

Annual Report 2025

Prepared by coordinators (Tihomir Viderman, Matej Nikšić, Evangelia Athanassiou) with the support of TG PSUC members

aesop-planning.eu/thematic-groups/public-spaces-and-urban-cultures

9 January 2026

Introduction

The Thematic Group on Urban Cultures and Public Spaces (PSUC) engages with the dynamic relationship between urban development, public spaces, and cultural practices from an interdisciplinary perspective. By bringing together academics, researchers, practitioners, activists, and policymakers from diverse fields and geographies, PSUC fosters innovative approaches to researching, planning, and designing urban spaces in contemporary cities. Central to this work is the recognition of lived experiences of public spaces and urban cultures as a key source of knowledge.

Established in April 2010 through the initiative of Sabine Knierbein (TU Wien, Austria), Ceren Sezer (RWTH Aachen, Germany), and Chiara Tornaghi (Coventry University, UK), PSUC has for more than 15 years contributed to research, planning, and design agendas on public spaces and urban cultures within and beyond the AESOP community. PSUC's work unfolds through peer-to-peer exchange on research and design projects, collaborations on research projects and publications as well as the organisation of regular PSUC events. In addition to the annual AESOP Congress, PSUC events spanning academia, practice and activism, take place in the form of workshops, seminars and conferences, accompanied by field trips.

By the end of 2025, PSUC's membership has grown to 182 professionals, researchers, and activists working on public spaces and urban cultures, both from AESOP institutional members and beyond.

Internal organization of the thematic group

To ensure the long-term pursuit of its goals, PSUC has developed a horizontal collective coordination structure based on shared responsibilities. This structure consists of a biannually rotating Coordination Team, a Core Working Group, and an Advisory Board, which together oversee the key tasks essential to the group's continuity and development.

The Coordination Team is responsible for:

- managing communication with PSUC members, broader audiences and the AESOP Secretary General (AESOP TG blog, Facebook page, mailing list, newsletter);
- preparing meetings and annual reports;
- disseminating scientific results.

Together with the Core Working Group, the Coordination Team:

- uses synergies of PSUC's membership to conduct research, enable exchange and produce publications;
- develops and promotes PSUC's agenda (working topics, calls, publications, events).

Advisory Board closely works with the Coordination Team and the Core Working Group on content and strategy development.

Coordination

The Coordination Team consists of one main coordinator and two co-coordinators, with roles rotating on a biannual basis. When a co-coordinator assumes the role of main coordinator, a new co-coordinator is recruited from among PSUC members to ensure continuity. Following the AESOP Congress in Paris, 8-12 July 2024, the Coordination Team for the 2024 to 2026 period comprises Tihomir Viderman as main coordinator (BTU Cottbus Senftenberg, Germany), Matej Nikšič (Urban Planning Institute of the Republic of Slovenia, Slovenia), and Evangelia Athanassiou (Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Greece).

Core Working Group

Patricia Aelbrecht (University of Cardiff, UK), Chiara Belingardi (independent researcher, Italy), Nadia Charalambous (University of Cyprus, Cyprus), Oana Druta (Eindhoven University of Technology, Eindhoven, Netherlands), Gabriella Esposito De Vita (CNR-IRISS National Research Council, Italy), Ebba Höglström (Blekinge Institute of Technology, Sweden), Karina Landman (University of Pretoria, South Africa), Sabine Knierbein (TU Wien, Austria), Christine Mady (Aalto University, Finland), Matej Nikšič (Urban Planning Institute of the Republic of Slovenia, Slovenia), Stefania Ragozino (CNR-IRISS National Research Council, Italy), Nikolai Roskamm (University of Applied Sciences Erfurt, Germany), Mohamed Saleh (University of Groningen, The Netherlands), Sara Santos Cruz (University of Porto, Portugal), Ceren Sezer (RWTH Aachen, Germany), Socrates Stratis (University of Cyprus, Cyprus), Tihomir Viderman (BTU Cottbus-Senftenberg, Germany), Burcu Yigit Turan (Swedish University, Sweden).

Advisory Board

Ali Madanipour (University of Newcastle upon Tyne, UK); Sophie Watson (Open University, UK); Sabine Knierbein (TU Wien, Austria); Gabriella Esposito De Vita (CNR-IRISS National Research Council of Italy); Ceren Sezer (RWTH Aachen, Germany), Stefania Ragozino (CNR-IRISS National Research Council of Italy), and Christine Mady (Aalto University, Finland).

PSUC's activities 2025

The Event Series to the 2024-2026 Working Theme “Public Spaces, Urban Cultures, and Hope”

PSUC develops its activities, exchange formats, and collaborative initiatives with a specific thematic focus aligned with the group's biennial working topic. Apart from the AESOP Annual Congress, the PSUC aims to ensure that all its events remain free of charge for interested participants.

The biennial working theme *Public Spaces, Urban Cultures and Hope* emerges from shared discussions within the PSUC community on how contemporary urban conditions are shaped by overlapping crises, fragmentation, and growing inequalities. Rather than approaching hope as an abstract or purely normative idea, the theme treats it as an analytical prism through which public spaces and urban cultures can be read as sites of both struggle and anticipation. Hope is situated where material practices, lived experiences, cultural expressions, and possible futures intersect. It allows urban research to move beyond the mere diagnosis of strain and crisis towards examining how everyday life, collective actions, shared aspirations, and speculative imaginaries shape urban places across multiple scales, from intimate domestic spaces to planetary urbanisation.

PSUC's engagement with hope explicitly recognises its ambivalent and contested nature. While hope may animate emancipatory practices and solidaristic forms of urban life, it is often appropriated as a rhetorical device, detached from material change and mobilised to obscure structural inequalities. Public spaces have long functioned as arenas where visions of justice and freedom coexist with attempts to stabilise power, draw boundaries, or legitimise exclusion. Against this background, PSUC's work directs attention towards critical and situated practices rooted in care, agonistic negotiation, and everyday transformation. By examining how public spaces and urban cultures inspire, sustain, limit, or extinguish hope, the focus shifts from abstract ideals to the ways hope is enacted, negotiated, and lived in the present as part of shaping more just and inclusive urban futures.

A full description of the theme is available at:

<https://aesop-planning.eu/tg-news/public-spaces-and-urban-cultures/call-for-expressions-of-interest-to-host-the-thematic-groups-meeting-2024-2026-public-spaces-urban-cultures-and-hope>



Walking with Hope: Public Spaces for Wellbeing

Ljubljana, Rijeka, Cres, 16-18 June 2025

A three-day interdisciplinary event explored the relationship between walkability, public space, and human wellbeing through the combined lenses of urban design and artistic practice. Focusing on the pedestrian experience in streets, squares, parks, and everyday public environments, it examined how walking shapes mood, mental health, social interaction, and collective life. Through lectures, discussions, artistic interventions, and site-based explorations in Ljubljana, Rijeka, and Cres, walkability was approached not merely as a spatial condition but as a political, cultural, and artistic terrain where questions of urban justice are negotiated. Drawing on epistemological differences between urbanism and art, the event examined how movement through space generates knowledge, perception, atmosphere, identity, and forms of hope embedded in everyday urban life.

Organisers:

Urban Planning Institute of the Republic of Slovenia (Ljubljana),
 Polygon – Center for Cultural Research and Project Development (Zagreb),
 University of Rijeka, DELTALAB – Center for Urban Transition, Architecture and Urbanism (Rijeka),
 in collaboration with University of Rijeka, Palace Moise

PROGRAMME

Monday 16 June, Urban Planning Institute of the Republic of Slovenia, Ljubljana

9.00 – 9.20	Welcome by the Organisers Matej Nikšić, Urban Planning Institute of the Republic of Slovenia Branka Cvjetičanin, Polygon – Center for Cultural research and Project Development Chiara Belingardi and Mohamed Saleh, AESOP Thematic Group Public Spaces and Urban Cultures
9.20 – 11.00	Paths to address walking on national level in Slovenia Tadej Žaucer, Ministry of the Environment, Climate and Energy of the Republic of Slovenia
Session 1	Integrating Walking into Urban Planning: Obstacles from Policy to Practice in Slovenia Luka Mladenovič, Urban Planning Institute of the Republic of Slovenia
	Sonic Topographies and Urban Futures Nikola Bojić, University of Zagreb, Academy of Fine Arts
11.20 – 13.30	Where Wellbeing Meets Climate Planning: Applying the WIEH Walkability Index to Shape a Greener and Health-Oriented Urban Environment in Ljubljana Franklin Gaspar, Faculty of Engineering of University of Porto
Session 2	Walking ethnographies: cultural anthropological steps along Zagreb streets Valentina Gulin Zrnčić, Institute of Ethnology and Folklore Research, Zagreb
	Walking as Scenography: Reclaiming Urban Pedagogy through Embodied Practices of Hope Pavel Veljanoski, School of Architecture and Design, University American College Skopje

14.30 – 15.45	Negotiating ethno-national differences through Skopje's Old Bazaar 'micropublic' Milka Dokuzova, Civic Association for Inclusive Development of Cities and City Spaces, Cities for Humanity Skopje
Session 3	Walking through shared and contested memories – "The group memory walk" Neža Čebron Lipovec, University of Primorska, Faculty of Humanities
	Walkable Seoul: Reclaiming streets as communal space in deprived neighbourhoods Blaž Križnik, University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Arts
16.00 – 17.00	Potovke - Ethnological dialogue through an interactive artistic experience Mojca Sfiligoj, Pr'Lenart, Belo
Session 4	The Art of Listening Jakob Šubic, The Inner Peace Institute, Medvode
	Slowing down and hope: The Slowness of Walking Shapes the Way We Experience Zvonka Simčič, Zavod CCC, Ljubljana

Tuesday 17 June, DeltaLab – Center for Urban Transition, Architecture and Urbanism, Rijeka

10.30 – 11.00	Welcome by the Organisers Matej Nikšič, Urban Planning Institute of the Republic of Slovenia Branka Cvjetičanin, Polygon – Center for Cultural research and Project Development Ida Križaj Leko, DELTALAB – Center for Urban Transition, Architecture and Urbanism
11.00 – 12.00	Error Harvest as a Concept of Hope: Case-study Ivex building in Rijeka Ida Križaj Leko, DELTALAB – Center for Urban Transition, Architecture and Urbanism
Session 5	Walking to School with Friends to improve the Urban Environment Chiara Belingardi, University of Florence and ISTC-CNR
	Smoties – Participatory Design and Walkability as Tools for Meaningful Public Spaces in Small and Remote Places Matej Nikšič and Nina Goršič, Urban Planning Institute of the Republic of Slovenia
13.00 – 14.00	Walking with Plural Values: Axiology and the Ethics of Hope in the Education of Progressive City-Making Mohamed Saleh, independent researcher, Groningen
Session 6	Stairs Catalog Marcell Mars & Miro Šarić, Zagreb
	Sensory Dérives and Hope Sanja Bojančić, University of Rijeka, Academy of Applied Arts
14.00 – 15.30	Walking Session IVEX - The Last Frontier Delta - Mrtvi kanal - Molo Longo: Walkability of Port Infrastructure

Wednesday 18 June, Palace Moise – UniRi, Cres

9.30 – 9.45	Welcome by the Organisers Matej Nikšič, Urban Planning Institute of the Republic of Slovenia Branka Cvjetičanin, Polygon – Center for Cultural research and Project Development Chiara Belingardi and Mohamed Saleh, AESOP Thematic Group Public Spaces and Urban Cultures
9.45 – 11.30	Pedestrian Branka Cvjetičanin, Polygon – Center for Cultural research and Project Development
Session 7	Pedestrian Bridge Initiative Inge Solis, Jadranka Blatt, Karmen Surdić Benvin, Cres Neighbourhood Team <i>Marin Gregorović, Mayor of Cres</i>
12.00 – 14.30	Walking Session Inge Solis, Cres City Museum
14.30 – 15.00	Concluding Remarks



Prefiguring Hopeful Futures

Eindhoven, 10-11 September 2025

A two-day workshop-based symposium brought together researchers, designers, artists, and practitioners to examine how hopeful urban futures are being tested and shaped through small scale, experimental, and everyday practices. Taking prefiguration as a shared point of departure, discussions framed urban action as an ongoing process of working with alternatives under present conditions rather than projecting distant futures. Three intersecting strands structured the exchanges, focusing on futures in the everyday, ecological transition, and more-than-human relations. Across these strands, ordinary practices such as maintenance, rituals, routines, cohabitation, and design experimentation featured as concrete ways through which transformative potential is embedded in urban life. By foregrounding the entanglement of social and ecological processes, where urban life is understood as inseparable from more-than-human agency and material interdependence, the symposium brought together empirical, theoretical, and artistic perspectives that showed how situated forms of hope can challenge dominant modes of urban development through example, reproduction, and resonance while remaining grounded in everyday urban life.

Organised and hosted by Eindhoven University of Technology (TU/e)
 [Oana Druta, Louwrens Botha, Giulia Gualtieri]

PROGRAMME

Wednesday 10 September, TU/e, Vertigo

12.00 – 13.00	Welcome Oana Druta, TU/e Tihomir Viderman, AESOP Thematic Group Public Spaces and Urban Cultures						
13.00 – 14.00	<i>Opening Keynote</i> How to dwell between possible and impossible worlds? Josephine Chambers, Utrecht University						
14.00 – 16.00	<table> <tbody> <tr> <td>Parallel Sessions 1</td> <td>Parallel Sessions 2</td> </tr> <tr> <td><i>Social infrastructures of hope</i></td> <td><i>Creating more-than-human futures</i></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Passionate Prefiguration of the Commons: towards a deeper understanding of motivation, performance, and transformation in civic urban initiatives Beitske Boonstra Reading for Prefiguration: neighborhood living rooms as concrete utopias Louwrens Botha Visible Spaces: Prefiguring Post-Migrant Civic Infrastructures through the Saalbau in Frankfurt Dhara Patel Prefiguring Hopeful Futures in Spoorzone Weert: Collective Landscape Readings and Urban Pixel Ideation Nima Tabrizi and Cecilia Chiappini</td> <td>Towards Multispecies Futures: tools and methods for urban placemaking Giulia Gualtieri Reimagining the Multispecies City: Visions from 2071 Berlin. Ophélie Véron Coexistences in the Thresholds: walking with my non-human companion in the liminal space of Sanluri Alessia Liscia Urban trees as catalysts for commons: Reflecting on placemaking, reciprocal care and multi-species commons in the 'Bos op Poten' Living Lab. Lea Hartmeyer</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Parallel Sessions 1	Parallel Sessions 2	<i>Social infrastructures of hope</i>	<i>Creating more-than-human futures</i>	Passionate Prefiguration of the Commons: towards a deeper understanding of motivation, performance, and transformation in civic urban initiatives Beitske Boonstra Reading for Prefiguration: neighborhood living rooms as concrete utopias Louwrens Botha Visible Spaces: Prefiguring Post-Migrant Civic Infrastructures through the Saalbau in Frankfurt Dhara Patel Prefiguring Hopeful Futures in Spoorzone Weert: Collective Landscape Readings and Urban Pixel Ideation Nima Tabrizi and Cecilia Chiappini	Towards Multispecies Futures: tools and methods for urban placemaking Giulia Gualtieri Reimagining the Multispecies City: Visions from 2071 Berlin. Ophélie Véron Coexistences in the Thresholds: walking with my non-human companion in the liminal space of Sanluri Alessia Liscia Urban trees as catalysts for commons: Reflecting on placemaking, reciprocal care and multi-species commons in the 'Bos op Poten' Living Lab. Lea Hartmeyer
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16.00 – 18.00	Parallel Workshop 1 <i>Envisioning 2150: Storytelling for more-than-human futures</i> Camille Straatman	Parallel Workshop 2 <i>Patterning Prefigurative Commons: Mapping spatial justice through the A.U.R.A. digital framework</i> Abhijeet Chandel and Caroline Newton
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Thursday 11 September, TU/e, Vertigo

10.00 – 12.00	Parallel Sessions 3 <i>Prefiguring alternatives in everyday spaces: experiences and examples</i> Insights from Barrios Populares for Reimagining Alternative Urban Futures Xavier Mendez Abad Quest(ioning) Rotterdam's Prefigurative Urban Development Practices Francisco Santos, Chiara Mazzarella, Alice Jelmini, and Pierre Kauter Designing for Degrowth: Stories from Amsterdam and Rotterdam Anna Kozera City Forest Communities: Towards Situated Stewardship and Justice-Based Tree Planting Initiatives (TPIs) Igor Sladoljev and Pinar Barat	Parallel Sessions 4 <i>Situated commons: memory, care, and more- than-human practices</i> Reclaiming Commons through Innovative Community Engagement Practices at Heritage Museums in Greater Oslo Helene Gallis Memories of the Future: Monumental Heritage and Redefinition of Hopeful Public Space in Former Yugoslavia Gianmarco Pisa Prefiguring Post-Coal Futures in Lusatia: Containing Dissensus, Staging Consensus Tihomir Viderman and Hendrik Weiner Urban-Rural Commons: Working in the Field Amina Kaskar
12.00 – 14.00	Parallel Workshop 3 <i>Stitching the table: mending as a ritual of care and conversation</i> Sam Bennett	Parallel Workshop 4 <i>From Pedals to Wings: future mobilities as a multi-species practice</i> Michela Grasso and Beatrice Vignati
14.00 – 16.00	Eindhoven walking tour	
16.00 – 17.00	<i>Closing Session</i> with reflection by Sophie Watson (Open University)	



Co-producing Alternative Urban Futures through Experimental Urbanism

Newcastle, 15-16 September 2025

Against the backdrop of post pandemic urban change, the Newcastle event engaged with emerging urban practices that challenge established approaches to planning and urban governance. Combining contributions from academics and practitioners with workshops, site visits, and informal exchange, the event brought researchers, activists, and practitioners into dialogue around public realm and third place projects that depart from conventional planning and design practices. The discussions centred on experimental forms of place making, governance, and creative spatial action, commonly described as temporary urbanism, ad-hoc urbanism, DiY urbanism, pop-up urbanism, Lowfi urbanism, tactical urbanism, or guerrilla urbanism. Contributions examined experiments in urban design, governance, policy, and technology, as well as their implications for social justice, sustainability, and democratic engagement. Experimentation was approached as a reflexive mode of knowledge production, grounded in iteration, learning from failure, and continuous adjustment, and discussed as particularly relevant for addressing complex social and environmental challenges that resist linear problem solving. Across diverse case studies and perspectives, the event highlighted how collective urban experiments can expand stakeholder agency, strengthen public life, and contribute to more socially just urban futures. The Newcastle event was the first in a seminar series on experimental urbanism that received funding from the Urban Studies Foundation.

Organisers:

Newcastle University, School of Architecture, Building and Planning, Newcastle upon Tyne
 Northumbria University, Newcastle upon Tyne,
 Vrije University Brussels, The Brussels Centre for Urban Studies,
 University of Pretoria, Engineering, Built Environment and Information Technology

PROGRAMME

Monday 15 September, Newcastle Contemporary Art

8.45 – 9.00	Welcome Georgiana Varna, Newcastle University Michael Crilly, Northumbria University Karina Landman, University of Pretoria
9.00 – 10.30	Session 1 <i>Shifting legal and planning systems for tactical and experimental urbanism</i> Tactical Urbanism as Critical Praxis: Redux David Webb, Newcastle University From Informality to Rhizomatic Commons: Schizoanalytic Cartographies for Experimental Urbanism in the Global North/South Edison França da Silva Filho, University of Florence Contractual Planning in Experimental Urbanism Lina Berglund-Snodgrass and Dalia Mukhtar-Landgren, Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences and Lund University The Negotiation Between Architects and Community-Land Trusts in Self-Build Governance Idil Akkuzu, Dhruv A. Sookhoo and Nizam Onur Sonmez, Istanbul Technical University and Manchester University

10.45 – 12.30	Session 2 Place-based projects of experimental urbanism Bottom-Up Versus Top-Down Experimental Urbanism in Abandoned Defence Barracks: A Variety of Approaches Towards Urban Commons Federico Camerin and Arturo Vicente Ruiz, University of Valladolid Prototyping Urban Futures: Agroecological Practices and Experimental Urbanism in the Peruvian Amazon Paola Peláez Rodríguez, Peruvian architect and urbanist, Leuven The Brothers of Midas: Experimental Architecture Shaun Young and Steve Roberts, Northumbria University Fenham Pocket Park - A Creative-Practice Approach to Community-led Place Making Armelle Tardieu and Daniel Mallo, Newcastle University The OME - An Experimental Building for Prototyping Biological Architecture Ben Bridgeman, Newcastle University
15.30 – 17.30	Session 4 How to embed experimental urbanism in city making? Introductory film: Back Lanes of Heaton. Sharing Knowledge Small Group Discussion. Exploring the challenges of classifying experiments, scalability, neoliberal urban development practices and complex urban politics of place.
17.30 – 19.30	Movie screening The Experimental City (2017, director: Chad Freidrichs)
Tuesday 16 September , The Farrell Centre, Newcastle University	
9.30 – 11.00	Keynote Lecture Transforming cities through experiments: motivations, experiences and implications Andrew Karvonen, Lund University
11.00 – 12.30	Session 5 Co-producing urban experiments with various publics Pedagogies of Possibility: Gamified and Situated Studios as Experimental Urbanism in Cairo Nancy Abd El-Moneim, Arab Academy for Science, Technology, and Maritime Transport Play2ProgressIndia: A Gamified Participatory Model for Just, Sustainable, and Resilient Indian Cities Balaji Kalluri, Flame University Co-Producing Alternative Consumption Spaces: Creative Youth in Experimental Community Governance in Shanghai Jingyi Qin and Prof Fulong Wu, The Bartlett, UCL "There Are Spaces That Change Your Life. Let's Open Them Together" - Scomodo's Grassroots Campaign and The Value of an Interactive, Subjective Mapping of Places Agnese Landolfo, University of Naples
13.30 – 14.30	Session 6 Social and technological dimensions of experimental urbanism Experiments of the Urban in the Living: Temporary Appropriation in Adventure Playground with Loose Parts Antonio Lara-Hernandez and Gregor Mews, University of Auckland, and University of Sunshine Coast Mural art as urban experimentation: Governing the ungovernable Nir Mualam, Technion Israel Institute of Technology Mbay Mobility pioneering EV ecosystems across West African cities Matthew Sellar, Mbay Mobility, Senegal
15.00 – 16.15	Session 7 Prototyping urban futures & experimental projects 1 Testing, Learning, Transforming: Helsinki's Summer Park as a Catalyst for Planning Change Christine Mady, Aalto University Little Bits of Loveliness in Heaton Cllr Lara Ellis, Newcastle City Council Project Nile Street, North Shields Rachel Bambridge, North Shields Informal Actors and Temporary Interventions in Vacant Spaces: Practices from Bandung, Indonesia Dwi Hatmojo Danurdroro, University of Leeds Shaping Urban Spaces through Interactive Digital Consultations Sebastian Weise, Newcastle upon Tyne
16.30 – 17.30	Session 8 Prototyping urban futures & experimental projects 2 Community Data Training for Energy Justice Action and Advocacy: experimental collaboration in Cape Town, South Africa Charlotte Lemanski, University of Cambridge An Investigation of the Meaning and Lived Experience of Social Connectedness for Tasmanians Aged 65 or Over: The Significance and Implications for the Design of the Built Environment Auditi Bridget Biswas, University of Tasmania Green City and Agrimorphology of Farming Experiments - From Grand Green Visions to Guerilla Farms Todor Stojanovski, KTH Stockholm Pushing the envelope: Experiments in making robot friendly cities Brendan Doody, Newcastle University
17.45 – 19.30	Collaborative coffee & cake workshop session 9 Achieving Impact in academic Research and next steps in the network and project Achieving impact through academic research (Early career researchers mentoring workshop), with presentations from Polina Chizhova Wright, Manchester Metropolitan University, and Laura Pinzon Cardona, Newcastle University Working together and steps forward: UrbEx Global Network, the website and experimental urbanism digital archive, and written outputs (academic, practice and media)



Politics of Hope for the Enjoyment of the Sea

Napoli, 6-7 November 2025

The two day international symposium in Naples explored hope as a collectively mobilised resource that connects utopian aspiration with practical negotiation in contested urban contexts. Grounded in the Politics of Hope, the event approached hope not as an abstract ideal but as something enacted through everyday struggles over access, care, and use of public space. The reclaiming of access to the sea by local movements such as Mare Libero Pulito e Gratuito and the Urban Commons Network served as a central empirical anchor, illustrating how claims in public space are articulated through embodied practices, affective relations, and forms of everyday politics. Through lectures, panel discussions, inputs on collective mapping and documentary work, and a mobile workshop along the Neapolitan coast, participants engaged with water and the waterfront as terrains where hope is materialised.

Organised and hosted by National Research Council - Institute for Research on Innovation and Services for Development

PROGRAMME

Thursday 6 November, Maschio Angioino - Castel Nuovo, Napoli

15.00 – 15.30	Welcome Address Paolo Landri National Research Council Maria Rosaria Santangelo University of Naples Federico II Tihomir Viderman AESOP Thematic Group Public Spaces and Urban Cultures
	Introduction Stefania Ragozino National Research Council
15.30 – 15.45	Collectively Mapping the enjoyability of Neapolitan Coast Stefano Cuntò University of Naples Federico II
15.45 – 16.15	PS-U-GO Urban Living Lab Naples: a documentary Film Projection and Discussion Lorenzo Lodato Lido Pola Urban Commons
16.15 – 17.00	Keynote Lecture Why does water matter to the everyday cultures and practices of city dwellers? Sophie Watson Open University London
17.00 – 18.00	Co-Producing Hope through the Enjoyment of Waters Panel Discussion moderated by Tihomir Viderman AESOP Thematic Group Public Spaces and Urban Cultures Gabriella Esposito De Vita National Research Council Paolo Landri National Research Council Lorenzo Lodato Lido Pola Urban Commons Valentina Rossi National Research Council Maura Striano Naples City Council Anna Terracciano University of Naples Federico II Raffaele Vaccaro Nisida Environment Sophie Watson Open University London, UK

Friday 7 November, Mergellina Metro Station, Napoli

10.00 – 13.00 Neapolitan Coast Mobile Workshop
Committee Mare Libero Napoli





AESOP 2025

CONGRESS

Istanbul, Yıldız Teknik Üniversitesi, 7-11 July 2025

PSUC was involved in organisation and co-chaired two tracks, attracting strong participation and engagement. Discussions extended beyond the scheduled sessions, continuing informally throughout the congress. Track 06 featured a total of 12 sessions, and included 69 paper presentations. Track 17 featured a total of 13 sessions, and included 83 paper presentations.

TG PSUC Annual Meeting

The annual TG PSUC meeting was held during the congress, with the participation of three Advisory Board members, many group members, and congress attendees. The meeting included a presentation about the group's work and update on the group's activities, as well as presentation of the events in the series to the biannual theme of hope.

Congress Programme is available here: https://aesop-planning.eu/images/congress/AESOP_2025_Program_Book.pdf

Chairs: Evangelia Athanassiou, Tihomir Viderman,
Zeynep Günay, Anita Martinelli

TRACK 06: URBAN CULTURES AND LIVED HERITAGE

Transformative power of culture
and heritage; Risks and threats on
cultural landscapes

Transformative power of culture and heritage; Risks and threats on cultural landscapes

This track explores how cultural landscapes take shape through people's search for a sense of connection and presence in unsettled urban space. As societies perceive their foundations as increasingly unsettled, and commit to envisioning paths to fairer futures, urban cultures and heritage conceptually address and practically open possibilities for disrupting unjust urban development.

Urban cultures foster moments where people engage with the unknown and unpredictable, enhancing the capacity to challenge social constraints through improvisation, creativity, and action. Heritage links present struggles to ideas of the past, reflecting how collective memories and aspirations are shaped through the tension between local identities and planetary urbanization. Planetary urbanization drives processes like touristification, gentrification, and commodification of space, alongside global and local forces like climate change, environmental crises, and conflicts. Together, these pressures erode urban heritage and cultural landscapes, creating vulnerabilities that require innovative protection and enhancement strategies.

This track puts culture and heritage into dialogue, viewing heritage not as an abstract quality of objects or places, but as an outcome of diverse, often contested social relations through which groups interpret the past to give meaning to the present and future. Heritage is not a static condition but a lived process, constantly redefined through urban cultures. By situating this lived heritage in spaces of everyday life, and urban cultures in the morphologies of objects and places, this track asks how daily negotiated rhythms of urban development—whether accelerated, paused, disruptive, or stabilizing—shape transformative paths and actions.

We invite contributions that explore challenges posed to historic places and everyday urban spaces as multicultural and emerging heritage sites. Adopting a broad view of urban cultures and lived heritage as dynamic and interconnected processes, this track highlights their roles in shaping urban transformations and invites discussions on how they influence social structures and spatial development.

Chairs: Matej Nikšić, Ebru Firidin Özgür, Maliheh Hashemi Tilenoī

TRACK 17: PUBLIC SPACE

Transformative power of public spaces, Planning for Inclusion, Equity and Transformation

Planning for Inclusion, Equity and Transformation

Public spaces have always played a central role in shaping vibrant urban experiences. They are sites of social interaction, cultural expression and political contestation. However, in an age of growing social inequalities, environmental challenges and political polarization, the question of how public spaces can foster inclusion, equity and positive change becomes more critical than ever. Public spaces have the potential to inspire hope by serving as examples of possibility and resilience in our urban environments.

This track for the 37th AESOP Annual Congress in Istanbul builds on the theme of "Planning as a Transformative Action in an Age of Planetary Crisis" by focusing on the transformative potential of public spaces. We invite scholars, practitioners and activists to explore how public spaces can be designed, managed and used to foster more equitable and sustainable urban futures.

Themes

Reflecting the AESOP Public Spaces and Urban Cultures Thematic Group's focus on "Hope" (2024-2026), this track seeks abstracts that address:

Public spaces as sites of hope: How can public spaces nurture hope for a better future and embody aspirations for social justice, environmental sustainability and collective well-being?

Inclusion and equity: How can public spaces become more inclusive and accessible? How can planning support marginalised groups and enhance social cohesion?

Agents of transformation: How can public spaces promote transformative urban change, civic engagement and empowerment while challenging existing power dynamics?

Climate change: How can public spaces be designed to be more resilient to climate change and promote environmental sustainability? How can they contribute to a more livable urban future?

Istanbul's unique context: How can public spaces address Istanbul's distinct urban challenges and opportunities?

We welcome abstracts that critically engage with the concept of hope, examine the intersections of public space, justice and sustainability, present innovative theoretical or practical insights, and highlight global case studies, especially from underrepresented regions and contexts.

urbanize!

Int. Festival für urbane Erkundungen

It's about time!

... **Predrag Milić, Laura Sobral, Burcu Ateş, Sara Caramaschi, Robin A. Chang, Angelika Gabauer, Sabine Knierbein, Androniki Pappa, Andre Krammer und Social Design**

Time Matters!

Facilitating Just Urban Transformations

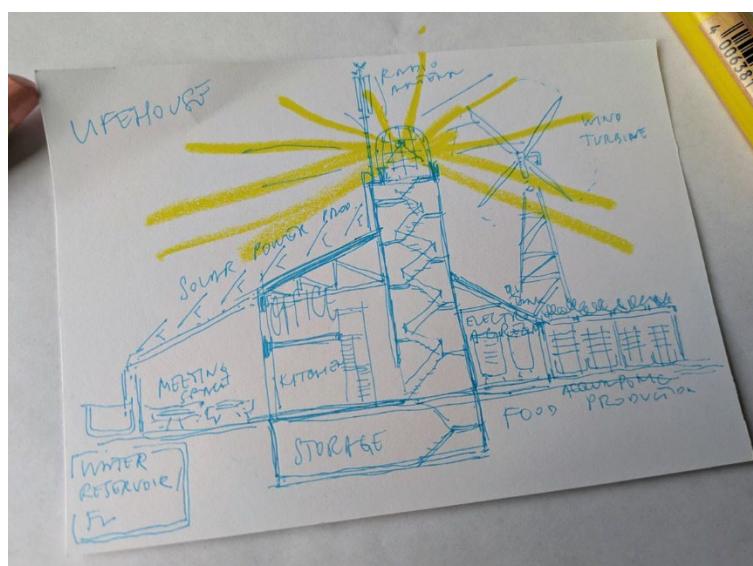
Sa, 18 OKT 2025

16:00–18:00

Universität für angewandte Kunst, Social Design Studio

Vordere Zollamtsstraße 7, 1030 Wien

Time Matters! is a roundtable discussion dedicated to exploring the role of time in facilitating just urban transformations – one that is inscribed in the everyday life practices (the present), captured and guided by schools of thought (the past), and conceived of and put into practice by plans and policies (the future). Walking the way of *>Long Emergency<*, our societies are facing more hunger, sickness, violence, lack of habitable space, shorter proximities, and closure, thus rendering the life of all those powerless subjects around the globe ever more difficult (Greenfield, 2024). As echoes of global warming and climate disaster grow, various initiatives have assembled to practise collective survival, or, expressed more metaphorically, they took time in their hands. Following this opening premise, guests from diverse fields will explore urban temporalities and their impact on activism and planning for oppressed and marginalised groups. Together with the audience, we will examine Vienna's local initiatives, recognise their time dimensions, forge connections, and envision a safe and survivable future. *In collaboration with the Social Design Studio, University of Applied Arts Vienna.*



Publications

The list includes publications that involved at least three PSUC members, or directly resulted from PSUC events.



URBAN CONFLICTS AND PEACE: EVERYDAY POLITICS OF COMMONS/ CONFLITTI URBANI E PACE: LA POLITICA QUOTIDIANA DEI COMMONS

APERTURA/OPENING

Urban Conflicts and Peace: Everyday Politics of Commons
Stefania Ragozino, Tihomir Viderman, Chiara Belingardi **p. 6**

IN DIALOGO/CONVERSATION

Commoning to Commons: On Transformative Practice and the Politics of Everyday Life. In Dialogue with Jonathan Metzger and Stavros Stavrides.
Edited by Stefania Ragozino, Tihomir Viderman, and Chiara Belingardi **p. 26**

DIETRO LE QUINTE/BACKSTAGE

Searching for Affective Spaces: an Interdisciplinary Approach to Wounded Cities through the Case of Caivano's Rione Parco Verde (Naples, Italy)
Fabio Esposito, Stefania Ragozino, Gabriella Esposito De Vita, Paolo Landri **p. 40**

Public Spaces, Domestic Commonality. Some Ethnographic Notes and Theoretical Considerations on Everyday Practices, Commoning, Conflicts and Domesticity in Public
Marianita Palumbo **p. 64**

FOCUS/FOCUS

Commoning Beyond the Crisis: Urban Civic Uses and The Democratization of the Urban Transformation and the Ecological Transition
Maria Francesca De Tullio, Roberto Sciarelli **p. 99**

Unsettling Youth Participation in Relational Space and Commons: Case Study Lusatia
Tihomir Viderman, Rafael Maximiliano Flores de Leon, Silke Weidner, Dominik Ringler, Anna Grebe, Gerd Kaufmann **p. 130**

Everyday Environmental Politics Along the Coast of Thessaloniki
Evangelia Athanassiou **p. 155**

Complex Ownership Systems Beyond Urban Commons: Hybrid Forms of Occupation Designing Alternative Urban Futures
Francesca Sabatini **p. 183**

Special issue

Tracce Urbane 17 (2025)
Urban conflicts and peace: Everyday politics of commons

Edited by
Stefania Ragozino, Tihomir Viderman, Chiara Belingardi

OSSERVATORIO/OBSERVATORY

Thinking the City: The Arena of Conflict
Nikolai Roskamm **p. 204**

Shared Learning Spaces and Urban Transformation. Peace Education Dialogues as an Educational Commons
Luisa Fatigati, Giammarco Pisa **p. 226**

The Role of Micro-communities for Urban Challenges: A Case Study of Mardin
Zemzem Taşgüzen Polat **p. 249**

Care Infrastructures in Andean Rural Context: The Case of Monguí
Diana Catalina Barrera Agudelo **p. 276**

RECENSIONI/REVIEWS

Unsettled Urban Space: Routines, Temporalities and Contestations. Edited by Tihomir Viderman, Sabine Knierbein, Elina Kränzle, Sybille Frank, Nikolai Roskamm and Ed Wall.
Routledge (2023)
Martina Bosone **p. 296**

Thinking and Acting With Care 'As Well As Possible'. Insights From Matters of Care by María Puig de la Bellacasa. University of Minnesota Press (2017)
Giusy Pappalardo **p. 302**

STRISCIA/STRIP

Of Continuity and Disruption: Through Lived Space and Representation
Tihomir Viderman **p. 309**

PORTFOLIO/PORTFOLIO

Naples: Continuity and Disruption
Tihomir Viderman with photographs by Stefania Ragozino and Tihomir Viderman **p. 317**

The hybridisation of public libraries: a comparative study between Helsinki, Oslo and Stockholm

Mina Di Marino^a, Hossam Hewidy^b, Christine Mady^b, Ebba Högström^c
and Laura Berger^b

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ABSTRACT

Nordic public libraries (PL) are considered 'houses of democracy', which have played a key role in ensuring free access to social and cultural capital, and more recently, knowledge capital. In several PL, there has been a shift towards 'hybrid hubs', which has not yet been adequately explored, either theoretically or empirically. Firstly, this study reviews existing scientific studies and builds a conceptual framework for exploring the hybridization of PL. Secondly, the study examines links of the National Library Acts and strategies to socio-cultural and knowledge capital in Finland, Norway and Sweden. Thirdly, the study explores the ways in which hybridization is manifested in selected libraries in Helsinki, Oslo and Stockholm, those that are both central and peripheral to the city. The study reveals several factors that mark PL as hybrid places, and it can contribute to the understanding of various dimensions in which hybridization occurs and transforms our cities.

ARTICLE HISTORY

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KEYWORDS

Hybridization; Nordic cities;
socio-cultural capital;
knowledge capital; central
public library; peripheral
public library

1. Introduction

The multifaceted phenomenon of hybridization is emerging in cities and societies facing the challenges of neoliberalism and globalization (Amin 2007; Cho, Heng, and Trivic 2016; Gibson, Legacy, and Rogers 2022). Hybridization is frequently linked to mixed-use developments, adaptability, multi-functionality of the buildings, different social activities, including diversity of users (Pelsmakers, Poutanen, and Saarimaa 2020). Additionally, buildings and urban spaces are conceived as hybrid when physical and digital elements are combined (Ratti and Claudel 2016; Streitz 2021), and in which a variety of complex programmes and services are provided, resulting in civic and non-civic functions (Gibson et al. 2021). By examining the existing literature, we discovered that hybridization in relation to public libraries (PL) pertains to the aforementioned factors (such as digitalization, architectural design, diversity and inclusivity, and civic and non-civic functions).

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Turn of Events: Community Events as a Practice for Inquiry in Public Space Research

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ABSTRACT

Events – spatially- and temporally-bound interruptions to everyday urban life – hold potential as more than objects of study, but as critical, community-engaged practices for public space research. Synthesizing perspectives from urban theory, practice, and our own research, we propose a framework for an immersive, events-based approach to public space inquiry that centers the potential for events to prompt greater publicness, shifts methodological approaches to elevate other ways of knowing, and fosters a justice-oriented disposition towards communities. We apply this framework to analyse a case of a collaboratively staged community festival for intergenerational public space, hosted in a park in Los Angeles.

ARTICLE HISTORYReceived 30 August 2024
Accepted 23 July 2025**KEYWORDS**

Events; public space; participatory research; co-creation; community planning

Introduction

The event, broadly conceived as a spatially- and temporally-bound interruption to everyday urban life, has sustained empirical and theoretical explorations of its influence, impact, and meaning in the city. For urban theorists, the event is a tool of spatial politics: taking up space differently carries emancipatory potential (de Certeau, 2013; Debord, 1958; Lefebvre, 1991), and new ways of being together in public space can bring about greater publicness (Biesta, 2012). For social scientists, urban events are often the focus of empirical studies that evaluate social, economic, and political outcomes (Richards & Palmer, 2010; Smith et al., 2022). As scholars search for new ways to build relationality and understanding with the communities they study, direct engagement in events and the everyday rhythms of the city are increasingly framed as effective practices for uncovering community knowledge and cultivating research reciprocity (Caris & Cowell, 2016; Pyyry, 2019). Taken together, this literature points to the potential of the event as a powerful lens through which to explore the theoretical, methodological, and relational aspects of urban phenomena.

However, conventional methods to study public space often position the event as the object of study and the researcher as outside observer. This limits access to the situated, experiential, and processual knowledge that can be gained through direct participation in the event, which can foster generative community collaborations and rich interpretive possibilities. Planning

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Research projects



As of 2024 PSUC is involved as an associated partner in Erasmus+ project EDUCATION IN LIVING LABS: PARTICIPATORY SKILLS FOR SUSTAINABLE URBAN GOVERNANCE.

The project is coordinated by a PSUC member Nadia Charalambous (Cyprus), with participation of further PSUC members as project partners Stefania Ragozino (Italy) and Tihomir Viderman (Germany). PS-U-GO stands for Participatory Skills for Sustainable Urban Governance. The project's mission is to create Urban Living Labs (ULLs) in 4 European cities, where students, local residents, urban planners, and policymakers could collaborate to address urban challenges and co-create vibrant, sustainable places of exchange beyond sectoral or disciplinary boundaries.

Within the project PSUC members Christine Mady and Matej Nikšić are responsible for monitoring and validation of learning outcomes.



As of 2026, PSUC is involved as an associated partner in a transnational initiative funded under European Union international cooperation programmes that aims to develop a comprehensive master's degree in *Design of Inclusive Public Space* in Latin America and Europe. Through innovative curricula, inclusive teaching methodologies, digital tools, and synergies between higher education institutions, public authorities, and civil society, the programme seeks to equip students and professionals with the skills needed to design inclusive public spaces and foster collaborative and equitable urban development. Within the project, PSUC members Evangelia Athanassiou (Greece) and Ceren Sezer (Germany) contribute to course development by sharing PSUC's collective expertise.