Editorial

Simon D. Smith BEng, PhD, CEng, FICE

Editor in Chief, Editorial Advisory Panel; Reader, School of Engineering,
University of Edinburgh, Edinburgh, UK

Welcome to the first issue of *Management, Procurement and Law* for 2022. It has become tradition in this journal that I, as Editor in Chief, prepare the first editorial of the year, and looking back at the article I wrote 12 months ago I see I spent a little time talking about the role of editors in journals. I can see that I wrote that ‘I do not view [my] role as the traditional ‘Editor-in-chief’ seen in many other journals’ (Smith, 2021: p. 1). I perhaps spoke too soon – we saw some slight organisational changes in this and other Institution of Civil Engineers (ICE) journals in 2021, accompanying our transition to a new article and peer-review management system (ReView). While the personnel are unchanged their titles are – ‘Panel Members’ are now ‘Associate Editors’ and my title has changed from ‘Honorary Editor and Panel Chair’ to ‘Editor in Chief’. I believe this better reflects the way in which we operate in this journal, with the panel members now having a title that reflects their input. In this journal the Associate Editors look after the oversight of papers from submission to acceptance, including the necessary peer-review including the identification and invitation of reviewers – much as Associate Editors do in other journals, and Editorial Panel Members do not. As I have mentioned in previous editorials, we have a very diverse group of 23 Associate Editors who are based in nine different countries. This international mix is reflected in our papers. In 2021 we had authors from ten separate countries (for 23 articles in total) and this first issue of 2022 I am pleased to note our three papers originate in three different countries.

Before I introduce those papers to you, I wish to stick with the diversity theme. In October 2021, ICE Publishing held its biennial Editor Convention (online regrettably) which covered a number of themes across all of the ICE journals. One of these was diversity, along with equality and inclusion. The convention reached the resolution that all journals would attempt to achieve a minimum of 20% representation from each group of individuals that (a) describe themselves as female, and (b) describe themselves as non-‘White British’. For our panel of currently 23 members that means a minimum of between four and five of each. I am pleased to report that we comfortably meet the non-White British target and are very close to the expected number of female panel members. Diversity in the range of topics has always been a feature of articles in *Management, Procurement and Law*, and this needs to be reflected in the internationality, gender, ethnicity, expertise and professional background of the panel members who consider these articles.

One of the other themes of the Editor Convention was sustainability in publishing, and here two resolutions were reached. The first is that many journals, including *Management, Procurement and Law*, will continue online-only publication. (Print versions will remain for those with accessibility requirements). I know this does not suit everyone and there are arguments over whether there are true sustainability gains through increased device energy use, but in terms of protecting the natural paper resource, and more importantly the significant reduction of plastic wrapping, this is a very positive move. Secondly is the resolution that online-only editorial panel meetings will continue. I agree with this resolution but its enactment I have mixed feelings about. I am comfortable in continuing all our panel meetings online – which has been the case since the start of the pandemic – mostly as this allows attendance from our international membership, as well as the reduction in carbon dioxide emissions through reduced travel. But there are advantages, as well as rare pleasure, in meeting people in person. This is a debate most of us have faced over the last two years of this pandemic.

So, to this issue. Here we have three articles – two that are ‘management’ papers and one which is ‘procurement’. They are quite closely connected in theme – all consider building rather than civil engineering construction, and all look at transformational change in the delivery of projects. Our first, by Agapiou (2022), considers the procurement of UK off-site housebuilding. It is refreshing to see considerations of construction at all scales, not just in major infrastructure construction, and in this article, Agapiou presents an analysis of a survey of those involved in housing development to determine those factors which affect the procurement of off-site housebuilding. He concludes that while there are a range of procurement methods within construction supply chains, none are ‘adapted sufficiently for an off-site housebuilding environment’ (Agapiou, 2022: p. 13). His analysis shows that price competition, speed of construction and project completion within the established budget are the major factors in the selection of appropriate procurement approaches. Agapiou also acknowledges that geographic location may be a factor but was unable to be tested in this analysis, all data coming from one UK region. Further work could confirm or otherwise ‘whether geographical location has an impact on practitioners’ perceptions of the key factors affecting the choice of procurement route for the off-site housebuilding sector’ (Agapiou,

2022: p. 13). The contribution here is to those seeking improvements by way of off-site manufacturing (OSM) in quality and efficiency of buildings, increased productivity in construction and reduction in resource demands compared with traditional construction.

Off-site manufacturing and construction are also the consideration in our second article, where Wong *et al.* (2022) focus on more general construction, this time with a research focus in Australia. They wished to explore the uptake of off-site construction and how this can be affected by organisational readiness – essentially, are contractors ready for and capable of such change? What is interesting about this study is the inclusion of the concept of counter knowledge and whether it is an intrinsic obstacle for organisational change. We learn that counter knowledge is knowledge which is unsupported with fact and truth, instead supported through illegitimate perspectives. In this context it boils down to whether gossip, rumour, false truths – malicious or otherwise – and so on have an impact on change, and whether they have a role in the slow uptake of off-site construction in Australia. Their conclusions are interesting – there are many factors which positively affect contractors' ability to institutionalise practice change, but these are moderated through the presence of counter knowledge. This is an interesting and original paper, the contribution again being to those who seek improvements through the adoption of off-site construction and manufacture.

Our final paper – also management – is one which turns away from OSM but does turn back to housebuilding. Here, Thajudeen *et al.* (2022) consider industrialised housebuilding (or IHB) within the Swedish timber-framed house building industry. Starting with the recognition that IHB has been identified as a way to improve overall productivity, the paper looks at organisational shifts from

traditional to industrialised approaches to housebuilding. In this way there are similarities with both the other papers in this issue in attempting to enact improvements to the delivery of construction. The specific focus of Thajudeen *et al.*'s paper is a consideration of the critical success factors and challenges to implementing IHB. They conclude that challenges remain, such as unpredicted legal regulations, poor communication and information exchange that, it has to be acknowledged, are not uncommon to other areas of construction delivery.

Thank you, reader, for your continued interest and support of this journal. As ever, the journal welcomes feedback and discussions on their content. I would also like to encourage readers who feel they can contribute to the journal – either through article submission or joining the editorial panel – to get in touch. Until then I wish you all the best for the successful and ultimately safe 2022 we all desire.

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