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Construction Management and Economics >

Volume 28, 2010 - Issue 3

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I trust you, I trust you not: a longitudinal study of control mechanisms in incentive contracts

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Pages 301-310 | Published online: 19 Mar 2010

Solution Cite this article Attps://doi.org/10.1080/01446191003587745



Abstract

The relationship between trust and control in client-contractor interactions is explored, focusing on the control mechanisms used in a construction project. A longitudinal case study of a large laboratory construction project found that the client used a variety of control mechanisms to ensure that the contractor behaved trustworthily. Empirical data were gathered through interviews and non-participant observation. The results indicate that the use of control mechanisms is part of a complex and dynamic socially constructed process that requires ongoing discussion and evaluation, and to which informal control mechanisms are central. Business relationships built solely on trust are seemingly rare; even in trust-based collaborative settings, such as partnering arrangements; the contracting parties must pay attention to trust-nurturing actions.

Keywords:

Longitudinal study

trust control mechanisms

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