PRESIDENT’S COMPREHENSIVE REPORT: ISOCARP MAP 2012-2015

Dear colleagues and friends,

In the Program communicated to you in 2012 I stated the four key objectives to be pursued during the term of my Presidency 2012-2015:

- Strengthening the existing and developing new forms of knowledge creation and sharing
- Strengthening/expanding the outreach by enhancing the existing and developing new partnering and collaborative relations with international, regional and national organizations and bodies
- Enlarging ISOCARP community and recruiting new members; taking ISOCARP to the under-represented regions and countries
- Setting up the revenue generating programs and securing financial stability of the Society.

Three years later I can say without hesitation that much of this ambitious and highly positioned program has been achieved. The PRESIDENT’S COMPREHENSIVE REPORT: ISOCARP MAP 2012-2015 presents an account of what has been achieved in turning these objectives into concrete results. It also sheds light on the activities that have not been accomplished yet or which are in progress, and points to the challenges that are before us. Detailed reports on EXCO activities during the term 2012-2015 have been regularly submitted and discussed in the annual Bureau meetings and AGM, and are available through the Secretariat and our website.

STRENGTHENING THE EXISTING AND DEVELOPING NEW FORMS OF KNOWLEDGE CREATION AND SHARING

ISOCARP has always been forward-looking and at the forefront of the planning profession. Its congresses, seminars and professional forums have been places where awareness on critical topics of its time has been raised, and the future of urban and spatial development debated and explored. Issues focusing on the information age, challenges of urban explosion, resilient cities and carbon cities followed by the hyper-dynamic age challenges and changing frontiers of planning illustrate the variety of issues ISOCARP is exploring and the aspirations the Society stands for.

1. During the term 2012-2015 we have organized annual international congresses in Brisbane, (Australia), Gdynia (Poland), and the one we are holding this month in twelve cities in the Netherlands, Germany and Belgium.


2016 Congress to be held in Durban South Africa is under preparation.

What makes these congresses more advanced compared to the ones we delivered in the past is that all of them come with the enriched and expanded content and include additional sessions which complement their thematic scope, like the Educational Forum—“David Prosperi” and the presentations of our training projects and UPATs. New initiatives often start on these occasions, for instance, the ISOCARP HABITAT III Task Force in 2014. These events always attract significant attention and present ISOCARP congresses as places where the critical issues of linking theory and practice are debated and explored. They have also contributed to strengthening the outreach of the Society as their topics are always timely and carefully chosen vis-a-vis the actual planning and spatial development issues.

The Congress 2016 will be held in Durban. Our colleagues from South Africa are fully committed to make it a great event. The Congress will be officially announced and presented in the Plenary Session in Rotterdam.

2. Much has been done in the area of YPPs, professional training and UPATs. These programs have been enthusiastically embraced by clients and viewed as state-of-the-art exercises capable of contributing advanced and liveable solutions, and meeting the highest professional standards. The technical and educational training programs came as an extension of the traditional YPPs and have been organized in UAE in cooperation with local governments of Abu Dhabi and Al Ain. Both clients are interested in keeping the program in 2016 (http://isocarp.org/activities/young-planning-professionals-programme/). ISOCARP’s dedication to supporting the planning knowledge and skills has been materialized throughout 25 years of implementing the YPP program.

The UPATs have been with us for more than ten years. More than twenty workshops have been delivered since the inception of the program in Spain, The Netherlands, Switzerland, Austria, Russia, Poland, China, Singapore, Palestine, USA and Mexico. During 2012-2015 the UPATs were organized in China, Mexico and Palestine. These hands-on exercises have attracted a lot of attention among our members and outside ISOCARP. Presentations of UPAT projects are among the most visited events in our congresses and on the website (http://isocarp.org/activities/upats/).

The success of UPATs and our commitment to sharing knowledge motivated us to start a new program- the Urban Resilience Task Force-URTF, this time in cooperation with ICLEI. The Agreement with ICLEI was negotiated in 2014 and the first URTFs are expected to take place shortly.

Last year the Mentor and Student Research Lab was initiated by the VP Congresses and Events. The program is designed for students in planning, urban design, architecture and adjacent fields.
3. Starting the ISOCARP Institute has been the most important event in providing the institutional framework for expanding the frontiers of knowledge creation and sharing. The prospect of organizing such a unit within the existing ISOCARP structure was debated for quite a long time. Last year the Institute was officially launched in Gdynia along with a new VP ISOCARP Institute position for the period 2014-2017. The Institute will be the place where different projects will be developed and executed; it will include the EU and similar projects that until now have been carried on the margins of ISOCARP structure (http://isocarp.org/activities/isocarp-institute). Making the Institute functional and productive is among the key challenges for the next period.

4. The ISOCARP Review and congress papers have been printed each year. The Review has become a valuable part of the congress package and is widely recognized for its excellent entries, editing work and the eye catching design. Regarding the publications, the Anniversary year of 2015 has been productive in particular as several new publications emerged: “Five Decades of Knowledge Creation and Sharing”, “International Manual of Planning Practice – IMPP” (in the enriched and expanded format), “Ten Years of the UPATS-Results and Effects” and the on-line collection “Absorbing 50 years of SCARP”. We also published with other organizations, e.g., “Think Deep: Planning, development and use of underground space in cities”, the joint publication with ITACUS (http://isocarp.org/publications/).

ISOCARP OUTREACH

One of the key objectives for the period 2012-2015 was strengthening the position of ISOCARP in the global planning community by enhancing the existing and developing new collaborative and partnering links with international, regional and national organizations and bodies. Many activities of the President, Secretary General, all Vice Presidents and our members have been devoted to making that happen. It is almost impossible to mention all the initiatives, activities achievements, individual and group actions. A more detailed and comprehensive look could be attained by visiting our website or through the Secretariat, while only a fraction is brought up here, including those delivered by the President.

Expanding and strengthening collaborative links with UN and UN HABITAT

In addition to attending and participating in various UN and UN Habitat events, ISOCARP gained in visibility and recognition by having its members appointed to several important UN Committees.

1. President Milica Bajic Brkovic was invited by the UN SG Ban Ke-moon to join his High Level Advisory Team for Sustainable Transport for the period 2014-2016. The Advisory Team is delegated the task of „working with governments, transport providers, business, financial institutions, civil society and other stakeholders, to promote sustainable transport systems and their integration into development strategies and policies, including in climate action. This initiative represents one more step by the Secretary general in advancing climate action and in implementing his Five-Year Action Agenda in advancing climate actions around a post 2015 sustainable development agenda and implement it

https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/topics/sustainabletransport/highleveladvisorygroup
2. Vice President Shipra Narang Suri was elected co-Chair of the World Urban Campaign-WUC (www.worldurbancampaign.org), a platform that brings together a wide range of organizations world-wide, and is also the primary forum to carry the views of these actors into the New Urban Agenda for the Habitat III Conference in 2016.
3. Vice President Shipra Narang Suri was elected Vice President of General Assembly of Partners (GAP) (www.worldurbancampaign.org/resources).
4. Past President Ismael Fernandez Mejia was elected Chair of the Habitat Professional Forum.
5. Secretary General Didier Vancutsem was elected Chair of the Habitat III constituent group “Professionals”.
6. ISOCARP representatives actively participated in several UN Habitat meetings in Nairobi, Napoli, Medellin and elsewhere. The most visible and important was participation in WUF7 in 2014.
7. ISOCARP members participated in developing the Guidelines for Urban and Territorial Planning (Andries Geerse, Netherlands, Hongyang Wang, China, Christine Platt, South Africa, and Shipra Narang Suri, India).
8. Through the program of Technical Assistance, ISOCARP was contracted for serving in several UN Habitat assignments in Africa and Asia.
9. ISOCARP started the HABITAT III Task Force.

This year, UN Habitat won the Sam Embden Anniversary Achievements Award. The UN Under-Secretary-General and Executive Director of UN Habitat, Dr. Joan Clos accepted the award with appreciation and gratitude. His representative will attend the Congress to receive the award on his behalf.

**Cooperation with UNESCO**

Collaboration with UNESCO has a long history and goes back to the last decade of the twentieth century. The joint work started on developing the YPPs workshops and gradually reached the stage where ISOCARP holds an important role within the NGOs section.

1. Our representatives with UNESCO (Milica Bajic Brkovic, Janine Marin, Bernard Aubert, Philippe Vailant and Hari Baral) participated in many programs including: JPC "Eradication of Poverty"; JPC "Human Rights"; workshops on the NGO Day of the Liaison Committee; 20 years of the Convention on the Right of the Child; Africa and Sustainable Human Development; JPC "Dialogue between Cultures for Peace"; JPC "Science and Ethics"; Preparatory Group on the Human Rights implementation at the local level (member of the Steering Committee); Preparatory Group on the International Forum on "Water for All in Africa"; and International Forum on "Youth in Preservation of Tangible and Intangible Heritage".
2. ISOCARP representatives participated in the General Conference of UNESCO in 2013 and in the sessions of the PNG/NGO Committee of the Executive Board of UNESCO.
3. President Milica Bajic Brkovic was invited speaker to the UNESCO Congress “Culture in the Post 2015 Sustainable Development Agenda: Culture-Key to Sustainable Development”, organized in cooperation with UNESCO partners in China, in Hangzhou, May 2013. She delivered a speech “Culture as a Drive in Making Places: Reshaping Behavior at the Local Level” and participated in developing the UNESCO Declaration “Culture in the Post 2015 Sustainable
Development Agenda”. The Declaration was adopted in the Plenary Session, and presented and discussed in the UN General Assembly in 2013.

4. This year, ISOCARP representatives will attend the 38th Session of the General Conference. Milica Bajic Brkovic will take the floor in the Plenary Session on General Policy and deliver a speech on ‘ISOCARP Mission toward the Post 2015 Sustainable Development Agenda”.

**ISOCARP cooperation with other international and national organizations**

ISOCARP is known for its openness and willingness to collaborate with international and national agencies, organizations and bodies, and professional associations. The activities we have held during 2012-2015 are numerous. Many of our members started initiatives and carried out projects that contributed to enlarge the ISOCARP outreach and its visibility. Our partners and collaborating organizations include UN, UN-Habitat (Focal Point: S. Narang Suri), UNESCO (Representatives: M. Bajic Brkovic-by function, J. Marin, B. Aubert, P. Vaillant and H. Baral), UNDP, Council of Europe (B. Aubert, B. Hildebrand, G. Guillaume), UNECE (Representative: C. Lambert), AESOP (Focal Point: P. Lorens), Russian Association of Planners (Focal Point: P. Lorens), Moscow Urban Forum (Focal Point: P. Lorens), ICLEI (Focal Point: D. Vancutsem), UPSC (Focal Point: Shi Nan), Ulyanovsk Region Government (Focal Point: P. Lorens), OECD, IFHP, ECTP, IFLA, IAIA, ADUPC, TUP, KAP, CORP, Fundación Metropoli, City of Antwerp, and many others. Our members organized conferences and professional meetings in Germany, UK, Poland, Slovenia, Italy, Romania, Serbia, Scotland, Switzerland, Russia, Korea, China, Iran and others. I gratefully thank all of them for their contribution to the Society. More about each activity or event is available on our website or through the Secretariat.

All these activities have made us better visible on the global scene and better connected to international and regional practices; at the same time they have significantly impacted the ISOCARP membership core. We have also negotiated several MoUs, details are available with SG Didier Vancutsem and the Secretariat.

**President’s appearance in the events organized by other international and national organizations**

The activities that EXCO and our members took in collaborating with other organizations or participating in international events are many. Details are available in the annual reports, our website and the Secretariat. In this section I would like to present those I was involved in as they illustrate my efforts towards strengthening the position of ISOCARP among the professional planning association, and development of the new collaborative links with international, regional and national organizations and bodies.

1. As a keynote speaker I delivered the speech “Sustainable Cities and the Digital Realm: A Dynamic Relationship Connecting Opportunities and Development” in the Township and Urban Development Conference, Johannesburg, 2013. It provided an opportunity to bring ISOCARP to the region where we are underrepresented and meet colleagues from South Africa, Zimbabwe, Kenya, Nigeria, etc. This participation raised our visibility in several African countries and potentially may contribute to the membership enlargement from that region.

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2. In 2014 I was invited to participate in the Abu Dhabi Ascent organized by the UN SG Ban Ki-moon and Sultan Ahmed Al Jaber, UAE Minister of State, which was the main high-level meeting before the UN Climate Summit in 2014 (https://www.abudhabiascent2014.com/). The participation was followed by an invitation to join HLAG in 2014.

3. I was invited and served as a member of the World City Summit Program Committee 2013-2014, WCS, Singapore. Secretary General Didier Vancutsem and I attended the World City Summit in 2014 (http://www.worldcitiessummit.com.sg/). This participation generated several possibilities for developing new partnership within the global planning community, details of which are available with the SG.

4. During 2014-2015 I worked with several high level Abu Dhabi UPC officials on starting the UPC Urban Research Institute. This activity, still in progress, may result in raising our cooperation with the Abu Dhabi Planning Council to a higher level of collaboration, and potentially bring in new projects. The next meetings are scheduled November-December. VP YPP Piotr Lorens is also on the team.


6. I was invited by ICLEI and served on the Program Committee of the ICLEI Resilient Cities in 2013 and 2014 and participated in the 4th Global Forum on Urban Resilience and Adaptation. These engagements provided opportunities for developing closer links between ISOCARP and ICLEI which have finally resulted in the MoU and starting the URTF program. The negotiations were successfully completed by SG Didier Vancutsem in spring 2014.

7. I brought ISOCARP as a supporting partner to the conference “Beyond Big Plans-Let’s reinvent planning! “ which was organized as a pre-event to this year congress. The conference was held in Seoul, Korea, in March this year. In my function as President I officially opened the Conference and delivered the speech “Culture as a Drive in Making Places Sustainable: Translating Ideas into Reality”. I also moderated one of the Expert Working Groups and contributed to the forthcoming publication. President-Elect Ric Stephens participated in the event as well, he delivered the closing speech and moderated one of the Expert Working Groups as well. The participation of ISOCARP and its contribution to the conference was much appreciated and recognized by the Seoul Metropolitan Government and the Korean Association of Planners. The Seoul officials expressed an interest for enhancing ISOCARP’s presence there.

8. On invitation and presenting ISOCARP, I participated in the conference “L:NOTRE INSTITUTE- The International Landscape Forum Conference, Bucharest, April 2015. The event was part of the 50th Anniversary celebration of ISOCARP and our Society participated in several ways. I delivered a keynote speech, and together with Vice Presidents Piotr Lorens and Gabriel Pascariu participated in the ISOCARP Round Table, organized by VP Gabriel Pascariu.

9. During 2012-2015 I have participated in a number of other international events, e.g., in Metropolitan Solutions in Hannover, the RESPAG Conference in Belgrade or Sedlarjevo sreckanje
in Ljubljana, and delivered speeches in the events organized by NDs and national planning associations in Slovenia, Romania, Poland, Italy and Serbia.

**ISOCARP as a meeting place for planners’ activities worldwide**

In parallel to our increasing visibility and the raising recognition internationally we were receiving many requests for endorsing other organizations’ events. Each time the request was assessed against ISOCARP’s mission and character and the scope of our work. Many of them were accommodated through the EEA-Event Endorsing Agreement and respective information appeared on our website (the EEA specifies the rules and conditions of using the ISOCARP name, and the way the Society should be presented by a partner). This form of cooperation has enlarged our visibility in some parts of Africa and Asia as well as in the Middle East and South Europe. The added value is visible in a raising interest for us among the professionals from these regions, and potentials for enlarging the ISOCARP community.

**ISOCARP in the web world and social media**

2014 is marked by the launch of the new ISOCARP web site, enriched and expanded in content, with tools that provide a dynamic and vibrant communication platform for all members. Many compliments have been received for its content and attractive design, for which credits go to Pietro Elisei, VP Communication and Marketing, the Secretariat staff and EXCO members who contributed with their ideas, suggestions and collegial advice. Since its introduction the rate and frequency of accessing our pages has dramatically raised; today, our virtual community significantly exceeds the actual membership. This positive trend has been reinforced by introducing social media.

The EXCO has committed itself to continue ISOCARP’S expansion into the virtual world by adding additional opportunities for on-line meetings, working groups, and accommodating the needs of our members.

**50TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION**

The 50th Anniversary Celebration started in Gdynia and has gone as a year round sequence of events and activities. Max van den Berg dedicatedly served as Chair of the 50th Anniversary Celebration Committee since its establishment in January 2013, however, in June he had to withdraw due to his health situation. Max provided a driving force to the 50ACC by bringing in ideas, commitment and a very special liveliness in inspiring members to join the celebration. It was with great gratitude that we acknowledged the acceptance of Jef Van den Broeck to take over the position of Chair. He brought in new energy and together with his team dedicatedly worked on implementing the Anniversary Celebration Program. A number of projects have been accomplished: “IMPP-International Manual of Planning Practice” (Judith Ryser and Teresa Franchini), “Five Decades of Knowledge Creation and Sharing” (Judith Ryser), “Ten Years of UPATS-Results and Effects” (Bernd Scholl, Martin Dubbeling and Ana Perić) and an on-line collection “Absorbing 50 years of CARP” (Ulla Hoyer [http://isocarp.org/50th-anniversary-celebrations/](http://isocarp.org/50th-anniversary-celebrations/)).
Several NDs and member groups prepared national and regional events to which the President and some Vice- Presidents were invited to attend (www.isocarp.org). The formal launch of the 50th Anniversary took place in Gdynia, part of which was a Roundtable in honor of our former presidents. The Roundtable was dedicated to the beginnings of ISOCARP and its development over the past five decades. It was a wonderful opportunity for sharing experience and memories on how we started and how we have developed. For many who joined us only recently this event was an occasion to meet the former presidents in person and learn more about the Society.

The closing celebrating event is taking place in Rotterdam. Jef Van den Broeck and his team prepared the program which addresses some of the key achievements over the fifty years of our existence “The Highlights of Society-ISOCARP matters”, and will take a look into the challenging issues of the planning profession-“Planning and planners/urbanists matters”. Lorraine Gonzales, Bernd Scholl and Fernando Brandao Alvez will join the stage.

**ACTIVE MEMBERS MAKE ISOCARP STRONG**

*Enlargement and strengthening of the ISOCARP community*

The objective of enlarging and strengthening the ISOCARP community was among the priorities of my Presidency. In contrast to the results achieved in other areas, here only modest results have been reached.

Although each year many colleagues have joined the Society, the arrivals, almost as a rule, equalled a number of the non-paying and leaving members. The previous VP NDs and Membership Khalid El Adli worked hard on redirecting the trend, and the same objective guides the work of his successor VP Gabriel Pascariu.

We need to attract talented, knowledgeable and dedicated professionals. ISOCARP, as a world-wide network of professionals active in different areas of the planning profession can fulfil its mission only through the sound and world-wide membership. While ISOCARP members have been successful in many endeavours and have accomplished a lot in making ISOCARP internationally recognizable and visible, we have not yet achieved the targeted geographic presence, nor have we reached the optimal size for our effective functioning. We need to create new opportunities to attract our colleagues and evoke their interest to join us.

*Decentralizing ISOCARP*

The objective of decentralizing the Society came as a side-effect of the objectives prioritized for 2012-2015. The initiatives and activities taken by NDs, representatives to international organizations and individual members are numerous. They all have greatly contributed to the wider recognition of the Society and its place at the forefront of the planning profession.

The most visible indication of the change is this year congress organized by twelve towns in three countries. The initiative to transform the congress format and make it decentralized and open came from LOC and it is their genuine idea; yet, it reflects the shift taking place in the Society. I am convinced that this “experiment” will give us a lot of “food for thought”.
The recently redesigned web page and newly launched Newsletter contribute to it by providing the platform for all members to express their opinion, present their activities, or debate on planning issues and the future of ISOCARP. Adding social media brought in new opportunities for the efficient day-to-day networking among us all.

**SECURING THE FINANCIAL STABILITY OF THE SOCIETY**

Our finances are becoming more stable and I believe that the challenges we faced in 2011 and 2012 are behind us. Yet, as ISOCARP is growing so are its financial needs to support numerous activities and programs. During 2012-2015 the President and all Vice Presidents dedicatedly worked to secure ISOCARP’s financial stability. Some substantial improvements have been achieved. However, there is also a need to identify new areas of ISOCARP expertise and activities which will further generate income. Vice Presidents responsible for Events, Technical Assistance, UPATs and ISOCARP Institute should be encouraged to foster their activities in that direction and unlock new opportunities to strengthen the financial stability of the Society.

**WORDS OF APPRECIATION AND THANKS**

I started my Presidency with a motto: Acta not Verba! The work we have jointly carried out over the period of three years reflects our joint commitment to make it work. Working together, sharing knowledge and experience and supporting each other once again proved to be the strongest bond that keeps the ISOCARP community together.

The credits and the words of appreciation go to all EXCO members who passionately and with dedication worked on implementing the Program 2012-2015, in addition to the tasks they posted as the objectives of their own service time. Very special thanks go to ISOCARP representatives of international organizations, National Delegations and our committed members who took part in many initiatives and projects that EXCO developed, along with those they started on their own initiative. Nothing could have happened without the support of the Secretariat staff to whom I warmly thank for their time and service.

It has been an honour and a privilege to serve as President of ISOCARP. I thank you all for this great opportunity and for this wonderful professional experience.

To my dear colleague and friend Ric Stephens I wish a very successful Presidency. His knowledge, wisdom, experience and dedication will keep the ISOCARP flag high.

Thank you.

Milica Bajić-Barković, President  
Belgrade, September 2015