

**Date**

Monday 13th July 2009

**Title of session**

Breakout Discussion Group

What are the impacts of economic turbulence on mapping in your country?

What are the impacts of economic turbulence on your institution/organisation?

What are the measures you have undertaken to cope with the challenge?

How do you think mapping (and your institution/organisation) can support your societies and countries in overcoming this period of economic turbulence?

**Name of presenter/chair**

Ingrid Vanden Berghe, General Administrator, National Geographic Institute, Belgium - Facilitator

**Name of rapporteurs**

Martin Lea and Carolina Sanchez Hernandez

The breakout session set out to discuss the issues raised in the first plenary session. The free flowing discussion covered the current economic climate, National Mapping and Cadastral Agencies' (NMCAs) governance structures, the need for flexibility, crowd sourcing and the continuing shift from traditional mapping to GIS (Geographical Information Systems) and SDI (Spatial Data Infrastructure).

Although the financial crisis underpinned most of the discussions and presents clear risks to NMCAs, Greg Scott (Australia) and Colin Bray (Ireland) pointed out that it also presents great opportunities. Cash strapped departments, who were causing mapping to become decentralised, are now coming back to NMCAs to try and save costs. The crisis has also given NMCAs the opportunity to go into other departments and offer tailored partnership solutions that save money.

Chukwudozie Ezigbalike highlighted that, in Africa, the economic crisis is having less of an impact as there was no money for SDIs before the crisis and they are facing numerous other historical issues.

The departmental structure of NMCAs also has a great impact on their effectiveness. Although many NMCAs have their own autonomous department within government (especially in the Francophone countries) most fall under an umbrella department such as Environment, Transport, Lands or Defence. This makes it more difficult to

demonstrate that NMCAs underpin all branches of government rather than just their own.

Professor Fraser Taylor then introduced the popular topic of maintaining a flexible business model in the current climate. John Naustdal (Norway) gave a description of Norway Digital, a collaboration where all central and local government departments in Norway contribute to the costs of national GIS data and it is available to all members. It was agreed that a standardised way of working was needed to manage the GIS overlap between departments and each department should be responsible for their specialist area of expertise. NMCAs need to drive forward interoperability standards and specifications to provide solutions to the changing needs of society.

The discussion continued with a look at some of the issues around the continuing migration from traditional mapping to GIS and SDI including:

- The difficulty of attribution compared to geometry
- The art of cartography can never be replaced because data still needs to be displayed effectively, even on a screen
- Increasingly there is a need to effectively archive data and be able to roll-back a data set in time
- NMCAs need to become spatial data platforms for the sharing of data so that national SDIs become nodes in a United Nations SDI

The session concluded with a brief discussion on crowd sourcing. Although back-office verification was required, it was agreed that crowd sourcing was becoming a valuable resource for NMCAs. Greg Scott, John Naustdal, Fraser Taylor and Chukwudozie Ezigbalike all cited examples of crowd sourced data capture, especially in remote areas. A number of countries, including Australia and Belgium, are also using public websites for error reporting.

Questions/Comments	Answers