The Fourth Wave

The next wave of international property reform will be characterised by a renewed focus on the importance of institutions, according to John McLaughlin, Professor of Geomatics Engineering, University of New Brunswick. ‘A whole new paradigm is beginning to come out,’ McLaughlin said. ‘It’s looking at new ways of thinking about what we mean by development, what we mean by value and what we mean by the institutions supporting us.’

McLaughlin devoted much of his career to working with Hernando de Soto on property formalisation in Peru. His presentation to the FIG 2010 Congress on Tuesday offered a retrospective analysis of the past 60 years of international property reform.

Institution-building was a chief concern in the first post-war wave, says McLaughlin. The second wave, which was based largely in South America, aimed to address major inequalities in land access. The third wave, which began around 1985, was distinguished by widespread recognition of the importance of property rights, said McLaughlin.

This chapter really began with people believing in the magical power of property to change lives, he said.

Property was seen as a vital part of social development, McLaughlin said. It was a core element in social stability, access to credit, poverty reduction and incentives to improve the land.

New technology helped to fuel what McLaughlin described as a ‘social revolution’ as it eventually became less complicated, cheaper and more widely available. However, despite its many strengths, this chapter had deep limitations, said McLaughlin, and soon began to taste the limits of the role of property. Key areas of failure include women’s access to property, transaction costs and indigenous property systems, he said.

The new wave of property reform – the fourth wave – will be more difficult to manage, McLaughlin said. It will be driven by the Millennium Development Goals, a rising middle class, and civil society and stronger environmental consciousness related to climate change and land degradation.

‘I have no doubt that the heart of that new story is going to be about the need for strong, robust institutions.’

‘It’s time now to get on with a new agenda and get fresh ideas on the agenda.’

Floating Feast

The FIG Foundation dinner, the ‘Floating Feast’, was held on Monday evening aboard Captain Cook Cruise’s largest vessel. The 290 delegates onboard enjoyed a memorable cruise around Sydney Harbour.

The festivities commenced with John Holak, FIG Foundation Director, introducing the event’s sponsor, Trimble. Trimble was represented by Keith Holgartner. The attendees enjoyed a delicious three-course meal matched with excellent Australian wines – with the dramatic backdrop of the Sydney Harbour Bridge and Opera House. Drinks were served on the top deck of the vessel, providing delegates with a magnificent view of the beautiful dusk and the lights around the Sydney Harbour.

Exhibition

The Exhibition Hall continues to be a hive of activity with a wide array of new products and services on hand. The Moroccan Stand, which includes information about FIG Working Week 2011, is a must visit for tea drinkers and cookie lovers.

Stop by Leica Geosystems’ stand (located at the front of the trade Exhibition Hall) to check out their latest range of GNSS receivers and terrestrial laser scanners.

The graphical interface of the new Viva GNSS controller ensures navigating around the various applications is easy and even prompts users with diagrams, enabling intuitive use of the unit. Also on display is the new C10 terrestrial laser scanner, which features onboard memory (no need for an external laptop) and is similar in size to a total station.

Bob Morton, Regional Geomatics Manager for the Indian, SE Asian, Australasian and Korean area, says Leica Geosystems’ focus is providing powerful software with easy-to-use graphical interfaces and strong after sales support.

Representatives from Leica, a Titanium Sponsor of the Congress, and their local distributor CR Kennedy said they were pleased with the venue and their exhibit space. The trade stand will be open until Thursday.

Empowering the Poor

A recording system that recognises unconventional relationships between people and land can play a vital role in alleviating poverty and empowering the poor, according to Clarissa Augustinus, from the UN-HABITAT Global Land Tool Network Secretariat.

The Social Tenure Domain Model, developed at the International Institute of Geo-Information Science and Earth Observation (ITC) in partnership with FIG and GLTN, focuses on land and property rights that are neither registered nor registrable.

The model has the ability to record all types of land rights, rights holders and land and property objects irrespective of the level of formality. It does this by relating personal identifiers, such as fingerprints or photographs, to a co-ordinate point inside a plot of land via ‘a social tenure relation’. These relations can include informal land rights such as tenancy, occupancy, use rights or customary rights.

The system will improve security of tenure, reduce evictions and lower planning and servicing costs, Augustinus said at the FIG 2010 Social Tenure Domain Model session on Tuesday.

‘STDM can put more money in the pockets of the poor.’