

RESEARCH BRIEFING

# 18th Congress of the AESOP, GRENOBLE, FRANCE, 2004 'Metropolitan Planning and Environmental Issues'

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Grenoble-France was this year's venue for the Association of European Schools of Planning (AESOP) 18th congress entitled 'Metropolitan Planning and Environmental Issues'. A successful congress ensued (it contained 390 authors and 195 papers) taking place in a sustainable and charming city at the University Pierre Mendès France, Grenoble and at the Institute of Urbanism in Grenoble. The local organizing committee Jan Tucny, Alain Motte, Gilles Novarina, Marc Bonneville, Yves Chalas, Jack Fontanel, and Bernard Pouyet; as well as the conference coordinator, the very promising young academic Stéphane Sadoux, are to be congratulated for this year's AESOP congress.

The congress opening ceremony began with the *welcome address* by professors: Prof. Claude Courlet (President University Pierre Mendès France), and Prof. Alessandro Balducci (President Association of European Planning Schools) Politecnico di Milano

The keynote were addressed by: Prof. Gabriel Dupuy, University Paris Sorbonne with a presentation entitled 'Cities and Planning in an era of Information Technologies and Communication'; Prof. Bernardo Secchi, University of Venice presenting 'The contemporary European city and its project'; Prof. Sir Peter Hall, University College of London with a presentation entitled 'Policentropolis: in search of the European Holy

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Grail'; and Jean-Paul Blais, PUCA, Ministère de l'Équipement with a speech on 'Current research issues in strategic and metropolitan planning: a French perspective'.

This year seven tracks composed the main subject areas (table 1); these tracks were organized into 65 subtitles containing multiple sessions. The subtitles of each track are a novelty introduced at this conference that groups the papers and reveals the rich diversity at each track. The track 'Planning History and Theory' seemed to be the one that best managed the grouping of different subtitles (9 different subtitles – the biggest number of sessions) revealing a richness of themes associated to this keystone subject of the AESOP. These different track sub-titles are a good indication on subjects that we must include at our university courses, as well as while doing research. This year the strongest tracks were 'Local and Regional Economic Development', 'Public Participation and Urban Governance', 'Urban Design and Physical Form', and 'Planning History and Planning Theory' (Figure 1).

A Special roundtable was also organized entitled 'Spatial strategies at the city and metropolitan scales: planning the Grenoble city-region' it counted with the following presentations:

- Agence d' Urbanisme de la Région Grenobloise: roles, competences and current actions, Jérôme Grange, Director, Agence d' Urbanisme de la Région Grenobloise;
- Transport planning in Grenoble: strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats, Hans van Eibergen, Director of Transport, la Métro;
- Current issues in planning in the Grenoble metropolitan area, Laurent Kermen, Deputy Mayor, Planning and Environment, Ville de Grenoble;
- Metropolitan Planning as a Political Project, Pierre Kermen, Deputy Mayor, Planning and Environment, Ville de Grenoble.

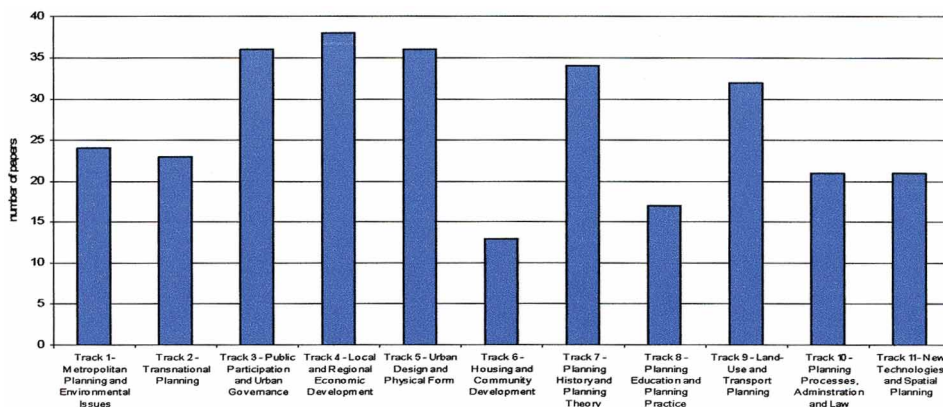
Besides the usual organization of the congress in tracks and roundtables, this year's conference introduced another novelty, the creation of video-conferences. Taking full advantage of good technicians and a infrastructure of information and communication technologies at the Institut d' Urbanisme de Grenoble (IUG) two 'visio-conferences' were organized:

- The planning portal programme: on-line planning advice and services
- Research labs and spatial planning in the information age

The importance of new technologies for planning is unquestionable, both as supporting information and communication technologies, and this year enabling congress to take advantage of these potentialities as a videoconference tool to bring together researchers from different parts of the world and discuss current subjects of research. ICTs are becoming more and more a basic infrastructure of our society, or as a tool at the service of different subject areas of planning that enhances the capacities for developing different analyses, and/or assessing different theories. It seems fair to state that AESOP congresses should start taking more advantage of ICT technologies. Therefore, these kind of video conferences are an option to consider for future conferences, as a basic tool to make the congress presentations available on-line from the moment when they are being presented, and as an 'interface' to be used by researchers all over the world.

**Table 1.** The tracks and its associated thematic groups

<p>Metropolitan Planning and Environmental Issues</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Defining and implementing sustainable development</li> <li>- Sustainable development in the metropolitan planning context (part I, II, III)</li> <li>- Sustainable development: Suburbs, Conservation and Bioregionalism</li> </ul>	<p>Transnational Planning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Exploring Polycentric Development on a European Scale</li> <li>- Requirements for EU Enlargement in a Transnational Context</li> <li>- Territorial cohesion takes shape</li> <li>- Creative approaches to transnational planning</li> <li>- Knowledge, learning processes and actor games in transnational planning</li> </ul>
<p>Public Participation and Urban Governance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Modeling urban governance</li> <li>- Public participation and civil society</li> <li>- Case studies in urban governance (part I, II)</li> <li>- Public participation and civil society: innovative approaches</li> <li>- The frameworks, actions &amp; institutions of urban governance</li> </ul>	<p>Local and Regional Economic Development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Institutional frameworks and levels of action</li> <li>- Case studies in local and regional economic development (part I, II, III)</li> <li>- Urban and rural economic development</li> <li>- Urban economics and the environment</li> <li>- Regional networks, knowledge and competition</li> </ul>
<p>Urban design and physical form</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Public space</li> <li>- Space, time, place, point, line</li> <li>- Metropolitan spaces</li> <li>- Places of consumption</li> <li>- Sustainable urban design</li> <li>- Regenerating inner cities</li> <li>- Community design and conservation</li> <li>- Analysis processes and form</li> <li>- Sprawl vs. Neighborhood</li> </ul>	<p>Housing and community development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The economics of housing</li> <li>- Housing supply &amp; demand/Case studies and tools</li> <li>- Social housing renewal and urban regeneration</li> <li>- Urban form and housing design</li> </ul>
<p>Planning history and planning theory</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Discourse and the objects of planning</li> <li>- Equity and planning</li> <li>- Bringing new concepts into planning theory</li> <li>- Changing planning, changing places</li> <li>- Understanding institutional change and continuity</li> <li>- Rhetoric, communication and planning</li> <li>- Institutions, change, and uncertainty</li> <li>- Professional cultures and responsibility</li> <li>- Justice, rationality, and power</li> </ul>	<p>Planning Education and Planning Practice</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Planning Education: current issues and new approaches</li> <li>- Lessons from the AESOP teaching prizes</li> <li>- Planning education and practice in Easter Europe</li> <li>- Pedagogical experiences</li> </ul>
<p>Land Use and Transport Planning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Transport mobility and the city: case studies</li> <li>- Local issues and cities</li> <li>- Strategic, local and regional</li> <li>- Sustainable cities and transport (part I, II)</li> <li>- Environment and airports</li> </ul>	<p>Planning Processes, Administration and Law</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Comparing planning and development control systems</li> <li>- Tools of implementation</li> <li>- Planning and property rights</li> <li>- Plan making: styles and approaches</li> <li>- New partnerships and institutional changes</li> </ul>
<p>New Technologies and spatial planning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Planning and geographic information systems</li> <li>- Planning, new technologies and issues in governance</li> <li>- Innovation and ICT</li> <li>- Planning and ICT</li> </ul>	



**Figure 1.** Number of papers per track

At this year's congress the first video conference was presented by Graham Saunders, Director, Planning Appeals Administration, The Planning Inspectorate (UK).

- Mr. Graham Saunders presented 'The planning portal programme: online planning advice and services'

Website: [www.planningportal.gov.uk](http://www.planningportal.gov.uk)

The Planning Portal has the goal to become the first port of call for all members of the planning system, from seasoned professionals to the general public. This service was launched in May 2002 by a specialized unit within the Planning Inspectorate in Bristol. Within 12 months of going live the service had signed up 160 of the 431 local planning authorities in England and Wales.

The second video conference 'Research labs and spatial planning in the information age' involved three presenters:

- Keith Clarke from the National Center for Geographic Information and Analysis (NCGIA, USA),

Website: <http://www.ncgia.ucsb.edu/>.

The National Center for Geographic Information and Analysis is an independent research consortium, formed in 1988, it is dedicated to basic research and education in geographic information science and its related technologies, including geographic information systems (GIS). The three member institutions are the University of California, Santa Barbara; the University at Buffalo; and the University of Maine.

- Piergiorgio Marchetti, from the European Space Agency – (ESA/ESRIN)

Website: <http://www.esa.int/esaCP/index.html>

The European Space Agency (ESA) and its 25 Member States work together to pursue a wide range of ambitious and exciting goals in space. These include: designing and conducting

space missions; disseminating the results to improve the quality of everyday life; promoting European industry. ESA's European Space Research Institute, better known as ESRIN, is based in Frascati. ESRIN has four main functions: Earth observation; Information systems; VEGA (hosting ESA's small satellite launcher programme); Public communications.

– Niall McCormick from the Joint Research Center – European Commission (JRC-EC)

website: <http://www.jrc.cec.eu.int/>

The Joint Research Centre is a research based policy support organization and an integral part of the European Commission. It carries out extensive research of direct concern to European citizens and industry. Over the years, the JRC has developed special skills and unique tools to provide autonomous and Europe-wide expertise to improve understanding of the links between technology, the economy and society. JRC work is split between institutional research in support of Commission policymaking, direct support for specific Directorates-General (DGs) and competitive activities in strategic relationships with the scientific and business communities.

Each year the AESOP congress is preceded by a Ph.D. Workshop, this year it took place in Aix-en-Provence from 25th to 28th June. The Institut d'Aménagement Régional (Université Aix-Marseille 3) hosted the workshop in its building, near the Aix-en-Provence city centre (10 minutes from the historic centre). The Ph.D workshop was organized by Prof. Alain Motte.

The option for a location that creates an informal atmosphere for the group of PhD planning students and professors has been one of the good strategies and Aix-en-Provence offered urban scholars a real life casebook of approaches to urban development, from the renewal of the historical inner core to the surrounding developments of high density social housing/wealthy quarters/commercial zones/high tech industries.

The Ph.D involved the keynote lectures of Prof. Heather Campbell, Sheffield University (England); Prof. Andreas Faludi, Nijmegen University (Netherland); Prof. John Forester, Cornell University (USA).

With the coordination of Prof. Alain Motte and with the support of other professors also supervising the work, Ph.D. students present their research work focusing on: the main theme of the PhD; its relevance to planning literature; research methodology; the major obstacles in developing research; and preliminary results. At the concluding session, an address to the audience reported on what have become a very successful action at AESOP and an important milestone for young academics in the planning field.

The closing session the year congress had a surprise for Prof. Patsy Healey, Professor of Town and Country Planning and Director of Centre for Research in European Urban Environments (CREUE), University of Newcastle. Considered the 'founding mother of AESOP' she has dedicated her work to the AESOP objectives defined at the 1987 funding charter: i.e. to represent the interests of the planning schools; promote the development of teaching and research in the field of planning; facilitate co-operation and exchange between planning schools; articulate a European dimension within planning education; foster and enrich higher education in planning; and defend the cause of expanding and enhancing higher education in planning. As pointed out it was time to reward all her efforts and contributions. This meant awarding Prof. Patsy Healey Honorary Membership of the Association of European Schools of Planning, and it was with great pleasure that all the participants at Grenoble celebrated this great and well deserved news.



Photo of Prof. Patsy Healey



The Institute of Urbanism at Grenoble



The city of Grenoble



A final remark is that AESOP activities go beyond the realization of the annual congress, its website ([www.aesop-planning.com](http://www.aesop-planning.com)) reveals its dynamics and current news includes the development of 5 new Thematic Working Groups presented at the Grenoble Congress (New Technologies in Planning, Planning, Law, and Property Rights, Transnational and Cross-Border Planning, Urban Design in Planning, Transport Planning and Policy). To add to the existing ones: AESOP Young Academics Network, SOCRATES Thematic Network Programme (WG: Ph.D Education, WG: Planning Research, WG: Role of Planning Education in The Development of the Profession) and the Communications Team.

The next AESOP 2005 congress. . . Vienna ‘The dream of Greater Europe’ 13–17 July. University of Technology Vienna (UT Vienna), The Faculty of Architecture and Planning  
As posted at the congress website (<http://aesop2005.tuwien.ac.at/>) the motive for the subject rests upon the following:

“Since May 1, 2004, the European Union has ten new member states. While – on first sight – this date merely marked the enlargement of the territory of the European Union,

it was a very special step – as some say – to the ‘Europeanisation’ of the European Union, which for the first time now includes countries which, until 1989, belonged to the former ‘Eastern bloc’ and which for the first time now embraces important parts of the Slavic speaking world of Europe.

The enlargement is a fascinating step in the slow process of this ‘peace project’ of the unification of Europe, which creates not only cultural, economic, legal, social and democratic problems but under the cohesion principle of the European Union also poses a challenge to spatial planning in Europe.

Vienna, traditionally a multicultural city, for more than 40 years had been located at the ‘fringe of the western world’ just 60 kilometres from the former ‘iron curtain’ and all of a sudden found itself back at the centre of Europe. Vienna is a place where all the emotional, political and social consequences of the enlargement process of the European Union process become acutely perceptible.

The AESOP-Congress will be dealing with the challenges this unification process poses for the planning profession in Europe. Is the European Union as the core of the European unification process becoming larger or greater? Is it a chance, a vision or a dream?” (AESOP 2004 Vienna website, August 2004)

Important dates for AESOP Vienna 2005 are:

AESOP 05 Congress | July 13–17, 2005

December 1, 2004 | Registration starts | Abstract submission will start

February 20, 2005 | Deadline for abstract submission

March 15, 2005 | Registration deadline for reduced fee

PhD Workshop | July 9–12, 2005

February 18, 2005 | Until this date interested applicants should send an abstract.

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Publisher: Routledge

Informa Ltd Registered in England and Wales Registered Number: 1072954 Registered office: Mortimer House, 37-41 Mortimer Street, London W1T 3JH, UK



## European Planning Studies

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:

<http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/ceps20>

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Published online: 19 Jan 2007.

To cite this article: Elisabete A. Silva (2005) 18th congress of the AESOP, Grenoble, France, 2004 'Metropolitan planning and environmental issues', *European Planning Studies*, 13:1, 175-181, DOI: [10.1080/0965431042000312460](https://doi.org/10.1080/0965431042000312460)

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/0965431042000312460>

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