



**AESOP Council of Representatives Meeting
14.00-17.00, 13 April 2007
Arenberg Castle
Leuven, Belgium**

Minutes

Present:

Peter Ache, Simin Davoudi, Gert de Roo, Andreas Voigt, Karel Maier, Roelof Verhage, Nikos Karadimitriou, Anna Geppert, Giancarlo Cotella and Marc Beeftink (minutes)
Didier Paris, Eduardo Cáceres, Ela Babalik-Sutcliffe, Enrico Gualini, Gerhard Schimak, Gonçalo Santinha, Henrik Harder Hovgesen, Jan Schreurs, Jan Tucny, John McCarthy, Kristina Nilsson, Lennart Tonell, Lublica Vitkova, Pantelis Skayannis, Petter Næss, Roar Amdam, Umberto Janin Rivolin, Vicente Miraccave, Zeynep Merey Enlil

Introduction

1. Welcome (President)

Peter Ache introduces himself as the new president of AESOP since the Mexico City conference July 2006, explaining this is the first official meeting for him in Europe as AESOP's president.

2. Apologies

Arnold van der Valk, Arthur Rosa Pires, Benjamin Davy, David Ludlow, Domenico Patassini, Elena Dimitrova, Hans Leinfelder, Heike Langenbach, Ilir Gjinolli, Jekabs Trusins, Jörg Knieling, Maxmilián Wittmann, Mervi Ilmonen, Tadeusz Markowsk, Tadeusz Marszal, Tejo Spit, Terje Holsen, Thomas Matta, Torill Nyseth, Uwe Altrock

3. Minutes of the last meeting (Mexico City, July 2006)

Accepted.

4. President's report

Peter Ache: A very important theme is the assessment criteria and the overall Bologna process. And the establishing of a common platform for planning curricula. Which will also be on the agenda of the Head of Department meeting, one day after the CoRep event. The current state is not an alarming situation, but: which kind of quality standards do we define? Which parts of the Bologna process do we accept/reject? Are there any alternatives? How does AESOP wishes to be seen within the European arena? AESOP is the only organisation representing all the planning schools in Europe. Therefore we should represent the planning profession and be involved in this discussion.

Planning Education

5. Collaboration with ECTP (Simin Davoudi)

Simin Davoudi: If you have not received a hardcopy version of the Bologna report, please let us know. (Aesop@rug.nl)

The European Council of Town Planners (ECTP) asked AESOP to cooperate with them, to create a common platform for the planning profession. The directive however, is a common framework, out of which a profession can get recognition, based on certain central criteria. Planning is not regulated in many European countries. We should initiate a platform, stating the very basics of the planning profession.

Anna Geppert: AESOP was afraid to miss the creation of the platform. This was not the case, things are not moving as quickly as we thought. Now AESOP can initiate the platform itself.

Broadly, we could think of providing a framework of context, a common platform with possibly two different sets of standards: First - minimum standards (a planner needs a certain level of education), although this is a very minimum standard. A minimum of 2/3 of the members should at least have a certain curriculum. For example 4 years of planning education. Second - some countries might have higher standards (for example 10 years of planning education). In that case an answer should be designed what to do with a planner from another country with less years of planning.

Peter Ache: We should create a task force, to indicate AESOP's position and possibilities. May I ask the National Representative's own national experiences?

Gerhard Schimak: One has been trying to deregulate and now we are trying to regulate. Is it our task, jointly with others? What I have seen so far from ECTP is not very convincing.

Ela Babalik-Sutcliffe: In Turkey a similar discussion is going on. It has been discussed in the Turkey Planning Schools Association. Who are the people telling what the profession standards should be? AESOP should be involved in this discussion.

Simin Davoudi: Gerhard Schimak is right and AESOP should not go alone. But it is doubtful that ECTP can go without AESOP's help. If ECTP wants to go ahead and if their proposal gets accepted by the European Commission, it will come back to us. So there is no rush, but we have to be vigilant. We need to keep in touch with ECTP.

Gerhard Schimak: What is the definition of this platform?

Anna Geppert: A common platform is a set of criteria, which is meant to allow people to move from one country to another. You need minimal standards to be in this field. This is an overall minimum. But countries are allowed to have higher standards. Compensational measures must be taken to apply to this higher standards.

Didier Paris: There is an experiment in France with a platform with basic criteria: which made it possible to distinguish the planning profession with other related professions. It has only a very few criteria, however.

Peter Ache: We will establish a task force and keep you informed, you are invited to join this task force.

6. HoD meeting (Peter Ache)

Peter Ache: The overall topic is the Bologna process: accreditation and its implications to our member schools. You will hear about the results of the presidents meeting. Brief reports on the standard discussion. Didier Paris will tell something about the APERAU perspective. ECTP representatives will explain what their actions will be. Finally discussion groups will be formed. This HoD meeting will be a continual of the Bratislava HoD meeting.

7. AOB on planning education

No other business on planning education.

Planning research

8. Thematic Groups (Roelof Verhage)

Roelof Verhage: AESOP has created its Thematic Groups about two years ago. Several groups are effective and efficient. Some groups are less active. We want to stimulate these Thematic Groups to have more meetings and be more productive. A meeting with the Thematic Group coordinators will be organised in Naples to investigate the possibilities to increase their efficiency.

Two new groups have been started: "French, British planning study group" and "Planning and Energy". The TG's can use the infrastructure offered by AESOP. All Thematic Groups will have their own meeting in Naples.

9. AESOP Journal (Simin Davoudi)

Simin Davoudi: This matter has been first introduced to the CoRep in Mexico City. AESOP has been approached by ETH and Elsevier to consider the journal DiSP, to be associated with AESOP. ETH wants to hand over the publishing side to Elsevier to make it more professional. This will probably go on, making AESOP a third party in this discussion. The big advantage of DiSP is that it is published in four languages (English, German, Italian and French). If the deal goes ahead, AESOP will have a say in its quality, a few AESOP pages and AESOP's logo will be incorporated into the journal.

The stage has been reached that Elsevier and ETH should present their proposition to AESOP's Council of Representatives and let the CoRep decide whether to go ahead. Martina Schretzenmayer, the editor, ETH and Elsevier will be asked to present their proposition in Naples.

The terms and benefits: the proposal at the moment is €50 for a hardcopy version of the journal and the digital archive. The normal price for non-members is €400.

Peter Ache: It is a good move to have a journal close to AESOP's interests. It is a big communication channel.

Petter Næss: If it is going to be an AESOP Journal, its content must also be influenced by AESOP. If the journal continues its present content, without adjusting to AESOP it is not really an AESOP journal.

Although there is a big advantage: it publishes in four languages.

Umberto Janin Rivolin: Will AESOP have influence?

Simin Davoudi: AESOP will probably be on the editorial board. Of course, if we go ahead the contract must give AESOP freedom to exit the cooperation if the character of the cooperation with the journal changes.

Jan Schreurs: Are there any other journals possible for such a cooperation?

Simin Davoudi: We have association with the journal "European Planning Studies". But it is not visible. It has an editorial board, without AESOP influencing it. With DiSP there will be a visible association and AESOP influence.

Gert de Roo: Our relationship with European Planning Studies must be reevaluated.

Peter Ache: We need to refine our quality standard for an AESOP journal. The CoRep is invited to send the ExCo suggestions.

Simin Davoudi: We will try to provide the CoRep with the terms in advance of the next meeting in Naples

10. Prizes (Gert de Roo)

Gert de Roo: The Excellence in Teaching prize call will go out next week.

Karel Maier and Nikos Karadimitriou will lead the Best Conference Paper Prize, this is done together with the local organising committee. Elsevier is interested in submitting this prize. Which is considered to be a good thing.

The Best Journal Paper Prize has been evolving from European to Global, which meant the standards became higher. But the winners of the last AESOP prize were from outside Europe. These publications will be published in the GPEAN driven 'Dialogues in Planning'. Therefore the next Dialogues in Planning will not have a European contribution. The prize committee has been asked to send the best European contribution to Dialogues in Planning. But according to the committee this is not an option. Should AESOP make this prize only available for European contributors, to make sure a European publication will be in Dialogues?

Umberto Janin Rivolin: Is it possible to make two prizes if the first prize is won by someone from outside Europe?

Simin Davoudi: Is it possible to send the best conference paper to Dialogues, which is likely to be European? The goal of the GPEAN book 'Dialogues' is to have a dialogue between the different continents. So a European contribution should be published.

Petter Næss: For the upcoming prize it will be hard to change anything. And also the conference paper is being applied for by many non-European contributors.

Anna Geppert: I would not feel very comfortable to restrict the prize winners to be European. If the subject of the paper is Europe, it is also suitable to be sent to Dialogues.

Kate Shaw's paper will be sent to the next Dialogues.

Roar Amdam: Speaking for Kristina Nilsson (who is delayed) about the teaching prize: The theme is: Social Equity, the deadline will be the first of May.

11. AOB on planning research

No other business on planning research.

Planning policy / Link with other organisations

12. Collaboration with ESPON (Peter Ache)

Peter Ache: The ninth and last ESPON Seminar under the ESPON 2006 programme took place on 14-15 November 2006 in Espoo, Finland. The main ESPON 2006 achievements in understanding the diversity, dynamics and perspectives of the European territory were presented during the Seminar. November 2006 was the closing session of the first round of ESPON.

We have established a link with ESPON. The first concrete result has been the ESPON Atlas, sent to all member schools. Next is a CD-ROM with all ESPON programmes, this will be provided during the Naples conference and sent to the member schools as well.

John McCarthy: The ESPON funding prospects of the projects are quite optimistic. Aim is to be more response to the policy makers.

13. AOB on planning policy

No other business on planning policy

Organisation and communication

14. Membership fee (Andreas Voigt)

Gert de Roo: AESOP's last web wizard has not been able to manage the website anymore since November 2006 and a new one has not been found yet. Marc Beeftink is currently managing the website, as much as possible. To find a suitable new web wizard some funding might be necessary. The same counts for the Yearbook editor, who is also doing a voluntary job.

To try to keep AESOP running a raise of the membership fee is needed. AESOP's full membership fee is far less than the participation fee for the Naples conference. Maybe AESOP needs to think of a different standard for the membership fee.

Andreas Voigt: the standard has been raised continuously over the last years. Maybe AESOP could be a quality mark for universities. AESOP is organising a yearly conference, a yearbook, the Bologna report, job advertisements, several prizes, and it is stimulating young academics. Future developments: an integrated Treasurer-Secretary General database and a new website.

The last few years the inflation rate has not been compensated for. To consolidate the current service level the fee should be discussed. This means a minimum raise of 10-11% to compensate the inflation rate. To consolidate the current service level, the fee must be increased even more.

Peter Ache asks the Council of Representatives to vote for the raise of the membership fee. Later, also of importance, the amount of the raise of the fee must be discussed.

More elementary the future of AESOP must be discussed. E.g. reflecting on the Bologna process, assessment of accreditation, the common platform, they all should be considered. In what way should AESOP evolve and what services AESOP should provide in the future?

Umberto Janin Rivolin is concerned about giving his vote without negotiating with his national members.

Andreas Voigt: A membership fee raise is up to the Council of Representatives, not up to the members.

Umberto Janin Rivolin: The Executive Committee should make clear in the agenda what kind of formal votes will be asked for during a meeting.

Jan Schreurs: What level of increase is expected, on what time base, only once or several times?

Andreas Voigt: The membership fee should at least be compensated for AESOP's current level of service. A basic procedure should be the correction of the inflation rate, but possibly also the service level.

Gert de Roo: in 2003 the fee was compensated for the inflation. Long before that (Hans Mastop's presidency) the actual fee has been raised for the last time. But should the fee also be adjusted to the current higher level of services, also for these in the future?

Andreas Voigt: If we keep the service level as high as this moment, we will need a fee raise. Or there will be a shortage of €16.000.

But there is also a more strategic point of view: should AESOP increase its service level in the future?

Gerhard Schimak: The inflation rate should definitely be compensated for.

It is clear that more activities are going on. Compared to other organisations Gerhard's University is paying membership fees to, the AESOP membership fee is quite low. Moreover, the raise seems necessary. The joint congresses also cause a lack of income every two years or so. If you are afraid of the reactions do not tell anybody how you voted. Jan Schreurs: I am feeling that I am missing certain important documents. For example voting subjects. At this moment I am not in favour of voting for a higher fee raise than just the inflation. It might be advisable to consider the new responsibilities more carefully and balance income and expenses by not raising the fee, but by having a lower standard of services.

Peter Ache: We are not desperately looking for new responsibilities. But there has been a certain growth of AESOP as an organisation, just by having more members and keeping standards at an acceptable level, which causes more pressure on the voluntary jobs of the several AESOP active members.

Andreas Voigt: We need to raise the fee with 35% to fill a gap, of inflation and current service level also caused by the growth of our organisation. But we will also have to consider the future developments of AESOP.

Henrik Harder Hovgesen: It would be appropriate to see a strategic development plan, before raising the fee.

Enrico Gualini: the Council of Representatives should give the Executive Committee a mandate to explore the future needs and present them in connection with the future developments in Naples.

Gerhard Schimak: Prepare a budget forecast for the coming years up to 2010 and clearly define the additional activities the fee raise is needed for.

Simin Davoudi: The reason for not correcting for inflation every year is administrative costs. The correction for inflation could be made every five years for example with 10%.

Pantelis Skayannis: The fee raise should not count for the retired individual membership fee. The increase on top of the inflation should happen in Naples. The CoRep members are not prepared to decide at this moment. Above that a detailed proposal should be presented to the CoRep members.

Andreas Voigt: The majority is agreeing the inflation rate should be corrected with a fee raise of 11%. Andreas will make a forecast for the next four years, in cooperation with the other ExCo members, and present this to the CoRep members before Naples and take a final decision in Naples.

Peter Ache: Agreed is that the fee should be raised. A proposal should be provided to the CoRep members before Naples, so the CoRep members can deliberate with their national members on this subject.

15. Secretary General's report (GdR)

There has been an increasing number of AESOP e-mail messages to all AESOP interested concerning advertisements, new books, job advertisements etc. Most of them are sent free of charge, in order of our own members. Some of the advertisements are paid for, by non-member organisations.

a. New members

The Slovak University of Technology Bratislava has been promoted from Associate member to Full member.

The Centre for Forest, Landscape and Planning, Copenhagen, Denmark has been denied as a Full member and has been advised to apply for Associate membership. One of the reasons to deny them is for not having a planning curriculum.

16. Treasurer's report (Andreas Voigt)

Income

The annual income for 2006 was € 56.800. This sum was realised through membership fee payments, the contribution of the successful AESOP'05 Vienna congress and a pleasing growing income from advertisement business. Several members did not fulfil their financial obligations in due time.

Expenses

During 2006 € 42.350 was spent. Communication team and thematic groups have been introduced as new budget items. The PhD grant for 2006 had to be raised. An additional claim for expenses had to be made by the Secretary General for additional secretariat costs in 2006.

The expenses can be summarised as follows (for details please see the table attached): publishing and printing, yearbook, communication team & web, general secretariat, business meetings, Young Academics, thematic groups, prizes and awards, PhD-workshop grants, unforeseen & miscellaneous (update of treasurer's database) and bank & VISA charges.

Balance

This year's balance shows a surplus of € 14.450. This is primarily the result of lower than expected expenditures for some items.

Conclusion & remarks

The aim of AESOP treasury policy is to achieve a balanced annual budget (annual expenditure should not exceed income). Given the spending praxis of the last few years it has proved possible to achieve this aim.

Membership fees and congress contributions remain AESOP's main sources of income. Concern has to be expressed about the lack of income as a result of the global meeting in 2006 (WPSC Mexico). AESOP'05 Vienna, on the other hand, was very successful, bringing in more than expected and thus helping to compensate for the lack of income in 2006.

The standard of AESOP-services (e.g. organizing and co-organizing conferences, workshops and meetings, provision of reports and information via website and e-mail, job advertisements, quality assurance) and strategic activities (e.g. young academics, communication, thematic groups) has been raised continuously over the last few years, which has necessitated additional budgets. New strategic activities (e.g. the further integration of databases and web) might need specific consideration and will incur additional costs.

In order to maintain the quality of current services and improve them still further additional income sources and the revision of membership fees and some budget items has to be discussed.

17. Communication Team's report (Nikos Karadimitiou)

Nikos Karadimitriou: One of the issues is increasing the clarity of the website. The future of the website is the main issue of the CT. Apart from the fact that the context of the website should be managed, the structure of the website might be improved to make it easier manageable.

Simin Davoudi: Might it be an option to have the website managing, Secretary General and hardcopy publishing etc. in one place, to be more (budget) efficient?

Anna Geppert: It certainly has advantages, but maybe also disadvantages. A permanent secretarial office is very expensive.

Zeynep Merey Enlil: There seems to be an absence of continuously in the secretariat, which is very important. A secretarial headquarter is very beneficial and should be considered in the future. But it does imply a salary for the staff and paying the rent for the office. It is probably a very important factor to increase AESOP's level of service.

Simin Davoudi: We have a logo, but no address under it. It would be nice to have a secretarial headquarters. But this can not be paid for, only with a membership fee raise. A fund raising committee should be started up to achieve this, with a lower membership fee raise.

18. Young Academics Report (Giancarlo Cotella)

Giancarlo Cotella briefly describes the Young Academics activities.

The YA have been founded to promote AESOP among young researchers. The YA website is more dynamic and more advanced than the general AESOP website. It takes less time to manage than the AESOP website.

At the Naples conference there will be a PhD workshop to make Naples' congress more attractive for PhD students.

The YA managed to organize a successful conference just for the Young Academics, with the help of the Slovak University of Technology (Bratislava, February 2007).

Desires for the future: changes to the website are needed, despite the fact that is more advanced as the AESOP one. It was created for an organisation of 30 members. But at the moment the YA have 300 members. New techniques are needed to cope with the capacity

problem and to organise the website under a more advanced and user friendly 'Content Management System'. An increase in the budget for the Young Academics is therefore needed.

Umberto Janin Rivolin: Maybe the YA can take care of the general AESOP website in return.

Gert de Roo: The first step is to bring the two website under one provider, instead of one in Greece and the other in Scotland, which is the case right now. It requires more budget for the website, which needs to be approved in Naples.

Annual Congress

19. July 2007: Naples

Everything seems to be on its way properly. Difficulties of last year seem to have been solved.

20. 5-10 July 2008: Chicago, Joint ACSP-AESOP Congress

Simin Davoudi: The congress also seems to be well on its way. The costs of a joint congress are fixed. The only way to make money is with the registration fee and fund raising. The price for a full registration is \$395,- But for every member attending AESOP will receive \$30,- Any profit or loss will be divided between AESOP and ACSP.

6-11 July 2008. The conference starts properly on Monday 7th of July. Monday will be the CoRep meeting, the General Assembly will be Tuesday, 5pm. It would be a good idea to have the sort of receptions of the different European planning schools, like the American schools do.

Above all: the more attendees of the conference, the more profit.

Marc Beeftink will circulate the ACSP flyer to the AESOP relations again.

21. July 2009 Liverpool

Celebration of 100 years of the profession of planning.

Next CoRep meetings

22. July 2007: Naples

The next CoRep meeting will be the 11th of July in Naples.

23. Proposal for April 2008 ExCo & CoRep meeting

An invitation has been received to come to Lodz, Poland. This is where the next CoRep meeting will be. There is no precise date available yet.

Any other business (AOB)

Peter thanks everybody for coming and for their comments and invites everyone to comment and advise more frequently.

