

A Decade of Planning 2011-2020

An initiative by AESOP, ECTP-CEU & IFHP

1. As a result of unprecedented economic and technological progress in the latter decades of the 19th Century and the first decade of the 20th Century, the new industrial cities faced rapid and uncontrolled growth which in turn led to unparalleled social misery and squalor. The need for intervention became urgent and unavoidable, whether from social activists, enlightened philanthropists, progressive politicians, new professionals or even more far-seeing industrialists who realised that more healthy workers were also more productive workers. Planning, often with roots in housing and neighbourhood building, emerged as a new profession.

The emergence of planning was reflected in:

- the development of new legal frameworks and other regulations which enabled the new generation of urban interventionists to start providing first improvements in the urban environment, especially urgent housing (eg UK Act on Housing and Planning, 1909)
 - the creation of a new scientific discipline in university education (eg University of Liverpool 1909).
 - the establishment of professional organisations, movements and institutions at the national and international level to facilitate the exchange of new ideas, information and knowledge (TCPA 1899), Société Française des Urbanistes (SFU, 1911), International Federation for Housing and Planning (IFHP, 1913), Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI, 1914),
 - new visions and holistic urban design concepts such as the Garden City
2. One hundred years on, cities again have to face challenges that in a number of fundamental ways are not dissimilar to when planning was first established – the liveability of cities, the quality of life, social cohesion in neighbourhoods, functional and green public spaces, healthy cities, affordable housing. The nature of the problems and the specific issues and challenges are, however, vaster, more complicated and essentially different.

What is also different is the growing marginalisation of the planning profession despite these new challenges, due to the need to reduce public spending and government interventions in the light of the financial and economic crisis, and the perception by many governments that it is an obstacle to economic recovery and growth (the FROG-syndrome – First Restore Our Growth). More fundamental is the increasing inability of the planning profession to make an impact with the traditional tools and methods proven over the years, given the complexity, dynamism and unpredictability of contemporary society. It seriously needs to re-orientate, even reinvent itself to make an impact on these major issues and reflect its new role in the organization of society and the global economy and environment.

3. Many of the afore-mentioned institutions are still playing an active role in the field of planning and they will be celebrating their centenaries in the next few years. These centenaries provide an excellent opportunity to bring planning into a more positive light and into the realms of public debate.

Other organizations – like AESOP – established in the course of these 100 years will also be celebrating their Silver (Association of European Schools of Planning AESOP, 1987) or Golden (ISOCARP 1965) Jubilees in this period.

4. **The above organisations have therefore launched the idea to declare the forthcoming years the DECADE OF PLANNING**, as a sort of “umbrella framework” for these jubilee celebrations. This would have two major advantages:

- an opportunity for planners, urban professionals and politicians to exploit this opportunity and discuss the issues involved in this re-orientation / re-invention directed at fundamental new ways of improving the liveability and quality of life in the cities of tomorrow;
- to ensure that there is a broader synchronisation of activities, products and ideas emanating from those organisations celebrating their centenaries and jubilees in this decade. This would mean a cross-fertilization of ideas, and an accumulation of publicity and attention rather than a competition for it.

The cooperation between the organizations would include:

- activities/products that these organizations are running separately but in close and friendly cooperation with other partners (i.e. annual congresses, on-going projects and activities);
- joint projects that partners decide to launch and run together.

5. The first actions to be taken are::

- a further inventory of possible planning (related) institutions and organisations that will indeed be celebrating milestones in their existence in the period 2011-2010;
- establish whether they would like to adhere to this over-arching concept of the Decade of Planning;
- agreement on a brand, logo and initial framework of the decade of planning.
- establish a decade of planning webpage with links to the associated organisations' websites and an agreement of how to run and finance it;
- get national partners involved (national planning associations).