

Bielefeld, 25 July 2020

Dear friends

traditionally, outgoing AESOP Presidents give their goodbye speeches during the General Assembly. As this year the annual congress was cancelled, no General Assembly was held. A written note must suffice. Actually, if more AESOP officials had left us notes on their experiences and insights, the sum of these notes would be a fine record of AESOP's history.



When I became Junior Vice President in August 2017, the world looked very different from today. The congress motto in Lisbon was »Spaces of dialog for places of dignity: Fostering the European dimension of planning«. The motto inspired the Special Issue of Transactions of AESOP 4(1), published in June 2020, on **Planning for dignity**. Guest-edited by Francesco, the seven articles in the Special Issue explore human dignity and spatial planning from various perspectives.

One of the articles explores human dignity with respect to the post-traumatic spatial self-organization of mobile populations. Balkiz, Kostas, and Charalampos discuss refugees from Northern Africa. I found the [article](#) particularly touching because AESOP's logo could be misunderstood as meaning that European planning schools do not care about Africa in general or refugees from Northern Africa in particular. Personally, I believe that **Black Lives Matter** is not limited to North America. AESOP has a strong record in reaching out internationally which fact the logo sadly fails to acknowledge.



Alternative logo design: B. Davy / N. Preuß

I remember fondly an inspiring discussion in the Council of Representatives (CoRep) in Ljubljana (March 2019) on a more adequate cartographic representation of Europe. Deleting Northern Africa from the map is not an option. The logo discussion is also an example of the institutional inertia I have experienced during my tenure as AESOP President.

The Executive Committee (ExCo) and CoRep met in **March 2020** under exceptional circumstances. The Technische Universität Wien, due to the emerging pandemic, was already closing its gates, and the CoRep meeting was held in a nearby seminar hotel. This would not have been possible without the dedication, flexibility, and organizational skills of the local organizing committee, and I am particularly grateful to Thomas D., Andi V., and Vicky.



ExCo in Wien (March 2020)
Beata, Agnes, Maroš, Rachel, Angeliq, Thomas D., Ben



CoRep in Vienna (March 2020)
Agnes, Angelique, Zeynep (and several friends online)

The CoRep, for the first time in March 2020, met partly online. The meeting gave us an impression of how the future of **life on Zoom** would look. The CoRep decided to cancel the 2020 AESOP congress in Bristol and PhD workshop in Sheffield. The COVID-19 crisis was not the only reason for the cancellation. By mid-March 2020, the University of Western England still had not agreed with the ExCo on a draft for the congress contract. Maroš announced as a conclusion from the sad experience that in the future, contracts must be signed one and a half year before the congress.

Once I became President in August 2018, I started working on **AESOP International** which started as a project proposal (rejected by the ExCo in Bristol), turned into a policy discussion (CoRep meeting in Ljubljana), and finally became a series of AESOP project proposals. All proposals were rejected by the ExCo in the Wien meeting due to the financial insecurity posed by the cancellation of the 2020 congress and the COVID-19 pandemic. Since a permanent call is open on the AESOP website – called »[project regulations](#)« – hopefully fresh project proposals will be submitted soon.

AESOP is registered under Belgium law as a non-profit association. AESOP has to pay patrimony tax because Belgian tax law considers the assets too large for a non-profit association. AESOP has accumulated substantial assets from membership fees and a percentage of congress fees. I strongly feel that this is morally dubious (and maybe even a legal problem): **AESOP's funds should be used promptly for AESOP's purposes.** Funding more AESOP projects would be one way to accomplish financial management suitable for a non-profit organization. But perhaps the assets are needed to cushion the fallout from the pandemic.



AESOP General Assembly in Venice (July 2019)



E-Seminar for PhD candidates in planning (July 2020)

Due to the cancellation of the 2020 AESOP PhD Workshop and the COVID-19 crisis, many PhD students missed opportunities to reflect upon their progress with mentors and colleagues. Andi H., Christian, Linda, and Thomas H. helped me organize a two-day **online seminar** for 28 PhD students (from, among others, Argentine, the United States, South Africa, Great Britain, Ireland, Germany, Norway, Italy, Turkey). The seminar focused on research questions, methods, academic writing, and theory. Although not a formally approved AESOP activity, the online seminar can be considered an example of how AESOP can replace on-site events during a pandemic.

AND NOW A FEW PICTURES!



**Anna chairing the CoRep meeting
in Warsaw (2017)**



**Coffee break during the
2017 AESOP Congress in Lisbon**



**Angelique in the Planning Theory track at
the 2017 AESOP Congress in Lisbon**



**Ela, Zorica, and Anaïs in a
selfie session in Venice (2017)**



Daniel explains the complexities of quality recognition (Venice, 2017)



Paulo P. relaxes in a café in Porto (2018)



Ela and Francesco chat about the Transactions of AESOP special issue on planning for human dignity (Heads of School meeting, Newcastle 2018)



ExCo meeting in Gothenburg (2018): Anna, Paulo P., Zorica, Ela, Beata, Daan



The Opening Session of the 2018 AESOP Congress in Gothenburg



The AEKOM group in Gothenburg (2018): Tijana, Paulo S., Camilla, Joana, Alex in deep discussion



Teresa, Angelique, and Marlon at the ACSP/AESOP Special Session »After Hardin« (Gothenburg, 2018)



Marlon summing up the conversation at the end of the ACSP/AESOP Special Session »After Hardin« (Gothenburg, 2018)



Jan and Ben explore the mystery of a relaxed selfie face (Gothenburg, 2018)



Paulo and Ben enjoy the end of the 2018 annual congress in Gothenburg.



And so does Beata.

One month later, a young Swedish women started a school strike to end the complacency of politicians and consumers regarding climate change.



The 2018 AESOP congress dinner in Gothenburg was a spectacular event. This could never happen on ZOOM.



Anna singing French folklore at the Gothenburg congress dinner (2018)



Angelique, Weiping, Marlon, and Ben at the ACSP conference in Buffalo, NY (2018)



Paulo, Daniel, Zorica, and Daan at the ExCo meeting in Ljubljana (March 2019)



Anna, Ela, Beata, Zorica, Angelique, and Daniel (CoRep meeting 2019 in Ljubljana)



Zorica, Daniel, Rachel, Weiping, Anna, Beata, Marlon, Angelique, Ben, and Paolo P. en route to the Lido: Opening ceremony of the 2019 AESOP Congress in Venice



Lunch break during the 2019 AESOP Congress in Venice



Paulo S. enjoys the 2019 AESOP Congress in Venice



Rachel keeps the General Secretariat going during the 2019 AESOP Congress in Venice



**Weiping and Ben sign the ACSP/AESOP
Memorandum of Understanding
(2019 AESOP Congress in Venice)**



**Agnes, Angelique, Rachel,
Maroš, and Beata
ExCo meeting (March 2020, Wien)**

I am grateful for the excellent time I spent at various AESOP events. The intense academic debates during the congresses have inspired me in many ways.

Maroš will take over as AESOP President in August, and I am confident that under his leadership, AESOP will continue to serve the interests of planning schools in Europe – and beyond. I wish the best of luck to him!

Warmest regards

Ben

WHO'S WHO IN BEN'S NOTE?

You know the problem. 10 years later nobody remembers the names any longer. So, here's the list:

Agnes	Agnes Matoga
Alex	Alex-Michael Deffner
Anaïs	Anaïs De Keijser
Andi H.	Andreas Hengstermann
Andi V.	Andreas Voigt
Angelique	Angelique Chettiparambil
Anna	Anna Geppert
Balkız	Balkız Yapıcıoğlu
Ben	Benjamin Davy
Camilla	Camilla Perrone
Charalampos	Charalampos Tsavdaroglou
Daan	Daan Bossuyt
Daniel	Daniel Galland
Ela	Ela Babalık
Francesco	Francesco Lo Piccolo
Jan	Jan Schreurs
Joana	Joana Bailão
Kostas	Konstantinos Lalenis
Linda	Linda McElduff
Marlon	Marlon Boarnet
Maroš	Maroš Finka
Paulo P.	Paulo Pinho
Paulo S.	Paulo Silva
Rachel	Rachel Tregidgo
Teresa	Teresa Fidélis
Thomas D.	Thomas Dillinger
Thomas H.	Thomas Hartmann
Tijana	Tijana Dabovic
Vicky	Viktoria Gabriel
Weiping	Weiping Wu
Zeynep	Zeynep Enlil
Zorica	Zorica Nedovic-Budic