

Engaging Local Communities on Large-Scale Construction Project

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Abstract : It is increasingly important that project managers develop greater capabilities to better manage the social, cultural, political, environmental and economic impacts on proposed construction projects. These challenges are best resolved in consultation with communities rather than in conflict with them. This is particularly important on controversial projects which are projects that have obtained government sanctioned 'development approval' but not 'community approval'. While a rich body of research and intellectual frameworks exist in the fields of urban geography and planning to understand and manage community concerns during the pre-development approval stages of new projects, current theoretical frameworks guiding community engagement in project management are inadequate. A new and innovative research agenda is needed to guide thinking about the role of local communities in the construction process and is an important research gap that needs to be filled. Within this context, this research aims to assess the effectiveness of strategies adopted by project teams to engage with local communities so as to capture lessons learnt to apply to future projects. This paper reports a research methodology which uses Arnstein's model of participation to better understand how power differentials between the project team and local communities can influence the adoption of community engagement strategies. A case study approach is utilizing interviews and documentary analysis of a large-scale controversial construction project in Queensland, Australia is presented. The findings will result in a number of recommendations to guide community engagement practices on future projects.

Keywords : community engagement, construction, case study, project management

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