

World Bank Conference Tackles Key Issues of Land and Poverty



This edition of policy watch is mainly dedicated to the annual World Bank 2019 land conference but there are still a few RICS specific bits and bobs to update you all on.

The RICS Geo Evening Lectures series added an extra date: Thursday 9 May, 18:00, at UEL, Stratford campus which will focus on Survey4BIM issues.

RICS Insight output is ramping up as we move into the summer months (the end of the RICS business year) with a brand new Insight on the 'Use and Value of Commercial Property Data' (www.rics.org/uk/news-insight/research/insights/the-use-and-value-of-commercial-property-data/). This paper aims to discuss the benefits of and challenges to an increasing use of data in the commercial property market. It considers not only its

availability and quality but also the skills needed by surveyors to recognize its uses and maximize the value in analysing it, but also with the ownership of data, its security and regulation, and it makes predictions and recommendations for the future of a property world full of accurate, easily available data.

There is also a forthcoming Insight paper on 'Drones/UAVs – an evolving technology'. We are aiming to launch this new output at GEO Business 2019. This insight will give a broad view on a rapidly emerging technology, its multiple applications with surveying, sensor and platform types, case studies, and most importantly underline the need to adhere to national and regional legislation and regulatory structures.

Again, I would commend to you all our latest RICS video (<https://communities.rics.org/connect/ti/Wikigeo/view?objectId=44498725>). This video is designed to give members a quick insight into the multi-faceted world of policy, education, journals (including GW), standards, best practice, collaboration and events that we work within.

World Bank – Catalysing Innovation

More than 1,500 delegates from across the globe and from all sectors of the land profession, were treated to an enormously successful World Bank Land & Poverty Conference 2019, held at the World Bank HQ in the heart of the imperial splendour of Washington DC, USA. It really does require an expansion of my stock of superlatives, and that's quite large, to adequately describe this milestone annual event. Suffice to say that it is a privilege to attend and an honour to speak at such an event. This was the 20th anniversary of the land conference and it has been led, indeed built from scratch, by Klaus Deininger, World Bank Lead Economist, Development Research Group, (very ably supported by Thea Hilhorst).

The conference now runs over five days, with hundreds of very high-level peer reviewed papers, 13 parallel sessions, poster sessions, daily plenary sessions, master classes and social events. This really is a must attend event for anyone involved in any aspect of the land process from mapping to valuation to acquisition, taxation, transfer and development and is very heavily supported by UN Agencies UNFAO and UN Habitat. It is probably the only arena that brings together geography, social justice and economics and whilst a rightful focus is on issues of tenure rights (gender especially), the question of how we arrive at an equitable form of recognizing legitimate land rights is an ongoing conversation. World Bank is always very keen to move away from ideological drivers and look at empirical forms of evidence-based solutions and refreshingly is very honest in the way that it evaluates projects and interventions. An excellent policy paper on 'Using Satellite Imagery to Revolutionize the Creation of Tax Maps' (<http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/305651536648310984/Using-Satellite-Imagery-to-Revolutionize-the-Creation-of-Tax-Maps>) underlines this concept and from an RICS viewpoint helps to synergize how geospatial enables economic development and functioning land/property markets.

RICS was heavily involved in this year's conferences with several posters, papers, sessions and for the first time a master class. We also took the opportunity to visit Georgetown University and speak at a local members CPD evening (RICS has around 120 members in the Washington DC region).

Conference Highlights

RICS produced a special edition of the Land Journal for the conference (www.rics.org/uk/news-insight/publications/land-journal/) which focussed on the value of natural capital, as usual the Land Journal proved very popular and two boxes (300 copies!) disappeared as quickly as we could put them on the journal distribution table.

The opening Monday has now become a full day of often riveting sessions on a variety of land-related subjects. An afternoon session featured a heavyweight session on the new World Bank Land in the World Bank's new Environmental and Social Framework (www.conftool.com/landandpoverty2019/sessions.php) of great interest when considering the ILMS 'due diligence' framework that we

presented later that day and an opening plenary on 'Linking satellite and administrative data for land economics research and practice', led by Adam Storeygard, Tufts University, United States of America. The opening day also featured a poster session on the mezzanine level which featured ILMS (amongst numerous other posters). Indeed, the poster sessions are increasingly active and busy and last for nearly 48 hours – a great way to highlight a new initiative or project. The posters are also close to the exhibition space (small for anyone used to geospatial events, but cosy).

Tuesday saw the start of the 13 strong parallel sessions, RICS was particularly interested in the GIS-derived Automated Valuation Modelling sessions and the morning also featured excellent sessions on fit for purpose land administration featuring Prof Stig Enemark, and Brent Jones from ESRI. The highlight for RICS was Fiona Mannix delivering a 1st paper on natural capital (www.rics.org/uk/news-insight/research/insights/value-of-natural-capital-the-need-for-chartered-surveyors/).

There were also sessions on making property tax systems transparent and equitable, implementing urban value capture, the use of UAVs, and low-cost ways to establish cadastral systems – not the first nor last mention of Blockchain during the event (www.conftool.com/landandpoverty2019/index.php?page=browseSessions&form_session=547&presentations=show), and much more. The second day opened with strong session on registries of the future – featuring HMLR and Lauren Tombs on the new Digital Street initiative in the UK, Mark Reichardt from the Open Geospatial Consortium closed out the morning session (remember 1 of 13 parallel sessions!) by calling for a new global initiative linking land registries. The next session of interest focussed on Blockchain and really brought into focus how far industry implementation is (Dubai Land Authority have implemented a full Blockchain enabled real estate market) ahead of academia and even for that matter regulation. Tokenisation (google it!), land transfer and security were high on the agenda, this was a packed session and an indication of the strength of the conference in bringing disparate professionals together.

I also attended sessions on land markets at the rural-urban fringe, enforcing adherence to standards for large land-based investment – now, this was a very active session and featured a new release from UN FAO on due diligence for lawyers in land acquisitions. This important UN FAO output is directly connected to the due diligence ILMS framework for surveyors. Wednesday saw an important session on Land Governance in the Arab states, UN Habitat GLTN also used this session to refocus their strategy on land-based financing and the provision of affordable housing. The day was wrapped up by our colleagues in CLGE & NSPS with a session on professional ethics and surveyors – this session also featured the Global Day of the Surveyor award which went to Loránd Eötvös from Hungary.

Thursday featured several sessions on crowdsourcing geospatial and land data, and I was lucky enough to chair a session on data to determine compensation for land acquisition. The session started with a Korean LX presentation of the use of UAVs to help combat land development compensation speculation (a major issue in Korea) and then Jean Brice Tetka, Transparency International, spoke on land acquisition systems that help to combat corruption, namely by breaking down the processes and highlighting the gaps and steps that introduce risk and the opportunity for corruption. The new technology is being tested in Zambia and Sierra Leone. Maxwell Mutema FRICS, then took the stage to speak on valuation and compensation issues in Zimbabwe's land reform programme. This paper highlighted the enormous post-colonial issues still at play in sub Saharan Africa and the economic devastation wrecked by the land reform programme, the mis-valuation of compensation (based on improvement issues) and the western misconception (or indeed propaganda) that the return of vast tracts of land from white farmers to local people was agriculturally disastrous. Mismanaged and highly political this is still a major issue for the nation to deal with post Mugabe. The session finished with an extremely lively debate; indeed, it wasn't easy to clear the room for lunch!

Thursday finished on capacity and training issues, more geospatial special sessions and sessions on dispute resolution. I should also mention that the main auditorium was filled with plenary sessions during the lunch breaks, a good one was given by geo-legend Jack Dangermond who mentioned the term cadastre-cide and highlighted the known fact that land registries, mapping agencies and surveyors are always targeted during conflicts. One of the first things Daesh (ISIS) did in Mosul was burn all land and property records. Thursday also saw the closing plenary which featured a celebration of a very satisfying week of interaction and intellectual debate.

RICS Master Class

On Friday, RICS took part in a master class on how land professionals can contribute to making the SDGs a reality, an open and lively session featuring several representatives from across the land professions including Nigeria, RICS, Ordnance Survey International, and FIG YSN with Diane Dumashie in the chair. I would commend the recent RICS output on the SDGs (www.rics.org/uk/about-rics/responsible-business/un-sustainable-development/). The entire Friday was taken up with masterclasses and two major visits to local land registries or even the national geospatial office in Washington DC. I should also note that social media interaction was intense at this conference with 100's of posts on Twitter #landconf2019 but what a week! All presentations and papers are available from www.conftool.com/landandpoverty2019/sessions.php an enormous resource of knowledge and expertise.

This article was published in Geomatics World May/June 2019