

Dear colleagues,

Many, many thanks in the faith you have in me, electing me as your future president. A few months ago I had not at all expected to become part of the AESOP board, once more. It is going to be a huge but challenging responsibility. I am fortunate not having to take this burden entirely on my own, being assured of a strong and very active team which is the ExCo. I am very, very grateful for their support and enthusiasm.

It is a delight to see the AESOP organization moving ahead. I strongly believe AESOP, robust and innovative as it is, is a factor of importance to us all in building confidence we need as scholars to participate in the various debates. To me it is not surprising that various European scholars are leading within our discipline. This particular aspect of building up confidence is important to me as it is a stepping stone to sharing new ideas and identifying new routes to be explored by our discipline, amongst others represented by various AESOP Thematic Groups which might become corner stones to the debate.

Once the argument to start Thematic Groups within AESOP was the need for AESOP to become more than an annual conference. Thanks to these working groups, and also to the Young Academics, the Head of School meetings and a lot more, AESOP has indeed become more than 'just' a mechanism to have annual conferences.

In this tradition I would like to move on, emphasizing the importance of scholars to become actively involved in the various interactions, actions and activities supported by AESOP and to take responsibility in new initiatives. Which could mean more reflection to developments within our discipline and to developments outside our discipline however of importance to our discipline. This could be embedding stronger the group of academics in between the 'founding fathers' and the Young Academics. These could be stronger linkages with journals and book series. This could be identifying new themes which strongly relate to planning however so far being ignored, such as the energy transition, the rise of a leisure economy, and more. The need or desire to pay attention to those countries and schools in Europe not being part of AESOP yet. And what about considering connections and interactions between European spatial planning and spatial developments in Asia and South America.

I believe it is also important to emphasize our lecturing programmes, which are more and more under pressure due to crises (economy, housing and so on), transitions within policy systems and the continues integration of the discipline of spatial planning within large and multi disciplinary faculties and schools, while we could make ourselves more resilient to outside influences if we are willing to share ideas about planning education, its programmes and the visions on which these programmes are build. 'Excellence in Teaching' is always been appreciated by AESOP, however there is far more to share than outstanding lectures.

Overall I would like to see the presidency being a driving force behind processes of innovation and renewal, in support of AESOP being a platform out of which progress emerges.

Warm greetings to you all from a rainy Netherlands
Gert de Roo