The role of media in construction design work and ecologies of practice

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Abstract

Information technologies are used across all stages of the construction process, and are crucial in the delivery of large projects. Drawing on detailed research on a construction mega-project, in this paper we take a practice-based approach to examining the practical and theoretical tensions that exist between existing ways of working and the introduction of new coordination tools. We analyse the new hybrid practices that emerged, using insights from actor-network theory to articulate the delegation of actions to material and digital objects within ecologies of practice. The three vignettes that we discuss highlight this delegation of actions, the ‘plugging’ and ‘patching’ of ecologies occurring across media and the continual iterations of working practices between different types of media. By shifting the focus from the tools to ecologies of practice, the work has important managerial implications for the stabilisation of new technologies and practices and management on large construction projects.