

**Motivation Letter  
TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN**

I want to express my availability and interest to be the coordinator of the jury for AESOP PRIZE FOR EXCELLENCE IN TEACHING aiming to promote and encourage planning schools to apply new theories and/or methodologies/techniques, to improve the knowledge and expertise in planning.

I have been part of this team since it was launched in 1999 and therefore, I have the memory of its evolution and successive adjustments and improvements to become what it is today. It has been a very interesting experience of bringing together different views on innovative aspects of the profession and the associated teaching.

In a society in permanent evolution planning has to find new ways of advancement. Society and technology changes also altered the contexts and how knowledge is transferred. It is essential to find new ways to reach the students and to involve them in effective learning activities. Moreover, more than schooling education is what matters (Postman, 1996), and more than education the way we educate makes the difference.

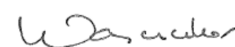
My conviction is that we need new ways to communicate and develop knowledge acquired in the planning spheres in a continuous evolving interchange between practice and theory, action and research, and hands-on experience and reflection.

I am part of the faculty of the Department of Environmental Engineering of the Faculty of Sciences and Technology of the **New University of Lisbon**, since 1985. I was hired to integrate the **Land Use Component** of the program of Environmental Engineering and therefore I have accumulated a substantial teaching experience along the years, exploring moving from theory to practice and from practice to theory, in an area not familiar to engineering students – public participation.

In this setting I ended up introducing the socio-environmental dimension in the Environmental Engineering Program as part of its land use component. This was done through the creation of a course on Interactive **Methods for Public Participation and Decision** that has been operating since 1999. It was a challenge to find creative and motivating ways to pass unfamiliar concepts of sociological and policy nature to future environmental engineers.

Besides, I have since 1993 focused my research and practice in **Governance and Public Participation** and I have developed extensive outreach by regular lecturing and offering hands-on training opportunities at non-university settings, such as NGOs, enterprises, and local/central public agencies, on the use and implementation of tools to promote knowledge integration and use through stakeholder interactive dialogue aiming at the co-construction of knowledge/strategies/actions/plans or studies in contexts of uncertainty and complexity. Throughout the years I have involved the best students of the university course mentioned above, as well as my post-graduate students, in the outreach actions with a very positive impact on the development of their practical and conceptual skills and motivation.

Education and the way we educate is a permanent challenge. I have been especially keen to find new ways of responding to this challenge and of promoting the development of new teaching environments and methodologies. Also, I believe I bring to this prize jury an unusual combination of experience on handling both university and non-university educational/training settings in multidisciplinary contexts and with active participation tools which is proving to be most relevant for current teaching developments.



Lia T. Vasconcelos

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