



Congress Theme

Theme

The 2006 ISoCaRP Congress will explore the contemporary challenges and emerging opportunities that cities are facing vis-à-vis influential forces that can be summarised as integrative and disintegrative. This year's framework builds on themes examined in previous ISoCaRP congresses, such as globalisation and its influence on planning (2003), the management of the city region (2004) and the spaces produced by and required for the "creative economy" (2005). By integrative forces we refer to, inter alia, strategies formulated by urban stakeholders to position their cities in the global arena, including institutional actions undertaken via growth-friendly policy and market initiatives realised through mega projects. These set of efforts aiming for urban competitiveness have nevertheless revealed the other side of the coin –how cities have become exposed to tides of disintegrative forces, which, scholars assert, has caused urban systems to be drawn to spatial, cultural, social and economic fragmentation.

The interplay of this framework, at remarkable magnitudes of scale and speed, has perhaps uncovered a gap between the planner and the doer. Is planning a hurdle for economic growth based on real estate industries? Is rapid urban development just non-sustainable land speculation? Observers of the current status of our cities might conclude that there could be some truth in both questions. It is a fact that construction and property industries are pillars to the world economy and is also undeniable that cities in both the developed and developing world are exposed to escalating pressures, as we have witnessed in the social unrest occurred in December of 2005 in the heart of Europe.

Starting point

Hosted in a city that embodies diversity and mixture both geographically and culturally, the Istanbul dialogue hopes to address the Congress' framework through hands-on narratives and practical examples. Authors are encouraged to present case studies that report on how seemingly conflictive integrative and disintegrative forces affect the shape of our cities at socio-economical, institutional and cultural levels. Contributions are expected to expose how planning can go beyond a regulatory duty to play a indispensable role in preparing urban strategies; detect how plans can assimilate multidisciplinary thinking and participatory schemes so that they mean more than colourful drawings with modest implementation potential; suggest how planning could balance the immediacy of development as dictated by the market and a sustainable framework with a broader horizon; and propose methods to synchronise planning and production of cities. Views from varied urban stakeholders are particularly welcomed.

Parallel Sessions

The Congress will consist of four parallel sessions addressing a particular set of issues:

Parallel Session 1: Socio-economic implications

Papers presented in this Session will focus on the effects of integration and disintegration forces in urban socio-economic issues, such as:

- What are the main causes of socio-economic polarisation and which remedies have been successfully applied?
- Can the effect of the neo-liberal agenda on urban structures be mapped?
- Can planning have a say in market-driven urban development?
- How can the plan reconcile equity, social cohesion and quality of life with the dynamics brought by globalisation?
- How are regional differences mirrored in urban disintegration?
- Which strategies have succeeded in being economically and socially sustainable?
- Do urban regeneration projects bring about gentrification?

Parallel Session 2: Institutional implications

Submissions to this Session should touch upon issues pertinent to governance and urban development agents, and in particular how instruments drafted to guide urban development are affected by, or can influence integration and disintegration forces. Topics to be dissected contain the following:

- Examples of initiatives undertaken by local governments to respond to external forces.
- Examples of exportable best practices in governance and urban management.
- Examples of multi-stakeholder urban strategies, devised in cooperation of local governments, public development agencies, planning bodies, economic councils, public-private partnerships, real estate developers, and community pressure groups amongst others.
- Which institutions have been created to better address contemporary challenges at local level?
- Implications of the progressive privatisation of urban development: case studies.
- How can the planner add value to urban agents thus minimising disjoint between thinking and acting?
- How can the administration normalise without putting a corset on urban entrepreneurialism?
- Examples of participatory schemes at vision, development and implementation stages.

Parallel Session 3: Cultural implications

In this Session, papers are expected to discuss the dilemmas of retaining a cultural identity and a territorial legacy versus the demands put forward by the competitive global city. Forces of integration and disintegration frequently put to a test the linkage between the vernacular and the spaces of economic progress. Issues to be discussed include:

- Examples of plans that incorporate identity as a key factor –through safeguarding heritage or “inventing” it.
- Examples of plans that do not take into account identity as a factor – can these cities remain competitive after erasing built memory?
- How can planners contribute to reconcile the seemingly opposing natures of the “cut and paste city” and the genius loci
- Has city making become a commoditised routine that replicates the iconic and perhaps cosmetic side of architecture?
- Do cities engaged in standardised regeneration schemes lose their distinctiveness?

Parallel Session 4: Market Perspectives: Cross-sectoral Views on Integration and Disintegration

This Session is conceived as an Open Platform in which participants can discuss the status quo of the planning profession, wherever acting as scholar, official or practitioner, and the relationship with other urban stakeholders. Contributions to this Session are asked to investigate if and demonstrate how the inclusive, multi-disciplinary plan is a possible antidote to the socio-economic fragmentation of our cities. Special interest will be cast upon implemented projects that have re-shaped cities and the assessment of how they have contributed (or not) to create a better, economically sound and cohesive city.

Parallel Session 5: Theory of Planning in Integration and Disintegration

This Session amalgamates theoretical initiatives on the city, its assets and instruments, which could be put in place to help urban areas to cope with forces of integration and disintegration. Topics include regeneration policies, participatory planning for diversity and social cohesion, city attractiveness, marketing and promotion, tourism, and other instances of integrative planning towards sustainability.