

## Track 3 – Planning Education

### Track chairs:

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In his account of planning education at the University of Liverpool and the beginnings of town and regional planning in Britain, Wright (1982) explains that although in 1908 town planning had been talked about there was no statutory basis for planning and no educational provision. The acknowledged need for formal training, research, theoretical understanding and dissemination led to the setting up of the Department of Civic Design which celebrates its centenary in 2009.

Over the past 100 years, the field has developed enormously with formal teaching in spatial or city planning provided at over 150 different departments, faculties or schools at university level in Europe alone. Over time, as planning practice has evolved, so has planning education; and the curriculum has been adapted in terms of its content and design, delivery mode and purpose. Caught up in wider processes of discontinuous change, it is shaped by national and cultural contexts and the institutional and educational perspectives and ambitions of individual nation states - as well as international influences.

For example, different constructions of spatial planning, and the different scales and domains of planning result in the elaboration of very different learning outcomes which are designed to serve and reflect place and need. The context for planning education and society's expectations for planning are thus very different. Another issue, in Britain at least, is the fact that the concept of the independent planning school is increasingly abandoned and planning is reduced to a 'subject area' within much larger inter-disciplinary and multi-professional entities in an effort by universities to maximise economies of scale in response to the challenges of global competition in higher education. This clearly impacts on the perceived identity and status of planning as a field. In practical terms, these processes of institutional restructuring may involve the delivery of shared modules with allied professions. On the one hand, this may help to inculcate a culture of partnership-working which is deemed necessary to manage today's complex world. On the other hand, such trends have direct impacts on constructions of planning education, as may be witnessed by the development of degree qualifications which have dual accreditation from professional bodies that in the past were intellectually and professionally distinct.

### ***Suggested themes***

The education track for the 2009 AESOP Conference encourages presentations of research evidence and critical reflection on the state-of-the-art of planning education in the light of the conference question: "*Why Can't the Future be More Like the Past?*"

Specifically, we invite papers that:

- I. take a historical perspective and investigate, for example, the legacy and relevance of past approaches in planning education to contemporary and future provision. Papers may therefore address to what extent planning education has evolved and changed and how important it is to understand the past. Papers might consider what or whether we can learn from past educational practices and experiences.
- II. are concerned with mapping and explaining current trends and challenges and which seek to forward plan the emerging priorities for planning education. Here, papers might address in what ways planning educational theory and practices have evolved to serve new constructions of the purpose of planning or how we might want to change educational practices (in light of technology, or scarcity of resources). Authors may want to explore also how to prepare students for the future demands in the profession. From an institutional perspective, papers may address issues of the survival of planning as a distinct field of teaching and strategies that are - or could - be employed by departments to improve the status and identity of planning. Finally, authors may wish to explore what are the pressing research questions that planning educators need to address in order to ensure that planning education is 'fit for purpose'.
- III. rework the conference question and present imaginative ways to reflect on the conference theme in the context of planning education.