

Track 4 Global Challenges for Local and Regional Development

Track Chairs:

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The AESOP Conference seeks to focus on how the lessons from the past can be used to deal with the planning themes and issues of the future. Related to this track's theme 'planning for local and regional development' we take as a starting point – partially to challenge potential contributors to prove the opposite – that the future of local and regional development is so different from the past, that it will be difficult for European planners to make use of past experiences.

Planning for local and regional development increasingly faces global challenges, like the economic and geographical re-structuring of key economic sectors, the increasing number of foot-loose companies and the outsourcing of economic activities to new, powerful economic nations like India, China and Russia. The world-wide financial crisis, uncertainties in energy and sustainability, and increased international competition between regions and cities all over the world compound this position. To survive or, better, to take advantage of new opportunities and challenges, Western European regions and cities must develop new, innovative strategies to stimulate sustainable local and regional development. In this track we would like to address issues: What will be the likely economic challenges for planners?; which are the 'winning' regions and cities in this increasing panorama of global competition? Who are the 'losers'? Is it still possible to 'plan' local and regional development in an increasingly global economy? Can we fulfill the (spatial) demands of powerful, economic giants whilst dealing with the contradictory claims of other sectors and interests?

Does this mean that the past is redundant? Will we learn nothing from the past? We would emphatically assert "No, certainly not". In the past, economic planning had to address the consequences of fundamental shifts in the economy. These included the oil crisis in the 1970s, the awareness for the environmental impact of economic activities in the 1980s and the ICT and Internet economy in the 1990s. We believe that every fundamental economic turn potentially brings forward winners and losers. This tension raises the question as to what we can learn from the experiences of successful regions and cities. Can we uncover the secrets of those relatively well performing regions and cities? How did they take advantage of the 'new global and regionalized economy'? Is it possible to identify the clues to economic and social success? Significantly, we can learn from the failures of other regions and cities as well.

We particularly welcome papers that are related to these themes and issues. Additionally, we will consider innovative papers that address other issues related to regional and local development.