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The reinvention of the self in the centre as an approach that makes construction projects fail

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Abstract: Researchers' efforts to analyse the causes of failure and/or diversion in the construction industry are extensive. Nevertheless, the number of construction projects that present deficiencies minimally in one of their complementary elements remains high. This article aims to shed light on why numerous construction projects fail to meet their functional parameters, emphasising that an overlooked cause is the inconsiderate approach of those in charge towards the surroundings. Relying on postcolonial theory concepts, it will also study the impact of the Othering attitude of construction projects' executives in terms of satisfying the needs and interests of its beneficiaries. Via the analysis of nine construction projects built at different time periods, in various parts of the world, the authors aim to bring to attention how these agents' approach is detrimental and costly for the construction industry and how a less self-centred and more appreciative line benefits all the involved parties and wider.

Keywords: Othering; construction projects; project failure; marginalisation; functional deficiency.

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Biographical notes: Edona Llukaçaj holds a PhD in Comparative Studies in Literature. Her work focuses primarily on multiculturalism, postcolonialism, cosmopolitanism, identity issues and marginalisation, political literature, collective memory as well as the culture and literature of developing countries. During her work as a Lecturer at various universities, she has taught a variety of courses on literature, culture, and language. She is also the translator of several books into English, Turkish and Albanian, as well as the author of many articles in the Albanian media.

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1 Introduction

Annual construction market reaches approximately US$3.400.00 billion (Sohail and Cavill, 2008) and every construction projects affects directly or indirectly the life of the community there and of the surrounding buildings (Younger et al., 2008; Becerik-Gerber et al., 2022). Terms such as quality deviations, non-conformances, defects, quality failures (Love, 2002), 'over budget' and behind schedule (Larson, 1995; Philbin, 2023) are quite frequent in urban planning, architecture and civil engineering projects. The effort to analyse the parameters affecting quality, (Jha and Iyer, 2006) budget, (Rahman et al., 2013; Arditi, et al., 1985) schedule, (Larsen et al., 2016) and functionality failure and/or diversion in construction industry is extensive. Nevertheless, the number of construction projects that have functional deficiencies minimally in one of their complementary elements remains significantly high. Luxury apartments lacking pedestrian paths (D'Onofrio and Trusiani, 2022; Furlan et al., 2019; Jeon, 2022) neighbourhood roads with no lighting systems, (Lin et al., 2023; Basu et al., 2022) highways with no drainage systems (Yardim et al., 2022; Pang et al., 2022) and auditoriums with poor acoustic systems (Heylighen et al., 2009) are not infrequent and are found in various parts of the word.

The main reasons behind these deficiencies are considered to be the lack of experience, ineffective interaction of clients-consultants-contractors and corruption. However, this article introduces and elaborates on another essential and overlooked factor that has an equally detrimental impact on construction projects and could lead to their partial or total failure: the approach of the ones in charge of any project towards the surroundings, which is reminiscent of the Othering attitude of the (former) coloniser to the (formerly) colonised. By analysing concrete examples found at various parts of the world in this light, the authors demonstrate how the mindset in question could prevent any sort of project to serve its purpose and the local community, implying that an inclusive and regarding approach enhances the functionality of a structure and eases its acceptance by the locals. Besides being a non-frequently encountered perspective that addresses a major problem of construction projects, the significance of this study relies in the fact that it highlights a to-be-avoided attitude on behalf of the ones in charge of projects and suggests the opposite for functioning projects that serve the community, blending harmoniously with their surroundings. These also shed light on the objectives of the study, which include emphasising a detrimental and costly approach on behalf of the agents of the construction industry worldwide, suggesting a non-Othering approach decreases the chances of construction project fail, and implying that key figures of any construction project should be more appreciative of the surroundings and beneficiaries, in order to avoid significant and costly failures.

2 Literature review

An extensive research that intended to analyse the causes of delay and overruns in construction projects was undertaken by Assaf and Al-Hejji (2006). After investigating the causes of delay in 76 large construction projects, it was concluded that 70% of projects experienced time overrun. The research also indicated that the owners and consultants of a certain project specify contractor as important sources of delays, while, on the other hand, contractors point their fingers to owners and consultants as an important reason for delays. González et al. (2014) analysed the causes of delay and time performance in construction projects and found out that planning was the main cause that led to unsatisfying performance in terms of fulfilment of time periods. Mahamid et al. (2012) examined the causes of delay in 52 road construction projects and concluded that the top five severe delay causes are the political situation of the involved entities, limited movement among areas, the awarding of the project to the lowest bid price without taking into consideration other factors, progress payment delay by the owner, and the shortage of equipment. Aziz and Abdel-Hakam (2016), similarly, explored delay causes of road construction projects in Egypt. The main causes of delay that this study put forth were the owner's financial problems, shortage in equipment and inadequate contractor experience. Sambasivan and Soon (2007) identified the ten primary causes of delay in the Malaysian construction industry; they are also all related to the contractor's improper planning and his/her poor management, client's inadequate financial situation that lead to payment issues as well as to the lack of interaction among the involved parties. Arditi et al. (1985) studied the cost of overruns in public projects and indicated that the most important factors are errors done in the first estimates of the project, unpredicted increases in material prices, inflationary pressure and the wages of work forces. Arditi et al. (2017) also explored the relationship between construction companies' organisational culture and their tendency to delay, and it was determined that a company's organisational culture is one of the delay causes in construction projects. Niazi and Painting (2017) pointed out that construction cost overruns in Afghanistan are primarily the result of corruption, delayed progress payments by the owner, difficulties encountered by contractors in financing project, security, changes made in the work order by the owner during construction as well as market inflation. Senouci et al. (2016) stated that cost overruns and delays in energy megaprojects are mainly encountered because of mistakes in decision-making, which, in turn, are the result of incorrect allocation of the environmental and social costs in the conceptual project, the poor management of the contract, miscalculated financial risks as well as corruption. Polat et al. (2014) claims that the factors that cause cost overruns in micro-scale construction companies are principally related to the performance of the client and contractor. The number of scholars that have analysed the delays and overruns in construction projects focusing either in one country, such as Kaliba et al. (2009) and Frimpong et al. (2003), or in wider areas, such as Odeh and Battaineh (2002), are plenty. As Le et al. (2014) emphasise, corruption is a common challenge to construction industries in both developed and developing countries. Indeed, Tabish and Jha (2011) states that corruption may occur in any phase of a project; namely, project initiation, planning and design, as well as bidding and construction. Sohail and Cavill (2008) estimated that the annual loss from corruption in the global construction market reaches approximately US$340 billion, which accounts for 10% of the global construction market value. Owusu et al. (2019) evaluated the construction projects' vulnerability to corruption in developing countries and concluded that the stages of the

construction process vulnerable to corruption in these countries were the contract stage (CTS) and the post-contract phase (PCP). Extensive studies have been conducted to shed light on the impact of corruption in construction projects, such as Locatelli et al. (2017), Nordin et al. (2013) and Neu et al. (2015). On the other hand, Ahzahar et al. (2011) maintains that one of the most common factors that leads to building defects and failures is the low quality of construction material. Researchers that focus on the management of the decision-making process are not absent, either (Aktas and Duarte, 2022; Mwangaila et al., 2023).

It is obvious that there is a considerable number of independently undertaken either individual or group researches that analyse a multitude of potential factors leading to defects, delays, over budget, or even to the utter failure of construction projects to serve their surroundings and even their purpose. Yet, these issues seem not to be addressed and keep being encountered constantly in spite of the scale, category and location of the project. In other words, the diversity of the findings of the undertaken numerous researches lead to the idea that there is an underlying reason and commonly-shared factor that results into the total or partial failure of construction projects, and this reason is also related and obvious in the failure of construction projects of all sorts to fulfil the needs of the local community or in their detrimental impact on the surroundings.

3 Methodology

The authors of this article undertook an interdisciplinary approach to shed light on a problematic and costly phenomenon as that of the partial or total failure of construction projects and their management is. More precisely, they applied the philosophical concept of 'Othering' and the fundamentals of postcolonial theory to put forth that the partial or even total failure of construction projects could also be the result of the executives' self-centred attitude. To sustain their point, the authors used a mixed method research that incorporates both quantitative and qualitative research. That is, the authors focused on nine relevant study cases built at different time periods, found in various geographies and financed by either governmental or non-governmental entities. For more reliable conclusions in relation to the impact of the executives' attitude, the qualitative analysis of these study cases was done.

4 The development of construction projects

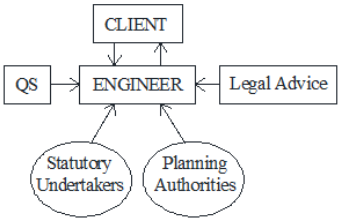
As claimed by Warren D.R. (Warren, 1996) every construction project begins with an idea, which is the result of a perceived necessity, and, in the process of their provision, construction projects aim to make a profit. The development of construction projects could be separated into two main phases; the first is the pre-construction phase while and following one is the construction phase.

4.1 The preconstruction phase of projects

After the necessity for the development of a certain construction project is determined, it is customary for the developing party, which is randomly referred to as the client, to

employ a civil engineer that would study the fusibility of the potential project, also considering if it fulfils the client's expectations and the project requirements. It is precisely this engineer that, by either hiring freelancers, by having them hired by the client or by utilising the human resources in his company, sets up a workgroup. This workgroup, which is led by the engineer, consists of four main subdivisions: technical, financial, legal, as well as environmental and statutory subdivision. Each of these subdivisions studies the project considering the cost, duration, and technological challenges. The project's impact on the environment, its surroundings and the community is also analysed.

Figure 1 Pre-construction phase



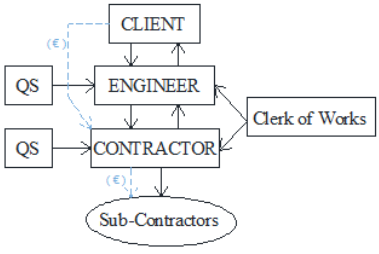
Source: Warren (1996)

These steps are to be considered and undertaken for all types of construction project, regardless the fact if it is an urban, civil engineering or architectural project. The time period dedicated to the necessary studies before work on site begins is referred to as the preconstruction phase. The relationship of the involved parties, adopted after Dene (Warren, 1996), is as shown in Figure 1.

4.2 The construction phase of projects

The construction phase is, obviously, the following phase and encompasses the work on site. This phase begins only after the engineer in charge of the preconstruction phase declares that the project in question is feasible and fulfils the necessary requirements. The standard contract agreed upon for a construction project involves the Client, the Engineer and the contractor, whereas the Dispute Adjudication and Avoidance Board (DAAB) is involved as a party only upon request. It is clear that the contractor is responsible for the construction of the project in compliance with the awarded contract. The informing of the Engineer on the progress of the project and the potentially encountered challenges is also part of the contractor's responsibility, the way detailed information on quality, quantity, time and budget is. The responsibilities of the engineer include routine controls, so that potential deviations are avoided, the rendering and certification of documents of the construction phase. Additionally, he is responsible for health and safety, quality, quantity, time, budget requirements and for reporting to the client on the progress of the project. The client's responsibilities include the duly payment of the certified documents, such as interim payment certificate, material supply, taxes and so on. The involved DAAB members' responsibility is the avoiding or solving of potential disputes among the parties. The strictly interrelated relationship of the parties involved in a construction project, adopted after Dene (Warren, 1996), is shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2 Construction phase (see online version for colours)



Source: Warren (1996)

5 The reason(s) why construction projects fail

As shown in part 4 of this article, there are at least three different entities involved in the development of a construction project: client, engineer and contractor. The client initiates the project and is responsible for providing funds for its execution; at times, it is referred to as the employer. The engineer is appointed by the client, and, in a conventional contract, s/he is the client's representative; at times, it is referred to as the supervision or the supervisor. The contractor is the one with whom the contract for the project is signed, mostly after a selection process (bidding process) organised for the construction of the works. Although, minimally three qualified entities are engaged in the preconstruction and construction stage of a certain project, the failure of construction project or its failing to meet the needs of the surroundings and of the community and its negative impact on the environment is not out of question. The extensive literature review provided above demonstrated that the findings of this multitude of researches point to the inability of at least one of these entities to perform their contractual responsibility. The client may fail to find the adequate contractor/engineer for a certain project, bid the contract at lower prices, or may even be corrupted. The Engineer may fail to enable effective interaction with clients and contractors or may not have the relevant experience. The contractor may fail because of a large number of factors; it may even nurture bad intentions, such as the maximisation of profits without performing its contractual obligations. It is obvious that if any of the involved entities fails to perform its duties the project fails. Yet, there is another issue that these studies do not answer. It is the reason(s) why construction projects still fail to fulfil entirely or partially the necessary parameters, even when the evolved entities perform well and timely. Taking this as a starting point, this article will attempt to shed light on a less studied reason in relation to why construction projects fail to fulfil some of their main functional parameters, emphasising that this is caused by the inconsiderate approach of the ones in charge of planning and building structures for their beneficiaries. It will demonstrate that urban planners, architects and/or civil engineers approach the structure in hand as 'the centre of the world'. Therefore, even when certain construction projects succeed to fulfil their goals, a considerable percentage of these projects fail a 'step away'. That is, although some construction projects succeed to fulfil their primary parameters and become sustainable entities on their own, – within their concrete and conceptual boundaries, they still fail to integrate as a functional segment of

the surrounding or, vice versa, the surroundings fail to be an integral part of these projects, which, on their own, are considered to be successful.

5.1 'Othering' as a philosophical concept

The concept of the 'Other' is not a new one. It has been used increasingly in philosophy and social studies for more than five decades to refer to the condition of individuals, groups, communities and sections within one that are directly and/or indirectly not accepted as equal to 'the self' and 'its similars', that are considered inferior and, consequently, pushed to the margins of society (Bullock and Stephen, 1999). The Hegelian self-other dichotomy, in which the other is solely a complementary element that serves to identify the self (Hegel and Miller, 1977), was utilised by Simone de Beauvoir in her groundbreaking work 'the second sex' to shed light on the man-woman relationship and to reflect a woman's position in a patriarchal society. In the very introduction of her famous book, de Beauvoir claims: "*She* is defined and differentiated with reference to *man* and not *he* with reference to *her*; she is the incidental, the inessential as opposed to the essential. He is the Subject, he is the Absolute – she is the Other" (De Beauvoir, 1949). Maintaining that the concept is not one meant to elucidate solely the socially-constructed man – woman relationship, de Beauvoir contends: 'Thus, it is that no group ever sets itself up as the one without at once setting up the Other over against itself. If three travellers chance to occupy the same compartment, that is enough to make vaguely hostile 'others' out of all the rest of the passengers on the train. In small-town eyes, all persons not belonging to the village are 'strangers' and suspect; to the native of a country, all who inhabit other countries are 'foreigners'; Jews are 'different' for the anti-Semite, Negroes are 'inferior' for American racists, aborigines are 'natives' for colonists, proletarians are the 'lower class' for the privileged' (De Beauvoir, 1949). As suggested by de Beauvoir, the concept of 'self-other' has also been widely relied upon by the non-homogeneous category labelled as postcolonial. Postcolonial theorists Mishra and Hodge (1991) claim: "Postcolonialism […] is not a homogenous category, either across all post-colonial societies or even within a single one. Rather, it refers to a typical configuration which is always in the process of change, never consistent with itself". However, the multitude of postcolonial activists and researches that have attempted to shed light on the colonial and postcolonial experience of various communities along those who have enriched and made use of the 'postcolonial' as a mode to also elucidate the experiences of emigrants, diasporas, as well as multi-cultural coexistence in our 'contemporary global village' of concrete economic and invented cultural stratification, have extensively relied upon this concept. As the Indian scholar Gayatri Ch. Spivak emphasises, "[w]e live in a postcolonial neo-colonised world" (Spivak, 1993). Additionally, the dichotomy has served not only to shed light on the relationship of the (former) coloniser with the (formerly) colonised but also to clarify the socio-cultural position and the identity issues faced by both sides, during colonisation and after. The Algerian pioneer of anti-colonial struggle and resistance, Franz Fanon made use of the 'self-other' dichotomy to express the dehumanising and existence-negating approach of the European coloniser towards the African colonised, '[t]he anti-Black world, the only world we know, hides this non-being to the extent that it ascribes a place and role to abject blackness' (Fanon, 2008). Similarly, 'the father of Orientalism' Edward Said, in his most famous work, shifted the concept to refer to a whole geography and religious belief of non-belonging communities. Said's 'other' is the oriental subject, just

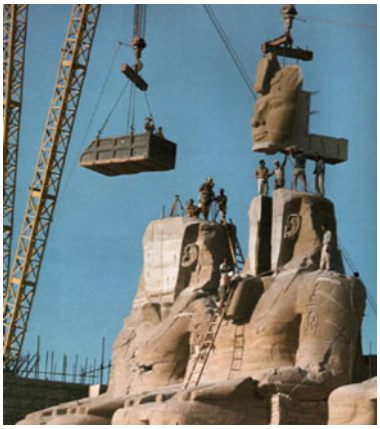
like the Orient that has been created and perpetuated through the Western discourse and in Western terms (Said, 1979). 'Ideas, cultures, and histories cannot seriously be understood or studied without their force, or more precisely their configurations of power, also being studied. To believe that orient was created, or, as I call it, 'orientalised' and to believe that such things happen simply as a necessity of the imagination is to be disingenuous […]. The orient was orientalised not only because it was discovered to be oriental in all those ways considered commonplace by an average 19th century European, but also because it could be that is submitted to being made oriental' (Said, 1979). As obvious, Said suggest that, the way De Beauvoir observes that the natural female is socially and politically turned into the subordinate 'woman', so the oriental is turned into the rest and inferior of the Western perception; it is the need of inventing and defining 'the self' as powerful as much as it is a way of holding this power that necessitates the conceptual invention of the Other. However, as postcolonial scholar Homi K. Bhabha suggests, the interaction of diverse cultures, even if in a power relationship and hierarchal perception, leads to the creation of hybrid identities: the individual identity of those existing within 'the third space', which is the realm where diverse cultures encounter but also inevitably mingle. Bhabha contends: 'For me, the importance of hybridity is not to be able to trace two original moments from which the third emerges, rather hybridity to me is the 'third space', which enables other positions to emerge' (Jonathan, 1990). At this point, it is crucial to emphasise that the global dimension of the postcolonial theory is not only due to the fact that this approach manages to shed light on the whole variety of colonial, postcolonial and neo-colonial experiences, but also to develop viable modes to contradict Othering and defy marginalisation, the pushing to the edges of existence of the diverse Other. Kenyan scholar and writer Ngugi Wa Thiong'o has baptised this process as 'moving the centre'. In his collection of essays with the same title, Ngugi maintains that marginalisation among nations and within one community is the result of placing one perceived culture or identity in the centre, as the placing of the West and its culture in the centre has led to the marginalisation of the so-called the rest (Ngugi Wa, 1993). To Ngugi, the worldwide contribution to the formation of knowledge from various intellectuals of different perspectives will also contribute to the 'moving of the centre' and the achievement of pluralism for cultures. In other words, if the perception of any diverse culture as 'other' contributed to the creation on a world with its centre in the West, by reinventing itself as a dominant power over its inferiorly invented 'Other', then the powerful response emphasising oneself would move the centre (Ngugi Wa, 1993).

5.2 Othering as the cause of construction projects' failure

In the construction industry the reason why construction projects fail has been widely discussed and studied. Many topics have been addressed and analysed in the field literature, such as an unscheduled project, selection of the wrong contractor, lowest bidder, inability to obtain construction materials on time, inflation, corruption, inadequate client-engineer-contractor relationship, project changes during the construction phase, and so on. All the reasons mentioned above stand, and similar others could be easily provided, yet all these reasons converge at one point, which may be considered as the conceptual placing of the self – the new project – in the centre, or, in other words, the unwillingness to 'move the centre'. All of these reasons rely on small interests bypassing the overall importance a certain construction project has, and most importantly ignoring

the 'big picture', that is, the everyday life interests of the beneficiaries and the impact on the surroundings. An effort is done to explain how the overseeing of the beneficiaries' interests for the sake of some less significant individual interest causes major problems. These major problems might also tend to have ever-lasting consequences and serious negative impacts on the lives of their beneficiaries, which, in the first place, they were supposed to improve. This controversial result that implies the shifting of the attention from the project to its beneficiaries – that is, the moving of the centre – will be achieved by analysing some projects well known worldwide and which belong to diverse disciplines of the construction industry.

Figure 3 Abu Simbel relocation (see online version for colours)



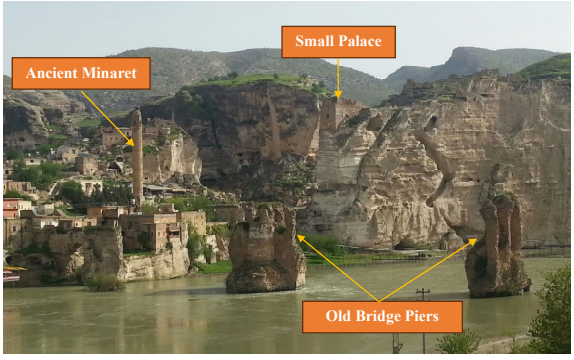
Source: Martínez (2018)

The construction of high Aswan Dam (Abu-Zeid and El-Shibini, 1997), the famous dam on the river Nile, resulted into the creation of the water reservoir which submerged the ancient remains of various ancient civilisations, such as the Nubian, Egyptian, and Roman civilisations. The Abu Simbel temple complex, which was built by Ramses II in the 13th century BCE and which has a significant position in the world heritage was also among the submerged historical and cultural remains. Egyptian authorities, with the blessing of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), were involved in safeguarding the monuments by transferring the temples to higher elevations (Hill, 2021) (Figure 3), action which is referred to as postcolonial diplomacy by Hill (2021). Due to the reservoir impounding, approximately 25,000 houses of the 33 affected villages were relocated. The number of archaeological sites in the Aswan Dam reservoir is as follows: surveyed (1,753 – 100%), excavated (476 – 27.1%) and conserved (100 – 5.7%) (Marchetti et al., 2019). None of the well-known project failure causes, like corruption, bad planning, improper construction techniques, and so on, were proved to be the case in the construction of this dam. Nonetheless, it is a fact that only 5.7% of archaeological sites in the area were conserved, which is a big failure on its own. Obviously, the dam was considered `the central` project of the location in question, while the surrounding objects were approached as its inferior `Others`. It goes without saying that such an approach had disastrous consequences for the archaeological site and the world cultural heritage.

The Ilisu dam is another significant example of this disregarding approach that places the construction project in the centre, ignoring the surroundings and the needs of the local

community. It is a € 1.8 billion hydroelectric scheme on the Tigris, a project of Turkey's State Water Agency (DSI) (Ronayne, 2006). Its construction resulted into the submerging of thousands of archaeological, cultural and historical sites, including most parts of the ancient town of Hasankeyf (Algaze, 1989), a 12,000 years settlement (Boyle, 2019) which has hosted a substantial number of civilisations, some of which are known as the first human settlings in Mesopotamia and which gather the Byzantine, Ottoman, Artukid, Eyyubid, Assyrian, Urartian and Arabic cultures (Figure 4). The impounding affected 184 villages with an estimated population of about 61,000 people (Morvaridi, 2004). Although this dam has brought significant economic benefits, it has had a dramatic impact in terms of population displacement, heritage loss, environmental damage, and conflictuality, as a result of the tensions that rose among local ethnic groups near the lake area. Considering all these issues and the loss of Hasankeyf, Ronayne baptised Ilisu dam as 'a monument of barbarism' (Ronayne, 2006). Extreme as it may seem, the term 'barbarian' denotes quite well the way a construction project is inconsiderate of its surroundings. By placing the expensive and well-built dam in the centre of attention, the historical heritage as well as the needs of the inhabitants of the area was disregarded. The objects of unspeakable value were rendered into submerged ruins, which also resulted into the marginalisation of entire communities.

Figure 4 Hasankeyf before impounding (see online version for colours)



Source: Topal and Kaya (2016)

Another example that implies the essentiality of 'moving the centre' from the construction project to the needs of the ones that are directly or indirectly affected by the project is the M25 or London Orbital Motorway. M25 is a 117 miles long major road encircling most of Greater London. The traffic on M25 is well known to be almost always heavy. The worst motorway traffic jam was recorded on 5 April 1985 and it stretched for 40 miles. Singer and guitarist Chris Rea (Rea, 1989), while stuck in traffic for over an hour, conceived the idea for a song and wrote the lyrics of 'Road to Hell' in his vehicle at the intersection of the M25. It is believed that one of the sources of error in the M25 traffic forecasts was the underestimation of longer distance rerouting effects (Mackie and Preston, 1998). Another reason of the over-occurring traffic jam could be the lack of cooperation, as there is no evidence of any joined planning between the central and local government in relation to this project. Rapidly increased land value in the vicinity of the motorway junctions made it impossible for the authorities to later enlarge and rebuild the motorway, insufficient for the constantly increasing traffic flow.

Besides the popular song, there are numerous articles and TV shows focusing on the heavy traffic of M25, but there is no single evidence that the actual situation is the result of corruption, improper implementation, use of low quality materials or any of these well-known causes of failure. The main reason why the road failed to transfer the load without major traffic jams is the neglect of the surroundings. In other words, the road and the conditions of the time when the highway was built, was the `central issue`, whereas the possible developments in the near future were apparently approached with an Othering attitude. Their marginalisation – the approach that these are inferior problems that could be overlooked – resulted into a major problem of complex and expensive solutions, into a 'road to hell', so to say.

The outcome of arbitrary actions that disregard the needs of the community and do not genuinely involve in their studies for a certain construction project the impact it would have on the existing surroundings is more painful in the case of authoritarian and dictatorial regimes. An example of communist Albania, in 1978, illustrates this perfectly. The whole city of Kukes was relocated for the construction of the Fierza hydropower plant. The ones in power did not feel the need to organise a single public hearing. Similarly, no attention was paid to the conservation of the cultural heritage. Also in this case, the main reasoning of failure is the Othering and marginalising attitude towards the community and its cultural heritage.

Albania, in its post-communist state, is also a great example of the prevailing attitude in developing countries. As these countries have not achieved a significant degree of industrialisation and economic growth, the situation remains quite problematic. Figure 5 presents some road/streets in Albania. The examples that provide an accurate picture of the situation of many existing streets point out both the deplorable situation of the country's transport system and the approach when these projects were designed and implemented. The missing traffic line in the first photo is the result of a previously existing structure; however, it should be noted that the structure itself carries no heritage value that would hinder its expropriation. The second photo is that of an electrical pole that happens to be in the middle of the road. It is not clear if it was the road project that did take into consideration its previous existence and the need of the community for electricity, or if it was the company responsible for the operation, maintenance and distribution of electricity (OSHEE) in the country that did not consider the need of the community to move. Clearly, the responsible ones for the two projects did not collaborate, respectively visualising other projects similarly vital for the community with an Othering attitude and placing their own project in the centre. The same goes for the third photo, in which a sidewalk with a width of only few centimetres is depicted. The sidewalk, on which a mother with a stroller would not be able to pass, is also the location where lighting poles have been installed. Also this picture strengthens the dominant disregarding approach towards the needs of the community, the surroundings and other similarly essential projects for their life.

Figure 5 Some road and street views in Albania (see online version for colours)

On a different page, Citicorp Center building is a 59-story tower, famous for its unique urban form. The building is supported by four, nine-story columns located on the centre points of the lot lines, rather than the corners that define the block that it occupies. Due to its unique structural form, the building found in Manhattan NY is well-known in engineering, architectural as well as in scientific discussions (Morgenstern, 1997). The construction of Citicorp Centre reflects the deal that the owners had to strike in order to purchase the air rights of the church, which still occupies one of the corners of the site, (Akın, 2022) as shown in Figure 6. Mian (2008) in the paper entitled 'Prophets-for-profits: redevelopment and the altering urban religious landscape', describes that it was because of this deal that also the perspective of the church found in the construction site, the current situation – the situation after the construction of the tower – is not approached negatively, on the contrary, it is viewed as 'win-win' situation.

Figure 6 St. Peter's Church and Citicorp Centre (see online version for colours)

Source: Clair (2019)

If the church had carried historical value, as in the occasion of the Abu Simbel temple or Hasankeyf, the construction Citicorp Centre might not have been regarded as a 'win-win' situation. Nevertheless, the 'win-win' situation, the construction of an entity that respects and contributes for the development of its surrounding is tightly related with the fact that the Citicorp Centre was built in a developed country. In postcolonial and developing countries, where check and balance principles may not function properly – as the submerging of the Abu Simbel exemplifies – the situation might be different. In developing Albania, the disregarding approach of construction projects' agents towards the surroundings and the community is not apparent solely in the case of modern contemporary objects; it is also to be found in the attitude towards exceptionally valuable historical and cultural heritage.

Two photos of Durres, a city of remarkable historical significance are shown in Figure 7. The photo on the left shows a very small section of the wall, which belongs to the 'golden gate' the first gate of Via Egnatia, which linked Dyrrachium – ancient Durres – to Constantinople and other centres of the Byzantine Empire. Via Egnatia was the first Roman highway to be built east of the Adriatic, (Lolos, 2007). The photo on the right shows an entire ancient villa complex; the majority of its remains are under the foundations of the new building, a similar fate with that of an enormous number of Roman baths (Shkodra, 2021). The voices of those who opposed the building of the new modern structures on the ancient structures that were part of the country's cultural heritage were not few. Nonetheless, all the attempts for their preservation failed, and, unfortunately, they exist no longer. The developers of the new buildings maintained that

the new object also served the old ones, an attitude which was also accepted as viable by both the local and central government. Ironically, a few of these state representatives went as far as maintaining that the preservation of some small pieces of the buried heritage as a great success. This attitude is reminiscent of Franz Fanon 'self-other' dichotomy (Fanon, 2008). The new construction project obtains the role of a colonising entity towards its surroundings and even negates the right to existence of what used to be found rightfully there. This is not only viable for the ancient remains of Dyrrachium buried under concrete high buildings but also for the previously mentioned structures. Indeed, similar cases are to be found all over the world and in every subfield of the construction industry, from residential buildings to infrastructure projects, large dams, railways and so on.

Figure 7 (Ex) archeological ruins in the city of Durres (see online version for colours)

6 Discussion

Through the analysis of various study cases, it was established that a reason why construction projects fail is the self-centred attitude of a project's executives. Each of the cases separately emphasised a different way of positioning the structure at hand in the centre, which had a detrimental impact on the surroundings, led to serious problems, including marginalisation, for the local community, marked the loss of significant objects and sites of cultural heritage or all of them. Although the phenomenon resulted to be more frequent in postcolonial and developing countries, it was not absent in developed countries, as London's M25 exemplifies. Each of the study cases sustained the idea that the successful implementation of a project did not necessarily result into an overall success, a phenomenon parallel to colonisation that, at first, fulfilled the needs of the coloniser but, ultimately, had detrimental effects for all the involved parties and makes colonialism morally indefensible. The same is viable for the defending of the economic profit acquired by Aswan, Ilisu and Fierza dams, when the impact they separately had on the world cultural heritage and the local people are taken into account.

It should be noted that the findings of this article do not point to lack of experience, ineffective interaction among clients, consultants and/or contractors and corruption, as previous research found to be the causes of failure in construction projects. Agreeing that the above mentioned are issues that lead to failure, the article proposes that the

self-centred approach of construction executives should also be considered as one. Nonetheless, the authors are aware that the absence of previous research based on this perspective is an obstacle to the instantaneous acknowledgement of this fact, as it was a challenge for the study itself.

7 Conclusions

The intention of this work is to put forward the hypothesis that an important reason leading to construction projects' total or partial failure may be referred to as a disregarding approach of the people in charge of the new construction project towards their surroundings and the community that has previously existed and lived its life in the area, which is considered by these agents as merely a construction site. It was also maintained that the relationship of several projects with their surroundings is reminiscent to that of the former coloniser with the formerly colonised, that is, a relationship built on the principle of dominating and Othering.

Most new construction projects emphasise their own trivial interests, overseeing the overall importance the project might have, and, most importantly, ignoring the big picture, which is the everyday life and interest of the local community. In other words, urban planners, architects and civil engineers alike, and, in several cases, also decision makers, approach the structure in hand as 'the centre of the world', marginalising the surroundings and local people. This article attempted to demonstrate that this approach is not sporadic; on the contrary, it is encountered in all sorts of structures built at different decades in various countries of different economic growths all over the world. Emphasising that significant structures of world's historical and cultural heritage were subject to such treatment as well, it was seen that the phenomenon was more frequent in developing countries, maintaining that 'the moving of the centre', that is, an attitude that takes in consideration the existing surroundings as well as the needs and expectations of communities was essential and achieved through collaboration and respective understanding, which resulted into 'win-win' situations for all the involved parties.

With these in mind, the authors recommend the inclusion of construction project executives' self-centred approach to be more profoundly researched as a potential cause of project failure for projects that should be added to the existing list of causes along corruption, lack of experience and so on. For these reasons, the authors are willing to enrich their study with additional similar cases of project failures because of the major agents' attitude, also focusing on the impact these failures have on the collective memory of the local communities and wider.

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