Editorial

The experts are dead: long live the experts

On June 24 this year, Dominic Medway wrote on his Twitter feed: "@PlaceManagement Places are ultimately made, unmade, defined and redefined by people before institutions. We've seen that today". This was of course referring to the result of the so-called "Brexit" referendum on whether the United Kingdom should leave the European Union (EU). The pollsters and the City of London seemed reasonably confident that the outcome of the vote, on 23 June 2016, would be to "remain", but it seemed both these institutional bodies hugely underestimated the power of the voters to exercise their democratic right to chart an alternative future.

The IPM, the professional body with which this journal is affiliated, put out a strong statement in the run up to the referendum vote supporting the Remain Campaign. Various cogent arguments were put forward as to why this was preferable, including the amount of EU development funding that has benefitted UK town and city centres (Henley, 2016); the benefits for places of working together in a cross-European sense (i.e. a Europe that includes the UK) and sharing best place management practices (although the IPM now hopes and believes this can still continue post-Brexit); and avoiding the historically evident economic and political dangers of national protectionism. Now the referendum result is in, it is possible that in our efforts spent pontificating about what a "leave" result would mean for the future of place management and development, and ultimately for places, we missed something important. Perhaps we should have considered more carefully how politics might have influenced past place management practices, which, in turn, could have shaped the result of the referendum itself.

There are, it would appear, some complex and seemingly paradoxical issues to unpick in the post-referendum analysis for place management practitioners and academicians. For example, areas of North East England and South Wales, where there has been much effort to redevelop towns and settlements, often with EU funding (following mass deindustrialisation, concomitant job losses and the erosion of traditional working class communities), voted in favour of leaving the EU. One analysis might be that the communities in such places felt that their loss of jobs was a result of immigration, and leaving the EU would solve this – only time will tell if this is the case. Equally, it might be the case that these communities were unaware of any benefits EU money and support had brought to their particular place – perhaps an instance of poor communication and promotion around the potentially positive impact of place management and development in practice?

A problem in the above analysis is that it is very easy to lapse into a narrative in which the so-called "experts" (academics, politicians, journalists) identify the referendum result as down to being down to group of "people" (typically portrayed as an undereducated precariat) who did not understand or comprehend what the experts had been trying to do for them to make their place better. At best, this could be deemed as a patronising attitude towards certain place residents (notably those who voted leave), portraying them as ignorant. At worst, it suggests something more sinister – an attempt to shift responsibility for the outcome of the referendum onto a marginalised group of people, thereby deflecting attention from the experts themselves.

An even more challenging and contentious interpretation from the perspective of this journal's readership might be that some of the so-called experts in place management and development have got it so wrong in terms of the focus of their energies and investment decisions over the past 20 years, that they are partly responsible for the wave of discontent that caused many to vote to leave the EU. Although, as indicated above, the decisions of place managers are influenced by wider, and sometimes unavoidable, political pressures and agendas. Nevertheless, this kind of critique is perhaps what prompted prominent leave campaigner, the MP Michael Gove, to suggest in the run-up to the referendum that, "people in this country have had enough of experts" (Menon and Portes, 2016). Put otherwise, any past spending of EU monies on apparently "worthy" infrastructure projects in places in need of investment and regeneration might seem understandably meaningless to those living in such areas who are long-term unemployed. It might be the case that they would have appreciated a job rather than a new and EU-funded university campus, museum, state-of the-art transport hub or road development scheme (Owens, 2016). Indeed, from the perspective of such individuals, it would be entirely understandable if voting to leave the EU was seen as a way of voicing discontent about the top-down manner in which their particular place has previously been managed. In this sense, a vote with pan-European consequences (and therefore relevant to place and places in a very wide sense) may have been most strongly influenced by the intricacies of localised place politics and investment decision-making.

What does all of this suggest? From the perspective of place management and development, we perhaps need to start to think more carefully and inclusively about how investment in places is made in the future, especially places that feel left out or appear to be struggling in an increasingly globalised and internet-enabled era. This is not just a lesson for Brexit Britain; it is arguably a lesson for everywhere. It is also perhaps time for the "experts" (which probably includes all of those reading this editorial) to realise that that they may not have all the right answers about a given place; in fact, they may not always know what questions to even ask to arrive at such answers. This is not a declaration that we do not need experts in place but a suggestion that we need to consider more carefully how those experts operate in a post-Brexit climate. It is perhaps time, more than ever before, for place experts to talk *with* rather that *at* the people who live in places and garner their opinions. Our expert role in such a situation involves facilitation and arriving at place solutions through a process of "knowledge partnering" (Eversole, 2015). This could take the form of providing better advice, support, encouragement and guidance for those stakeholders keen to improve the lot of *their* place. It signals that the most valuable resources in the place manager's armoury may be empathy and emotional intelligence, something that was undoubtedly missing in much of the referendum campaigning around Brexit.

As for this current issue of *JPMD*, it includes, as always, the writings of a host of place management and development experts, whose views this journal will always recognise as valuable. We start with a comment piece from Fraser Bell, based on work from his recently completed PhD at Newcastle University under the supervision of Stuart Dawley and Andy Pike. This looks beyond place branding and considers the importance of place reputation, and how the reputations of geographical entities are shaped and changed over time. Fraser's work is indicative of a wide variety of doctoral enquiry being carried out globally into the subject of place management and development, and we encourage more of these comment pieces from recently completed doctoral students.

Moving to the full academic contributions within this issue, we start with the paper entitled "Urban icons and city branding development", by Fernando Castillo-Villar. This focuses on the role of iconic architecture and landmarks in cities. The article begins by criticising many contemporary urban icons as their globalised and standardised appearance has a lack of meaning for local people. By interviewing 30 local residents of Monterrey (Mexico), the author develops a new approach to the creation of future urban icons, as the research confirmed that existing contemporary urban icons were not considered by respondents to represent their city. In future, to connect more favourably with residents, the author suggests that new urban icons should be a symbol of public space, link with the local identity and generate positive experiences.

We then move to a paper by Chung-Shing Chan, Mike Peters and Lawal Marafa, titled "An assessment of place brand potential: familiarity, favourability, and uniqueness". In this paper, value creation within places is explored through a study of place brand potential. A review of the three key periodicals in the field, including this journal, was undertaken. The study concludes that familiarity, favourability and uniqueness are the three dimensions that represent place brand potential.

Chung-Shing Chan and Lawal Marafa present another strand of their research in "The green branding of Hong Kong: visitors' and residents' perceptions". The importance of green space to cities is well known to those that manage and develop places. The authors identify a lack of integration of green space into Hong Kong's branding process, suggesting the city's "green resources could be more effectively utilized to revamp the city's image, attractiveness, and competitiveness". The authors go on to adapt an existing, popular framework for developing city brands, Anholt's (2006) City Brand Hexagon, to measure the green credentials of Hong Kong with both locals and visitors, finding a perception gap between the two groups. Visitors are less knowledgeable about Hong Kong's green resources – probably because they are often informed from tourist sources that tend to ignore these assets. By contrast, residents have a much more sophisticated understanding of, and relationship with, green space. Nevertheless, as the management of green space is undertaken independently of the city branding and promotion activity, there may well be a misalignment not only between different government authorities but also between the city authorities and the residents. This should be rectified, and the authors draw from the work of Parkerson and Saunders (2005) to remind us that "[s]uccessful city branding should be based on a city's true strengths and avoid erroneously building on its weaknesses".

The next paper is "Happiness and the city: an empirical study of the interaction between subjective well-being and city satisfaction" by Dmitriy Potapov, Irina Shafranskaya and Anastasiya Bozhya-Volya. With more and more people living in cities, urban services and amenities play an important role in peoples' well-being. This paper explores relationships between aspects of urban life, individual characteristics, satisfaction with the city, satisfaction with life and happiness. Using a sample of 1,636 residents of Perm, Russia and structural equation modelling, the study reports various findings, the most important being that improvements in some urban services (e.g. safety, culture, education and healthcare) are likely to make residents happier and more satisfied with the city. Conversely, the data suggest, investment in social security and the environment will not result in significantly higher levels of city satisfaction. In light of the comments, we have made in the earlier part of this editorial, this paper may offer

politicians and place managers some useful direction as to where investment should be made if the aim is more satisfied and happier people.

Our final paper, by Viriya Taecharungroj, is "City ambassadorship and citizenship behaviours: modelling resident behaviours that help cities grow". This study focuses on residents as an aspect of city marketing practice. The paper encourages us to think of residents not as "merely passive beneficiaries of the city" but also as "the city's active partners". Building on work published in this journal by Braun *et al.* (2013), the study goes on to explore two important roles for the inhabitants of cities: residents as ambassadors and residents as citizens. Surveying 858 residents in Bangkok, the study provides more empirical support for the previous finding that resident satisfaction positively affects ambassadorship behaviours. However, the study also finds that resident satisfaction positively affects citizenship behaviours. From a place management perspective, city citizenship behaviours are even more important than ambassador behaviours (which may be more aligned to people outside the city). As the author notes, citizenship behaviours "result when residents contribute to the city by helping other people and participating in events that can improve the city" such as "[v]oting in an election, participating in focus groups or town hall events for the local government, volunteering in social projects, and helping fellow residents during natural disasters". Referring back to our earlier editorial reflections upon Brexit, we feel there is a lot to learn from Viriya's paper. For example, voter turnout in the UK for local elections is exceptionally low, while at the same time, many people feel dissatisfied with their place and believe that their community is being left behind. Understanding and investing in the drivers of resident satisfaction can result in more engaged citizens, who, in turn, invest time and effort into activities that can improve not only their own satisfaction but also that of those around them. This is surely a virtuous circle of effective place management?

Our "Place in Practice" article is "Shopping districts and centres, markets, neighbourhoods, public squares, and urban gardens: Reflecting upon place management practice in Berlin" by Ares Kalandides, Steve Millington, Cathy Parker and Simon Quin. This contribution reports reflections from the first Institute of Place Management study trip, which took place in Berlin in June 2016. Eight different examples of place management or marketing were visited during the trip, generating some valuable lessons learnt. These lessons are reported in more detail in the paper, but, in brief, consist of the passion and place knowledge inherent in many place managers, the importance of understanding the place management environment, the value of place-based learning and development and place management as an incremental practice.

We end this issue with a conference report by Gary Warnaby entitled "Place and marketing in a dynamic world". Gary attended the 1st Consumer Research Summit at Bangor Business School (London Centre), which this year explored "the linkages between place, identity, marketing and consumption". A variety of papers representing many of the challenges involved in marketing and managing places were delivered and are subsequently reviewed in this conference report. This link between place marketing and consumption is an important one, and it is therefore hoped that further events of this kind could become a regular fixture in the place management and marketing conference calendar.

Dominic Medway and Cathy Parker
*Institute of Place Management, Manchester Metropolitan University,
Manchester, UK*

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