

SSPCR 2017, a successful event!

Over 150 researchers, engineers, architects, public administrators, economists and urban planners coming from over 20 countries gathered in Bolzano during March 22-24th to discuss innovative tools and methods for smart city planning in occasion of the second international conference dedicated to “Smart and Sustainable Planning for Cities and Regions”.

Land use and urban planning influence our every-day lives in many crucial ways, determining from the miles we must travel to reach our workplaces, to our city’s air quality or the appearance of our neighborhoods. The international Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) summarized in a recent report a set of indications and guidelines to land use governance for its member countries. OECD’s delegate Tamara Krawchenko announced in preview its contents in occasion of the conference: “an urban planning process should not only suggest how to exploit a certain territory but also make use of fiscal incentives, for citizens and enterprises, to encourage or discourage specific behavioural trends”. “Indeed, if on one hand land use policies explain us how to use the land, it is fiscal and energy-related measures that actually push citizens and businesses to use the land in that specific way”. The report also suggests how to avoid restrictive land use policies that could result in an increase of real estate prices: “the construction of new housing must keep the pace with population growth. For this reason, land use regulations should favor building densification – especially in low density central areas – as well as the creation of transport corridors”, concludes Krawchenko.

Planning urban development means accounting for the territory’s economic, social, environmental and energy-related aspects; it entails understanding who inhabits a city and how to improve their life quality resorting to information and communication technology. “Technological tools, such as data, meters and sensors, should always be used intelligently – bearing as final goal citizens’ overall wellbeing”, says Adriano Bisello, urban planner at Eurac Research and the event’s organizer. “In planning land use one should always keep a balance between urbanized and rural territories – worlds that should constantly grow along and communicate with each other”, concludes Bisello.

Planning also entails intercepting new cultural ideas or trends and using them to transform our living spaces. This is the experience brought to the conference audience by four European cities – Matera, Taranto, Amsterdam and Prague – during one of the conference’s round tables in which urban cultural projects have been exploited for urban regeneration and reuse of neglected buildings.

Wolfram Sparber (Director of Eurac’s Institute for Renewable Energy and President of South Tyrol’s energy company Alperia) comments: “today over 40% of Europe’s population – and 54% of the World’s – lives in cities. An every-day increasing trend. Cities are hubs for economic growth, employment, new ideas and technological development, but they are also the origin of our future challenges on climate change and environmental threats. This is the reason for which we believe that cities are key in achieving a level of sustainable development characterized by low carbon emissions”. “Low carbon economy for cities and regions is indeed our focus in the EU-funded project SINFONIA, aimed at transforming Bolzano in a smart city by 2019, as well as in the EU network mapping Europe’s global energy needs”.

The Organizing Committee of SSPCR 2017 would like to thank partner institutions, especially ISOCARP, for funding and supporting the dissemination of the conference all over the word.

For more details on the event and the conference’s abstracts, please visit <http://www.sspcr.eurac.edu/>.