



**UNIVERSITY OF
CAMBRIDGE**

Department of Engineering

CONSTRUCTION ENGINEERING MASTERS DISSERTATION ABSTRACT

Collaboration and interdependency: Exploring the relationship between designers and contractors

The UK construction industry is frequently characterised by late delivery, cost overruns and legal disputes (Cable et al., 2013). Collaboration is proposed as a mechanism to achieve improved working relationships, information exchange, quality, timing and to reduce conflicts, risks, and costs (Black et al. 2000). In order to move to a more collaborative way of working, the UK construction industry must change its traditional way of working.

The question this research seeks to investigate is: "What are the enablers for collaboration between designers and contractors in design and build infrastructure projects in the UK?"

This study aims to evaluate the relationship between main contractors and designers in D&B projects, understanding the perception of what collaboration involves, determining which factors and behaviours affect collaboration and looking at the interdependency of activities.

A qualitative method was used, given the human and therefore subjective nature of the topic under investigation. Data was collected from semi structured interviews with influential industry executives, coupled with the author's auto-ethnographic diary. An Ethnographic approach is the one adopted in the dissertation as its aim is to understand people behaviours and actions.

Results indicated that collaboration is rare in the relationship between designers and contractors. In order to enable collaboration, D&B participants should focus on the following points: unanimous definition, leadership, common goal, motivation, trust and interdependency of activities.

Conclusions indicate that collaboration is beneficial and welcomed by the industry. However to make collaboration more effective, changes will be needed in behaviours, particularly regarding trust, mutual understanding of each other's drivers, needs and interdependency of activities. Governing contractual mechanisms should also be defined better.

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