

PRESS RELEASE

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Seven Ingredients for Low Carbon Cities

45th ISOCARP Congress, Porto/Portugal, 18-22 October 2009

Porto has just hosted an extremely important international congress on the possibilities for low carbon cities, which is an especially hot topic at the moment given the concerns about climate change. A joint effort by the International Society of City and Regional Planners (ISOCARP) and the Faculty of Engineering at the University of Porto, this event attracted some 400 delegates from all over the world who came to debate the role of town and regional planning in tackling this growing threat to the future of our planet.

This is literally a hot topic because the science consensus is that it is mankind's activities over the 250 years since the industrial revolution that have led to the rise in atmospheric temperatures that we are experiencing now. The effects of that are already becoming clear, as is evident from the massive shrinkage of polar sea ice, the rising sea levels that threaten many of the world's largest cities, and the droughts and the other extreme weather events that have devastated lives in numerous countries. ISOCARP's congress took place in the immediate run-up to COP 15, a vitally important inter-governmental meeting in Copenhagen which will try to agree a successor to the Kyoto Protocol which, in 1997, started the faltering attempts to limit greenhouse gas emissions.

As the Porto Congress was able to reaffirm, much of the necessary action will take place at the level of the city where over half of the world's population now lives. Because they concentrate people and activities, our cities place a particular burden on resources. As has been debated at the Porto Congress, these will also be the places to concentrate the action if we are to be effective in moving towards a lower carbon world.

The Congress focused on the role of spatial planning and effective city management in bringing this about. It asked a number of big questions. In particular, what is the right way forward for individual cities; should they adapt to observed and anticipated changes in the climate, or should the emphasis be on mitigation, tackling the causes of climate change as part of the collective effort to reduce the build-up of greenhouse gases?

And how should cities be shaped and designed in detail so as to become more efficient in carbon terms?

In his concluding remarks to the Congress, the General Rapporteur Chris Gossop listed seven ingredients that together can foster the low carbon cities of tomorrow. These are as follows:

1. Urgency, Leadership and Vision

- Moving rapidly towards a low carbon future;
- Turning the approaches used in the successful low carbon schemes of today into the **mainstream** of tomorrow;
- Identifying and sharing **best practice** on low carbon approaches;
- Adopting **long term** visions and trajectories for the spatial planning of cities and regions to secure progressively lower carbon futures.

2. The developed and the developing world

- For the **developed nations** a commitment to secure an at least 80% reduction in carbon emissions by 2050;
- In the fast **industrialising developing countries**, a commitment towards emission reduction and low carbon developments (in line with what emerges from Copenhagen);
- In the **poorer developing countries**, an emphasis on new planning approaches, including adaptation to protect the vulnerable;
- An avoidance everywhere of carbon intensive developments.

3. A three pillar approach embracing

- Public policy development
- Fostering awareness and lifestyle change
- Technological innovation

4. **Public policy - development at all levels** from the international to that of the City, the neighbourhood and the individual project.

5. Integrated, inclusive planning:

- **Spatial planning policies** that integrate land use, transport, energy and waste planning;
- An emphasis on the **compact city** but taking into account the particular regional and local circumstances;
- Policies that embrace all other aspects of the green and blue environment;
- Policies that aim to secure genuine **greenhouse gas savings**;
- City policies that are in the context of those for the wider region;
- Policies that extend from the City to embrace the **rural hinterland**;
- **Energy Planning** at the local level.

6. Carbon conscious design

- Energy efficient, resource conscious cities, neighbourhoods and individual buildings;
- Places that are well connected but with reduced dependence on the car;
- Places where networks of open space, landscaping and opportunities for food growing are fully integrated with the built environment.

7. Delivering Low Carbon Cities

- The delivery of growth that is zero carbon;
- The **retrofitting** of existing development to secure maximum gains in efficiency against challenging targets that are in line with those set nationally and internationally;
- Strategic action to upgrade the efficiency of the existing building stock;
- Innovative organisational and funding arrangements to deliver the necessary action programmes;
- Training to secure the necessary skills.

A specific outcome of the Congress is Review 05, a 250 page book on the topic of Low Carbon Cities. This contains numerous case studies of low carbon approaches in different parts of the world. The studies range from the global to the local. They include perspectives from UN HABITAT, the European Environment Agency and individual cities such as Portland Oregon, Cambridge England and the host city Porto.

Review 05 is available at the ISOCARP Headquarters The Hague (isocarp@isocarp.org) at the price of Euro 30,- (ISOCARP Members pay Euro 25,-).

