

INTRODUCTION

I recently visited Venice. It is a city I like to return to and my visit was during the annual carnival, when the Veneto region celebrates its past.

There is something special about visiting a place of such historic importance and with so many remarkable sights. In the medieval past, Venice was a centre of the known world. Today, Venetians make their living from tourism.

Within a few years in the 18th century, the city became the smarter, more upscale and infinitely more beautiful forerunner of Las Vegas. It has kept this brand image to the present day.

On a small street, close to the Piazza St Marco, one can find Harry's Bar. It is an iconic place in its own right, opened by bartender Giuseppe Cipriani in 1931 and very quickly frequented by famous people. It was a favourite haunt of Ernest Hemingway and it is the birthplace of the Bellini cocktail. Harry's Bar is today the anchor to a global brand of restaurants positioned around the Cipriani name.

Venice as a global tourist brand and Harry's Bar as the origin of a global restaurant franchise are classic examples of successful place management.

However, Europe is full of places like Harry's Bar in cities with a historic past, where the opportunities of the place have not been utilised as they could. To balance and develop all the assets of a place and make it attractive in the global marketplace is a necessity for growth and wealth creation. The certain alternative is stagnation.

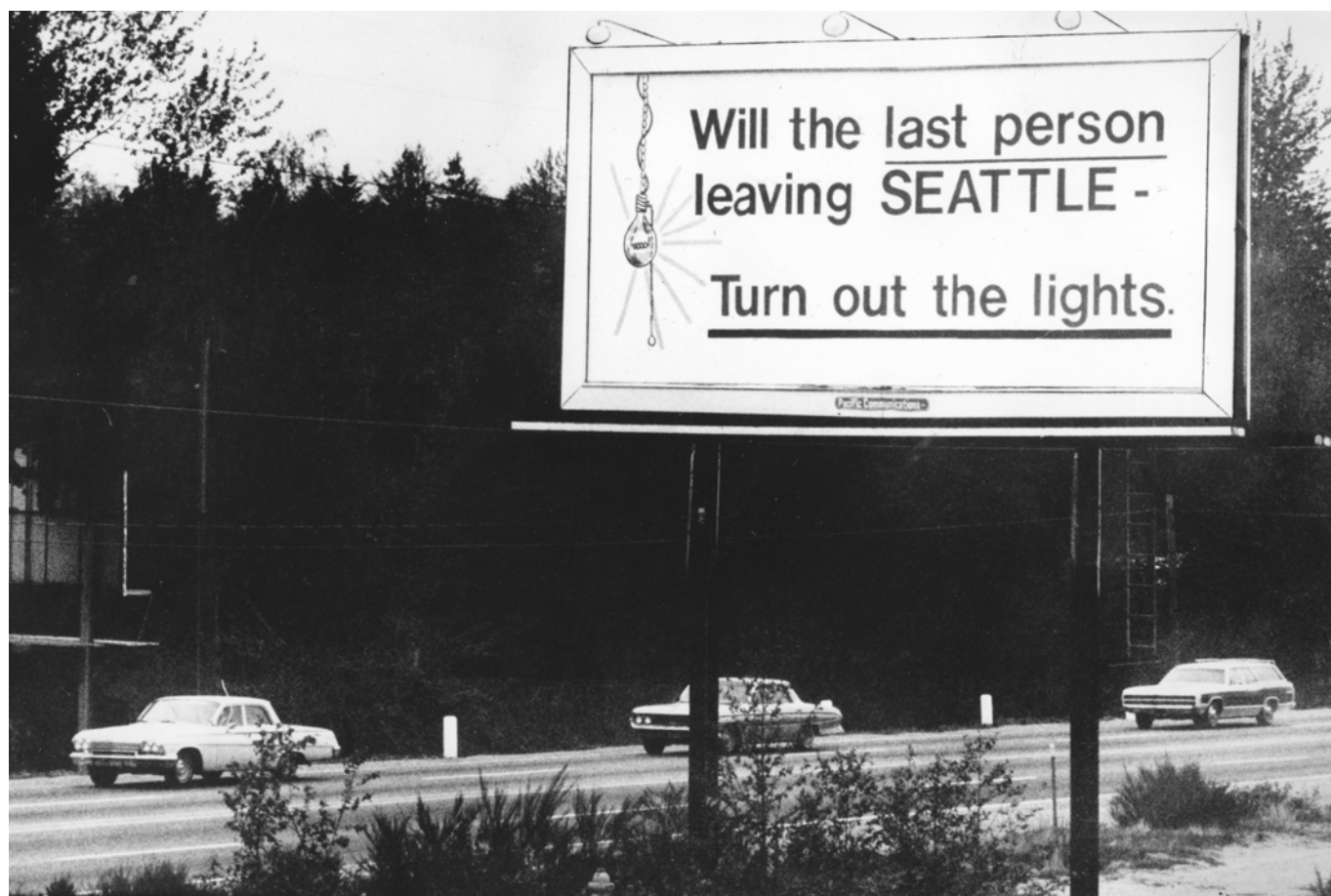
We are tied to places throughout our lives, although in recent times our perception of place has changed drastically. Before 1900, most people did not venture far beyond their birthplace during their lifetime. They heard about other places through word-of-mouth or writings but seldom experienced them in person.

Today, young people – Generation Y – consider themselves world citizens, travelling, living, working and creating families across borders and settling in the place they find most attractive. The younger generation of my own close family is scattered between London, Dubai and smaller rural places in Europe.

With increased mobility, the importance and expectations of the local region and place have increased immensely in the competitive and global marketplace.

Turnaround is possible for places in decline. One of my favourite examples is a city where I lived briefly many years ago, Seattle in Washington State. It is in the United States and not in Europe but is nevertheless a good example.

In 1971 the city was in decline. Employment at Boeing, the region's largest employer, had fallen from a peak of 100,800 employees in 1967 to a low of 38,690. In a sign of the times a billboard posted by the highway near Sea-Tac International Airport on April 16, 1971 read: "*Will the Last Person Leaving SEATTLE - Turn Out the Lights*".



The turnaround came with new business models enabled by disruptive technologies and successful cultivation of a high-tech start-up culture, including software, medical devices and internet companies. Several start-ups – for example Starbucks and Amazon – grew to be global brands and in recent years Seattle has been one of the fastest growing cities in the United States.

Will the last person leaving Seattle – Turn out the lights. Boeing layoff sign on a billboard. This billboard was displayed in the early 1970s during a recession that saw Boeing lay off about 70,000 workers.

Mandatory credit to Greg Gilbert / The Seattle Times.



Place Excellence is what can be achieved when the forces of place management, place development and place branding are working together in coordination toward the same, jointly accepted goals.

What forces can manage and inspire such a change? Is it luck, competent place management or a combination of both? Some answers to these questions can be found in this book.

This is a book about the importance of places and how talented place managers can make a difference. It is an important book, as the perception and importance of place is changing through the strong macro trends it describes. Its ambition is to deduce theory from a wealth of experience of place development, and from that theory to provide practical advice and principles for place managers to follow.

The writing of this book is a project I have encouraged and discussed with Christer Asplund for several years. I was fascinated by his and Philip Kotler's previous book *Marketing Places Europe*. I first met Christer in 2001 when he was about to leave his position as Managing Director of The City of Stockholm Economic Development Agency.

During the past ten years, I have got to know Christer's qualities as a consultant, following how he and his team excel at helping regions and cities build more attractive investment infrastructures at the local and regional level, through innovative cluster-building and creation of place-marketing strategies. He has always underlined the necessity to go beyond the branding jargon and focus on place development in a broader place-management context.

During the past 35 years Christer Asplund has developed place branding plans for large and small cities throughout Europe, as well as for cities in the Far East.

I got to know Jacob Ikkala more recently, at the start of the book project. I have come to admire him for his sharp intellect and ability to help synthesise the lessons of practical experience into theory and conclusions.

It is with great satisfaction that I have followed this project and now see it come to a successful conclusion. The book is easy to read, yet full of experience and knowledge which is synthesised into theory and blended with practical advice. It should be a good read for both experienced practitioners and students. We hope it will help to further the theoretical understanding of the field of place management.

In Chapter 1 the authors define who place managers are. It is important to note that the roles of place managers are not restricted to the town hall. Broad categories of private stakeholders act as place managers, perhaps without looking upon themselves as such.

The authors guide us through the macro influences that drive the development of places and regions in Europe in Chapters 2 and 3. It is an exciting journey in history, through a changing European place management climate.

Chapter 4 takes a fresh view on current theories and gives the reader a deeper understanding of the complex world of place managers.

Place management styles are examined in Chapter 5, where the "Ability Matrix" identifies winning and losing management strategies, all illustrated with real-life cases.

In Chapter 6 the reader is confronted with the short-term consequences of “sloganeering” and how common it still is to fall into this trap. In contrast, place development efforts as the natural basis for place branding are described in a convincing way.

Chapter 7, “How to get it right – The 14 Principles”, summarises the wisdom of the book in a set of practical principles, providing a checklist that place managers need to consider when redesigning their place strategy.

The book is much needed in today’s Europe. By providing advice, principles and tools – all based on real-life experiences – the authors will help place managers in their challenging tasks.

Jörgen Eriksson

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