

ABOUT AESOP

The Association of European Schools of Planning (AESOP) was established in 1987. The aim of the organisation is to articulate a European dimension within planning education as part of the process of institutional co-operation and integration within Europe, also keeping in mind the prospect of increasing professional mobility within Europe. The ambition is to foster and enrich higher education in planning across Europe by mutual support, including facilitating dialogue, exchange visits and spread of information and to defend the cause of expanding and enhancing higher education in planning.

The key event of AESOP is the annual congress which brings together the broad spectrum of the work of member schools. It incorporates presentations and discussions of papers on planning, planning-related and planning-education subjects. Congresses also include local study visits, business meetings and meetings of special interest groups.

In addition to the traditional congress a new annual AESOP Seminar will be organized. The Seminar will have a clearly delineated theme, and be modeled on an informal workshop style. The seminar will focus in depth on a topic, be limited in size and be relevant to AESOP's concerns with developing understanding and education in the planning field within Europe. The first seminar will be held in 1996.

The AESOP Newsletter is published twice per year and contains information about member-schools, working groups, office-bearers and other representatives. It also provides news of our corporate activities. Information about AESOP is also given in AESOP News Items which are distributed via e-mail. Information about AESOP is also available on the World Wide Web (WWW). The URL is: <http://regina.regplan.kth.se/aesop.htm>

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AESOP Statement

The State of Spatial Planning in Europe

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Preface

This is an important time for spatial planning in Europe. The purpose of this document is to make a statement on the contribution of spatial planning can make in the context of contemporary urban and regional conditions in Europe. We hope the statement will be of value to policy-makers and others, in Europe as a whole and in individual countries, interested to understand the evolving role of planning at the present time. It is also provided as a stimulation to debate, research, education and training work among AESOP member schools.

The statement was approved as an AESOP statement by the AESOP Council of Representatives in March 1995, following presentation to the AESOP Council and General Assembly in the Istanbul Congress in August 1994, and publication for comment in the AESOP Newsletter.

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DEFINITIONS

The planning we refer to is variously known as spatial planning, urban and regional planning, land use planning, and *aménagement du territoire* or territorial management. We refer to the strategies and practices which have developed to help political communities manage their places, cities, regions, neighbourhoods, rural areas, coastlines and wild landscapes.

CONTEXT

This statement identifies key tendencies with respect to urban and regional change at the present time in Europe and the responses to these being developed within the planning field. Europe is by no means homogeneous. There are huge differences between countries and regions, in history and geography, in public policy, attitudes to governance, to cities and the environment. A major task of AESOP is to promote understanding of this diversity and its implications for planning work.

There are major changes underway in Europe these days. This can be seen in the economic, environmental and socio-cultural conditions of territories and localities. It is also evident in Europe's political-institutional landscape. This is creating a new context for spatial planning work, and in many countries particularly in Western Europe, a new enthusiasm for planning. One reason for this enthusiasm is the increasing sense that urban regions across Europe are in competition with each other, for private investment and public subsidy. The qualities of places and their institutional capacity to act in a strategic and co-ordinated way seem to be an important factor in that competition. Co-ordination and collaboration within urban regions gives confidence to companies moving into a region and helps draw down benefits, or at least mitigate adverse impacts, which companies may generate to the society and the environment of a place. Co-ordinated institutional capacity that can integrate economic, socio-cultural and environmental dimensions of the qualities of places is also emerging as a critical issue for the achievement of strategies for environmental sustainability.

But this new emphasis on spatial planning and strategic co-ordination is not universal. In some countries in Europe, the emphasis is still on the promotion of development through particular projects, rather than strategies. "Flagship" projects and a rhetoric about the image of places are substituted for strategic co-ordination, although the results of a project-led approach to development in urban regions are now seen as full of problems. In post-communist Europe, "planning" is seen as part of the old regime, and the search is for ways of developing markets. Yet it is well-established that urban land and property markets, which are the key markets mediating spatial development, need sensitive and stable frameworks to flourish. In many places, the origins of planning lie in the need to address market failures. There is much need in Eastern Europe to identify a new form spatial planning, free of associations with centralized economic planning.

Where there is a new enthusiasm for planning, there is an appreciation of the need for new approaches and methods. The challenge for the planning community throughout Europe, and for AESOP in particular, is to develop these new approaches. AESOP member schools have an important role to play in undertaking research on the critical issues which need attention for an effective, facilitative form of planning in order to promote the economic health, environmental sustainability and social cohesion of Europe's urban regions. AESOP also has a responsibility to promote the education of the coming generation of planners, and prepare them for the changes which will be demanded of them, both with respect to their role and their expertise.

KEY TENDENCIES

There are four broad tendencies which are experienced in one form or another in Europe's urban regions and rural areas. These are:

- the impact of both the globalising economy and the policies of the EU
- the search for ways of managing our economic and social activities in ways which can reach the objectives of environmental sustainability
- the social consequences of high levels of unemployment, increasing social inequalities, and migration across Europe
- the search for ways of reducing public expenditures and developing less bureaucratic and more collaborative ways of undertaking the work of urban governance.

globalisation, integration and competition

It is widely acknowledged that Europe's economies are increasingly open to the pressures of international competition. In this competition, some regions are in more favoured locations than others. But all feel the pressure of international forces, encouraging proactive economic development policies. Much of the emphasis in public policy in recent years has been to encourage this process through removing barriers to the free movement of people and goods, and hence to the benefits and the costs of this competition. Meanwhile subsidies have been withdrawn from many rural areas, as a result of the changes in the *Common Agricultural Policy*.

These developments produce new patterns of advantage and disadvantage among Europe's urban regions and rural areas. They also emphasise the importance of urban region institutional capacity. The well-positioned regions will always benefit. But for the others, the challenge is to develop local assets in the international market place, promote indigenous growth and limit the adverse consequences of the tough competitive environment. The European Union's Single European Market project vigorously encourages the opening up of Europe's territory to transnational competition. These policies have potential economic and social costs, for particular areas and social groups. This is acknowledged

by the EU in continuing subsidy programmes and the promotion of interurban networking, to provide support for urban regions in similar circumstances.

Critical issues in urban region development in this context are (1) the renewal of regional infrastructure and the equipping with new telematics technology, removing outdated bureaucratic mechanisms which impede investment; and (2) coping with the adverse consequences of economic transformation, in terms of re-training of labour, and the regeneration of derelict sites and buildings abandoned by former urban uses. But there are difficult challenges to be faced. Some approaches to economic development re-enforce adverse environmental and social consequences, and reduce the distinctive identities of places. There are strong pressures, for social as well as economic reasons, to develop and protect 'local identity'.

In this context, spatial planning is in demand to promote and co-ordinate the physical development aspects of local economic promotion and link these with the economic and social dimensions. A strategic orientation to the development of major projects of transformation, a pro-active enabling stance and a horizontal coordinative capacity are increasingly being seen as key institutional assets in the struggle to maintain economic prosperity in urban regions and rural areas in the emerging Europe. These also help to achieve environmental objectives, promote urban and regional cultural identity and reduce the adverse consequences of economic change on people in localities.

environmental sustainability

Despite the European Union's vigorous espousal of the agenda of environmental sustainability, there is still substantial variation among Europe's urban regions in both the adoption of the sustainability principle and the meaning given to it. There are common tendencies, however. One is the recognition that economic development has to be constrained within biospheric environmental capacities. A second is the appreciation that achieving sustainability requires interlinking environmental with economic and social policy.

These tendencies are generating an increasing interest in more strategic and integrated approaches to the management of change in urban regions and rural areas. The practice of Environmental Appraisal is changing the terms of planning regulation in many

countries. Where environmental issues are given prominence, new development issues have to be addressed, such as the location of toxic waste disposal facilities and renewable energy plants. The environmental perspective also stresses new relationships between activities. A major consequence of this emphasis on environmentally sustainable strategies is a new interest in the overall relationship between transport and infrastructure location and development. This contrasts sharply with the predominance of car-based transport policies in earlier decades, although real policy change is slow. It is also leading to new ideas about urban structure and form, emphasizing development within existing urban areas rather than extension into the periphery.

In this context, spatial planning is in demand to develop strategic ideas about the location of development, the terms on which development can take place, and the forms of subsidy which may be needed to encourage changes in behaviour in relation to infrastructure use and the location of development. But the demands of the new agenda of environmental sustainability require us to change our priorities and behaviour. Inevitably, this will produce conflicts. Some people will gain, others lose, and some of the losers will be the poorest in our societies. This raises questions about the way environmental issues are debated. It is not enough to leave the environmental agenda to scientific experts. There are complex interconnections with different policy fields to be considered and moral issues to be addressed.

social cohesion

Across Europe there is a sense of increasing social instability in our cities. Meanwhile, in affluent countries, there is a strong movement towards countryside living, either commuting, teleworking or through ownership of second homes. While we may celebrate 'post-modern differentiation', and the increasing opportunity for acknowledging diversity and difference, in relation to culture, gender and race, as well as class, yet there are other threatening tendencies. Unemployment seems stuck at very high levels, with a high proportion of long-term unemployed. This is opening up long-term differences between lifestyles and opportunities among citizens which create considerable conflict at the local level. These tensions are exacerbated by the situation of both old and new immigrants in different countries. In many parts of Europe, ethnic identities are being asserted.

In some countries, the result is considerable territorial tension, as different groups lay claim to the same places. While there is talk of preserving local identities and local culture, the reality may be one of differential trajectories of change. The disadvantaged pursue means of economic survival which lead to all kinds of informal strategies. In the third world, such informalisation is considered as a desirable response to limited opportunities in the formal economy. In most European countries, such informalisation is usually ignored in public policy. This raises serious questions about the different 'economic and social networks' in which we all live, and the extent to which there is any co-incidence among them in our urban regions and rural areas. One response is to move to neighbourhoods where there are others like ourselves. But such social-spatial segregation reinforces local tensions and inequalities rather than reducing them. The developing interest in culture and identity is a way to build back a sense of a shared community in urban regions and rural areas.

In this context, spatial planning needs to give very careful attention to the way the organization of space enhances or diminishes the ability of households in different situations to accomplish their daily life strategies. We need to explore this issue with detailed research on how people move around in cities and regions these days, and how far they are helped or hindered in the organization of space, the location of facilities, the physical infrastructure networks and the way built form is produced and accessed. It is also important that spatial planning is linked to the appraisal of the socio-spatial impacts of economic and environmental policies for urban regions and rural areas as these affect the diverse ways people live their everyday lives. Social impact assessment is as important as the assessment of the environmental and economic impacts of development proposals.

This social agenda has been a neglected issue in recent planning debate, as all those researching and campaigning for more awareness of gender differences stress. It urgently needs to be brought back into the forefront if the quality of life in places is to be fully understood and sensitively addressed, from the point of view of women and men, and social diversity more generally

partnership in governance

In the days of the dominance of the welfare state in Western Europe and Communist regimes in Eastern Europe, the state acted on our

behalf. It was the provider state, delivering housing, jobs, social and physical infrastructure and culture. While in some countries, this role is still considered valuable by citizens, elsewhere there has been criticism of the paternalism and cumbersome bureaucracy of welfare states. Citizens in many European countries complain that the political and administrative machinery of governments has become self-serving and unresponsive to needs.

Business makes the same criticism too. The business interest has encouraged the growth both of a more entrepreneurial and proactive stance in government agencies and forms of governance which involve partnership with business in some form, the classic *public-private partnership*. But without appropriate checks and balances, such partnerships can become seduced by their own rhetoric and produce projects that are economically unviable. Or they may pursue a very narrow definition of who the project is supposed to benefit. So some way of containing such partnerships within strategic objectives is desirable. Further, environmental groups and local people in a number of countries are vigorously demanding a greater say in governance.

This suggests that the challenge for urban governance in the 1990s and the next century is to find ways of working collaboratively between government agencies, business and citizens, which reflect the diversity of lifestyles and cultures which we now recognise. In some countries, there are already such traditions in place. Such processes need to be accepted as fair and accountable by all citizens and those with a stake in issues. The tradition of spatial planning, with its interest in directing governance actions by explicit and accountably-arrived at policy, and its long-standing interest in the forms of policy process, has significant new ideas to offer in this context.

NEW APPROACHES AND METHODS IN PLANNING

There are many areas of innovation in planning thought and practice, responding to these new challenges, from developing new approaches to urban design to new ways of reducing car use. Seven significant developments in planning thought and practice are discussed below. They are by no means universal across

Europe. But they suggest the emergence of new possibilities and ways of doing things. These are:

- the development of pro-active, facilitative approaches to guiding spatial change
- the experimentation with more collaborative and participative ways of developing and monitoring local policies towards urban and regional change
- the development of ways of thinking of time and space from the point of view of the daily life of households
- the development of ways of managing land and property markets through pro-active regulation
- the development of ways of understanding the environmental capacities of urban regions and techniques to monitor their condition
- the application of new information technologies to assess the impact of projects and policies
- recognition of the need for new ways of acting as planning experts, particularly from the point of view of practical ethics.

Pro-active planning

This practice developed strongly in the 1980s. It involves a shift from a form of planning either focused on the regulation of private development or on the provision of development by the public sector to meet the needs of households and companies. The new alternative is a form of urban development strategy which seeks to work through the interests and strategies of private land and property owners, developers, companies, intermediary agencies, community bodies and others, rather than the direct provision of development by the state. Such a strategic approach works not by directing what the various parties should do but by *framing* the activities of these various actors in an effort to help achieve public interest objectives. It acknowledges that the public sector does not have the resources to provide all the space that is needed, and that anyway, other players may be better placed to work out what is needed. This form of planning emphasises effective urban region strategies, to provide a loose-fit but co-ordinating framework, and

the development of financial incentives and partnerships, to 'add value' to the resources available to the public sector. It also emphasises the various elements of the promotion of major development projects in ways which maximise multiple objectives.

Collaborative planning

The new emphasis on inter-agency working, and on public-private-community partnerships puts the spotlight on the processes of collaboration. Within the planning field, the limits of conceptions of scientific objectivity and technical rationality are now widely acknowledged. New ideas are developing which emphasise the interactive and interpretative way knowledge is constructed and used. This emphasises that the work of developing strategies and following policies through into action is done through 'talk', and discussion, rather than through technical analysis, and that in this *communicative work*, arguments are constructed which create meaning and direction which then act to frame the subsequent strategies and interests of those who acknowledge the strategy. This is leading to a new ideas about how to facilitate collaboration and communication among different stakeholders in urban and regional issues, how to mediate conflicts creatively, rather than getting stuck in adversarial conflict and how to give real 'voice' to the different groups in urban areas, despite cultural and linguistic differences.

The 'everyday life' perspective

There is now a growing body of work on how people accomplish the tasks of daily life. This has grown in particular from studies and campaigns focused on how women live, and how their concerns and constraints have often been neglected in planning policy. Research work is exploring the daily timetables of household members, how they move around in time and space in urban regions and rural areas, and the constraints they encounter. With large numbers of women now working, and sometimes the main household earner, many assumptions of traditional planning policies are being challenged. Policy initiatives are focused on ways of removing constraints. Although the origin of much of this work arose from the perspectives of women, it is leading to an understanding of the diverse ways we live our lives these days, and consequently to understanding opportunity and constraint from the point of view of social diversity.

Market-sensitive planning

In the post-war period, planning was presented as an alternative to the market in the provision of land for development and often in property development itself. Market-driven development processes were presented as likely to make exorbitant profits, benefiting from the availability of public infrastructure. In this context, firm regulation of the private sector, the taxation of the profits of development and the substitution of the market by direct public sector development were seen as appropriate actions. But very little attention was given to how land and property markets functioned, and how they were shaped by planning regulation and public sector development activity. One consequence of the shift to pro-active planning and to collaboration with the private sector is that there is now a much better understanding of the nature of the property development process and the interrelation between public intervention and the constitution of land and property markets. Experiments in more liberal planning regimes in some western countries have shown clearly the limits of unfettered market behaviour, for the private sector developer as well as for the wider health of local economies and the local environment. Meanwhile, in Eastern Europe, there is concern about ways of generating market processes in land and property development which are sustainable over the long term. The new ideas focus on forms of collaboration between market and planning, private and public sectors, which maximize mutual benefit without disregarding social and environmental objectives. This is leading to ideas about ways of managing and providing the context for market processes which both facilitate the development of long-term development capacity and meet the other objectives a local community has.

Promoting environmental capacities in spatial development

Public policy, in the European Union, and in many individual countries and regions, is now strongly oriented to achieving objectives of environmental sustainability in some form. But this requires the translation of environmental rhetoric and principles into operational terms at the level of the management of urban regions and rural areas. There are currently vigorous debates on what this means in many areas. There are several examples where environmental resource conservation is the dominant objective of every aspect of urban management. Elsewhere, attempts are being made to define urban region and local area environmental capacities, or to conduct audits of environmental assets and develop indicators of environmental quality. Many cities are now exploring how to

improve environmental quality by managing traffic demand and energy consumption, including the regulation of land use and the design of urban form. This is leading to a recognition of the very difficult trade-offs that may have to be made between economic, social and environmental objectives. The contribution of planning research and practical endeavour to these developments is to emphasise the need to interlink environmental evaluation with social and economic considerations, to stress the difficult moral and distributional consequences of environmental choices and to challenge the assumption that these matters are purely technical and can be handled in the language of engineering, natural science or economics alone.

New technologies for new impacts

The planning field, as elsewhere, is excited by the new possibilities of the revolution in informatics and telematics. There is widespread experimentation with Geographical Information Systems. There is also a good deal of interest in the use of interactive technology to facilitate the building up of networks, the flow of information between networks, working out the consequences of proposals from different points of view, etc. SMART card technology is being used in experiments in road pricing and other traffic management experiments. The challenge for the planning field is to connect the use of these new technologies to what we already know about the diversity of perspectives, of the socially-constructed nature of knowledge and the range of forms of knowing and reasoning. In this way, the new technologies could become a really useful aid to broadly-based, informed debates about the future of cities, and about the way proposals for change impact on the material interests, moral values and feelings of different groups. If this is achieved, the new technologies could provide a valuable role in spreading access to knowledge and services, and in getting views across. But many contemporary trends show how the new technologies are reinforcing the advantages of those already well-placed. The contribution of planning work in understanding the social context of the use of these new technologies is therefore of great importance.

Practical Ethics

Within the planning tradition, there has long been a recognition that planning is as much about values as about facts, about moral issues as well as scientific ones. Rationalist traditions in planning thought sought ways of separating these out. It is increasingly evident that this is not possible, either practically or analytically. Nor is it

desirable for the task of helping communities work out how to co-exist in urban regions despite their differences. Common sense understandings have rich resources for the task of developing agreement on how to act. This means that planning experts have to think carefully about the way the work of knowing and of valuing, is woven together, and how planners, as experts in the service of society, make available our knowledge and skills. There is now an expanding literature which confronts the issue of the ethics of economic, social and environmental actions, and the way experts should conduct themselves when offering their services inside such contexts.

WHAT THE PLANNING COMMUNITY IN EUROPE OFFERS

The above agenda is demanding, and much of it at the forefront of new ways of thinking about society, space and public policy in the contemporary period. It raises theoretical and conceptual issues, issues to do with empirical inquiry, as well as questions to do with policy development and evaluation.

The planning community in Europe has much to contribute to the challenges of spatial planning or *territorial management* in the new Europe. Its distinctive contribution is the capacity to interlink social, economic, environmental and governance dimensions of issues to do with change in urban regions and rural areas. AESOP, as the association representing the academic side of the planning community, aims to promote the capacity to address the challenging tasks ahead by developing research, by preparing the new generation of planners and assisting in the updating of the current generation, (see the parallel AESOP statement on the education of planners) and by facilitating the exchange of ideas about innovations in research and practice across Europe.