

SITRAP 10 years

Spatial professions and higher education – international trends

SITRAP annual conference 22 and 23 October 2026. Anja Standal & Marius Grønning.

SITRAP was established in 2016, following a rectoral assignment, as a centre purposed to improve the quality of higher education. In the context of the Faculty for Landscape and Society (Landsam), the centre focuses on the spatial professions – not only the ones with study programmes at the faculty, but any professional education that plays a role in the spatial organisation of society. A common challenge of these educations is that they need to prepare experts to deal with major social issues; crises and transitions we face such as climate change, nature loss, civic protection, the green shift and so forth. For the last 10 years the centre has developed didactics with the aim of innovating and improving teaching and learning at the level of spatial professionalism and interprofessionality.

In 2023 SITRAP was awarded the recognition as Centre for Excellence in Education (CEE) by the Norwegian state, based on a 5 years quality development plan. By the 10 years' milestone, the centre offers early results from the CEE project, as well as new tasks and projects for the time that follows.

This year's annual conference marks the first 10 year milestone by highlighting international trends within education in the spatial professions. The conference focuses on three prominent trends:

- **Mass teaching.** Across countries and professional education curricula we see a shift in teaching practices from one-to-one-tutoring to facilitating large groups and collaborative learning processes. The trend coincides with reduced financial resources allocated for higher education in public and private institutions. It also coincides with the emergence of more complex problems, requirements of interdisciplinary competence, and new genres of professional tasks. Mass teaching may be driven by an economic management rational, but it may also offer possible gains in terms of pedagogy and didactics.
- **Space and interprofessionality.** Current real world challenges and professional practice require problem-solving strategies that involve division of labour, complementary expertise, and interprofessional collaboration competence. The situation is mirrored in higher education by new forms of framing and tutoring practical tasks, for instance in inter- and transdisciplinary studio courses. Students from different professional curricula may collaborate in studio courses, or teaching staffs may involve an array of professional and academic expertise. There seems to be a trend in exposing students to experiences of interprofessionality at earlier learning stages, where traditional higher education has been organised around unique competence and professional monopoly.
- **Sustainability and professional role adjustments.** Professional knowledge is *heterotelic*, i.e. having a purpose external to itself. In contrast scientific disciplines and fine arts are *autotelic*, having internal purpose. In other words, the purpose of professional knowledge is to provide society with expertise where it is required, and therefore they require more contextual production and application of knowledge. The green shift and the emergence of the sustainability perspective on development deeply alter certain aspects of expert knowledge and ethics. In higher education we observe how the emphasis is shifting from the single individual talent – the "star architect" or the "career bureaucrat" – to the ability to englobe new structures of expertise knowledge and to maintain certain professional values in practice.

The annual SITRAP conference gathers this year a selection of teachers from international higher education institutions in order to display pedagogical trends and share experiences. We will delve into the causes behind these trends, the pedagogical frameworks that support them, and the educational qualities that may be drawn from them. We will hear about experiences from contexts such as France, Switzerland, Germany, Italy, Finland, and Norway, as well as the highly particular and extreme situation of Gaza in Palestine. We will also hear educational reflections from a range of professions, from architecture, landscape architecture, and spatial planning to agronomy and political sciences. The purpose is to exchange, explore, discuss, and learn, and to develop critical perspectives, ideas and strategies for higher education that may enable our professions to deal with challenges that characterise our time and our future.

Workshop programme

Thursday 22 October | 11:30 - 16:00

11:30 Lunch

12:30 Introduction to the workshop

12:40 **Mass teaching:** drivers, purpose, approaches, experiences

- Example 1, urbanism, Marta Mendonca, École Spéciale d'Architecture, Paris
- Example 2, architecture, Annabelle Thüning, École Fédérale Polytechnique de Lausanne
- Group work: pedagogic opportunities, challenges, and tools

– Pause –

14:10 **Space and interprofessionality:** how to prepare experts for complex societal challenges

- Example 1, landscape planning, Marianne Darbi, Hochschule Geisenheim
- Example 2, spatial planning, Ettore Donadoni, Politecnico di Milano
- Group work: integrational motives and figures of interprofessional organisation

15:20 **Professions in a new era:** sustainability, space, professional ethics

- Ecology and pedagogical redirection in political sciences, Nicolas Eschach, Sciences Po Rennes
- Discussion: professional values, professional didactics

15:50 Wrapping up: ideas, collaboration opportunities, way forward

Conference programme

Friday 23 October | 9:00 - 13:00

9:00 Welcome. Pro-rector for education NMBU. Prof. Elin Kubberød

9:05 Introduction. Marius Grønning & Anja Standal, SITRAP

9:10 Keynote:

The multiple profiles of spatial planning education – core competencies, origins and futures

– Hendrik van der Kamp, European Council of Spatial Planners – Conseil Européen des Urbanistes

9:40 Discussion:

- perspectives on Norwegian planning practice by Sverre Nagel Bjordal & Pavel Grabalov

Part I. Trends

Studio teaching – two models

10:00 *Space, teamwork, and transdisciplinarity as introduction to architecture*

– Annabelle Thüring, Alice (Atelier de la conception de l'espace), EPFL Lausanne

10:20 *A decentred view – the landscape as perspective across disciplines*

– Marta Mendonca, architect, and Gilles Brusset, landscape architect, École Spéciale d'Architecture (Paris)

– pause –

Part II. Approaches

11:00 Panel: **Innovative approaches and experiences**

- *Urban form and spatial literacy*, Hossam Hewidy, Alto University
- *Place and practice community – landscape as framework for knowledge production*, Marianne Darbi, Hochschule Geisenheim
- *Can we teach an interprofessional language?* Ettore Donadoni, Politecnico di Milano
- *Ecology as a spatial method: pedagogical redirection at an Institute of Political Studies*, Nicolas Escach, Sciences Po Rennes

Discussion: *Spatial professions – past and future pedagogies*

– Denis Bocquet (framing and moderator), board member of *Espaces et Sociétés*

– pause –

Part III. Academia and the spatial professions

12:15 **Territory, expertise, and self-determination**

- *Why the plans for Gaza has nothing to do with recovery*. Akram El-Ijla, University of Palestine.
- *What the world can learn from academia in Gaza*. Ahmed Schaban, Al-Azhar University – Gaza.
- *The spatial professions and recovery from crisis*. Marius Grønning & Steffen Wellinger, AirrPal.

12:50 Wrapping up: prospects, criticisms, and strategies for higher education. Elin Børrud, centre leader SITRAP

13:00 End

13.15 Lunch