

Helsinki and Vienna, January 2024

To the attention of the AESOP Secretary General,

Hereby we submit the Annual Report for the AESOP Thematic Group **Transboundary Planning and Governance** for the year 2023.

During 2023, the TG has continued work according to the ideas outlined in the previous year, when the TG coordination was transferred to Eva Purkarthofer and Alois Humer.

TG meetings

Two TG meetings were organized during 2023: One in person meeting at the AESOP Congress in Lodz (July 13th) and one online meeting (December 14th). The meetings were attended by 15-30 participants and served to review past TG activities, plan future activities and share information on relevant events and calls. In the Lodz meeting, we also continued debates related to the roundtable organized the previous day “Planning across borders in times of geopolitical conflict” and discussed several follow up ideas (see below).

AESOP Congress in Lodz

At the AESOP Congress in Lodz, the TG was responsible for coordinating the Track “Integrated planning over the borders” (chaired by Eva Purkarthofer, Sylwia Dołbłasz and Annalisa Rollandi). The track contained six sessions with approximately 25 presentations over three days. In addition, a roundtable entitled “Planning Across Borders in Times of War and Geopolitical Conflict” was organized as part of the track. All paper sessions and the roundtable were very well attended and sparked lively discussion.

Follow up “Planning across borders in times of war and geopolitical conflict”

The roundtable highlighted the connections and clashes between transboundary planning and geopolitical events and conflicts. All organizers and speakers voiced an interest in continuing discussion on the subject, and in our TG meeting, we contemplated various strategies and activities to follow-up on the theme:

1. *Academic reflection on transboundary planning in times of war and conflict*: A short academic reflection on the roundtable to share our discussions with a broader audience.
2. *Planning education acknowledging war and crisis situations*: Thinking about “blind spots” related to war and crisis situations in planning education and communicating these ideas to the AESOP community.
3. *Pan for Ukraine – planning and architecture network*: This existing network of schools of planning and architecture in Germany supports Ukrainian students and researchers. Please check the website (<https://www.panforukraine.de/about/>) and get in touch if you want to contribute or participate.
4. *Learning from other disciplines*: Planning research (in Europe) seems to have little grasp on conflict and war, and the role of planning therein. There could be opportunities to learn from other disciplines, such as foreign policy, related to how transboundary planning could deal with conflict or even attempt to mitigate it.

5. *Support regeneration in Ukraine:* Although the war is still ongoing, the regeneration of Ukraine will also pose a challenge in the future. How could we support this process from an academic perspective? One idea was to review relevant studies on regeneration and post-war development and organizing an online session aimed at learning about the issue.
6. *Facing challenging interpersonal situations head-on:* As humans, we often tend to avoid interpersonal conflicts and act like they don't exist, for example by limiting interaction of students from potentially conflicting backgrounds (e.g. Ukraine – Russia, Serbia – Kosovo, ...). However, such behavior might just conceal conflicts and in the long run avoid that wounds really heal. Could there be strategies to face challenging interpersonal situations head-on, instead of pretending they don't exist? It is not yet determined what the concrete format or outcome of this activity could be, but it might be an issue faced by many in the classroom or workplace, and therefore worth discussing.
7. *Communicate concerns to policy makers:* While we might be eagerly discussing among academics, communication with policy makers is sometimes still a challenge, also in relation to the theme of geopolitical conflict. A recent communication related to the EU's adherence to the OECD Council Recommendation on "Regional Development Policy" for example does not acknowledge the war in Europe and potential implications for regional development policy. Could we contribute to an increasing acknowledgement of connections and clashes between transboundary planning and geopolitical events and conflicts in policy circles? The initial idea was to direct comments to and share our discussions with representatives from public actors such as the European Commission.

In Lodz, we agreed that these possible activities would not all be directly led by the TG coordinators but facilitated through matchmaking of interested TG members on various initiatives.

TG communication channels

The main communication channel of the TG is a mailing list with approximately 160 subscribers. The TG website (<https://aesop-planning.eu/thematic-groups/transboundary-planning-and-governance>) continues to be updated to reflect the thematic focus and activities of the group. The website also introduces the main activities of the TG (AESOP Congress, journal collaboration, other conferences and workshops) and is updated regularly with news items such as workshop announcements, calls for papers and news related to the TG itself.

Future activities

1. The TG is responsible for organizing Track 4 "BORDERS - Transboundary planning for sustainability and cohesion" at the AESOP Congress 2024 in Paris (chaired by Alois Humer, Thomas Perrin and Simin Yan). The call for abstracts is currently open.
2. An event entitled "Inclusive and Cohesive Urban Development in European cities. European reflections and learnings for a post-war urban planning" is currently being planned under the patronage of the TG. The one-day event, comprising of several keynotes and roundtables, is planned to take place in Bratislava in October 2024. The event is organized by Nataliia Yehorchenkova, Oleksii Yehorchenkov and Maros Finka

(Slovak University of Technology), supported by the TG coordinators. Details on the event will be shared via the TG website and the AESOP newsletter in due time.

3. The TG coordinators are currently finalizing a brief academic reflection on the status and activities of the TG, which will be published open access as debate article in the European Journal of Spatial Development. The article highlights the recent changes and activities of the TG and shall outline a potential future research agenda related to transboundary planning and governance. The article will be shared via the TG website and the AESOP newsletter when published.

In 2024, the TG will continue to be active and promising ideas have surfaced already, especially related to exchanging ideas and experiences on the role of transboundary planning in times of crises.

Best regards,
Eva Purkarthofer & Alois Humer