



AESOP News Section: *Planning Ghosts and Adaptive Planners*

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To cite this article: Izabela Mironowicz (2013) AESOP News Section: *Planning Ghosts and Adaptive Planners*, disP - The Planning Review, 49:4, 58-61, DOI: [10.1080/02513625.2013.892794](https://doi.org/10.1080/02513625.2013.892794)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/02513625.2013.892794>



Published online: 12 Mar 2014.



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AESOP News Section

Planning Ghosts and Adaptive Planners

Izabela Mironowicz, AESOP Secretary General

AESOP-IFHP Lecture Series was launched to celebrate the Silver Jubilee of AESOP (2012) and the Centenary of IFHP (2013).

The event was designed as a series of lectures in 2012–2013 by well-known planners and other ‘urban thinkers’, both academics and practitioners. Our speakers (all presented in disP) were: Klaus R. Kunzmann (January 2012), Andreas Faludi (June 2012), Danuta Hübner (October 2012), Peter Hall (January 2013), Juval Portugali (April 2013) and Cliff Hague (December 2013). The last event, rounding off the celebrations, took place on 13 December 2013 in Riga, hosted by the University of Latvia, Faculty of Geography and Earth Sciences.

Anticipating *Zietgeist*, Cliff Hague, decided to read a fascinating story: A Christmas Carol: The Ghosts of Planning, Past, Present and Future which was written with help from Charles Dickens... (see Box 1). The script of this planning version of A Christmas Carol is available on the AESOP website. Everyone can also enjoy the story read by Cliff Hague by watching the video of this unusual lecture.

The lecture was followed up by a discussion, which can be summarised in three points.

- Planning education

Professor Hague’s realistic optimism was reflected in the fact that he felt it was absolutely still worth studying planning, as long as you are looking for professional fulfilment in helping people to create a pleasant living environment for themselves and not in earning a lot of money. This extended also to helping developing countries to expand

their knowledge of planning. Given the far higher economic growth rates in Asia and Africa, the future of the planet is being shaped elsewhere than in Europe, but Europe will be influenced by what is happening in the other continents. We have to in of those new international knowledge flows. Applied research, linked to the realities of practice and power (political and financial) is in our fast-changing contemporary world arguably more useful than more fundamental, theoretical research.

- Architecture and planning

Cliff Hague values the role of architects in urban development and planning, especially for their willingness to experiment and be innovative, and despite their tendency to be rather technocratic sometimes. Their major new challenge is in refitting older heritage sites and buildings to adapt to a low-carbon economy whilst retaining their attractiveness and liveability.

- Shifting role of the planner

Probably the main point to emerge from the discussion was the continuing shift from the planner as a major player in a ‘top-down’ governmental system of planning towards a more ‘bottom-up’ role as a collaboration mediator and process-manager, facilitating the involvement of citizens and their representatives in civic society organisations and NGOs in a more participative and interactive planning system. Professor Hague illustrated this with the fact that 1 in 6 planners in Scotland were now involved directly in Planning Aid to citizens. At the same time, planning is now inextricably linked with economic development. The planner has a role to play in getting investments into those areas where neither big capital nor big government will willingly go, such as in many High Streets and mining communities in the UK. Cliff Hague was “realistically optimistic” that ‘the planner’ could sustainably adapt to his/her shifting role. Assuming society will, at some point in time, come out of the economic crisis, planning will not go back to the old top-down approach. With young people and new technologies fundamentally changing the way citizens interact, both together and with their governments, and with those governments selling off their assets and reducing their direct control over, for example, development investors, people will continue to take a greater role in developing their own communities. The planner needs to be at the heart of this process.

The Jubilee celebrations are already finished, but the Lecture Series will continue. The new partner – European Regional Sciences Association (EURA) – will join the project in 2014; therefore there will be an even wider spectrum of topics to be discussed.

Fig. 1: Cliff Hague is beginning his Christmas Carol “The Ghosts of Planning Past, Present and Future” at the University of Latvia, Faculty of Geography and Earth Sciences on 13th December 2013.



Box 1:

A Christmas Carol: The Ghosts of Planning Past, Present and Future

by Cliff Hague (with help from Charles Dickens)

"You will be haunted", the Ghost told the Planner, *"by Three Spirits. Expect the first when the bell tolls. Without their visits, you cannot hope to shun the path I tread."* The air was filled with phantom planners, wandering hither and thither in restless haste and moaning as they went. The misery with them all was clearly that they sought to interfere, to do good, in human matters, but had lost the power ...

As Christmas approaches, the ghosts of Planning Past, Planning Present and Planning Future visited the AESOP-IFHP Lecture Series on 13 December. The First Spirit, "like a child: yet not so like a child as like an old man", the Ghost of Planning Past will show you dream-like Cities of Tomorrow, revealing hopes and joys and cares long forgotten: garden cities and cities of towers, cars racing along fly-overs, reconstruction of war-damaged cities, places for the people designed by experts and shaped by modern technology and ideas. *"Strange to have forgotten it for so many years",* observed the Ghost. *"Let us go on."*

The Ghost of Planning Present comes clothed in one simple green robe that has shining icicles. Around its middle is a belt, but the sword is eaten with rust. It will show you cities of today, austere places and palaces of plenty, where planners speak a new language of "delivery and outcomes", "carbon-neutral", "territorial cohesion" and "impact assessment". The Ghost reveals a boy and a girl. *"This boy is Ignorance. This girl is Want. Beware of them both."* On the boy's forehead is written "Doom".

The last of the spirits shows Planning Future and a Tomorrow for Cities. *"They scarcely seemed to enter the city; for the city rather seemed to spring up about them ..."* whether as leaky hovels built from garbage or virtual spaces captured and negotiated on what was once called a telephone. Could the place-managers steer the cities through their recurrent crises? *"I would do it",* said the Planner, *"if I could".* *"You can",* said the Ghost. *"Your skill is in building a practical vision for any place, knowing what makes that place special and what people share there. You can't do it all yourself, you'll need to do some things differently, but you have a part to play."*

Fig. 2: Professor Zaiga Krisjane (University of Latvia), who made the event possible, and Derek Martin (IFHP).



Fig. 3: City of Riga.



In 2014 AESOP will not only be moving ahead with the Lecture Series, obviously, we will retain our traditional annual activities:

- Heads of Schools Meeting (7–9 March 2014, Lisbon): We MUST adapt! Planning connecting academia and local communities in a rapidly changing Europe;
- 28th AESOP Annual Congress (9–12 July 2014, Utrecht and Delft): From Control to Co-evolution;
- European Urban Summer School 2014 (September, Tours): Heritage and Sustainability.

AESOP Young Academics will meet at their 8th Annual Conference on 10–13 March 2014 in Gothenburg. The topic of the meeting is “Cities that Talk”. The organizers developed the topic in this way: “The conference theme responds to the contemporary phenomena of urban resistance that has significantly challenged traditional practices of urban planning worldwide. Urban resistance ranges from everyday life insurgencies, through protests and riots, to urban social movements. This resistance requests planning systems to stop the invention and authorization of particular traditions, histories, meanings, identities, landscapes, and lifestyles in their cities. Instead, planning systems ought to situate urban policies and strategies in the local contexts of development with particular attention to the recognition of the diverse cultural and social identities in a city, based on social and environmental justice, wellbeing and quality of life, and coexistence and equal representation.”

We warmly encourage young scholars to join the discussion in Gothenburg.

AESOP Heads of Schools Meeting is an annual forum for planning education. AESOP is happy to welcome delegates from our member schools, whether they are heads of the schools or any key persons designated by the schools, to discuss the main problems and challenges for planning education across Europe. We are always delighted when delegates from the universities that are not AESOP members yet, join us and share their experience and knowledge.

The 9th AESOP Heads of Schools Meeting will be hosted by the University of Lisbon, where we would like to discuss two inter-related topics.

First, we would like to invite the AESOP community to discuss the new role of planning education in relation to local communities.

The main question here is how to strengthen planning in ‘our’ places (universities, professional environments, communities, local authorities, etc). This raises the issue of strengthening the position of planning schools beyond academia to the community-based programs. One of the main features might be also the problem of engaging students in their community’s development. The other interesting question is what planners can actually deliver?

These problems will be discussed in three debating groups: (1) Research by Design, (2) Research in Action: What Can Planners Deliver? and (3) Planning with Communities.

Second, mobility and the European dimension of the planning profession are new challenges for planning and planners across Europe. This requires a new approach to planning education. Shall we aim at European accreditation for the courses? What is the role of AESOP in this process? Can we re-define the role of the AESOP Experts Pool? What instruments would we need to facilitate both mobility and the European dimension of planning? Is AESOP’s Digital Platform essential for these developments?

Three debating groups will be working on the following issues: (1) Qualification of Courses – Towards European Accreditation, (2) Digital Platform – Towards Local and European Databases of Knowledge, and (3) Planners on the Move, Courses on the Move: Towards Europeanization of the Profession?

This year we would like to initiate more intense debates rather than develop ‘little conferences’ with speeches and long presentations. Therefore, there is no ‘keynote speech’ planned – this will be replaced with a plenary debate moderated by the President and will follow two brief introductions – one from a European perspective and the second from a local point of view. These introductions are supposed to set the scene for the discussion.

The theme of the AESOP Annual Congress in 2014 was already presented by Luuk Boelens in the previous issue of disP. The innovation of this congress is an invitation for all planning organizations across Europe to present their activities during our congress, which would bring together academics and practitioners. We believe that this would evolve new synergies for planning; both in terms of conceptual thinking and practical development.

In 2014, new National Representatives in the AESOP Council of Representatives will be elected. The Council of Representatives is a body elected by AESOP Full Members. Among other functions, it defines the policies and programs of the Association and elects the officials of AESOP. All the powers of the association rest within the Council of Representatives.

The Council of Representatives consists of the following members: (1) the National Representatives, (2) the officials and (3) up to three additional persons designated by the President. National Representatives are appointed or elected by the universities having the status of AESOP Full Member. If a country has one Full Member, its delegate represents the member schools of that country. If a country has two Full Members, both their delegates represent the member schools of that country. If a country has more than two Full Members, all Full Members of that country elect two representatives of member schools of that country. Each National Representative has one Substitute, elected in the

same way as National Representative. The Substitute is allowed to attend the meetings of the Council, but is only allowed to vote in case of absence of the National Representative.

The mandatory period of the National Representatives and their Substitutes is two years. National Representatives and their Substitutes can be re-elected.

According to the Charter, the Council shall meet at least once a year on the call of the President.

Usually, the Council of Representatives Meeting takes place twice a year: during the AESOP Heads of Schools Meeting in spring and during AESOP Annual Congress in July. In 2014, the Council of Representatives will meet:

- on 7 March 2014 at the University of Lisbon, which will be the last meeting of the Council with National Representatives elected for the mandatory period 2012–2014;
- on 9 July 2014 at the University of Utrecht, which will be the first meeting of the Council with National Representatives elected for the mandatory period 2014–2016.

2014 will also bring a new format of cooperation with disP: AESOP greatly appreciated the proposal to present debates taking place in AESOP Thematic Groups, which are working groups on specific themes established in order to create more effective platforms for discussion amongst AESOP members. At the moment, there are the following Thematic Groups:

- Planning and Complexity
- New Technologies & Planning
- Planning, Law and Property Rights
- Transnational and Cross-Border Planning
- Urban Design in Planning
- Transportation Planning and Policy
- Ethics, Values and Planning
- Resilience and Risks Mitigation Strategies
- French and British Planning Studies Group – Groupe d'Etudes sur l'Urbanisme Français et Britannique
- Evaluation in Planning
- Sustainable Food Planning
- Public Space and Urban Cultures
- Planning/Conflict

Finally, AESOP Secretary General would like to take this opportunity and wish all planning scholars, students, and practitioners a very successful year in 2014!

Thanks to Derek Martin for summing up the discussion that took place on 13 December in Riga after Cliff Hague's lecture.