

**AEKOM**

# **WHY (DO WE) STRENGTHEN AESOP COMMUNITY?**

**Towards AESOP future in the digital transition**



**PARTICIPATORY SCENARIO WORKSHOP**

Invited participants: CoRep, ExCo , YA Coordination Team and TG coordinators

**Promoted by the Presidency  
ExCo  
AEKOM Team**

The Presidency, ExCo and the AEKOM Team, **invite you to take part in a PARTICIPATORY SCENARIO WORKSHOP** and contribute to co-design a road map towards a hybrid future of AESOP. **How to explore the real as well as digital future of AESOP as a community** able to create, share and manage (better) knowledge for planning.

## STATE OF THE ART

### Towards an Open Access platform

In more than 25 years of AESOP's history, many members of our community have invested a lot of effort and voluntary work in the development of AESOP activities bringing valuable benefits for our member schools. Under the new challenges and the changed situation, which does not seem to return to "normal" easily, the "new normal" will be rather different. It brings the need and opportunity to reflect on this change and to re-vitalise the AESOP community and its activities so as to adapt to the new future and the challenges it might bring.

Now AESOP needs to enhance its relationships, to deepen the benefits and opportunities of the ongoing digital and open access transition, and to build a strong vision for our future, facing a post-pandemic environment. **So, the main scope of the meeting is creating a common knowledge on the Association's "state of the art" and a shared vision of future steps, with regard to the projects that must be accomplished – with particular reference to the digital transition – and the way in which the community can meet and cooperate.**

Stimulated by the 2020 pandemic, sources of knowledge are becoming increasingly digital: articles, books, videos, presentations... The management of digital knowledge does become a fundamental part of the knowledge sharing process which is crucial within the planning community. In order to access this knowledge without barriers it needs to be open. To share Open Access knowledge, we need researchers and educators allowing their articles, books, presentations to be stored in open digital platforms. We also need skilled and engaged scholars. Open digital platforms are public digital libraries of the information age. Managing digital Open Access knowledge from journals like Transactions or PlaNext needs Journal Management System software. Producing proceedings from AESOP and YA conferences needs Conference Management System software. AESOP & AESOP YA journals, AESOP conference proceedings, YA booklets, other AESOP publications, videos or working papers, which are

a kind of knowledge ‘in creation’, need an Institutional Repository (similar to the ones universities, national and European institution are using). **Inviting, motivating and enabling members of the AESOP community to manage and share Open Access digital knowledge by employing information technology is what AEKOM team is trying to accomplish.**

## **Reciprocity between productive platform and building community**

We trust AEKOM (the AESOP KnOwledge Management platform) as a relevant contribution to this progressive change within AESOP. In the next months, AESOP’s members will appreciate and benefit from this transition within the open science framework. They will be able to contribute to and gain from a new platform for knowledge management and sharing, as well as online collaboration. Beside this opportunity, also unprecedented challenges pop up. As stated in the recent AESOP president’s letter “the Covid19 pandemic has brought many additional challenges for all of us. On one hand we were confronted with new limits and uncertainties, on the other hand, the situation has catalysed progressive change, motivating us to rethink deeply our values in life and work”. **Therefore, a collective and prompt effort is needed to address the work of AESOP within the digital transition. This can be done exploring the following questions:**

**1.** How can the benefits from the new **AEKOM platform** be accessed?

**2.** How can the **AESOP community** be strengthened around possible futures?

Both questions relate respectively to the perspectives of users and of providers of the AEKOM platform. They can be reframed as

1. why does the AESOP community need the **AEKOM platform**? (users' angle of incidence)
2. why does the AEKOM platform need the **AESOP community**? (provider's angle of incidence)

As an infrastructure, the AEKOM platform has potentialities to offer for individuals and for collectives.

As an instrument, the platform is conceptualized with interactive exchange of knowledge in mind. Critically reflecting on the future of (the role of) spatial planning (in its different definitions and characteristics) needs well-informed users. They need to know the instrument, to learn the potentialities, to train how to use this new infrastructure...

On the platform, individual members, as well as groups can contribute to the use of these potentials for the benefit of the AESOP community:

- to put a much-needed critical reflection on the agenda
- to propose ways of dealing with the manifest diversity of opinions and cultures in a productive way
- to organize a critical discussion about the future according to AESOP, included the future of AESOP

On the other hand, this infrastructure needs engaged users. Users should not only use the infrastructure in order to find the appropriate kind of knowledge, they also have to make it use-able. If all AESOP-members only retrieve information/knowledge from the infrastructure, and no one contributes by providing knowledge, there will be no content to be used.

Contributing asks for engagement. The IR-pillar is the hardest to make use-able. As AESOP's 'showcase' and 'intellectual treasure', it needs to collect, manage, distribute and actualize AESOP's legacy, actual concerns and discussions, visions for the future... Rules nor force will produce this; only conviction and engagement. And this implies a sense of belonging. Users not only should find

their way through the infrastructure, to the knowledge made available. They also have to feel 'at home', as part of a larger whole, which includes them, and which they include in their daily life.

AEKOM-as-a-tool can be a crucial help for "further community building". Moreover, community building is a necessary precondition for developing the AEKOM-tool. One could say: AEKOM-as-a-tool and AESOP-as-a-community (have to) grow together.

## Looking ahead

AESOP has a mission. Selectively read the Charter's aims: to promote the development of teaching and research in the field of planning, by facilitating co-operation and exchange between planning schools in Europe, fostering and enriching a progressive approach to planning education by mutual support, including facilitating dialogue and the spread of information.

This aim implies the organization of institutional bodies and events that can contribute to the spread of knowledge necessary to improve the 'landscape of man'. Challenges related to this mission are numerous. Coping with these challenges needs lots of (theoretical and practical) knowledge, diverse knowledge, inter- and transdisciplinary knowledge, clashes of knowledge...

Covid-19 has shed new light on crucial aspects of knowledge distribution: importance of human contact and interaction, and how fragile those are; potentials of digital connectivity and mobility, and related limits imposed on mutual understanding and conveying emotions. And, as we can learn from the Covid-19 pandemic, we can expect more.

In other words, AESOP has to adapt ... but AESOP should also take a leading role ...! AESOP has to play a major role by contributing to making knowledge available, even in creating knowledge, preferably in an interactive way.

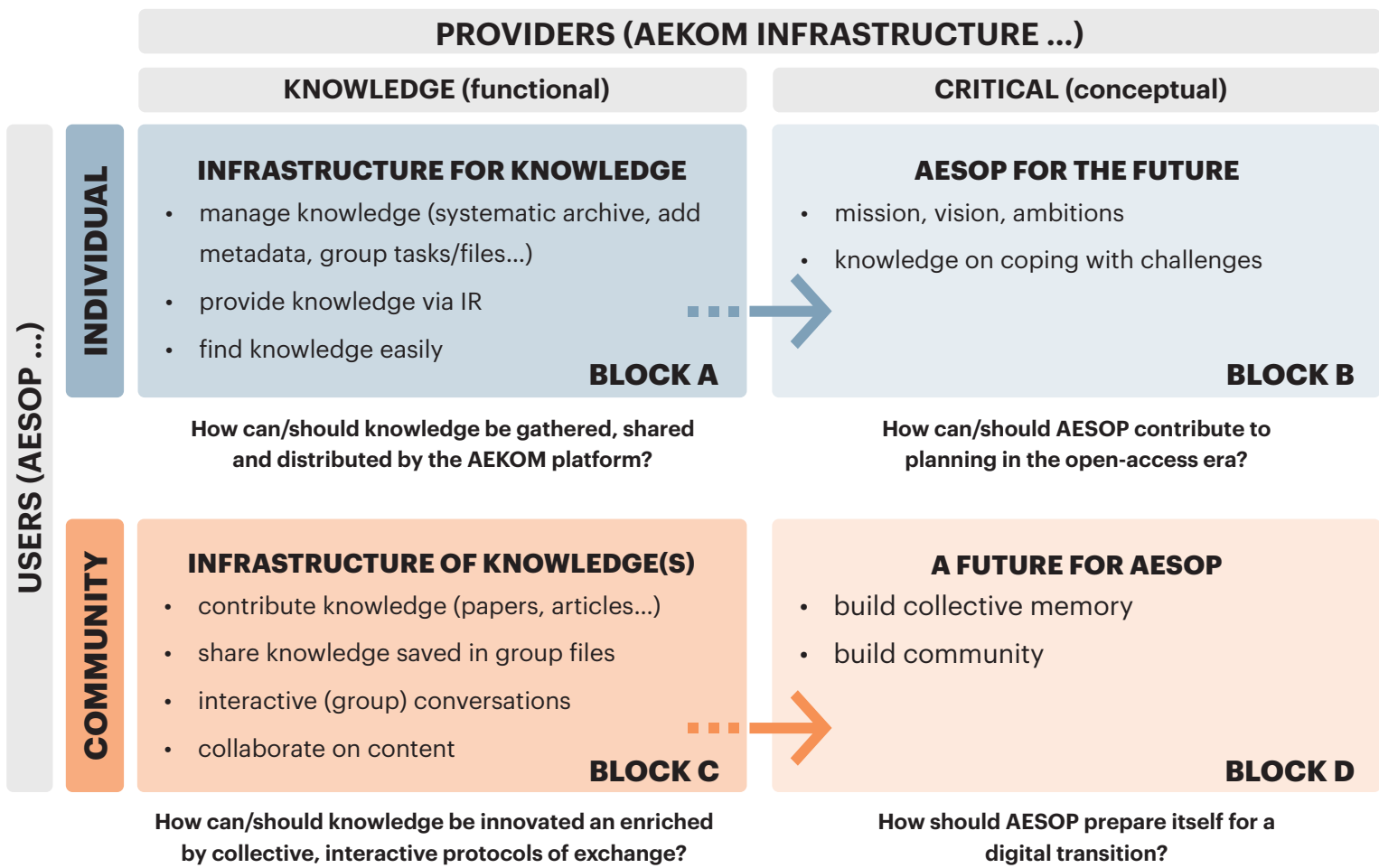
In this light, the AEKOM infrastructure offers opportunities:

- as instrument for managing knowledge
- as tool for interactive collaboration

- as laboratory for digital transition
- as platform for community building

## A tissue of issues

Building community is a central part of AEKOM (and AESOP), but it cannot be isolated. In the following scheme the two previous angles of incidence (users and providers), each with two dimensions (functional and critical; individual and collective) are combined. The four resulting fields are filled with issues. Together they form a ‘tissue of issues’. They form a backdrop for launching questions and looking for answers in an integrated way.



## WHAT'S NEXT? SCENARIO MAKING ABOUT THE FUTURE

A participatory scenario is a formula proposed to collectively envision the next steps of AESOP both in the short and long term. Scenarios are narrative descriptions of potential futures that focus attention on relationships between events and decision points. At their best, scenarios imagine aims, explore paths towards these goals, and consider probable circumstances.

While doing this, this AESOP participatory scenario workshop allows focusing on specific issues (from the 'tissue of issues').

Participants are asked to debate around two umbrella issues -- with 2 questions each – and develop the associated scenarios for AESOP within the digital transition. The debate is organized in two rounds that develop each question and address pathways to develop scenarios about the future of AESOP.

Within each round, the participant can choose their own favourite issue:

### I ROUND

AEKOM Open Access digital platform is a multifunctional device that allows storing, sharing, and disseminating different knowledge products.

This digital infrastructure has a great potential to enrich, facilitate and sustain the continuous community building within AESOP, besides the other numerous initiatives promoted by the AESOP members. Nevertheless, it is a crucial challenge to find **how we CAN construct the AEKOM Open Access digital platform into a device that can boost community building.**

Participants are asked to dig into this challenge under two questions of their choice between the followings:



### 1. How can/should knowledge be gathered, shared and distributed?

This question refers to **block A** in the table named “tissue of issues”.

Participants are asked to cross **the individual user and provider perspective** exploring the role of **AEKOM** as an **infrastructure FOR knowledge** addressed to manage knowledge (systematic archive, add metadata, group tasks/files...), provide knowledge via the Institutional Repository, and find knowledge easily, beside many other functionalities pointed out during the interactive debate.

### 2. How can/should innovation in knowledge be facilitated by collective, interactive protocols of exchange?

This question refers to **block C** in the table named “tissue of issues”.

Participants are asked to cross the **community user and provider perspective** exploring the role of **AEKOM** as an **infrastructure OF knowledge** addressed to contribute knowledge (papers, articles, Memories...), share knowledge saved in group files; host interactive (group) conversations, providing digital room for collaboration on content and so forth.

## II ROUND

AEKOM can represent a piece of excellent equipment for AESOP to face the digital transition.

However, more effort is needed to collectively define a transition scenario by exploring the paths and **pathways of how we SHOULD reconstruct AESOP to cope with the digital transition implied in the condition of planning in an Open Access era.**

To this end participants are asked to frame some scenarios on the base of their acknowledgment of AEKOM functionalities and potentialities as focused on previously (I round). These scenarios relate two perspectives on the future: AESOP for the future (individual user perspective) and a future for AESOP (community user perspective).

For any scenario co-designed and prioritised with reference to the two

perspectives on the future, participants are asked to explore the following aspects:

- What's the level of uncertainty as to how it will/can develop?
- How would we get from here to there? Which circumstances and conditions will influence the success of that path?
- Which structural contexts (ideological, political, economic, ecologic...) are needed for this scenario to come true?

Participants are asked to dig into this challenge under two questions of their choice between the followings:

### **3. AESOP for the future: how can/should AESOP contribute to planning in the open-access era?**

This question refers to **block B** in the table named "tissue of issues".

Participants are asked to cross the **individual user and provider perspective** exploring **mission, vision**, ambitions, knowledge on coping with challenges and so forth.

### **4. A future for AESOP: how should AESOP prepare itself for a digital transition?**

This question refers to **block D** in the table named "tissue of issues".

Participants are asked to cross the **community user and provider perspective** envisioning how AESOP can pave the way to its digital transition getting prepared to the future challenges, considering whether building memories and communities can be a way to do this and if so, how to do it digitally under the open science umbrella.

## Organizational infos

The event will be run on ZOOM. It includes 3 plenary sessions at the beginning, after the first round of discussion, at the end. The event is organized in two rounds of parallel group discussion defined according to participants' preferences expressed while registering (**It is possible to subscribe to the Individual category to work around the issues of Block A and B in the table named "tissue of issues". It is possible to subscribe to the Community category to work around the issues of Block C and D in the table named "tissue of issues"**).

- Introductory plenary session (10 minutes)
- I round of discussion in parallel groups (40 minutes)
- Plenary with results (10 minutes)
- II round of discussion in parallel group (40 minutes)
- Concluding Plenary with results (10 minutes)

Each session will be chaired by a facilitator who is in charge to report the results of the discussion.

A report about the results of the event will be sent just after to all the participants.

**Please register** to the following links and express your preference about the focal issue you'd like to contribute.

[https://us06web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZ0lce6tqTljGNwaKY39VsAhiK5zrXK8y\\_vy](https://us06web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZ0lce6tqTljGNwaKY39VsAhiK5zrXK8y_vy)



## Organisational side notes

- A control room will ensure the IT functioning of the event workflow (unifi)
- A central moderator will make it work! (unifi)
- The parallel sessions are run by a facilitator and an assistant to take notes and report (Avventura Urbana)
- Participants must be reassured that their proposals will be taken by the presidency and that actions will follow accordingly.

## Side comments about the expected results

- Awareness about the opportunities of the new digital environment to strengthen the AESOP community in the transition
- Widespread familiarity with the new platform
- Mutual and incremental learning (people learn about how to get benefits from the new devices and become ambassadors)
- Collectively discussed suggestions about how to work in the future (critical thinking about the future)
- Priority tasks to be accomplished by AESOP (organisational, related to topics, actions etc.)
- A call for a wider discussion about the future of the AESOP community in the epochal transition:

[This might be the result of comments on how AESOP has been working (the past), what the Association has represented for planners (past), which challenges is facing (the present), how to get prepared for the near and far future (the future)]

