ISFAHAN REGIONAL CENTER FOR TECHNOLOGY INCUBATOR & SCIENCE PARK DEVELOPMENT
(UNDER THE AUSPICES OF UNESCO)
NEWSLETTER

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IRIS Supports ISTT in Hosting the 35th IASP World Conference

- *Introduction*
- *Opening Ceremony*
- *Preconference Seminar*
- *Session Contents*
- *B2B Meetings*
- *IRIS Signs MOU with APTE*
- *Conference Delegates Take Orientation Tour to ISTT Organized by IRIS*

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" Towards sustainable cities and communities: Fostering innovation ecosystems"

Introduction

The 35th IASP World Conference on STPs (Science and Technology Parks) and AOIs (Areas of Innovation) was hosted by Isfahan Science and Technology Town (ISTT) with the support and partnership of Isfahan Regional Center for Technology Incubator and Science Park Development under the auspices of UNESCO (IRIS) in content and execution. The conference was held in the heart of Iran, at the beautiful and historic Abbasi Hotel from the 2nd to the 5th of September, 2018.

The conference theme was chosen to be " Towards sustainable cities and communities: Fostering innovation ecosystems" which was exactly in correspondence to one of the sustainable development goals adopted by the UN.

In September 2015, the UN adopted 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to guide global action and investment for sustainable development around the world over the next 15 years.

Sustainable Development refers to the appropriate management of financial, natural, basic and human resources to achieve the desired consumption pattern that will be possible through utilization of technical facilities and suitable structures to continuously and satisfactorily meet the needs of present and future generations. In other words, sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

Among the 17 SDGs proposed by the UN, **SDG 11** "Make cities inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable", was strongly related to the main theme of the conference.

Collaboration between different actors and exchange of knowledge between countries are crucial for the successful implementation of the 2030 Agenda: as typical triple helix organizations, STPs and AOIs can play a central role in the process.

STPs and AOIs are powerful tools to support the efforts of their cities in implementing the Agenda 2030 and as such the theme was suitable for bringing together experts from STPs and other AOIs, technology-based incubators, academia, the public sector and businesses from around the world to discuss and debate in depth the latest industry trends and achievements contributing to the advancement of this objective.

With the strong existing correlation between the theme of the conference and the UN adopted goals, IRIS as an organization under the auspices of UNESCO thought the support and successful organization of the conference to be in line with its main mandate and thus offered its assistance to the organizer of the conference (ISTT).

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Opening Ceremony

More than 500 representatives from 50 countries participated in the conference and its many activities.

During the opening ceremony of the conference Prof. Klaus Kunzmann, Emeritus Professor of Spatial Planning at Technische Universitat Dortmund, gave the key note speech on *Knowledge in the Sustainable City of the Future***.**

Prof. Klaus Kunzmann has advised the European Commission, the Council of Europe and the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) as an expert in spatial planning. He was a member of the expert panels for the partially EU-funded "Future of London Study" and the "Study for the Future of Berlin" on behalf of the European Commission and the Land Senate of Berlin. During 2006 and 2007 he was invited to serve as a member of the international scientific advisory council to the strategic plan for the province of Milan and from 1998 to 2004, he was a member of the scientific advisory council of D.A.T.A.R. (Délégation à l'aménagement du territoire et à l'action régionale), Paris, France.

Prof. Klaus Kunzmann was also one of the co-organizers of the 3rd Knowledge Cities World Summit in Melbourne, Australia in 2010.

In his opening remarks Prof. Kunzman emphasized the role of knowledge as a crucial precondition for local economies and sustainable cities of the future. He went on to elaborate that knowledge development and sustainable development rely on two separate policy arenas and because of this it is uncertain what role will innovative knowledge development can play in the process of sustainable city building.

Prof. Kunzman introduced the concept of "The Quadruple Helix" to the attendees of the opening ceremony and explained the shift from a dominating industry-government period during industrialization to a growing cooperation between university-industry-government-and civil society in the Knowledge Society. He elaborated that the close cooperation of the four pillars are key to knowledge development in cities that have already become increasingly knowledge-based.

Prof. Kunzman concluded his address by stating that sustainable urban development is not a blueprint! It requires long processes of learning and incremental action, longer term perspectives and impressive visions of a sustainable world that guide incremental piecemeal activities towards sustainable urban development. He also mentioned that for building sustainable knowledge cities, institutions like IRIS must facilitate and strengthen:

•National policy environments favorable to sustainable development
•National instruments and support programs
•Stick and carrot policies
•Holistic minded sustainable local governance
•Local economic milieus favorable of sustainable development
•Local research and development institutions
•Environmental industries and creative start-ups
•Responsible sustainable land policies
•Learning from success stories and local experience and activities
•Media Support
•Local leadership

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Iran's Minister of Science, Research and Technology, Dr. Mansour Gholami, also addressed the participants of the conference at the opening ceremony in which he expressed his contentment in Iran becoming the host of this international conference and hoped that the conference could bridge the distance between international experts active in entrepreneurism and innovation and transfer the knowledge and experience of those more developed to parties looking to learn and expand.

Dr. Gholami also highlighted Iran's domestic infrastructure for innovation and entrepreneurism by introducing its many science and technology parks and incubators and also their strong ties with the country's many universities. He explained that Iran started it's development of incubators and science parks 25 years ago and has since then come a long way in becoming one of the leading countries in the region. He went on to express his delight in this achievement which has resulted in the establishment of the UNESCO center, IRIS, in Iran which actively participates in the dissemination of knowledge and experience internationally accumulated in the field of entrepreneurism and innovation and is also a supporter and partner of the conference.

Dr. Sorena Sattari, Iran's Vice-President for Science and Technology also spoke at the opening ceremony where he elaborated that Iran has the biggest start-up community in the Middle East and has thus ventured to reduce the dependency of its economy to the oil industry by investing and developing the knowledge-based economy within the last two decades. He also elaborated that such international conferences can pave the way for the development of working relations leading to cross border programs and studies on knowledge based projects.

Dr. Mehdi Abtahi, ISTT President and board member of IRIS also spoke at the opening ceremony where he extended his warm welcome as the host organization.

Dr. Abtahi briefly explained the activities of both ISTT and IRIS and hoped that the conference would promote networking and international relations amongst ISTT, IRIS and other Iranian STPs and also facilitate further explorations for new ways of establishing cooperation with all who were present at the conference.

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Preconference Seminar

With the support of IRIS and ISTT, the IASP Pre-conference seminar brought together newcomers to the science park industry to hear from six experts in various aspects of STP management in a one-day event moderated by IASP's Chief Operations Officer Ebba Lund. With a special focus on the main building blocks of science parks and areas of innovation, attendees from around the world had the chance to compare experiences and discuss their unique challenges.

The preconference seminar had 35 participants coming from Argentina, Italy, Nigeria, Romania and Iran.
All participants were interested to learn the fundamental issues of STP/AOI management from their peers who had years of experience in the field and to shorten their learning curve about the industry. It was also a unique opportunity to connect with international colleagues facing the same problems and challenges.

The Seminar had a very dynamic and practical approach and was designed to meet the needs of its attendees, basing its content on their questions and comments. The training seminar consisted of 6 sessions, each divided in two parts: a presentation by the expert, followed by questions and answers, and a discussion among all participants.

The presentations started with the Director General of IASP, Luis Sanz. His presentation was about "*Mechanisms for Innovation & Knowledge Transfer*".

The presentations continued with Dr. Mclean Sibanda from the Bigen Africa Group talking about " *Science park manager Nightmares*'.

Afterwards Martin Goroško, Startup Incubator Manager of Tallinn Science Park in Estonia proceeded to make a presentation on "*Business incubation, business creation*".

The presentations continued with Ewa Kocińska-Lange, Deputy Director of Poznan Science and Technology Park in Poland who talked about "*Science park Services*"

Lourdes Cruz, the Director of Business Development & Investment Promotion in Parque Tecnologico de Andalucía in Spain came afterwards and gave a presentation on "*Science park marketing and communication*".

The last presentation was given by Mostafa Karimian Eghbal, the Internal Advisor to ISTT about "*The governance of STPs and other AOIs*".

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Session Contents

The many sessions of knowledge sharing were spread across the 3 days of the conference. Each session was dedicated to a specific subject related to sustainability of cities and innovative ecosystems. The sessions were divided to 6 plenary and 6 parallel sessions:

PLENARY SESSION 1 - Cities, STPs and other areas of innovation: challenges and strategies

The papers presented in this session addressed the main issues that were currently relevant to the STP and AOI industry including:

How can new age STPs and AOIs contribute to the development of sustainable cities?

How does being integrated/embedded in a city affect the concept of space and boundaries at STPs?

In terms of sustainable development, what are the main challenges of developing urban areas of innovation?

What can STPs/AOIs and their companies do to tackle problems such as water scarcity and flooding, and to ensure access of large segments of the population to clean, cheap energy resources? All this leads to one central issue: how can STPs and AOIs contribute to the SDG 11 target, such as reducing the adverse per capita environmental impact of cities?

PLENARY SESSION 2 - New tools and functions for cities and areas of innovation

In recent years concepts like Living Labs or Fab Labs, and disruptive technologies such as 3D printing and virtual reality are gaining momentum.

The creation of Artificial intelligence and Internet of Things have also proposed solutions for new city challenges, such as security, healthcare, logistics, transportation, education, and others. Exploring what the role of STPs and AOIs can be in pushing forward these new tools in collaboration with city governments, is considered a very important topic for the world and as such was discussed extensively during this session.

Various SDGs were connected with these issues, particularly SDG 12, "Build sustainable infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation", which served as a valuable input for this theme.

PLENARY SESSION 3 - Cities, STPs and other AOIs: attracting talent

The session was dedicated to exploring what features make cities attractive for human talent and innovative firms? How can STPs contribute to increasing a city's attractiveness? How can they benefit from their cities when it comes to talent attraction and management? Themes such as talent flow and circulation, brain drain, knowledge worker migrations, and what can STPs and AOIs do about them were also raised and discussed. This theme was closely linked to SDG 8.

PLENARY SESSION 4 - PITCH: STPs in the new proactive cities and areas of innovation: winning strategies

One of the major changes that we have witnessed in the worldwide landscape of polices for economic development is the new proactive role that many cities are taking on. Until recently, science and technology parks were the main protagonists in developing the knowledge economy, but more and more they are sharing this job with other actors, among which cities and local administrations stand out. The emergence of new actors require a readjustment in the status quo to ensure maximum efficiency and to avoid redundancies. To this end plenary *cont.*

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cont. session 4 session explored how STPs can better adapt to the new scenario: what should their value proposition be to the cities they work with? What should their specificities and their specialization be? How can parks add the maximum value to the city and reinforce their relevance and their own importance? In sum, what strategic or tactical changes should STPs adopt in order to make the best out of this changed scenario?

PLENARY SESSION 5 - Open Innovation and City Challenges

STPs are increasingly involved in stimulating Open Innovation processes, inviting their companies to participate in numerous events and organizing such events themselves. During this session presentations on "how Open Innovation activities can provide solutions to the major challenges of the cities of today" were given and also experience and knowledge was shared on the current and foreseeable city needs and challenges, as well as public procurement issues and what the role of STPs and AOIs in these processes and activities could be.

PLENARY SESSION 6- Entrepreneurship for growth and sustainability in STPs and AOIs

As well as hosting mature and established companies, a major role of most STPs and AOIs is to encourage entrepreneurship, which is conducive to the creation of new knowledge and technology-based companies. For this purpose STPs and AOIs use different tools such as business incubators, business accelerators or spin-off mechanisms.

Plenary session 6 was dedicated to deepening the understanding and knowledge of participants about these types of mechanisms, especially linking them to the ever-growing connection and collaboration between STPs and cities.

This session elaborated the new trends or innovations that exist in business incubation, acceleration and spin-offs. The impact that the stronger interaction between STPs and cities have on them, and how UN SDGs trigger the creation of new companies that will develop technologies and solutions addressing the SDG targets?

Parallel session 1 - Innovation through a prism

This session was dedicated to exploring the different activities of STPs and AOIs around the world. The perspectives of each individual country or organization towards providing services were examined and a deeper understanding on how these services could result in achieving the set SDGs was gained. During a presentation by a fellow member from Palestine the highlights of strengthening the innovation process to alleviate the human condition in difficult situations was also elaborated.

Parallel session 2 - Global alliances for internationalization

SDG number 17 specifically addresses the need for partnerships to successfully reach the desired outcome specified in these goals. Such partnership must happen between the different elements involved in all these processes, such as between the public and private sectors, but also between countries.

In this session successful international partnerships were explored and learned from and suggestions to create or implement new types of collaborations that can enhance the growth of STP networks and its members whilst contributing to the UN adopted SDGs were made.

Part of the session was devoted to How can individual STPs benefit from the existence of this type of partnerships and what kind of reforms traditional international structures might need to adjust to new challenges.

Also it was debated whether these traditional international organizations and alliances still play a significant role and what are the prospects of new models of international platforms such as the Belt and Road Initiative and the European Horizon 2020 Program?

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Parallel session 3 - The Productive City (Factory City)

Many countries and cities have rediscovered the need to recover industrial activities. New industrialization plans are being outlined everywhere and cities will be increasingly involved. Such plans can no longer be in the old industry model. Concepts such as smart industrialization or industry 4.0 are gaining momentum; the strong emergence of technologies such as 3D printing (additive manufacturing), robotics, virtual reality, new materials and the like will certainly make a difference. Fab Labs may well become the industrial campuses of the future. How will all this affect STPs and cities? How can STPs and other AOIs benefit from these new technologies? What growth opportunities could they create for our STP industry?

Parallel session 4 - Entrepreneurship for growth and sustainability

The theme of this session specifically referred to six of the seventeen Sustainable Development Goals "SDGs". This session described and analyzed the contribution of services provided to start-ups and knowledge -based SMEs to the achievement of SDGs and also the programs and services to be implemented in Science and Technology Parks and Areas of Innovation to support these efforts. It was discussed that the specific services needed can vary depending on the type of companies and their stage of development, but in general terms, many suggestions were given. Amongst the prominent suggestions given and debated was considering the benefits in growth and sustainability provided by organizing STPs or AOIs in specialized technology clusters. The use of technology clusters allows for more efficient cross-fertilization of ideas as each cluster faces somewhat different challenges and opportunities.

Parallel session 5 - New roles and opportunities for STPs in cities, regions and AOIs

According to the Quadruple Helix Model, government, industry, academia and civil participants work together to co-create the future and drive structural changes far beyond the scope of what any one organization or person could do alone. The roles of each sector in regards to shaping our future cities and towns have changed over the years placing emphasis on partnerships between the factors that lead to the achievement of SDGs within different regions. This session was devoted to speakers from around the world sharing their experience of co-operation which has lead to the improvement of the quality of life in their home towns. Several examples were also provided on how the engagement of all actors of a science and technology hub can contribute to addressing issues related to sustainability.

Parallel session 6 - The 'Lab factor' Living labs, Fab labs and STPs

In order to develop an attractive sustainable society based on people's needs and lives it's important to find more holistic solutions and new business models for an integrated development of cities and societies.
Building, infrastructure, mobility and other areas must be connected with each other in many ways both physically, digitally and in new organizations models. Decision-making processes are more complex and the need of simulation and visualization will expand due to the complexity on all levels. This session was dedicated to sharing knowledge and experience on how to design different platforms (Living Labs, Fab Labs) in which knowledge can be accumulated and practical activities can be implemented to strengthen the innovative capacity of small and medium-sized companies. It was noted that the mix of larger and smaller companies, academia, cities and already existing innovation platforms and projects are crucial success factors in developing new services and new companies at Innovation Labs.
How different platforms are to be built, which actors should participate and what activities should take place within these frameworks were also discussed during this session.

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B2B Meetings

As a side program of the conference main agenda, a B2B meeting platform was set up several months prior to the conference to further facilitate the exchange of knowledge and enhance networking amongst the different member organizations and experts of the STP and AOI industry. Each 25 minute session was scheduled beforehand between interested parties to stimulate partnerships and mutual cooperation.

In total 200 official meetings took place out of which:

- 170 meetings were between foreign and Iranian institutes and individuals
- 30 meetings were between different foreign institutes and individuals

As a result of these meetings many consultations were given on different topics and a groundwork for future partnerships and agreements was laid.

Exhibition

An exhibition area was set up for interested parties who wanted to showcase the achievements of their STP or AOI or the achievements of their settled companies. The conference participants had the opportunity to walk through the exhibition area and get a tangible understanding about the many activities of the science park community around the world. The exhibition covered 26 plots allocated to international and domestic STPs and organizations including Cartuja Science and Technology Park (Spain), Atlanpole Science and Technology Park (France), Tsinghua University Science Park (Tuspark– China), IASP itself and many other Iranian STPs.

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IRIS Signs MOU with the Association of Science & Technology Parks of Spain (APTE)

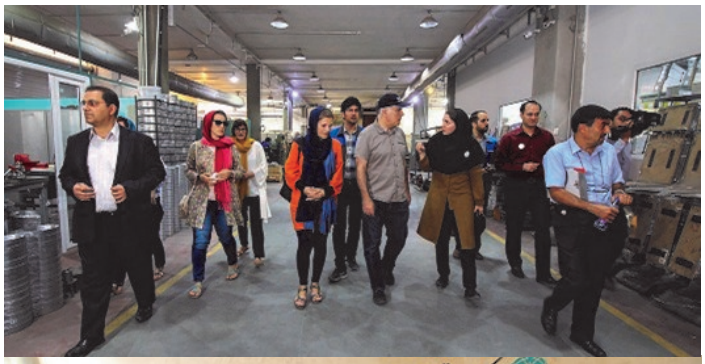
One of the many side benefits of supporting the conference for Isfahan Regional Center for Technology Incubator and Science park Development (IRIS) was signing a memorandum of understanding with the Association of Science and Technology Parks of Spain (APTE) on the last day of the conference.

The main objective pursued under this understanding is to strengthen the relationship between the Spanish and Iranian science and technology parks (STPs) and promote the exchange of experiences and further business collaboration between the parks, their companies and their R&D&I entities. A twining agreement on scientific, technological and cultural aspects of the Spanish –Iranian STP understanding is also hoped to be promoted via this MOU.

ISTT was also able to sign 3 Memorandums of Understanding (MOU) with its international counterparts from Spain, France and China.

Conference Delegates Take Orientation Tour to ISTT Organized by IRIS

In response to the popular demand of the conference delegates who were interested in the innovative ecosystem of Iran and who wanted to learn from the knowledge and experience accumulated at ISTT, an orientation tour of the town, its Parks, Incubators and many resident companies was organized by IRIS. This tour incorporated interested international experts from Nigeria, South Africa, Thailand, Turkey, Poland, Austria, Sweden, Spain, France, England, Romania Russia, Brazil , etc. Many of the parties participating on the tour were either new to the industry or looking for hands-on experience to help in setting up a new STP or managing a newly set up organization. This tour opened doors for IRIS to organize new training seminars for managing STPs and AOIs in other developing countries.



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