

2017 AESOP AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE IN TEACHING

Educating Planners in a Post-truth World

AIM OF THE PRIZE

Teaching in the broad field of planning is one of the main activities of AESOP Member Schools. Thus, in 2002, AESOP introduced a prize (http://www.aesopplanning.eu/en_GB/excellence-in-teaching) which recognizes and encourages Excellence in Teaching. Through this award, AESOP celebrates and disseminates innovative practices in teaching in its Member Schools. The broad aim of the Prize is to stimulate the development of planning courses or groups of courses in order to better prepare students for their forthcoming practice, to further educate practitioners, and to promote the development of a critical perspective. The specific purpose of the prize is to promote and encourage planning schools to apply new pedagogy, theories and/or technologies/techniques in ways that enhance the knowledge and skills necessary to respond to new global planning challenges. The Award provides an important opportunity to disseminate effective practice and importantly to celebrate teaching quality amongst European Schools of Planning.

THE THEME OF THE PRIZE IN 2017

One of the key features of political debates in recent times has been the rising scepticism displayed towards different forms of expert knowledge by certain political movements and sections of society. The prevailing mood was captured by an anti-EU politician during the 2016 UK referendum on EU membership, who remarked that people in Britain have “had enough of experts”. Such attitudes have been accompanied by the rise of mendacious and manipulative discourses and narratives in recent political processes, leading to the growing use of term ‘post-truth’ politics to describe this phenomenon. If the realization of true democratic participation requires what Habermas termed to be ‘undistorted’ communication characterized by the features of comprehensibility, legitimacy, truthfulness and sincerity, then the ‘democratic’ quality of many recent electoral episodes is perhaps rather moot. Instead crude majoritarian views of what is ‘right’ and ‘should’ happen dominate, whilst the rights of minorities, or those, including experts, who take a different view, to be heard are often questioned. This is the case even where a majority of the electorate did not actively support certain choices (e.g. 63% of the UK electorate did not vote for so-called ‘Brexit’), or in truth the absolute majority of voters backed the ‘losing’ side (e.g. Hillary Clinton polled more votes than President-elect Donald Trump in the 2016 US Presidential election).

The political and societal context described above brings clearly into view notions of the relativity of what constitutes ‘truth’ and who can authoritatively claim to articulate it in given social situations. It presents particular challenges for societal groups such as professions that claim to possess forms of specialized or expert knowledge in relation to a particular field of human action and endeavour. It brings clearly into view notions of the relativity of what constitutes ‘truth’ and who can authoritatively claim to articulate it in given social situations.

The planning profession and its theorists and educators have long grappled with the issue of what gives planning and planners their legitimacy to 'pronounce' on the forms and outcomes of development which can be identified as serving a common good, or the public/collective interest. The idea of planning and views of the 'knowledges' it should draw on have evolved over time, with the central theme of the position and legitimacy of the planner as the expert, or 'knower' being explored in practice and in theory. This issue has been a theme of reflection for planning practitioners, scholars and students, and the design and teaching on many planning programmes seeks to take this into account. These issues are given particular and renewed salience by the current political and societal climate in many countries.

In recognition of this context, in 2017, the AESOP Excellence in Teaching Prize Committee are keen to encourage entries from courses that seek to use innovative approaches to develop learners' capacity to reflect on the kinds of issues outlined above and prepare them to work as practitioners in a world where dissensus rather than consensus around matters of collective interest seems to be growing and the legitimacy of expert and professional knowledge(s) is increasingly called into question.

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

Only AESOP member schools can be nominated for this prize. The course must have been successfully implemented for at least one year. Applicants can either be:

- a planning school;
- a planning department within a university; or
- a group of teaching staff or an individual belonging to an AESOP Member school.

HOW TO APPLY

Please, use the electronic [application form](#) available from the AESOP web site.

All material must be submitted electronically.

Applications must be received by x of May 2017.

Applications must include a full description of the course or module, as it is described and structured in the 2017 application form.

THE JURY

A panel of academics ([AESOP Excellence in Teaching Award](#) Committee) will judge the nominees. The panel will consist of AESOP members, including a representative from AESOP's Young Academics Network.

AWARDING THE PRIZE

A prize of **€1000** will be presented to a representative of the winning programme during the [AESOP 2017 Congress](#) in Lisbon, at the AESOP General Assembly which will take place on **13th July 2017**.

The winner will be expected to make an audio-visual presentation of the programme at the subsequent year's congress. He/she/they will also be expected to allow the programme to be presented on AESOP's website.