

18th AESOP YOUNG ACADEMICS CONFERENCE

Book of Abstracts

Bridging Gaps: Urban Planning for Coexistence

Department of Architecture and Urban Studies – Politecnico di Milano 19–22 March 2024



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DIPARTIMENTO DI ARCHITETTURA
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18th AESOP Young Academics Conference
“Bridging Gaps: Urban Planning for Coexistence”

Organised and hosted by the Department
of Architecture & Urban Studies (**DASU**)
Politecnico di Milano

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Conference Theme

6

Bridging Gaps: Urban Planning for Coexistence

TRACK 1 Looking Towards a Sustainable Urban Future Transition & Challenges **8**

Chairs Eugenio Morello, Gilles Desthieux, Asef Ayatollahi, Chenling Wu
Participants Federico Camerin, Hashem Alsibai, Karlijn Kokhuis, Kosar Azarmikhosroshahi, Lucia Chieffallo, Mariana Pereira Guimaraes, Mirjam Sophie Mael, Qian-Cheng Wang, Tianqin Chen, Yuxi Xiong

TRACK 2 Beyond the Urban-Rural Divide **20**

Chairs Luca Lazzarini, Nitin Bathla, Anna Fera, Antonio Jose Salvador, Anita Martinelli
Participants Alessandra Marcon, Cihan Mert Sabah, Elvira Pietrobon, Francesco Galli, Francesco Gugliotta, Ioanna Chatzikonstantinou, Maria Khristine Alvarez, Sumaita Tahseen, Yağmur Aşçı, Yixuan Lan

TRACK 3 Challenging the Role of Academia The Impact of Research **32**

Chairs Gabriele Pasqui, Julia Wesely, Dafni Riga, Giulia Oldani
Participants Aubrey Toldi, Giulia Li Destri Nicosia, Gloria Calderone, Irem Duygu Tiryaki, Mareike Schmidt, Maria Vittoria Arnetoli, Maria Minic, Mercy Edna, Qing yuan Guo, Stefan Baars

TRACK 4 Planning Tools & Techniques Bridging the Gap Between Theory & Practice **44**

Chairs Israa Mahmoud, Adriano Bisello, Abdallah Jreij, Jaime Sierra
Participants Anna Giulia Castaldo, Ana Lago, Axelle Vincent, Bahaa Bou Kalfouni, Federica Rotondo, Janneke van der Leer, Mariya Badeva, Mirna Mikhail, Sanja Platisa, Tara Op de Beeck

TRACK 5 Towards Coexistence Contested Social & Spatial Landscapes in Transformation **56**

Chairs Nikos Katsikis, Gloria Pessina, Danila Saulino, Aamina Shahid, Busra Ince
Participants Angelina Grelle, Blessing Mucherera, Elia Silvestro, Francesca Berni, Luis Carlos Raposo, Maisa Totry, Nikhil Sanjay Shah, Ramazan Oruç, Şelale Balambar Ergan, Seyed Alireza Seyedi

Challenging the Role of Academia: The Impact of Research

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Engaging with research: challenges of an academics/civil society partnership

Keywords

engaged research, civil society, university, collective learning

Over the past decades, complexity theory, postmodernism, contemporary hermeneutics, American pragmatism, and neo-Aristotelian theories have challenged in different ways applied fields, such as planning, to account for the loss of linearity in the relationship between knowledge and action. In the planning debate, such a loss has produced two major effects: on one hand, it encouraged scholars to investigate and test strategies to enact a more holistic, transdisciplinary approach; on the other, more and more academics explore and experience engaged research practices, looking at the relationship between universities and civil society as an opportunity to produce more democratic knowledge as well as durable and equitable spatial transformations.

In this respect, the paper presents how young and less young academics from three universities (University of Catania, University of Massachusetts Boston, and University of Memphis) are trying to cope with both transdisciplinarity and engaged research within the framework of CoPED (Community Planning and Ecological Design)

Summer School, an intensive research training using an approach commonly identified as participatory action-research. Since 2012, CoPED has worked with one or more organizations operating in the eastern Sicily (Italy), experimenting with a research process that becomes an opportunity for collective learning, aimed at identifying strategies for addressing a specific territorial issue and, in general, effective for local development.

The aim of the paper is pointing out both challenges and opportunities of CoPED Summer School, focusing on three specific thematic areas: 1) the role of the university and its chances to support long-term and meaningful partnerships with groups of the civil society; 2) the role of local organizations and their challenges/opportunities when it comes to organizational aspects, resources, and willingness to change; 3) the role of students and trainees, who experience a learning context that is highly intensive and significantly different from the one they are used to.



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