



## Introduction

*A lively and participatory format for the Bilbao Congress – Plenary Sessions and Parallel Workshops, Mayors’ Summit; Young Planners’ Workshops and Planning Exhibitions.*

The 2005 ISoCaRP Congress will focus on the more recent transformations that some cities are already facing as a result of the growing importance of what is known as the “creative economy”. Highly experienced professionals, such as planners, urban stakeholders, economists, sociologists, policy scientists and politicians, as well as national and local city officials will bring to Bilbao their experiences and discuss one of the most actual issues in urban policy and local economic development.

As creativity and innovation gain prominence as driving forces of in driving economic growth, “the ability to compete and prosper in the global economy goes beyond trade in goods and services and flows of capital and investment” (John Howkins, *The Creative Economy*, 2001). This new situation opens a set of opportunities for cities in general - and not only for the major ones which are already playing an important role in the global economy - to compete in attracting creative people and to develop new skills, with clear consequences for their urban vitality and position in the urban hierarchy. As competition between cities became more acute, one of the major preoccupations of both politicians and professionals is to find ways to improve their attractiveness, both for business and people, especially those belonging to the "creative community", which is growing at a fairly rapid pace in Europe and in the USA. Cities should become places where people want to live, work or visit.

On other hand, as public capital becomes a scarce resource, innovative finance models are needed to provide infrastructure and improve the urban environment of our cities. This means to put in practice new paradigms for partnerships and public participation. The development of cooperative planning processes, together with potential investors and landowners, the creation of a collective vision for the city’s future, as well as more creative and talented local authorities, are key issues for the success of new urban policies and local economic development.

The main topics of the Congress are

1. How to re-invent cities to become “creative cities”?

2. How to shape urban space to become “Spaces for the Creative Economy”?
3. How to encourage smart communities and talented city administrations?

The city of Bilbao, with its internationally known experience of re-shaping its economic base and quality of its urban environment, is an ideal setting to debate this theme and to discuss the major challenges and opportunities that this new creative economy offers to the 21st century city with mayors from innovative cities around the world.

It is hoped that the 2005 Congress will be an appropriate forum to present, develop and assess these ongoing experiences, to relate them to current urban policies, and to draw up recommendations for a more competent management of our cities.

*- Fernando Nunes da Silva, General Rapporteur -*