

# EDITORIAL

This issue (5.2) of Transactions of AESOP brings together a selection of papers which address current themes and issues in planning education. Two of the papers reflect on the experience of teaching modules submitted to recent rounds of the AESOP Excellence in Teaching Award (ETA), one reports on an experience of internationalisation in planning education, and one is an invited paper by Andrea Frank the present Chair of the AESOP ETA Committee. They all provide original and insightful contributions addressing key themes in contemporary planning education including, the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, new technologies and modes of teaching delivery, the teaching of landscape in planning programmes, and, the internationalisation of planning cohorts and curricula.

Frank's paper explores 'higher education futures', offering reflections on the impacts of COVID-19, digitalisation, and the expectations of young adult learners ('generation z') regarding educational formats and delivery. It concludes that the pandemic has shown that new approaches and solutions are needed and that a reversion to previous modes of working may offer little more than the preservation of previous structures with all their attendant issues around equality, diversity, and inclusivity. The paper argues that there are now 'small windows of opportunity' for joint reflections and constructive dialogue between learners, educators, and institutional representatives to shape more innovative institutions which can deliver planning education which fosters the emergence of more sustainable societies.

The second paper by Ray shares experience from University College Cork (UCC), including that gained through the delivery of the module Landscape Character, Context and Change (AESOP ETA, Highly Commended, 2020). The paper observes that understanding the relationships between a development and its wider setting may be nothing new to planning, but that the ground-breaking *European Landscape Convention* (ELC) of 2000, and its interpretations in domestic law, act as a conscious reminder of landscape's value-laden and complex nature beyond being 'mere scenery'. In a world where rapid environmental change leads to more deadlines for decision-makers, it might seem idealistic to expect engagement with landscape on these terms. But the paper argues this is crucial and something that needs to be emphasised during the education of young planners. The paper explores methods for equipping students with the skills necessary to make efficient and objective, yet value-sensitive, judgements on landscape at strategic and project levels.

The third paper by Dockerill, Mell, and Nurse, explores the internationalisation of planning student cohorts. It focusses on the findings of a project conducted at the University of Liverpool (UoL) which examined how an enhanced learning experience might be delivered for undergraduate students transitioning to Liverpool from XJTLU - the university's partner institution in Suzhou, China. The paper considers the outcomes of certain pedagogic interventions such as, additional contact, and one-to-one guidance for students. These were implemented to promote complementary understanding of British and Chinese planning at XJTLU and UoL, and to improve academic attainment for XJTLU students completing their studies in Liverpool. The paper recommends managing the process of student transfer as well as ensuring that the planning discipline integrates 'soft skills' more effectively in its teaching.

The fourth paper by Roux reports on the experience of the international planning studio organized by the Urban Planning Institute of Grenoble (France) at Sfax (Tunisia) (Winner of the AESOP ETA, 2019). The paper describes how an initial project evolved into a long-term cooperation between French and Tunisian partners which now forms the focus of the teaching approach in both years of Grenoble's Urbanism and International Cooperation master's programme. The paper considers the theoretical, practical, and pedagogical contexts and characteristics of international planning studios and the planning concepts on which they are built. The lessons which can be learned from this experience and the potential for these to be applied elsewhere are then evaluated.

Collectively the papers reflect the current dynamism of planning education and its constant engagement with new challenges and practices. The Editorial Board of Transactions of AESOP thanks the authors and reviewers who contributed to this issue.

We would also like to remind readers that the journal is open to submissions from all those who would like to share their research in the planning discipline. We are excited to report that submission to the journal is now through the new dedicated [Transactions of AESOP Open Journal Systems \(OJS\) website!](#) This platform facilitates the work, and will improve the experience, of the Journal's, authors, reviewers, and editors, and the Editorial Board would like to acknowledge here the work that has been undertaken within the AESOP community and by the [Open Access Provider](#) to make this possible.

Happy reading!

**Olivier Sykes**

Editor in Chief of Transactions of AESOP