

Circular Cities and Regions

AESOP YA Conference 2025

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Conference Theme



Welcome to the „Circular Cities and Regions: Planning for Sustainable Social and Inclusive Communities“ AESOP YA Conference, which aims

to explore sustainable urban and regional planning in the context of unprecedented urbanization and environmental challenges. The conference focuses on integrating circularity, as outlined in SDGs 11 and 12, to create inclusive, resilient, and sustainable communities by analyzing current approaches and strategies in planning and architecture. It seeks to minimize waste, enhance resource efficiency, and foster sustainable innovation through tailored solutions that address equity, accessibility, and social cohesion. The event brings together academics, leaders, and practitioners to evaluate existing policies and propose new strategies, with input from various disciplines, to facilitate a shift towards circular urban and regional planning. Participants are encouraged to engage actively in discussions and presentations to develop strategies promoting sustainability and inclusivity for the future.

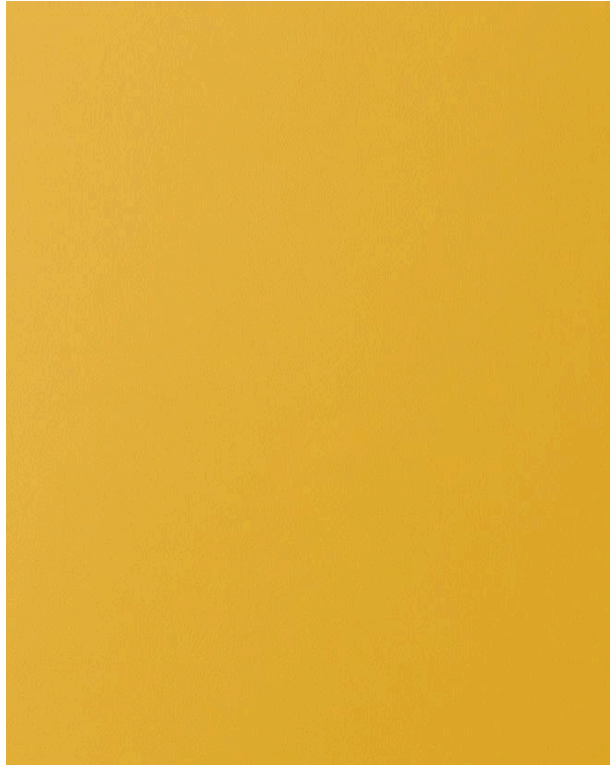
Track 1

Space

Built Environment and Urban Design

Traditionally perceived as linear, planning and architecture have contributed to significant resource consumption and land use. In response to climate change, there's a shift towards sustainable, circular planning models endorsed by initiatives like Amsterdam's circular strategy. This transition necessitates planners to embrace adaptive strategies for evolving

environmental and societal conditions.



Keynote speaker:

Mina Di Marino

Keynote „Circular cities and sharing in the built environment from a planning perspective“

Mina Di Marino is Professor at the Department of Urban and Regional Planning, Norwegian University of Life Sciences (MSc in Arch., Ph.D in Urban, Regional and Environmental Planning).

- 2024-2026 Member of the Excellence Education Board of AESOP
- 2022 (on-going) Member of AESOP Council Representatives (COREP for Norway)

Her current research focuses on four main Research Themes (RT):

- Circular Economy approaches within regions and cities, within a major focus on (re)sharing spaces, facilities and shared mobility options and sustainable consumption patterns/behaviours;

- Multi-local working (or multi-locational work, in other words, working in multiple places, including new working habits and patterns), and multi-local living (for job-related reasons) in urban and regional contexts, including novel approaches to 15' city concept;
- Hybridization of cities, spaces and buildings, including the hybrid life style of people; Rt4) Role of nature within urban and regional planning and the built environment (including role of Green Infrastructure, Ecosystem Services, and more recently, Nature-Based Solutions, in situated local and regional planning contexts.

In the last decade, she has studied the above themes in several interdisciplinary and international research projects. Some of them were conducted while she was based at Aalto University -Finland (2012–2017) and some at NBMU (2018–ongoing). Her studies have recently appeared on *Land Use Policy*, *Regional Studies*, *European Planning Studies* and *Progress in Planning*,

Further info at [Mina Di Marino](#) | [NMBU](#)

Contributions from: **Megdelawit Yohannes Yoseph, Irina Karaselnikova / Maria Karaselnikova, Jonas Schäfer, Pauline Jegen, Elifsu Şahin / Gözde Arzu Sarıcan, Shane Sugrue, Christian Corral Burau, Honey Kumar, Fernanda Gomez Saenz, Anna Diemer, Sachi Abe, Bianca Andalaro / Alessandro Raffa, Bianca Andalaro / María Cecilia Chiappini / Frank Suurenbroek, Rossana Pittau**

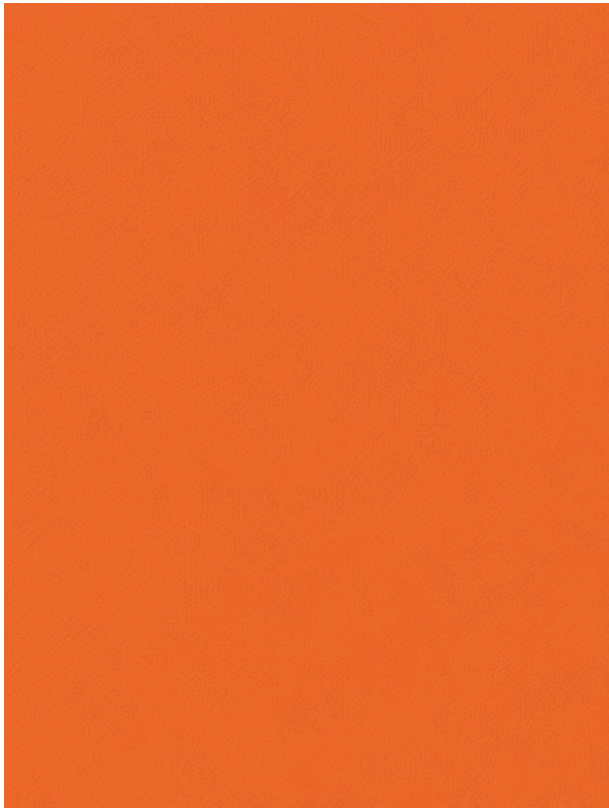
Track 2

Links

Mobility, Economy, and Energy

Regions and cities, as future logistic and mobility hubs, must integrate circular solutions to transform infrastructure into accessible and clean mobility systems, thus reducing pollution and congestion.

Collaborations are essential between economic, social, and municipal actors to enhance synergies, such as sustainable waste management and better utilization of resources, fostering a circular economy. Increasing public awareness and strategic incentives are vital for developing sustainable energy solutions and transforming excessive infrastructure into green spaces, thereby involving local knowledge in the transition process.



Keynote speaker:

Meike Levin-Keitel

Keynote „Same, same, but different? Planning for sustainable places“

Abstract: Sustainability and sustainable development have always been central to planning. In theory, the transformation debate—often linked to circular economy principles—fits naturally into these long-standing objectives. Some scholars even argue: *This is exactly what we have been doing all along!* Yet, in practice, we face significant challenges. Existing instruments often fall short, political support is inconsistent, and societal demands frequently contradict what is considered the public interest. Is this simply a matter of flawed implementation? Or do we need to rethink our tools, structures, and concepts altogether? I will take a critical look at the current state of sustainable planning, questioning whether established approaches are still fit for purpose and exploring how planning needs to be transformed to contribute to truly sustainable places.

Meike is a scientist in spatial planning and transitions at the University of Vienna, Department of Geography and Regional Research, Professor for Spatial Research and Spatial Planning. Her research focuses on questions of spatial development in connection with transformation processes towards sustainability. At the interface between planning theory principles and action-related planning approaches and instruments, she is interested in the extent to which social transformations are taking place in our regions, cities and urban districts, how they are changing them and what prerequisites the respective spaces have for change. Most of Meike's research work deals with decision-making in complex transformation processes – and with the associated question of how to shape the spatial development of our environment in terms of a sustainable way of life. This involves a practical and transdisciplinary research perspective, characterized by the development of joint research questions with local people and a shared learning process. More info is available on [her website of University of Vienna](#).

Contributions from: **Jan Bittner, Chetna Rathee, Davide Vettore, Andrea Brambilla, Helena Schuch, Ludovica Dangelo, Pınar Gökçe, Elif Bengi Güneş Yerlikaya, Tanya Tsui, Selin Aslan Şenol**

Track 3

Communities

Societies, Culture, and Participation

This track emphasizes the exploration of circular urban planning and design and its transformative effect on communities, aligning with the Global Sustainable Development Goals, particularly target 12. It focuses on how circular initiatives impact lifestyles, social structures, and community well-being, highlighting the importance of cultural diversity and community engagement in developing circular cities that reflect unique local identities. Participants are encouraged to participate in discussions and examine case studies, with an emphasis on collaboration among citizens, businesses, and local communities to create socially inclusive, innovative, and circular communities.



Keynote speaker:

Francesco Campagnari

Keynote „Urban Democracy in Practice: The dilemmas and contradictions of direct interventions on urban issues.“

Abstract: Over the past decades, a new form of civic engagement in the resolution of urban issues has spread in Europe (and beyond): across social innovation practices, squats, ecological projects, independent cultural centers, community-based organizations, nonprofits, NGOs, social centers, or political parties, scholars have recognised a form of action oriented towards a direct intervention on urban problems, moving beyond protest or delegation to public administrations. While these actions are often celebrated for enhancing inclusive, innovative, and effective problem-solving to urban challenges, they generate more complex effects on urban democracy. Drawing from current literature and my ongoing research, the keynote will discuss the main democratic contradictions and dilemmas linked to this form of action, suggesting ways forward for research to understand the transformations of urban democracy.

Francesco Campagnari is an urban planner and scholar. He currently holds a Marie Skłodowska-Curie Fellowship at the Centre d'étude des mouvements sociaux, École des hautes études en sciences sociales. His education started in the field of architectural engineering at the University of Trento, and shifted

towards planning and public policy with a PhD at University Iuav of Venice. His research focuses on direct civic actions in European cities, exploring their public effects, their processes of experimentation and institutionalisation, and their relation to democracy.

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Track 4

Recycling

Waste Management, Nutrition, and Food

In alignment with the Global Sustainable Development Goals, specifically target 12, the EU aims to halve food waste by 2030, necessitating both technological innovations and cooperative circular systems for production and consumption. Track 4 emphasizes creating and implementing circular waste management strategies, as highlighted by the European

Consumer Food Waste Forum's identified interventions to reduce food waste. Achieving these goals requires widespread support and participation from industry, local initiatives, and citizens, embedding the principles of reducing, reusing, and recycling in daily life to realize ecological, social, and economic benefits such as reduced transport for regional foods and sustainable practices in gastronomy.



Keynote speaker:

Dr. K.B.J. (Karel) Van den Berghe

Keynote „The circular economy is dead, long live the circular economy! What is it for spatial planning in light of the end struggle and/or new phase of glocalization“

Abstract: Being typically academic-critical, one could argue that the circular economy is yet another operationalizing concept of sustainability—one in a long line of ideas that have emerged over the past few decades. These concepts tend to generate enthusiasm at first, then get labeled as for example ‘wicked’ and become subject to endless debates—not least through the inevitable (and so annoying) question: But, what’s your definition?—before eventually fading or being overtaken by the next ‘new kid on the block.’ In a similar vein, circular cities—without denying the value of specific programs or projects, quite the contrary—can be seen as yet another attempt to fuel the urban growth machine. Luckily, the presentation doesn’t stop here. On a ‘meta-level’, by criticizing this (cheap) critical stance, my presentation will turn the argument around. I will suggest that we should not (only) see the circular economy as (the end of) globalisation—or rather, glocalisation (cf. Swyngedouw, 2004)—but instead as an (early) indicator of the new global era we are entering. Whether this era is one of re-globalisation or de-globalisation remains to be seen and will likely only be defined in hindsight. Against this backdrop, and drawing on recent empirical research spanning local to global scales and private as well as public perspectives, I will argue that modern spatial and urban planning—largely shaped towards and during the decades of glocalisation—will become (more) relevant (again). This is not because of ‘circular’, but because ‘economy’ is increasingly (explicitly) (i) normative, forcing us to balance the trilemma of sustainability, security, and affordability, and as such (ii) spatial again. And so, contingently, the economy, cities, regions,... need to become circular. The aim of this presentation is explicitly not to provide a ‘grand theory’, but, quite the contrary, to raise questions and provoke discussion with the young and promising scholars of our field.

Karel Van den Berghe is Assistant Professor in Spatial Planning and Urban Development Management at the Department of Management in the Built Environment, Delft University of Technology, the Netherlands. He holds a master’s in geography as well as a master’s in spatial planning and urbanism. His doctorate focused on the relational port-city interface, exploring how the socio-economic planning of urban and maritime systems should co-op with ongoing transitions. More recently, Karel has focused on the question of the role of space in the circular economy (Circular Campus project), the increasing geopolitical turmoil due to re-/de-globalisation (NWO KIC SUBLIME project and NTNU 1-2-Tre-Steg project), the use of a scenario methodology for uncertain spatial planning (South Holland urban water-bound industrial areas project and NWA-ORC Accelerating the Circular Transition), and the importance of industrial functions in or nearby urban knowledge areas as an answer, first, to

localising global production networks and, second, to a beautiful and inclusive urban planning (PI of Horizon Europe FABRIX project). Karel is an advisor to the Dutch Council for Infrastructure and Environment, and a member of the advisory board of the Dutch Knowledge Alliance Industrial and Business Areas. He often advises port authorities, municipalities, provinces, the Dutch and Flemish governments, and the European Commission. Karel is a Regional Studies Association Fellow 2024 (FeRSA).

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Hosted by Young Academics of the Faculty of Architecture and Landscape Sciences (FAL) Leibniz University Hannover

Funded by the Ministry of Science and Culture of Lower Saxony ("zukunft.niedersachsen"), Leibniz University's Graduate Academy, and FAL

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