The Eurocarto heritage

Marek Baranowski

Institute of Geodesy and Cartography, Poland

In 1970's a group of scientists in the fields of cartography and geo sciences research, as well as practitioners in the USA and Canada decided to initiate a series of conferences named Auto Carto. Some years latter one of European Fathers of GIS and automated cartography – David Bickmore of the UK proposed to the European cartographic community another conference focused on same scope of investigations like North American colleagues. He invented a name of the conference Eurocarto.

The first one has been held in December 1981 in Oxford, where in 1964 David Bickmore and Ray Boyle presented "The Oxford System of Automatic Cartography" to our community. At that conference there were discussed a key issues of the computer assisted, or computer aided, or automated cartography, like thematic mapping with the use of computers, automated name placement or generalisation algorithms.

There were present a number of outstanding British and non-British cartographers of that time. Namely, Joel Morrison (USA) – future ICA President, Stein Bie (Norway), Tom Waugh (UK) – an author of GIMMS system, Peter McMaster (UK) – future Ordnance Survey General Director, Mike Klein (UK) – an owner of the first GIS private company in UK, and many others. At the closing session we agreed that the conference should be repeated in other European countries.

The series of the conferences has been endorsed by the International Cartographic Association as an important contribution of European cartographers to the discussion on the modern cartography. In the next years 13 conferences, following the first one took place in many location in Europe (all together 14), namely:

- Eurocarto II in Bolkesjö – 1983,
- Eurocarto III in Graz – 1984,
- Eurocarto IV in Frankfurt am Main – 1985,

- Eurocarto V in Paris – 1986,
- Eurocarto VI in Brno – 1987,
- Eurocarto VII in Enschede – 1989,
- Eurocarto VIII in Palma de Maiorca – 1990,
- Eurocarto IX in Pultusk – 1991,
- Eurocarto X in Oxford – 1992,
- Eurocarto XI in Kiruna – 1993,
- Eurocarto XII in Copenhagen – 1994,
- Eurocarto XIII in Ispra – 1995,
- Eurocarto XIV in Lyngby – 1997.

Main focus of the conferences has been initially directed to the digital cartography, evolving to GIS relevant topics. In 1990's some sessions have been devoted to the first attempts of establishing a spatial information infrastructure, namely by David Bickmore's idea of the World Digital Database for Environmental Science.

Each of the Eurocarto conferences has had its own character and own thematic scope. They varied from methodological approaches (like digital cartographic modelling) thru regional related issue (like *Mapping Technology for Societies in Transition*) to European level considerations (like *Pan-European Environmental Policy: some relevant GIS applications*).

Most of the issues presented and discussed during the Eurocarto meetings has been already solved and today seems so obvious. However, for a long time they provided a unique opportunity for European cartographers to meet and discuss the most essential issues of contemporary cartography and Geographic Information Science. Many of participants of those conferences are still active in our discipline and their experiences of the past scientific events can be used in the new series of conferences for European cartographers and GI scientists.