

FIG 2008, Stockholm (WW):
Commission 8 Chairman's overview Report
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Integrating Generations was the central theme of the working week and included a parallel joint FIG/UN-HABITAT seminar entitled "Improving Slum Conditions through Innovative Financing".

The key speakers in the opening plenary highlighted two key central themes. In her opening keynote address Dr. Anna Tibaijuka, UN Under Secretary General and Executive Director of UN-HABITAT reminded the audience that the world is becoming more urban. She pointed out that in one generation there will be 2 billion dwellers in slums (2030). Fitting neatly with the WW theme, integrating generations, thus highlighting that there is not such a great divide between the generation now and in the immediate future, since the challenge for the future is a reality right now.

Other key note speakers reflected that land governance problems are clearly located at the intersection of the centuries greatest development challenges, these are Urbanisation and Climate change, each cannot now be considered in isolation since each inextricably affects the other.

The issues of changes in Urbanisation and Climate and how they relate to People and Places are central issues for Commission 8.

FIG President in his opening address drew the audience attention to the MDG's and the need to deliver global partnerships and to manage the finite resources, requiring partnering with the worlds bottom income billion people, i.e. connecting the wealthy, and middle income groups with the poor.

The overriding theme of global partnership and the contribution that Comm 8 surveyors can make was reflected in 16 technical sessions, and a further 5 session embedded in the UN Habitat parallel sessions. How the Commissions activities reflected the themes raised in plenary and technical sessions is overviewed below

Politics- Partnerships between People

Facilitating social partnerships at strategic level, i.e. the global commons is likely to be an increasing emphasis in the coming generations. There is a gap between the institutions and in governance structures, thus new ways to organise societies need to be found. Debate during technical sessions regularly highlighted that Land Professionals do have the technical capacity to manage the emerging problems of the day, with solutions likely to be solved through partnership debate, as encouraged by the MDG's.

Why, then, not apply these skills to overcoming the politics of global resources? Surveyors drive complex projects, they are well placed to overcome the politics of people. Utilising their communication skills they facilitate the complex agendas of different stakeholders, and reach agreeable conclusion. There is a very real role to be 'change agents' to facilitate the development of global partnerships.

The surveyor's role in this partnership was highlighted in the Environment technical session. This topic is a key thrust that I would like to champion for Commission 8

over the rest of the term. The session highlighted that it is the surveyor responsibility to overcome the politics of resources; but also the politics of people. We as change agents can inform governance decision makers of the technical merits of a proposed way forward, but we also understand and communicate the balance of people's agendas.

At the local level, mindful of the speed that informal settlements are growing in third world countries, the partnership agenda needs to begin to consider the slum interest deficit. It is the people living in these slums that are often providing the labour to the formal cities. UN Habitat is seeking pro poor ways to legitimise their position, while not compromising the environment and social fabric of communities.

The launch of the Commission report on "Informal settlements: Driving toward change" (publication #43), a joint commission report, led by Comm 8 complimented the parallel UN Habitat workshop on Finance for Improving slum dwellers, in which comm. 8 subjects areas were discussed. The Seminar discussed the challenges and approaches that suit the poor; for example intermediate forms of title; gender sensitive title and incremental finance. The outcome of this integrated seminar will be forwarded to the 4th World Urban Forum in China November 2008.

In addition, a Comm 8 FIG technical session considered issues, techniques and practices to avoid when managing the partnership and political issues arising within informal settlements.

The ability to compare practices between Regions and Countries will always remain important in this commission, consequently sessions compared and contrasted spatial planning and land consolidation case studies. It is important we maintain this wealth of shared information to illicit best and comparative practice.

Climate

The issue of climate adaptations was brought into focus first by the launch of the Costa Rica declaration, with contributions from Comm 8 and 4 as well as Regional representatives from Central America. It was first presented at the commission joint technical session and subsequently accepted at General Assembly. Second, the knock on effect of increasing urbanisation and the planet's changing climate and the increasing role and partnership that will need to emerge to manage natural disasters, was discussed in a specific comm 8 technical session.

The technical session relating to administrating the coastal zone gave clear signals that this highly pressurised area (both climatic and commercial pressures) will require a focus on defining boundaries and territories, planning for disaster, the political framework, and the commercial and population pressures that brings into question access to resources, as highlighted in the Costa Rica Declaration.

Spatial planning and development considers the management of land use allocation and economic development; Michael Doran's (Northern Ireland) thought provoking presentation highlighted that Land is highly competed, not just for people to live on, but land as a factor of production. This subject is now finally reaching the general public. In his presentation he questioned,

Is land for....the production of food? Fuel crops? or just plots for people or as land for set back to protect property from eroding

coastlines? The supply of Land is the combination of politics and planning; but overcoming resource allocation is political.

New demands will be placed on surveyors; they have a strategic duty to fulfil:

- Balance between individual freedom and community responsibility,
- Manage the tension between legal rules and local practice,
- Facilitate the mechanics of control over land use and development.

There will be more and more demands on us as Professionals, but conferences such as this demonstrate that we are already rising to the challenge. Not only do we continue to drive complex projects forward we are often in a pivotal role of being at the centre or striving to create a partnership between environment, social and technical problem solving. Promoting our profession to the next generation is key.

END- Dr DD July 2008