

For Immediate Release

*Community Engagement  
Key to Just and Sustainable  
Planning – Writes Academic,  
Consultant and Former  
Dublin City Councillor*

Recent scandals in An Bord Pleanála, a ‘housing crisis’, and Ireland’s ambitious target to achieve net-zero by 2050, have placed the country’s planning processes in the spotlight. While what constitutes good planning is fiercely debated, with different sides blaming everything from excessive regulation to lack of investment for impeding progress, all agree that robust consultation and stakeholder engagement are essential to ensure sustainable infrastructure development that meets community-wide approval.

In *Infrastructure Projects and Local Communities*, Dr Garry Keegan presents a vision of a community-based, socially conscientious model of public participation, particularly one with adequate and inclusive conflict resolution mechanisms. Armed with qualifications from the London School of Economics, University College Dublin and the National University of Ireland, Galway, and experience as a councillor in Dublin City Council and numerous corporate boards, including ESB, Keegan’s argument is public consultation is a fundamental part of participative democracy, and without it no robust planning system can operate. The study analyses the impact of technological change on planning

consultation, including how information on public and private infrastructure projects is easily accessible to an increasingly diverse body of stakeholders. The changing nature of community structures, and how objections to infrastructure projects can come from many sources, is also considered in-depth.

Not content with robust analysis, Keegan also offers constructive solutions and actions aimed at making planning more robust and participatory. His vision is to refine conflict resolution mechanisms, leading to better and fairer planning decisions. Keegan builds on the existing research to nuance our understanding of communities, the role of social justice, community benefit schemes, and mediation practices, in order to provide readers with a comprehensive understanding of the contemporary infrastructure planning landscape.

This book is a must-read for project sponsors, governmental officials and community activists, as well as anyone with an interest in how a fundamental aspect of participatory democracy is changing and must change to keep pace with changes in wider society.

The book is available for free on the IPC website (Infrastructure Projects Consulting).

# Infrastructure Projects & Local Communities

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