

Too much of a good thing?

Our original title for this issue was 'Interpretation and communities', later changed to 'Power to the people' in light of the content of the articles we received. If you work for an agency or NGO, doesn't our new title fill you with terror? Do you see months of difficult community consultations stopping you from getting on with your work? If you are part of a community, don't you find the idea of initiating interpretive projects daunting, bureaucratic or just downright intrusive?

Reading through this issue I've been struck by one thing. Despite the broad definition of community – villages, gay communities, urban groups - and the range of professionals with which they worked, they are all success stories. Communities of all shapes and sizes working closely with professionals to develop inspiring and original projects.

There are valuable lessons to be learnt from each, but I was, perhaps perversely, rather disappointed that there weren't more problems to be discussed, more difficulties to be overcome. Ongoing news in the media about the marine parks consultation process highlights the conflicting interests and views that are found in most communities, even the smallest. Sometimes working our way through issues like this teaches us as much about achieving our goals as the success stories.

However, the articles in this issue do show that great things can be achieved if people have the confidence and vision to look beyond the traditional view of agencies coming in and working above the heads of 'ordinary people'. People power is set to be the Next Big Thing in interpretation, so take note!

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'Democracy is the theory that the common people know what they want and deserve to get it good and hard'

H L Mencken