POST-COVID PLANNING
MOVING TOWARDS MORE RESILIENT COMMUNITIES

📅 8 November 2021
◎ 08:30–14:30
◉ Valletta Campus

L-Università ta' Malta
Faculty for the Built Environment | Department of Spatial Planning & Infrastructure

Creating our futures
ECTP-CEU
European Council of Spatial Planners
Conseil européen des urbanistes

Kamra Maltija għall-Ippjanar
Malta Chamber of Planners

Programme

08:30   Registration

09:00   Opening Address

09:30   Keynote lecture by Prof. Vincent Goodstadt entitled **Post-Covid Planning - Towards more resilient communities**

10:30   Parallel sessions:
- **Parallel Session 1: Supporting local governance in a changing demographic situation**
- **Parallel Session 2: Implementing innovative sustainable infrastructure**
- **Parallel Session 3: The economic role of the construction industry**

11:30   Coffee break

11:45   Reporting on the Parallel sessions

12:30   Poster presentation sessions

13:30   Closure of the conference

The conference will have three parallel sessions which will discuss various issues as indicated below. This should help you in choosing which session to participate in:

Parallel session 1 - Supporting local governance in a changing demographic situation

An important element in post-pandemic recovery is the way in which national policy builds social capital. This session shall discuss the role of local governance and decision-making in a time of changing demographics and lifestyles.   How can planning decisions be transferred to the communities and their representatives? Should local communities have a stronger voice in the processes of development planning and strategic policy-making? Which structures of participatory planning need to be in place?

Moderator: Dr Rachael Scicluna
Speakers: Perit Ruben Abela, Ms Catherine Fleri Soler, Dr Antoine Zammit

Parallel session 2 - Implementing innovative sustainable infrastructure

The emergency directives during the Covid-19 pandemic required a series of social distancing measures which changed our perception of physical proximity and thus, of space. Indoor and outdoor spaces, whether for work, recreation or residence assumed new values in line with the shift in lifestyle. In moving forward, high density developments must be assessed using criteria which prioritise remote working practices, reduced air pollution and an ecosystem of public open spaces amongst others. Can more open spaces be incorporated into the built fabric? What is the impact of climate change on the built environment? How can the built environment support sustainable mobility?

Moderator: Dr Gayle Kimberly
Speakers: Prof Louis Cassar, Dr Odette Lewis, Dr Sarah Scheiber

Parallel session 3 - The economic role of the construction industry

The construction industry has for years been considered a key pillar of the Maltese economy. In a post-pandemic situation, it is an industry that is however faced with issues of redundancy of building stock and an oversupply of outdated typologies. The industry employs a great majority of foreign workers. Shall the continued desire for remote working affect development practices? Is any monitoring being carried out to identify typological and infrastructural gaps in the construction sector? Is the current infrastructural capacity able to cope with projected developments? How can UCAs continue to be relevant to residents and visitors alike?

Moderator: Perit Jacques Borg Barthet
Speakers: Prof Vincent Buhagiar, Prof Alex Torpiano, Ms Marisa Xuereb

The conference was a hybrid event with over 40 participants attending in person and over 55 participating online. The conference was opened by the Head of the Department of Spatial Planning and Infrastructure, Dr. Kevin Gatt, followed by Mr. Bjorn Bonello, President of the Malta Chamber of Planners. It was a pleasure to have Professor Janet Askew, newly elected President of the ECTP-CEU, make her first address as President, followed by Mr. Martin Saliba, CEO of the Malta Planning Authority. The Minister for the Environment, Climate Change and Planning, Mr. Aaron Farrugia, sent a recorded address to the participants.

All speakers agreed that planning is the way forward to progress beyond the current COVID-19 pandemic. This was further emphasised by Professor Vincent Goodstadt who from his hometown in Oxford gave the keynote speech. Professor Goodstadt highlighted the main trends within which future planning post-COVID will have to operate – An Age of Uncertainty, Focus on Resilience, Local Empowerment, National renewal, Growing Inequality and Beyond Austerity. The relationship between home and workplace has changed over this year and a half as a result of working from home practices and recognition of the important role of open spaces in urban contexts.

Future planning should give more importance to local communities and empower them to shape their localities for the benefit of the whole community. We need to move from consultation to collaboration. Indeed, planning is central to a just recovery from the pandemic, Professor Goodstadt concluded and in this scenario the Re-Start Europe, ECTP's planning roadmap post-COVID, sets a number of policy directions and programmes to combat the uncertain future – containing urban densities, empowerment of local communities, value public space, enhance connectivity.

The conference also had three parallel sessions where various aspects were discussed with participants on a number of issues. The key themes for the parallel sessions were 'Supporting local governance in a changing demographic situation', 'Implementing sustainable innovative infrastructure' and 'Analysing the economic role of the construction industry'. Common to all three parallel sessions was the realisation that contextuality is central to achieving good planning, and that context includes not only the spatial, but also the social environment within which we practice.

The conference also gave the opportunity to Third Year students of the Faculty for the Built Environment to present their projects on achieving high quality public spaces within a social accommodation zone in the locality of Zebbug, Malta. This work was greatly appreciated and was the result of bringing together professionals from various disciplines, highlighting the notion that planning is multidisciplinary. Since these projects were also a result of a collaboration between the Faculty and the Ministry for Social Accommodation, the conference was brought to a close by Minister Roderick Galdes.