

Culture, an excuse? An explorative study of project manager's accounts of intercultural encounters in international construction projects.

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Construction projects are interesting from the view of intercultural communication, not only do they often involve a variety of national, professional and corporate cultures but the members of these cultures are required to collaborate in order to complete the project. This is challenged by the fact that the members of a project do not share a common business goal, but rather the project contributes to their individual business goals. This setting, of course, builds up tensions between groups within the projects as they do not necessarily act according to each other's standards nor interests. I investigate the accounts project managers make of these situations, i.e. of intercultural encounters. Situations in which a cultural other acts in a way that is not acceptable or constructive to the aim of the project in their opinion. I draw on the theory of responsibility attribution and show how project managers and project engineers both justify and explain the behavior of an individual on the premises of his group-membership, I argue that they treat "culture" similarly as insanity is treated in courtrooms, as an internal excuse which renders the culprit less responsible for his actions. Further I argue that this is made possible by the positivist paradigm that approaches culture in a determinist tradition that questions agency on an individual level and thereby undermines the individual's ultimate responsibility for his actions. This does not merely have theoretical implications, but practical as well as culture becomes a veil behind which causes for problems are hidden, safe from intervention and solution.