

Open Access Journal

## Foreword

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It is a pleasure to write a foreword for the third volume of *plaNext*, dedicated to 'Differences and Connections: Beyond Universal Theories in Planning, Urban, and Heritage Studies'. This volume publishes six papers selected from the YA conference held on this topic in Palermo in March 2015, thanks to the support of Francesco Lo Piccolo, at the time acting President of AESOP. Published since 2015, *plaNext* is a peer-reviewed journal, created and edited by the AESOP Young Academics Network. Since the beginning, AESOP has supported this initiative for two reasons.

First, we believe that Young Academics benefit of the experience of editing their journal. At a personal level, Young Academics are actively engaged in various dimensions of scientific publication. They are writing, submitting, sometimes reviewing and editing papers in various journals. However, being in charge of the full process of elaboration of a journal from the first editorial choices to the final implementation is a different experience, providing the whole picture. On the side of AESOP, supporting *plaNext* was a bet on the maturity of the Young Academics and their capacity of carrying through such an endeavour. The present volume proves, once again, that trusting the Young Academics was right. I want to express a special gratitude to the guest editors of this issue. Simone Tulumello, post-doc research fellow at the Institute of Social Sciences of the University of Lisbon, has coordinated the YA conference in Palermo, his alma mater, and given his time, a scarce resource when one is in a post-doc position, for the present issue. Our esteemed colleague Patsy Healey, professor emeritus in the School of Architecture, Planning and Landscape at Newcastle University, has supported this project, giving her time and sharing her experience with generosity. Without these intergenerational collaborations, *plaNext* would not be what it is, and I am proud to state that AESOP is a network where such collaborations take place: a treasure in the contemporary academic system. I am proud to say that AESOP is the only academic association in which I have seen so much energy in the young generation and so much commitment among confirmed scholars to support the new generation.

Second, we believe that *plaNext* brings to our community a unique value. We hope that the journal will be a place for debating new, emerging ideas, that don't always get through in well-established academic routines. The ambition of the present issue is questioning and going beyond well-established theories points in this very direction. It would not have happened without the commitment of the editorial board of *plaNext*, Feras Hammami (Editor in Chief), Nadia Caruso, Ender Peker, Simone Tulumello, Lauren Ugur. We hope that by publishing in open access, *plaNext* will reach out to various audiences, academics of all generations as well as practitioners, bringing new perspectives on planning. It is particularly important in our days, when planning is facing new challenges and undergoing dynamic changes.

AESOP has always supported the initiatives of its Young Academics network. And the present volume proves, once again, that the Young Academics network is an excellent investment for our community!