

Uniting the Generations

The FIG Working Week held at the Stockholm City Conference Centre in Sweden just before midsummer night was the biggest ever. Young surveyors were very much in evidence and mentoring sessions brought the generations together. FIG wants to mobilise the next generation of land professionals and continue to develop innovative and transitional solutions to address global inequality in land and property ownership and tenure.<P>

Jointly hosted by the International Federation of Surveyors (FIG) and the centenary celebrating Swedish Association of Chartered Surveyors (Sveriges Lantmätareförening, SLF), the theme 'Integrating Generations' lined up with the overall FIG theme of Building the Capacity'. The conference and exhibition was supported by the National Land Survey of Sweden (Lantmäteriet) and Swedesurvey.

Opening Ceremony

FIG is a global assembly aimed at building bridges between ages, cultures and continents. Integrating the younger generation is key; they should not only give a new look to FIG but also contribute to solving the issues of our time; surveying is the backbone of society. President Stig Enemark during the opening ceremony described how FIG had tied the ribbon between older generations and the one "that changed the world from analogue to digital and takes digital media for granted". But, he continued, "work needs to be done in many countries". And in his closing address he repeated, "We must mobilise the next generation of land professionals." Swedish Minister for the Environment Andreas Carlgen told the meeting how land and property underpinned the Swedish economy, and in developing countries legal empowerment of the poor was required to support property ownership; information systems were needed to circumvent a guessing game. "You (FIG) have such an important key role to play, to combat environmental threat, to combat poverty and slums, and to support the development of this globe and its cities." The focus of attention for FIG's ten Commissions showed how land professionals could contribute to solutions from a broad perspective.

UN-Habitat

FIG is strongly committed to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the UN-Habitat agenda on the Global Land Tool Network. Dr Anna Tibaijuka, UN under-secretary-general and executive director of UN-Habitat in her invited keynote reminded people that the world was becoming more urban. Cities were not prepared for the new influx, and the challenge was to guide urbanisation. The urban poor would be able to contribute US\$20 billion annually to improving their own living conditions, leaving US\$5 billion to come from other sources, currently contributing just US\$2 billion. She drew attention to the fact that only 10% of land parcels were registered; in many areas, land rights of the poor are based on customary rights not legally recognised yet socially legitimate, and only 5% of registered land is owned by women. She noted that individual freehold titling was not always appropriate, for reasons including cost of adjudication, high technical standards, expensive registration and transfer fees, and literacy requirements. She observed that the development of new land tools, such as the FIG Land Administration Domain Model, allowed for the registration of customary forms of tenure and overlapping land rights and claims. Dr Tibaijuka announced a two-year agreement between UN-Habitat and Google to collaborate on new mapping tools.

The Working Week included the joint FIG/UN-Habitat seminar on 'Improving Slum Conditions through Innovative Financing'. The seminar discussed the challenges and approaches suited to the poor; for example, intermediary forms of title, gender-sensitive title, and incremental finance from group to project. The latter to make financing attractive to banks by reducing transaction costs and risk. Land markets should also work for the poor, using innovative planning instruments. A radical suggestion might be to create teams of young people to be mentored by experts: a New Curriculum for Land Professionals. The new breed will need to be adept at discussing and facilitating multi-professional issues and working with other professional groups. This integrated seminar experience will be forwarded to the fourth World Urban Forum in China, in November 2008.

Gold Medals

Making the Law Work for Everyone, a report by the Commission on Legal Empowerment of the Poor, unfolded a four-pillar approach to empowerment of the poor: (1) access to justice and the rule of law, (2) property rights, (3) labour rights and (4) business rights. Dr Ashraf Ghani quoted a Native American saying: "We do not inherit the earth from our ancestors, we borrow it from our children". "The land professional can bring information, knowledge and wisdom into harmony," he stated. "That is where," Mr Enemark reflected in his closing address, "the 'gold medals' of the profession's contribution to land administration appear: mapping, planning, property and land rights (security of tenure), cadastral services, valuation (most relevant for self-supporting local government), and financial services." From the government perspective, this represented a bundle of interests.

New Customers

On 24th June Sweden launched Saccess, the constructing of a national satellite-imagery database for measurements over Sweden, enabling everyone to download satellite images of Sweden for free. Nokia is to increase production of GPS-supported mobiles from ten to 65 million within three years. David Zilkoski identified new customers for land professionals' services: emergency managers, planners and developers, insurance industry, agricultural industry, construction industry, environmental engineers, coastal managers, local government, tribal government, international organisations, academia, professional organisations and foreign counterparts. The World Bank presented important and highly influential papers; Malcolm Childress provided a new view of world population growth (see FIG website).

Flying High

UN agencies have access to national governments and to setting a global agenda; however, implementation depends on interest groups and non-governmental organisations (NGOs). Global partnerships will drive development for achieving the global agenda such as the MDGs. The big challenges are climate change, food shortage, energy scarcity, urban growth, environmental degradation and natural

disasters. All these issues relate to governance and management of land, the core area of land professional expertise. Achieving solutions will require:

- high-level geodesy models to predict future change
- modern survey and mapping tools to support management and implementation
- spatial data infrastructures to support decision making on the natural and built environment
- secure tenure systems
- sustainable systems for land valuation, land-use management and land development
- systems for transparency and good governance.

“We can act as professional facilitators, we can fly high,” concluded Mr Enemark, at the close of conference. “We are providing the underlying data to enable monitoring and support decision making for sustainable development.”

Concluding Remarks

Conference director Svante Astermo and his team did an excellent job. Around 950 participants from 95 nations attended. In addition to the plenary sessions there were over seventy technical ones, with almost 350 presentations and technical tours. Around forty papers were subject to peer review, introduced in concession to the many presenters who are university staff and to comply with the practice of other organisations. University staff members are increasingly forced to submit papers for peer-review, and such high-quality authors should not be lost to FIG meetings.

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