

AEKOM - Final Report

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1. Background

[Motivation for starting the project and the conclusions of the feasibility study]

AEKOM is the AESOP KnOWledge Management and Sharing platform (AEKOM). The AEKOM initiative was proposed in 2017 to enrich current AESOP online services availability to face the occurring digital open science transition. It includes three modules, namely the Journal Management System, the Conference Management System and the Institutional Repository, and is developed relying on free, open-source software. The three modules aim to improve the AESOP Information and Communication Technology infrastructure to fulfil the AESOP mission more effectively and efficiently.

In addition, it was conceptualized to improve AESOP's digital knowledge sharing and to value scholars' contribution to AESOP community building by means of a strategic platform-making process.

The initiative relies on the idea that AESOP is a complex organization. Its members are regularly involved in many processes that could benefit from online ease of access, sharing and managing knowledge information systems. Moreover, AEKOM could complement the website that was already supporting reasonably well several functionalities (including dissemination of newsletters, hosting thematic group web - pages, supplying the public with general information about the organization, and serving as a repository of relatively uncategorized contents).

A series of preliminary formal discussions and meetings took place at the AESOP 2017 Annual Conference in Lisbon. Following the early debate, a charrette meeting was organised by the AESOP President and the General Secretary in January 2018 in Oporto, where the AESOP President, the AESOP Vice President, the Secretary-General and the AEKOM Working Group (WG)/TEAM formed in Lisbon met to assess the initiative in detail and to draw the roadmap of this initiative, which stretches over 3 years.

A formal project proposal by the AEKOM WG/TEAM was presented, discussed and adopted by AESOP in April 2018 CoRep meeting in Newcastle. The project proposal included for the first year the following tasks:

1. Assessment of current AESOP online web-services;
2. Consultations on the need to implement the AEKOM initiative and preliminary requirement analysis;
3. Technical and financial feasibility study on the three main AEKOM online services infrastructure components, the Journal Management System (JMS), the Conference Management System (CMS), and the Institutional Repository (IR).

The AEKOM project was officially launched as a three years project in July 2019 at the AESOP Annual Conference in Venice based on an in-depth qualitative consultation opened to the wider AESOP community (supported by focus groups with AESOP's stakeholders and a participative initiative based in the world-café method) and a robust technical and financial feasibility study including the assessment of the (that time) current AESOP online web-services and the three main AEKOM online services infrastructure components.

The major findings and recommendations of the AEKOM WG/TEAM as a result of the technical and financial feasibility are summarized below:

- The enrichment of the AESOP ICT infrastructure and online services will address several existing limitations, and will contribute to better serve the collaboration among AESOP Members and between AESOP and the public domain worldwide; The AEKOM working group agrees with the open source solution (as opposed to the commercial one which is also costly) proposed by the Transactions/plaNext

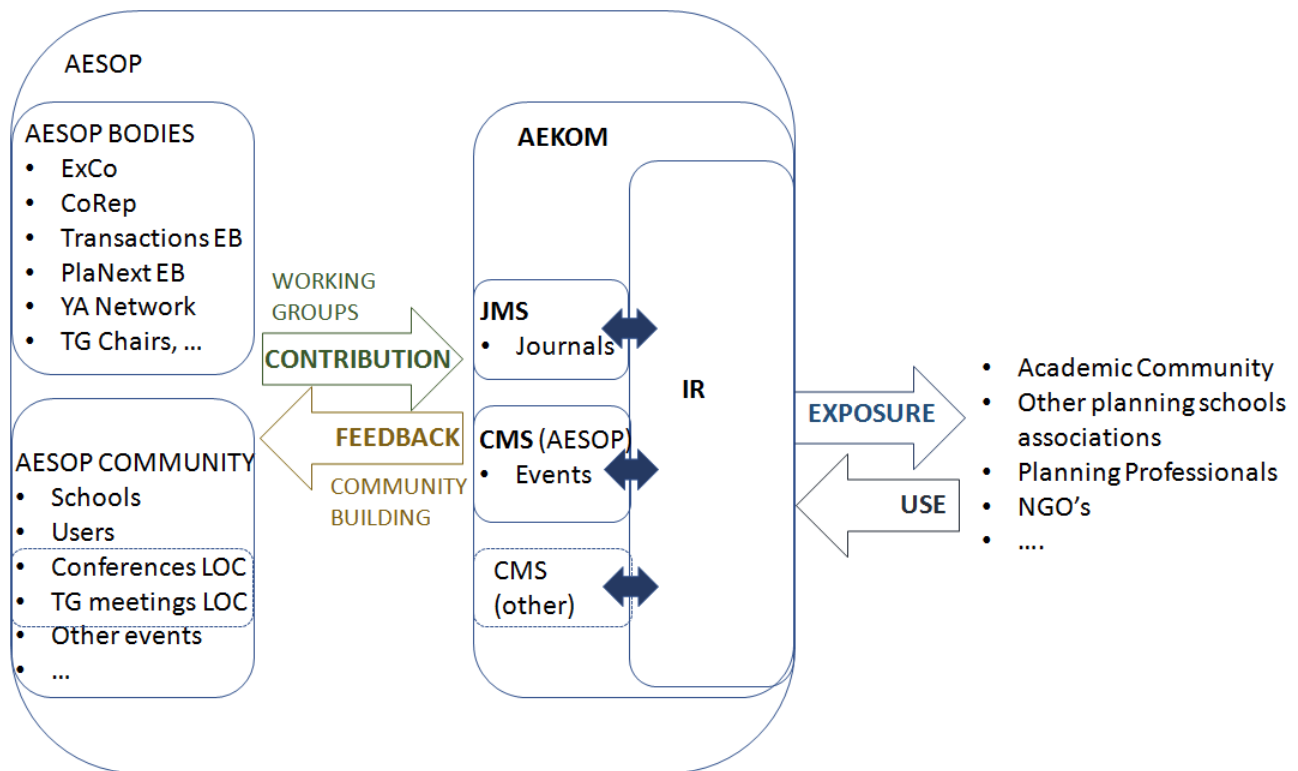
group (after the work done by Nikos Karadimitriou in particular) concerning the use of the open-source OJS and the solution offered by the EKT (Greek National Documentation Centre) is sensible.

- The CMS will facilitate the organization and management of the major conference as well as other conferences and meetings within AESOP initiatives, and will offer a customized standard interface, thus avoiding changing interfaces, workflows, and procedures at any new event. CMS will also contribute to keeping AESOP's heritage and memory alive. The final decision will be made at Year 2. A logical choice is a software which can be bought (probably for some years with a special arrangement) and then customized.
- There are strong arguments IR will eventually enable AESOP to save and share memory of its cultural and scientific legacy, avoiding duplication and loss of the uncountable works and products of the AESOP community at large. Installation and customization of DSpace digital repository software could be a possible solution. The plan for Year 2 is to do the basic set up and testing of the IR, and for Year 3 to do the implementation and testing as well as the preparation for the user manual.

All in all, the AEKOM Working Group/TEAM strongly suggested that the implementation of the online service infrastructure of AEKOM would have been very beneficial for the AESOP community at large and will contribute to disseminate the AESOP's legacy worldwide.

2. Project Components

The AEKOM idea is composed of three blocks (a journal management system, a conference management system and an institutional repository). The in-depth investigation presented in the initial feasibility study analyzed potentials and critical aspects of each one. Figure 1 shows the main innovative aspects of AEKOM, composed of JMS, CMS and IR, regarding the relation between AESOP – explicitly addressing its main bodies and the community (schools members, users, LOC, ...) – and the rest of the planning world (mainly composed by academia, other planning schools and planning schools associations, planning professionals. By strengthening the cohesion of JMS, CMS and IR, these three elements will become the core of AEKOM. Its role in AESOP's dynamics can be crucial, either by stimulating the emergence of working groups, or by giving feedback, which can play an important role in terms of community building.



2.1. Infrastructure

Once the various functions of knowledge management and sharing platform had been identified, it was necessary to define the architecture of the platform and find appropriate organizational and software solutions in order to ensure its sustainability. Apparently, an extended version of a conventional website, similar to the existing one, could not meet the requirements. The existing website did not ensure an optimal visibility to the books, primarily because it was not possible to add metadata in a standard format and the website was not interoperable with publication aggregators. Therefore, it was necessary to separate the information about AESOP, its members, activities, Thematic Groups, etc. from publications by dislocating the publications into a repository that would support standard metadata formats and a harvesting protocol. The two journals already had separate websites and various solutions were used for conference management. At this stage, a comparative study of technical requirements, differences and links among the website, the institutional repository, the journal management system and the conference management system was done. It was decided to set up four separate elements united by a similar interface design and interlinked, so that the website serves as the main hub.

The common requirements for all elements included:

- The use of free and open source software, preferably the LAMP (Linux, Apache, MySQL, PHP) stack;
- AESOP must have full access to data and code;
- Interoperability with major journal and repository aggregators must be ensured .

The second step was defining the technical details of each element.

- Website

The AESOP website rested on a custom-made content management system which was difficult to maintain and upgrade. It was decided to use a widely used open-source content management system, preferably Joomla or Wordpress. These software solutions are not only free to use, but they are also permanently developed by massive developer communities. Thanks to this, software updates are available free of charge, website design can be altered without migrating the website content, and even if migration is needed, content, which is stored in a database, can be ingested into the new website.

- Journal management system

The websites of both AESOP websites used custom-made content management systems, which could not meet the requirements of online journal management (no support for the editorial and peer-review processes), publishing (metadata were not exposed in a standard format) and dissemination (no protocol for metadata exchange). Open Journal Systems, an open-source solution developed by the Public Knowledge Project (PKP) was identified as a preferred software platform for the AESOP journals already in an early stage of the project, as the most widespread solution, especially for non-profit Open Access academic-led journals.

- Institutional repository

Before the project, AESOP did not have a repository, nor was this idea considered as an option. Publications and other outputs were uploaded to the website. Although discoverable by Google and other search engines, these resources were not harvestable by aggregators and e-research infrastructures. Also, the cluttering of these resources made it difficult to navigate through the website. The idea to establish an institutional repository was raised with the aim of optimizing the visibility and usability of the AESOP research outputs in line with the principles of Open Science and ensuring integration with major international aggregators. It was decided either to set up an independent repository using a widely known open-source software solution (originally, DSpace was identified as a preferable solution) or use Zenodo, a general-purpose open-access repository developed under the OpenAIRE project and operated by CERN.

- Conference management system

Conference Management System (CMS) supports the management of the entire life cycle of events, event by event, allowing the building of a conference material archive and possible reduction of costs. Having an in-house CMS would avoid change in procedures at every event. Conference Management Systems typically facilitate the common tasks when organizing a conference. Integration of the CMS, such as the Open Conference System (OCS) designed by Public Knowledge Project (PKP), usually opens the opportunity to run several conferences from the single installation, each of which may occur repeatedly over several years. Apart from the various difficulties of a CMS (also technical) and limitations its importance is great, since it plays a crucial role in the functionality of continuity as well as, and this is possibly the most significant issue, in keeping alive the heritage and memory of AESOP in the future.

2.2. Community Building

Before the implementation: what was planned, aims, challenges identified, etc.

Besides the aim to pave the way to managing, sharing and innovating knowledge in a new digital ‘public space’ where academics meet, discuss, learn, co-create, decide, the AEKOM platform was planned as a feasible and desirable way to preserve the AESOP legacy and to value AESOP’s heritage. While providing the AESOP community with powerful tools to foster an engaged planning community, AEKOM could also expand the number of non-AESOP stakeholders, and the level of their involvement and contribution to AESOP processes. AEKOM is also considered and is also an expression of a trajectory toward a truly open attitude. Allowing and activating technological as well as mental openness, it pushes beyond the usually referred “Open Research Data” and “Open Access” to scientific publications, to include all ranges of possibilities facilitating ‘open science’.

In this regards the challenges identified include the followings:

- Addressing an AESOP *open access policy* in collective and interactive knowledge-building/sharing/managing
- Encouraging AESOP to deeply explore the linkages between the digital-infrastructures, on the one side, and the civic engagement as a way to build communities for the future, on the other side while addressing an *open access policy* in collective and interactive knowledge-building/sharing/managing.
- Embracing *Open Science* as a new approach to the scientific process that extends the principles of openness to the whole research cycle in order to foster sharing and collaboration as early as possible thus entailing a systemic change to the way science and research is done (EU, 2016, Open innovation, open science, open to the world: A vision for Europe).
- Paving the way to three of AESOP’s main endeavours: *revisiting the past, sharing the present, and building the future*. AEKOM will contribute to AESOP’s heritage building process in the digital era, while providing the AESOP community with powerful tools to foster an engaged planning community. The project intends to achieve this goal convinced that knowledge creation, sharing and management – in particular E-Knowledge, thanks to the contemporary cybernetic environment and its potential – matters for addressing huge planning challenges such as climate change, migration, equity etc.
- Conceiving AEKOM as an infrastructure that invites daily rituals of knowledge-exchange *turning legacy* (as the memory disseminated through scientific products and built on the result of past decisions and actions) *into common heritage*(as the legacy inherited, kept and fed in the present and made available for the future). The platform (AEKOM) supports the group (AESOP). The group (planning community) makes the platform (AEKOM).

3. Project Activities

3.1. Infrastructure

3.1.1. Finding the path

In order to formulate adequate recommendations, the following inquiries and comparative studies were conducted in the second half of 2019:

- an analysis of Open Science principles as a context for AEKOM;
- an analysis of the basic principles and features of institutional repositories;
- a comparative study of Zenodo and a customized DSpace repository;
- a comparative study of technical requirements, differences and links between a website, institutional repository and a conference management system.

As a result, the following recommendations and supporting activities were offered to ExCo

members:

- to implement an institutional repository using a customized DSpace platform;
- to start looking for a repository service provider and a website designer relying on the technical requirements defined by the AEKOM team;
- to explore options for OJS customisation and hosting services;
- to explore options for the conference management system;
- to hire a repository manager once the infrastructure is implemented in order to ensure content curation and repository maintenance.

There was a general preference in the AEKOM team to seek service providers among university or public institutions associated with AESOP members. Potential collaboration was discussed with the National Documentation Centre of Greece (EKT), which offered an OJS instance and hosting free of charge for at least two years. However, the legal obligations and rights over the contents and especially over a potential transfer to a different server or platform in the future were insufficiently clear. Also, the Firenze University Press and OpenAIRE were approached for potential collaboration but these attempts yielded no results.

The issue of open-source platforms for conference management

3.1.2. Call for bids

As it was impossible to find companies, teams or individuals who would set up the infrastructure within the AESOP community, it was decided to run a Call for Bids. The [Call](#) was announced on 6 October 2020 on the AESOP website and it was open until 4 December 2020. However, it was only after an extension and direct invitation to several companies that a sufficient number of relevant bids were collected.

3.1.3. Evaluation of bids

Seven bids were received – three for the website and the repository, one for the website only and three for the repository only.

Bids from	Website	Institutional repository:
Tubelingo	yes	no
Limpide & MyScienceWork	yes	yes
stichting OPENACCESS.AC	yes	yes
Atmire Solutions	no	yes
Ibai sistemas	no	yes
Escire	no	yes

Nikolaos Politis (IT engineer)	yes	yes
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A complex evaluation framework was developed to assess the bids. The following aspects were taken into consideration:

- bidder's portfolio;
- implementation timeframes;
- implementation and maintenance costs;
- the quality of services (technical aspects);
- elements that were not explicitly defined in the call (e.g. responsiveness, communication, etc.).

Special attention was paid to the so-called "exit strategy" to ensure for AESOP full ownership and control over the established infrastructure, software and data.

After the evaluation, the AEKOM team proposed to the CoRep members to award the contract to the Stichting OpenAccess for providing services of the AESOP website design and the AESOP Institutional Repository, as well as OJS services for *Transactions* and *plaNext*, which are offered free of charge. Not only that **Stichting OpenAccess** offered the most competitive services and financial terms, but this bidder was also closely connected with the planning community and familiar with best practice in Open Science.

3.1.4. Signing the contract

The contract for providing services for the Websites Design, IR and OJS was awarded to **Stichting OpenAccess** by the CoRep in August 2021. The contract was drafted based on a template provided by AESOP and the information (description of the services, technical details, timelines, etc.) provided by Stichting OpenAccess. It was revised by legal advisors. The contract covers the AESOP website, YA website, CiviCRM Association Management System (integrated with the website), two instances of the Journal Management System, the Institutional Repository, hosting for all the services, as well as a set of supporting services necessary to establish and maintain the infrastructure.

3.1.5. Call for a Transition Management Services Provider

A call for a Transition Management Services Provider was launched on 10 May 2021. The services relate to the coordination of the transition and implementation process with the responsible person from Stichting OpenAccess and AESOP stakeholders. The AEKOM team defined the requirements for this position. Only one person applied. The contract was awarded to Phoebus Ilias Panigyrakis (Iconic Ironic Architecture, Galvanistraat 451, 3029 AD, Rotterdam, the Netherlands). The Transition Manager was responsible for the following tasks:

- communication between AESOP and Stichting OpenAccess;
- content preparation (and delivery to Stichting OpenAccess);
- implementation and organization of infrastructure testing;
- organization and coordination of a training package for relevant administrative staff;
- smooth handover to the Repository Manager;
- reporting.

3.1.6. Call for a Repository Manager

In order to ensure repository management and efficient editorial workflows, it was decided to hire a competent individual who would assume the role of a repository manager, along with providing technical support to the

editorial teams of the journals *PlaNext* and *Transactions*. The call was announced on 11 January 2022 and was open until 28 February 2022.

- maintaining and developing AESOP's institutional repository using Open Preprint Systems;
- managing editorial workflows using Open Journal Systems in collaboration with the editorial teams of the two journals;
- implementing, documenting, and maintaining effective quality control standards;
- Liaising with external and internal service providers;
- responding to enquiries from AESOP members;
- providing support and training for AESOP members;
- assistance in developing practice and policy in collaboration with the relevant bodies of AESOP;
- maintaining an understanding of developments in scholarly communication, research data management and open access publishing and advising on their relevance and application within AESOP.

3.2. Community building

3.2.1. Main actions

AEKOM team developed five main actions throughout the project implementation:

(1) *The AEKOM kiCk-off(ee) meeting* organised according to the "World Cafè" participatory methodology in Gothenburg, July 2018 (this initiative is detailed in the Feasibility Study, March, 2019)

The "world café" conversation concentrated on a general main question – What do you see as AESOP's potential for creating, sharing and managing knowledge to contribute to a vibrant planning community? – and three sub-questions:

- What do you see as AESOP's potential for creating knowledge to contribute to a vibrant planning community?
- What do you see as AESOP's potential for sharing knowledge to contribute to a vibrant planning community?
- What do you see as AESOP's potential for managing to contribute to a vibrant planning community?

This initiative resulted in the following 10 general strategies of creating, sharing and managing knowledge through a new platform. These strategies crosscut explicitly inputs, results and addresses emerging from the various steps of the consultation (questionnaire survey) and the in-dept investigation and can be considered the strategic interface between AESOP mission and AEKOM complementary support to accomplish such mission.

They are:

1. Promoting the intersection between Creating, Sharing and Managing (C&S&M Intersection);
2. Encouraging E-participation;
3. Using existing knowledge in a new context;
4. Strengthening knowledge management, knowledge production, and knowledge exchange;
5. Initiating process of knowledge creation and sharing;
6. Communication on potentialities and risk of knowledge sharing;

7. Promoting knowledge managing;
8. Engaging users' agency;
9. Stimulating knowledge creating and sharing;
10. Developing and monitoring a quality assurance services of digital scholarship.

(2) *The Focus Group meetings* (this initiative is detailed in the Feasibility Study, March 2019)

In order to capture perspectives of AESOP stakeholders which are involved in most of the AESOP online services and in a broader sense in AESOP processes, focus-group meetings were conducted and divided regarding the possibilities different digital tools could offer them.

After several rounds of discussions on the raised issues, the most important highlights and conclusions were made.

JMS focus-group meeting:

- The same JMS should be integrated to both Transactions and plaNext journals' workflows as a shared resource.
- The process leading to the implementation of the proposal (made by the Transactions/plaNext group, based on the research done by Nikos Karadimitriou) for the OJS by EKT (Greek National Documentation Centre) should be as fast as possible. Also, the necessary costs have to be known.

CMS/IR focus-group meeting:

- The main functionalities regarding abstract submission, review process, designated people can see cluster of abstracts, collaboration during the reviewing process, a platform for a "user" where he/she is an author or reviewer, access to track co-chairs.
- IR requires constant support and attention, since these systems are not selfmanaged, and the workload tends to increase regarding the platform complexity.
- The actual AESOP website is currently out-of-date;
- There is no clear information about who are the potential users of a future platform, possibly individuals. It contributes to this the fact that there is no systematic database of users; also, the fact that in the case of AESOP members are schools, not individuals, should be taken into consideration

(3) *An Overall Strategy for Fostering E-Knowledge in Planning Scholarship:*

Revisiting the Past, Sharing the Present, Building the Future

This strategy was presented as a policy statement for the ExCo and CoRep to approve in July 2019 AEKOM at the AESOP Annual Conference, in Venice. It was presented before deciding on the feasibility of implementing a digital knowledge platform to reflect upon and agree on the role of AEKOM as a productive companion in every academic task: teaching, researching, debating.

The second aim was to straighten the motivation for the project implementation based on the strong community-building component of the project. It was not planned in the original plan proposals. It was an extra effort by the AEKOM Team, to further clarify and address the issues raised during the Ljubljana CoRep meeting in March 2019, and the postponement of the approval of AEKOM year 1 and of the continuation of the project to the CoRep meeting in Venice, July 2019.

As a result the CoRep agreed on the Idea that AEKOM should aim at:

- ° preserving AESOP's legacy and turning it into heritage for the planning community;
- ° envisioning AESOP as a transformative community;
- ° embracing an open knowledge/open access attitude (and the innovative potential implied);
- ° stimulating interactivity amongst members, between members and ExCo/CoRep, and possibly between AESOP

and other communities/stakeholders.

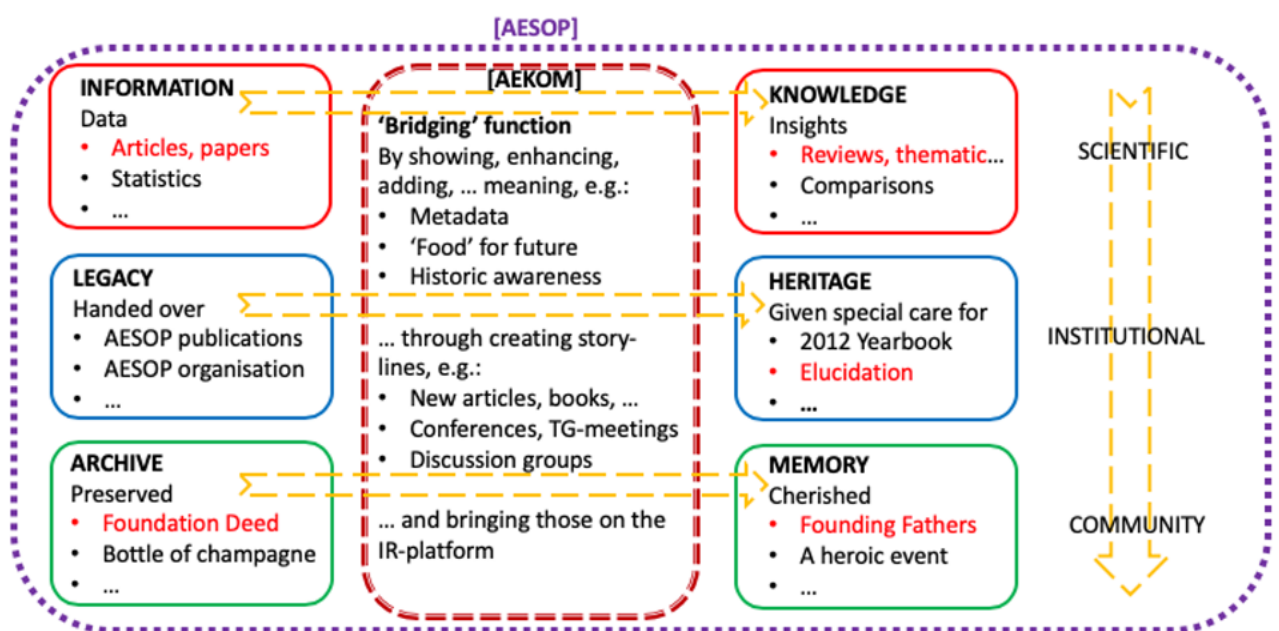
(4) AESOP meeting in Reading, October 2019.

During the meeting, a specific slot was devoted to the AEKOM project.

Within this slot a conceptual work on the potential role of AEKOM as “multiple bridging” among the many AESOP activities and projects was presented with particular reference to the Memories Project.

This work was particularly addressed to stress the community-building component of the AEKOM projects with the aim to enucleate the following issues also illustrated in the scheme below:

- how AEKOM can help bridging AESOP’s intellectual outputs and make them available to the internal and external community? (by: open access, metadata, ... cfr. further slides);
- how creating, managing and sharing knowledge is bridging past, present and future, paving the way for *legacy* to become *heritage* and *archive* to become *Memory*?
- how AEKOM’s structure and functionality have the potential of hosting and implementing projects with strong synergies due to its already established modules, namely Institutional Repository?



Scheme 3 – AEKOM as multiple ‘bridging’

AEKOM’s crucial role in creating added value for AESOP: parallelism between 3 examples shows how the bridging-functionality between **information** and **knowledge** can be ‘extended’ into addressing **heritage** and **Memory**.

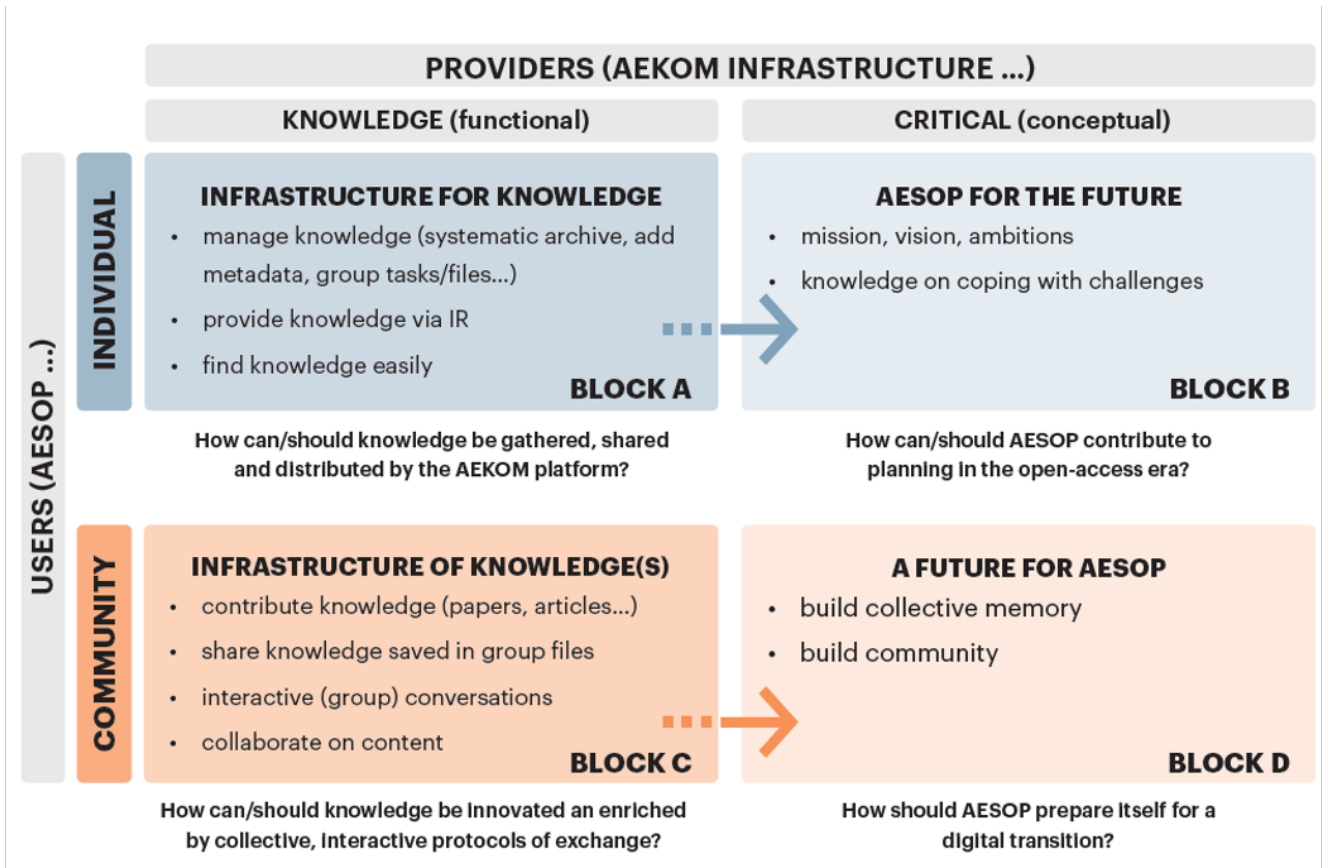
(5) The AESOP-AEKOM Participatory Scenario Workshop, promoted by the Presidency, ExCo, AEKOM Team – October 2021: WHY (DO WE) STRENGTHEN AESOP COMMUNITY? Towards AESOP future in the digital transition

This meeting is a milestone of the AEKOM project. It aimed at co-designing a working map towards a post-pandemic future of AESOP as a community that is able to create, share, and manage knowledge for planning, including digital open-access tools.

The main scope of the meeting was to create common knowledge of the Association’s “state of the art” and a shared vision of future steps, with regard to the projects that must be accomplished – with particular reference to the digital transition – and the way in which the community can meet and cooperate. The initiative came after the Covid-19 spread out when the management of digital knowledge became a fundamental part of the knowledge sharing process which is crucial within the planning community. These circumstances made even more evident the need for an AESOP community prepared to navigate the digital open-access transition and

that the AEKOM platform can facilitate this process.

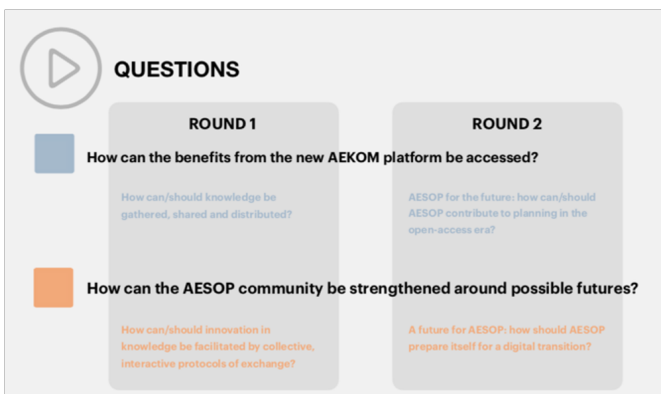
Conceptually, two perspectives and four dimensions were brought together. Taking the stakeholders (including CoRep members, YA coordination team, Thematic Groups, past presidents, ExCo members, ...) into account, the provider, as well as the user perspective, were interrelated. The individual and the collective dimension was also introduced as a crucial perspective for envisioning the future (see 'Tissue of issues'-matrix in the image below).



The related questions served to the participants of Blocks A & B or C & D put this in perspective (see the image below):

Question 1: How can the benefits from the AEKOM platform be accessed?

Question 2: How can the AESOP community be strengthened around possible futures?



The Participatory Scenario Workshop was a successful event, both in terms of attendance and content.

Amongst the participants, stakeholders from AESOP's institutional articulation were present: CoRep, ExCo, TG coordinators, YA, former presidents and SG's. Given this constellation, one can be confident to have gathered a significant sample of voices.

Amongst the themes discussed, technical, functional, social, strategical and epistemological issues were discussed. Facts, statements, and expectations were launched, issues and suggestions were raised, themes were put on the agenda.

Four main transversal themes have been identified as in need of further exploration. Round table discussions could be a fruitful further approach, if well prepared: *access* to the platform, *diversity* within AESOP, *community* building, and AESOP's *future*. Each of these themes is characterized by tensions, controversies and/or challenges.

1. Tensions between 'open access' and membership
2. Pluralism as an asset or as a complication?
3. What community to be built?
4. (How) should AESOP adapt to a digital future?

It seems wise to spend more time for elaboration, exploration and debate.

Three documents are enclosed in this final report with details and results of this initiative:

- The informative guide for the discussion
- The Instant report of the workshop
- The critical report of the workshop (with addresses for future steps).

3.2.2. Outreach

AEKOM team reached out to the YAs Tirana Conference LOC and the AESOP PhD Workshop Organizing Committee to plan two sessions in order to disseminate the project results (1 April and the 22 June 2021 respectively). During the events, the AEKOM team presented the project, its scope, objectives and its added value to the community.

AEKOM took part in the "AESOP – European planning schools at the crossroads" Event, in Kaiserslautern, (March 16, 2022) contributing to the "Shaping the future for planning in Europe and beyond" Round table.

Moreover, several communications and informative videos have been presented and distributed to the AESOP community throughout the project preparing and implementation.

4. Results

4.1. Infrastructure

Except for the conference management system, all elements of the infrastructure have been established in line with the technical and governance requirements defined by the AEKOM team.

4.1.1. Website

The AESOP website is powered by Joomla! version 3.10.5 Stable. Joomla! will be upgraded to version 4 as soon compatible versions of all plugins are released. To respond to one of the major requirements, relating to the

membership and contact registration and invoicing, [CiviCRM](#), an open-source software solution, has been integrated with Joomla!. Other notable extensions include:

- [Gantry 5](#) - theme framework;
- [Acymailing](#) - support for newsletters;
- [PWT ACL](#) - permissions management;
- [Shack Forms Pro](#) - support for forms;
- [Twitterfeed Pro](#) - supports embedding Twitter feeds into the website.

The interface is responsive, which means that it adjusts to various screen resolutions. The website has a publicly available front end, a members' area (reserved for the AESOP members, i.e. registered users) and a backend accessible only to the AESOP staff.

4.1.2. Journal Management System (JMS)

Two instances of OJS 3.3.0.7 were set up (on the OS platform Darwin, PHP version 7.4.21, Apache 2.4.46 (Unix), Database driver mysql, database server version 8.0.26), one for Transactions of AESOP and the other for plaNext. To ensure interoperability and more efficient data exchange, the following open-source plugins are used:

- [Funding data](#) - a funding registry plugin submit funding information to Crossref;
- Dublin Core - metadata plugin ensuring compliance to the Dublin Core metadata schema;
- [Form HoneyPot](#) - support for user registration;
- [Google Scholar](#) - exposes metadata to Google Scholar for harvesting;
- OpenAIRE - maps metadata to a format required by OpenAIRE for harvesting;
- [PKP Preservation Network](#) - automatically harvests new content from registered journals and adds the content to the PKP Preservation Network, which is dark archive ensuring long-term preservation;
- [CrossRef XML Export](#) - deposits DOIs to Crossref;
- [DOAJ Export](#) - exports metadata in the format required by the Directory of Open Access Journals.

These are the links for the journals:

Transactions of AESOP: <https://transactions-journal.aesop-planning.eu/index.php/TrAESOP>
plaNext: <https://journals.aesop-planning.eu/index.php/planext>

Both journals have an OAI-PMH interface. It has been validated and included in the OpenArchive register: <http://www.openarchives.org/Register/BrowseSites>.

The interface is responsive, which means that it adjusts to various screen resolutions. Each OJS instance has a publicly available front end enabling access to the journal information, metadata and the published content of the journals, and a back end enabling editorial workflows in an online environment, accessible only to the editorial staff, authors and reviewers.

The new Transactions of AESOP website is live and its content is indexed by Google Scholar. It has been submitted to the Directory of Open Access Journals. After acceptance in DOAJ (<https://www.doaj.org/toc/2566-2147>), its article metadata were submitted there, which means that users can find Transactions articles by searching DOAJ. plaNext has already been indexed by DOAJ for some time.

4.1.3. Institutional Repository (IR)

At the time the contract with Stichting Open Access was signed, it was assumed that the repository was to provide a more interoperable environment for the scattered academic content included in the AESOP website (e.g. Booklets). The original idea was to set up a platform based on Open Monograph Press, developed by Public Knowledge Project (PKP). In follow-up conversations with the AEKOM team, it was understood that the repository should facilitate a broader range of academic outputs. After some deliberations, it was decided to set up a so-called (pr)e-print server, based on Open Preprint Server version 3.3.0.10 (set up on OS platform Darwin, PHP version 7.4.21, Apache 2.4.46 (Unix), Database driver mysql, Database server version 8.0.26). Open Preprint Server, is open-source software developed by PKP. The repository is already available online: <https://eprints.aesop-planning.eu>. The software solution is similar to the OJS platforms used for the two AESOP journals. To ensure interoperability and more efficient data exchange, the following open-source plugins are used:

- Funding data
- Dublin Core
- Form HoneyPot
- Google Scholar
- [Hypothes.is](#) - Support for annotations and comments
- OpenAIRE
- Research Organization Registry (ROR) - support for globally unique, open, and persistent ROR identifiers for research organizations
- Crossref Deposit
- CrossRef XML Export

Eprints.aesop-planning.eu can be used for a broad range of resources. The platform supports the following resource types:

- Books/Booklets
- Book Parts
- Conference Papers
- Conference Proceedings
- Doctoral Theses
- Journal Articles
- Lectures
- Preprints
- Reports
- Videos

The various publications found at the current AESOP website, as well as those that had previously been deposited in the [AESOP Zenodo Community](#) have already been migrated to the repository. All documents are made available under the CC-BY-4.0 license, visibly displayed at each content page. All documents can be downloaded without restrictions, or viewed in a PDF viewer. If necessary, access to some items may be restricted.

The repository has a publicly available front end, where users can find the metadata and deposited content, a members' area for eligible registered users who wish to deposit their content and access restricted items, and a back end with administration and curation functions accessible to the AESOP staff and repository managers.

All submitted content in the repository will be moderated. This means that no content will be accepted and displayed in the repository without the approval of the repository manager. As opposed to classic preprint servers, the platform does not support the peer review workflow, as this was not a call requirement.

Content can be organized into categories (e.g. for the Annual Congress Papers, for a Thematic Group or any other coherent set of content). Currently, there is only one category (Booklet series). Any publication can be part of two or more categories, if required. The homepage displays the ten most recent additions to the collection.

In line with the defined technical requirements, the repository exposes metadata through a public OAI-PMH protocol, which has been successfully validated using the Open Archives Initiative validation service (<https://www.openarchives.org>). This means that its content can easily be harvested by aggregators such as BASE or CORE.

The platform facilitates statistics on downloads and views. The interface is responsive.

4.1.4. Conference Management System (CMS)

A solution was discussed, with Stichting Open Access, for hosting conference papers and proceedings, including registration, payment, and additional information such as programme.

PKP did develop a conference solution (OCS), but this has stalled. The proposal is not to use a solution without a future. There are quite a number of conferences that deploy OJS for managing conference papers and proceedings. Examples can be found in the Directory of Open Access Journals. In fact, OCS was a modified version of OJS. Using OJS as key building block to facilitate the conferences makes it easy to ask the help of the repository manager to support the overall submission process.

The new website of AESOP will go live including the association management system (CiviCRM) that will be used for the registration of members, contacts and invoicing. CiviCRM does have a module for the organisation of events from registration, invoicing, up to printing badges.

Two solutions can be used to facilitate AESOP conferences:

1) OJS standalone

Open Journal Systems, using the OJS PayPal payment plugin for collecting fees. Custom pages can be made within OJS to provide more information such as programming, venue. This does require some extra knowledge on coding.

2) OJS + CiviCRM

Open Journal Systems can also be used in combination with CiviCRM. A participant registers and will pay using CiviCRM. The paper itself will be submitted in OJS. CiviCRM can offer more payment options, including credit cards. Another benefit is that the participant is added to the AESOP user base. For other interactions with AESOP, no additional registration will be required in the future. In the AESOP website, templates for a conference/congress (programme, venue, etc.) can be set up. In this case, the AESOP Secretariat can support filling in the templates.

The proposal is to opt for the second solution: a) using OJS for the dissemination of the academic content, and b) using the AESOP website with its CiviCRM to communicate the event, register participants and facilitate payments. Both solutions have the benefit that support can be provided through the Repository Manager and the AESOP Secretariat.

4.2. Community building

From the start, this project had a double aim. First and foremost, AEKOM aimed to find out how AESOP could relate its organization and functioning as well as possible to the digital transition taking place in the planning discipline. It was believed that the creation of a digital platform would offer new perspectives (e.g., the potential benefits of 'open source') and unrivalled means to manage and share knowledge amongst European Schools of Planning. Second, AEKOM's intention was to involve AESOP stakeholders and members in developing that digital platform. It was believed that engaging users in the making of the platform would make it attuned to needs and expectations of planning schools (and planners). It was also believed that engaged users would guarantee a performant platform on the long run, because such a platform needs providers of knowledge as well as users. One could say that the AEKOM project was trying to find out 'how to make the future digital'.

This project touches upon needs and wants of individual planners (in spe) and of the community of planners, planning students and schools.

Unexpectedly (and typical for planning!), while unfolding concepts and contracts for the making of the AEKOM-platform, the COVID-19 pandemic hit the world. We are still not sure whether COVID-19 will cause a ply or a rupture in planning practices, but we do know that the future will be different from before. One of the differences will be the increased range and intensity of using digital tools. The pandemic turn met the digital turn. A digital platform is no longer 'nice to have'; it suddenly became a 'need to have'. The proliferation of digital means and tools has influenced strongly teaching, learning, and researching. Institutions and organizations are adapting to a new context. And AESOP needs to redefine its role and functioning accordingly.

This quest must redefine simultaneously the future of planning and a future for AESOP.

One could say that AESOP is urgently trying to find out 'how to make (it in) the digital (planning) future'. It brings the need and opportunity to reflect on this change and to re-vitalise the AESOP community and its activities to adapt to the new future and the challenges it might bring.

The main findings for the future development and use of the AEKOM platform include three conceptual challenges:

- *Preparedness*: Planning is about change, how to adapt to changing situations, how to induce change to a better future, dealing with uncertainty, collective learning.
- *Co-design* a work map towards a post-pandemic future of AESOP as a community that is able to create, share, and manage knowledge for planning, including digital open-access tools.
- *Being Reflective* by doing (engaging, involving, debating).

4.2.2 Recommended paths and propositions (>>)

According to the result of the participatory scenario workshop 4 recommendations and the associated propositions are enucleated for future action.

1. Tensions between 'open access' and membership / *Inclusivity and membership*

In order for the platform to be used correctly, policies need to be set in advance, both for enabling an appropriate use (through protocols) while limiting access to some material (where needed), respecting GDPR compliance and so on.

>> Inclusivity and accessibility are crucial concerns and demand a policy of AESOP that entails providing all members with information for adequate support and stimulation.

Participants raised the question of whether the platform should be for members only, in order to offer them a specific advantage while making sense of the fact they pay for it or should be completely open access in order to broaden AESOP's community.

>> Members and groups will define the range of accessibility of certain products.

Open access publications will be anyway available to a wider audience.

2. Pluralism as an asset or as a complication? / *Promoting pluralism*

Participants indicated that from an ethical perspective, AESOP should remain pluralistic and represent a wide-range of views on planning. The diversity and richness of these perspectives should be reflected on the AEKOM platform.

>> To this end a strong effort by the community is needed and recommended to meet this goal. Crowding and making use of the platform to nurture planning diversity is an opportunity but also a commitment for members and schools to make their specificity travel, increase and develop.

Participants suggest that AESOP should be more open, not only to other organizations (e.g., NGOs) and professionals but also to geographical areas outside Europe. In fact, some highlighted that AESOP is composed of people from all over the world, and if on one side this distinguishes AESOP from other organizations, on the other it requires us to be open everywhere.

>> Geographical inclusiveness contributes to pluralism but comes with a double cost: expenses for traveling and loss of identity. A well-designed digital platform could reduce these costs while stimulating pluralism.

3. What community to be built? / *Community building through AEKOM*

AEKOM platform can feed the future of the AESOP community and accomplish most of the members' requests: stimulate interactivity amongst members, between members and ExCo/CoRep, and possibly between AESOP and other communities/stakeholders; preserve AESOP's legacy while turning it into heritage for the planning community over time. Nevertheless, the valuable role of the platform will be determined by its users as AESOP community members.

>> Being an AESOP member entails an academic and ideological commitment that goes beyond the simple act of accessing and distributing knowledge.

By reinforcing the engagement of individual members and group of AESOP, AEKOM can become a site of community-building where members of AESOP connect and share their expertise. From the perspective of community building and thanks to its open access character, AEKOM could become a 'common', a platform on which members (department and individual), TG, etc., can and should participate.

>> A clear policy statement needs to be embraced by the AESOP members to contribute at the best the envisioned interactive system of knowledge management, entailing creating, sharing and distributing with the community in mind.

4. (How) should AESOP adapt to a digital future? / *Future*

As stated by participants, the digital transition does not concern only the way planning knowledge is consumed and shared, but also the discipline of planning itself. In times of the climate crisis and a global pandemic, planning is to take a leading role in shaping the future.

AESOP and AEKOM must deal first-hand with the challenges brought by the digitalisation of the discipline. On the other side, the future of planning is not only digital, and digital platforms are not an end in themselves, but a means to promote the concepts and content of planning. The concepts of planning can reach a wider audience if the institutional repository AEKOM is build and organized in a clear and accessible way, and highlights keywords and main concepts.

>>This is a twofold responsibility. On the one side it relates the platform's functioning and managing. On the other side, the platform users (AESOP members and community) will be responsible for making the knowledge sharing effective. How users will upload materials, metadata, other information will determine the success of the platform in promoting the concepts and content of planning

The future of AESOP is inextricably linked to the future relevance of planning. Practitioners have experienced the decrease in the relevance of planning in the last decades due to the current socio-economic system. Participants stated that it is one of AESOP's duties to counteract this tendency by strengthening planning departments, their alliances with other departments and their role within each university. This can be achieved also through AEKOM: by showing the relevance of planning in best practices of 'futuring' and coping with change. Another way the discipline of planning can be supported is by strengthening the relation with administrations and other institutions.

>> An AESOP policy address shared with the community would support such a fundamental path.

5. Conclusion

The AEKOM project has managed to establish an e-knowledge infrastructure consisting of:

- a website, which acts as a central hub connecting the AEKOM pillars as defined in the feasibility study (Institutional Repository, Journal Management System and Conference Management System);
- a journal management system for the two journals published by AESOP;
- an institutional repository.

A conference management system will be established at a later stage.

The infrastructure was established with sustainability in mind. In practice, this translates into the following guiding principles:

- infrastructure sovereignty, achieved through a heavy reliance on open-source software and commonly accepted standards, and efforts to avoid vendor lock-in;
- interoperability and integration with major international aggregators (DOAJ for journals and OpenAIRE, BASE and CORE for the repository) and Open Science infrastructure, achieved through the implementation of commonly accepted metadata standards (Dublin Core), persistent identifiers (DOI, ORCID, ROR) and metadata exchange protocols (OAI-PMH, HTML meta tags, XML sitemaps);
- competent curation and maintenance, achieved by hiring a repository manager, who will also support the editorial workflows of the two AESOP journals.

Thanks to this, AESOP keeps full control of the infrastructure. Software and content updates and upgrades, as well as data transfers, are possible without having to redesign the whole system.

By taking this path, AESOP has also established itself as a player in the Open Science arena, not only as the publisher of two Diamond Open Access journals, but also as a scholarly society that has undertaken to support the need for greater openness among its members by establishing a repository.

6. AEKOM Project Budget and balance

As portrayed in the budget sheet below the project has left unspent 9221 Euros.

The project has progressively saved resources thanks mainly to the reduction in travel (due to COVID-19) and work optimization, and the progressive achievement of milestones.

	BUDGET 2018		9700,00
2018	Meetings cost		3100
	BUDGET 2019		11000
2019	Meetings cost		6505,89
2019	AEKOM Secretariat		980
2019	Technical support		500
		<i>Realised</i>	<i>7985,89</i>
	BUDGET 2020		13934
2020	Meeting cost		212,35
	BUDGET 2021		13721
2021	Project Manager		4500
	TOTAL BUDGET		25019,24
		<i>Realised</i>	<i>15798,24</i>
		Unspent	9221

7. Attachments

This report is accompanied by 3 attachments relating to the *AESOP-AEKOM Participatory Scenario Workshop*, promoted by the Presidency, ExCo, AEKOM Team – October 2021: WHY (DO WE) STRENGTHEN AESOP COMMUNITY? Towards AESOP future in the digital transition

- The informative guide for the discussion
- The Instant report of the workshop
- The critical report of the workshop (with addresses for future steps).

