Knowledge sharing in construction partnering projects - redundancy, boundary objects and brokers

This article adopts practice-based theory for understanding inter-organisational knowledge work and extends it with a discussion of the role of redundancy. In this view, a constellation of firms is a multiple configuration of communities of practices, characterised by overlapping practices, multiple memberships and different levels of participation, and accompanied by a governance frame. The paper discusses central mechanisms for coordinating knowledge in such a complex construction project. The knowledge relations are conceptualised through focusing on redundancy, understood as negotiated common assignment of meaning, brokers (e.g., design managers), boundary objects (e.g., drawings) and arenas (e.g., meetings). The paper presents an ethnographic case study of a project partnership between engineers, architects and contractors in construction using the partnering concept. The focus is on two dialogue excerpts, one on process, and one on product knowledge exchanges. The diversity and disjunctive feature of the practices form a condition of possibility for knowledge handling and synthesis into the built construct. Relation-based interaction is necessary with boundary objects and brokers, requisite redundancy and governance.

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