

Editorial Preface

Digital Community Planning, Crowdsourced Mapping, and e-Governance

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The International Journal of E-Planning Research (IJEPR) addresses in the second issue of volume 5 three issues and challenges in urban e-planning: digital community planning, crowdsourced mapping and the social, political, economic and institutional contexts that frame the adoption of GIS as part of an e-Governance institutional reform.

In the first research article, 'Digital Community Planning. The Open Source Way to the Top of Arnstein's Ladder', Enzo Falco, from Gran Sasso Science Institute, Italy, explores current patterns of citizen participation in urban planning concluding that decision-making and future-oriented activities are still to a large extent in the hands of government. Based on this assessment, the article moves on to argue that recent developments in information and communication technologies, in particular in the field of community informatics, although still largely unused in all its potential, can be employed to enhance citizen participation in urban planning. Enzo Falco explores this idea, based on a discussion of different planning approaches to participation, and on an exploration of different open source and proprietary software that can be used by citizens in order to produce urban planning documents, arguing that the development of a digital community planning approach has the potential to support local communities to move along Arnstein's ladder of citizen participation.

The second research article, 'Use of Qualitative Methods to Examine GIS Planning and Management in the Context of e-Governance', written by Falguni Mukherjee, from Sam Houston State University, USA, examines, based on a qualitative methodology and on a case-study in India, the internal and external contexts that shape the way planning organizations adopt and use GIS. The author argues that this technology is socially constructed, emphasizing the role that social, political and economic contexts have in the adoption of this technology and how the context affects the use of GIS planning in local governance processes. And as the author shows, in her case study, the rich contextual elements that shape GIS adoption in planning and knowledge production can only be fully apprehended through qualitative methodologies.

The third text, a research note, 'Visual Comparison of Web Map Changes of OpenStreetMap and Commercial Online-map Providers. A Research Note.', written by Beata Ćmielová and Jiri Panek,

both from Palacky University in Olomouc, The Czech Republic, discuss the ways crowdsourcing mapping can contribute to fill empty spaces in digital maps, empowering at the same time members of the community engaged in the creation of these maps, in particular in developing countries, arguing that without maps no real development can take place. In doing this, the authors examine and discuss different digital maps providers, a collaborative platform, the OpenStreetMap, and commercial providers, and focus their analysis and comparison on three cases. Among others aspects, the article shows that the OpenStreetMap community is very strong and active in areas where commercial providers did not invest strongly in mapping, and that its coverage and accuracy is correlated with the number of volunteers mapping a given area.

This issue ends with a review of Sara Westin' book 'The Paradoxes of Planning. A Psycho-Analytical Perspective', a different and stimulating critique to planning, in which the author explores the gap between vision and reality in urban planning, addressing this issue from a perspectivism philosophical point of view.

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Carlos Nunes Silva, PhD, Professor Auxiliar at the Institute of Geography and Spatial Planning, University of Lisbon, Portugal. His research interests are mainly focused on urban and metropolitan governance, history and theory of urban planning, urban planning in Africa, urban e-planning, urban planning ethics, local government policies, local e-government, and research methods. His publications include the books "Urban Planning in Lusophone African Countries"; "Emerging Issues, Challenges, and Opportunities in Urban E-Planning"; "Urban Planning in Sub-Saharan Africa: Colonial and Postcolonial Planning Cultures"; "Fiscal Austerity and Innovation in Local Governance in Europe" (co-edited); "Urban Planning in North Africa"; "Citizen e-Participation in Urban Governance: Crowdsourcing and Collaborative Creativity"; "Online Research Methods in Urban and Planning Studies: Design and Outcomes"; "Handbook of Research on E-Planning: ICT for Urban Development and Monitoring"; "Portugal: Sistema de Govern Local"; "Política Urbana em Lisboa, 1926-1974". He is member of the Steering Committee of the International Geographical Union Commission 'Geography of Governance', and the founding Editor-in-Chief of the 'International Journal of E-Planning Research' (IJEPR).