

Partnering in flight: from being to becoming

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Abstract

Current literature offers little understanding about how procurement methods are enacted in practice. Developments in procurement are often viewed as the result of responding to recommendations from particular constituents within the sector. The research seeks to remove itself from such deterministic leaning, counselling instead that procurement should not be viewed in static terms, but dynamically manifesting over time within a complex web of interconnections between various actors, their situated context and the broader industrial structure. Attention is given to how a client and construction firm engaged in a collusive interaction to realise an innovative procurement method that derived its legitimacy from a backcloth of initiatives promoted by various commentators. A case study of a medium-size regional contractor demonstrates how the first partnering arrangement was enacted within the UK affordable housing maintenance sector in the UK. The case study finds that the enactment of new procurement methods strongly relies on iterative learning between clients and contractors. It is further suggested that construction firms need to initiate new procurement in order to remain competitive within the sector. The findings point towards a pro-active initiative by the contractor and client to enact a 'procurement first'. Encouragement may be drawn from this example by other contractors seeking to offer more than simply responsive procurement solutions.

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