

President's Report September 2023

As ISCA continues to grow and develop, it has been my great pleasure to serve as ISCA President and Chair of the Board. As we hold our second AGM, I am delighted to reflect on our association's progress and the positive impact we have made together. In this report, I review our accomplishments and assess the state of our association.

Achievements

Over the last year, ISCA has maintained a series of key activities and progressed several strategic goals. Most notable is the ongoing series of events supporting the application of social capital and the dissemination of research findings, and the launch of a community platform. Below are some further details and highlights.

Events

Events have been a core feature of the development of our association, and they have continued with vigour in the past year. In addition to webinars, we have held regular networking events, PhD sessions, discussion group sessions, research design workshops, and an introductory session for researchers. Interest in our events continues to be strong, with most of our sessions receiving more than 100 registrations. The events committee continues developing new ideas for social capital events and remains focused on holding an international conference on social capital as soon as it is feasible.

Community building and interest groups

In May 2023, we launched our community platform on Mighty Networks. Community building has been a key strategic focus this year, and it aligns with ISCA's aim to "cultivate a thriving global community focused on social capital research and practice". Many of the people I talk to have described feeling isolated. Social capital is one of the most popular concepts across the social sciences, but often, only one or two people in a department are researching it, leaving people feeling alone. We believe establishing a strong community is an important priority for ISCA.

The community platform on Mighty Networks includes space for developing interest groups that can bring together people with similar interests in social capital. The aim is to create collaborative and engaging spaces where members can freely exchange ideas, insights, and experiences related to topics related to social capital.

Members can access the community from any web browser and can also download the App to access the platform from a phone or tablet.

Newsletter and member communications

In recent months, we have started a quarterly newsletter called *The Bridge*. Communication is a critical part of building an association, and this newsletter keeps members updated on association activities and is also a resource about social capital and the latest developments. We anticipate that this newsletter will expand and evolve as our association grows and develops.

Membership

Since membership opened on June 1st last year, we have seen rapid growth. As of September 1st, ISCA had 186 current members. We are actively engaging with researchers and practitioners who may be interested in joining our association. Our association needs to grow our membership and encourage members to get involved in our community and activities. Every member can contribute to this important task by inviting colleagues and connections to join the association.

In the last year, we have continued supporting members in every country. Not only are our membership fees tiered by country income level, but we have also established a fee reduction program to make membership even more accessible. We do not want financial reasons to be a barrier to accessing membership in the association.

Thanks to anonymous donations, we have extended our sponsored membership program from 20 to 60 memberships for students from low-income and middle-income countries. This is a fantastic initiative, but we need more students to take advantage of this opportunity. If any members know anyone who would benefit from this initiative, please contact us for more information.

Governance

The Board has maintained regular meetings throughout the period. The Board has met monthly, and committees have been established to progress specific tasks and initiatives. The board meetings have been generally well attended, and detailed minutes have been kept. Some directors have experienced periods of unavailability due to work and other commitments, and a few directors have chosen to step down or not seek re-appointment.

During this period, the board voted to appoint two active members to fill vacant positions. These members were Kathryn Dilworth and Alice Campbell, both of whom are seeking election to the board of directors at this AGM. Kathryn and Alice have actively contributed to ISCA, and they have continued to be some of the most active and valued members.

Committees have been established to progress the operational tasks of the association. A board member chaired each committee, and members have volunteered to join these committees. There are currently five operational committees: Administration and Human Resources, Membership, Marketing & Communications, Events, Publications, and Nomination.

Challenges

As a relatively new association, ISCA requires a lot of volunteer work to progress its mission and grow and develop its membership and activities. The burden continues to fall on too few people, and we need to be mindful of volunteer burnout. There is a great deal of passion and interest in ISCA, and we need to find more opportunities for people to get involved in the association's operations. As a collective initiative, we need people to be empowered to undertake activities that progress the association and its mission. I welcome members to reach out and see how they can contribute. The board welcomes proposals for new activities that align with the strategic plan and anyone who would like to contribute to existing activities.

An ongoing challenge for ISCA stems from the volunteer nature of our board and committees. As volunteers, everyone has busy schedules and commitments outside of ISCA, making it difficult to progress ISCA's priorities quickly. This means we need to take a long-term view and appreciate our steady progress. The board has undertaken strategic planning to ensure our effort is efficient and focused. ISCA is incredibly fortunate to have directors such as Tara Jacobsen, who has provided expert guidance through this process. The outcomes of this process will be disseminated soon.

Over the last year, there have been some interpersonal issues between members of the board that have slowed our progress. We continue to operate by our guiding principles and values, and tensions have been handled with respect and careful observation of our constitution. I am pleased to report that these issues have been resolved, and we have established positive working arrangements.

Financial position

ISCA is in a strong financial position. In the reporting period, ISCA received NZ\$17,742.06 of income against NZ\$7,358.74 of expenses, leaving a reportable surplus of NZ\$10,383.32 at the end of the reporting period on March 31, 2023. In the current year, our expenses have increased, primarily due to the costs of our community platform. However, ISCA continues to hold a strong financial position, and as of September 1st, cash on hand is NZ\$14,983.37.

Our Future

It seems there is increasing interest in social capital. We are seeing more practical applications of the concept to real-world problems and an increasing volume of academic publications. Social capital continues to interest organisations, political parties, public health authorities, and many others. The need for an international association has never been greater.

Although our new association is still in its infancy, we are incredibly fortunate to have hardworking members. Our existing and incoming Board members are passionate and driven,

with extensive and diverse experiences and skills. By joining forces and collaborating in diverse and creative ways, we can expand our reach, improve our capacities, and achieve our aims. There are many reasons to be optimistic about the future of the association.

Below are a few key initiatives that are currently underway and that align with our mission and what our members have expressed they want to see accomplished.

More social capital events

We are working to add more social capital events to our calendar. We already have a range of regular events, and we will soon start regular sessions on "Application of Social Capital in Higher Education Institutions and Beyond". As our interest groups become more established, they will start to hold events targeting specific interests and social capital applications. Events continue to be a great way to engage with members and our wider audience, facilitate collaboration, and build social capital among our community members.

International conference on social capital

There continues to be a great deal of interest in an international conference on social capital. ISCA continues to prioritise this, and we are well underway with assessing the feasibility of starting a regular conference. It is important to allow people to gather in person and remotely, share their work on social capital, and identify opportunities for collaboration. This aligns with several ISCA aims, particularly our aims to "facilitate opportunities to publish, present, and promote social capital research and practical application" and to "advance the scholarship of social capital through development and clarification of conceptual and methodological approaches".

Social capital resources

Social capital is complex and multidimensional, with many different meanings and applications. Members have expressed a desire for ISCA to develop resources on social capital, and this aligns with our aim to "be a trusted and accessible source for social capital theory, research, practice, and policy advice". This will take a lot of work and be best achieved with many people contributing. We're working on a plan and technology solutions to support this initiative.

Social capital publication

The ISCA publications committee has started to publish articles on social capital and is developing a plan to establish a peer-reviewed publication. This is a medium to long-term goal since it will require much preparation and resources. Any member with experience or interest in this initiative is encouraged to get involved.

Not all of this can happen at once, but we can achieve all of the above and more by working together. If you want to get involved, please get in touch with any member of the Board.

Acknowledgements

ISCA has been successful thanks to the continued work of our volunteers, including the Board of Directors, committee members, and every member who gets involved by attending events or contributing to our community forum. I would like to acknowledge and thank every member for their continuing support of ISCA.

The Board is comprised of hardworking and dedicated people. I feel very honoured to have worked with you during the past year. I want to acknowledge and thank all Board members for their service and support over this period - Jacob Spanke, Emily Pitts, Mark Chubb, Charlotte Felix-Faure, Tara Jacobsen, Linda Wendling, Ed DeJesus, and Marion Cornish. We also appreciate Kathryn Dilworth and Alice Campbell, who stepped up to fill vacant board seats temporarily and have been among the most dedicated and hardworking. I am hopeful members will vote to elect them to the board for the next term.

There are many other people to thank and acknowledge. I specifically want to acknowledge Beverly Sloan, who has run Research Design and Methods Sessions and has helped and mentored numerous members and prospective members. Her guidance has been invaluable to many people.

Also, thank you to all our volunteers, admin assistants, and to our members, many of whom made additional donations when they joined.

Finally, all the people who nominated for the Board and officeholder positions have ensured our association will continue to grow and prosper. Whoever is elected today, our Board will be passionate and experienced. The future of ISCA is looking very promising!

I look forward to seeing the association continue to grow and develop and having more opportunities to connect and collaborate with other members.

Ngā mihi (kind regards)

Tristan Claridge

President of the International Social Capital Association