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Conference Report

Preparing for climate change in the planned and unplanned city: the 13th Annual Conference of Planning, Law, and Property Rights, College Station, Texas, USA, 18–22 February 2019

From 18 to 22 February 2019, the 13th annual conference of the International Academic Association on Planning, Law, and Property Rights (PLPR) was held at Texas A & M University in College Station, Texas, USA. The conference was hosted by Professor Dawn Jourdan, executive associate dean and professor of landscape architecture and urban planning at the College of Architecture. During the four-day conference, 75 researchers and planning professionals from 29 different countries discussed socio-political challenges at the interface between planning, law, and property rights. In particular, participants were invited to address ongoing environmental changes and subsequent consequences for policy making and planning under the conference theme *Preparing for Climate Change in the Planned and Unplanned City*.

Full-day PhD workshop

On Monday 18 February 2019 the conference's fourth full-day PhD workshop was held with ten participants. The workshop was organised and managed by Lu Zhou (PhD coordinator, *Hong Kong University*) and Dr Andreas Hengstermann (PLPR secretary general, *Bern University*). In addition, Professor Chris Webster (*Hong Kong University*) and Professor John Sheehan (*University of Technology, Sydney; Bond University, Queensland; J.E.P. University in Usti nad Labem*) were invited as mentors and supervisors. Based on their academic experience, they provided valuable feedback and input into the ongoing work of the participants. During the first half of the workshop, the PhD researchers presented and reflected upon their research projects and discussed their methodological approaches in small groups. During the second half, the participants summarised their feedback, research progress and challenges on posters which were then displayed during the conference. The workshop was a great success and the participants not only improved their PhD projects but were also able to network and exchange ideas with other young academics and experienced researchers working in similar fields.

Conference theme: planning for climate change in the planned and unplanned city

For many countries facing impacts of climate change on socio-ecological systems, the issue of planning for climate change has gained increased importance over recent years. An increased number of people are suffering from the impacts of natural hazards and global warming, particularly in relation to the accessibility and availability of resources. As environmental conditions and the supply of resources continue to change (e.g. for land, water, housing), it becomes even more important to enhance our understandings of how stakeholders can, or should, strategically use institutional rules and policy instruments to foster sustainable development. To effectively steer spatial development, a deeper understanding of the complex interplay between public policy and property rights is therefore required. As the US southern and coastal regions are particularly confronted with the sociopolitical consequences of climate change, this year's PLPR participants aimed to address this issue from a legal, planning and property-rights' perspective.

Keynote speeches

On Tuesday 19 February 2019, the PLPR conference was officially opened at the welcoming reception in the Wright Gallery by Professor Dawn Jourdan, President Michael Young (president, *Texas A & M University*), Dr Jorge Venegas (dean, *College of Architecture, Texas A & M University*), and Andrew Nelson (mayor of the city of Bryan). Participants were welcomed and invited to contribute to lively, critical and fruitful academic discussions during the conference.

On Wednesday 20 February 2019, the conference began and the theme was introduced by two keynote speakers. First, Professor Michael Gerrard (*Columbia University*) presented his research on urban heatwaves and the corresponding legal adaptation. Second, Professor Shannon van Zandt (head of the Department of Landscape Architecture and Urban Planning, *Texas A & M*) outlined the importance of understanding the equity implications associated with resiliency planning. Van Zandt is an expert in coastal resilience, social vulnerability to disasters and low-income housing. Both keynotes reflected on current outcomes and challenges related to climate change, natural hazards and decarbonisation. They called for action to protect environmental systems, not only from a scientific stance but also from a planning, practitioner and local-community perspective.

Excursions

During the conference participants had the opportunity to join excursions and field trips around the city of College Station. On Tuesday the day started with a visit to the George H. W. Bush Presidential Library at the Texas A & M University campus. The group was welcomed by Professor Emeritus David Woodcock, who explained the historical and architectural background of the campus and guided a walking tour through the university. On Wednesday, the participants were invited to the City of Bryan (College Station's twin city), where Mayor Andrew Nelson hosted a reception for PLPR participants at Bryan City Hall. He introduced the planning department as well as current urban-development challenges. Specifically, the transformation of the historic old town was discussed since it was severely threatened by population decline and physical decay during the 1990s. However, due to various strategies and initiatives the historic centre of Bryan is now a viable place where people like to meet, live and interact. In addition, the city of Bryan's ongoing socio-economic development was explained to the audience by two town planners of the local planning department. On Thursday conference participants enjoyed the conference dinner at the local Messina Hof winery.

Parallel sessions

During the four-day conference, sixty-nine papers were presented in nineteen parallel sessions focusing on social, ecological, institutional and governance aspects of land-use change. The papers showed a broad diversity of research at the interface of planning, law and property rights. The conference participants vividly discussed academic research by presenting their papers in a variety of thematic sessions. As in previous conferences, the main focus of the conference was related to environmental issues (land-use changes) and their diverse mechanisms between planning, law and property rights. Each presenter had fifteen minutes for their presentation and another ten minutes for discussion, which enabled critical reflection and input from academics working in similar research fields.

Round tables

This year's conference was supplemented by two round tables. On 11 April 2018, Professor Leonie Janssen-Jansen from Wageningen University (NL) passed away. Professor Janssen-Jansen was one of the founders, initiators and promoters of PLPR. Besides her academic career and knowledge in the field of land-use planning, she was a friend, colleague and mentor to many PLPR members. Professor Rachelle Alterman (*Haifa University*), Professor Thomas Hartmann (*Wageningen University*) and PhD student

Rick Meijer (*Wageningen University*) honoured her work and mentorship by organising a round table in her memory.

The second round table was held by George Rogers (*Department of Landscape, Architecture, and Urban Planning at Texas A & M*) and Tim Mulvaney (*Texas A & M University School of Law*). They led scholars in a lively discussion on climate change and the common-law principle of ‘coming to the nuisance’.

General assembly and next PLPR

No official elections of the PLPR Executive Committee took place at the conference this year. However, Professor Richard K. Norton (PLPR president, *University of Michigan*) announced the upcoming elections for the year 2020 in Usti nad Labem, Czech Republic. He promoted young and interested academics to join the PLPR network and to engage with the organisational committee. Current elected members include Richard K. Norton (president), Thomas Hartmann (vice president), Andreas Hengstermann (secretary general), and Lu Zhou (PhD coordinator). The elected members are supported by the appointed ExCo members, including Eran Kaplinsky and Dawn Jourdan (North American representatives); John Sheehan and Stessa Chao (Pacific Rim representatives); Linda McElduff and Rachel Alterman (Association of European Schools of Planning [AESOP] PLPR thematic group leaders); Dušan Nikolić (previous PLPR conference host); and Jiřina Jílková, Pavel Raška and Lenka Slavíková (upcoming conference hosts). The 14th PLPR annual conference will take place at the Jan Evangelista Purkyně University in Usti nad Labem, Czech Republic, from 17 to 21 February 2020. The conference theme reflects on the post-socialist Central European reality dealing with fragmentation of land ownership as well as responsibilities and institutional rules regarding the use of (public) spaces. More details will follow this summer on the conference website (see <http://plpr2020.ujep.cz>). The next meeting for interested PLPR researchers will take place at the AESOP congress in Venice, Italy (9 to 13 July 2019).

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