

Editorial Preface

Citizen and Crowd Participation in Urban e-Planning

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The first issue of the 2019 volume of the International Journal of E-Planning Research (IJEPR) explores advances in the study related to citizen engagement in urban e-planning as well as on the challenges associated with the impact of new forms of online services in planning at the local level.

In the first article “Mining social media to measure neighbourhood quality in the City of Atlanta”, Subhrajit Guhathakurta, Ge Zhang, Guangxu Chen, Caroline Burnette and Isabel Sepkowitz, from the Georgia Institute of Technology, USA, develop a classification model to identify perceptions of various Atlanta neighbourhoods based on social media. The model considers eight categories - public safety, transportation, density, walk ability, maintenance, aesthetics, open space, and quality of dining and entertainment venues. The authors used geo-tagged Tweets related to the quality of the neighbourhood, extracted using Twitter’s API, and compared these results with quantitative indicators of neighbourhood quality.

In the following article, “Citizen Participation and the Rise of Digital Media Platforms in Smart Governance and Smart Cities”, Olga Gil and María E. Cortés-Cediel, from the Universidad Complutense de Madrid, and Iván Cantador, from the Universidad Autónoma de Madrid, Spain, explore the question of who really benefit from smart cities, by studying digital media platforms, with the aim to understand the link between e-governance and smart city initiatives. In other words, the authors examine how far thirteen digital platform projects in several cities, considered in their study, are in fact clearly for citizens, how far they support citizen participation in decision-making, and which are its main implementation challenges.

This issue includes also a research note titled “Immersive Computing and Crowd Simulation Techniques in Modeling Urban Commons: the case of Nicosia-Cyprus”, authored by Georgios Artopoulos and Panayiotis Charalambous, both from The Cyprus Institute, and Colter Eugene Wehmeier, from the National Center for Supercomputing Applications, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, USA. The authors report the technical development of a virtual environment platform that could be used for the cross-disciplinary study of complex urban realities. The case study is the historic city of Nicosia, Cyprus, and through it the authors show how these tools, virtual environment platforms and crowd simulation methods, can capture data of user’s movement and how this data can be used in the study and modelling of the impact of alternative planning scenarios of open public spaces.

Lukasz Damurski, Jacek Pluta, Jerzy Ładysz, and Magdalena Mayer-Wydra, from Wrocław, Poland, examine in the last research article included in this issue, “Online or offline services for urban neighbourhoods: Conceptualisation of research problems” the inter-relatedness of real and virtual environments in the context of urban neighbourhood service centres, an important aspect that ought to be considered in the planning and development of urban services at the local scale.

This first issue of volume eight includes a report on the third Annual IJEPR Conference on Urban e-Planning, held in 2018, and a review of a book on planning history, a book that is mandatory reading for all those interested to get a deeper insight into how key planning ideas have been formed, and how they have developed and circulated worldwide, in the words of some of the main protagonists of this historical process.

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Carlos Nunes Silva, PhD, is a Professor Auxiliar at the Institute of Geography and Spatial Planning, University of Lisbon, Portugal. His research interests focus mainly on urban and metropolitan governance, the 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. He is the Chair of the International Geographical Union Commission on 'Geography of Governance' (2016-2020), and the founding editor-in-chief of the 'International Journal of E-Planning Research' (IJEPR).