not only a contract
• Sensitive topics are costs, (dis)advantages and expectations (August)
• During negotiation process topics like production capacity, sustainability, product range and price are discussed. Price is rather sensitive topic; some companies bargain, others calculate cost structure (Tam)
• Negotiation process includes discussing specialties of each partner and whether it compensate for what is needed, whether there are sufficient facilities or capabilities and about an affordable price (Dung, Danh Moc)
• Main issue of negotiation is price (James)
• Sensitive topic during negotiation is that companies do not want to pay for design; they make a profit versus time assessment to see if project is profitable, but usually they find that design and development is too risky (James)
• Sensitive topics during negotiation are secrecy, ethical problems, publishing rights and intellectual property rights (Bart)
• When selecting partners, the following is considered: (1) Similar sector? (2) Interest in project? (3) Are they part of foundation’s network and/or employees personal network? The latter increases trust at the beginning of the project (Wouter)
• At start of project, formulate vision and mission to make sure the end-results fit to the company (Wendy)
• Stimulate collaboration by (1) show that they can earn money, this increases willingness; (2) presence of initiation to increase commitment; (3) presence of trust between initiator and other companies, it is easier to build trust among other companies if each party trust the initiator; (4) letting companies evolve on their own (Wendy)
• During process when setting up collaboration; be goal oriented and be adjustable to specific projects (Wendy)

What SMEs need (implicit):
• VN SMEs currently have no good marketing strategies and their prices are too high (Gerwin)
• Some SMEs observe trends and check them as well, furthermore they research their competitors’ bestsellers (Son & Dung; A Chau)
• They ask for feedback in showroom, but also customers volunteer feedback as well (Son)
• There is no marketing yet; the R&D manager does some local marketing and website development (Tam)
• They study competitors only, there is no market research in own market (Phuong)
• They ask experts (usually friends) how a product could work (in the market) (Phuong)
• Distribution is done through dealers, retailers and showrooms (Phuong)
• Product introduction is done through exhibitions and ads in papers (Phuong)
• Marketing involves only participation in exhibitions, ads in papers and have interviews/meetings with customers (Phuong)
• Advertisement is mainly done through word-of-mouth (James)
• Feedback is given by customers in store by a survey and short questions (August)
• There is no market research; they try to reach the market by approaching retailers and going to exhibitions and fairs as visitors (Tam)
• What a company needs are competent people; seniors with much expertise in different fields to be advisors (Tam)
• Important values are sustainability and transparent wages employees (Tam)
• Some SMEs are protective of designs and afraid to be robbed or cheated, they have experienced this a lot (James)
• There is no market research; they follow their experience and instincts (Dung, Danh Moc)

**Success factors:**
• Companies same goals and orientation should join (Wouter)
• Attention to each organisation’s interests (which each organization could not reach individually because of scale) (Wouter)
• Understanding what companies want & strive for (Wouter)
• Important for collaboration are transparent money issues and relationships (Dung, Danh Moc)
• Partners (or clients should) follow through with decisions made, show commitment, be enthusiastic and excited to buy (James)
• Ways to improve relationships are (1) account management, (2) openness to take risks regarding finance, money and design which means be willing to invest in design & development and (3) being concerned with your collaborator or end-customer (James)
• Trust, openness, honesty; these are benefits in longer term (August)
• Needed for the success of collaboration are trust and commitment; commitment means the willingness to drive through, to make things happen and to spend resources (Tam)
• Improving collaboration requires (1) trust which could be increased by interdependence and time, (2) communication which helps preventing assumptions but is rather poor now because image is important to VN SMEs; and (3) expertise & competences (Tam)
• Collaborators need to have a strong connection with each other or be working under one umbrella (organization) for collaboration to work in VN
• Success factors: (1) presence of initiator, (2) trust, (3) open communication, (4) presence win-win situation, (5) allowing others their benefits and (6) sharing ambitions and goals (Bart)
• Success factors: (1) willingness to collaborate which means presence of collective interest, (2) trust (looking for existing relationships if available), (3) relationships; meaning increasing the perception of a durable relationship, (4) spreading risk, (5) offer reasonable deal, (6) benefits for all actors and (7) presence of technical & organizational capacity

**Problems & pitfalls:**
• Collaboration (in Italy) not a success because of long delivery time, high price, not enough distribution capacity and because the quality standard in Italy is too high. But the main issue is that the delivery was always delayed by the manufacturer (Phuong)
• Problems with production or partners often involves late deliveries, wrong deliveries and payment problems (August)
• Pitfalls are (1) costs, (2) intellectual property, (3) (lack of) process management, (4) administration, (5) finance, (6) meeting intermediate goals and (7) responsibilities (Bart)
• Pitfalls are (1) cheating on / breaching contracts (for 1 time deals), (2) not being able to meet expectations and hopes; e.g. making agreements but unable to accomplish them, (3) not knowing what investment is worth (Eelco)
• Pitfalls of collaboration are: (1) Sudden drop out of key companies (e.g. financially; declared broke), (2) difference in opinion about the execution of project, (3) overestimation of technology development which results in not being able to meet promises and (4) inadequate problem manager unable to identify problems (Wendy)
• Problem of VN is that (1) people try to take shortcuts of processes (there is no specific process), (2) companies do not have new ideas and are not very creative (they are following certain routines / trends), (3) VN is very protective
of themselves; they are reluctant to collaborate, especially with competitors (Tam)
• Another problem regarding the market is that it is hard to create brand awareness and trust in Vietnam. In addition, there is a lot of disturbance (of competitors and politics) in the VN market (August)
• Current threats in VN regarding doing business are (1) copycats and (2) people not fulfilling agreements; the solution for that is to keep doing something new (August)
• Problems with collaboration are that suppliers are not much on time and that there are a lot mismatches regarding late deliveries and quality. This means that more attention need to be paid to follow-up (Tam)
• An issue of doing business in VN is the high fees for market research while results do not reflect reality (Dung, Danh Moc)
• A high fee needs to be paid for retailers to sell your product, but it is not efficient due to the low sales (Dung, Danh Moc)
• Other issues are the high transportation costs and the high risk of damaging products which is why they target the southern part of VN only (Dung, Danh Moc)
• Setting up collaboration in VN is hard if companies can do things themselves (Phuong)
• Issues in VN are the copying behaviour and the perception (of locals) that bamboo is cheap and for poor peoples (James)
• Problems with marketing in VN are the high media costs and the high promotion costs, while more advertisements are needed since the character of products is not (always) clear to market and customers yet (Phuong)
• VN SMEs are very order-oriented and thus they are not (often) willing to engage in R&D (James)
• There is not much loyalty among employees in middle management (James)
• The protection offered by law is limited (regarding intellectual property, designs, etc.) (James)
• Employees switch jobs easily based on salary because of the lack of commitment which is caused by employees’ insufficient understanding of the value chain they are part of; they do not know what they contribute to (Gerhard)
• There are several (company) cultural obstacles: VN firms are closed, hierarchical and authoritarian, status and power is important, it is hard to interpret what VN (managers) say and companies are not transparent. This also affects the decision making process in a negative way.

Solutions:
• A solution could be to combine the interests of small companies to reach a bigger market (through Group Access Power / Group Purchasing Power) (Wouter)
• Solution for the pitfalls could be (1) assigning an independent party to be an objective outsider and (2) making clear contract agreements about non-disclosure, obligations regarding goals, conflicts & communication commitments (Wendy)
• A solution is to offer design & high performance (James)
• VN SMEs could collaborate with retailers since retailers know what is desired and for what prices. It also allows VN SMEs to find connections to the market for their products through those retailers; the vision could be to introduce high-end products on the local market (Gerwin)
• Communication could be seen as a solution; it helps VN SMEs to be more specific in what they want and expect (August)
Ideal situation regarding collaboration:

- It would be ideal if there was synergy in VN: being able to do more together than possible separately, but this is not understood in the sense of collaboration yet in VN (August).
- In the ideal situation there would be high quality, a timeline or planning as agreed on, credibility and willingness to solve problems (Dung, Danh Moc).
- The reason to collaborate is because companies have lost their advantage, in the ideal situation this would be re-gained (Phuong).
- The purpose of collaboration is that companies find that there is a common interest (Tam).
- VN companies need to (1) become sustainable, (2) become innovative, (3) become market oriented and (4) increase in transparency (Gerhard).
- Companies collaborate for bigger orders, higher quality and sharing of facilities (Eelco).
- VN companies need to change from passive to pro-active; future plan is decided / influenced by customers, so go to / approach these customers (Tam).
- Minimal overhead costs is desired, especially for SMEs (Tam).
- The goal for companies should be to be transparent, avoid conflicts of interests and prevent personal financial gain (Gerhard).

Vietnam versus West:

- Vietnamese are loyal to brand when they find something they like (August).
- Vietnamese have better skills in determining price & quality of product in comparison to Westerners (August).
- Vietnamese are better able to focus in environments crowded with products (August).
- Vietnamese are need driven and therefore often more demanding customers than Westerners (August).
- Vietnamese cannot see the difference between high class vs. average class products; they do not care about origin, design & materials, but choose based on affordable price and whether they are 'liking it' (Son).
- Vietnamese use products for a very long time, while in Europe maybe fore 1 season or at least a relatively short time (Son).
- Vietnam has a closed mindset, is hierarchical and authoritarian (Gerhard).
- The local market of Vietnam is quite small; Vietnamese do not spend a lot of money on furniture compared to Westerners (Gerhard).
- In general, women make more emotional purchases, while men look more at the technical and functional aspects (August).
- In Vietnam, the market could be effectively reached through television (August).
- Vietnamese SMEs do not have a clear structure, plan or strategy for their design process (Gerwin).
- Vietnamese SMEs go along the way and take small steps (in change) since the main goal is to survive (Gerwin).
- Vietnamese SMEs often lack clear vision and mission, which are seen as advertising or marketing only (Gerwin).
- Vietnamese SMEs do what has already been proven to work; they are not willing to just change or innovate (Gerwin).
- Vietnamese SMEs focus on price differentiation rather than design differentiation (Gerwin).
APPENDIX F: Findings ‘trend’- & ‘event’-cards

APPENDIX F: Findings used for ‘trend’- and ‘event’-cards

**Trends:**
- preference for natural products
- high inflation in Vietnam
- high fees for retailers
- high fees for market research
- high transportation costs
- sustainability
- insecurity due to economic crisis (finances, personal stress, organisation structures)
- family orientation
- Do It Yourself furniture (e.g. Ikea)
- Importance of heritage
- Sampling
- Increasing amount of competitors
- Less stable market (due to high inflation)
- Changing perception of partnerships
- Use of social media
- Transition from mobile phone to smartphone
- On collaboration: transition from DIY to Do It With Others
- Need to change from passive to pro-active (future plans are decided by customers, so go to these customers)

**Needs:**
- Vietnamese are very protective of themselves and thus reluctant to collaborate, esp. with competitors
- Setting up collaboration in VN is hard if companies can do things themselves
- High media costs
- High promotion costs
- More advertisements needed since character of products is not clear to market/customers yet
- Vietnamese companies are order-oriented and not willing to engage in R&D
- Not much loyalty among employees (in middle management)
- Protection by law is limited
- Being protective of designs
- Copying behaviour in VN
- Perception of Vietnamese that bamboo is cheap
- Vietnamese use products for very long time (EU for relatively short time)
- Vietnamese cannot see the different between high class vs average class products (they do not care about origin, design & materials so by according to affordable price and whether they like it)
- Vietnam has closed mindset, is hierarchical and authoritarian
- Local market is quite small (Vietnamese do not spend a lot of money on furniture) Employees switch jobs easily based on salary because of lack of
commitment and understanding of value chain

- Vietnamese are closed, hierarchical and authoritarian; there are status and power positions
- It is hard to interpret what people say; companies are not transparent and influences the decision making process
- Women make more emotional purchases while men look at technical and functional aspects
- Advertising is not efficient
- Vietnamese are loyal to brand when they find something they like
- Vietnamese have better skills in determining/estimating the price and quality of a product
- Vietnamese are more need-driven and thus sometimes more demanding customers (Westerners buy brand for the brand sometimes)
- Vietnamese do not have a clear structure, plan or strategy for their design process
- Vietnamese companies make decisions along the way and take small steps since their main goal is to survive
- Vietnamese companies often lack clear vision/mission which are seen as advertising or marketing
- Vietnamese companies do what is already proven to work, they are not willing to change
- Vietnamese companies tend to compete and differentiate themselves on price rather than on design
APPENDIX G: Decision making process boardgame

Decision making process for the development of the boardgame (version before testing)

Tool/game design:
Aspects to be stimulated for collaboration:
• Trust = understanding, interdependence (short term) & credibility (long term)
• Willingness/commitment/enthusiasm
The above could be reached by sharing experiences, opinions, lessons learnt, etc.

The game needs to let users feel:
Enjoyment = need satisfaction and requires autonomy, competence and relatedness

Criteria game:
• open up the mindset of companies for collaboration
• build understanding and trust (and credibility)
• show their interdependence
• learn them to collaborate
• learn them to find possibilities and/or form strategies
• let them think about their own strengths, weaknesses, possibilities, threats and kinds of resources (knowledge, time, budget, etc.) they have
• (roadmap marketing strategy)?
• increase willingness, commitment and enthusiasm
• sharing experiences, knowledge, opinions, lessons learnt (communication & interaction increases understanding in personality which increases the knowledge about each other and allow for trust to grow)
• EXPLORATION of possibilities, process to develop collaboration/strategy

Findings:
• relative importance of different process steps (represented by willingness to spend resources)
• appropriate process towards collaboration tailored to the group’s needs and logic (they build up the process from existing elements themselves through discussions)
• process development also implies the timeline: the further away each step is from the subsequent one, the more time is needed for that phase.
• better understanding of potential partners and how they think or would act in certain circumstances
• non-fictive companies and their available resources
• distribution of actual available resources over the process
• more real-life “what ifs”: would participants act the way they said they would act when instead of fictive companies, the questions are related to their ‘real’ companies?
• Take into account the trends and developments that could start to play a role
in the collaboration for marketing at different and rather unpredictable times
• Increased understanding of potential partners

A sketch was made and experimented with:

1. Sketch - Based on this first sketch, the first draft of the game was designed:

2. First draft - After a meeting with the supervisors who advised to include a game element and that a boardgame was not very necessary (board does not add up a lot to the game). The second draft emerged (and included the prisoner's dilemma element):
3. Second draft (used for first pre-test) - After a meeting with Danh Moc who wanted the game to be less complex and analytical (he said “academic”). As a result, the headings disappeared which allows a more smooth process, and also avoidance of thinking in clear, outlined steps, but more as a flow. Also decided to put more emphasis on the storyline of the game and to write down the aspects per stage less formal/academic/analytical. Furthermore, some process stages are joint and shown together to reduce the amount of ‘steps’ and thus complexity. The next game lay out emerged:

4. Third draft (halfway the pre-tests) After some more pre-tests and iteration-rounds, the following design emerged and was used for the user-test of the first workshop:
You and your potential partners are identifying the activities that are needed to achieve the goal on collaboration

You and your potential partners are trying to align wishes & desires (scope, expectations, interdependencies, goals)

You and your potential partners need to look at what each partner could bring to the table (SWOT & available resources)

You and your potential partners try to find shared interests & goals to identify possible interdependencies

You and your potential partners are meeting each other to get to know each other and the companies

You and your partners are making a planning for the activities mentioned before (when will what be done?)

You and your partners create an action plan which states what, when, how and by whom activities will be done

You and your partners make clear agreements on what is said before to avoid uncertainties and confusion

The activities mentioned before are included in the organisation structures of the participating companies

To understand the impact, you and your partners monitor, evaluate, reflect and report the findings during the process

5. The draft shown above is used for the user-test of the first workshop. After this user-tests, some more adjustments are made (according to feedback of test-participants) resulting in the end-design of the boardgame for this project.
APPENDIX H: Feedback forms & evaluations pre-test workshop I (test reports)

**Appendix**

Phuong, Danh Moc (did not play the game):

Feedback game:
- It is very complex & confusing: there are many steps and no physical resources.
  - Reducing the amount of steps and by using physical resources will make the game easier.
  
  I agree with this, because the game looked very crowded and the many stages will take too much time to pass.
- You need to make it more like a game, thus more personal
  
  I want to change it because I agreed with that this is too formal.
- Also language is a problem; most Vietnamese people’s English it not very good and even he has trouble understanding it. You should translate it to Vietnamese (or maybe make icons instead of using text).
  
  From practical point of view it might be indeed better to translate it.
- The game is very academic with all the different stages and use of terms. Make it less academic and easier to play.
  
  The same as the comment to make it more personal; the current version is too formal.
- Also make a visualisation/diagram of your project/workshop to show the goal and purpose of the tool.
- Go to mr. Rainer from HAWA, he might be able to help you.

Observation:
- not too happy with it (but maybe because it is different than what he expected it to be)

**Changed:**
- reduced amount of steps by combining/simplifying
- made text easier (less academic and serious)
- use storyline and less formal words/sentences

Tuyen:
- During the game: what happens if you run out of resources?

  Good question; I wonder if that would happen at all. But I should definitely think about that.
- First impression of game after playing:
  - It’s difficult, but effective
  - The way to pick the cards is difficult; maybe you should just have 1 stack?
  - It is effective because it is a very clarified (= clear?) way of thinking. It helps in sharing content in stages which is useful.
It is fun because you need to think to solve the problem.

The game does not look energetic; choose a warm colour?

I want to keep it a bit formal and plain. Especially since by adding the resources the board will become much more colourful and crowded. Keeping it simple will prevent it from being too much during and after the game. It will be easier to keep an overview.

Content of the different process stages are too long

This could be, it might take quite some time to read and understand it. I will make it less elaborate and more general to make it easier and shorter.

Make the text bigger & bold; it would be clearer

I agree with this, the text is not too easy to read because of its size.

Observation:
- she became very talkative
- clearly thinking about the problems offered to her, but also the cards I drew
- used a lot of own experiences
- was sometimes also excited in the way she talked
- did not fully understand the rules/explanation

Changed:
- reduced the content of the process stages by making it less elaborate and keeping it simple and rather superficial
- made the text bigger for readability
- add a rule: if you run out of resources, you will depend on other participants; make a deal with them to lend/give you a part of their resources. Also, what would you have done in real life?

Nguyen (Nha Viet)

Feedback on the game:
- winning vs losing is unclear; need to explain winning/losing rules (esp. when comparing with own resources).
  I need to explain it more in steps; this way it should become more clear.
- He likes it a lot, he thinks it is good because of 3 reasons:
  - Process focus: it shows how the process should be, a vision
  - For the coordinator it shows what is important
  - It is a roadmap to show to others
- It is the actual thing that he sees happening. He enjoys playing the game, but it is not fun-fun.

Observation:
- he was very serious/formal throughout the meeting, but kind and helpful (he was very willing to answer my questions and the questions in the game)
- he did not seem enthusiastic about it (but apparently he liked it)
- he did not seem to think a very long time before coming up with an answer (so maybe he had thought about this before?)

Changed:
- explained more clearly that it is about collaboration and the discussions, about reaching the goal together while being the best
- explained more clearly that if the winner has more resources than the amount put in the game divided by the amount of participant, the participants are not on the same page regarding collaboration. Some of them are not committed to the collaboration and thus the collaboration fails.

Thomas/Claudine
Feedback on game Claudine:
- title needs to be changed, maybe Collabo?
  “Collaboration: reach the market” was too long and too boring sounding. The name definitely needs to be changed and Collabo is a very nice suggestion.
- Take out the ‘start-over’ events car, going back 1 or 2 process stages is fine
  These cards turned out to be quite annoying and time consuming, especially when they occur midway or even at the end of the game. I took them out and changed them into going back 1 or 2 stages instead.
- For a non-designer it is easy to follow
- The game is provoking in the sense of collaboration, tactics discussion and team building

Feedback form Claudine:
- by making the mission a collaboration; it creates a team building exercise
- by including strategies for personal gain within a collaboration and a partnership (collaborative) gain, commitment and enthusiasm could be increased
- it really shows the link between partnerships, but it is just the beginning
- you should remove the ‘start over’ cards or change them into ‘move back 1’ instead
- the lay-out of the game could be more colourful
  The same as before: I want to prevent the game to become over-crowded during or after the game. Making it more colourful could have that over-crowded effect if there are more players and thus more resources.
- you could use better game pieces, e.g. pawn players
  I did not have any game pieces/pawn players in this version and it sometimes made it hard to remember where one has left off. A game piece to keep track of the progress might be a good solution.

Feedback on game Thomas:
- maybe the keeping vs spending of extra resources need to be changed (it is easy to say to invest it in the collaboration; you even get more if you do so, there is therefore not really a trade-off of why you would keep resources to yourself)
  I changed the resources card: you get more if you invest in yourself and less if you invest in the collaboration (because of higher administrative costs etc.)
- it is fun to come up with ideas
- but it should have more the feeling of actually running a company
  I do not want to become too real, because it might make participants reluctant to speak their minds. It could increase cautious behaviour.
- the company profiles could be used as an option if you elaborate it and put in interesting differences among the profiles. This way different departments or managers within a company can use the game as well
  That is definitely true, but if there is no company profile, participants will talk from their own experiences more because there is no other reference for them. There is the risk that
if you have company profiles they will use their imagination to live up to the character/company.
- the investing system is unclear; you should clearly explain that the extra resources you keep to yourself are for other company projects (not related to the collaboration)

*That is true, it will also make the choice more apparent I guess.*
- now you just have a stack of ‘resources’ which you put into the game; there is no real overview, so maybe you could have an extra (overview-)card where you can invest the extra resources you get from the cards.

*That is a good idea, that way the participant is also able to keep an overview of the resources they have left and that they have spend on other company projects.*
- Companies have to make priorities and difficult choices; this is not really represented in the game. Maybe you can have different kinds of resources to make the experience of running a company more real.

*This might take away the feeling of playing a game for the participants. It becomes very realistic for a first meeting and might lead to formal/cautious behaviour as a result.*

Feedback form Thomas:
- it helps to understand on a social/business level and to think about your own position
- spending resources feels easy because it doesn’t represent real value. Spending is not so dependent on strategy in the game. (This could be changed in the game to increase commitment and enthusiasm in collaboration???)
- the goal is achieved in the sense and to the extend that it helps participants to brainstorm about opportunities, but maybe it does not prepare for the real pitfalls of collaboration
- To come closer to the goal of the game, the stakes should be higher and there should be more possibility for strategic decisions
- There should be a clearer goal
- Explain what it is you are working towards exactly. It does not feel so clear
- Everyone’s investment in the game is the same while that might not be the case in real life
- The moral of the game seems to be: collaboration is good, is that always the case?
- The most important thing to change is that an investment and commitment should feel like that. (That is not the case in this version of the game yet)

*The goal is to gain understanding among participants to create space for trust and communication to grow. Even though a representative situation is desirable, during a first meeting participants are not ready to deal with real life situation yet. The level of trust in Vietnam is low and first there should be a basis before looking at serious and formal issues/situations. The game could build towards more concrete solutions and plans throughout time and meetings, but for now the goal is to give the collaboration a positive kick-start in the right direction. First trust, understanding and willingness, business and agreements come later.*

Observations:
- discussions are provoked
- company profiles help participants to think from a certain perspectives and from their own ‘experiences’
- an issue was explaining the rules in a clear and understandable way
- participants are challenged to think about the trends/events and how they would face it
- they use their own experience often
- they made jokes (during test with a designer and a writer)
- some problems with understanding the rules/goal of game (complicated to explain), but when just starting to play it becomes more clear quite fast
- It’s good that test-participants were very easy in determining the importance of a process stage, but I will need to ask for an explanation/argument of why they made a specific decision.
- Some turns tend to take a lot of time, maybe a time limit is needed to make sure the session does not take too long
- Because there are no pawns, participants get confused about where they are in the game/process

Changed:
- changed title, for now Collabo, but maybe another name later?
- Took out the ‘start-over’ cards and changed them into going back one or two process stages or skip one or two turns
- Added game pieces to show participants at what process stage they are. For now they are game chips, but that might not be the best solution.
- Added an overview card on which all the available resources and the extra resources gained through the ‘resources’ cards participants decided to keep for themselves are put.
- Explained goals and what the game is working towards more clearly in the explanation doc.
- Some turns took a lot of time, so I want to add a time limit per turn to control the session a bit more.
- Include strategies for personal gain within a collaboration and a partnership (collaborative) gain to increase commitment and enthusiasm.

Gerhard – HAWA
Feedback on game:
- explain the goal of the first meeting more clearly
- explain the winning/losing rules after the game (otherwise they will play strategically)
  That makes sense; if I tell them beforehand, they might play with a specific strategy in mind (e.g. no investing in own projects if they know that it might lead to losing the game).
  Telling them after the game might be a good opportunity to allow for reflection as well (What would I do different the next time? Can I both increase current market share as well as win the game as a collaboration? Short-term vs long-term vision? Being selfish causes everyone to lose; is that also the case in real-life? Etc.)
  - it is a playful mode, but how to utilize these results
  - how can the increased mutual understanding be used?
  - Maybe you can use objective/problem trees instead of mindmaps in the second meeting (also, use stickers to let participants indicate what in the mindmaps they think is most important)

Mindmaps are a quick tool to map out the most important aspects/associations.
Objective/problem trees are too detailed and formal, especially for a second meeting. The stickers to let participants indicate what is important, is a good idea though.
- It is interesting and a good approach, but it is not strict. A second step is needed to find out how to implement. Without institutional implementation, nothing will happen.
- It is an interesting game, for me (Gerhard) this is a learning experience.
- Explain why you start where you start, what the end is and why the process stages are organized like that.
That is a good idea to prevent confusion and misunderstandings about when the game has finished.

- During the workshop you need to be careful about the overpowering/dominant types. Make sure also the less outspoken participants are heard.
- It integrates participants by the discussions
- The rules are very open; maybe have a time limit per turn
- Balance the mega trends, macro trends and micro trends
- Maybe add more mega trends like ‘green thinking’
- Also for events: maybe structure the events?
- You need a clearer set of rules beforehand (and explain them), but without disclosing too much (otherwise they will play strategically)
- Maybe you could link the trends, events and resources (???)
- Maybe make it more fun, more excited
- The purpose of this game is to change management

Feedback form:
- it is fun to do
- it triggers discussions
- it integrates participants
- it creates mutual understanding
- it is a different approach
- it helps participants to help each other because it stimulates participants to express deviant opinions
- you should have more focus on instruments if you want to teach them to collaborate or to identify interdependencies (more elaborate/deep process stages)

That will be the case in subsequent meetings: more elaborate process stages, finding interdependencies through mindmaps, etc.

- to improve the stimulation of participants to share experiences and to explore the different possibilities, you should let everybody speak (watch out for overpowering types of participants)
- he does not know how commitment and enthusiasm could be increased and translated in the board game / workshop
- explaining the rules, the goals and the expected outcomes more clearly will help to come closer to the goal
- change in the sense of process of the board game: that is related to efficiency; the time consumption is quite high
- change in the sense of rules of the board game: maybe more restrictive or more open?
- Change in the sense of aims of the board game: nothing
- Balance the mega, macro and micro trends; maybe more mega trends are needed
- If anything could be changed the most important thing would be the rules; have a clear set of rules without too much info before(?) results

Observation:
- cards work; invites to talk/discuss
- rules were unclear
- a lot of interesting side-discussions actually arose throughout the game (about more abstract issues in VN and companies)
- interesting was that he had another view on things; he interlinked several topics and explained very well what he meant (but sometimes I needed to ask though)
Changed:
- Explain more clearly in the explanation doc; the goal of the first meeting and how the results and the increased mutual understanding after the game will be used.
- Explain the rules of winning/losing after the game (otherwise they will play strategically)
- Use stickers after drawing up the mindmaps (meeting 2) to let participants indicate what they think is most important.
- Explain the sequence of the process stages (start to end) and what the end of the game is.
- The rules are very open; maybe have a time limit per person/turn (very time consuming game)
- Develop a clearer set of rules and explain them, but do not disclose too much
- Explain the rules, the goals and the expected outcomes more clearly
This Master thesis is the result of a research project in Vietnam. The goal of this project is to design a tool that will help Vietnamese SMEs initiate collaboration (plans) that fit their situation, position, culture and desires. These partnerships could be initiated for various reasons, but will mainly be aimed at improving the efficiency and effectiveness of company strategies and business operation. The purpose of the project is not to prescribe a strategy, but to offer them some guidance and support in the start-up phase of the collaboration development process. The result is COLLABO; a tool facilitating discussions and interaction to increase its users’ understanding and trust on several aspects regarding collaboration.