In the early 70’s in Edinburgh, when I was a young planning student I had my first contact with ISOCARP.

Professor Johnson-Marshall, hosted the 11th ISOCARP Congress at the University of Edinburgh in the old George Square premises of the Urban Research Unit, or Department of Urban Design and Regional Planning as was officially named.

Been one of his foreign students he invited me to be part of the event.

That was a great opportunity for me.

I was then mixed and entangled with those great planners that were in the edge of the profession, Rebuilding Cities all over Europe, as professor Johnson Marshall named one of his books, and with a hands-on scheme in the workshops,… the experience was great.

I had the opportunity to meet, those great personalities like

Prof Sam van Embden,

Prof Gerd Albers,… he just turned 90 some days ago,

Derek Lyddon,

Lanfranco Virgili,
Papageorgiui,

Professore Piccinato,

Federico Malusardi …

and so many others.

And of course Manuel Costa Lobo… as young and energetic as ever,…I have a personal gratitude to him because amongst so many other things, he long ago introduced me to the beauties of Portugal.

Apart of the professional experience which was enlightening, I did experience a more personal one with the atmosphere that was in that event.

All of them were friends and they behave as a family. I loved that feeling. You could have a close interchange of ideas and opinions directly with those great people.

I did then, with the recommendation of Professor Johnson-Marshall, become member of ISOCARP, ….that was in 1975

Those were years in which society was in another wave length.

Were the years of the Cold War, VietNam, Watergate, the last days of the Beatles, the Concorde….It was The age of Aquarius
Those were the days of the Urban Motorways, the famous Colin Buchanan’s Traffic in Towns book; and the beginning of the war between the car and the pedestrian…

Those were the days of the worshiping of suburbia.

The use of the car as main transportation mode move life to the outskirts, causing a huge dereliction of town centers,

Society was thinking in other values, and cities were building under that line of thinking and behaving

Planners were responding to those needs and values.

However, 1961 Jane Jacobs’s book Death and Life of Great American Cities, and his work in Toronto, was the spark, and later, in the 70s, a sort of credo, it was the waking up from the Suburbia dream.

ISOCARP was part of that same wave,… but looking ahead

It did organize Congress with themes that demanded the review of the values that were present at that time…, looking at the possible and foreseeable future

1975, Edinburgh, Planning for our Inheritance,

1977, Athens, Urban Change and Urban Structure,
1978, Montreal, Evolution of Urban and Regional Planning

1979, Strasbourg, Planning and Energy.

1981, Stockholm, Renaissance of the City, How?

And so on…. ISOCARP has been always looking ahead… as a group of professionals that share knowledge, experiences but most important…. Friendship.

I still have that feeling now in our congress and I want it will be kept for the future

I am proud of been part of these brotherhood for the last 35 years

Our society was designed by our founders, in its organization and constitution to cope with the circumstances of its time.

When ISOCARP was founded in 1965, about one-third of the world’s population lived in urban areas. By 2025, this figure would have doubled, meaning that some 4000 M people would be living in cities.

Several presentations on this gathering had referred to other statistics confirming this forecasting.
This is a huge global challenge, and one that ISOCARP should be leading at the forefront of the Planning Profession.

In this new millennium, innovation in technology, communications, economic activity and other elements as important as the Global Warming, have forced society to adapt to a new way of looking at life and therefore at cities.

These new values, or should I say, old values, have pushed to the return to the human scale, to the preeminence of the human person over concepts such as uncontrolled energy use, waste management, sprawled land use, expanded urban form or any other value that in the past had override the human person as the focal point of the building of the city.

It has been a process of pure development, not a process of building a city

The urbanite, the person living in an urban area, as the central beneficiary of the city is now demanding a new quality of life and wellbeing for him and for its fellow inhabitants; these demands have forced planners to adapt to these changing circumstances.

Cities must be environmentally sustainable, socially equitable, and economically competitive
ISOCARP as I have said must be at the forefront of this thinking and because of that it must be adequately armed and structured, for these new scenarios.

The ISOCARP that was dreamed by our founders, 45 years ago, responded to completely different circumstances.

We must force ourselves to the 21st century.

In the near past, as a society of professional planners, and in order to cope with the new times, ISOCARP had experienced a number of adjustments that were aiming to adapt to new demands that are moving our society forward into a new phase of its existence.

However, there is the extended feeling amongst our members that we should enter deeper in the review and change of our present paradigm.

This new phase must respond to the new growth and new trends that our profession in general and cities in particular have and are experimenting.

In this context there are several areas that need to be taken into consideration in order to lead ISOCARP into the new Century and its new paradigms.
Three main ideas underlying such new vision have been in force for the last few years.

- Learning from the past facing the future
- Strengthening our membership
- The strategic importance of being a global association in a global world

I believe that under these three ideas, several goals ought to be achieved in the near future in order to maintain our Association in the edge of planning knowledge.

Within this context, two circumstances came together.

Firstly, the strong support obtained from the General Assembly in order to carry on with this new vision of the future of ISOCARP, following the presentation of the action programs of previous administrations, and, since our 40th anniversary in Cairo 2003.

Secondly, the adoption by ExCo, after several discussions (Sitges, Jan.’08, and in Portland May ‘08), of the new Program/Project model as opposed to the traditional centralized model, for the administration of ISOCARP.
This model was presented for its analysis within ExCo by Didier Vancutsem and myself in Antwerp 2005

In view of all this background and considering possible scenarios, there are several actions that have to be taken during the following presidential period, in order to lead ISOCARP with the necessary adjustments to this new stage.

I believe that we ought to look at the basics in order to assess our lines of exploration and development for the future; therefore, I will focus my attention in trying to answer and implement three main questions that constitute the heart of ISOCARP.

1. Who we are?

This is a question that implies several others

How we see ourselves in the world?

Do we want to see ourselves as the best (not the biggest!) Planning organization in the world?

Do we want to become the reference point in planning for the global arena?
Are we the head, arms and hands of Planning, not only the voice?

If so

Who should be members?

What is our strategy for recruiting members?

Should we use a precision target strategy instead of a wide shot one

If we want to be the top planning organization at a global scale, should there be a professional and capacity door to be opened before becoming a full member?

What is our YPP recruiting policy?

Do we want to keep the Small is Beautiful concept?

2. Where do we play?

Do we want to remain as a Eurocentric society?

Are we a global society?
Is our network organized and communicated with enough strength?

How do we cope with this geographical challenge?

Who we are competing with?

Are the huge organizations such as ULI, RTPI, APA, and others of the sort, our direct competitors or we are in a different niche?

Do we want to become Knowledge Partners to Global organizations as UNESCO, WB, IBD, Council of Europe, OECD….

3. How we are organized?

Is our present structure adequate for the challenges that we want to confront?

Is our present structure responding to the needs of our membership and our activities?

Is our present structure adequate for the global representation that we already have?
Do we communicate adequately amongst our members?

Or even, do we have to enter into the re-design of our website in order to facilitate communication?

In trying to answer these questions we ought to look at three concepts that from my point of view underlay these main interrogations

- Membership
- Globalization
- Organization

The reason to exist of our Association is our membership,

All our efforts must be directed into their service and wellbeing.

We must keep the friendship and family type of relationship between our members maintaining the strength of our exclusivity, high quality and small size organization.
We must keep and review our commitment to the young planners who are our next generation.

We consider them to be the most valuable asset of ISOCARP, upon which we ought to build a sustainable future for our Association.

In view of these we ought to achieve several objectives.

We need to increase the ISOCARP network inviting new members, from the areas of the world that are now not represented in ISOCARP.

We need the participation of national delegations inviting the most relevant members in each country.

These aims must comply the principles of small is beautiful and better quality than quantity.

We need to increase the members participation in ISOCARP.

We have to reinforce the activities reserved for our members only, such as the UPAT program, YPP Program, Congress, Seminars, courses and other new opportunities that are to be opened in the benefit of our members.
We have to procure the means in order to increase and develop the members initiatives in order to have ISOCARP become the media for the member’s ideas and innovation.

We should answer the old question of what is in ISOCARP for me, in order to have arguments strong enough for new members to find important added value for their profession on being members of this great Society.

The world is just moving out from the worst crisis since WW2, more than 70 years ago.

This is not just an economic crisis, this is also, and more important, from my point of view, a Crisis in values, and a Crisis in the way in which society faces its way of life.

This crisis demands from world society a change in the way things have been done in economics, social structure, development, and many other facets of life.

Planning is not external to this situation.

On the contrary Planning is central to these new circumstances.

People are moving to and living in cities more and more.
The sustainability principles, the none contaminating fuels, the new paradigms created by the new technologies of connections, physical and virtual, and all the changes in our lifestyle than only a mere 10 years ago were not even imagined by most part of society.

We have already stress that more than 2 thirds of the world population will be living in cities in the next 20 yrs, so we as planners must be in the center of this change.

This fact is relevant to the general argument, not only from the point of view of the quantity of people, but most important from the new way of looking at things of this people.

The new millennium demands that we adapt and use in our own benefit the new paradigms.

We must increase ISOCARP visibility worldwide, and constitute a real Global Society, focusing in Africa, the Arab World, Asia and Latin America

We ought to reinforce our national Delegations in such areas and create Project Offices in strategic locations in order to ensure ISOCARP visibility there
We must disseminate worldwide our work through the extensive, paper and electronic, publication of our activities, discussions and research.

We must reinforce the capacity and the content of our webpage so as to be the main link amongst our worldwide network of members.

In synthesis we must ensure that ISOCARP become a worldwide reference point for national and multilateral entities in urban and planning matters. UN, HABITAT, WB, WMF, EU, OECD.

Our founders were living in a world that was concerned with a different set of variables, but the principles must remain.

However under this statement, the structure of the organization should be revised.

We ought to look at the articles of Association in order to have them adequate to the revised structure and to the demanded new vision for the 21st century.

As a principal task, we ought to ensure the financial stability of the society.
Such assurance must be achieved through the organization of activities for the benefit of our members, and for the sustainability of our administrative structure.

Such activities, at the same time, must be self sufficient, and could leave some financial benefits for the proper operation of the society.

The already adopted structure of the Program/Project framework must enter into full force, so as to produce its benefits as soon as possible.

The creation, already adopted by the past General Assembly, of the ISOCARP Foundation, should contribute to finance the society projects, once it has being integrated.

The design, conception and creation of the ISOCARP Institute in order to disseminate planning knowledge, capacity building, training and research, through the harvesting of our rich knowledge network.

In synthesis, we should design and propose, not only in ExCo but by our membership at large, new ways of taking advantage for the benefit of our members, of the vast knowledge base of the worldwide ISOCARP network.
In doing all these we need not only the participation of ExCo but the involvement of all our membership.

My email is always open to listen to your initiatives, needs and comments.

The society needs the help of all its members to be at the place that we have planed

This is our vision of the future… One must look at the future past was as it was

As Thomas Jefferson said

“...I prefer the dream of the future than the history of the past…”

Thank you very much.......