AESOP-Young Academics

Open Access Journal

Volume 15 / November 2025

AESOP

YOUNG ACADEMICS NETWORK

ISSN 2468-0648

plaNext

NEXT GENERATION PLANNING

The 10th Anniversary: *plaNext* and Planning in Transition

Open Access Journal

plaNext – Next Generation Planning

Along the concentrated efforts of the Association of European Schools of Planning (AESOP) to Open Access scholarly planning debates, the young academics network of AESOP continues to publish its international peer-reviewed open access e-journal, *plaNext*. *plaNext* provides prospective authors an opportunity to engage their ideas in international planning debates as well as make their research available to the wider planning audience. *plaNext* invites authors to submit original work that includes: empirical research; theoretical discussions; innovative methodologies; case studies; and book reviews on selected books, textbooks, or specific topics dealing within planning.

For more information about *plaNext* and to access all publications, please visit the journal's homepage at http://journals.aesop-planning.eu/. You are also welcome to reach us at planextjournal@gmail.com.

plaNext editorial board

Peer Review and Open Access Statement

plaNext is an international, peer-reviewed journal that publishes high-quality and original research. In this special anniversary issue we have collected both essays devoted to the journal, academic publishing and planning, as well as two research articles. The essays were reviewed by the special editors of this special issue, Elisa (Lizzy) Privitera and Sıla Ceren Varış Husar. Two research articles—Alberto Bortolotti "Financialization and deterritorialization in the Milanese major urban development projects" and Lorenzo Stefano Iannizzotto & Alexandra Paio "Rethinking the In-Between: Designing with a socio-ecological approach to activate the potential of Terrain Vague spaces"—were reviewed by at least two expert referees each, through a double-blind or open peer-review process.

All manuscripts are published with open access. This means that they are freely and permanently available to the general public. There is no subscription fee, article pay-to-view fee or any other form of access charges; and no publication embargo is applied.

Open Access Journal

Editorial Board

Editors of Volume 15

- Elisa (Lizzy) Privitera, University of Toronto Scarborough, Canada.
- Sıla Ceren Varış Husar, Slovak University of Technology, Slovakia.

Acknowledgment

The editorial board of *plaNext* would like to warmly thank all the contributors to this special issue, who generously dedicated their time to this volume—often experimenting with creative and collaborative ways of thinking, reflecting, and producing knowledge together. A special thanks to Pavel Grabalov, who has rigorously and kindly supported the editorial management and copyediting phase of all contributions.

We also wish to extend our sincere thanks to Chandrima Mukhopadhyay, whose collaboration and support were crucial during the initial stages of developing this special issue.

Finally, we are deeply grateful to the reviewers of this volume for their constructive feedback and invaluable contributions. As we highlighted in some of the essays, without the reviewers' input, this volume (and academic knowledge production in general) could not have undergone such rigorous yet constructive improvement.

Open Access Journal

VOLUME 15, SPECIAL EDITION

The 10th Anniversary: *plaNext* and Planning in Transition

The *plaNext* was born in 2015 to create a dedicated platform for emerging scholars and new voices in spatial planning. Ten years later, this special issue, *The 10th Anniversary: plaNext and Planning in Transition*, reflects on the journal's evolution and outlines its future trajectory. Over the past decade, *plaNext* has accompanied, and often anticipated, shifts in the discipline. These include the climate emergency transitioning to a present crisis, new movements for social justice and spatial equity, the transformative potential of digitalization and AI on urban futures, and an increasingly fractured global planning discourse. The journal's name underlines its core mission to focus on "planning what is next," both for the next generation of planners and the evolving nature of planning as a discipline. The collected contributions reinterpret old debates through the lens of today's urgencies, speaking to transitions in pedagogy, politics and planetary boundaries. They critically examine what it means to plan in an era where intergenerational justice is an existential imperative. As it enters its second decade, *plaNext* reaffirms its commitment to fostering a community for early-career thinkers and promoting critical, inclusive, and experimental approaches to planning knowledge and practice.

Open Access Journal

Content

I Forwards
Giancarlo Cotella
Foreword: A bright future for *plaNext* and the AESOP publishing platform

Sıla Ceren Varış Husar and Elisa (Lizzy) Privitera
Editorial: *plaNext* and planning in transition (2015–2025)

II Past, present, and future of *plaNext*: Reflections and predictions from founding and current editorial board members
Asma Mehan
plaNext in transition: A decade of young academic publishing in planning (2015–2025) – Insights and futures

Feras Hammami
Ethical publishing as resistance: Reflections from *plaNext* and the politics of knowledge and space

Simone Tulumello
For a dialectic of planning pasts and futures: Theoretical courses and recourses in conversation with Patsy Healey

Batoul Ibrahim
Grounded futures: A decade of planning through humanitarian and Southern lenses

III Founding and current editorial board members in conversation
Sıla Ceren Varış Husar, Simone Tulumello, Asma Mehan, Francesca Dal Cin, Nadia Caruso, Ender Peker and Esra Kut Görgün
Bridging generations: A decade of open peer review and collective knowledge-building in planning scholarship through *plaNext*

Elisa (Lizzy) Privitera, Pavel Grabalov, Milan Husár, Francesca Leccis, Mafalda Madureira, Subhashree Nath, Lauren Uğur, Chandrima Mukhopadhyay and Sıla Ceren Varış Husar
Empowering scholarship: Young researcher-led journals as spaces for learning, envisioning, and experimenting with alternatives

Esra Kut Görgün and Subhashree Nath
Echoes of a decade in *plaNext – Next Generation Planning* journal and the road ahead

IV Voices from young academics and AESOP on future planning challenges and directions
Alberto Bortolotti
Financialization and deterritorialization in the Milanese major urban development projects

Lorenzo Stefano Iannizzotto and Alexandra Paio
Rethinking the In-Between: Designing with a socio-ecological approach to activate the potential of *Terrain Vague* spaces

Peter Ache
Artificial intelligence and the planning task

Ender Peker
Framing the values of teaching urban design in planning education

Elisa (Lizzy) Privitera
Planning ahead: Toward a critical, environmental, just, and action-oriented planning theory, practice, and journal

Open Access Journal

Notes on Contributors

Alberto Bortolotti is a Doctoral Researcher at the Department of Architecture and Urban Studies of Politecnico di Milano, and the author of several articles and contributions on the interactions between finance and space. He is Vice President of the Council of Architects and Planners of Milano. He was a Visiting Researcher at the University of Amsterdam and the Catholic University of Leuven, where he studied real estate markets, trends, and operations. He also served as an advisor for housing and urban policies for the Feltrinelli Foundation, the Foundation for European Progressive Studies, the Italian Ministry of Culture, and the European Parliament.

Alexandra Paio is an Architect (Lusíada, 1993), a Master in Urban Design (Iscte-IUL, 2002) and holds a PhD in Architecture and Urbanism (ISCTE-IUL, 2011). She is an Assistant Professor at Iscte – University Institute of Lisbon. Founder and researcher at the Digital Fabrication Laboratory – Vitruvius Fablab. She coordinates and supervises research in digital architecture: computational design, digital tools and processes to support creative design, emerging housing, public space, and participatory processes. She participates and coordinates workshops and ongoing training with the support of Portuguese industry companies and municipalities in the themes of co-production and participatory processes through digital tools. Special Mention Research and Teaching Forma Award 2022. Regularly writes opinion articles in the national media and newspapers. She is Coordinator of the Specialization Course in Collaborative Territories: Processes, Project, Intervention and Entrepreneurship. Co-coordinator of the Professional Master in Digital Innovation for Project Practices (Iscte/FAUP). Regional coordinator of the European MSC-ITN project *RE-DWELL: Delivering Affordable and Sustainable Housing in Europe* (2020–2024).

Asma Mehan is an Assistant Professor at the Huckabee College of Architecture, Texas Tech University, USA, where she also directs the Architectural Humanities and Urbanism Lab (AHU_Lab). She currently serves as Editor in Chief of *plaNext – Next Generation Planning*. Dr. Mehan has authored three books and edited two volumes. Her debut, *Kuala Lumpur: Community, Infrastructure, and Urban Inclusivity* (Routledge, 2020), explores how infrastructure shapes social equity in the Malaysian metropolis. She followed this with *Tehran: From Sacred to Radical* (Routledge, 2022), a critical analysis of political transformation in Tehran's public spaces. Her most recent authored book, *The Affective Agency of Public Space: Social Inclusion and Community Cohesion* (De Gruyter Brill, 2024), examines how public spaces in cities such as Amsterdam and Houston foster urban connection and civic interaction. She also edited *After Oil: A Comparative Analysis of Oil Heritage, Urban Transformations, and Resilience Paradigms* (Springer, 2025), on post-industrial city futures, and *City, Public Space, and Body: The Embodied Experience of Urban Life* (Routledge Research in Planning and Urban Design, forthcoming November 2025).

Batoul Ibrahim is an Urban Planner, Researcher and Humanitarian Professional with over eight years of experience in spatial planning, urban development, and humanitarian response. Batoul holds a PhD in Spatial Planning and has worked extensively with international organisations and NGOs in fragile and conflict-affected settings. She specialises in post-conflict recovery, WASH coordination, land administration, and cultural planning.

Chandrima Mukhopadhyay is an Architect and Planner, with a PhD in Urban Planning from the School of Architecture, Planning and Landscape, Newcastle University, UK. Her PhD dissertation was on infrastructure delivery through Public Private Partnership in India. Chandrima has been working for the Association of European School of Planning's (AESOP's) Young Academic network since 2011 and has been one of the core founders and the coordinator of the Thematic Group on Global South at AESOP. She has taught at the Faculty of Planning, CEPT University, India, and was a Visiting Scholar at MIT-UTM Malaysia Sustainable Cities Program. She has worked on OPTIMISM, a multi-country large-scale research project based at Ahmedabad University, India, and as a consultant for UN-Habitat India. In the past, she has worked on projects for the Florida Department of Transport while based at Florida State University. Chandrima is a Regional Studies Association (RSA) Fellow.

Open Access Journal

Elisa (Lizzy) Privitera is a transdisciplinary researcher and practitioner working at the intersection of community urban planning, environmental justice, environmental humanities, and political ecology. She is currently a postdoctoral researcher at the Canada Excellence Research Chair Network for Equity in Sustainability Transitions (CERC NEST) at the University of Toronto Scarborough. At the same university, she co-led the *Just Transitions in Action* project—a community-based research initiative collaborating with local partners to understand and envision equitable transitions. Her PhD dissertation (University of Catania, Italy) explores the role of embodied knowledge and small data in researching and planning industrial risk landscapes. She has published scientific contributions and received several grants, including a Fulbright Scholarship supporting her visiting period at the University of California, Santa Barbara, and the international Courageous Scientists Award for Environmental and Climate Justice (2025). She previously served on the coordination team of the AESOP Young Academics Network and is currently a member of the editorial team of *plaNext – Next Generation Planning* and part of the editorial collective of *Resistance: A Journal of Radical Environmental Humanities*.

Ender Peker is Associate Professor of Urban Design and Planning at Middle East Technical University and an Honorary Research Fellow at the British Institute at Ankara, Türkiye. Ender is an urbanist specializing in climate-responsive urban design. His research focuses on climate-responsive urbanism, thermal comfort and the built environment, the governance of climate action, and water management. From 2012 to 2015, Ender served on the Coordination Team of AESOP Young Academics, where he was a founding editorial member of *plaNext* in 2014 and remained actively involved with the journal until 2022.

Esra Kut Görgün holds a PhD in City and Regional Planning from Dokuz Eylul University (2023). She conducted her postdoctoral research at Politecnico di Milano with the project titled *Land Use and Land Cover Change (LULC) Effects on Ecosystem Services and Land Use Structure Optimization Based on Carbon Neutrality in Izmir*, which was supported by the Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey (TÜBİTAK). Her research interests include rural planning, tactical urbanism, land use planning, remote sensing, and the quality of urban life. Recently, her work has focused on achieving climate neutrality, optimizing land use, and assessing ecosystem services. Since 2024, she has been serving on the editorial board of *plaNext – Next Generation Planning*, the academic journal of AESOP Young Academics.

Feras Hammami is the Deputy Head of, and an Associate Professor at, the Department of Conservation at the University of Gothenburg, Sweden. His academic path began in Palestine, where he earned a bachelor's degree in architecture and experienced the impacts of Israeli settler colonialism. This shaped his understanding of cultural heritage and its deep connection to daily life. He later pursued a PhD at the Royal Institute of Technology (KTH), Sweden, where his thesis, *Heritage in Authority-Making*, explored the politicization of cultural heritage in urban policies across Palestine, Botswana and Sweden. Following a postdoctoral fellowship at the University of Gothenburg, his research has focused on the complex relationship between cultural heritage, conflict, and peace. He examines how heritage is politicized within neoliberal urban and colonial practices, addressing issues of security, identity, and memory. His current work challenges Western-centric notions of peace, seeking innovative perspectives to build socially just futures.

Francesca Dal Cin holds a PhD in Urban Planning from the Lisbon School of Architecture, with the thesis titled *Streets by the sea: type, limit and elements*. She has taught in Saudi Arabia since 2023 and is currently an Assistant Professor at Prince Mohammad bin Fahd University. A member of CIAUD since 2018, she has published widely on urban and coastal planning, supervises PhD and Master's students, and regularly participates in international conferences. Since 2024, she has been serving on the editorial board of *plaNext – Next Generation Planning*. Her recent work includes research in Timor Leste. She is the editor of the upcoming volume *Fuzzy Boundaries*, exploring the interface between water and land.

Francesca Leccis holds an MSc cum Laude in Architecture from the University of Cagliari (2012) and an MSc with Merit in International Real Estate and Planning from University College London (2015). Her

research primarily focuses on sustainable urban and territorial planning, culminating in a PhD cum laude (2017) in Civil and Environmental Engineering and Architecture, with a comparative study on the impacts of urban regeneration initiatives in Cagliari, Rome, and London. She has been a member of *plaNext* editorial board since 2022. Currently, she is a research fellow at the Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering and Architecture (DICAAR), University of Cagliari, working on a project defining evidence-based spatial policies for climate neutrality and adaptation in urban and rural areas. Her past research includes projects such as SOS-Lab, developing governance tools for Sardinia's sustainable development strategy and creating a methodological approach to integrate the regional sustainability strategy into urban planning practices at the municipal and metropolitan levels, and GIREPAM, focused on integrated ecological network management in coastal and marine areas aligned with blue-green economy goals.

Giancarlo Cotella is a full professor of urban and regional planning at Politecnico di Torino. He has 20 years of experience in comparative spatial planning research, developed through the active participation in numerous international and national research projects. He recently edited the volume *Spatial planning systems in Europe: Comparison and trajectories* (with Vincent Nadin and Peter Schmitt) and the *Handbook of Territorial Governance* (with Umberto Janin Rivolin). Since 2023, he serves as Secretary General of AESOP, the Association of European Schools of Planning.

Lauren Uğur is a Professor of International Tourism Management at Heilbronn University of Applied Sciences, Germany. She holds a PhD in Sociology with a focus on integrated urban and socio-economic development. She also holds an MSc in International Cooperation and Urban Development from the University of Darmstadt and an MBA from the University of South Australia. Her research centers on resilience-building and inclusive development planning. One of her recent publications is the co-edited volume *Rethinking Urban Transformations: A New Paradigm for Inclusive Cities* (2023, with Dr. Nebojša Čamprag and Dr. Anshika Suri), published by Springer. Lauren's academic path has been strongly interdisciplinary and is complemented by her work as a freelance consultant and business coach. She is also one of the co-founders of *plaNext – Next Generation Planning*.

Lorenzo Stefano Iannizzotto is an architect, researcher at DINÂMIA'CET-Iscte, PhD student at Iscte-IUL-Lisbon with FCT funded research *The Cartography of the In-Between: Rethinking Urban Voids Approach for New Urban Challenges*; and PhD visiting scholar at University of Westminster, London and Florence, Italy. His master thesis with the title *Construir Entre* was published in 2023. In 2018 and 2021, he worked as architect at Ventura Trindade Arquitectos (Lisbon). In 2021, he won an honourable mention in the competition *Unlocking cities. New scenarios for living*, and in 2022 he worked in the research project *SizaATLAS. Filling the Gaps for World Heritage*. In 2025, he took part in organizing the exhibition *Glossary of Portuguese Architecture of Fernando Távora* and the Blended Intensive Program *Activating the Void: Exploring Transdisciplinary Strategies and Practices for Urban Vacant Land* and contributed to the project *Immaterial Matters*, selected for the Lisbon Architecture Triennale.

Mafalda Pinto Soares Madureira is currently an Assistant Professor at the Faculty of Geo-Information Science and Earth Observation (ITC), in the department of Urban and Regional Planning and Geo-Information Management (PGM), of the University of Twente. She received her PhD in Urban Planning in 2014, from the Blekinge Institute of Technology, in collaboration with Circle – Center for Innovation, Research and Learning in the learning Economy, at Lund University, in Sweden. Mafalda Madureira is an experienced researcher in Urban Geography with a strong focus on the intersection of technology, citizen science, and urban planning. Her work explores how public participation can be harnessed to improve policymaking and planning processes, contributing to the creation of more resilient, inclusive, and sustainable urban spaces. She was a member of *plaNext* editorial team between 2017 and 2021.

Milan Husár is an Associate Professor at the Spectra Centre of Excellence of the EU at the Institute of Management, Slovak University of Technology in Bratislava. He has participated in numerous national and international research projects covering topics of smart cities, biodiversity protection and spatial planning. In his research, he is exploring the topics of humanizing smart cities, exploring spatial planning culture in Central Europe and energy planning. As a Fulbright Scholar, he spent six months at Arizona State University. In the period 2022–2023, he was the chair of AESOP Young Academics Network Coordination Team He is a member of *plaNext* editorial board since 2022.

Open Access Journal

Nadia Caruso is an Associate Professor of spatial planning at Politecnico di Torino, DIST, in Italy. She coordinates the Master of Science programme in Urban and Regional Planning and teaches urban regeneration and planning. Her research interest focuses on housing policies, social housing, urban regeneration and social innovation. She has been part of the editorial board of *plaNext – Next Generation Planning* from 2014 to 2022 and Chair of the AESOP Young Academics in 2015–16.

Pavel Grabalov is a researcher at the Centre of Excellence in Education SITRAP at the Norwegian University of Life Sciences (NMBU) where he investigates how learning occurs in professional practice within Norwegian spatial planning. He has also worked on topics such as public space planning and design, cemetery planning, urban agriculture, and circular economy. He has strong competence in qualitative methods, works interdisciplinarily, and is interested in the relationship between research and policy development. Pavel holds a PhD from the Norwegian University of Life Sciences (NMBU) and a master's degree in urban studies from Malmö University.

Peter Ache is a Professor Emeritus of Planning, previously at Radboud University, Nijmegen. He received his PhD from TU Dortmund and is a member of the German Academy ARL. He was a former president of AESOP and co-chairs a thematic group on Urban Futures. His main research interest is related to metropolitan regions with their complex actor and governance structures. This research is connected to urban futures, vision and strategy making, conflict and utopia.

Sıla Ceren Varış Husar is an Assistant Professor at the Slovak University of Technology (STUBA), Institute of Management, where she teaches and conducts research in the field of economics and spatial management. She successfully completed her three-year postdoctoral research as a Marie Skłodowska-Curie Fellow at the STUBA Spatial Planning Department. Her MSCA COFUND project centred on regional innovation capacity and human agency, particularly in Central and Eastern European countries like Slovakia. She holds her PhD in City and Regional Planning from Middle East Technical University (Ankara, Türkiye), with a dissertation on the nexus of economic development, regional innovation, space, people and institutions. She remains actively involved in the academic community as an editorial member of the Scopus-indexed Q3 journal *plaNext – Next Generation Planning* and a member of the Association of European Schools of Planning (AESOP) and Regional Studies Association (RSA).

Simone Tulumello is an associate research professor in human geography at the University of Lisbon, Institute of Social Sciences, where he is also president of the Ethics Commission and member of the scientific committee of the PhD in Development Studies. At the crossroads of human geography, critical urban studies and political economy, Simone is interested in the multi-scalar dimensions of urbanization, with a focus on urban security and violence, housing policy and politics, urban imaginaries, and urbanization in the semi-periphery. Among his books are *Urban Violence: Security, Imaginary, Atmosphere* (with Andrea Pavoni; 2023, Lexington), *Habitação além da "crise": políticas, conflito, direito* (2024; Tigre de Papel) and *Fear, Space and Urban Planning: A Critical Perspective from Southern Europe* (2017; Springer).

Subhashree Nath is currently a PhD researcher at the Leibniz Institute of Ecological Urban and Regional Development and TU Dresden. Her work focuses on bridging the gap between community and scientific knowledge on liveability and climate resilience. She develops community engagement tools to make scientific insights more accessible. Her interests include community-driven climate adaptation using ICT, decolonial theories for just adaptation, and methodologies like fuzzy cognitive mapping and system dynamics to analyse power dynamics in community-driven adaptation and development. Subhashree is a member of the *plaNext* editorial team since July 2024.

Open Access Journal

Foreword: A bright future for *plaNext* and the AESOP publishing platform

Giancarlo Cotella
AESOP Secretary General, Politecnico di Torino, Italy
secretariat@aesop-planning.eu

Introduction

In early 2025, *plaNext – Next Generation Planning* achieved a significant milestone: its indexing in the Scopus database. This event marks a pivotal moment for the journal and for the broader publication strategy of the Association of European Schools of Planning (AESOP). It is a recognition of the collective efforts made by successive editorial boards, contributors, reviewers, and above all, by the young scholars who believed in a journal that could serve both as a platform for emerging voices and as a vehicle for innovation in planning scholarship. More than a celebratory note, this foreword seeks to situate *plaNext* within AESOP's evolving ecosystem of publications and overall digital environment. It reflects on the journal's distinctive role and achievements, connects it with the broader ambitions of AESOP's scientific dissemination strategy, and explores how recent developments—including the launch of the AESOP Digital Archive—are contributing to a renewed and more integrated platform for publishing in planning.

AESOP has always considered quality academic publishing a cornerstone of its mission of promoting excellence in planning education and research (Geppert and Cotella, 2010). As an academic community grounded in diversity—of traditions, languages, institutions, and methodological approaches—AESOP promotes not only excellence in research, but also accessibility, pluralism, and intergenerational dialogue. The publication activities of the Association must be read in this light. Today, AESOP offers a rich and articulated platform for knowledge dissemination, including three peer-reviewed channels—*plaNext*, *Transactions of AESOP*, and the booklet series *Conversations in Planning Theory and Practice*—as well as the recently launched AESOP Digital Archive, a public repository for open-access dissemination of a wide range of materials produced within and beyond the AESOP community. Each of these instruments plays a specific role. Together, they form a coherent, open, and inclusive knowledge infrastructure that reflects AESOP's mission and evolving responsibilities in a complex and interconnected world.

Aiming at providing the readers with an account of the latter, this foreword is organised in three parts. First, it will reflect on the trajectory and present positioning of *plaNext*, focusing in particular on its foundational vision and the significance of its recent indexing in Scopus.

 ISSN 2468-0648.

Please cite as: Cotella, C. (2025). Foreword: A bright future for *plaNext* and the AESOP publishing platform. *plaNext – Next Generation Planning*, 15, 9–12. https://doi.org/10.24306/plnxt/106

Open Access Journal

Second, it will consider the broader publishing landscape of AESOP, situating *plaNext* alongside *Transactions* and the booklet series, and emphasising their complementarity. Third, it will place all these activities within the emerging architecture of the AESOP Digital Archive, arguing that together they are giving shape to a new era of academic dissemination in planning: open, plural, collaborative, and forward-looking.

plaNext: A space for next-generation planning

From its inception, *plaNext* was envisioned as a journal that would break with convention. Conceived in 2013 as a peer-reviewed open-access journal of AESOP, it was designed to fill a specific gap in the landscape of planning publications: to offer early-career scholars an opportunity to publish their work in a high-quality academic venue that was not only rigorous and international, but also accessible and supportive. In doing so, *plaNext* embraced two complementary missions. On the one hand, it sought to foster excellence and visibility for emerging voices in planning research. On the other hand, it aimed to challenge the established boundaries of the field, encouraging contributions that were methodologically sound, theoretically diverse, and reflective of the rapidly changing realities of urban and regional development.

Over the past decade, *plaNext* has succeeded in fulfilling this dual mission. Through special issues emerging from AESOP Young Academics conferences, open calls, and thematic dossiers, the journal has published a wide array of articles covering innovative topics—from post-growth planning and environmental justice to digital transformations and decolonial approaches to space. It has welcomed interdisciplinary contributions, fostered critical debates, and promoted inclusive authorship. Above all, *plaNext* has become an entry point into international publishing numerous early-career researchers who might otherwise have struggled to overcome the barriers of more traditional editorial environments. The recent indexing of *plaNext* in Scopus is a significant recognition of this achievement. It validates the editorial and scientific quality of the journal and elevates its standing in the global planning research community. At the same time, it provides a strategic opportunity for the journal to renew its vision and further its impact. Indexing in Scopus brings greater visibility, enhances discoverability, and makes it easier for authors to meet institutional publishing requirements. But it also entails new responsibilities. The editorial board of *plaNext*, together with AESOP leadership, is now in a position to consolidate the journal's identity, sharpen its editorial scope, and refine its review and publication processes to ensure that the founding mission—supporting early-career researchers and stimulating innovative thinking—continues to guide the journal's evolution.

The success of *plaNext* also points to a broader strategic insight: that academic publishing must not be seen merely as an endpoint of research, but as an integral part of the research and training ecosystem. In this sense, *plaNext* is not just a journal; it is a pedagogical and community-building instrument. It provides young researchers with a first-hand experience of peer review, helps them navigate the publishing landscape, and connects them with international networks. It also offers an avenue for mentoring and intergenerational exchange, as senior scholars contribute to the journal as reviewers, guest editors, and supporters. The continued success of *plaNext* will depend on AESOP's ability to nurture this ecosystem and to integrate the journal more closely into its teaching, research, and networking activities.

A plural publishing platform: Transactions and booklets

While *plaNext* holds a unique place in AESOP's publishing platform, it is part of a wider constellation of initiatives. The AESOP journal *Transactions* and the booklet series

Open Access Journal

Conversations in Planning Theory and Practice complement the work of *plaNext*, each contributing in distinctive ways to the mission of knowledge production and dissemination.

Transactions of AESOP was launched in 2017 to serve as a journal of record for the AESOP community. It offers an outlet for high-quality papers that have undergone peer-review and often presentation in the context of the Association's flagship annual congress. Unlike *plaNext*, which is primarily oriented toward early-career scholars, *Transactions* provides a space for the more established segments of the planning community to share the results of their work. In so doing, the journal serves a strategic function: it helps to preserve and valorise the intellectual output of the various activities organised in the framework of AESOP—from its annual congresses to the thematic groups' meetings—translating what would otherwise remain as ephemeral presentations into citable and widely available knowledge products. Importantly, *Transactions* reflects the diversity of the AESOP community, both in terms of geographical representation and disciplinary approach. It embraces conceptual and empirical work, and reflects a wide spectrum of planning cultures, offering a venue where pluralism, openness, and critical reflection can thrive (Davidoff, 1965).

The booklet series, launched under the title *Conversations in Planning Theory and Practice*, represents yet another dimension of AESOP's publication strategy. Designed as a more flexible outlet, the booklets allow for a dialogic approach that fall outside the conventional boundaries of journal articles. More in detail, they aim to document conversations between two generations of scholars about theories, ideas, concepts and practices that matter in planning in an inviting and explanatory way that allows the readers to engage with the discussion easily. In so doing, the booklets serve as a bridge between academic publishing and community engagement, offering a space where ideas can be explored in a less formal and more conversational tone, where theory and practice can meet, and where planning scholars can reflect collectively on shared challenges. At the same time, their academic rigour is ensured by the blind peer-review process, and every time they host comments by senior scholars that highlights parts of their work in a manner that helps to elaborate on the essence of the conversation in knowledge creation.

Together, these three channels—*plaNext*, *Transactions* and the booklets—compose a robust and diversified dissemination platform. Each has its own editorial identity and operational logic, but they are united by a shared commitment to open access, internationalism, and scholarly excellence. They also reflect AESOP's longstanding attention to different formats and audiences, from students and early-career researchers to senior academics and practitioners.

Toward an integrated infrastructure: the AESOP Digital Archive

In 2025, AESOP launched its new Digital Archive, a publicly accessible online repository designed to collect, preserve, and disseminate the intellectual output of the AESOP community. The Archive represents a fundamental step toward an integrated and sustainable knowledge infrastructure, one that brings together publications, presentations, teaching materials and multimedia content under a coherent and open-access framework. It is both a technological and a political project: technological in the sense that it provides the tools and standards for long-term digital preservation and discoverability; political in that it embodies AESOP's commitment to open science, transparency, and equitable access to knowledge.

The Digital Archive was conceived not as a competitor to formal publishing venues, but as their complement. It hosts working papers, conference proceedings, grey literature, and other outputs that do not necessarily find space in peer-reviewed journals but are of significant value to the planning community. It also supports the dissemination of other types of knowledge and materials, fostering the transfer of information and capacity building. In time, the Archive is

expected to evolve into a comprehensive portal that supports metadata integration, DOI attribution, and cross-linking with other databases and platforms. Its alignment with European and international standards ensures its interoperability and long-term sustainability. Within this infrastructure, *plaNext*, *Transactions*, and the booklet series find new resonance. The Archive allows for enhanced visibility of the published content, better indexing, and easier access by researchers, students, and practitioners. It also enables new forms of engagement: thematic curation, cross-referencing, digital exhibitions etc. By anchoring its publishing activities within the Archive, AESOP is not only improving the circulation of knowledge but also rethinking the very function of academic publishing. The Archive foregrounds the idea that knowledge production is a continuous, collective, and open-ended process—one that benefits from transparency, accessibility, and dialogue.

More broadly, the Archive reflects the shift from a publication-centred to a platform-centred approach. Instead of seeing journals, booklets, or proceedings as discrete entities, AESOP is now embracing a more systemic vision. This vision recognises the multiplicity of formats, audiences, and temporalities involved in knowledge production (Scott et al., 2016). It acknowledges the need for interoperability, reuse, and accessibility. And it commits to building a resilient infrastructure that can support the planning community in the face of accelerating social, environmental, and technological change.

Conclusion: Looking ahead

As we celebrate the Scopus indexing of *plaNext*, we should also take the opportunity to reflect on how far the AESOP publishing platform has come and, more importantly, where it is heading. The success of *plaNext* is a testament to the vitality of AESOP's community, its commitment to emerging scholarship, and its capacity to evolve. But it is also a reminder of the responsibilities that come with visibility and recognition. Strengthening *plaNext* means investing in editorial quality, mentoring, international reach, and innovation. It means ensuring that the journal consolidates as a beacon for next-generation planning, grounded in excellence and open to experimentation.

As mentioned above, to achieve these results AESOP has been investing in integration. The coexistence of *plaNext*, *Transactions*, the booklet series and the Digital Archive all became part of a shared and converging agenda. By connecting these initiatives technically and intellectually, the Association is building a knowledge infrastructure that reflects its plural identity, its pedagogical mission, and its social responsibility. This is not only a matter of scholarly dissemination; it is a contribution to a more just, open, and collaborative culture of planning.

In this spirit, the future of *plaNext* is indeed bright. But even more promising is the future of the AESOP publishing platform as a whole. Rooted in values, responsive to change, and committed to the next generation of planners and researchers, it stands as a model for what academic publishing can and should be in the years to come.

References

Davidoff, P. (1965). Advocacy and pluralism in planning. *Journal of the American Institute of Planners*, 31(4), 331–338. https://doi.org/10.1080/01944366508978187

Geppert, A., & Cotella, G. (2010). *Planning Education No. 2. Quality Issues in a Consolidating European Higher Education Area*. Leuven: AESOP. Available at: https://eprints.aesop-planning.eu/collections/d2b0401c-558c-4494-bcac-8331783a023b

Scott, P., Gallacher, J., & Parry, G. (Eds.). (2016). *New languages and landscapes of higher education*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Open Access Journal

Editorial: *plaNext* and planning in transition (2015–2025)

Sıla Ceren Varış Husar
Slovak University of Technology in Bratislava, Slovakia
Corresponding author: silaceren.varis@gmail.com

Elisa (Lizzy) Privitera
University of Toronto Scarborough, Canada

 ISSN 2468-0648.

Please cite as: Varış Husar, S. C., & Privitera, E. (2025). Editorial: *plaNext* and planning in transition (2015–2025). *plaNext – Next Generation Planning*, 15, 13–17. https://doi.org/10.24306/plnxt/114

Open Access Journal

When *plaNext* first emerged in 2015, it was born out of a decision that the field of spatial planning needed a dedicated platform for emerging scholars who would highlight new voices. Ten years later, the world we plan for has shifted significantly, and so has our journal.

The purpose of this special issue "*plaNext* in Transition 2015–2025" is to reflect on the journal's evolution over the past decade and to envision its future trajectory for the next ten years. It marks a moment of reflection and reimagination. Over the past decade, *plaNext* has accompanied and often anticipated momentous changes: the climate emergency transitioning from future threat to present crisis, new movements for social justice and spatial equity gaining visibility, digitalization and AI altering how we imagine urban futures, and an increasingly interconnected yet still fractured global planning discourse. We thought that it would be interesting to see how *plaNext* has evolved over the last decade, and to reflect on the next decade for the journal, especially as the name of the journal implies to "plan" what is coming "next" as in "next generation of planners and planning as a discipline". This special issue brings together contributions on both editorial developments and future directions, as well as on current planning debates, challenges, and emerging trends.

In this special issue, we have gathered contributions that do more than revisit old debates; they reinterpret them in light of today's urgencies. The works presented here speak to transitions in pedagogy, in politics, and in planetary boundaries while asking critical questions about what it means to plan "for the next generation" of planners, i.e., early career scholars, and the next generation of planning, i.e., the evolving nature of the discipline in an era where intergenerational justice is no longer a philosophical ideal but an existential imperative.

At its core, *plaNext* has always stood for more than just a publication platform: it is a community of early career thinkers, practitioners, and scholars navigating the edges of what planning can and should be. As we enter our second decade, we reaffirm our commitment to fostering critical, inclusive and experimental approaches to planning knowledge and practice.

The issue opens with a foreword by **Giancarlo Cotella**, current **Secretary General of the Association of European Schools of Planning (AESOP)** and once a representative of the Young Academics (YA) network, where the seeds of *plaNext* were first sown. His reflections provide a deeply personal yet institutional narrative of the reciprocal relationship between *plaNext* and AESOP, revealing how the journal has functioned not just as a publication outlet but as a living laboratory for emerging academic voices in Europe and beyond.

This moment of transition also introduces **Asma Mehan** as **the new Editor in Chief**. In her opening editorial note, Mehan shares a compelling vision for the next decade of *plaNext*. A vision that embraces interdisciplinarity, planetary-scale thinking, engagement with justice and diverse planning. Her ambition is clear: to extend *plaNext*'s reach across boundaries, disciplinary, geographic and linguistic, while keeping its heart anchored in the values of critical thinking, justice and collective learning. She also points to potential future developments and areas of interest on the horizon of planning and of *plaNext*, including climate-related themes and the integration of emerging technologies.

Following this, we honor the exceptional dedication of **the founding Editor in Chief**, **Feras Hammami**, whose decade-long leadership, along with fellow co-founders and editorial board members, was instrumental in shaping *plaNext*'s open-access identity, its commitment to academic mentorship, and its transdisciplinary ethos. Feras' contribution addresses the current challenge of publishing ethically in a world where knowledge production is increasingly shaped by human rights violations, social inequalities, colonial legacies and systemic

exclusions. In doing so, his handover goes beyond disciplinary or editorial development; it is also a handover of the values that *plaNext* has embodied over time and should remain committed to in the future.

This special issue for *plaNext*'s tenth anniversary includes commemorative essays from two of our key contributors: **Simone Tulumello** and **Batoul Ibrahim**. Tulumello's work, **"For a dialectic of planning pasts and futures: Theoretical courses and recourses in conversation with Patsy Healey"** challenges planning theory's static relationship with time, advocating for a more dynamic, "open, experimental" engagement. He draws on his collaborative experience with the late Patsy Healey, urging a shift away from a rigid, modernist view. Simultaneously, Ibrahim's essay, **"Grounded futures: A decade of planning through humanitarian and Southern lenses"** traces *plaNext*'s evolution as a critical platform, particularly in humanitarian and Global South contexts. She highlights how the journal has centered community agency, participatory methods and reparative justice, moving the discourse toward inclusion, ethics and contextual sensitivity. She unfolds how the cross-cutting skills developed through editorial work can support career pathways both within and, especially, beyond academia, particularly in industry and the humanitarian sector. Together, these pieces serve as a dual reflection on *plaNext*'s journey, showing its role in not only broadening planning's theoretical geography but also deepening its ethical engagement with the real-world challenges faced by communities globally.

The following three contributions are dedicated to tracing the achievements, innovations, and challenges *plaNext* has faced over its ten years of activity. Two of these contributions approach this reflection through the perspectives and accounts of those who have been directly involved in the journal's editorial work over the years. They feature conversations between old and new editorial boards, presented in a more experimental, dialog-based format. Both pieces offer a unique perspective on the journal's journey.

The first contribution, **"Bridging generations: A decade of open peer review and collective knowledge-building in planning scholarship through *plaNext*"** reflects on *plaNext*'s foundation in open peer review and how this principle has cultivated a mentorship-driven, collaborative publishing environment. Now, as the journal enters a new phase with its Scopus indexing, this dialogue explores the crucial balance between maintaining its original mission and navigating new institutional expectations for visibility and sustainability. The second piece, **"Empowering scholarship: Young researcher-led journals as spaces for learning, envisioning, and experimenting with alternatives,"** looks into the unique role of young researcher-led journals as spaces for learning and experimentation. It also highlights how *plaNext* has provided a supportive platform that challenges the competitive norms of academic publishing, with its open peer-review process serving as an emblematic example. Finally, it reveals how the diverse skills gained through editorial work (from upholding ethical standards to managing complex responsibilities) are highly transferable, supporting career pathways both within and beyond academia.

These two just-mentioned contributions, together with Feras's piece, show how, from its earliest calls for papers to building a rigorous peer-review structure and indexing recognition, this team transformed an experimental initiative into a trusted scholarly platform. Their efforts were not simply editorial but infrastructural: they built the foundation upon which new generations now stand.

Finally, the third contribution, titled "**Echoes of a decade in the *plaNext – Next Generation Planning* journal and the road ahead**" provides a comprehensive retrospective of the

journal's scholarly output and presents a set of strategic recommendations for the future. By qualitatively and quantitatively assessing the journal's outreach and capturing insights on the contemporary publishing system, this piece positions *plaNext* as a distinctive, forward-looking model committed to empowering the next generation of planning scholars. Together, these contributions offer a rich, multifaceted narrative of *plaNext*'s past, present, and future, affirming its role as a vital community for critical thought and practice.

This special issue is also enriched by the voices of early-career and senior planning scholars, who offer fresh and forward-thinking perspectives on the evolving content of planning discourse, the broader contexts shaping it, and its pedagogies. The last section of the volume demonstrates that planning has always been an evolving discipline, and today's rapidly changing realities demand that it continues to adapt to emerging needs and challenges. *plaNext* can serve as a platform to further discuss and develop these new directions in planning.

We would like to extend our sincere thanks to **Peter Ache**, who contributes a timely and thought-provoking piece on Artificial Intelligence and the planning task, drawing from the ongoing work of the AESOP Urban Futures Thematic Group. Ache's essay anchors the journal in a broader dialogue on technological transformations and invites readers to consider how critical planning must adapt—not only methodologically but ethically—to the accelerating influence of digital systems on urban futures.

Secondly, the article by **Ender Peker** argues for the foundational role of urban design in planning education, highlighting its unique ability to cultivate spatial, analytical, and collaborative skills. It identifies six key contributions, from studio-based learning to engaging with public needs, that help students critically analyze and shape the built environment. We would like to thank Ender for his endless support and efforts for *plaNext*. We also commend his contributions to the pedagogies and research of the planning field.

Thirdly, the paper by **Lizzy Privitera** argues that, in the current context of polycrisis, planning should strive to be critical, environmental, just, and action oriented. She offers insights for future developments in planning theory and debate, drawing on emerging critical disciplines. The essay explores the extent to which these approaches have already been incorporated into planning studies and practices, the added value of integrating their critical tools, and, in particular, the potential for urban planners and policymakers to engage in spatial and practical experimentation with such provocative concepts.

Alongside these, the issue proudly features emerging scholarly voices that reaffirm *plaNext*'s original mission: to support and elevate the work of young academics. **Alberto Bortolotti**'s piece on "Financialization and deterritorialization in the Milanese major urban development project" offers a compelling critique of contemporary urban governance through the lens of finance capital and spatial displacement. Likewise, **Lorenzo Stefano Iannizzotto and Alexandra Paio**'s contribution titled "Rethinking the In-Between: Designing with a socio-ecological approach to activate the potential of Terrain Vague spaces" brings to our attention the value of marginal and abandoned urban spaces, such as wastelands and brownfields, which lie in their potential to be transformed into sustainable and resilient environments rich in biodiversity. The authors also provide some indicative strategies for analyzing and designing Terrain Vague spaces according to a socio-ecological perspective. These contributions not only expand the thematic scope of the issue but also signal the journal's continued commitment to publishing bold, grounded and analytically rich debates by emerging voices.

Open Access Journal

This culminating volume offers a compelling retrospective on the first decade of *plaNext*'s vibrant history, documenting its trajectory from the inception to the current status. It stands as a testament to the power of a collective endeavor, one skillfully led by early career researchers who, through effective peer-to-peer collaboration and sensible engagement with senior scholars, forged an original platform. This platform is distinguished by its intellectual and methodological openness, fostering an environment conducive to the uptake of fresh ideas in both scholarly content and editorial practice.

The volume's very structure and content embody this self-reflexive commitment, mirroring the original editorial principles of its members. Beyond merely celebrating past achievements and milestones, this transitional period marks a new chapter characterized by the dedication of the editorial board to not only sustaining but also intensifying the foundational spirit of openness, experimentation, and collaborative intellectual enterprise in the years ahead, thereby ensuring *plaNext* remains at the forefront of the planning discipline.

Open Access Journal

plaNext in transition: A decade of young academic publishing in planning (2015–2025) – Insights and futures

Asma Mehan
Editor in Chief of *plaNext – Next Generation Planning*
Architectural Humanities and Urbanism Lab (AHU_Lab), Huckabee College of Architecture, Texas Tech University, USA
asma.mehan@ttu.edu

This article reflects on the ten-year journey of *plaNext – Next Generation Planning*, an open-access, peer-reviewed journal initiated by the AESOP Young Academics Network (AESOP-YAN). First published in 2015, *plaNext* has served as a platform for early-career researchers to engage in planning debates, publish their work, and foster professional development. As the journal approaches its tenth anniversary, this reflection examines its history, legacy, and future directions, highlighting its role in promoting inclusive, critical, and innovative scholarship in the field of planning. Over the past decade, *plaNext* has evolved into a dynamic forum that publishes diverse contributions, fosters international dialogues, and challenges conventional planning paradigms. The journal's commitment to promoting interdisciplinary dialogues is evident in its eclectic range of published works, encompassing empirical research, theoretical discussions, innovative methodologies, and critical case studies. This breadth reflects *plaNext*'s mission to serve as a conduit for creative and socially responsive planning research. As the journal evolved, it remained steadfast in its dedication to nurturing the professional development of young academics by providing opportunities for early-career researchers to engage in editorial processes, peer review, and scholarly debates. As *plaNext* transitions to a new editorial board, this article offers a comprehensive overview of its evolution and impact. Drawing on the journal's trajectory and broader shifts in planning scholarship, the discussion highlights the critical role of platforms like *plaNext* in shaping the discipline's future.

Keywords: spatial planning; inclusive research; emerging scholars publishing; interdisciplinary planning futures; editorial transition

Please cite as: Mehan, A. (2025). *plaNext* in transition: A decade of young academic publishing in planning (2015–2025) – Insights and futures. *plaNext – Next Generation Planning*, 15, 18–24.
https://doi.org/10.24306/plnxt/109

Open Access Journal

Introduction

In 2015, the AESOP Young Academics Network (YAN) started a cool project called *plaNext – Next Generation Planning*. The idea was to create a space for early-career researchers to share their work and engage in essential planning discussions (Miraftab, 2009; Roy, 2005). This project kicked off because people recognised the importance of fostering communication. This work highlights a significant need for a more open and inclusive method of communication among various fields within the planning community (Tulumello, 2016). Fast forward to today, and *plaNext* has become a lively platform that does more than just publish various articles. It has become a space where people worldwide can come together and discuss new ideas while questioning traditional views on planning (Mehan, 2025a; 2025b; 2025c; Varış Husar et al., 2025, 2023; Watson, 2009; Yiftachel, 2006). One of the things that sets the journal apart is its commitment to open access, making it easier for people to read and share work while giving a voice to those who might not usually be heard. This whole setup has helped spark thoughtful conversations around urban and regional planning.

This article examines the growth and impact of *plaNext* as it prepares for a change in its editorial board. It reflects the path the journal has followed while also considering how the field of planning research is evolving as a whole. It's clear that platforms like *plaNext* are taking an essential role in shaping the future of planning.

My past work examines the intersection of urban planning with social movements and cultural narratives. I've pushed the idea that we must include everyone when planning urban spaces. This philosophy aligns perfectly with what *plaNext* aims to do—serve as a bridge for innovative research and respond to social issues. As *plaNext* enters its second decade, it remains true to its core principles while adapting to the changes in the academic publishing world. The journal continues to focus on creating a welcoming space for new voices, encouraging research across diverse fields, and addressing pressing global issues through informed planning discussions.

Origins and vision

plaNext was founded by AESOP's Young Academics Network in 2013 to provide an open-access, peer-reviewed platform where early-career planners could publish without fees and challenge dominant Eurocentric planning narratives. The first issue[1] published in 2015, "Cities that Talk", established the journal's focus on inclusion, equality, and participatory urbanism. From the outset, *plaNext* committed to amplifying diverse voices—especially from the Global South—and nurturing emerging researchers through fair review processes, editorial opportunities, and community engagement (Mehan and Dominguez, 2024).

Over the past decade, *plaNext* has published 14 volumes addressing critical themes in contemporary planning. Volume 11[2] (2021) reframed planning theory through the lens of the Global South, Volume 13[3] (2023) explored human well-being and community dynamics, and Volume 14[4] (2024–2025) examined social mobilisations in times of crisis. By spotlighting grassroots movements, southern epistemologies, and resilience planning, *plaNext* has established itself as a dynamic forum for critical, socially attentive planning scholarship.

[1] https://journals.aesop-planning.eu/index.php/planext/issue/view/1
[2] https://journals.aesop-planning.eu/index.php/planext/issue/view/11
[3] https://journals.aesop-planning.eu/index.php/planext/issue/view/17
[4] https://journals.aesop-planning.eu/index.php/planext/issue/view/19

Open Access Journal

Impact and recognition

Since it started, *plaNext – Next Generation Planning* has steadily made a name for itself in the academic world, showing its dedication to quality, inclusivity, and fresh ideas in planning research. One of its significant achievements came in February 2025 when *plaNext* was accepted into Scopus, one of the best-known and most trusted databases for academic studies. Getting into Scopus not only helps more people find the journal but also demonstrates that it matters and makes a real contribution to today's conversations about planning.

What's compelling about this journal is that it provides open access and doesn't charge publications' fees. This means that researchers from all over—regardless of their location or financial situation—can share their work and contribute to academic debates. This concept aligns with the growing global effort to make academic publishing more equitable and accessible to everyone. The folks behind *plaNext* like to focus on special, themed issues that examine essential topics in planning. For example, in Volume 14, titled "Social Mobilisations and Planning through Crises," the journal digs into how neoliberal urban planning interacts with the challenges of global crises (Rossini et al., 2024). These themed issues have transformed the journal into a trusted platform for insightful discussions and fresh perspectives.

The influence of *plaNext* extends beyond this point. It's got a lively mix of authors from around the world, including newcomers to research and seasoned experts. This mix fosters a vibrant exchange of ideas, methods, and experiences, which helps push planning theory and practice forward (Kawachi & Berkman, 2001; Kiers, de la Peña, & Napawan, 2020; Tahar et al., 2023; Kozlowski et al., 2020). It's exciting to think about how such diversity can lead to new ways of seeing and solving problems in planning.

Challenges and opportunities

Over the last ten years, *plaNext* has been working diligently to learn about the complicated world of academic publishing. Like many scholarly journals, it has faced common challenges but has also discovered exciting opportunities for growth and innovation.

One significant challenge has been maintaining rigorous peer-review standards while handling an ever-increasing number of submissions. As more researchers seek to publish their work, finding enough qualified reviewers has become increasingly challenging. The difficulty often leads to concerns about whether the reviews are of sufficient quality and completed on time. This struggle highlights a broader issue in academic publishing, characterised by an insufficient number of reviewers to meet the demand (Open Publishing, 2021). To address this, we explored ideas such as open and collaborative reviews, which could help make the entire process more transparent and democratic for all parties involved.

Another critical issue is ensuring the journal has diverse contributors and editorial board members. Research shows that certain groups, like women, queer people, visible and invisible minorities from the Global South, and those just starting their careers, are often not well-represented in scholarly publishing (INASP, 2016). To combat this, *plaNext* has been actively working to diversify its editorial board and contributor pool. They're implementing inclusive policies and running outreach programs to connect with underrepresented communities, a significant step toward making publishing more accessible to everyone.

The journal's commitment to open access presents its set of challenges. While this model makes research more accessible to anyone, it also means that the journal must identify ways

to operate financially without charging authors for processing their articles. This process requires support from institutions (Fainstein, 2010; Flyvbjerg, 2001; Hammami, 2016; Healey, 1997). Crucially, *plaNext* has remained independent of commercial publishers thanks to support from AESOP, which provides a modest annual grant, which, together with the journal's nonprofit ethos, alleviates financial pressure and enables the journal to offer completely free publishing and access. This project advocates for sustainable publishing models driven by the community, which could ultimately benefit them in the long run (COPIM, 2023).

Despite these challenges, some real opportunities are on the horizon, especially when it comes to working across different fields. By building partnerships that span various disciplines and geographical areas, *plaNext* has enriched its content and reached a broader audience. Interdisciplinary research is gaining more recognition for its ability to tackle complex societal issues, and *plaNext* has made it a point to be a platform that promotes these collaborative approaches (Rossini et al., 2024; Mehan, 2024a, 2024b, 2023).

Additionally, the journal is embracing digital technologies to enhance its publication process. Shifting from traditional print to digital formats has made it easier to share research with a broader audience and engage with them more effectively. Using new publishing tools and platforms, *plaNext* is continuously adapting to keep up with the fast-paced changes in academic publishing (INASP, 2016; Mehan, 2022). All these proactive strategies demonstrate *plaNext*'s commitment to evolving and staying relevant in the planning field, pushing boundaries while navigating challenges.

Future directions

As *plaNext – Next Generation Planning* enters its second decade, the journal is poised to advance a research agenda centered on equity, sustainability, and innovation. Future issues will foreground climate resilience, urban inequality, and the integration of emerging technologies—such as artificial intelligence and big data—into participatory governance frameworks. With the Editor in Chief's knowledge in social and environmental justice and different fields of urban studies, *plaNext* wants to gather articles that combine important ideas with real-world solutions, making it a top place for research focused on justice in planning.

Moreover, the Editor in Chief's scholarly vision—grounded in decolonial perspectives, community engagement, and global epistemic diversity—offers a guiding ethos for the journal's evolution. By incorporating a brief editorial reflection on this vision, *plaNext* can affirm its identity not only as an academic publication but also as a dynamic, values-driven forum. Such a statement, modelled after the personal yet academically grounded style seen in previous editorials, will inspire both contributors and readers, reinforcing the journal's mission as it advances into its next decade. The emerging critical expertise in socio-environmental justice and interdisciplinary urbanism will guide the commissioning of work that pairs rigorous theoretical critique with practical, socially responsive planning interventions.

A significant theme for the journal is the impact of climate change on cities and regions. Given the profound effects of climate change, *plaNext* is committed to disseminating research that explores strategies for cities to adapt, maintain resilience, and promote sustainable development. This approach aligns with the demands of many academics, who seek research that goes beyond theory and delves into the practical aspects of the climate crisis, as well as its impact on society and the environment. At the same time, *plaNext* wants to address urban inequality in relation to planning. It's essential to examine how planning can help reduce social gaps or, ironically, if it makes those gaps wider, especially as cities grow rapidly and the economy shifts. By focusing on fairness and justice, the journal aims to contribute to the

development of planning methods that are more inclusive and responsive to the needs of all individuals.

We also can't ignore the tech side of things. With technological changes, planners today face both new opportunities and tricky challenges. *plaNext* examines the impact of artificial intelligence and big data on planning strategies. The journal is open to discussions that weigh the pros and cons of these tech advancements in making planning more participatory, improving how we manage cities, and tackling complex spatial issues. To tackle these urban challenges effectively, *plaNext* believes in bringing together ideas from various fields. Whether it's sociology, environmental science, or public health, the journal aims to integrate these perspectives to enrich the discussion surrounding planning and development. It's essential to draw on diverse perspectives to deal with the complexity of today's urban issues and develop innovative solutions. Lastly, *plaNext* is all about hearing from diverse voices in planning debates. The journal seeks to feature work from lesser-known regions and communities to broaden the pool of ideas and perspectives in planning. By encouraging various viewpoints, *plaNext* aims to support a global discussion that is both critical and inclusive in the world of planning scholarship. The journal strives to make planning knowledge accessible to all and reflect the diverse experiences of communities worldwide.

Conclusion

Over the last ten years, *plaNext – Next Generation Planning* has become an essential platform for new scholars looking to make their mark in the planning world. It focuses on being open to everyone, encouraging diverse opinions, and promoting new ideas. This journal has made significant contributions to the subject by ensuring that diverse voices are heard and sparking conversations across other areas of study. One of the things that sets *plaNext* apart is its commitment to open-access publishing. They don't charge fees for articles, making it easier for people from all backgrounds to share their research and connect with global audiences. The initiative is part of a bigger trend that aims for fairer and more open academic publishing. Another exciting development is that *plaNext* has recently been added to Scopus, a well-known database that helps people search for research articles. This inclusion indicates that the journal is gaining recognition and is vital for today's planning discussions. Looking ahead, as *plaNext* enters its next chapter, it will keep focusing on fostering lively and impactful research in planning. By remaining open to new ideas, supporting projects that span multiple disciplines, and upholding its commitment to inclusivity, the journal is well-positioned to help shape the future of planning theory and practice.

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the editors of the plaNext Special Issue "Celebrating 10 Years of Planning for the Next Generation"—Lizzy Privitera and Sıla Ceren Varış Husar—for their thoughtful editorial guidance and dedication. Their collaborative spirit and critical insight greatly enriched the development of this contribution. I am grateful to Pavel Grabalov, managing editor of *plaNext* journal, for his great comments during the copy-editing process. It has been a privilege to be part of this milestone publication.

References

COPIM. (2023). *Community-led Open Publication Infrastructures for Monographs*. https://copim.ac.uk/
Fainstein, S. S. (2010). *The just city*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Flyvbjerg, B. (2001). *Making social science matter: Why social inquiry fails and how it can succeed again*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Hammami, F. (2016). plaNext: New ideas and perspectives on planning. *plaNext – Next Generation Planning*, 2, 6–8. https://doi.org/10.24306/plnxt.2016.02.001
Healey, P. (1997). *Collaborative planning: Shaping places in fragmented societies*. Basingstoke: Macmillan International Higher Education.
INASP. (2016). To address geographical diversity in peer review we need to include southern voices. https://blog.inasp.info/address-geographical-diversity-peer-review-include-southern-voices/
Kawachi, I., & Berkman, L. F. (2001). Social ties and mental health. *Journal of Urban Health*, 78(3), 458–467. https://doi.org/10.1093/jurban/78.3.458
Kiers, A. H., de la Peña, D., & Napawan, N. C. (2020). Future directions—Engaged scholarship and the climate crisis. *Land*, 9(9), 304. https://doi.org/10.3390/land9090304
Kozlowski, M., Mehan, A., & Nawratek, K. (2020). Kuala Lumpur: Community, Infrastructure and Urban Inclusivity (1st ed.). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315462417
Mehan, A. (2022). *Tehran: From sacred to radical*. Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge.
Mehan, A. (2023). Re-narrating radical cities over time and through space: Imagining urban activism through critical pedagogical practices. *Architecture*, 3(1), 92–103. https://doi.org/10.3390/architecture3010006
Mehan, A. (2024a). *The affective agency of public space: Social inclusion and community cohesion*. Berlin and Boston: De Gruyter. https://doi.org/10.1515/9783111035642
Mehan, A. (2024b). Decolonizing architectural pedagogy: radical cities over time and through space. In *Educational Research and the Question (s) of Time* (pp. 387-400). Singapore: Springer Nature Singapore. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-97-3418-4_21
Mehan, A., & Dominguez, N. (2024). Interdisciplinary urban interventions: Fostering social justice through collaborative research-led design in architectural education. *Architecture*, 4(4), 59. https://doi.org/10.3390/architecture4040059
Mehan, A. (2025a). Adaptive reuse as a catalyst for post-2030 urban sustainability: Rethinking industrial heritage beyond the SDGs. *Discover Sustainability*, 6, 598. https://doi.org/10.1007/s43621-025-01462-9
Mehan, A. (2025b). Reimagining post-industrial landscapes through the lens of sustainable development. *AGATHÓN | International Journal of Architecture, Art and Design*, 17, 120–129. https://doi.org/10.69143/2464-9309/1772025
Mehan, A. (Ed.). (2025c). *After Oil: A Comparative Analysis of Oil Heritage, Urban Transformations, and Resilience Paradigms*. Springer Nature. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-92188-9
Miraftab, F. (2009). Insurgent planning: Situating radical planning in the Global South. *Planning Theory*, 8(1), 32–50. https://doi.org/10.1177/1473095208099297
Open Publishing. (2021). Peer review in academic publishing: Challenges in achieving the ideal. https://open-publishing.org/journals/index.php/jutlp/article/view/602
Rossini, L., Gall, T., & Privitera, E. (2024). Editorial: Social mobilisations and planning through crises. *plaNext – Next Generation Planning*, 14, 5–10. https://doi.org/10.24306/plnxt/101
Roy, A. (2005). Urban informality: Toward an epistemology of planning. *Journal of the American Planning Association*, 71(2), 147–158. https://doi.org/10.1080/01944360508976689
Tahar, F., Mehan, A., & Nawratek, K. (2023). Spatial reflections on Muslims' segregation in Britain. *Religions*, 14(3), 349. https://doi.org/10.3390/rel14030349

Open Access Journal

Tulumello, S. (2016). Reconsidering neoliberal urban planning in times of crisis: Urban regeneration policy in a 'dense' space in Lisbon. *Urban Geography*, 37(1), 117–140. https://doi.org/10.1080/02723638.2015.1056605

Varış Husar, S. C., Mehan, A., Husar, M., Ceylan-Çalışkan, R., Erkan-Öcek, R., Song, S., & Leemans, S. (2025). Permeability of borders, ideas and spaces: Reimagining Europe's spatial futures from the perspective of new generation of planners. *disP – The Planning Review*, 61(1), 24–40. https://doi.org/10.1080/02513625.2025.2518856

Varış Husar, S. C., Mehan, A., Erkan, R., Gall, T., Allkja, L., Husar, M., & Hendawy, M. (2023). What's next? Some priorities for young planning scholars to tackle tomorrow's complex challenges. *European Planning Studies*, 31(11), 2368–2384. https://doi.org/10.1080/09654313.2023.2218417

Watson, V. (2009). The planned city sweeps the poor away: Urban planning and 21st-century urbanization. *Progress in Planning*, 72(3), 151–193. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.progress.2009.06.002

Yiftachel, O. (2006). Re-engaging planning theory? Towards 'South-Eastern' perspectives. *Planning Theory*, *5*(3), 211–222. https://doi.org/10.1177/1473095206068627

Open Access Journal

Ethical publishing as resistance: Reflections from *plaNext* and the politics of knowledge and space

Feras Hammami
University of Gothenburg, Sweden
feras.hammami@conservation.gu.se

What does it mean to publish ethically in a world where knowledge production is shaped by human rights violations, social inequalities, colonial legacies, and systemic exclusions? This reflection draws on ten years of experience with *plaNext*, an open access journal created by the Young Academics Network of the Association of European Schools of Planning to support early career scholars. It explores how ethical publishing can act as a form of resistance to dominant academic norms, the marginalization of alternative epistemologies, and the politicization of knowledge. Through personal and collective experiences, the article examines *plaNext*'s commitment to academic freedom, equity, decolonisation, and inclusivity, expressed through practices such as voluntary management, half-blind peer review, and a justice-based ethical policy. It also addresses the challenges of sustaining these principles within the constraints of institutional expectations, the publishing industry, and global crises. Ethical publishing, it argues, is not about pretentious neutrality but about taking a principled stance in support of marginalized voices, critical scholarship, and transformative knowledge production. Whether this vision remains viable is an open question that *plaNext* and many other international journals must continue to examine.

Keywords: *plaNext*, ethical publishing, epistemic justice, resistance, academic freedom

Please cite as: Hammami, F. (2025). Ethical publishing as resistance: Reflections from *plaNext* and the politics of knowledge and space. *plaNext – Next Generation Planning*, 15, 25–34.
https://doi.org/10.24306/plnxt/104

Open Access Journal

Introduction

The 2010 Association of European Schools of Planning (AESOP) Young Academics (YA) conference in Prague, themed "Space is Luxury," was more than a scholarly gathering. It marked a moment of intellectual and political awakening for me. It was there that I joined the inspiring YA network and presented a paper, titled "Conservation under Occupation in the Historic City of Nablus." In that work, I explored how cultural heritage in Palestine is not merely a matter of presentation, but a deeply politicized terrain shaped by both settler colonialism and acts of resistance. Cultural heritage, whether embodied in a historic building, landscape, tradition, or a language, is not a static relic of the past. Rather, it is a living medium through which communities orient themselves in space and time, assert identity, and contest erasure.

These early reflections on the politicization of the past and its entanglement with identity and memory would later inspire the theme of the 8th YA conference, "Cities that Talk," held in 2014 at the University of Gothenburg. The theme resonated with a global wave of urban unrest that challenged governments and planning systems across diverse contexts. These included the Arab Spring, which called for democratic reforms and an end to authoritarian regimes, the London Riots, which exposed racial injustice and economic marginalization, anti-austerity protests in Greece and Southern Europe, the Chilean student movement against inequality and privatization, Black Lives Matter's call for racial justice, Nigeria's #EndSARS protests against police brutality, and the Gezi Park protests in Turkey, which resisted the imposition of a singular heritage narrative, and defended the pluralistic memory embedded in Istanbul's urban fabric. These movements, though varied in their origins and demands, shared a common thread: they revealed how urban space is a site of contestation, where planning practices intersect with struggles for justice, recognition, and democratic participation. Many of these themes were explored during the conference and later formed the basis of the first volume of *plaNext*[1], published in 2015.

Now, ten years later, this editorial journey has accumulated a rich archive of experiences, challenges, and reflections. As the *plaNext* editorial board prepared for a transition, we recognised the importance of documenting this legacy. One outcome of that discussion is this special issue, and I am grateful to the current editors for curating this volume that both reflects on the past and looks towards the future of the journal.

This paper is not merely a retrospective on editorial practice. Drawing on my long-standing engagement with the politics of memory and identity in heritage discourse and planning research, it is also a meditation on how memory, both personal and collective, shapes the intellectual and ethical commitments that underpin scholarly publishing. In what follows, I reflect on the principles that guided *plaNext*, the dilemmas we encountered, and the evolving role of academic publishing in a world where neutrality is often neither possible nor desirable.

Scholarly activism

In 2015, together with the inspiring coordination team of YA's network, we founded the *plaNext journal—Next Generation Planning*. I was honoured to be elected as its first Editor in Chief (EiC). From the outset, we approached publication with a critical lens, comparing international journals in terms of their publication policies, audiences, and review mechanisms. Our goal was not simply to create another academic journal, but to transform knowledge production into a tool for equity and inclusion. This was shaped by both personal and collective experiences—particularly the challenges we faced as young scholars trying to access international journals. We were perhaps inspired by Paulo Freire's transformative pedagogy, as we sought to

[1] https://journals.aesop-planning.eu/index.php/planext/issue/view/1

empower ourselves and our peers to gain confidence and find a voice in planning debates. Knowledge production should thus be concepved as a tool for liberation, not oppression (Freire, 2000). Over time, what began as a practical response to exclusion evolved into a form of scholarly activism. We became increasingly concerned not only with what was being published, but also with how, why, and for whom knowledge was being produced.

From the beginning, we committed to managing the journal on a voluntary basis, with no publication fees and a streamlined publication process. This was a deliberate challenge to the dominant academic publishing industry—not only to the commercial publishers who control most high-impact journals, but also to the profit-driven models that create barriers for both readers and authors. We also questioned the prevailing blind peer review system, which we saw as reinforcing exclusionary practices and hidden hierarchies. While we recognized the competitiveness of academic publishing and the experience gap between young and senior scholars, we were particularly concerned about how intimidating the blind review process could be for early-career academics.

To address this, we introduced a half-blind peer review system. In this model, authors' identities were disclosed to reviewers, while reviewers could choose to remain anonymous or not. Many reviewers opted to reveal their names, especially since *plaNext* journal maintained a strict communication policy: all exchanges between authors and reviewers were mediated by the editorial board. This approach fostered a more transparent and constructive review process. Publishing several articles through this model was a refreshing and empowering experience. At some stage, we felt that we were moving beyond the gatekeeping culture of prestige journals, which often rely on high rejection rates to maintain exclusivity. At other stages, we were challenged by the demands of the traditional education and university systems that value publications in indexed journals. We therefore initiated the plans to have *plaNext* indexed by several environments, including Scopus.

Back to the voluntary system of management. One of the challenges that we faced from the beginning of the journal is how to negotiate our unstructured project with the then AESOP's emerging digital platform, InPlanning. While the platform offered a promising environment and valuable support for the publication of *plaNext*, it was also highly structured, bureaucratic, and costly. These conditions conflicted with our core principle of informality and voluntary labour. As doctoral students and postdoctoral researchers, we were navigating intense workloads and uncertain career transitions. Our time was limited and unpredictable, and our communication methods were necessarily informal and adaptive. Eventually, AESOP transitioned away from InPlanning for unrelated reasons, and *plaNext* journal was integrated into the AESOP website. This shift and the continuous support we received from AESOP leadership gave us greater flexibility and space to operate according to our values. Despite the many challenges, the unwavering commitment of the editorial board made our voluntary model not only viable but deeply meaningful. It was a journey marked by both setbacks and successes—but above all, by a shared belief in the transformative power of ethical publishing.

Academic freedom and the ethics of engagement

As part of our broader commitment to scholarly activism, we came to understand that academic publishing is not merely a technical process. It is deeply ethical and inherently political. This realization shaped our vision for *plaNext*, which we articulated as follows: "*plaNext* provides prospective authors with an opportunity to engage their ideas in international planning debates, as well as to make their research available to the wider planning audience.[2]"

[2] https://journals.aesop-planning.eu/index.php/planext/index

Open Access Journal

At the heart of this vision lies the principle of academic freedom. This refers not only to the right to speak, but also to the right to be heard (Bacevic, 2021). This is especially critical for scholars whose work challenges dominant geopolitical narratives or emerges from contexts of marginalisation. In an era when universities face multiple crises, defending academic freedom has become more urgent than ever. Within the context of *plaNext*, we interpreted this freedom as the right of early-career scholars to participate meaningfully in international planning debates, particularly in a field where Northern paradigms often dominate and depoliticize local knowledge systems.

Although we may not have always framed it explicitly or interpreted uniformly, the editorial board viewed ethical publishing as a means of supporting politically engaged scholarship, even when such work was uncomfortable or controversial. We made conscious efforts to recognize the positionality of authors, the structural inequalities embedded in the publishing industry, and the colonial legacies that continue to shape planning and related disciplines. Scholars working under occupation, in authoritarian regimes, or within underfunded institutions often face censorship, surveillance, or institutional exclusion. Yet their perspectives are essential to understanding the very systems that marginalize them.

At the same time, we took a principled stance against publishing research that functioned as propaganda, particularly from institutions complicit in colonial practices or human rights violations (Allard-Tremblay, 2023). The challenge was always in determining a legitimate and consistent basis for assessing the ethical context of a manuscript. To navigate these complexities and ensure a rigorous foundation for our decisions, we developed an ethical policy grounded in academic freedom and human rights[3]. After many discussions and even external reviews, the policy document developed into a comprehensive framework that outlines the journal's core values and operational principles, emphasizing democracy, human rights, academic integrity, and inclusivity. It is structured around key areas such as editorial responsibilities, authorship, conflicts of interest, data sharing, and ethical oversight. The policy guides decisions on manuscript handling, reviewer selection, and community engagement, with a strong stance against discrimination, bias, and complicity in human rights violations. It also defines clear protocols for complaints, appeals, and post-publication corrections, while promoting transparency, accountability, and respect for intellectual property .

This experience also brought us face to face with a persistent paradox in academic publishing: the expectation that scientific journals remain apolitical, even when they engage with fields that are inherently political. Planning as a discipline is a politically loaded discourse and practice. It is deeply entangled with questions of power, land, governance, justice, and identity. To claim neutrality in such a context is not only misleading, but potentially complicit in reproducing dominant ideologies. Journals are often exposed to what might be called research propaganda, or a scholarship that presents itself as objective or technical while subtly or overtly legitimizing nationalism, settler colonialism, authoritarianism, or other forms of collective identities constructed through structural violence (e.g. Alam, 2024).

In such cases, the role of the editorial board becomes crucial. We are tasked with navigating the fine line between academic freedom and ethical responsibility. But this raises difficult questions. Which political views are acceptable in academic publishing? What competencies should editors have? Should all political positions be treated equally under the banner of free expression? How to distinguish between them and how should we, as editors, deal with work that undermines human rights, erases historical injustices, or perpetuates epistemic violence?

[3] https://journals.aesop-planning.eu/index.php/planext/about

These are not abstract dilemmas. They go to the heart of what it means to uphold academic integrity. If academic freedom is to be meaningful, it must include the freedom to challenge dominant narratives, but it must also be grounded in a commitment to "truth," justice, and accountability. In this sense, neutrality is not the absence of politics but a political position in itself, often one that favors the status quo. As editors, we came to understand that ethical publishing does not mean avoiding politics but rather engaging with it critically and transparently. It means being willing to take a stand when scholarship is used to obscure oppression or legitimize harm, while also creating space for diverse and dissenting voices that are often excluded from mainstream academic discourse.

Certainly, implementing it was not, and it would never be, a straightforward task. Concepts like justice and human rights are usually interpreted differently across contexts. At the same time, we, the editorial board members, engaged in cases using different perspectives and positions. We often found ourselves in lengthy discussions about how to handle ethically problematic submissions. On the one hand, we wanted to support authors in publishing their work. On the other hand, we were committed to upholding our ethical policy. As Santos (2014) reminds us, publishing is embedded in power relations that determine whose knowledge is legitimized and whose is marginalized. Ethical publishing, therefore, must be attentive to what he calls the "politics of representation," especially when dealing with contested geographies and politically sensitive research. In this context, "representation" should not refer to any uncritical distribution of voices and values. It is, however, analytically important to reveal the silenced or even the violent voices.

The challenge was how to sustain these discussions when most of us were already overwhelmed by teaching, research, and the sheer volume of submissions. However, the friendly and respectful environment we cultivated within the *plaNext* editorial board was helpful. Not only in navigating difficult conversations, but also in supporting one another through the practical demands of editorial work. When the review process was delayed due to conflicting reviewer reports, lack of available reviewers, or other logistical issues, members of the editorial board often stepped in to complete reviews themselves. This collective commitment helped us keep the review process moving forward.

In the final years of my tenure, as we prepared to transition to a new editorial team, *plaNext* experienced several bottlenecks. Managing this transition was particularly difficult, given that all editorial work was done voluntarily, often by young academics navigating the demands of PhD studies or the instability of academic careers. During this period, I was also personally and professionally affected by the ongoing genocide in Gaza. While we continued to strive for ethical integrity in our published volumes, witnessing such atrocities unfold in real time made it increasingly difficult to make sense of many established debates on ethics, human rights, and democracy. Like many other international scholars, I felt powerless to intervene and disheartened by the absence of a meaningful response from the global academic and political communities. As a result, reconciling my editorial efforts with the realities of global injustice became increasingly fraught. At times, our work felt urgently necessary, not because it was apolitical, but because it aimed to challenge the illusion of neutrality and to center justice as a guiding principle. At other times, it felt painfully inadequate, a reminder of the limits of academic work in confronting systemic violance.

Engaging platform

Young academics often expressed a desire to continue the conversations initiated at YA conference. Presenters are often allocated generous time to engage in meaningful discussions not only with peers but also with senior academics. With an open and dialogic

atmosphere, participants are encouraged to explore each other's work in depth and build intellectual connections. This has been helpful for many to leave YA conferences with inspiring networks and aspirations for additional discussions.

plaNext emerged as a response to this need. It offered a platform for conference participants to further develop and publish their papers, incorporating feedback received during the event. This process allowed young scholars to refine their arguments and solidify their contributions to the field of planning. It also ensured that valuable research is published after the conference, especially given the challenges many early-career academics face in navigating the publication landscape while managing demanding thesis work.

Each YA conference typically features around forty full paper presentations, organised into thematic sessions. Session chairs were invited to nominate the two strongest papers from each session for potential publication. While this form of recognition was appreciated by many, some experienced young scholars—particularly those under institutional pressure to publish in high-ranking journals—chose to decline the invitation. In such cases, the editorial board extended invitations to other promising papers from the same sessions. It was not uncommon for about half of the invited papers to drop out during the review process due to illness, doctoral workload, or personal circumstances. We often maintained close contact with authors, sending reminders and offering support to re-engage them in the process. This proactive approach helped several authors complete their revisions and successfully publish their work.

Looking back at the process, this also raises important questions about how to balance academic quality with *plaNext*'s commitment to inclusivity and mentorship. Selecting "best papers" may unintentionally reinforces hierarchies. Such a dynamic sits somewhat uneasily with *plaNext*'s broader ethos of supporting early-career scholars in a non-competitive, developmental environment. What alternative models of selection can be developed to protect *plaNext*'s values of inclusion, equity, care, and collective growth is an important question that the new editorial board might need to explore.

As part of its mission to foster dialogue between young and senior academics, *plaNext* also invited keynote speakers from the conference to co-lead the review process and co-author the editorial with members of the conference organizing committee. I had the pleasure of collaborating with Jeffery Hou from the University of Washington for the first volume (Hou & Hammami, 2025), and with Vanessa Watson and Chandrima Mukhopadhyay for volume eleven (Mukhopadhyay & Hammami, with Watson, 2021). It was a rewarding experience, both intellectually and personally, and a valuable opportunity to learn from important scholars in the field. Many other young academics have similarly benefited from *plaNext*, using it to engage in meaningful scholarly conversations and to build professional networks.

Feedback as empowerment

From the very beginning of *plaNext*, one of the core principles guiding the editorial work was the importance of constructive feedback. We recognized that traditional peer review often acts as a gatekeeping mechanism, reinforcing academic hierarchies and excluding non-mainstream scholarship. At *plaNext*, we reimagined peer review as a collaborative and educational process. Feedback was not only a tool for improving manuscripts; it was also a way to build confidence, encourage critical thinking, and support intellectual development. Providing meaningful feedback was not always straightforward. We often debated how much feedback we could realistically offer and how to synthesize reviewer comments into a coherent editorial response.

Over time, we embraced the principle that every submitted manuscript deserved a fair opportunity for review. Rejecting a submission without review, we believed, might contradict

the ethical policy of *plaNext* journal. Rather than lowering standards, we sought to navigate the balance between academic rigor and developmental support. For example, we welcomed work that was politically engaged, methodologically innovative, or grounded in lived experience. At the same time, we remained committed to rejecting propaganda research or submissions that failed to meet basic scholarly integrity.

That said, we also recognized the ethical dilemma posed by a no-rejection policy. In many academic contexts, it is both reasonable and necessary to protect the time and labor of peer reviewers by filtering out submissions that clearly fall outside a journal's scope or quality threshold. At *plaNext*, however, we experimented with a different model. In this, we tried to develop a different editorial engagement prior to peer review. This often involved providing feedback that focus on the potential of papers, specific revisions that advance quality, and encourage resubmission. While this approach was deeply supportive and aligned with our mission, we acknowledge that it may not be scalable or feasible in more conventional or high-volume publishing environments.

This commitment to ethical publishing was particularly important when dealing with politically sensitive or contested topics. We took this responsibility seriously and worked to ensure that our editorial decisions did not reinforce the very hierarchies we aimed to challenge. In this spirit, our pre-review engagement with authors was not only about improving manuscripts but about fostering a more just, dialogical, and inclusive academic culture.

But once again, our work is based on voluntary principles, and the review process was managed manually. Manuscripts were submitted via email, and the review process was coordinated manually by the editorial board. While this system allowed for flexibility and personal engagement, it became increasingly difficult to manage as the journal grew. The workload was shared among board members, and we supported one another through periods of high pressure. When someone was overwhelmed by professional or personal responsibilities, others stepped in to help.

Despite our dedication, there were initiatives we hoped to implement but never fully realized. One of these was to involve the broader YA network more directly in supporting the journal's operations. As a volunteer-run initiative, it was essential to make effective use of the network's resources. For example, we needed to digitize our workflows, develop a communication strategy, create a consistent journal template, and improve language editing support. These goals could have been achieved through closer collaboration with YA members, but unfortunately, we did not manage to formalize that connection.

plaNext recently celebrated the development of a website-based submission system, which helped improve the effectiveness of editorial work and improved the communication between authors and the editorial board. It has taken us some time to familiarise ourselves with the system, and some of us took the responsibility of managing it. In all cases, we should certainly thank authors and reviewers for the patience and trust that *plaNext* editorial board received from them.

Equity, access, and the politics of visibility

As described earlier, *plaNext journal* was created to offer new opportunities for early-career scholars to engage in international planning debates. We also acknowledged that the global academic publishing industry is shaped by deep structural inequalities. These disparities are particularly visible in the marginalization of scholars from the Global South, who often face significant barriers to participation. In our special volume Planning Theories from the Global

South[4] (Mukhopadhyay & Hammami, with Watson, 2021), we aimed to highlight these challenges and bring attention to the intellectual and pedagogical gaps in mainstream planning discourses.

These barriers include language constraints, limited funding, restricted access to scholarly networks, and the epistemic violence of having one's work judged by standards that do not reflect local realities or intellectual traditions. It is troubling to observe how Northern discourses frequently universalize Euro-American urban experiences, sidelining alternative planning epistemologies rooted in indigenous, postcolonial, or conflict-affected contexts. Drawing on Donna Haraway's (1988) concept of "situated knowledges," we envisioned *plaNext* as a space where diverse geographies, epistemologies, and lived experiences could be recognized and valued, particularly those emerging from the Global South and other marginalized communities.

In practice, our ability to realize this vision was limited. We made efforts to diversify our editorial board, reviewer pool, publication topics, and the positionalities of *plaNext* authors. However, these efforts were shaped by the reality that most members of the editorial board and the YA network were based in European universities, due to their affiliation with AESOP. Perhaps this is a question to be explored with AESOP leadership? But we, despite these constraints, remained committed to operating on a voluntary basis, waiving publication fees, and prioritizing accessibility over prestige. We also understood that achieving "equity" in publishing requires more than simply including underrepresented voices. It demands a transformation of the structures, languages, and values that define what is considered legitimate knowledge. As Santos (2014) argues, ethical publishing must involve a process of decolonization. This means going beyond representation to challenge the hierarchies embedded in the publishing system itself. It also requires rethinking peer review, editorial criteria, and even the aesthetics of academic writing.

This work was not without its difficulties. One of the persistent challenges we faced was the lack of institutional innovation in addressing academic exclusion and misconduct. Ethical transformation in academia requires more than enforcing rules. It calls for a fundamental rethinking of the structures that shape academic life. This is why, from its inception, *plaNext* sought to reimagine the publishing process as a space of inclusion, dialogue, and epistemic justice. From submission to review to publication, we aimed to create a platform that not only welcomed diverse voices but also questioned the systems that have historically silenced them.

Towards a justice-based ethics of publishing

Academic publishing can often feel isolating, especially for early-career scholars navigating unfamiliar institutional and intellectual terrain. Within the *plaNext* editorial board, one of the most meaningful conversations we had was about how to reimagine the review and publication process as a community of practice. We saw the half-blind review model not only as a technical alternative but as an opportunity to foster dialogue, collaboration, and mutual learning among authors, reviewers, and editors. This approach encouraged us to think of publishing as a form of "community work," where ethical engagement and collective responsibility guided our communication and decision-making.

Over time, however, external pressures began to shape our internal practices. The growing demand from authors for indexing and the requirement to join Scopus led us to adopt a double-blinded review process. While this shift was necessary for institutional recognition, it also marked a departure from the more dialogic and transparent model we had initially envisioned.

[4] https://journals.aesop-planning.eu/index.php/planext/issue/view/11

In practice, this change might not appear drastic, but it symbolized a deeper tension. Our principles were continually challenged by the structured relations and hierarchial nature of the academic publishing industry.

The ethical dilemmas we encountered during our editorial work at *plaNext* ultimately led to the development of a formal ethical policy. In addition to the core principles of "good research practice," the policy was guided by a commitment to academic integrity, human rights, and the recognition of historical injustices. It was never an easy task to implement those principles and commitments. As EiC, I was responsible for the initial evaluation of submissions prior to peer review. Following the policy, manuscripts reporting on contexts with histories of settler colonialism, colonialism, systematic human rights violations, or high levels of corruption were discussed with the editorial board before any initial decision was made.

Due to my personal and professional experiences with the Israeli settler colonial regime and the documented complicity of Israeli universities in the illegal occupation of Palestine (e.g. Wind, 2024), I recused myself from handling submissions by Israeli academics. I considered submissions that failed to acknowledge or critically engage with the historical and ongoing realities of settler colonialism in Palestine as unsuitable for publication. In line with the principles of the Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions (BDS) movement, which calls for nonviolent pressure on institutions' complicity in human rights violations, I chose to provide my opinion without participating in the publication of any volume that included such a contribution. I held the same critical perspective on manuscripts reporting findings from other contexts of settler colonialism, such as those in South Africa, Australia, Canada, China, and the USA. This editorial stance was grounded in the belief that scholarly work must be accountable to the histories and structures it engages with, particularly when those structures involve dispossession, occupation, or erasure.

These experiences made *plaNext* ethical policy a living document, shaped by the critical cases we encountered and the diverse perspectives within the editorial board. Sometimes, our work became complex and time-consuming. Reaching consensus was not always possible, as each Board member brought their own ethical commitments and lived experiences to the table. Voting among the editorial board was sometimes a solution. But we often returned to the authors with constructive suggestions. It is also worth mentioning here that the *plaNext* ethical policy was not consistently implemented, which is certainly not unique to *plaNext.* This can be explained by different reasons, ranging from being overwhelmed with other academic and family matters to the difficulty in finding consensus to the relative level of bias that editorial board members inevitably hold.

Eventually, ethical publishing, as I came to understand it, is a form of resistance. It is not in opposition to individual authors and institutions—though it might be sometimes so—but in service of more inclusive and accountable scholarly communities. Ethical publishing is also a form of resistance to any attempt that seeks the politicisation of knowledge production.

With the continued support of AESOP leadership, there is now an opportunity to further develop the ethical and justice-oriented principles of *plaNext* as a core part of its identity and publication process. It would be valuable to extend these conversations beyond *plaNext*, engaging the editorial boards of *Transactions*, *Booklet Series*, and other AESOP platforms. Together, these dialogues could help lay a stronger ethical foundation for AESOP's broader scholarly mission.

Looking back, I have gained wonderful relationships and experiences through *plaNext,* including collaboration with young and senior academics, organization of YA conferences and participation in editorial board meetings. All of these have been deeply meaningful. It has been a privilege to work alongside such committed and thoughtful colleagues. Following ten

inspiring years, I want to warmly thank the entire *plaNext* community for the enriching discussions, the friendships, and the shared laughter. I also extend my best wishes to the new editorial board as they carry this work forward, with care, courage, and a continued commitment to justice.

Acknowledgment

Thanks to the reviewers and the editorial board of *plaNext* for their generous invitation, thoughtful feedback, and continued commitment to ethical publishing. Their support has been invaluable in shaping this reflection.

This article was written during a time of profound grief and injustice, as the genocide in Palestine continues to unfold. I write these words with a heavy heart, aware of the limits of academic work in the face of such violence, yet convinced that silence is not an option. I dedicate this contribution to all those who continue to resist erasure and silencing, and to the belief that publishing, too, can be a space for solidarity and justice.

References

Alam, S. (2024). Trends in research integrity concerns and the evolving role of the publisher. *Insights*, 37, Article 13. https://doi.org/10.1629/uksg.663

Allard-Tremblay, Y., & Coburn, E. (2023). The flying heads of settler colonialism; or the ideological erasures of Indigenous peoples in political theorizing. *Political Studies,* 71(2), 359–378. https://doi.org/10.1177/00323217211018127

Bacevic, J. (2021). No such thing as sociological excuses? Performativity, rationality and social scientific expertise in late liberalism. *European Journal of Social Theory*, 24(3), 394–410. https://doi.org/10.1177/13684310211018939

Freire, P. (2000). *Pedagogy of the oppressed* (30th anniversary edition). New York: Continuum. (Original work published in 1970)

Haraway, D. (1988). Situated knowledges: The science question in feminism and the privilege of partial perspective. *Feminist Studies*, 14(3), 575–599. https://doi.org/10.2307/3178066

Hou, J., & Hammami, F. (2015). On the entangled paths of urban resistance, city planning and heritage conservation. *plaNext – Next Generation Planning*, 1, 9–16. https://doi.org/10.24306/plnxt.2015.01.002

Mukhopadhyay, C. & Hammami, F., with Watson, V. (2021) Introduction: Planning theories from ‘southern turn’ to ‘deeply rooted/situated in the South/context’: A project in the making. *plaNext – Next Generation Planning*, 11, 9–25. https://doi.org/10.24306/plnxt/67

Santos, B. de S. (2014). *Epistemologies of the South: Justice against epistemicide.* Boulder: Paradigm.

Wind, M. (2024). *Towers of ivory and steel: How Israeli universities deny Palestinian freedom*. London: Verso books.

Open Access Journal

For a dialectic of planning pasts and futures: Theoretical courses and recourses in conversation with Patsy Healey

Simone Tulumello
Instituto de Ciências Sociais, Universdade de Lisboa, Portugal
simone.tulumello@ics.ulisboa.pt

> New generation scholars live in a very different conceptual world than the generations who began to build 'planning theory' back in the mid-twentieth century [...]. It is a world of multiple empirical referents from across the globe, and of multiple intellectual strands offering new inspirations. Perhaps it would be helpful now and again re-connect these new intellectual possibilities to the history of ideas in our field, wide and open as it is. We would surely find some recurrent concepts, such as 'system', perhaps used in different ways and with different realities in mind, or that new concepts, such as 'resilience', are similar to older ideas about change and transformation. And we would find that many of our current concerns have a long history, including the meaning and uses of the term 'planning'. Maybe the 'new' is never so new as we think, yet the 'old' is never so persistent as we fear (Tulumello & Healey, 2016, p. 7).

In search of inspiration for this essay, I was leafing through the folder of my hard disk dedicated to the preparation of *plaNext*'s volume 3[1] and my email correspondence with Patsy Healey, the guest editor of that volume. Toward the end of one of the working files of the introductory article—a draft prepared by me and edited by Patsy—she added a comment: 'I thought we needed a concluding paragraph—these are my thoughts—maybe you have better ideas!' With some slight reformulation, that paragraph indeed became the concluding one of that editorial—a perfect conclusion to the long path that had brought to *plaNext*'s volume 3. And a perfect opening for this contribution of mine to *plaNext*'s 10-year celebration.

The path that brought to *plaNext* volume 3 began sometime in 2014, when Francesco Lo Piccolo told me that Jean Hillier and Jonathan Metzger were preparing a Festschrift for Patsy Healey's 75th birthday, with the idea of presenting it in Palermo. It would be a nice occasion to bring the AESOP Young Academics (YA) Network conference to Southern Italy, he added. At that time, the yearly conference would be organised directly by the Coordination Team (CT), of which I was a member; and the rest of the CT embraced the idea with enthusiasm. In March 2015, thus, the 9th YA conference 'Differences and Connections: Beyond Universal

 ISSN 2468-0648.

Please cite as: Tulumello, S. (2025). For a dialectic of planning pasts and futures: Theoretical courses and recourses in conversation with Patsy Healey. *plaNext – Next Generation Planning*, 15, 35–39. https://doi.org/10.24306/plnxt/103

[1] https://journals.aesop-planning.eu/index.php/planext/issue/view/3

Theories in Planning, Urban Studies, and Heritage Studies' took place at the University of Palermo. Keynote speakers were, besides Patsy, Jean Hillier, Cornelius Holtorf, Laura Saija and Leonie Sandercock, while John Friedmann led a workshop with Laura Saija on planning research/practice/politics. Having coordinated the conference, I was the member of *plaNext*'s editorial board (which also corresponded with the CT at that time) tasked with leading the preparation of a volume; and we decided to invite Patsy Healey to be the guest editor. After some doubts regarding the commitment, she accepted saying, in an email exchange, 'it will help to keep me in academic mode!'—Patsy was at that time retired and was focusing mostly on advocacy and activism.

Working with Patsy was an incredible experience, not only because, as a post-doc researcher at the very beginning of my career, the opportunity to collaborate with such a 'planning hero' was thrilling; but above all because rarely have I met someone whose brilliance was coupled with such generosity and humility—the formulation of that final paragraph and of the comment that came with it perfectly encapsulates this. But the reason for quoting that paragraph at the beginning of this essay is not just about remembering those years and, with them, Patsy, roughly one year after her death.

That paragraph also perfectly expressed some issues, troubles, and questions that are pretty relevant for a journal like *plaNext* turning 10, that is, for the type of discussion that, I believe, is worth having when thinking of the consolidation of a planning journal by and for early career planners.

The call for the YA conference in Palermo was inspired by what was then a relatively recent attention, in planning theory and practice, on issues of geographical connections and difference—see, e.g., a *Planning Theory* special issue on insurgent planning (Roy, 2009), another in *International Planning Studies* on international comparative planning (Nadin, 2012), or Patsy Healey's (2012) reflections on the transnational flow of planning ideas and practices. While the increasingly tight dialogue between critical urban studies and planning theory—for which the likes of Ananya Roy and Oren Yiftachel had been pivotal—had pushed the latter to (belatedly) engage with matters of (post-)colonialism, and critiques of modernity and universalism, our goal was that of spotting, and addressing, some blind spots 'at the border between analyses of micro-practices of policy-making and critiques of urban trends' (Caruso et al., 2016, p. 220).

Indeed, the papers presented at the conference engaged with: the challenges of generalisation with which (modernist) planning is often fraught; communicative divides that emerge when planning is not attentive to local specificities; the spaces and places that remained at the margins of (planning) theory; the persistent Western-centrism of much planning and heritage policy; and the potentialities for planning education in bridging such divides (see, for the conference report, Caruso et al., 2016). Good news, almost 10 years after, is the fact that those issues, which were quite innovative and marginal by then, have by now become, in a sense, 'mainstream' to planning theory, research, and education.

But while space, in its manifold dimensions of relevance for territorial change and planning policy (variegation, differences, uneven development, travels, flows), has become an obvious point of discussion and contention in planning scholarship, it seems to me that much less is the case with time, which is the main reason for having used that paragraph to open this essay.

In reading some of the articles from volume 3 of *plaNext*, like Meike Levin-Keitel's (2016) discussion of 'systemic constellations' and Aoife Doyle's (2016) review of 'resilience' conversations in planning, Patsy Healey felt the urge to turn the eye to the past to consider

the histories of 'new' concepts that often taste like old wine in new bottles—for another paradigmatic example, see how the smart city has its genealogies in the long history of urban techno-solutionism (e.g. Angelo & Vormann, 2018). The articles by Ignacio Castillo Ulloa (2016) and Cora Fontana (2016), for their part, contributed to the problematisation, in the field of planning research, of ideas about linear progress. Ulloa's Lacanian reflections on the recursive presence of modernist ideas and Fontana's reconstruction of the penetration of neoliberal ideas into slum upgrading suggest that the timeline of planning theory can hardly be described as a progressive advancement toward knowledge. Rather, the history of planning is made of intersecting waves of dominant and alternative ideas, whose hegemony is very much linked with, though not completely determined by, the broader political economy. And those waves of theories tend to overlap in complex ways: for instance, the decline of the hegemony of modernist planning in times of neoliberalisation was followed by the dominance of entrepreneurial urbanism and financialised planning policy, but also by the rise of any number of pressures for opening up the planning field to diverse, insurgent voices (see again Roy, 2009).

Making sense of this, and other, disjunctions calls for a different understanding of time and, for that matter, capitalism; one attuned to recurrencies and repetitions as well as to novelty and conjuncture—Giovanni Arrighi's (2010[1994]) understanding of cycles of capitalist development is a milestone of such a critical attunement. This means opening ourselves to a dialectical lens capable of making sense of history as the result of struggles that never completely close the political, and indeed theoretical, field, rather always opening new fields of contention. Alvaro Buitrago-Sevilla's (2022) history of 'planning against the commons', that is, of the role of planning in commodifying communal resources and practices, is a powerful example of this capacity. By anticipating the conventional 'birth' of (European) planning to the process of British enclosures, Buitrago-Sevilla's detailed history shows how the appropriation of existing commons never actually stopped the capacity for commoning, rather always pushing new communal practices—which would, sooner or later, be appropriated in return. With a different focus, on assetisation and financialisation, the recent book by Maria Kaika and Luca Ruggiero (2024) on class struggle and land in Milan is another example of a renewed attention of spatial scholarship to a less linear, and more dialectical, understanding of time in urban development.

But while critical planning and geographic scholarship have begun to address the past dialectically, much less is the case vis-à-vis the future. For all its courses and recourses, the relation of planning with the future has always been pretty complicated, if not fraught. For a discipline founded on the normative goal of shaping spatial development in the future, and for long time centred on the practice of modelling future needs and designing how to provide for those needs, planning has been recursively accused of having lost sight of that very future: this was, for instance, the core reason that brought Sam Cole (2001) to call for a collaboration of planners and futures scholars; and it was again at the core of a call for a very recent special issue of *Journal of Planning Literature* edited by Tomas Sanchez and Mai Nguyen (2025).

And yet, I would like to suggest here that the problem is less that planning has lost sight of the future, and more how it (still) looks at the future. Despite several decades of problematisation of ideas about linear time and progress in the social sciences and humanities, planning practice and theory are still dominated by an understanding of future as a space for progressive development rather than as an open field for dialectical struggle: 'what if […] planners were asked to reimagine our long-term future[?],' asks the aforementioned call for papers; 'planning has the power to reshape urban environments,' states the theme for AESOP's 2025 congress.

This is a question with which Andrea Pavoni, Lavínia Pereira and I (2025) have recently engaged in a contribution to the special issue of the *Journal of Planning Literature*:

> Planning has always and still is centred on ideas about a progress from a gone past to a non-yet future, its present is supposedly able to produce, within a precise 'ontology of action' that rests on an uncontested relation between planning and acting, making, and doing (idem, p. 50).

Planning theory has, during the last few decades, indeed discussed and problematised issues like public good, expert knowledge or technical expertise, in so doing becoming increasingly attentive to the politics of spatial development—the debates about communicative versus agonistic approaches or the arguments for insurgent planning immediately come to mind. However, very little has been said and done regarding planning's 'ontology of action'. Even the shifts from land use zoning to strategic planning, or from comprehensive to targeted intervention, while changing the scale of at which planning operates, have not really challenged or changed the very idea that planning is about deciding (collectively) on a (desirable) future and working to achieve it—an idea deeply centred on Enlightenment conceptions of future and progress, once again.

If time, rather than linear, is dialectic, then planning should be focused less on 'planning the future' and more on seeking the possible futures that are already in the present and giving them space and possibility. This is, fundamentally, what the project of abolition—with which planning has only incipiently articulated (e.g. Bates, 2018)—is about: rather than offering a precise utopian framework, letting a new system emerge from the dismantling of the previous, oppressive one (cf. Gilmore, 2023). Or, with Harney and Moten (2013, pp. 74–75):

> planning in the undercommons is not an activity, not fishing or dancing or teaching or loving, but the ceaseless experiment with the futurial presence of the forms of life that make such activities possible.

How to reimagine planning as not an activity, but an experiment? As Patsy Healey hinted in that paragraph above, this would probably be easier if we just stopped for a moment and considered the past not as something we are going away from, that is, separated from us and open to analytical capture; but, rather, as a set of experiences and possibilities that are with us in a myriad of different ways, including, importantly, in the form of all those futures that never came to be—say, the futures that were being built in past abolitionist struggles and are an inspiration for present ones. The past and future, in this sense, are always already nested within the present—something that is pretty obvious to many non-Western cosmogonies, with which planning has only rarely engaged. Less than re-envisioning the future, then, it is here and now that we can wrestle with futurity: what we need is a dialectics of, rather than plans for, the future. A journal like *plaNext* turning 10 is the perfect place for this, I believe—but, and I am pretty sure Patsy would have agreed with me, it is not for me to say to new generations how they should engage with this very endeavour.

References

Angelo, H., & Vormann, B. (2018). Long waves of urban reform: Putting the smart city in its place. *City*, 22(5–6), 782–800. https://doi.org/10.1080/13604813.2018.1549850

Arrighi, G. (2010). *The long twentieth century: Money, power and the origins of our times* (Original work published 1994). London: Verso.

Bates, L. K. (Ed.). (2018). Race and spatial imaginary: Planning otherwise. *Planning Theory & Practice*, 19(2), 254–288. https://doi.org/10.1080/14649357.2018.1456816

Buitrago-Sevilla, A. (2022). *Against the commons: A radical history of urban planning*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Open Access Journal

Caruso, N., Hammami, F., Peker, E., Tulumello, S., & Ugur, L. (2016). Differences and connections: Beyond universal theories in planning, urban, and heritage studies. *Urban Research and Practice*, 9(2), 219–224. https://doi.org/10.1080/17535069.2016.1174418

Castillo Ulloa, I. (2016). From apophenia to epiphany: Making planning theory-research-practice co-constitutive. *plaNext – Next Generation Planning*, 3, 16–35. https://doi.org/10.24306/plnxt.2016.03.002

Cole, S. (2001). Dare to dream: Bridging futures into planning. *Journal of the American Planning Association,* 67(4), 373–383. https://doi.org/10.1080/01944360108976246

Doyle, A. (2016). Operationalising resilience within urban planning – Bridging theory and practice. *plaNext – Next Generation Planning*, 3, 101–113. https://doi.org/10.24306/plnxt.2016.03.007

Fontana, C. (2016). Hernando de Soto on land titling: Consensus and criticism. *plaNext – next generation planning*, 3, 36–48. https://doi.org/10.24306/plnxt.2016.03.003

Gilmore, R. W. (2023). *Abolition geography: Essays toward liberation*. London: Verso.

Harney, S., & Moten, F. (2013). *The undercommons: Fugitive planning and Black study*. Wivenhoe: Minor Compositions.

Healey, P. (2012). The universal and the contingent: Some reflections on the transnational flow of planning ideas and practices. *Planning Theory*, 11(2), 188–207. https://doi.org/10.1177/1473095211419333

Kaika, M., & Ruggiero, L. (2024). *Class meets land: The embodied history of land financialization*. Oakland: University of California Press.

Levin-Keitel, M. (2016). Systemic constellations in spatial planning processes: A method to visualise questions of power and cultural peculiarities? *plaNext – Next Generation Planning*, 3, 67–81. https://doi.org/10.24306/plnxt.2016.03.005

Nadin, V. (2012). International comparative planning methodology: Introduction to the theme issue. *Planning Practice & Research*, *27*(1), 1–5. https://doi.org/10.1080/02697459.2012.669928

Pavoni, A., Pereira, L., & Tulumello, S. (2025). Planning (in) the next century? On the futures of planning that are already here. *Journal of Planning Literature,* 40(1), 47–58. https://doi.org/10.1177/08854122241265115

Roy, A. (2009). Strangely familiar: Planning and the worlds of insurgence and informality. *Planning Theory,* 8(1), 7–11. https://doi.org/10.1177/1473095208099294

Sanchez, T. W., & Nguyen, M. T. (2025). Special issue: “Alternative planning futures: Planning the next century”. *Journal of Planning Literature*, 40(2), 151–153. https://doi.org/10.1177/08854122251314478

Tulumello, S., & Healey, P. (2016). Questioning planning, connecting places and times: Introduction to the special issue. *plaNext – Next Generation Planning*, 3, 7–15. https://doi.org/10.24306/plnxt.2016.03.001

Open Access Journal

Grounded futures: A decade of planning through humanitarian and Southern lenses

Batoul Ibrahim
Independent researcher, Syria
orcid.org/0000-0001-6715-765X

This reflective article marks the tenth anniversary of *plaNext – Next Generation Planning*, tracing its evolution as a critical platform for spatial planning discourse, particularly in humanitarian and Global South contexts. Drawing on personal editorial and field-based experience, the author explores how *plaNext* has shifted spatial planning discourse toward inclusion, ethics, and contextual sensitivity. Focusing on contributions from Volumes 9 to 11, the article highlights planning's potential as a transformative tool in humanitarian settings, centering community agency, participatory methods, and interdisciplinary innovation. The analysis further integrates non-Western ethical frameworks, advocating for planning as a reparative and care-based practice, especially relevant in post-crisis urban environments. Contributions from the Global South illustrate planning as a reparative practice rooted in justice, resilience, and relational well-being. Ultimately, the article calls for bridging academic and humanitarian spheres to foster responsive, interdisciplinary, and just planning. The next decade of *plaNext* offers a chance to consolidate many gains and push further. Thus, the journal's commitment to fostering a young researchers-driven process is vital for the future of spatial planning.

Keywords: humanitarian planning, Global South, participatory methods, inclusive planning, epistemic plurality, planning future

Please cite as: Ibrahim, B. (2025). Grounded futures: A decade of planning through humanitarian and Southern lenses. *plaNext – Next Generation Planning*, 15, 40–48. https://doi.org/10.24306/plnxt/105

Introduction: Marking ten years of critical spatial thought

As we commemorate the 10th anniversary of *plaNext – Next Generation Planning*, it is an opportune moment to reflect on the journal's significant contributions to the field of planning and its intersection with pressing humanitarian issues. For *plaNext*, this anniversary is more than a chronological checkpoint—it represents a decade of fostering critical discourse, inclusivity, and emerging voices in planning field. Founded in 2015 under the auspices of the Association of European Schools of Planning (AESOP), *plaNext* has provided a vital platform for young academics to engage in critical debates surrounding urban challenges.

As someone who has served as an editor for several volumes and worked in the humanitarian and planning fields, I write this reflection not only as an academic but as a practitioner shaped by the tensions and synergies between theory and humanitarian realities. The journal's evolution has mirrored shifts in the field itself—from technocratic paradigms toward an interdisciplinary, ethics-driven practice. This article examines key thematic developments in the evolution of *plaNext*, with particular emphasis on Volumes 9 and 10, to which I contributed as an editor, as well as Volume 11, which foregrounds perspectives from the Global South—an area that resonates strongly with my professional engagement in the humanitarian sector. These reflections are interwoven with insights derived from practice, offering a critical dialogue between academic inquiry and field-based experience.

Planning discourse diversity in *plaNext*

Over the past decade, *plaNext* has published 14 volumes, each addressing significant themes in the field of planning. The inaugural issue[1], 'Cities that Talk', set the tone for discussions on social inclusion and equality in urban environments. Subsequent volumes, such as 'Planning Inclusive Spaces' (Volume 10[2]), have further explored the complexities of urban life, particularly in light of recent migration flows and climate change (Dörder et al., 2020). The journal has consistently, and precisely in Volume 11[3], challenged the northern bias in planning theories, as exemplified by the contributions of the late Prof. Vanessa Watson, which have fostered new perspectives from the Global South (Mukhopadhyay et al., 2021; Watson, 2014).

Volume 9[4], titled 'Navigating Change: Planning for Societal and Spatial Transformations', highlighted the need for diverse planning approaches to address various forms of change, including environmental, technological, and political shifts (Silva, 2019). This volume underscored the importance of interdisciplinary exchange within planning-related research and practice, emphasising that societal and spatial transformations often reflect complex settings requiring tailored responses (ibid). The journal's commitment to inclusivity is evident in its thematic focus on inter- and transdisciplinary approaches, which align with the transformative promise of the 2030 United Nations Agenda for Sustainable Development, emphasising the principle of 'leaving no one behind' (United Nations General Assembly, 2015).

Inclusive and participatory planning in humanitarian contexts: Lessons from *plaNext* volumes 9 and 10

Recent volumes of *plaNext* (9 and 10) offer a compelling array of scholarship on inclusive and context-sensitive planning, with particular relevance to humanitarian contexts. These contributions highlight how planning can respond to complex social, political, and spatial

[1] https://journals.aesop-planning.eu/index.php/planext/issue/view/1
[2] https://journals.aesop-planning.eu/index.php/planext/issue/view/10
[3] https://journals.aesop-planning.eu/index.php/planext/issue/view/11
[4] https://journals.aesop-planning.eu/index.php/planext/issue/view/9

challenges by centring local needs, promoting participatory methods, and embracing interdisciplinary innovation. Together, they argue that planning must evolve beyond technocratic solutions to become a vehicle for equity, accountability, and empowerment in settings affected by displacement, marginalisation, and crisis.

Social sustainability and governance

A central theme is the operationalisation of social sustainability in urban development. Janssen et al. (2020) examine area development projects in the Netherlands, identifying the persistent gap between the concept of social sustainability and its practical implementation. They argue that community needs are often subordinated to market interests unless governance frameworks explicitly prioritise equity and inclusion. This insight is highly relevant in humanitarian urban planning, where interventions must avoid reinforcing pre-existing inequalities and instead support community cohesion, safety, and long-term resilience.

Migrant agency and adaptive design

Pesce and Bagaini (2019) contribute to this conversation by emphasising the agency of migrants and displaced populations in urban regeneration. They argue for an adaptive, modular architecture that accommodates both emergency needs and integration into the broader urban context. Migrants, they contend, should be regarded not merely as recipients of shelter but as co-creators of urban futures. This approach is particularly applicable in humanitarian responses to large-scale displacement, aligning with international frameworks such as the Global Compact on Refugees[5], which advocate inclusive, community-driven solutions.

Urban Living Labs and participatory experimentation

Du (2020) examines Urban Living Labs (ULLs) as collaborative platforms for experimentation in urban planning. He critiques the tendency to present ULLs as universally applicable solutions that are often lauded for their innovation. He argues instead for a critical, context-sensitive approach, particularly relevant in humanitarian settings where social structures, power dynamics, and resource constraints vary widely. Adapted thoughtfully, ULLs can serve as models for co-creation in crisis-affected areas, but only if grounded in local realities and community engagement.

This call for contextual sensitivity is exemplified by the UN-Habitat and MIT Urban Living Lab[6], which positions itself as a global platform for co-creating solutions with local actors in diverse urban contexts. By emphasising inclusive, interdisciplinary collaboration and capacity building tailored to local needs, the initiative aligns with Du's argument that ULLs must move beyond one-size-fits-all models. Rather than exporting fixed solutions, it facilitates context-specific experimentation rooted in community engagement and institutional partnerships, reinforcing the value of grounded, participatory approaches in both development and humanitarian planning.

Innovative methods: Games and art as planning tools

Several contributions explore creative participatory methodologies. Prilenska (2019) presents the use of 'serious games' as tools for civic engagement. In her study, role-playing scenarios allow participants to simulate planning decisions and collaboratively explore future

[5] https://www.unhcr.org/about-unhcr/overview/global-compact-refugees
[6] https://www.living-lab.center/

possibilities. Such methods can be especially valuable in humanitarian settings where traditional engagement may be limited by language, trauma, or mistrust of institutions. By enabling safe, accessible, and dialogic participation, game-based approaches help build trust and amplify community voice.

Hotakainen and Oikarinen (2019) examine art interventions as a means of community engagement and dialogue. Their study of a temporary installation in a public park demonstrates how artistic expression can surface local knowledge, foster connection, and humanise spatial issues. In vulnerable or under-served urban areas, including informal settlements and areas experiencing prolonged humanitarian need, such creative practices can support collective identity and contribute to inclusive place-making.

The power of narrative and framing

Krisch (2019) underscores the role of discourse in shaping planning outcomes. Her analysis of cultural planning in Vienna shows how different framings, such as culture as infrastructure versus culture as economic commodity, can lead to divergent strategies. In humanitarian contexts, language similarly matters: how terms like 'resilience', 'vulnerability', and 'integration' are used can influence everything from donor funding to the treatment of displaced groups. Krisch's work highlights the ethical responsibility of planners to be intentional and inclusive in their use of narrative.

Grassroots action and the role of the third sector

Privitera (2020) sheds light on grassroots-led public space regeneration in Catania, Sicily. In contexts where institutional support is lacking or slow to materialise, communities and civil society actors often step in to revitalise neighbourhoods through informal, cooperative action. These efforts, ranging from cleaning up public areas to organising cultural events, demonstrate the capacity of local actors to lead urban transformation. In humanitarian environments, especially those affected by prolonged crises or neglect, supporting grassroots initiatives through flexible policy and micro-level resources can strengthen social infrastructure and foster ownership.

Such work also challenges the conventional binary between formal and informal planning. Recognising informal urban practices as legitimate responses to need can open up new pathways for inclusive humanitarian planning and recovery, grounded in the lived realities of affected populations.

Implications for humanitarian urban planning

Collectively, the contributions from *plaNext*'s Volumes 9 and 10 suggest a shift in how we understand planning in humanitarian contexts. First, they underscore the importance of embedding social sustainability goals—equity, safety, cohesion—into planning from the outset. In settings marked by displacement, disaster, or systemic exclusion, these goals cannot be secondary to infrastructure delivery or logistical efficiency.

Second, inclusive participation must be central, not optional. Whether through Urban Living Labs, serious games, or artistic engagement, methods must not only invite but meaningfully incorporate community input. This means co-designing processes that are transparent, iterative, and reflective of the voices of women, youth, people with disabilities, and other often-overlooked groups.

Third, planners must recognise and enable the agency of grassroots actors. In many humanitarian contexts, formal planning mechanisms are slow, centralised, or disconnected from on-the-ground realities. Communities, NGOs, and local leaders are often already filling

critical gaps through adaptive and informal practices. Supporting and learning from these actors enhances both the inclusiveness and effectiveness of urban humanitarian response.

Finally, the power of narrative must be taken seriously. Planners and humanitarian professionals should critically assess how their language and framing shape policy, programming, and public perception. Who is seen as a stakeholder? What outcomes are valued? These discursive choices can reinforce or dismantle exclusion.

Volumes 9 and 10 of *plaNext* reflect a growing maturity in planning discourse, one that embraces inclusion, interdisciplinarity, and context sensitivity as core tenets of practice. Their lessons are particularly relevant for humanitarian contexts, where the stakes are high and the need for thoughtful, responsive planning is urgent.

As humanitarian challenges become increasingly related to the urban environment, whether due to migration, disaster, or socio-economic marginalisation, planners must move beyond conventional models. Instead, they must adopt approaches rooted in empathy, flexibility, and accountability. Inclusive planning is not an afterthought or a luxury; it is a fundamental tool for restoring dignity, building resilience, and fostering equitable urban futures in times of crisis.

Southern perspectives and humanitarian aspects: Lessons from *plaNext* volume 11

Perhaps the most transformative step for *plaNext* was the publication of Volume 11, focused on planning in and from the Global South. This issue challenged Northern-centric assumptions embedded in planning theory and emphasised the need for epistemic plurality (Mukhopadhyay et al., 2021). This epistemic plurality can be grounded through non-Western ethical frameworks that resonate deeply with humanitarian values. For instance, many Indigenous and First Nations traditions adopt an ecosystemic relational ethic, where humans are understood as part of a larger ecological community, bound by reciprocal obligations to land and non-human life, and emphasising reciprocity and stewardship (Tomateo & Grabowski, 2024).

In such views, decision-making is guided by restoring harmony and right relations, not merely by technical efficiency, which resonates with humanitarian ideals of care and community. Similarly, the Southern African philosophy of ubuntu enshrines communal care and solidarity: encapsulated by the aphorism ‘I am because we are’, Ubuntu emphasises empathy, mutual support, and justice in interpersonal and collective life (Muia et al., 2023). The Indian principle of ahimsa (nonviolence) further extends this logic of care: literally meaning ‘non-harm’, ahimsa calls for active compassion and avoidance of violence toward all beings. Each of these philosophies offers an alternative and complementary ethical lens for planning; one that foregrounds cooperation, stewardship, and healing, principles central to trauma-sensitive and protective planning (Schroeder, 2023; Marris, 2023). I will discuss them more extensively later in this text.

Thus, by engaging also with non-Western epistemologies, planners can diversify the values and methods of humanitarian planning and stimulate it to be more inclusive, community-oriented, and ecologically grounded.

Planning experiences from the Global South context capture the realities on the ground and highlight the importance of integrating humanitarian perspectives into planning practices. Effective planning can help rebuild communities, restore livelihoods, and promote social cohesion in areas affected by violence and displacement (IFRC, 2025).

Costa et al. (2021) discussed metropolitan planning in Belo Horizonte, Brazil, through the lens of critical theory and participatory practice. Their university-community collaboration exemplifies how Southern cities are generating theory through practice, not just applying imported frameworks. For humanitarian actors, this is an important reminder: interventions must be context-driven, and local knowledge is not supplementary, it is central.

Another important contribution was from Adelina et al. (2021), who examined urban environmental governance in small cities of the Global South. Often overlooked in both planning and humanitarian agendas, these intermediary cities are sites of innovation and resilience, offering models for decentralised governance and community-based adaptation.

These contributions make a compelling case for what can be called ‘cartographies of care'—mappings that are not neutral but embedded in ethics, justice, and politics. They also call for a people-centred planning practice, one that listens rather than prescribes.

In the era of a global polycrisis, where climate change, conflict, inequality, and other shocks intertwine, planning in Global South contexts has become a critical focus for humanitarian approaches. The Global South often bears the heaviest burdens of these shocks; Devex Editor notes, that ‘the global South is… where the effects of climate change are being felt most intensely’, these effects are driving severe disasters (e.g. tropical storms, floods) in low-income cities (Devex Editor, 2020). For example, Almulhim et al. (2024) estimate that about 143 million people in the Global South will be displaced by climate impacts by 2050, underscoring the disproportionate vulnerability of Southern populations.

In such settings, planning for resilience and aid must merge; Southern cities and communities routinely exemplify the convergence of poverty, environmental risk, and conflict, making them de facto arenas for humanitarian action. Those Southern urban areas often face compounding crises that demand integrated planning responses (Adam & Rena, 2024). At the same time, scholars stress that polycrisis is transnational, planning must ‘traverse the North–South dichotomy’, recognising that crisis and marginalisation also affect people in Northern contexts. In other words, the polycrisis is not confined to the ‘South’; similar dynamics of displacement, precarity, and social fragmentation are emerging within the Global North, making the Southern case both paradigmatic and globally relevant.

In sum, while humanitarian planning is urgently needed in the Global South, it should be framed in global terms. Southern cases illustrate many key challenges, but planners must also address systemic shocks wherever vulnerable communities exist (Almulhim et al., 2024).

Bridging academia and Humanitarian practice

As someone embedded in both academic and humanitarian spheres, I often witness a gap between theory and practice. Academic planning tends to valorise long-term visioning and spatial coherence, while humanitarian action is grounded in urgency, often amid fragmented governance and trauma.

Yet there is potential for convergence. In post-conflict reconstruction, spatial planning must grapple with displacement, destroyed infrastructure, and fractured social ties, issues that demand both technical skill and emotional intelligence. Humanitarian organisations, once focused solely on emergency response, are now engaging in area-based planning, co-producing settlement designs with affected populations.

Furthermore, humanitarian spatial planning aligns closely with contemporary care-based, healing, and trauma-informed planning approaches, which seek to repair harm and foster resilience in communities facing structural and episodic violence. There is a growing trend to

view planning itself as an ethical practice of healing and justice, not just technical design. For example, some U.S. cities have explicitly adopted reparative planning measures, following civil unrest over racial injustice: Minneapolis established a Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and St. Paul launched a Community Reparations Commission, both conceived as planning instruments to address historical harm and foster community healing (Williams, 2022).

At the same time, planning literature increasingly advocates trauma-informed approaches: planners are encouraged to recognise community trauma and design public spaces and policies that support safety, belonging, and recovery. As one recent planning brief observes, interest in trauma-informed planning is growing, emphasising that built-environment interventions can 'advance planners' work to promote the health, safety, and economic well-being of all people', especially those who have experienced chronic stress or violence (Schroeder, 2023).

In an era of cascading crises, bridging academic inquiry with humanitarian practice is not only timely but necessary. By fostering mutual learning, co-producing knowledge, and engaging in field-informed research, spatial planning can evolve into a more responsive, ethical, and transformative discipline capable of shaping cities that heal, protect, and empower.

These developments frame planning as a form of intentional care, a reparative practice that acknowledges past and present injustices and prioritises relational well-being. In other words, the humanitarian approach is increasingly understood as a duty of care: planners are called on to repair harm and build resilience by centering ethics, compassion, and community agency in their work.

The *plaNext* volumes underscore that spatial planning is inseparable from conditions of social precarity, spatial injustice, and historical contestation. The journal has served as a laboratory for ideas that challenge not only how we plan, but also why we plan, and for whom. Planning must engage with the complex challenges that shape contemporary urban and territorial realities, from climate breakdown and forced displacement to deepening inequality and informal urbanisation. These issues are not peripheral; they are central to the discipline's ethical grounding, critical relevance, and transformative potential.

Looking forward: Toward grounded futures

Reflecting on the past decade, several key lessons emerge from the journal's content and my experiences in the humanitarian sector. First, the importance of interdisciplinary collaboration cannot be overstated. The challenges of urban planning, particularly in post-conflict contexts, require the expertise of various stakeholders, including planners, humanitarian workers, and community members (UN-Habitat, 2020).

Second, the journal's commitment to fostering a young researchers-driven process is vital for the future of spatial planning. As the new editorial board takes over, it is crucial to continue prioritising emerging voices and perspectives that challenge conventional paradigms. This includes addressing gaps in current debates, such as the need for a more glocal vision that transcends Eurocentric frameworks.

As we navigate the complexities of a post-pandemic world, the principles of social sustainability and inclusivity must remain at the forefront of planning discourse. The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed and exacerbated existing inequalities, highlighting the urgent need for planning practices that prioritise the most vulnerable (Hertel & Keil, 2020).

The next decade of *plaNext* offers a chance to consolidate many gains and push further. Integrating humanitarian planning as a core discourse within spatial planning comes as a key

priority. Furthermore, deepening collaboration with scholars and practitioners from the Global South would contribute to more context-sensitive planning and policy approaches. As well, supporting research on post-disaster and post-conflict urbanism would not only expand the field's scope but also foreground the lived realities of communities navigating extreme disruption and uncertainty. This could be achieved by enhancing practice-oriented research and integrating the lived experiences and practical humanitarian insights.

Reflecting on a decade back to looking forward to a grounded future, cultivating a space where justice and dignity are not peripheral values, but central planning principles is becoming increasingly crucial. Because ultimately, planning is not only about space, it is about people.

References

Adam, H., & Rena, R. (2024). Introduction: Polycrisis and economic development in the Global South. In H. Adam & R. Rena (Eds.), *Polycrisis and economic development in the Global South* (pp. 1–3). London: Routledge.

Adelina, C., Archer, D., Johnson, O., & Opiyo, R. O. (2021). Inclusion in urban environmental governance of small and intermediary cities of the global South. *plaNext – Next Generation Planning*, 11, 81–105. https://doi.org/10.24306/plnxt/70

Almulhim, A. I., Alverio, G. N., Sharifi, A., et al. (2024). Climate-induced migration in the Global South: An in-depth analysis. *npj Climate Action*, 3, 47. https://doi.org/10.1038/s44168-024-00133-1

Costa, G., Costa, H., & Monte-Mór, R. (2021). Rooting metropolitan planning in critical theory and participatory practices: A university planning experience in Belo Horizonte, Brazil. *plaNext – Next Generation Planning*, 11, 44–61. https://doi.org/10.24306/plnxt/71

Devex Editor. (2020, October 30). In cities of the Global South, resilience is the only way forward. *Devex*. Retrieved from https://www.devex.com/news/sponsored/in-cities-of-the-global-south-resilience-is-the-only-way-forward-98438

Dörder, P., Ibrahim, B., & Keil, R. (2020). Editorial: Planning inclusive spaces – in a new light. *plaNext – Next Generation Planning*, 10, 5–9. https://doi.org/10.24306/plnxt/63

Du, D. (2020). Urban Living Lab: What is it, and what is the matter? *plaNext – Next Generation Planning*, 10, 22–37. https://doi.org/10.24306/plnxt/65

Hertel, S., & Roger, K. (2020). After isolation: Urban planning and the COVID-19 pandemic. *Ontario Professional Planners Institute* (blog post). Retrieved from https://ontarioplanners.ca/blog/planning-exchange/may-2020/after-isolation-urban-planning-and-the-covid-19-pandemic

Hotakainen, T., & Oikarinen, E. (2019). Balloons to talk about: Exploring conversational potential of an art intervention. *plaNext – Next Generation Planning*, 9, 45–64. https://doi.org/10.24306/plnxt/59

IFRC. (2025). IFRC 'Recovery' overview. Retrieved from https://www.ifrc.org/our-work/disasters-climate-and-crises/recovery

Janssen, C., Daamen, T., & Verdaas, C. (2020). Implementing social sustainability in area development projects in the Netherlands. *plaNext – Next Generation Planning*, 10, 10–21. https://doi.org/10.24306/plnxt/64

Krisch, A. (2019). Examining cultural planning in Vienna: The discursive institutionalization of social infrastructure in strategic planning. *plaNext – Next Generation Planning, 9*, 26–44. https://doi.org/10.24306/plnxt/58

Marris, W. (2023). *Trauma-informed community change: An exploration of community-led, trauma-informed, prevention-oriented, resilience-building, & healing-centered*

considerations for strengthening communities. Retrieved from https://www.ctipp.org/post/guide-to-trauma-informed-community-change

Muia, D., Masese, S., & Munene Rufo, B. (2023). Inclusive and participatory community development: Building on Ubuntu to leave no one behind. *Australian Journal of Community Work*, 3, 79–92.

Mukhopadhyay, C., & Hammami, F., with Watson, V. (2021). Introduction: Planning theories from 'southern turn' to 'deeply rooted/situated in the South/context': A project in the making. *plaNext – Next Generation Planning,* 11, 9–25. https://doi.org/10.24306/plnxt/67

Pesce, B. I., & Bagaini, A. (2019). Urban and architectural adaptive strategies for inclusive cities: A review of international innovation experiments. *plaNext – Next Generation Planning*, 9, 65–82. https://doi.org/10.24306/plnxt/60

Prilenska, V. (2019). Participation game: Reflections on the iterative design process. *plaNext – Next Generation Planning*, 9, 97–122. https://doi.org/10.24306/plnxt/62

Privitera, E. (2020). The third sector in the planning, production, and regeneration of inclusive public space: Notes from an ongoing experience in a distressed Sicilian neighbourhood. *plaNext – Next Generation Planning*, 10, 38–57. https://doi.org/10.24306/plnxt/66

Schroeder, K. (2023). *Trauma-informed planning: A best-practice framework*. PAS QuickNotes 103, American Planning Association. Retrieved from https://www.planning.org/publications/document/9275402/

Silva, P. (2019). Editorial: Planning is about change – Different perspectives on societal challenges. *plaNext – Next Generation Planning,* 9, 6–10. https://doi.org/10.24306/plnxt/56

Tomateo, C., & Grabowski, Z. (2024). Indigenous justice frameworks for relational ethics in land-based design. *Ecosystems and People,* 20(1), 2409165. https://doi.org/10.1080/26395916.2024.2409165

United Nations General Assembly. (2015). *Transforming our world: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/70/1)*. Retrieved from https://sdgs.un.org/2030agenda

UN-Habitat. (2020). *Urban planning responses in post-crisis contexts*. Retrieved from https://unhabitat.org/urban-planning-responses-in-post-crisis-contexts

Watson, V. (2014). The case for a Southern perspective in planning theory. *International Journal of E-Planning Research,* 3(1), 23–37. https://doi.org/10.4018/ijepr.2014010103

Williams, R. (2022, November 2). Three models of reparative planning: A comparative analysis [Video and transcript]. *Cities@Tufts; Shareable*. Retrieved from https://www.shareable.net/cities_tufts/three-models-of-reparative-planning/

Open Access Journal

Bridging generations: A decade of open peer review and collective knowledge-building in planning scholarship through *plaNext*

Sıla Ceren Varış Husar
Slovak University of Technology in Bratislava, Slovakia
Corresponding author: silaceren.varis@gmail.com

Simone Tulumello
Institute of Social Sciences, University of Lisbon, Portugal

Asma Mehan
Huckabee College of Architecture, Texas Tech University, USA

Francesca Dal Cin
Prince Mohammad bin Fahd University, Saudi Arabia

Nadia Caruso
DIST, Polytechnic University of Turin, Italy

Ender Peker
Middle East Technical University, Türkiye

Esra Kut Görgün
Researcher and City Planner, İzmir Planning Agency, İzmir, Türkiye

This dialogue between the old and new editorial board marks the 10th anniversary of *plaNext – Next Generation Planning*, reflecting on its evolution as an experimental and inclusive platform for early career scholars. Born out of the AESOP Young Academics Network, *plaNext* has advocated the principles of open peer review, aiming to foster constructive, transparent and mentorship-driven academic publishing. As a fully online and open-access journal, it has served as both a publishing outlet and a pedagogical space where academic writing is cultivated collaboratively. Now indexed in Scopus, *plaNext* enters a new phase—grappling with questions of visibility, institutional expectations and the sustainability of its original mission. This dialogue gathers founding and current editorial board members to examine key milestones, reflect on the ideological and operational implications of open review, and strategize on maintaining the journal's core identity while embracing global relevance and growth. Through honest discussion of challenges, aspirations and future pathways, the conversation offers critical insights into the journal's past decade and its renewed commitments for the next.

Keywords: open peer review, academic publishing, journal evolution, reflections, indexing, scholarly dialogue

Please cite as: Varış Husar, S. C., Tulumello, S., Mehan, A., Caruso, N., Peker, E., Kut Görgün, E., & Dal Cin, F. (2025). Bridging generations: A decade of open peer review and collective knowledge-building in planning scholarship through *plaNext*. *plaNext – Next Generation Planning,* 15, 49–60. https://doi.org/10.24306/plnxt/113

Open Access Journal

As plaNext celebrates its 10th anniversary, the editorial board convened a transgenerational conversation to reflect on the journal's roots, assess its signature commitment to open peer review and explore the implications of its recent indexing in Scopus. Held online on 5 March 2025, this editorial dialogue brought together both founding and current editorial members, offering a cross-sectional view of what plaNext has stood for and what it could become.

Sıla Ceren Varış Husar:
Welcome everyone, today we are going to have a dialogue for the 10th year special issue of *plaNext* for the last decade of *plaNext* and this is the first dialogue session with previous editorial board members and new editorial board members. I would like to thank you again for your time and today's topic is the open peer review and online fully open access. I would like to start with a short introduction, and I would like to ask you to explain in like a couple of sentences your experience with *plaNext*: when and how did you get involved and your insights? My name is Ceren, I am a post-doctoral researcher and an urban planner. Since I chaired the AESOP Young Academics (YA) network[1] coordination team, I have been invited to the editorial board member membership. Starting from December 2023, I have been actively involved in the editorial board. We have been in a transition period from the past editorial board to the new one and I have been working with Asma Mehan as an Editor in Chief and with Esra and Francesca as fellow editorial board members. I would like to give the floor to everyone.

Simone Tulumello:
I was one of the founding editors of *plaNext*. At that time, I was one of the members of the YA coordination team, together with Nadia, Ender and Feras Hammami. It was, I think, during the 8th annual AESOP YA network conference, titled "Cities that Talk" and held in Gothenburg in 2014, that we started discussing the need for a journal for the young academics. So we started working and launched the first issue in 2015. I have been one of the editors for a few years and then, since I stepped down, I am very happy to see this is growing: take the listing in Scopus, though we are going to talk about its problems later, that's one of the good news.

Nadia Caruso:
As Simone has already said, we were the founding members. We discussed the first ideas about the journal in 2014 in Gothenburg. Then, the first issue[2] was published in 2015 with the papers of the AESOP YA Conference. As the coordination team, at that time we were the only ones involved in the journal, we believed in this project and tried to share responsibilities and duties. It was quite an interesting and inspiring moment, full of decisions to take.

Ender Peker:
Together with Nadia and Simone, I was also part of the coordination team at that time. I've actually been involved with the YA network for about 15 years now. In 2014, we founded the journal, which was a very exciting moment. We wanted to create something bold and enduring, not just a temporary initiative, but a lasting platform that could build its own archival legacy. It's rewarding to see how the journal has continued to grow and evolve under your leadership. I might also add that I was one of the people who came up with the name of the journal. We spent quite a bit of time brainstorming, experimenting with different terms and combinations, and eventually arrived at *plaNext*. It emerged from combining "plan" and "next", reflecting our vision of a journal for the next generation of planning scholars.

Sıla Ceren Varış Husar:
That's great. Asma, would you like to continue?

[1] https://aesop-youngacademics.net/
[2] https://journals.aesop-planning.eu/index.php/plaNext/issue/view/1

Asma Mehan:
Thank you everyone for joining us today. It's a pleasure to have this discussion with you and learn from your experiences and different perspectives. My name is Asma, I've been engaged with AESOP, especially YA related activities, during the past five years at different capacities. Before joining the *plaNext* journal, I served as part of the coordination team for a while and worked along with my colleagues like Ceren and a couple of others. Starting from August 2024, I took the lead as the Editor in Chief of the *plaNext* journal from Feras. For me this was an exciting and pivotal moment because it was a time that I could learn from all those past experiences, as Ceren mentioned, to help the *plaNext* for this transition stage. We are so thrilled and happy because, as you've been informed, the *plaNext* journal have been indexed in a Scopus and this couldn't happen without all of your contribution, dedication and perspectives and long-term vision that Ender mentioned.

Esra Kut Görgün:
I am Esra Kut Görgün and I was a visiting researcher at Politecnico di Milano, but now I have come to Türkiye and I'm a researcher and city and regional planner, and I'm new as an editor board member, so I'm just trying to learn the editorial work.

Sıla Ceren Varış Husar:
These are uncharted waters for us. We have a lot of things to learn from you also today. Francesca, would you continue?

Francesca Dal Cin:
Honestly, I just joined *plaNext* together with Esra, I believe it was in August 2024, so I'm still quite new to both the journal and the process. At the same time, I've been serving—and I'm still serving—as a member of the editorial board of another Italian journal, *in_bo – Ricerche e progetti per il territorio, la città e l'architettura*[3], which is published by the University of Bologna. I do have some experience with editorial work. That's it for now, and I'm very open and willing to contribute more actively to *plaNext* moving forward.

Sıla Ceren Varış Husar:
Before I open the floor for questions, I'd like to explain our reasoning for this. The initial idea was that *plaNext* is a great initiative and it has been institutionalized in its unique way. It helped a lot of young scholars to raise their voices in the past decade. It clearly involves a lot of dedication from editorial board members, personally I also experience it right now. In this dialogue basically we wanted to understand what your experience was, what the main challenges are and also what you foresaw for the future and how much that happened until now. Additionally, what we can bring new to the table, how we can collaborate on this and have this dialogue in a text format in the special issue so that we can keep it and have a reference for future.

Let me start with the questions. This set of questions mostly concern the previous editorial board members:

- How was this idea of open peer review born, and why?
- How has *plaNext* evolved over the past decade, particularly during your active involvement in the editorial work and its approach to open peer review?
- Did you get the results you hoped for? Was it smooth?
- What were the key milestones that have shaped the journal's development?

[3] https://in-bo.unibo.it/

For your information, we're now shifting to double-blind peer review, though we are still using open peer review sometimes. I would like to open the floor for some reactions and responses.

Simone Tulumello:
I can start because it was probably me to suggest, at that time, that we could experiment with the open peer review. I have always been interested in issues of scientific evaluation, the role of evaluation in the building of scholarship, and so forth. In the early 2010s, there had been quite a lot of critical discussions on peer review, particularly on how blindness, though a powerful instrument to guarantee certain minimum standards of quality, also tends to stifle innovation and efface power relations: it hides power relations more than it tames them. The debate was stronger in the field of project funding: many argued at the time that projects should be funded by lotteries, because there is really no way of forecasting what project will result in great results. But problems also exist when evaluating completed research, as in the case with peer review of journal articles. There had been calls for opening up the black box, and so we thought that a journal created by and for younger academics, in which the editorial approach was less about seeking for the few groundbreaking articles and more about building an environment where early career scholar could train their "academic muscles", improve they ability and skills for writing up a journal article, this journal could be a good place to experiment.

If the goal is not to bar articles but rather working together to build good articles to be published, then there is less of a necessity to, so to speak, "protect" authors and reviewers through blindness. And that's why we decided that authors would never be blinded. Well, that's also one of the myths of blindness: in 90% of cases, identifying the author is relatively easy for the reviewer, who is supposed to be an expert in the field. Actually, identification is harder with early career scholars, who tend to have less power and whose names will hardly be a weight for the evaluation. And we decided to give the reviewers the freedom to decide whether they wanted to remain anonymous or not. The experience of the first few issues, on which I and Nadia published a short article in the Italian journal *EyesReg* (Caruso & Tulumello, 2017), showed that we had a very small minority of reviewers that decided to remain anonymous. And, though it wasn't really a quantitatively significant sample, it was quite evident that the poorest reviews—shorter, less aimed at engaging with the authors and more at pointing up problems—were from those that asked to remain anonymous.

Granted, the nature of a journal like *plaNext*, and particularly the specific editorial environment we wanted to build, made the decision of not using blindness easier than it would be in larger, more established, more generalist journals. Still, I think that was quite an interesting experiment. In fact, in the following years, other very good journals started to experiment with these approaches. One of those is *Fennia*[4], published by the Geographical Society of Finland. It's an international journal, published online, fully open access, and so forth. And in 2018, they started giving the opportunity to reviewers to not only disclose their name, but also to publish the review as a companion to the article (see Kallio & Riding, 2018). This means that at the end, the article is basically a dialogue. That may not be suitable for all situations, but it's definitely an interesting instrument: in the palette of opportunities for publishing, this should be one of those available. But here I would ask you why they decided to step down on this idea of open review?

Sıla Ceren Varış Husar:
It's a great start to the dialogue. Asma, would you like to respond to Simone?

Asma Mehan:
Thank you so much, Simone, for your response. I also agree with all the comments. You share the idea of an open peer review process versus blind traditional way of peer review process.

[4] https://fennia.journal.fi/

I agree that it would be a great experience especially for the early career or young academics. I do agree, but I want to focus on a specific angle and maybe a challenge for the process of open peer review process, which is the idea of biases. Also there are lots of ongoing debates about the open peer review process and the potential for biases/conflicts of interest, and it could be positive or negative. But especially when the reviewers and authors know each other's identities. I want to learn, especially from your editorial experience. Did *plaNext* face the same challenges in ensuring fairness and impartiality in the open peer review process? This is a crucial topic related to biases and ethics. I'm interested in learning more about the measures taken to mitigate these potential biases or conflicts of interest. Especially for this open peer review process to make sure that it's a really academically objective peer review process rather than being more subjective. Do you have any thoughts on this?

Sıla Ceren Varış Husar:
We can bridge this discussion to another dimension for this dialogue. I wanted to ask about the specific challenges *plaNext* faced and how these challenges have been addressed. Whether they have been solved or what the discussions were in the editorial board back then. Of course, I want to underline the discussion about impartiality and inclusivity of both approaches to reviewing.

Ender Peker:
This is actually something we discussed in detail when Simone first suggested adopting an open review process—and we all agreed with him. Of course, we debated the pros and cons of different review models, but ultimately, we felt that the ethos of the journal—at least from the perspective of the founding editorial team—called for a more constructive and transparent review process. As you all know, traditional peer review can sometimes become quite destructive, especially when everything happens behind the scenes and reviewers remain anonymous. Our goal was to shape a review process that would be both transparent and supportive, particularly because the journal's main audience consists of early career researchers. At that stage, publishing can feel overwhelming—like being a small fish in an ocean—so we wanted to create a space where feedback would not only provide critique but also help authors improve their work.

That's why the open review format made sense. We weren't compromising on quality—rigorous critique was still essential—but we encouraged reviewers to offer suggestions that would help authors develop their manuscripts further. In that sense, both sides had something to gain: reviewers had the chance to engage with emerging scholarship in a constructive way, and authors received guidance they might not otherwise have access to.

As editors, we were responsible for ensuring that this constructive tone was maintained. Personally, I never encountered any conflicts between authors and reviewers in this process. In fact, if I can share a personal experience: in one of my earlier review experiences, a reviewer indirectly revealed his identity through the comments. His comments were quite critical, but very detailed and valuable. The paper improved significantly as a result. Later on, we got in touch and eventually collaborated on a project. He's a senior scholar in water research based in Australia, and this connection wouldn't have been possible without that open gesture.

To sum up: the very nature of a journal that supports early career scholars almost naturally calls for an open review process; one that fosters learning, transparency, and constructive engagement.

Nadia Caruso:
I would like to add another dimension to the previous answers of Simone and Ender. It's important to remember that in this first stage of the journal, *plaNext* was really homemade. The review process was conducted by contacting colleagues, scholars and friends to ask for

the reviews. The journal was new and a request to support young academics in the publishing process was too. The message to the potential reviewers was to give constructive comments. But it was really something that came out naturally, the editorial board didn't have to push anyone or any review. We started with personal networks and then we had list of scholars to contact.

Simone Tulumello:
I think most points that are specific to *plaNext*, that is, to the process of building a journal for and by early career scholars have been covered. However, the question by Asma and Ceren pointed to a broader issue, which I think is worth reflecting. When one asks: "How to guarantee protection from biases and conflicts of interest in an open review?", this seems to be implying that those are not problems with blind peer review. If that's the suggestion, I completely disagree. I mean, we all have experience with peer review, we all know, as editors, as authors, as reviewers, that there are competing values, normative ideas, epistemological and methodological approaches to research, especially in the social sciences. When, as editor, you pick a reviewer, you basically have 80 to 90 % of chances to already know whether they will say yes or no to that article. And, as editor, you know that if you want to accept an article you have to send it to name X and Y, because they agree with that paper. If you want to reject it, you will ask Z or A. Of course, a good editor will pick one of those who would agree and one of those who would disagree.

The point is that power is very much present both on the side of the editor and of the reviewers. And blindness puts even more power in the hands of the editor. By not disclosing who they picked, editors can say of a decision: "Look, these were the peer reviewers"; but, in fact, it was the editors who decided who to invite and, with that, basically whether the paper would be accepted or rejected. The point is that power exists: I'm not saying that openness and transparency are the way to definitely solve power issues, but I believe it's a way, at the very least, to create an environment in which power issues are more evident. For instance, if a reviewer is really doing everything they can to bar an article from being published, they would probably not accept to disclose their name, or even to participate in the game.

Once again, this is definitely easier in a journal that has not an ambition to become the top journal in the field, a journal where everybody wants to publish, where you need to reduce the number of submissions because you don't have space to accept everybody. In a journal for which the problem is actually the opposite, that is, recruiting authors, this constructive and open approach is definitely easier and, for me, it is an experiment in thinking of a different way to address power, rather than pretending it disappears because people are protected by anonymity. Actually, and I refer to Ender's comment, one of the things I always do when doing peer reviews is that, if I suggest to the authors a work of mine, I always disclose my name, which is a way of saying: "I think this may be useful to you, but that's mine, so I may be biased, so I'm not gonna judge your decision on whether to cite it or not." This is very different from one typical problem of blind, poor reviewers, asking completely unrelated works to be quoted. I mean, if this happens to me as an editor of a blind journal, I would not send this comment through or say to the authors: "this is probably just not interesting for you." But the point is this happens. And this happens because of lack of accountability, it would not happen in open reviews: once again, I am not claiming this will solve the issues, but that openness is actually one of the ways to deal with power.

Ender Peker:
In my case, by the way, the reviewer actually suggested many other articles too—not just his own. But I understand exactly what you mean, Simone. I also find it quite awkward when reviewers send a long list of only their own work, almost like a checklist. It feels more like self-promotion than helpful feedback.

Sıla Ceren Varış Husar:
Thanks for listing down mostly the positive, but also the negative, sides of the open review approach. The next question, what do you think about this recent indexing in Scopus? The journal has been evolving with your efforts and with our efforts right now. It's a good milestone and we are on the edge of something like rethinking or restructuring the journal. The expectation is that there are going to be more submissions. I would like to ask the new editorial board, Editor in Chief primarily, what do you think about this, and what steps are being taken to enhance. Are we going to still support young academics and early career researchers or are there any different ideas for the future?

Asma Mehan:
It has been more than 10 years that the *plaNext* has been initiated with all your help, support, visions and great perspectives. After a decade, the Scopus indexing marks a very important moment for *plaNext* and also for *plaNext*'s future and vision. It is important because it solidifies the *plaNext*'s reputation as a high-quality peer reviewed journal. I didn't say open or blind peer reviewed journal in the field of urban studies and planning on purpose. It is not an end point, I think it's just a stepping stone and just the beginning of a new process.

My main concern and push as the Editor in Chief of the *plaNext* would be to make sure to help the visibility of the journal. So I would love to expand our national, international, regional and local presence through targeted related outreach. Also, I would love to create more platforms for collaborations and different academic networks. For example, I'm based in the US and now I'm working with the American Planning Association for having a roundtable and introduction about the *plaNext* journal. Creating this new international collaboration and visibility of *plaNext* for me is a really important goal.

I want to make sure that we keep our rigorous editorial work and especially the peer reviewer standards. This is really important when you are being indexed in Scopus, you need to keep this peer reviewer standards and the quality of the papers being published. I think here, it's essential to make sure that we do have our published articles in a really high-quality and rigorous peer review process. Definitely the next step would be to invite the leading and senior scholars and academics and even practitioner as guest editors, and also reviewers, to make sure that we are just holding the excellence as well as making sure that we do provide the stage for the early career and young academics because this is the main mission and aim of the journal.

Finally, I think it's essential to consider the impact and the strategies, which encourage authors to cite *plaNext* in relevant studies: keeping the citation is in line with Scopus strategies on international level and also engaging with other high-quality Quartile 1 journals to increase our citation metrics. We want to apply for the different regional and national indexing to make sure that journal has a wider outreach as well. Additionally, digital footprint in our digital world is really important and we need to have some digital strategies. My idea is to leverage social media, different research platforms, Academia, ResearchGate and different institutional repositories to make sure that the *plaNext* is being seen and being acknowledged as a Scopus indexed academic journal. These are the main aims and goals to have the leads for the next stage and the impact of *plaNext* journal.

Sıla Ceren Varış Husar:
These are the goals that we have because the existing academic publishing system kind of pushes us to get indexed and apply for this and that constantly. We have been discussing the fact that there has also been a serious slowdown in the submissions to *plaNext* for the past one and a half year. We knew that people would like to publish on this platform; yet there are some criteria to be filled, for example, for finishing PhD, getting a position, etc. So, I can rephrase my question, being indexed as a journal is a good step, but what are your critical

thoughts on this? Since the needs that were 10 years ago, maybe are not the same right now in the academic world.

Ender Peker:
Well, I agree with the majority of those goals, and I really appreciate the efforts toward indexing, including being listed in Scopus. But when it comes to the broader system and the way it pushes us toward certain benchmarks, I can't help but question whether this might conflict with the original spirit of the journal. I don't want to sound too pessimistic, but I do have some hesitations when it comes to indexing. The conventional way of looking at academic publishing encourages us to chase these indexes. And yes, I understand that after completing a PhD, many researchers are required to publish in indexed journals—we're all familiar with these institutional stories, and they apply across many countries. But as we pursue credibility through indexing, there's a risk that early career researchers—the very audience this journal was created to support — could be overshadowed. For example, as the journal becomes more visible and better indexed, it will likely attract submissions from more established scholars. While that's not inherently a bad thing, it could shift the balance. We may start receiving fewer submissions from early career academics. There's also a risk that we'll feel pressure to adapt to more traditional models of academic publishing, such as adopting a more closed, anonymous peer review process. I'm not saying this will happen for sure, but it's a possibility that the system might push us in that direction over time.

Another concern is that the editorial board itself is made up of early career researchers. One of the values of *plaNext* is that we're learning by doing. But as the workload increases and more experienced scholars begin submitting to the journal, the capacity of the editorial board to respond as a team might be stretched. The pace of learning within the editorial board may not keep up with the expectations of these more established contributors. So I think it's worth asking: how do we maintain the journal's identity as a platform for early career scholars? Are we going to define authorship eligibility, say, by limiting it to those within a certain number of years after completing their PhD? Probably not — and we shouldn't have to. But then how do we balance our efforts? How do we ensure that we continue to support new and emerging scholars while dealing with increasing submission numbers? For instance, we started out handling 5 or 6 papers at a time, which we could manage individually. But now, with the journal's growth and the indexing, I imagine there are 30 or 40 papers in the system — maybe more. And with Scopus indexing, you can expect even more submissions, maybe ten per a month or more. That's a real accumulation, and it raises questions about scale and sustainability. These are just my concerns. I'm not trying to make a black-and-white argument. I'm just reflecting on how we might navigate these challenges while staying true to the journal's founding mission.

Asma Mehan:
Ender, thank you so much for your comments. Respectfully, I want to just let you know that it's exactly the opposite for most of the early career and young academics. They were very hesitant during the past years to submit to the *plaNext* journal because the journal was not indexed. I think via indexing they think you're also providing a really firm platform for the early career young academics. I don't think that we need to just define all that traditional way of, for example, how many years after your PhD or postdoc, etc. Rather than that, I think we need to judge based on the quality of the submission. This should be a merit base selection rather than the years from your PhD. I think it's a different perspective. So I think that this being indexed in the *plaNext* will help and motivate the young and early career academics to submit their work to the *plaNext*. I also agree that it's also encouraged some of the more senior established scholars to contribute.

We just received so many comments and hesitation from people across different countries. For example, from Italian colleagues we received a comment that *plaNext* was not indexed in

the Italian system, so they were not going to submit their articles. This sparked the idea of making sure that *plaNext* is indexed in Scopus. Especially for early career academics, it's a relief since they want just to make sure that their efforts are valued and recognized. They gain credits for their PhD, postdoc, etc. They need to get hired in an academic institution that is built on the indexing system without being hesitant about the journal and the ability of the journal itself. I think it creates new potential, especially for the young academics and early career researchers.

In addition, please also consider that we also have submissions from the AESOP YA network annual conferences. This is the medium that exists especially for young academics and early career researchers, and I think we need the mixture of contributions from both young academics and senior scholars because we are not living in a void. Both groups are together in the academic system. We need to have a mixture of all these experiences, and I think that's how the young people are being more motivated to submit to the *plaNext* journal.

Ender Peker:
My hesitation is more about the long run. *plaNext* should preserve its distinction from more mainstream, established journals. It shouldn't become, for example, like *Transactions of the AESOP*[5] in the future. The question is: how will that difference be maintained? Conference-based issues and special issues are tools for doing that. But the open call model, by its nature, is open to everyone, and that makes it harder to preserve the original character of the journal.

Simone Tulumello:
I see a contradiction here: of course, in the present environment, being indexed in Scopus is a good thing, congrats for that. The point, one thing Ender was saying, is: more people are going to submit, sure, are you ready to manage five times, six times, ten times the number of articles? In my personal experience, when I was at *plaNext*, it was very tough for me to handle five, six articles a year. Now, at *Análise Social*[6], the journal of which I am an editor, I handle 30 to 40 a year, which is the normal thing for most journals. The point is that when you are an early career academic, it's tougher for any number of reasons: managing those huge numbers of papers is something that may not be that easy when you are a PhD candidate or starting up your career. That's, however, a pragmatic issue, which can be addressed and I'm sure you will manage to address it.

But I think there is a broader point here, which is the idea of buying into a problematic system. I mean, I personally think that PhD candidates should not write articles. The PhD, in the social sciences, should be the period of a career in which you focus on actually doing a monograph, which will become your first and best book. And this obsession of pushing PhD candidates to publish is not for them. It's just a way for universities to have a cheap workforce publishing a lot of stuff. And, of course, now they are all in this competition because you don't get into a postdoc if you haven't published; in this way you get stuck, individually and collectively, into this process. Granted, I'm not saying journals like *plaNext* should not be indexed; but I think the editorial board should be aware of the meaning of this system. Indexes, and it's becoming more and more evident every day, do not guarantee quality. I mean MDPI and Frontiers publish lower quality journals and they are all indexed. They are in Scopus, in Web of Science, and they have very high impact factors, and so forth. The fact is that there is no relation between quality and indexing. This wasn't a debate 10 years ago; nowadays, it's something everybody knows, and still we are into this, this run for getting indexed, otherwise people would not publish. So, there is a tension here, of which especially a journal for and by early career scholars should be aware of. I think it's a good thing for journals in this environment to be

[5] https://transactions-journal.aesop-planning.eu/index.php/TrAESOP/index
[6] https://revistas.rcaap.pt/analisesocial/

indexed. But only as long as you have spaces to debate what indexes are about: I mean, this is a great space for doing it, isn't it? So thanks for launching this initiative.

Sıla Ceren Varış Husar:
Additionally to what we are going to publish in the *plaNext* but also the editorial model that we need to restructure. At the moment I am responsible for nine papers and the review processes. I believe that we can still provide the necessary requirements without losing the soul, without losing the core views of the journal. The early career scholars that would like to publish are going to publish with us. What are the strategic goals? What do you have in mind as the new editorial board member of the *plaNext*?

Esra Kut Görgün:
I guess we should share posts on YA network because everybody can access information there easily. And for each public publication, we should share some posts on social media. I agree with Asma, I guess I can just say that.

Sıla Ceren Varış Husar:
Since Esra mentioned the ideas of posting on social media and reaching out young scholars, maybe we need to put on the journal website our manifesto: what we are trying to do is; what our ethical point of view is; what the soul of this journal is and how we are going to keep the core of this journal. Maybe we can also discuss, Asma, in the next editorial board meeting and Francesca would you like to add something about the future ideas and goals that you have in mind for the *plaNext*?

Francesca Dal Cin:
Picking up from where Esra left off—about the website—I think that, even though it's not directly related to the publication process itself, it's important to focus on the design and visual side of the site. Improving the layout and imagery can really help attract a broader community of readers and contributors. Since the journal focuses on topics such as architecture and planning, I believe we should pay more attention to the visual identity of *plaNext*. Images and visual communication can play a key role in engaging different kinds of authors, especially from creative or design-related backgrounds.

Another idea—though I know it may be a bit ambitious or even wishful thinking—would be to organize a workshop. Something designed specifically for early career researchers, to bring them together and help them better understand how to write an academic article. Before even debating whether it's better to publish a monograph or an article, I think it's important to clarify what each format is, what the differences are, and how to approach writing. Especially at the beginning of a PhD, these distinctions can be very unclear and confusing. That's more or less what I've been thinking about.

Asma Mehan:
As Esra and Francesca mentioned, there is a point here and I think after our conversation now it's more strong for me. One of the goals would definitely be bridging these established and more senior and the early career scholars. We had this long discussion on how we want to make sure that *plaNext* serves as a mentorship-driven platform where a young researcher receives constructive feedback from more senior academics.

Sıla Ceren Varış Husar:
Last but not least, as we conclude, could you share your vision for *plaNext* and what you hope to see from it in the years to come?

Simone Tulumello:
I honestly think it's not for not-so-early-career folks like me to give a vision for a journal by and for early career folks. For instance, many of the issues we discussed in this dialogue are very

different from the perspective of a (recently) tenured guy like me and (mostly) precarious scholars like those at *plaNext*: I am a bit sceptical of indexes, and yet perfectly understand the need for precarious folks to privilege publishing in indexed venues—a contradiction that can only be solved if people manage to publish in different venues for different purposes. What I feel like saying is that I would be happy if *plaNext* could remain a space where, more than following the latest fashion in academic evaluation, people could experiment with different ways of being in academia, like we tried and did launching it 10 years ago.

Nadia Caruso:
I hope *plaNext* could be a place where young and early career scholars can experiment and publish with a different ratio, finding a supportive and constructive journal to enrich their knowledge and capabilities to publish. I suggest that the current and future members of the Editorial board keep an open mind, to be able to invent and test calls and initiatives in this spirit.

Ender Peker:
I think *plaNext* is a unique journal by its nature. From the very beginning, it stood out not just for what it published, but for how it approached the entire publishing process. That's something rare. What made the journal special, at least for me, was its openness to young voices and its commitment to constructive feedback mechanism—both in the content it published and in the way it operated behind the scenes. As it gains recognition and becomes more visible through indexing, I hope it can keep that spirit alive. I'm no longer part of the editorial board, but as someone who was there at the beginning, I hope it continues to evolve without losing its character, and that it remains a place where emerging scholars can feel seen, supported, and challenged in different possible ways.

Esra Kut Görgün:
My question is, how do we overcome the challenges faced by new generation urban planners in academia through more interactive and collaborative systems?

Francesca Dal Cin:
In the near future, I believe *plaNext* should continue to strengthen its role as a reference point for early career scholars—not only by publishing high-quality research, but also by actively fostering spaces for exchange and dialogue. In this regard, it would be desirable to promote opportunities for direct interaction among young researchers, through initiatives such as seminars, workshops or special issues emerging from collective processes.

At the same time, the journal could further consolidate its interdisciplinary vocation by encouraging dialogue between planning and related fields such as environmental studies, political ecology, digital geographies or feminist theory. These cross-disciplinary engagements are essential to critically interpret the complexity of contemporary spatial transformations and to question the normative and performative dimensions of planning.

Finally, I envision *plaNext* as an increasingly accessible and visible platform, capable of extending its impact beyond academia. This could be achieved through more open editorial formats, carefully curated thematic sections, and a stronger relationship with AESOP—not only as a reference network, but as an active interlocutor in supporting the growth of the next generation of scholars.

Asma Mehan:
As the current Editor in Chief of *plaNext – Next Generation Planning*, I see the journal's next phase as a delicate balancing act: deepening our roots in open, mentorship-driven practice even as we embrace the visibility and reach that come with being indexed in Scopus. My vision is to continue as a creative incubator where early career scholars can experiment with formats, narratives, and methodologies—often overlooked in mainstream, metric-driven venues—but

now backed by the confidence that their work meets institutional benchmarks. We will safeguard our signature ethos of transparent peer review and constructive feedback, building formal mentorship pathways between seasoned academics and early career authors, ensuring that every submission becomes a site of learning and growth.

I plan to launch thematic special issues, workshops and digital initiatives to cultivate skills, foster dialogue, and broaden our community across disciplines and regions. A public manifesto or guiding statement will be formalised to assert our editorial values, serve as a compass for future leadership, and reaffirm *plaNext*'s identity as more than a journal—a living project that champions inclusion, experimentation, and intergenerational collaboration. *plaNext* will continue to serve as a crucial platform that recognises, supports, challenges and empowers emerging scholars to shape the future of planning scholarship.

I want to thank you all for joining us today and it's not the end of our conversation. So I will get back to you, it's for different collaborations. Dear Simone, Nadia and Ender, we want to learn more from your experiences and for us it's important to keep you engaged. Our aim is to make sure that you are engaged in the related activities of *plaNext* because I think you are the founding members of the *plaNext*, and this relationship never stops.

How does a journal stay true to its mission of empowering early career scholars while also adapting to the realities of the academic world? That's the question at the heart of this conversation about the future of plaNext. Participants shared their visions for the journal, discussing how it can continue to foster a creative and supportive community for emerging scholars without compromising on the quality or visibility needed to advance their careers.

Acknowledgment

The dialogue is transcribed from a recorded online meeting by YouTube's automatic transcription. Original texts have been compared, combined, compacted and edited by Sıla Ceren Varış Husar. The other authors have reviewed and modified it.

References

Caruso N., & Tulumello S. (2017). *plaNext* – next generation planning: verso una peer-review aperta, *EyesReg – Giornale di Scienze Regionali,* 7(4), 143–147. www.eyesreg.it/2017/*plaNext*-next-generation-planning-verso-una-peer-review-aperta/

Kallio, K. P., & Riding, J. (2018). Dialogical peer-review and non-profit open-access journal publishing: welcome to Fennia. *Fennia-International Journal of Geography,* 196(1), 4–8. https://doi.org/10.11143/fennia.70470

Open Access Journal

Empowering scholarship: Young researcher-led journals as spaces for learning, envisioning, and experimenting with alternatives

Elisa (Lizzy) Privitera
University of Toronto Scarborough, Canada
Corresponding author: elisa.privitera@utoronto.ca

Pavel Grabalov
Norwegian University of Life Sciences (NMBU), Norway

Milan Husár
Spectra Centre of Excellence of the EU, Slovak University of Technology in Bratislava, Slovakia

Francesca Leccis
University of Cagliari, Italy

Mafalda Madureira
University of Twente, The Netherlands

Subhashree Nath
Leibniz Institute of Ecological Urban and Regional Development (IOER), Dresden, Germany

Lauren Uğur
Heilbronn University of Applied Sciences, Germany

Chandrima Mukhopadhyay
Independent researcher, India

Sıla Ceren Varış Husar
Slovak University of Technology in Bratislava, Slovakia

 ISSN 2468-0648.

Please cite as: Privitera, E., Grabalov, P., Husár, M., Leccis, F., Madureira, M., Nath, S., Uğur, L., Mukhopadhyay, C., & Varış Husar, S. C. (2025). Empowering scholarship: Young researcher-led journals as spaces for learning, envisioning, and experimenting with alternatives. *plaNext – Next Generation Planning,* 15, 61–77. https://doi.org/10.24306/plnxt/111

Open Access Journal

This paper presents reflections and experience-based perspectives on the potential of young researcher-led journals, such as *plaNext – Next Generation Planning*, to generate a space for learning from and networking with peers and senior scholars, as well as empowering young researchers and creating new ideas. Its original dialogue-based format is drawn from a two-hour online conversation that took place on March 7, 2025, between founding and current editorial members of *plaNext*. The discussion was recorded, then transcribed and polished, while leaving the main core of the discussion and tone intact. It was structured around a series of guiding questions prepared by the editors of this special issue, who adopted a qualitative research approach situated between focus groups and semi-structured interview formats. As such, the themes addressed were guided, while still allowing space for personal reflections and open expression.

The resulting article is organized into five main thematic sections. The first explores the motivations that led participants to found or join the editorial team of *plaNext*, detailing its genesis as a collective initiative led by early career academics seeking to resist and challenge the competitive and exclusionary practices of academic publishing by offering a more inclusive and supportive environment for young scholars. The second section examines the tension between creatively innovating within the publishing system while maintaining scientific credibility and appeal. The third addresses the ethical challenges of adopting a supportive yet rigorous editorial approach, as well as the complexities of navigating diverse editorial roles and responsibilities. The fourth focuses on lessons learned from previous editorial experiences and how they could shape the vision and future direction of the journal. It also touches upon how the cross-cutting skills developed through editorial work can support career pathways both within and beyond academia. The final section presents general reflections and concrete suggestions for recognizing and valuing the work of reviewers.

Keywords: early career researchers, open knowledge, plural knowledge, open peer review, technology and AI, publishing ethics

Stories about founding, joining, publishing, and shaping *plaNext*

Lizzy Privitera:
I'm very happy to have all of you here. Thank you for participating in this dialogue. Today's conversation aims to reflect on key milestones from *plaNext*'s past 10 years, while also exploring a shared roadmap, vision, and the challenges ahead. I'm looking forward to today's discussion. I invite you to share how you got involved with the journal and what motivated you to join.

I can start with myself. I've been collaborating for many years with the AESOP Young Academic network (YAN), both as a part of the coordination team, and a couple of years ago, in 2023, I joined the editorial team of *plaNext*, where I was a guest editor of two volumes[1]. I witnessed the transition from the previous editorial board to the new one. We are in the middle of understanding and figuring out together the challenges of the coming years.

Sıla Ceren Varış Husar:
I have been much more active in the YAN Coordination Team. That's why I was invited to the editorial board in December 2023. The journal has been going through the transition period from the previous editorial board to the new one. I was invited to join the team despite having no prior experience in journal or editorial work. From the beginning, the group was very welcoming and supportive while gradually introducing me to tasks. They'd say, "You can do this, you can get involved in that," which helped a lot. As we began working on special issues and submissions, I took on more responsibility and started to develop my own role within the editorial board.

Subhashree Nath:
I joined *plaNext* last year, around July/August, as one of the board members. I think my key reason for joining *plaNext* was that it's something which has open access and there is no article processing charge (APC)[2], which is very critical for young researchers, especially from the Global South, who often cannot afford the APC[3].

Milan Husár:
I joined *plaNext* similarly to Ceren as a natural, or let's say typical, pathway of being a chair of YAN from late 2022. So, I was also working partially with the old editorial board and now with the new one.

Francesca Leccis:
I joined *plaNext* by applying for a position, and I've been collaborating since the end of 2022.

Chandrima Mukhopadhyay:
I started by collaborating with AESOP in other projects on Global South planning[4], then, in 2016, I joined *plaNext*. For me, *plaNext* not only gives an opportunity to early career researchers to publish but also encourages them to think about how the discipline is advancing. I think that I would be more interested in making *plaNext* a **safe place for the young researchers to think more innovatively about the discipline**. *plaNext* is already attracting authors from different geographical areas, and I think that thinking about *plaNext*

[1] See Vol. 12 (2022): Governing the Unknown: Adaptive Spatial Planning in the Age of Uncertainty | plaNext–Next Generation Planning, Vol. 14 (2024): Social Mobilisations and Planning through Crises | plaNext–Next Generation Planning, as well as Privitera et al. (2022) and Rossini et al. (2024).

[2] APC refers to the fee charged to authors by most scientific journals to make their articles open access.

[3] Among others, Rodrigues et al. (2022) highlight that the APC system must change, as it restricts access to scientific knowledge in low- to middle-income regions, thereby exacerbating existing inequalities in science.

[4] For info, see Mukhopadhyay et al. (2021).

innovatively implies including the disciplinary evolution of planning theories and practices. At the end of the day, the name of *plaNext* comes from "planning for the next generation".

Mafalda Madureira:
I worked with *plaNext* for about three years during the COVID-19 phase. I got to know *plaNext* when I was a PhD student, and I really enjoyed that it was a space where PhD students could find a more **supportive** and constructive publishing environment. And I wanted to contribute to that type of experience also because I think that you grow as an academic when you engage in a **constructive dialogue with your colleagues and with your peers**. So that's what brought me to *plaNext*. Also, I thought that the journal might be a friendly place where you can **network** and connect with other peers. And that's what I found. I think it helps that *plaNext* is connected to a wider community of YAN, that it's, likewise, connected with AESOP.

Lauren Uğur:
I think I would like to speak a little bit about the initial days of *plaNext*, when it started. As a young academic involved with AESOP, I led the YAN for a couple of years—a really rewarding experience that connected me with amazing young people, who, just like myself, were starting to question their academic futures. As everyone at this stage in their life and career, we were thinking, "Am I going to get an academic position?" We all know that those are not hanging on trees! While navigating such uncertainty, we were feeling some frustration—but in a constructive way. Many of us were analyzing discourses for our own work and own PhDs, starting to teach, write, and get our papers rejected—sometimes harshly—by the more established voices in the field. We started having deep conversations about **what kind of future we wanted for planning research and discourse**. These discussions—both formal and informal—led to an idea: why not create our own journal? If I remember correctly, it was during a meeting in Sweden with Simone Tulumello, Ender Peker, and other members of the YAN organizing team that we were around a table and said, "Let's do it." That's how *plaNext* was born—out of a desire to **do things differently**, to offer an **inclusive platform for emerging voices**, and to shape discourse in new ways. We wanted something collaborative, meaningful, and lasting.

Pavel Grabalov:
I joined *plaNext* in August 2024. I think that there are several reasons why I wanted to join. Beyond the fact that *plaNext* is a safe space for younger career researchers like me, also, I do not like these big publishing houses that make a lot of money on us. I appreciate more those journals promoted by institutions or universities themselves, which are run without any financial profit from commercial companies. And *plaNext* is one of them. So I like the idea of being part of it. But of course, I also wanted to meet new people working in planning and related disciplines.

Subhashree Nath:
I would like to build on what Pavel said about having these big companies or big publishing houses. I think that *plaNext* can be a great option for young researchers, especially those who cannot afford an APC but have really good research and have something important to say. This is also a way to **resist the big publishing companies** that make money out of research and knowledge that should probably be otherwise common knowledge, and you cannot really advance science if all this knowledge is behind paywalls. So I think this was also one of the reasons that motivated me to join *plaNext*. Also, I see a lot of potential in *plaNext* because it comes from young researchers. So, in a way, we share our own struggles. Apart from just researchers who are part of institutes, I think *plaNext* could also be something for people who do not fall within institutional categories. There is so much knowledge that is out there, which we often call gray literature, and which then does not make up part of the systematic reviews, for example, because it's gray. I think *plaNex*t would also then become a space for not strictly

academic knowledge, or the **plural ways of knowing** things. I think this potential was also very important for me when I decided to apply.

Lizzy Privitera:
These are all excellent points and closely align with our thoughts while developing the special issue. You are bringing an important **equity lens** to *plaNext*. A more **accessible journal** can make a real difference for many researchers.

plaNext's evolution and challenges: Staying creative, open, inclusive, and grounded in the real-world, while scientifically recognized

Chandrima Mukhopadhyay:
I want to highlight that *plaNext* is an open access journal and has an open peer review process. And now it is also Scopus indexed, right? So *plaNext* has everything! From my experience and what mentors have told me, even if your article isn't published in a top-tier, high-impact journal, it can still make a difference if you actively promote it. Either publish in a well-regarded journal or help the journal by promoting it. Especially now, with social media, we have the tools to **amplify our work** and the platforms we publish in.

Lizzy Privitera:
I really like this topic because navigating the publication world can be a complex experience for young scholars. I have a critical view on publishing only in top-tier journals, however, while applying for academic positions, it became clear how much publishing in high-impact journals is a key selection criterion. Personally, I believe in the value of the article itself—the quality of the work and the process of creating it. That's where *plaNext* can be really special: it offers a supportive, **non-judgmental space for learning and publishing**, which is incredibly important for young researchers. At the same time, there's a challenge in promoting open-access journals like *plaNext* as valid and valuable places to publish—whether at the start, during, or after a PhD. There's pressure to aim for "high-level" journals, but what does that even mean? Impact factors and indexing don't always reflect the true quality of a paper. So it's a tricky process.

Mafalda Madureira:
One of the ongoing challenges has been publishing a cohesive set of papers from the YAN workshops. While the papers from the YAN initiatives often share a common theme, it's been difficult to gather them all in *plaNext*, partly because some supervisors encourage students to submit elsewhere. What's really valuable, though, is when papers that speak to each other are published together in a single issue—it allows the editorial team to **craft a narrative around a shared debate**. A great example was the Global South issue[5], which came together so well, partly thanks to Vanessa's involvement on the editorial board. This connection between *plaNext* and the YAN initiatives and PhD workshops is a key strength, and it would be great to consistently publish thematic clusters that reflect those workshop discussions

Chandrima Mukhopadhyay:
Every journal contributes to an ongoing debate by advancing specific knowledge or perspectives. High-impact journals, in particular, are often defined by their ability to engage a broad audience in these debates. One way to strengthen this in *plaNext* is by encouraging authors—especially when their papers are close to acceptance—to reflect on and connect

[5] For more info, see Mukhopadhyay et al. (2021) and the following link: Vol. 11 (2021): Planning Theories from the Global South | plaNext–Next Generation Planning

their work to the **journal's overarching themes or current debate**. Even if not all papers are directly related to each other, prompting authors to situate their contributions within a broader conversation can help build coherence across issues and foster deeper engagement with the journal's vision.

Lizzy Privitera:
This is a great point for the new editorial team to reflect on. In the coming years, it could be valuable to **define some thematic interests** that both reflect the team's vision and help push the boundaries of the planning debate. Young researchers often bring fresh, experimental ideas that differ from more established academic paths, so *plaNext* could serve as a **platform for** this **innovation**. It might be worth considering whether the new editorial team wants to develop a thematic roadmap—specific angles or perspectives on planning to explore over time.

Chandrima Mukhopadhyay:
From the beginning, *plaNext* has been **open to new ideas**. For example, we were allowed to develop a thematic issue on the Global South and East, and Simone Tulumello later co-edited one with Patsy Healey that reinterpreted older concepts in a newer frame and light[6]. The journal has consistently welcomed innovation and invited leading scholars to guest-edit special issues, offering young academics a valuable opportunity for feedback and dialogue.

Looking ahead, one way *plaNext* could evolve is by **facilitating more direct interaction between contributors and guest editors**. Currently, most collaboration happens via email, but organizing online or face-to-face meetings—like those often held for edited book projects—could help authors better connect and create more cohesive issues. Creating these spaces for live exchange would strengthen the journal's collaborative and mentoring potential.

Mafalda Madureira:
I would like to confirm Chandrima's point about earlier special issues where well-known scholars were invited to join the editorial team. This is part of a broader effort to **increase *plaNext*'s visibility**—like the introduction of the **"Online First" feature**[7]. We put a lot of work into making the journal more recognized so that publishing in *plaNext* would also be valuable for early career researchers. I believe these efforts are starting to pay off.

Pavel Grabalov:
It sounds like open access was a really important issue. I'm not sure how it is elsewhere, but in Northern Europe now, there are often large budgets to cover the APCs, so PhD students might not face the same challenges. I'm curious—how important open access was for you at the time, and how important is it now?

Lauren Uğur:
Back when we started, our focus wasn't so much on open access, but rather on **open transparency in the review process**. We saw how younger academics—especially PhD students and postdocs—were often pushed aside or used to support the careers of senior academics. It wasn't uncommon to receive harsh reviews simply for not citing certain

[6] See Vol. 3 (2016): Questioning planning, connecting places and times | plaNext–Next Generation Planning.

[7] "Online First" refers to a publication status where an article is made available online before it is inserted into the journal issue. This allows readers to access peer-reviewed articles ahead of their scheduled print publication, enabling them to stay updated with the latest research. Authors benefit from reduced lead times between submission and publication. *plaNext*'s online first page is accessible on this link: OnlineFirst | plaNext–Next Generation Planning

"important" papers, even if they felt outdated or irrelevant. Blind reviews could be brutal, and fresh ideas were often dismissed if they didn't align with established narratives.

And we were saying, you know, what do we stand for? In the future, what we want in academia is **critical, open, and fair debate**. We want to show up and say, "Yes, I have a different opinion because diversity is what makes us powerful!". We believed that **diversity of thoughts and transparency** in how opinions shaped academic discourse were essential. If we were aiming for a global, inclusive platform, then **integrity, diversity, and fairness** had to be at the core. So while open access was—and still is—important, our real push was for **transparency and accountability in the academic process.**

Chandrima Mukhopadhyay:
Regarding the open review process, I think that you would like to see who is saying what and **from what position they are giving that feedback**. A single issue can be looked at from different perspectives, and people will have different views. And that's how your review would vary from one person to another. That also gives you a broader perspective of why you have certain comments on certain issues.

Lauren Uğur:
We were saying, "Don't hide behind anonymity, and don't shy away from different perspectives". Open, critical, and reflective debate is what makes us better—not just as academics, but also as practitioners. In regard to this latter aspect, in urban planning and development, we've always pushed **against the "ivory tower" mindset**. Yes, conceptually, theoretically, we have to be strong, but we were—and still are—interested in how those theories are applied and tested in **diverse real-world contexts**. That's how we understand the strength of a theory versus its contextual limits.

Lizzy Privitera:
My first experience with *plaNext* was years ago, and it was through the open review process of my first solo-authored paper[8]. I could even suggest potential reviewers. I remember indicating scholars whose work I admired and with whom I did not have the chance to collaborate yet. Two reviewers were assigned to my paper, and especially one of them was very familiar with the *plaNext* review system. With this scholar, **the review turned into more of a dialogue than a critique**. It felt like having a thoughtful conversation over a beer about my research. That experience really stayed with me—it was constructive, respectful, and personal. That said, in recent years, as part of the editorial team, I've noticed a shift. When we offer reviewers and authors the option between open and blind review, most tend to choose blind—often for reasons of privacy or impartiality. We don't force either option, but I still see open review as a real strength of *plaNext*, something worth preserving for the future.

Lauren Uğur:
This point brings me back to one of our original goals with the open review process. Beyond just improving a paper, it was about **creating meaningful connections**. Back then, we felt a real disconnect between senior academics and early career researchers trying to find their path. Outside of formal AESOP structures, there were few opportunities for real interaction. The open review process helped bridge that gap. It gave younger scholars a reason to reach out, start a conversation, and connect with more established academics. I remember cases where a review led to a real-life meeting and even new collaborations. That kind of **generational exchange** was something we truly wanted to foster, and it brought a lot of unexpected value.

[8] See Privitera (2020).

Lizzy Privitera:
I believe the journal can play this important role of an **intermediary between senior and young scholars**. If early career researchers often lack networks or feel too shy to approach senior academics, *plaNext* holds a unique and somewhat empowered position to help bridge that gap. We can actively engage senior scholars, especially during conferences, and invite them into conversations. I've noticed that those who've previously been involved within the YAN are often more receptive—they understand the spirit. Others may take more effort, but it's still possible. As an editorial team, we should be more conscious of this potential and take a more proactive role in facilitating these connections.

Chandrima Mukhopadhyay:
Just to add a point—when I spoke about **creating a safe space for young researchers**, I also meant being mindful of their **diverse geographic and socio-economic backgrounds**. In planning, these differences shape the kinds of knowledge we produce. The journal could do more to support and encourage those unique perspectives. One way might be offering more space for **alternative formats**—like viewpoints or perspectives—where early career researchers can share emerging ideas, even before they have full empirical evidence. That flexibility could really empower more voices to be heard.

Lauren Uğur:
I'll be honest, in fields like planning or development—what really matters is application. That's what got me thinking: Do we always need to publish in journals? Of course, publishing remains essential—it's the backbone of academic discourse. But **accessibility** as well. Not everyone can easily access journal article formats. So why not **experiment with formats like podcasts, short videos, or visual explainers**—ways to share complex theoretical ideas in forms that are easier to access and understand? When we first started *plaNext*, we also struggled with this tension. There's still a lot of hesitation around doing things differently. Academia can be resistant to change—it values peer review, impact factors, and long-established processes. But younger academics need the courage to push these boundaries and ask: What counts as meaningful? How else can we create impact? We're academics, but we can also be academics in a different way, who move with the times and look into the future.

For me, **generating impact** means making ideas available to those outside academia—practitioners, communities, people on the ground. So, in rethinking the future of academic publishing—and the role of a journal like *plaNext*—I hope we can embrace **more creativity, more experimentation, and more ways to translate theory into action**. I really believe we need more of them in how we represent and present our ideas. Because in the end, that's where real change happens.

Mafalda Madureira:
I'd like to build on Lauren's point. I completely agree—there's a real need to connect our academic work more closely with global development agendas. For example, topics like localizing the Sustainable Development Goals, the role of planning in tracking progress toward frameworks like the Sendai Framework or the New Urban Agenda—these should be rooted in concrete, real-world cases. That way, we're **not just contributing to academic debates**, but also **reaching a broader audience**. Nowadays, people readily consume videos. So maybe we could invite authors to produce **short videos**—two or three minutes—explaining why their paper matters. These quick, accessible formats could help spark interest and make the content more approachable, especially for non-academic audiences. Open access is part of it, but diverse formats for sharing knowledge are just as important.

It might also be valuable to engage more with **practitioner networks** to bring in more action-oriented research. In my experience, a lot of what's published tends to be heavily literature-

based and often feels quite removed from practice. Since planning is inherently practice- and change-oriented, it would be great to see more work that reflects that side of the field and to strengthen the connection between research and real-world application.

Lauren Uğur:
Just a quick addition. It's not just about adapting to how people consume knowledge now, but also about encouraging them to value solid academic work and actually read journal articles. I think we mustn't lose sight of the foundation and importance of deep academic reading. It's really about striking a careful balance.

Chandrima Mukhopadhyay:
p*laNext* doesn't have strict rules or boundaries, so there's room for innovation. If authors have photos or videos from their fieldwork, sharing those alongside their papers could really boost readers' interest. Visuals leave a strong impression—people might forget the text, but they rarely forget the visuals.

Lizzy Privitera:
I think one of our key challenges is to navigate the space between innovation and maintaining scientific credibility. We need to ensure that our creative formats—like podcasts, short videos, TED-style talks, or even graphic novels—align with our goal of being a respected academic journal. The aim is to be both "cool in format" and scientifically rigorous in content. I see this as a core challenge for the new editorial team moving forward: to experiment with new tools while still being seen as a valuable place to publish, or in other words, being innovative in what scientific knowledge we deliver and in how we deliver it.

Takeaways, lessons, and future challenges from being part of *plaNext*: About being a communicative and kind, and still rigorous, journal and reviewer

Lauren Uğur:
One of the biggest lessons was that **change takes time**—you can't go from zero to 100. As young and passionate academics, we were full of ideas and wanted to see immediate results, but we quickly realized that progress in academic publishing needs to happen step by step. Another key learning was the **importance of communication**. As much as diversity is our biggest strength, if there's no communication for that step-by-step incremental change process, even amongst ourselves as young academics, it becomes challenging. With such a diverse group, it was easy to focus on the technical and conceptual work and forget how crucial it is to stay connected and aligned. So, we pull it back, and we say "what is the impact we want? What is the change we want?". Good communication made a real difference in moving forward together and turning ideas into action.

Pavel Grabalov:
I'd like to add to what Lauren said about communication. From my experience with copy editing and publishing, the transition between editorial teams wasn't very smooth—many papers experienced long delays, which is the opposite of what we want. Surprisingly, authors were generally understanding, probably because, unlike big journals where communication can be minimal or formal, we kept an open and **supportive dialogue**. This close communication helps create a safe space for authors and is something we can continue to improve.

Chandrima Mukhopadhyay:
Publication anyway is a very slow process and then when you are working as an editor, you set up the timeline, but there is a lot of going back and forth, not everything works out, so a lot of patience is needed.

Francesca Leccis:
For me, it was a big learning experience, realizing that things can be done differently. I'd always published through double-blind peer review—even in conference proceedings—characterized by strict deadlines and formal reviewer demands. *plaNext*'s more open and dialogue-based approach unlocked my mind towards new possibilities.

Subhashree Nath:
Beyond the reasons I mentioned earlier, I joined the journal to understand the publishing process from the other side. We've all encountered long waits without updates, which can be frustrating. I wanted to see what happened behind the scenes. Now, knowing that backlogs can happen due to editorial changes or life events, I've gained a more sympathetic perspective on the process. I also think we can improve how reviews are communicated. Since *plaNext* focuses on young researchers, reviewers adopting a more supportive, mentoring tone rather than harsh criticism would be hugely beneficial. Applying this approach more widely could boost morale, especially for early career scholars who might be discouraged by harsh feedback that's not about the content but the tone. Ultimately, I think we could be that **sympathetic safe journal** which doesn't put away rigorous scientific practice, but that **can be kind and still rigorous**: finding this balance would be a major achievement.

Lauren Uğur:
I love that sentence. Can you be kind and rigorous at the same time? Because that's exactly what matters. As a teacher, I constantly reflect on this. Unfortunately, academia often feels like a shark-eat-shark world. This was true 10 years ago, and it still is. So why, even anonymously, would someone be so unkind to a person trying to produce meaningful work? Personally, I believe we've lost the art of constructive critical debate, especially in education. People often take criticism as offense, get triggered, and avoid hard conversations. Yet, if we look around our cities and societies, we see pressing issues demanding tough discussions. Isn't that exactly what our discipline is for? So, you can be critical, and you can still be kind in the way that you communicate that 100%.

Pavel Grabalov:
I've been researching how planners learn and exploring different learning theories. We know from various fields that harsh critique, especially when someone is stressed or afraid, does not support learning. So, it's important to view **publishing and peer review as a learning experience—for both authors and reviewers.** It's also a chance for us to practice how to engage in constructive, respectful dialogue.

Mafalda Madureira:
Let me build on the point about being both critical and kind. I've been fortunate to have supervisors who embodied that balance, and it shaped how I give feedback—both to students and in peer reviews. But I've also worked with someone quite the opposite—their comments made even me uncomfortable, though they weren't directed at me. When I suggested they were too harsh, especially toward a student, they replied, "Well, they were harsh to me. Why shouldn't I be harsh to others?" That kind of mindset just perpetuates the cycle. I believe *plaNext* has a role to play in breaking that culture. As editors, we're responsible for ensuring feedback is constructive. If a review is unnecessarily harsh, it's on us to intervene. Criticism should never be personal—people don't make mistakes because they want to, but because they don't yet know better.

Chandrima Mukhopadhyay:
I've heard PhD students express frustration about the visibility imbalance in academia. Those supervised by prominent "star" academics often receive more attention and recognition, while others feel overlooked—partly because they lack a platform to showcase their work. *plaNext*

can help address this. By inviting respected scholars as guest editors, the journal can create opportunities for more students to gain exposure. Similarly, when promoting the journal at sub-conferences or events, efforts can be made to highlight a wider range of contributors. Moreover, there's often tension between different academic schools of thought. Certain journals tend to favor specific theoretical or methodological perspectives, which can feel exclusionary. I hope *plaNext* will take a consciously inclusive approach: **welcoming diverse perspectives and giving space for different schools of thought** to coexist and engage in meaningful dialogue.

Lizzy Privitera:
I really appreciate the emphasis on plurality—creating a truly welcoming and inclusive space. I also value the discussion around equity. Not everyone is fortunate enough to have access to a top university, a supportive supervisor, or an ideal PhD experience. People come from different backgrounds and life stories. This journal can offer a platform for diverse voices, **helping bring more equity into an inherently unequal system**.

Lauren Uğur:
I want to reflect on the learning process and how it connects to many of the points raised. As a journal—especially one like *plaNext* that aims to be innovative and inclusive—we need clear **quality management frameworks**, particularly when exploring creative formats. However, when guiding reviewers and students, I often find that the "key performance indicators" used are wrong. For instance, there's too much emphasis on language sophistication rather than on the clarity of logic, conceptual framework, and academic rigor. Such measurements are based on the wrong criteria. If *plaNext* can clarify that we value **critical thinking, originality, and sound methodology over polished language**, we can shift toward more constructive, supportive feedback. Mistakes are part of learning—especially for early career researchers—and criticism should help people grow, not discourage them. What I care about is how you think. If *plaNext* is truly committed to inclusion and plurality, then we must promote thought itself—across different schools of thought—and provide a platform for diverse voices to be heard. My core point is—*plaNext* needs a reflective process and questioning: What do we value? What do we measure? And how do we communicate that to the people who are involved in the whole review process and everything that we're doing?

Chandrima Mukhopadhyay:
I know from editors of other journals that when they receive a submission from a non-native English speaker with strong ideas, they would help the author to rewrite and polish the paper, while fully preserving the author's original thinking. That kind of supportive editorial approach sets a powerful example. If leading journals can prioritize the value of ideas over language perfection, then we should adopt a similar attitude—recognizing that great research isn't always expressed in perfect English, and that thoughtful contributions deserve to be heard and supported.

Lauren Uğur:
Nowadays, there are tools like ChatGPT and other AI programs available, and many universities already use AI-driven systems for plagiarism detection and grammar correction. So while these tools are useful, language and grammar aren't the real issue—what matters is the concept, the idea, and how we communicate it.

One insight from this conversation is how *plaNext* could **use technology to promote inclusion and accessibility**. With just a few backend automations, the journal could be published in multiple languages. At the heart of it, the question is: What do we value, and how do we want to foster inclusion, access, and diversity? Once we align on those conceptual and ethical goals, implementing them—technically and practically—becomes much easier.

Lizzy Privitera:
It's also worth remembering that in Europe, only people from the UK speak English as a native language. So even the best scholars across Europe speak with an accent and make many mistakes. It helps you realize that perfection in language isn't the goal—being understood is. I really appreciate the discussion around language. A few years ago, proofreading was a serious issue, especially for PhD students who couldn't afford professional editing services. Now, with tools like ChatGPT and other AI, much of that burden has been lifted[9]. Still, language remains a broader topic. Some journals already accept articles in multiple languages. As far as I know, *plaNext* hasn't done this yet, but it's worth considering. While English dominates academic publishing in the Global North, in regions like South America, there's a huge body of work published in Spanish and Portuguese. We're missing out on a wealth of knowledge by limiting ourselves to English. Looking forward, AI could play a role in offering real-time or automated translation to bridge this gap—helping make publications more accessible across languages. It's definitely something to keep in mind as we think about inclusion and the future of academic publishing.

Lauren Uğur:
I'd suggest keeping things simple at the start. Personally, I wouldn't recommend accepting full papers in multiple languages—unless *plaNext* is prepared to restructure its editorial board accordingly, which can be complex. That said, accessibility is still key. Most authors are willing to write in English, as it's the dominant academic language—not necessarily by choice, but because that's the reality. The goal should be to create a safe and supportive space for those writing in English, especially non-native speakers. AI tools can help with grammar and clarity, so **the focus should shift from language perfection to idea quality**.

Where *plaNext* could innovate is in **dissemination**. While submissions remain in English, the journal could publish short-form summaries or abstracts in multiple languages. This would help readers access key ideas in their own language, without complicating the peer-review process. So in short: keep the "channel in" in English for now to maintain editorial consistency but explore multilingual "channels out" to broaden reach and visibility—especially in regions where English isn't dominant. Even small steps like this can increase *plaNext*'s impact and inclusivity. Speaking about visibility, today, with all the digital tools available, including social media and platforms like LinkedIn, it is a matter of mobilizing simple strategies to grow the journal's reach, even without a budget. There's real potential here to scale up and expand globally.

What did plaNext mean for your personal and professional development?

Chandrima Mukhopadhyay:
One of the most meaningful aspects of my *plaNext* experience was the opportunity to work with Vanessa Watson as a guest editor for the Global South issue. It significantly expanded my network and deepened my understanding of Southern theories and contexts. We received an immense number of abstracts from across the globe, and it was a very fruitful discussion. Following that, we have formed a thematic group on Global South and East within AESOP[10]. All these collaborations have been in a way an outcome of being involved in *plaNext*.

[9] We do not intend to oversimplify the current debate on the potential and limitations of incorporating AI into scientific production. While we are far from endorsing the replacement of paid human proofreaders with AI tools as a way forward, we recognize the ongoing and complex challenge of how to balance affordable AI-based proofreading solutions—particularly appealing to early-career scholars and universities with low budgets—with the continued professional support provided by expert human proofreaders.
[10] See AESOP - Global South & East

Lauren Uğur:
For me, the impact of *plaNext* has two sides—personal and professional. On the personal side, it's simply been fun. I formed meaningful connections as a young academic across the world. People with whom we share a commitment to the values behind *plaNext*. That sense of connection is powerful. That global network makes work travel and conferences much more enriching—and enjoyable. Professionally, the key takeaway for me was the value of **interdisciplinarity**. Working with people from different countries, academic backgrounds, and schools of thought exposed me to a wide range of planning and development frameworks. I truly believe that this interdisciplinary mindset helped me stand out in my field. When I connected those dots and showed how different approaches could lead not just to comparable outcomes, but better ones, it made an impact. It was AESOP, *plaNext*, and spaces like this that taught me how to think critically, cross boundaries, and embrace new ways of working. That interdisciplinarity has been transformative in both my personal and professional journey.

Chandrima Mukhopadhyay:
Being part of *plaNext* means forming a great group of friends, and you also learn about each other's strengths, which can be incredibly useful on other occasions.

Lizzy Privitera:
I see how you refer to some **cross-cutting skills** that have been useful for future work experience. Do you want to expand on this?

Sıla Ceren Varış Husar:
I learned a great deal about the **internal dynamics of academic publishing**. For example, I now understand why some journals take four to six months to respond—still frustrating, especially during your PhD, but at least I see what might be the reasons behind those delays. This experience helped me better understand the system and showed me how we can support our peers. The **editorial knowledge** we've gained is **valuable and transferable** to other journals and publishing platforms. In this regard, one unexpected but valuable skill I've developed through being on the editorial board is communication, especially when reaching out to potential reviewers. At first, it felt like begging people to accept review requests, and I'd joke about how I had to become increasingly polite and persuasive each time. However, in all seriousness, this role has helped me **develop my soft skills**. Whether I'm contacting professors, PhD holders, or professionals working in research centers, I've become more confident and effective in how I connect, ask for feedback, and maintain those relationships. These soft skills, such as **clear communication, diplomacy and relationship-building**, have definitely been added to my skill set thanks to this experience.

Review dilemmas and ideas

Mafalda Madureira:
The review is challenging for everyone. My former boss keeps sending me papers to review simply because he can't find enough reviewers. There's just a huge volume of publications and very limited time for reviewing—so it's a widespread issue.

Lizzy Privitera:
Someone once told me a good rule of thumb: for every paper you submit, you should review two to three others. Since editors typically need 2–3 reviewers per submission, it's a fair way to give back to the academic community—and honestly, it's good karma. I think it's a helpful mindset to promote. Sometimes it's really hard to find reviewers, so reminding people of this practice in our journal could make a real difference.

I also think it would be helpful to introduce some form of **incentive for reviewers**. I've seen some journals publish a list of reviewers at the end of the year, or offer small symbolic gestures—like a thank-you note or a recognition award—as a way to show appreciation. Even something symbolic can go a long way in acknowledging the time and effort reviewers give. Maybe this is something we could implement in *plaNext*. Right now, it's more of an informal "thank you," but formalizing it, even in a small way, could make a difference. As reviewing becomes harder and people get busier, having some form of recognition or motivation might help. Especially as we move toward more creative formats—like graphic narratives, for example—the nature of reviewing may change, and new types of incentives could become even more important. Just an idea, but perhaps worth exploring.

Subhashree Nath:
I'd like to add to this, especially since some of you are further along in your academic careers and may have influence within institutions. I believe this is a systemic issue: **many academic institutions don't allocate time for anything beyond project-specific work**. For example, if I have a 75% or even 100% research contract, it's usually tied directly to a funded project. That means reviewing papers—or even writing new grant applications—often happens in my personal time, which is already limited and needed for both life and long-term career development. As long as reviewing remains considered "pro bono" and something we're expected to do outside of paid work, we'll keep facing this challenge. It's voluntary, yet essential, while large publishing houses profit from it. Reviewers don't get compensated, and authors may or may not benefit professionally—this imbalance needs to be addressed. If any of you can advocate within your institutions, that would help. At my institute, we've started discussions about allocating even 5 % of our contracts to peer-review work. It's not formalized yet, but it's a start. Maybe *plaNext* could publish a piece on this—highlighting **how systemic structures are undermining the peer-review process**, which is central to academic integrity and progress.

Chandrima Mukhopadhyay:
Maybe *plaNext* could introduce a basic "Reviewer Award" or something similar on an annual basis. I received one once, and I really appreciated the recognition—it felt like meaningful acknowledgment.

Lizzy Privitera:
Yes, I think that's a very good point. I really like the idea of including a dedicated 5 % of paid time in academic contracts for reviewing duties. We're all committed and passionate about making change, but academia can also be one of the most exploitative environments—many rights that are standard in other professions are often missing here, simply because we're expected to do it "for the love of it." That shouldn't be the norm. From an institutional perspective, one thing a journal like *plaNext* could do is **advocate for this kind of structural change**. Beyond that, publishing a list of contributors, for example, not only shows genuine appreciation, but also helps build a reviewer's academic profile. **Recognition** like that **strengthens careers** because it demonstrates that you are a good scholar also because you're a good reviewer. It's something we should definitely consider putting into practice.

Lauren Uğur:
As you were all speaking, I thought of one practical idea: the *plaNext* editorial board could create a simple template—a letter of appreciation or appointment—for reviewers, especially younger ones. That way, reviewing isn't just an invisible task, but something formally acknowledged. A letter could say, for instance: "Thank you for supporting the academic and planning community through your review work. We understand the effort this takes and deeply appreciate your contribution."

That kind of **formal recognition raises awareness and helps supervisors or institutions understand the time and value involved**. A small gesture like this helps **make the labor visible**. Many supervisors wouldn't even think about how much time reviewing takes unless it's actively discussed. A formal acknowledgment gives that work legitimacy.

And beyond that, we should be louder—positively loud. So my question is: what platforms are we using? For example, with AESOP or other conferences, we could be more present and better connected online. Not just demanding change, but showing up, being present, and **creating a visible culture around peer review**. That can build positive peer pressure, spotlight those who support early career scholars, and spark broader conversations about what it means to review and edit. Honestly, it's a bit like a marketing or advocacy campaign—a kind of "review lobby." But I think it could really shift the culture.

Lizzy Privitera:
I think it's a great point to mobilize more discourse and narrative strategies around this. On a related note, I was reminded of a journal where, right after I submitted a paper, the editorial team informed me of their policy: for every submission, the author is expected to review at least one paper. It wasn't strictly mandatory, but it was strongly encouraged—and I was immediately given a paper to review. This approach helps ensure a steady flow of reviewers and sets a tone of **shared responsibility**. We could do something similar with *plaNext*, but frame it more around **values**—like **solidarity, mutual support, and collective growth**. A message like: "Join our reviewer network as part of a community built on reciprocity and shared commitment!" might help reinforce that. We could definitely push this kind of narrative further.

Subhashree Nath:
I'd like to build on the marketing idea—young researchers need visibility. If *plaNext* strengthens its outreach and becomes more consistent with promotion, it could help authors gain more exposure for their work. Many journals already use social media to highlight new publications and engage broader audiences. We could do the same **to ensure that the work of young researchers is more visible and impactful**.

Lizzy Privitera:
This conversation was meant to create that space. With the new editorial team, we've met several times, but mostly to resolve practical problems like the publishing system. There was little space left to talk about ideas or future visions. So, for me, it's the first time hearing their opinions on bigger topics. I agree—we need more time for reflection and discussion to envision the change we want to see.

Let's wrap up by saying: thank you all for your time and for sharing your thoughts. This has been a rich and incredibly meaningful conversation.

Highlights

1. Motivations and origins

plaNext was born from a collective drive within the AESOP Young Academics network to challenge exclusionary norms in publishing. Founding members were motivated by a desire for openness, inclusivity, and support for early-career scholars, especially those from the Global South. The journal's open-access model and absence of article processing charges positioned it as a space for collaboration, empowerment, and the amplification of emerging voices often sidelined in traditional academic platforms.

2. Innovation vs. Scientific credibility

Editors discussed the tension between experimenting with new formats and maintaining scholarly credibility. While *plaNext* embraces creativity—like open peer review—it must also gain recognition in academic circles. Suggestions included thematic roadmaps, stronger editorial-academic links, and alternative media formats. The journal aims to legitimize experimental approaches from early career researchers while ensuring high-quality, credible contributions within a competitive publishing landscape.

3. Ethical editorial practice

Kindness and rigor emerged as guiding principles for ethical editorial practice. Editors stressed the importance of respectful, constructive feedback, particularly for early career authors. They criticized harsh, exclusionary review cultures and emphasized the role of editors in fostering dialogue over critique. *plaNext*'s open peer review system and flexible approach to knowledge were seen as essential to creating a supportive, high-quality publishing environment that values both empathy and academic standards.

4. Lessons and future visions

Editorial work at *plaNext* has helped editors develop professional skills and confidence in academic publishing. It has encouraged interdisciplinary thinking and global connections. Looking ahead, editors envisioned stronger author-reviewer interactions, more diverse contribution formats (e.g., field visuals), and deeper engagement with planning practices and global challenges. The journal's growth is shaped by its editors' reflections, learning processes, and their commitment to making publishing more accessible and meaningful.

5. Recognizing reviewer contributions

Participants emphasized the need to recognize and support peer reviewers, whose work often goes unpaid and unnoticed—especially in precarious academic contexts. Ideas included publishing acknowledgments, issuing appreciation letters, offering training, and even annual reviewer awards. The goal is to build a culture of mutual care and accountability. *plaNext* was seen as well-positioned to model equitable practices that formally value reviewer labor and foster a sustainable, community-oriented publishing culture.

Acknowledgment

The current text uses two combined sources: the automatic captions by Autotekst using OpenAI Whisper V3 and the Zoom automatic transcription. Such original texts have been compared, combined, compacted, and edited by Elisa (Lizzy) Privitera. The other authors have reviewed and modified it.

References

Mukhopadhyay, C., Belingardi, C., Papparaldo, G., & Hendawy, M. (Eds.) (2021). *Special issue: Planning Practices and Theories from the Global South*. Conversations in Planning Theory and Practice Booklet Projects. Dortmund, Germany: Association of European Schools of Planning – Young Academics Network.

Mukhopadhyay, C., & Hammami, F., with Watson, V. (2021). Introduction: Planning theories from 'southern turn' to 'deeply rooted/situated in the South/context': A project in the making. *plaNext – Next Generation Planning*, 11, 9–25. https://doi.org/10.24306/plnxt/67

Privitera, E. (2020). The third sector in the planning, production, and regeneration of inclusive public space. Notes from an ongoing experience in a distressed Sicilian neighbourhood. *plaNext – Next Generation Planning*, 10, 38–57. https://doi.org/10.24306/plnxt/66

Privitera, E., Dhrami K., Madureira, M., Dörder, P., & Toto, R. (2022). Editorial: Planning for Uncertainty. *plaNext –Next Generation Planning*, 12, 8-12. https://doi.org/10.24306/plnxt/84

Rodrigues, M.L., Savino, W., & Goldenberg, S. (2022). Article-processing charges as a barrier for science in low-to-medium income regions. *Memórias do Instituto Oswaldo Cruz*, 117, e220064. https://doi.org/10.1590/0074-02760220064

Rossini, L., Gall, T., & Privitera, E. (2024). Editorial: Social mobilisations and planning through crises. *plaNext –Next Generation Planning*, 14, 5–10. https://doi.org/10.24306/plnxt/101

Open Access Journal

Echoes of a decade in *plaNext – Next Generation Planning* journal and the road ahead

Esra Kut Görgün
Researcher and City Planner, Izmir Planning Agency, Izmir, Türkiye
Corresponding author: esrakutt@gmail.com

Subhashree Nath
Leibniz Institute of Ecological Urban and Regional Development, Dresden, Germany

plaNext – Next Generation Planning journal is an international, peer-reviewed, open-access e-journal founded by the AESOP Young Academics network. Established as a platform to amplify the voices of emerging scholars, *plaNext* enables early career researchers to contribute to international planning debates and make their work accessible to a global audience. The journal welcomes a wide range of contributions, including empirical research, theoretical discussions, innovative methodologies, case studies, and book reviews, fostering both academic engagement and professional development among young planners.

This paper presents a threefold contribution: (i) a retrospective overview of *plaNext*'s scholarly output over the past decade, (ii) an empirical survey assessing the journal's outreach within the Young Academics network and capturing respondents' perspectives on the contemporary publishing system, and (iii) a collective editorial dialogue. It culminated in a set of strategic recommendations aimed at enhancing editorial practices, strengthening mentorship mechanisms, and consolidating *plaNext*'s role as a supportive and inclusive platform. In positioning itself through these initiatives, *plaNext* aspires to serve as a distinctive and forward-looking model of an open-access journal committed to empowering early career researchers in the planning discipline.

Keywords: plaNext, planning, early career researchers, academic publishing, young planners, urban research

Please cite as: Kut Görgün, E. & Nath, S. (2025). Echoes of a decade in *plaNext – Next Generation Planning* journal and the road ahead. *plaNext – Next Generation Planning*, 15, 78–88. https://doi.org/10.24306/plnxt/110

Open Access Journal

Introduction

plaNext – Next Generation Planning journal is an international, peer-reviewed, open-access e-journal founded by the Young Academics network (YAN) of the Association of European Schools of Planning (AESOP). With a core mission of providing a platform for early career researchers (ECR), *plaNext* aims to promote critical engagement with planning discourses and make young scholars' contributions accessible to a broader academic and professional audience. The journal emphasises inclusivity, mentorship, and experimentation in publishing practices. *plaNext* positions itself as a distinctive and forward-thinking voice in the evolving landscape of planning scholarship.

In this paper, we provide a structured analysis and reflection on *plaNext*'s publishing history, trajectory, and editorial vision. This is achieved through three distinct approaches: first, a retrospective overview of the journal's output over the last decade; second, a survey on the outreach of *plaNext* within the YAN and the members' perspective on the publishing system; and third, a collective editorial dialogue.

The retrospective evaluation of *plaNext*'s output over the past decade was conducted through a combination of quantitative and qualitative analyses. These analyses consider publication dynamics, including issue frequency, article output, and the geographical and institutional distribution of authors, and trends through keyword and content analysis. Together, these perspectives highlight the journal's diverse, interdisciplinary, and globally engaged profile.

What sets *plaNext* apart is its commitment to amplifying the voices of young planners at a time when publishing remains a significant challenge for many ECR. To further understand and strengthen this role, a survey was conducted among members of the AESOP YAN to assess their familiarity with and experiences of *plaNext*, while also exploring broader challenges faced by ECR in academic publishing. The survey gathered responses on participants' awareness of the journal, their publication experiences, perceived barriers to publishing, and suggestions for how journals can better support ECR. Participants were asked to identify the main challenges they face as master's students, PhD candidates, and postdocs, as well as to provide recommendations for how *plaNext* could evolve to serve the needs and priorities of emerging planning scholars more effectively. The survey also solicited input on desired thematic directions and areas for journal development, providing valuable insights to inform the journal's future editorial strategy and support mechanisms for young academics in the planning field.

The third part of the paper focuses on the collective editorial dialogue developed around the findings. This dialogue centred on critical questions about the journal's ethos and future direction, such as balancing inclusivity with academic rigour, the role of ECR–senior scholar collaboration, academic visibility, and equitable open-access practices.

Through these questions and the insights they generated, this paper not only provides an original analysis of the publication history and accomplishments of *plaNext* but also outlines a roadmap for how it can continue to innovate and lead as a truly next-generation planning journal.

A retrospective review of *plaNext*

As the *plaNext* journal reaches its 10th anniversary, a comprehensive quantitative and qualitative evaluation of its publishing trajectory has been undertaken to inform future editorial

strategies and ensure the journal's stability, visibility, and continued inclusion in leading academic indices.

The *plaNext* journal commenced publication in 2015 and has released a total of 14 volumes to date, with the latest issue published on the 21st of May 2025. Between 2016 and 2019, the journal maintained a biannual publication schedule. In contrast, in 2015 and from 2020 onwards, only one issue was published annually. This shift coincided with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent changes in the editorial team, both of which affected the journal's operational capacity and publication frequency.

Excluding foreword and editorial introductions, a total of 79 articles, comprising 78 research articles and 1 book review, have been published in the past. As shown in Figure 1, the number of publications varies across volumes. The highest number of publications was recorded in Volume 11[1], 'Planning Theories from the Global South', with nine papers (also one of the most cited volumes), while the lowest was in Volume 6[2], 'Open Call', featuring only three papers.

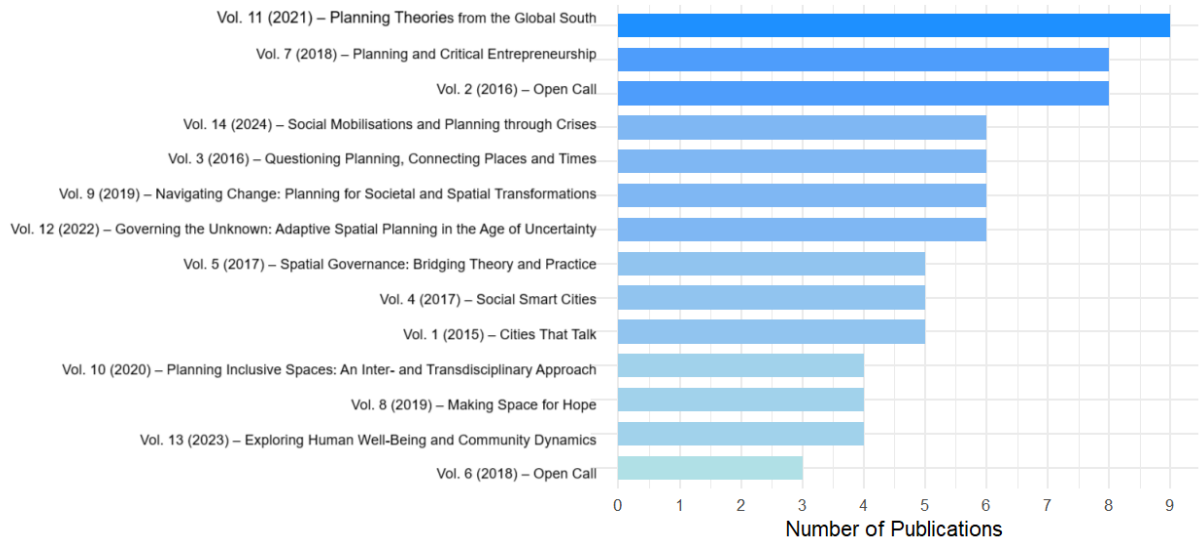

Figure 1. *Number of publications per volume*

The distribution of authors by affiliation country demonstrates the dominance of European-based contributions (53 %) to *plaNext*. However, it can be noticed that the emergent trend of the journal's international (beyond Europe) outreach corresponds to 43 % of the contributions (Figure 2). The affiliation countries of three independent authors could not be identified and are thus represented as 'unspecified' in the dataset. Germany (14 authors), the Netherlands (13 authors), and Italy (10 authors) are the leading countries. Approximately 34 % of all authors are affiliated with institutions from these top three contributing countries (Figure 3). The United Kingdom (9 authors) and the United States (9 authors) further strengthen the journal's connection with European and North American academic institutions. Together, the top five contributing countries account for 56 authors, representing 50% of all contributors. These top five countries are followed by Brazil (7 authors), the most numerous Global South contributor, Austria (5 authors) and Sweden (4 authors). Other countries, such as Canada, Estonia, Norway, Finland, Greece, Israel, Spain, Portugal, and Türkiye, each contributed between 2 and 3 authors. There are also authors affiliated with universities in the Global South,

[1] https://journals.aesop-planning.eu/index.php/planext/issue/view/11
[2] https://journals.aesop-planning.eu/index.php/planext/issue/view/6

including Chile, Egypt, Ghana, Mexico, South Africa, Argentina, Georgia, and Taiwan. Additionally, the 'others' category, which includes authors from multiple countries with single contributions, accounts for 16 authors in total.

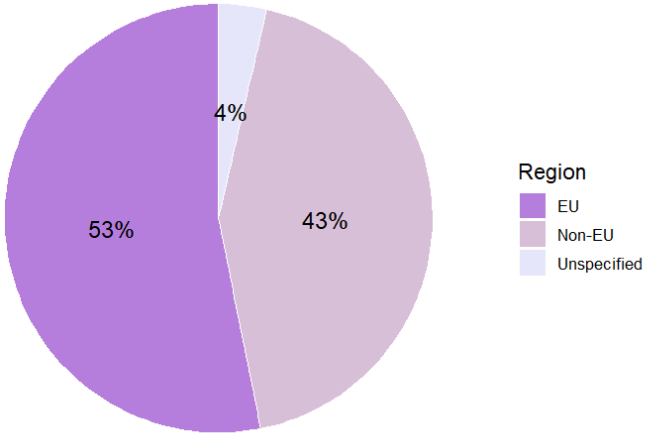

Figure 2. *Distribution of authors' affiliation by region*

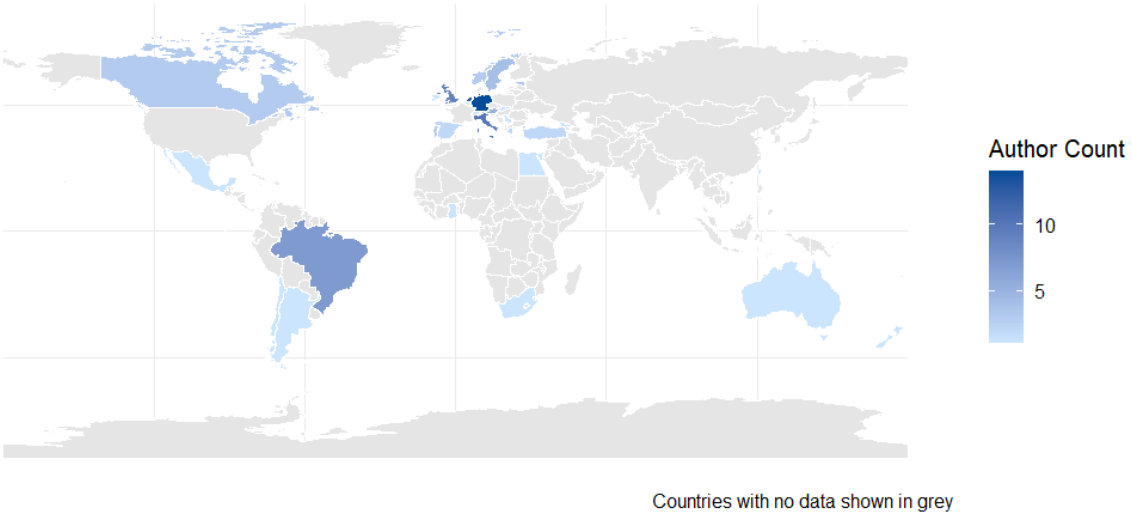

Figure 3. *Distribution of authors by affiliation country*

While these figures indicate plaNext's reach beyond its European base, they also reflect the journal's strong anchoring within European academic networks, particularly in countries such as Germany, the Netherlands, and Italy. This orientation is closely linked to the historical roots of YAN and AESOP as Europe-based organisations and thus represents a natural starting point rather than a limitation. However, the journal is committed toward greater internationalisation. ECR affiliated with European institutions but originally from other regions—such as Asia and Africa—have played a vital role in broadening the scope of contributions and perspectives. Their engagement has fostered growing connections with the Global South and other parts of the world, suggesting a continuing potential for *plaNext* to serve as a platform for more globally inclusive planning scholarship.

The comparatively limited engagement from the Global South, with Brazil standing out as the only major contributor, suggests that structural barriers such as language, access to publishing networks, and uneven institutional support continue to shape participation. In the coming years, *plaNext* intends to adopt a more critical and proactive approach by prioritising outreach strategies that engage underrepresented regions, diversifying editorial and reviewer pools, and actively encouraging submissions that interrogate global asymmetries in planning knowledge production. By doing so, the journal seeks not only to expand its geographical diversity but also to foster a more reflexive, equitable, and critical dialogue on the politics of knowledge in planning.

Figure 4 presents the distribution of contributing authors by university affiliation. While a significant portion of authors (80 individuals) are affiliated with a wide range of institutions grouped under the 'others' category, several universities stand out with multiple contributors. University College London (the UK) and the University of Twente (the Netherlands) are the most prominent, each with five contributing authors. They are followed by TU Wien (Austria), the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (the USA), and TU Delft (the Netherlands), each with four authors. Institutions, such as TU Dortmund (Germany), the University of Groningen (the Netherlands), and IUAV University of Venice (Italy), each have three contributors. This distribution reflects a broad international engagement, with a modest concentration around a few leading academic institutions known for their planning, design, or technology-oriented programmes. At the same time, the visibility of such institutions also indicates a higher likelihood of contributions involving senior scholars who are strongly connected to AESOP, suggesting that *plaNext*'s networked position within established academic circles continues to shape its authorship profile. Nevertheless, maintaining this balance between established academic connections and the journal's core mission of amplifying ECR remains crucial, underscoring the need for editorial strategies that safeguard space for emerging voices while benefiting from intergenerational collaboration.

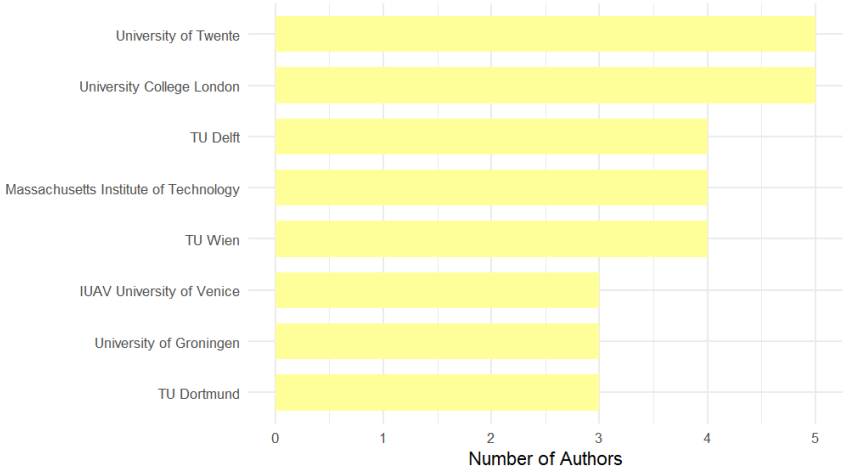

Figure 4. *Distribution of top contributing universities*

Figure 5 illustrates the career stages of *plaNext* contributors, with the majority being PhD candidates, complemented by smaller proportions of postdoctoral researchers, master's students, and early-stage professionals. Importantly, postdoctoral researchers are also considered part of the ECR community, aligning with the journal's mission to provide a platform for emerging scholars. This distribution reflects *plaNext*'s proactive editorial policy of prioritising contributions authored solely by ECR, without requiring the co-authorship of senior supervisors. The intention behind this policy has been to empower ECR to publish as leading

authors, thereby operating outside traditional academic publication hierarchies. Senior scholars, by contrast, typically appear in *plaNext* not as article authors but as co-guest editors of special issues, ensuring intellectual diversity, thematic depth and intergenerational exchange of ideas and reflections, without overshadowing the platform's focus on early career voices. The patterns visible in Figure 5 therefore reinforce *plaNext*'s role in carving out a distinct space where ECR can develop authorship experience, visibility, and confidence as independent scholars.

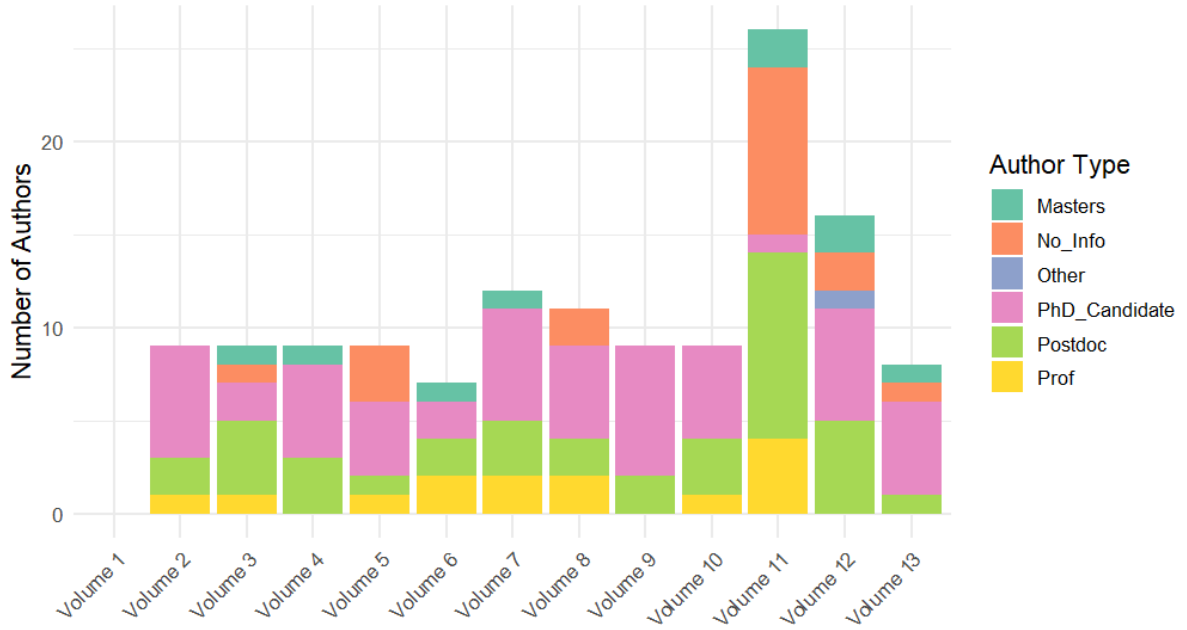

Figure 5. *Distribution of authors by academic career stage or educational degree stage.*

The keyword cloud analysis provides valuable insights into the thematic orientation and research priorities of the articles published in the journal. It was generated in RStudio by visualising the keywords extracted from all published articles. As illustrated in Figure 6, the most frequently used keywords are urban planning and informality, each appearing four times, indicating their central position in the academic discussions addressed by the authors. These are closely followed by keywords such as participation, smart city, urban governance, governance, public space, and Brazil, each occurring three times. This distribution reflects the diversity of research interests represented in the journal and indicates a particular emphasis on governance practices, participatory planning mechanisms, urban innovation, and case studies focusing on specific geographical contexts, such as Brazil. Additionally, the term 'planning culture' emerged twice, highlighting discussions on the values, norms, and practices that shape planning across different socio-spatial settings. Overall, this analysis reveals that the research published in the journal predominantly engages with critical urban issues, combining theoretical perspectives with empirical case studies, and addressing contemporary debates on informality, participation, governance, and smart urban development.

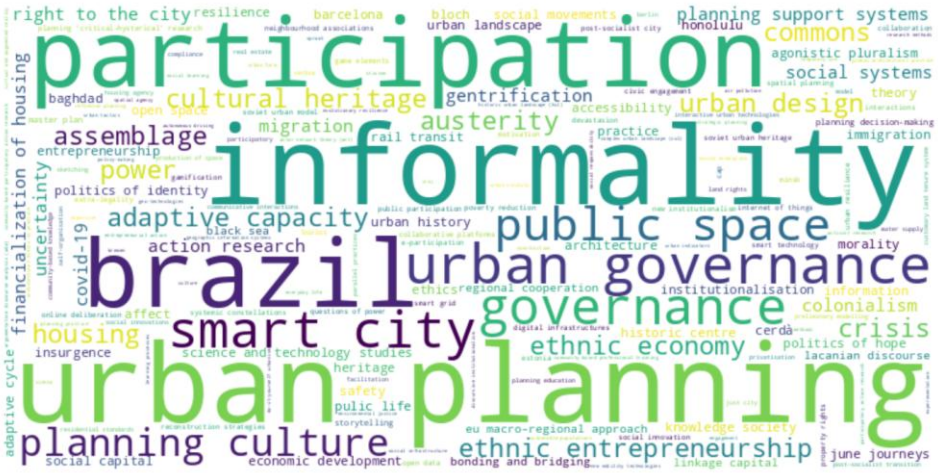

Figure 6. *Keyword cloud*

Of the 78 research articles published in plaNext, only 30 did not include a specific case study. This demonstrates that ECC present research grounded in rich empirical analysis and research, which might often be characterised by immersive fieldwork and direct interaction with the context under study. As shown in Figure 7, the remaining 48 papers are based on case studies and are distributed as follows: 27 focused exclusively on non-European cities, 20 on European cities, and only one article incorporated case studies from both European and non-European cities, indicating that international case study comparison remains an underutilised approach among ECR. Given that 53 % of authors are affiliated with European universities, this data tells us that, despite being affiliated with European universities, many of them dedicate their research to non-European contexts.

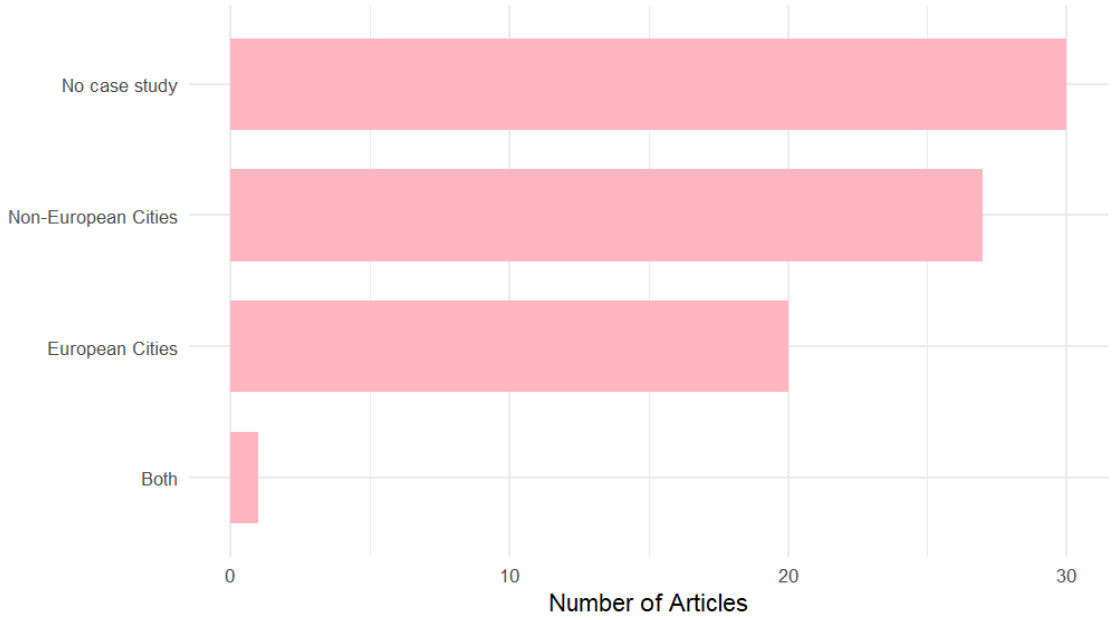

Figure 7. *Distribution of case study regions in published articles.*

Survey of early career researchers

The survey was conceived as an instrument to capture young researchers' priorities and perspectives, enabling these insights to inform future editorial dialogue within the *plaNext* editorial board (EB). This approach sought to establish connections between the bottom-up needs of the AESOP YAN communities and the strategic vision for *plaNext*'s development. The objective was to examine how a young-academics-led journal might better address the institutional and professional challenges encountered by emerging scholars.

The survey was developed by the editors of this special issue to systematically collect young researchers' perspectives on contemporary academic challenges. The survey comprised 12 questions addressing journal awareness and experience, publishing obstacles encountered by ECR, desired institutional support mechanisms, and recommendations for journal advancement and thematic development. Data collection occurred between February and March 2025, with survey distribution through YAN newsletters, social media platforms, and the 2025 YAN conference in Hanover, Germany. Additional dissemination occurred through targeted email networks.

The survey yielded 37 responses from an internationally diverse cohort, predominantly comprising PhD students or candidates (n=22), postdoctoral researchers (n=8), master's students (n=2), and scholars with other academic positions (n=5). The age distribution centred on the 25–35 demographic (n=22), with relatively balanced gender representation (13 women, 11 men, 2 undisclosed). Geographic distribution encompassed multiple countries, with substantial representation from Italy alongside responses from Türkiye, Greece, India, the United States, and other countries.

Analysis of survey responses revealed significant insights regarding *plaNext*'s current positioning and the systemic challenges confronting ECR. Limited journal awareness emerged as a primary finding: only 16 of 36 respondents demonstrated familiarity with *plaNext*, with initial exposure occurring primarily through collegial networks, academic conferences, or social media channels. Publication experience with *plaNext* was minimal, with only one respondent reporting prior engagement, noting editorial motivation while identifying concerns regarding process duration and communication consistency.

Respondents articulated four principal categories of challenges affecting ECR: structural and institutional barriers encompassing funding constraints, inadequate support systems, and supervisory complications; academic and publishing pressures, including performance anxiety, journal selection difficulties, and insufficient training; workload and temporal management challenges; and psychosocial factors involving recognition deficits and linguistic barriers. Regarding publishing support deficiencies, participants emphasised requirements for enhanced mentorship structures, expanded networking opportunities, comprehensive writing process support, increased funding accessibility for research and conference participation, and more holistic approaches addressing psychological dimensions of academic career development.

The survey generated substantive recommendations for *plaNext*'s strategic development in supporting ECR. Key proposals included implementing supportive publishing processes featuring constructive editorial feedback, transparent review mechanisms, and integrated mentorship programs; developing enhanced peer networking and collaborative research opportunities; establishing comprehensive training programs in academic writing and peer review methodologies; introducing innovative journal features including thematic special issues and experimental publication formats; improving accessibility through affordable

publishing models and enhanced resource provision; and strengthening community-building initiatives that acknowledge the precarious conditions characterising early career academic positions. Thematic priorities identified by respondents demonstrated preferences for bridging theoretical and applied perspectives while providing platforms for emerging critical scholarship addressing urban futures, social justice, climate change, and academic labour conditions.

The road forward: Editorial dialogue on *plaNext*'s next decade

As part of the 10th anniversary of *plaNext*, a dialogue session was organised to reflect on the challenges and opportunities currently faced by ECR, as highlighted through the survey, and to investigate how an ECR-led journal could try to address them. The dialogue also aimed to generate a space to envision the future direction of the journal under the leadership of the new editorial board.

The session, held on Zoom on the 2nd of May 2025, lasted two hours and was moderated by Sıla Ceren Varış Husar, alongside Lizzy Privitera, who presented the results of a targeted survey. Participants included previous and current members of the editorial board—Pavel Grabalov, Esra Kut Görgün, Chandrima Mukhopadhyay, and Milan Husar—who engaged in an open exchange around four strategic questions:

- What challenges has the journal encountered in balancing inclusivity with academic rigour, particularly in the context of open peer review?
- In what ways does *plaNext* facilitate collaboration between ECR and established scholars, and what impact does this have on ECR?
- What is the significance of the recent Scopus indexing, and what further steps are being taken to enhance the journal's academic visibility?
- How does *plaNext* contribute to the global conversation on open-access publishing and support more equitable publishing practices?

The discussion addressed several strategic concerns and proposals:

- *Editorial timelines and process efficiency*: Participants emphasised the need to implement internal deadlines for reviewers and adopt a maximum turnaround policy to improve accountability, while avoiding rigid, superficial review models common in commercial publishing.
- *Co-authorship with supervisors*: Opinions varied regarding whether supervisor co-authorship should be discouraged. While some stressed preserving the journal's ECR focus, others advocated for case-by-case flexibility, particularly when co-authors are also in the early stages of their careers.
- *Mentorship models*: There was strong support for introducing a mentored article section, which would offer a guided editorial process and constructive feedback for early career authors. The model takes inspiration from practices observed in the Regional Studies Association.
- *Challenges faced by ECR*: The discussion reinforced several persistent barriers faced by young scholars, including a lack of institutional support, time pressure, imposter syndrome, journal selection difficulties, and language barriers.

In response, the group proposed a range of actionable steps:

- *Mentorship & training*: Webinars, writing workshops, and peer-to-peer review initiatives could help strengthen author capacity and confidence.

- *Recognition & incentives*: Introducing best paper awards and formally acknowledging contributors and mentors was recommended to increase motivation and visibility.
- *Community building*: Regular editorial events such as 'write-together' sessions and deeper integration with the AESOP YA network were proposed to foster a stronger sense of belonging.
- *Funding & accessibility*: The group encouraged exploring external funding sources (e.g., COST Actions, British Academy) and offering language editing support to non-native English speakers.

The meeting concluded with a shared commitment to transforming *plaNext* into a more inclusive, transparent, and supportive platform for early career planning scholars. The editorial board will further refine these ideas in upcoming meetings to integrate them into long-term strategies for the journal's development.

Conclusion

Over the past decade, *plaNext* has established itself as a key platform for ECR, offering space for critical, experimental, and diverse contributions in planning scholarship. While the journal's trajectory reveals steady growth, strong engagement from European institutions, and a consistent presence of young academics, particularly PhD candidates, it also highlights the need for broader geographical outreach and strategies to strengthen inclusivity and global representation in the years ahead.

The collective evaluation process initiated during the *plaNext 10th Anniversary Special Issue,* enriched by survey results and an open exchange of perspectives, has generated valuable insights into the strengths and areas for improvement within the journal. Building on these discussions, a series of strategic recommendations has emerged to guide *plaNext* toward a more consistent, inclusive, and supportive future for ECR in planning and related fields.

Firstly, editorial consistency was identified as a key priority. Maintaining regularity in annual issue numbers is essential to ensure the journal's credibility and reliability among its readership. Similarly, the presence of editorial forewords should follow a clear policy, either consistently included or intentionally omitted to avoid editorial ambiguity. Standardisation in the number of papers per issue will also help strengthen the journal's structure and identity.

The participants further emphasised the need to transition from open calls to theme-based calls that reflect timely and relevant debates in planning theory and practice. Such a shift will not only improve the journal's topical coherence but also enhance its visibility and attractiveness to both authors and readers. To improve article quality and discoverability, formal limits for keyword usage, such as a minimum of three and a maximum of six, should be implemented.

Importantly, *plaNext* has achieved a notable level of geographical diversity among its contributing authors, particularly in terms of institutional affiliation. This diversity should be protected and expanded upon, reinforcing the journal's international character and broadening its impact across different academic contexts, especially towards Global South countries.

Complementing these editorial refinements, proposals arising from the 10th Year workshop also focused on addressing the specific challenges faced by ECR. This includes implementing a mentored article section with structured guidance and feedback, improving timeline transparency and review turnaround times, and carefully re-evaluating policies on supervisor co-authorship to preserve the ECR focus without restricting collaboration. Additionally, there

was widespread support for community-building activities, such as regular writing sessions, peer-review training, and stronger ties with the AESOP YA network. To further support ECR, the journal is encouraged to explore external funding opportunities that could provide resources for proofreading or language support, especially for non-native English speakers. Recognition mechanisms such as reviewer acknowledgements and best paper awards may also contribute to greater engagement and motivation among contributors.

Together, these recommendations point to a shared commitment: to strengthen *plaNext* not only as a scholarly publication but also as a supportive ecosystem for ECR. By embedding consistency, mentorship, inclusivity, and responsiveness into its editorial framework, *plaNext* can continue to serve as a distinctive and transformative platform within the planning research community.

Acknowledgements

We want to thank all the early career researchers who took the time to complete the survey and share valuable experiences and insights. Their continuous contributions and engagement will help guide our actions and vision for the future of *plaNext*.

plaNext
NEXT GENERATION PLANNING

AESOP / YOUNG ACADEMICS

Open Access Journal

Financialization and deterritorialization in the Milanese major urban development projects

Alberto Bortolotti
Department of Architecture and Urban Studies, Politecnico di Milano, Italy
alberto.bortolotti@polimi.it

Major urban development projects are pivotal to connect financial and real estate markets through the 'financialization' of strategic lands and the 'deterritorialization' of actors, practices and instruments. Milan is currently facing several large-scale property operations delivered by global developers and investors. Among these, this article problematizes the Milano Innovation District (MIND) by reconstructing its spatial development, showing how property financialization generates a deterritorialization of this project from the city planning system. Milan's case has been considered relevant because of the convergence of global and local interest in developing the former Expo 2015 site, in a little metropolis which, on the other hand, shows an enormous concentration of financial capital managed in the Milanese headquarters of some of the largest European banks. In this article I will introduce the concept of financialization, which challenges land uses in this hyper-capitalization time, provide an illustration of the Milanese planning system, outline the interactions between planning, politics and finance, and present the case analysis of MIND and a discussion of its findings. In conclusion, this contribution remarks how such projects are used as levers to pursue polycentrism by challenging the 'raison d'étre' of statutory planning in overseeing the city's urban growth instead of just enabling land value extraction, expansion and densification. Overall, the article argues that financialization has undermined redistribution of wealth through spatial planning, and this role has shifted to the major property corporations.

Keywords: deterritorialization, financialization, urban development, major projects, Milano

Please cite as: Bortolotti, A. (2025). Financialization and deterritorialization in the Milanese major urban development projects. *plaNext – Next Generation Planning,* 15, 89–105. https://doi.org/10.24306/plnxt/102

Introduction to financialization and deterritorialization

The concept of 'financialization' has obscure origins (Nobanee et al., 2023), even though its use has been massively spread in academic literature since the end of the 1990s (Aalbers, 2019). During the last four decades, the 'financialization of the economy' (Epstein, 2005) led to structural changes in agglomeration economies, which increasingly accumulated land capital assembled by major cities (Camagni, 2016). According to Aalbers (2019, p. 4), '"financialization" can be defined as the increasing dominance of financial actors, markets, practices, measurements, and narratives, at various scales, resulting in a structural transformation of economies, firms (including financial institutions), states, and households'.

In spatial terms, land financialization coincides to the transformation of real estate assets into tradable financial goods (Harvey, 2005; Gotham, 2012; Kaika & Ruggiero, 2016; van Loon & Aalbers, 2017) and it is intertwined with the 'deterritorialization', sometimes called 'decontextualization' (Savini & Aabers, 2016), which corresponds to the mobilization and reterritorialized of land capital to generate urban rent elsewhere.

The concept of deterritorialization was firstly introduced by Deleuze & Guattari (1972) to describe the territorial disjunction of social, cultural, and economic structures in the evolution of capitalism. Since the 1990s, geographers, sociologists and urbanists used this term to frame the obsolescence of spatial capital, planning and culture, as highlighted by Salet & Majoor (2005), Wood (2009) and Savini & Aalbers (2016) in urban regenerations placed in Amsterdam, Melbourne and Milan.

Within the current scenario of hyper-capitalization (Leyshon & Thrift, 2007), major urban development projects are framed as 'pipelines' to fuel the nexus between real estate and financial markets (Fainstein, 2008; Flyvbjerg, 2014; Savini & Aalbers, 2016), particularly by deterritorializing and reterritorializing the land-value capital and mobilizing and converting financial capital among liquid and illiquid assets (Cocco, 2007).

Financial strategies treating 'land as an asset' (Kaika & Ruggiero, 2016; Swyngedouw & Ward, 2022) became the 'keystone' for initiating and implementing complex territorial transformation processes in Milan. These processes entailed a profound 'disconnection' of actors, tools, and practices from the locales of 'financialized' large-scale projects. Such a 'disjunction', which can be classified as 'deterritorialization', is significantly intertwined with financialization and extends beyond real estate to encompass urban plans and projects, adapting corporate business plans into masterplans approved by local administrations.

In other words, by financial schemes to urban development, land financialization implies 'deterritorialism' (Medeiros et al., 2021). Through the category of 'deterritorialization', I refer to the practice of progressively abstracting and dematerializing land-use policy and spatial planning. Although such praxis reflects an 'approach under which bounded spaces are the objects of policymaking and planning' (Faludi, 2018: 123), seeing the process as positive to overcome national constraints (Medeiros et al., 2021; Capello et al., 2018; Agnew, 1994), this paper suggests that deterritorialization and financialization of major projects undermine the capacity of spatial planning to recapture land rent as planning gains, because of the involvement of local governments in such processes.

In this sense, as highlighted by Jessop (2016), the role of public bodies and governments have been progressively crucial to enable artificial dynamics of financialization and their application in the spatial planning of urban development (Yeşilbağ, 2019), mega-projects (Silver et al. 2020) and mega-events (Raco, 2014)

Overall, financialization and deterritorialization shifted the conceptualization of major projects from a local and public-led perspective (Altshuler & Luberoff, 2003) to a global private-led one, as 'territorialities' transcendent from statutory planning, not guided by 'collective apparatus' (Foucault, 1984). Thus, such large-scale urban development projects are what Harvey's theory defined as 'innumerable points for the extraction of value and surplus value' (Harvey, 2005, p. 97). To some extent, financialization and deterritorialization seem to interact with spatial planning, urban policies, and strategic projects due to their role in shifting societal spatialization from political to economic and financial power (Foucault, 1982).

Within this global context, local financialized major projects, specifically in Milan, 'are seen as both tools to revitalise real estate markets and key arenas in which political and economic actors bargain' (Conte & Anselmi, 2022, p. 2). Milan is an emerging 'middle-range' metropolis marked by rapid globalization and financialization, largely driven by the development of multiple major projects spearheaded by various global developers.

This article seeks to critically examine one case study, the Milano Innovation District (MIND), focusing on one specific question: How do property financialization and deterritorialization interact with major projects? This study situates the deterritorialization of real estate assets and markets within the broader context of financialization, using MIND as a case to illustrate the shift toward abstract models of large-scale spatial planning and project financing.

To unveil the financialization and reterritorialization effects, this paper unfolds across five sections. First, it details the methodology and materials used in the analysis. Second, this contribution examines the Milanese planning system and its interactions among planning, politics and finance. Third, it analyzes the Milano Innovation District, emphasizing its relevance to this field of study. Fourth, the paper discusses and generalizes the findings of such analysis. In conclusion, this contribution remarks that the financialization and deterritorialization of major projects undermine the 'raison d'étre' of statutory planning in overseeing the city's urban growth instead of just enabling land value extraction, expansion and densification (Raco et al., 2019).

Case methodology and selection

This research focuses on a single major project, serving as an exemplary case for analyzing financial and planning strategies that link the Milanese planning framework to the financialization of property practices in major operations. The discussion presented in this article is grounded in an empirical study of the MIND major project. This case can be contended as neither an anomaly nor an extreme example. Rather, an in-depth examination of the MIND mega-project reveals its parallels in formulation, implementation, and outcomes with other large-scale European developments driven by the valorization of public lands and assets. Despite Italy's overall limited level of real estate financialization (Mosciaro, 2021), Milan stands out as an exemption, and it is internationally relevant for at least three reasons. First, it is the historical headquarters for two of the largest capitalized European banks, Intesa San Paolo and UniCredit, linking North and South European economies. Second, without being a capital city, it encapsulates 46% of the investments in the whole Italian real estate market (Banca d'Italia, 2023). Third, despite the European Central Bank's austerity measures, Milan is one of the few cases of European cities which have been massively penetrated by global institutional real estate investments (Modiano & Onado, 2023).

This analysis highlights the deterritorialization of urban development through financialized real estate mechanisms influencing urban development projects following two criteria. First, according to Dente et al. (1990), these projects can be interpreted as urban policies themselves. Second, the impact of financialization on the built environment is better framed

as ‘deterritorialization’ rather than ‘decontextualization’ because, while most recent urban developments are decontextualized in terms of architecture and urban design, only some are activated and managed through deterritorialized methods underpinned by financial and non-spatial rationalities.

The methodology of this article is based on a rigorous and in-depth case analysis and generalization of the MIND mega-project. Such analysis was conducted through the desk study of business and planning documents, the review of academic literature and press reports, as well as through multiple semi-structured interviews with key actors from development, investment and law firms, municipal officials, experts, consultants, scholars and politicians involved in real estate. All these data were crucial to validate the case analysis and select sources.

The choice of MIND as a case study stems from its significance among large-scale development projects currently underway in Milan. Specifically, MIND was selected for its relevance and representativeness in planning traditions, cultural contexts, and objectives, mirroring other European experiences. Additionally, the case reflects a variety of territorial governance arrangements, institutional frameworks, and planning methods present in the site’s development, as well as diverse representations of planning intentions pursued by Lendlease, the principal property developer.

The nexus between planning and finance in Milan

The future of large public and private areas (former railway yards, industrial sites, agricultural lands) dominated academic debate in the early 2000s, particularly concerning the design and planning of peri-urban contexts. These brownfields increasingly exhibited a decontextualization of language and functions (Salet & Gualini, 2007; Salet, 2008; Fainstein, 2008). Similarly, this discourse spurred scholars and practitioners to explore the ‘strategic dimension’ of these areas within urban policy frameworks already grappling with significant governance challenges in major European urban agglomerations (Rogers, 1999; Albrechts et al., 2003; Mazza, 2007).

I argue that a crucial yet missing element in this discussion is the overlooked analysis of the real estate financialization of urban development projects—that is, as mentioned above, treating these real estate assets as financial products (Epstein, 2005; Gotham, 2012; van Loon & Aalbers, 2017; Aalbers, 2019; Aalbers, 2020). As recent studies on Milan’s Pirelli and Falck industrial areas reveal (Kaika & Ruggiero, 2016; Savini & Aalbers, 2016), it was precisely the financialization of real estate, transforming land value into financial value—that ‘unlocked’ the urban regeneration of these large areas.

Mega-events always play a crucial role in stimulating the financialization of major transformations by mobilizing massive public investments both following logics of State dirigisme (Müller, 2011) and market-led facilitation (Hiller, 2006). In particular, the Olympics have historically accelerated urban developments (Essex & Chalkey, 2010; Müller, 2015), but the following case shows that Expos can also produce similar impacts.

In the past two decades, Milan’s urban policies have undergone structural shifts toward ‘financialized’ territorial planning, emphasizing the demarcation and alienation of large projects—massive ‘enclosures’ where rents could be efficiently extracted and commercialized. Numerous international authors have argued that financialization is intrinsic to public-private partnerships and joint ventures that develop and regenerate such areas (Fainstein, 2016; Savini & Aalbers, 2016; van Loon et al., 2019; Aalbers, 2020). They illustrate how real estate finance ‘shapes’ planning systems and tools, as well as the urban policies deploying them, through corporate financing schemes and risk-return models driving business plan decisions.

Operators focus particularly on the types of funds dedicated to Special-Purpose Vehicles (SPVs) enabling multiple financialization strategies for large projects. These include securitizing real estate assets through closed-end funds or trading equity via mutual funds or trusts. In the case of trusts, or publicly traded real estate companies, properties are bundled into equity packages traded on financial markets. Similar processes occur in mutual funds, which may also encompass portfolios represented by closed-end funds capable of securitizing specific property groups or adjusting liquidity through asset sales/acquisitions (Borghi, 2009).

The outcome of such practices is an 'insular vision' of major urban transformations. As seen in the cases of Porta Nuova-Garibaldi (Anselmi & Vicari, 2020), the former Pirelli-Bicocca area (Kaika & Ruggiero, 2016), or the former Falck site in Sesto San Giovanni (Savini & Aalbers, 2016), these projects are detached from any unified strategic planning, despite past governance attempts like the 1999 Strategic Framework Document (Mazza, 2007). The powerful financialization of the planning system and its marked dependence on financial capital to produce urban development and regeneration (Raco & Brill, 2022), combined with weak differential rent recapture even where revenues reached approximately 50 % of investment value (Anselmi & Vicari, 2020), are common traits of recent major Milanese transformations. The MIND exemplifies these trends.

The property financialization of the Milano Innovation District

The MIND represents today one of the most significant urban transformations in the Italian and European landscape. Located on a site with a gross floor area of 1,044,102.00 m², MIND is an urban mega-project worth approximately €4.5 billion (Gervasoni et al., 2024), involving 480,000 m² of buildings to be constructed according to a territorial utilization index (UT) of 0.52 m²/m² (Comune di Milano et al., 2020). This will be achieved through advanced real estate financialization techniques capable of positioning this major project as the cornerstone for the densification of the 'Sempione Axis', intersecting with a strategic dimension that includes other metropolitan projects such as Cascina Merlata, Rho Fiera, Stephenson, and Bovisa's Goccia (Di Vita & Morandi, 2018; Armondi & Di Vita, 2018). The MIND operation is supported by a solid public-private partnership between the public company Arexpo (co-owned, among others, by the government, the Lombardy Region, and the Municipality of Milan) and the global developer Lendlease, originating from Australia (Figure 1).

Such a large-scale project is situated in a 'fenced' context that is far from straightforward, configured as a peri-urban enclave surrounded by railway and highway infrastructures, crossed by two irrigation ditches, and served by energy and water supply systems that were functional both to the Expo and, previously, to the Rho Fair (Botto & Di Vita, 2018). At the same time, inspired by other European innovation districts (Salet & Majoor, 2005), the narrative underpinning the MIND operation aims to create an international district for technology, innovation, and science, mobilizing local excellence on a global scale and leveraging the infrastructural investments left as a legacy by Expo 2015 through the financialization of the areas (Kaika & Ruggiero, 2016), in this case, repurposed after the mega-event. In this sense, the development of the Expo 2015 mega-event and the redevelopment of the MIND mega-project are two episodes connected by a long process of transformation and geostrategic repositioning of Milan, and they can be seen as two 'Siamese projects' (Gaeta & Di Vita, 2021).

The history of MIND (see Appendix 1) is thus intertwined with that of the Expo site, originally an agricultural area belonging to Cascina Triulza, itself owned by the Cabassi family, a Milanese real estate group. They managed the exhibition area and extensive contiguous or nearby plots (for example, the areas where the Poste Italiane mechanization center and the Bollate Prison are currently located) since the post-war period, amounting to about 920,000 m².

At the beginning of the 2000s, with the creation of the new fair in Rho, Fondazione Milano Fiera acquired 520,000 m² of the area from Belgioiosa Srl, controlled by Bastogi & Brioschi Sviluppo Immobiliare and managed by Matteo and Marco Cabassi, who remained the owners of the remaining 260,000 m² (other plots were simultaneously sold to Poste Italiane, Ferrovie dello Stato, and the Ministry of Infrastructures). Despite the consortium formed by the Municipality of Milan, the Lombardy Region, and the Italian Government being awarded the mega-event already in 2008 and the site being designated for the event in the related Expo's Dossier, the development of the area remained frozen until the approval of the Program Agreement (AdP) in 2011. This was among the first acts of the new center-left administration of Mayor Giuliano Pisapia, which defined certain criteria, such as a territorial utilization index UT of 0.52 m²/m² and various functional criteria related to green spaces, later incorporated into the 2020 Integrated Intervention Program (PII) (Figure 2).

Shortly thereafter, the decision was also made to purchase the area through the public company Arexpo, which is still the owner of the site and is predominantly managed by the aforementioned public entities. However, by the end of the event, there was no legacy plan for the site's future. Additionally, a first pre-sale auction in 2014, with a base price of 315 million euros, failed to attract bidders. Following a subsequent political 'stalemate' that ended with the election of Giuseppe Sala, the former CEO of Expo 2015, as Mayor of Milan (Gaeta & Di Vita, 2021), and after nearly two years of inactivity with the risk of a massive urban planning failure, the site was relaunched through two actions initiated directly by the Central Government led by Matteo Renzi. These were the establishment of the Human Technopole research center as a catalyst for financial and human resources and the acquisition of 39.28% of Arexpo's shares by the Ministry of Economy and Finance (MEF) (Arexpo, 2016).

As part of this operation, the governance of the public company was restructured as follows: 39.28% to MEF, 21.05% to the Lombardy Region, 21.05% to the Municipality of Milan, 16.80% to Fondazione Fiera Milano, 1.21% to the Metropolitan City of Milan, and 0.61% to the Municipality of Rho. In this management framework, important decisions can only be made if a quorum of 71% of the share capital is reached (Arexpo, 2016). Meanwhile, the two main local stakeholders, the Municipality of Milan and the Lombardy Region, encouraged the San Donato Group and the University of Milan to relocate, respectively, the new IRCCS Galeazzi Hospital and a new UniMi campus to the Expo 2015 site (Figure 1).

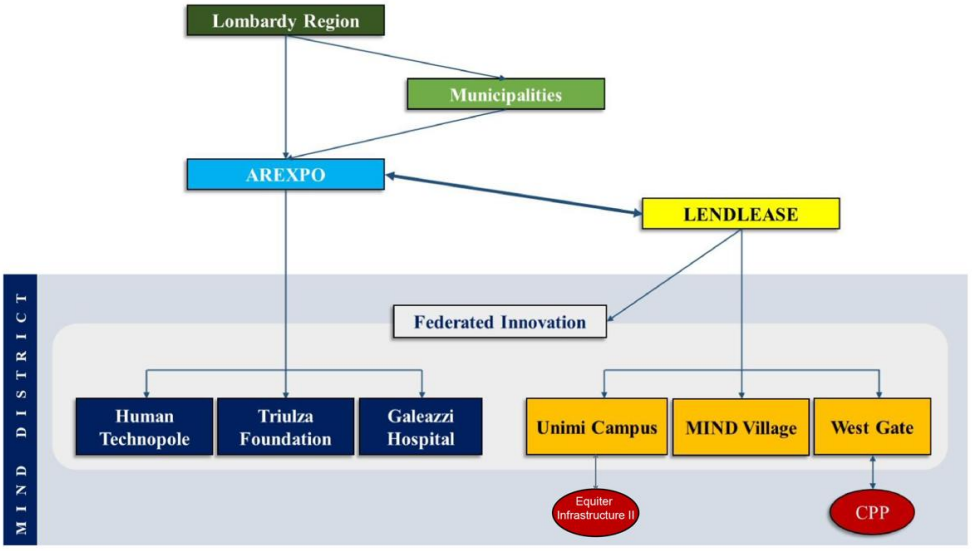

Figure 1. *MIND governance (author's elaboration based on Gervasoni et al., 2024)*

Figure 2. *Integrated Intervention Program for MIND. Source: author*

This initial phase of corporate financialization of Arexpo's property restructured its governance through the sale of equity, laying the groundwork for the disposal of the site after the failure of the first auction. In other words, the combination of corporate restructuring and the programming of three new public anchors (Galeazzi Hospital, Human Technopole, and the University of Milan's Campus) attracted significant interest from international operators. This led Arexpo to organize a second 99-year concession tender (unlike the 2014 outright sale), conducted by invitation, which was won in 2017 by the Australian developer Lendlease, prevailing over the French real estate management and development group Stam Europe.

Between 2018 and 2020, Arexpo, along with Lendlease—one of the largest real estate developers globally, with an investment pipeline of 74.5 billion Australian dollars—collaborated on drafting the Integrated Intervention Program (PII) together with Carlo Ratti Associati, Systematica, and Land (Comune di Milano et al., 2020). The master plan incorporates the cardo-decumanus grid from the Expo site (Figure 1).

The concession and the PII entail the transfer of surface rights for 480,000 m² from Arexpo to Lendlease for a 99-year term, after which the area will become the property of the Australian giant. This is in exchange for a total fee of €671 million, spread over 99 years, and an estimated revenue of approximately €2.2 billion (Gervasoni et al., 2024).

In particular, the concession agreement maintains Arexpo as a landowner and supervisor of the site until 99-year period and grants construction and management rights to Lendlease. More specifically, the concession defines (Gervasoni et al., 2024):

1. An immediate grant of 250.000 m^2 and an additional one accessible upon the fulfilment of specific requirements, for a total of 480.000 m^2, plus 30.000 m^2 of social housing provision.
2. The total investment of 4.5 billion euros, of which 2.5 billion euros must be provided by Lendlease.
3. The total leasing fee of 671 million euros in nominal value terms is to be annually paid.
4. The main revenues for Lendlease will derive from the rent and sale of private offices and residences developed in the area targeted by surface rights.
5. Arexpo will bear the risks related to the urban and infrastructure authorization procedures—*planning risks*—while Lendlease will shoulder the industrial and financial risks—*enterprise risks*.

In other words, the financialization of the Expo area occurred both by 'unlocking' the conversion of the area and by deterritorializing its land value, which is externalized, nationalized, and globalized through the multiscalar sales/acquisitions of corporate shares and the involvement of multilevel actors, similarly to what has been done to support major projects in other contexts (Raco & Tasan-Kok, 2023).

Looking at the urban project by Carlo Ratti Associati, and the two subsequent masterplans signed by Allies & Morrison and Mario Cucinella Architects, it is clear that the strategy of financializing the area, which involves the establishment of two Special-Purpose Vehicles—one for the western sub-district, adjacent to the Rho Fair, called West Gate, and one for the eastern university sub-district, called Knowledge Hub—de facto implies the predominance of Lendlease's business plans over the aforementioned masterplans (Figure 2). Specifically, the development and construction of the buildings occur alongside the procurement of financial resources derived from the extraction and commercialization of assets through equity trading, built-to-rent schemes, or securitization. This process unlocks, in sequence from east to west, the 24 project plots *Stralci Funzionali* on which building permits are issued (Figure 3), as foreseen in the Integrated Intervention Program (PII), which adopts this financialized phasing (Comune di Milano et al., 2020).

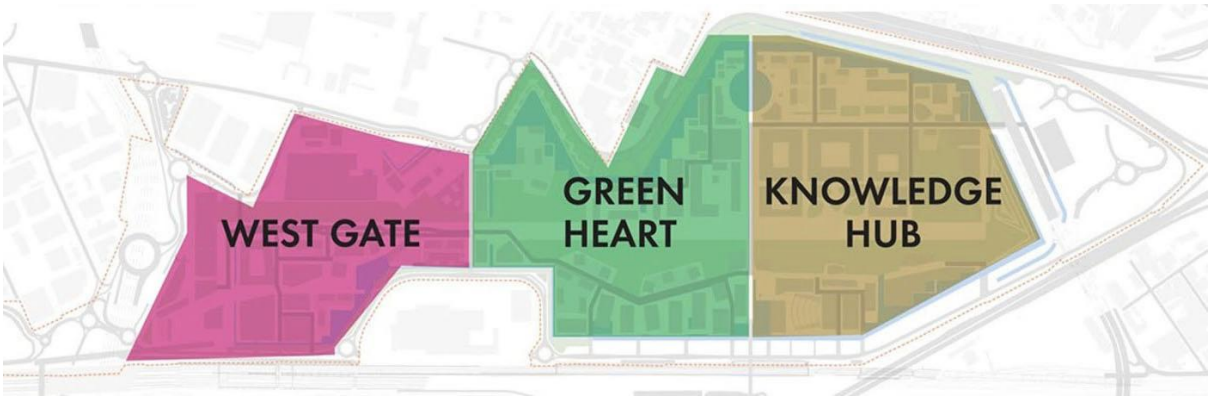

Figure 3. *Subdistricts of MIND (Comune di Milano et al., 2020)*

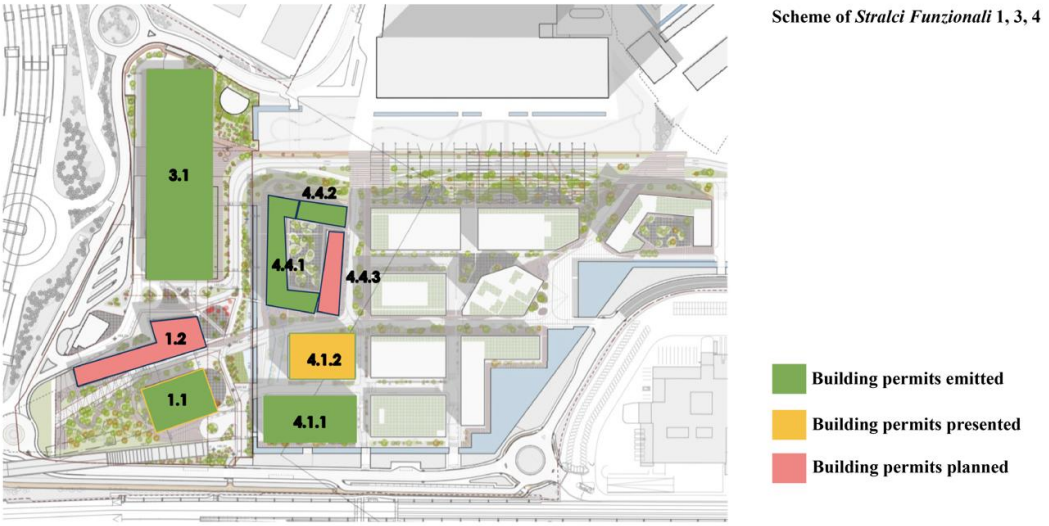

Figure 4. *Phasing of building permits at West Gate subdistrict (Arexpo, 2022)*

Finance and planning are deeply intertwined in the MIND case. Looking at the finance-driven micro-mechanisms of the MIND site development, it seems clear that the phasing of development from the plot contiguous to the Fiera Milano area towards Milano core city is financially driven. Particularly, the process follows two main criteria: the minimization of operational risks given by the fragmentation into *Stralci Funzionali* and the concentration of investments in the most densified and connected district (West Gate), through the joint venture with Canadian Pension Plan Investment Board, an institutional investor able to leverage and securitize millions of capitals (Figure. 1).

The long-term property financialization of MIND is represented by two components. Excluding the 'Green Heart' district, which encapsulates the Human Technopole and is supposed to be developed at the end of the phasing, the PII and the interviews confirmed that Lendlease is delivering one joint venture with the Canadian Pension Plan Investment Board[1] for realizing the 'West Gate' district. On the other hand, Lendlease established a public-private partnership with the University of Milano (UniMi) and other institutions for building the new UniMi campus

[1] Canadian Pension Plan and Lendlease collaborated through joint ventures in a few other large-scale projects, such as Elephant Park and Castle in London and the Barangaroo in Sydney.

in the 'Knowledge Hub' district. According to my inquiry, the site developments of Galeazzi Hospital and Social Housing Residences were transferred to San Donato Group Real Estate and REAM Real Estate and alienated from the Lendlease business plan.

Regarding West Gate—almost 150,000 m^2 (of the total 450,000 m^2) estimated at 2,5 billion euros value (of the total 4,5 billion euros)—Lendlease established the alternative (opportunistic) investment fund 'Lendlease Renaissance I' REIF as an Special-Purpose Vehicle managed by Lendlease for underpinning the joint venture with the Canadian Pension Plan REIT for a value of about 400 million euros of equity and a predicted ending value of about 800 million euros. Such 50:50 joint venture makes Canadian Pension Plan a co-investor of the Renaissance I REIF, and it was stipulated with the support of several legal firms which globally deal with real estate (Bonelli Erede, Chiomenti, Dentons, DLA Piper, PwC TLS, Rodl & Partners, EY, RP Legal & Tax).

Such an investment program affects only the West Gate subdistrict, 11 plots *Stralci Funzionali* for different *asset classes* destinations of use (office, retail, hotels, residential and ancillary spaces) and a total of 164'000 m^2 (Figure 3). Among the edifices realized in such plots, 10 of the major buildings will be securitized by the SPV. In 2022, the Municipality of Milano granted Lendease and Arexpo by assigning them 5 building permits (Arexpo, 2022), and according to West Gate phasing, the construction started in 2024. The real estate financialization occurred in the West Gate built environment by grouping several parcels/plots of the *Stralci Funzionali*. These assets are securitized following the *in-line* desnification of the area from the Rho Station towards the Knowledge Hub.

Moreover, Lendlease established a Joint Venture with REAM Sgr Spa—a Turin-based property developer and manager funded by Compagnia di San Paolo Foundation—to provide about 30,000 m^2 of social housing residences and office units used by the university campus through the multi-division alternative REIF named 'Cervino'. A similar process occurred, de facto, for the Galeazzi Hospital, even though, differently from the Social Housing Residentials provision, the Hospital's plot was completely alienated from the MIND area to San Donato Group.

Regarding Knowledge Hub—210,000 m^2 (of the total 450,000 m^2) estimated at 458.2 million euros value (Gervasoni et al., 2024 —Lendlease established an SPV as a Joint Venture with the Equiter Infrastructure II Fund managed by the investment company Equiter and the Swiss-Italian Ersel private bank with a capital capacity of 400 million euros. Such a joint venture is based on the public-private-partnership to develop and manage for roughly 31 years the new University of Milano (UniMi) Campus. Ersel is a leading private equity banking investor established in Turin in 1936 by the jeweller's family Giubergia and merged with the bank Albertini Syz in 2022. On the other hand, Equiter is an investment company established in 1998 by San Paolo IMI bank (32,88 %) and participated by Compagnia di San Paolo (32,99 %), CRT Foundation (22,13 %) and CRC Foundation (12 %). The campus will host 23,000 people among students, researchers, professors, and academic staff and will be composed of 18,376 m^2 for teaching activities, 35,525 m^2 for laboratories, as well as 5,500 m^2 of ancillary spaces.

In 2019, Lendlease signed a *pre-sale agreement* with the University of Milano (which was among the actors of *Contratto Quadro)* to sell out the plot of 65,000 m^2 for 13 million euros that will host the new University of Milano campus. Consequently, in late 2022, the University of Milano signed a *project financing agreement* which confirmed the buying of the land and defined the academic contribution of almost 50 %. Such an investment is quantified in 201 million euros provided by the European Investment Bank and Cassa Depositi e Prestiti (within the InvestEU program), plus 23 million euros self-provided by UniMi. On the other hand,

Lendlease is delivering an investment of 257.2million euros provided by loans and equities (Gervasoni et al., 2024). According to the *project financing agreement*, UniMi pays approximately 14 million euros per year to the SPV, combining construction, leasing, and services fees (including asset, property and facility management) (Gervasoni et al., 2023).

The construction of the UniMi campus, designed by Carlo Ratti Associati, the same planner of the MIND PII, started in 2023 and is underpinned by a public-private partnerships ruled through a concession of 30 years and 11 months with Lendlease. Following this concession, Lendlease is developing the campus by managing an SPV as a leading partner, enabling the Australian property company to pursue property financialization through equity exchange for receiving a Senior Project Finance Loan and VAT revolving facility and equity investment by quotaholders (Ersel as a key Equity Investor 80 %, Lendlease 17 %, Renco 2 % and Coopservice 1 %) (Gervasoni et al., 2024).

In the MIND operation, the programming of three important 'public anchors' (University, Technopole, and Hospital) has been crucial in ensuring Lendlease's 'full equity' strategy and its willingness to invest in this major project despite the lack of legacy and the need to capture institutional investments, which the presence of these functions facilitates. In this sense, the pro-growth approach (Pasqui, 2018) pursued by the Municipality of Milan in recent years has undoubtedly helped to create the conditions to easily align the objectives of deterritorialized and financialized global investment strategies of institutional investors (such as the Canadian Pension Plan) with the risk/reward parameters of real estate operations, maximizing revenues and minimizing the risks of the bonds issued by the associated special-purpose vehicles. Overall, the deconstruction, decontextualization and deterritorialization of actors, instruments and capitals represented the socio-spatial and economic essence of the MIND financialization.

Discussion: Major urban transformations, financialization and deterritorialization

The link between major urban transformations, real estate financialization, and the deterritorialization of areas has transformed urbanization dynamics according to a logic that heavily depends on the accumulation and commercialization of capital extracted from mega-projects (Altshuler & Luberoff, 2003), By conceiving strategic projects as urban policies (Salet, 2008; Haila, 2008; Lake, 2015), their financialization appears instrumental to fuel real estate markets, both financially and culturally (Briata & Raco, 2022). This financialization, in turn, exerts an increasing 'pressure' from land interests on local administrators, significantly limiting the radicality of reforms aimed at capturing land capital in European countries (Edwards, 2020).

The similarities in the financial and spatial techniques used to implement large-scale projects in Milan and other major European cities such as London (Raco & Brill, 2022), Amsterdam (Tasan-Kok & Ozogul, 2021), and Paris (Wijburg, 2019) are also evident, with urban planning systems increasingly reshaped by financialization. Indeed, as abroad, Milan uses 'transnational capital and large urban regeneration projects to promote its international reputation' (Conte & Anselmi, 2022, p. 2), conceiving major projects as 'catalysts of urban and political change' (Swyngedouw et al., 2002: 551) for the strengthening of local real estate markets and political arenas within global power configurations.

As shown by the case of MIND, urban policies (partially), and especially urban planning techniques and financial methods, are increasingly conditioned by the standardization of global real estate parameters, which in turn are reflected in local real estate markets where specialized real estate developers are emerging as key actors capable of representing the interests of large institutional and non-institutional investors, deterritorializing narratives, decisions, and capital-raising techniques (Cocco, 2007). The urban regeneration of MIND also

demonstrates how large-scale design is increasingly shaped by the know-how held by real estate operators who manage large sets of data and operate with corporate structures capable of spatializing the financial techniques behind the deterritorialization of urban policies (and projects). This configuration has, paradoxically, made central, regional, and especially local governments more dependent on information provided by operators, making them capable of easily navigating regulations and building permits (Raco et al., 2019). Thus, any faint hint of rigidity in the zoning plans that have followed is systematically bypassed by the ability of business plans to adapt to the flexible context in which Milan's urban planning operates. This 'flexibility' is now a foundational trait of European urban planning (World Bank, 2020) and represents a powerful enabler of both financialization and deterritorialization of areas.

The direct consequence is a planning practice based on projects disjunct from the statutory plan and enabled by ad hoc tools, such as MIND's PII, which guide a paradigm of a deterritorialized and financialized city (Tasan-Kok & Ozogul, 2021). Therefore, the governance of the planning system reshapes every five years with the revision of the plan, often based on the 'appetite' of real estate developers and their investors, selecting the sites most suited for large-scale financialization operations that define such projects (Colenutt et al., 2015; Chiapello, 2015).

Conclusions

Real estate financialization today has a stronger impact in determining spatial aspects and time phases of urban development (Lake, 2015; Savini & Aalbers, 2016; Raco & Tasan-Kok, 2023). To some extent, deterritorialization is the consequence of the difficulties of governing real estate finance' gains of major projects through urban planning (Wood, 2009). Considering its obscure nature, financialization can be seen as a frontier research topic and, from an early career scholar perspective, investigating its implications enabled me to frame the power relations between space and finance.

The boundary conditions, both constitutive and intrinsic to the financialization of major projects, have overall reduced the statutory planning power of municipalities, regions, and the State in executing such projects. In other words, large-scale urban projects are 'packaged' as vehicles to capitalize on the real estate industry, markets, and investments. This highly extractive dynamic is reflected in the 'insular spatialization' of these places. Therefore, it is not only large areas that are alienated, but also decisions, tools, and actors, facilitating the influence of international operators capable of handling significant capital with high returns (Raco & Tasan-Kok, 2023), whose objectives are increasingly dissociated (deterritorializing them) from those of the local economies and actors (Savini & Aalbers, 2016).

As pointed out above, the State exercises a crucial role in enabling financialization and deterritorialization. Its pro-market approach is intertwined with policy frames configured over the 1990s aiming to 'hollowing out' (Jessop, 1990; Jessop, 2016) the government bodies of regulative goals and tools able to control capitalistic markets and structures (Alami & Dixon, 2021). All these processes are present in the MIND area, a large enclosure within which the strategic planning and public intervention once mobilized for national projects like this one have been sidelined to privatize one of the most significant urban regenerations in Europe.

Financialization and deterritorialization dynamics have characterized urban planning practices (Aalbers, 2019) alongside the growing complexity of land investment strategies and the rise of market-driven real estate operations, bringing significant changes to the ethics that once guided planning principles (Briata & Raco, 2022). Although urban planning continues to maintain a key role in territorial policies for land use, the deterritorialization and financialization of major projects has disconected these spatial interventions from the statutory planning' 'raison d'etre'. Following this discourse, the ascent of such phenomena has negatively

impacted the capture and redistribution of the land value extracted from large-scale urban development projects. Particularly, such circumstances determined low urbanization charges (Camagni, 2016) by weakening planning, which is the main lever for redistributing urban rent and territorial wealth (Raco & Tasan-Kok, 2023).

To conclude, future research can probe whether the financialization and deterritorialization of urban development increase real estate profits in the districts surrounding major projects and call for a revamp of the State's role in governing such processes.

References

Aalbers, M. B. (2020). Financial geography III: The financialization of the city. *Progress in Human Geography,* 44(3), 595–607. https://doi.org/10.1177/0309132519853922

Aalbers, M. B. (2019). Financialization. In D. Richardson, N. Castree, M. F. Goodchild, A. L. Kobayashi, & R. Marston (Eds.), *The international encyclopedia of geography: People, the earth, environment, and technology*. Oxford: Wiley.

Agnew, A. (1994). The territorial trap: The geographical assumptions of international relations theory. *Review of International Political Economy,* 1(1), 53–80. https://doi.org/10.1080/09692299408434268

Alami, I., & Dixon, A. D. (2021). Uneven and combined state capitalism. *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space*, 55(1), 72–99. https://doi.org/10.1177/0308518X211037688

Albrechts, L., Healey, P., & Kunzmann, K. R. (2003). Strategic spatial planning and regional governance in Europe. *Journal of the American Planning Association,* 69(2), 113–129. https://doi.org/10.1080/01944360308976301

Altshuler, A., & Luberoff, D. (2003). *Mega-projects. The changing politics of urban public investment.* Chicago, USA: Donnelley.

Anselmi, G., & Vicari, S. (2020). Milan makes it to the big leagues: A financialized growth machine at work. *European Urban and Regional Studies,* 27(2), 106–124. https://doi.org/10.1177/0969776419860871

Arexpo. (2022). *Bilancio annuale.* Milano: Arexpo publications.

Arexpo. (2016). *Bilancio annuale.* Milano: Quaderni Arexpo.

Armondi, S., & Di Vita, S. (2018). *Milan: Productions, spatial patterns and urban change.* London: Routledge.

Banca d'Italia (2023). *Rapporto Annuale. L'economia della Lombardia*. Roma: Banca d'Italia Eurosistema.

Borghi, A. (2009). *Finanza immobiliare: il mercato, la valutazione, gli strumenti e le tecniche di finanziamento.* Milano: Egea.

Botto, I., & Di Vita, S. (2018). *Oltre l'Expo 2015: Tra dimensione ordinaria e straordinaria delle politiche urbane.* Roma: Carocci.

Briata, P., & Raco, M. (2022). The financialisation of urban policy in the UK: From area-based initiatives to area-based value-capture. In F. Gelli & M. Basso (Eds.), *Identifying models of national urban agendas: A view to the global transition* (pp. 57–76). Cham: Springer.

Camagni, R. (2016). Urban development and control on urban land rents. *Annals of Regional Science,* 56, 597–615. https://doi.org/10.1007/s00168-015-0733-6

Chiapello, E. (2015). Financialisation of valuation. *Human Studies,* 38, 13–35. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10746-014-9337-x

Cocco, G. (2007). The labor of territories between deterritorialization and reterritorialization. *Rethinking Marxism,* 19(3), 306–318. https://doi.org/10.1080/08935690701412703

Colenutt, B., Cochrane, A., & Field, M. (2015). The rise and rise of viability assessment. *Town and Country Planning,* 84, 453–458.
Comune di Milano, Arexpo, & Lendlease. (2020). *Programma Integrato di Intervento MIND.* Milano: Comune di Milano.
Capello, R., Caragliu, A., & Fratesi, U. (2018). Measuring border effects in European cross-border regions. *Regional Studies,* 52(7), 986–996. https://doi.org/10.1080/00343404.2017.1364843
Conte, V., & Anselmi, G. (2022). When large-scale regeneration becomes an engine of urban growth: How new power coalitions are shaping Milan's governance. *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space*, 54(6), 1184–1199. https://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0308518X221100828
Deleuze, G., & Guattari, F. (1972). *Anti-Oedipus capitalism and schizophrenia.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
Dente, B., Bobbio, L., Fareri, P., & Morisi, M. (1990). *Metropoli per progetti: Attori e processi di trasformazione urbana a Firenze, Torino, Milano.* Bologna: Il Mulino.
Di Vita, S., & Morandi, C. (2018). *Mega-events and legacies in post-metropolitan spaces: Expos and urban agendas.* Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan.
Edwards, M. (2020). How much land value should be captured for collective purposes? In *The wrong answers to the wrong questions: Countering the misconceptions driving the Government's planning reform agenda.* London: Town and Country Planning Association.
Epstein, G. A. (2005). *Financialization and the world economy.* Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar.
Essex, S., & Chakley, B. (2010). *Urban transformation from hosting the Olympic Games*. London: Olympic Studies Centre.
Fainstein, S. S. (2008). Mega-projects in New York, London and Amsterdam. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 32(4), 767–84. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2427.2008.00826.x
Fainstein, S. S. (2016). Financialisation and justice in the city: A commentary. *Urban Studies*, 53(7), 1–6. https://doi.org/10.1177/0042098016630488
Faludi, A. (2018). *The poverty of territorialism: A neo-medieval view of Europe and European planning.* Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar.
Flyvbjerg, B. (2014). What you should know about megaprojects and why: An overview. *Project Management Journal,* 45(2), 6–19. https://doi.org/10.1002/pmj.21409
Foucault, M. (1982). *Space, knowledge, and power*. Paris: Skyline.
Foucault, M. (1984). *Des espaces autres*. Tunisi: Cercle d'études architectuales.
Gaeta, L., & Di Vita, S. (2021). Planning disaster, successful event, and uncertain future: The twin cases of the World Expo 2015 and Innovation District in Milan. *Les Cahiers de la recherche architecturale urbaine et paysagère,* 12. https://doi.org/10.4000/craup.8735
Gervasoni, A., Lertora, M., & Mietto, M. (2024). *Smart cities and sustainable development: The MIND district case. A new model for urban regeneration*. ExSUF Center publication. https://exsuf.liuc.it/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/Smart-cities-and-Sustainable-Development_the-MIND-district-case_april-2024.pdf
Gotham, K.F. (2012). *Creating liquidity out of spatial fixity: The secondary circuit of capital and the restructuring of the US housing finance system*. In M. B. Aalbers (Ed.), *Subprime cities: The political economy of mortgage markets* (pp. 25–52). Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell.

Haila, A. (2008). From Annankatu to Antinkatu: Contracts, development rights, and partnerships in Kamppi, Helsinki. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research,* 32(4), 804–814. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2427.2008.00824.x
Harvey, D. (2005). *Spaces of global capitalism: A theory of uneven geographical development.* London: Verso Books.
Hiller, H. (2006). Post-event outcomes and the post-modern turn: The Olympics and urban transformations. *European Sport Management Quarterly,* 6(4), 317–332. https://doi.org/10.1080/16184740601154458
Jessop, B. (1990). *State theory: Putting the state in its place*. Cambridge: Polity.
Jessop, B. (2016). *The state: Past, present, future*. New York: Wiley.
Kaika, M., & Ruggiero, L. (2016). Land financialization as a lived process: The transformation of Milan's Bicocca by Pirelli. *European Urban and Regional Studies,* 23(1), 3–22. https://doi.org/10.1177/0969776413484166
Lake, R. W. (2015). The financialization of urban policy in the age of Obama. *Journal of Urban Affairs,* 37(1), 75–78. https://doi.org/10.1111/juaf.12167
Leyshon, A., & Thrift, N. (2007). The capitalization of almost everything: The future of finance and capitalism. *Theory, Culture & Society,* 24(7–8), 97–115. https://doi.org/10.1177/0263276407084699
Mazza, L. (2007). Milan's strategies. In *ISOCARP Review. Urban trialogues: Co-productive ways to relate visioning and strategic urban projects* (pp. 12–27). The Hague: ISOCARP.
Medeiros, E., Ramirez, M. G., Ocskay, G., & Peyrony, J. (2021). Covidfencing effects on cross-border deterritorialism: The case of Europe. *European Planning Studies,* 29(5), 962–982. https://doi.org/10.1080/09654313.2020.1818185
Modiano, P., & Onado, M. (2023). *Illusioni Perdute.* Bologna: Il Mulino.
Mosciaro, M. (2021). Selling Milan in pieces: The finance-led production of urban space. *European Planning Studies,* 29(1), 201–218. https://doi.org/10.1080/09654313.2020.1735309
Müller, M. (2011). State dirigisme in megaprojects: Governing the 2014 Winter Olympics in Sochi. *Environment and Planning A,* 43(9), 2091–2108. https://doi.org/10.1068/a43284
Müller, M. (2015). The mega-event syndrome: Why so much goes wrong in mega-event planning and what to do about it. *Journal of the American Planning Association,* 81(1), 6–17. https://doi.org/10.1080/01944363.2015.1038292
Nobanee, H., Shanti, H., Shikder, A., Almarzooqi, M., Vaz, A., & Masood, S. (2023). Financialization: A bibliometric review, research streams, influential works, and future research paths. *Cogent Social Sciences,* 9(2). https://doi.org/10.1080/23311886.2023.2269684
Pasqui, G. (2018). *Raccontare Milano: Politiche, progetti, immaginari.* Milano: Franco Angeli.
Raco, M. (2014). Delivering flagship projects in an era of regulatory capitalism: State-led privatization and the London Olympics 2012. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research,* 38(1), 176–197. https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-2427.12025
Raco, M., Livingstone, N., & Durrant, D. (2019). Seeing like an investor: Urban development planning, financialisation, and investors' perceptions of London as an investment space. *European Planning Studies,* 27(6), 1064–1082. https://doi.org/10.1080/09654313.2019.1598019
Raco, M., & Brill, F. (2022). *London.* London: Agenda Publishing.
Raco, M., & Tasan-Kok, T. (2023). *Le (in)visibili ambiguità delle riforme urbanistiche guidate dagli operatori immobiliari: essere dentro o contro il mercato*. In Balducci, A. (Ed), La città invisibile. Quello che non vediamo sta cambiando le metropoli. Milano: Feltrinelli.

Rogers, R. (1999). *Towards an urban renaissance.* London: Department of the Environment, Transport, and the Regions.
Salet, W. (2008). Rethinking urban projects: Experiences in Europe. *Urban Studies,* 45(11), 2343–2363. https://doi.org/10.1177/0042098008095871
Salet, W., & Gualini, E. (2007). *Framing strategic urban projects: Learning from current experiences in European urban regions.* London: Routledge.
Salet, W., & Majoor, S. (2005). *Amsterdam Zuidas. European space*. Rotterdam: 010 Publishing.
Savini, F., & Aalbers, M. B. (2016). The de-contextualisation of land use planning through financialisation: Urban redevelopment in Milan. *European Urban and Regional Studies,* 23(4), 878–894. https://doi.org/10.1177/0969776415585887
Silver, J., Fields, D., Goulding, R., Rise, I., & Donnachie, S. (2020). Walking the financialized city: Confronting capitalist urbanization through mobile popular education. *Community Development Journal*, 56(1), 161–179. https://doi.org/10.1093/cdj/bsaa044
Swyngedouw, E., Moulaert, F., & Rodriguez, A. (2002). Neoliberal urbanization in Europe: Large-scale urban development projects and the new urban policy. *Antipode,* 34(3), 542–577. https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-8330.00254
Swyngedouw, E., & Ward, C. (2022). Land as an asset. In M. Hyötyläinen, & R. Beauregard (Eds.), *The political economy of land: Rent, financialization and resistance*. London: Routledge Handbook.
Tasan-Kok, T., & Ozogul, S. (2021). Fragmented governance architectures underlying residential property production in Amsterdam. *Economy and Space,* 53(6), 1314–1330. https://doi.org/10.1177/0308518X21996351
van Loon, J., & Aalbers, M. B. (2017). How real estate became “just another asset class”: The financialization of the investment strategies of Dutch institutional investors. *European Planning Studies,* 25(2), 221–240. https://doi.org/10.1080/09654313.2016.1277693
van Loon, J., Oosterlynck, S., & Aalbers, M. B. (2019). Governing urban development in the Low Countries: From managerialism to entrepreneurialism and financialization. *European Urban and Regional Studies*, 26(4), 400–418. https://doi.org/10.1177/0969776418798673
Yeşilbağ, M. (2019). The state-orchestrated financialisation of housing in Turkey. *Housing Policy Debate*, 30(4), 533–558. https://doi.org/10.1080/10511482.2019.1670715
Wijburg, G. (2019). Reasserting state power by remaking markets? The introduction of real estate investment trusts in France and its implications for state-finance relations in the Greater Paris region. *Geoforum*, 100, 209–219. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.geoforum.2019.01.012
Wood, S. (2009). Desiring Docklands. Deleuze and urban planning discourse. *Planning Theory*, 8(2), 191–216. https://doi.org/10.1177/1473095209102234
World Bank. (2020). *Private participation in infrastructure—2020 annual report.* Washington: World Bank publications.

Appendix 2. *Timeline of Expo-MIND site development*

Year	Condition/Event	Landowner(s) and manager(s)
1950s–2002	Greenfield with breeding farm	Cabassi Family
2002	Fiera Milano buys 52 hectares from the Cabassi Family	Cabassi Family
2002–2005	Fiera Milano builds the new fair centre / Multiple land expropriations	Fiera Milano/Cabassi Family
2004	Breeding farm activities are suspended	Fiera Milano/Cabassi Family
2006	Fiera Milano, Belgioiosa and 5+1AA presented a PII proposal	Fiera Milano/Cabassi Family
2007	The Expo-MIND site is included in the Expo 2015 candidature dossier	Fiera Milano/Cabassi Family
2008	Milano is selected to host Expo 2015; Expo 2015 company is established	Fiera Milano/Cabassi Family
2010	Approval of the PGT Variant	Fiera Milano/Cabassi Family
2011	Approval of the AdP; Arexpo company is established	Arexpo
2012	Accordo Quadro Expo 2015	Arexpo
2013	Giuseppe Sala appointed as CEO	Arexpo
2013–2015	Realization of pavilions and infrastructural works	Arexpo
2014	Failure of the first auction to pre-sale the Expo-MIND area	Arexpo
2015	1/05 – 31/10 Expo 2015 mega-event	Arexpo
2016	The Italian Government delivers two propulsive policies: MEF acquires 39 % of Arexpo shares while the Presidency of Council of Ministers launches the Human Technopole project	Arexpo
2017	Lendlease won the second auction to lease and manage the Expo-MIND area	Arexpo
2018	Framework Contract among Lendlease, Arexpo, HT, Galeazzi Hospital, University of Milano / Lendlease, Arexpo and Carlo Ratti Associati present the PII MIND proposal	Arexpo/Lendlease
2019	Construction of IRCCS Galeazzi Hospital / Project competition, refurbishment, and expansion of HT	Arexpo/Lendlease
2020	PII MIND approved	Arexpo/Lendlease
2022	Opening of IRCCS Galeazzi Hospital	Arexpo/Lendlease
2023–ongoing	Construction of the University of Milano campus / Arexpo enabled as a national property developer	Arexpo/Lendlease
2024–ongoing	Construction of West Gate subdistrict	Arexpo/Lendlease

plaNext
NEXT GENERATION PLANNING

AESOP / YOUNG ACADEMICS

Open Access Journal

Rethinking the In-Between: Designing with a socio-ecological approach to activate the potential of *Terrain Vague* spaces

Lorenzo Stefano Iannizzotto
DINÂMIA'CET-Iscte, Iscte – University Institute of Lisbon, Portugal
Corresponding author: lorenzo_stefano_iannizzotto@iscte-iul.pt

Alexandra Paio
Department of Architecture and Urbanism, Iscte – University Institute of Lisbon, Portugal

Rapid and uncontrolled processes of urbanization expanded cities boundaries and generated a new type of space that can offer rare opportunities. These *Terrain Vague* spaces are abandoned and open spaces where urban, rural and wild dimensions mingle. They could play a significant role in addressing urgent urban socio-ecological challenges related to sustainable, resilient and inclusive development. These spaces have great value and potential as rare intersections of social and ecological interests. Despite their value, these spaces are constantly at risk of disappearing due to massive urban development pressures and the perception that they are problems to be solved rather than valued. To harness the enormous potential of *Terrain Vague*, a new approach is necessary. This paper aims to describe a new social-ecological approach that amplifies and activates the potential of *Terrain Vague* spaces, outlining principles derived from theory and academic literature, and verifying the emergence of projects in line with these principles. For this purpose, nine projects were chosen as case studies, with the aim of demonstrating the concrete implementation of theoretical principles to make an initial attempt at systematizing these projects, and finally, to identify some of the possible strategies implemented in the development of these specific cases.

Keywords: *Terrain Vague*, urban voids, urban vacant land, innovative practices, urban design

Please cite as: Iannizzotto, L. S., & Paio, A. (2025). Rethinking the In-Between: Designing with a socio-ecological approach to activate the potential of Terrain Vague spaces. *plaNext – Next Generation Planning,* 15, 106–131. https://doi.org/10.24306/plnxt/112

Introduction

Currently, cities around the world are facing significant and urgent challenges in advancing sustainable, resilient, and inclusive development. These challenges encompass both social and ecological factors, which are interconnected. Some examples can be the for instance growing demand for: green spaces accessible to everyone, increased quality of urban life and spatial justice, space for local activities or urban agriculture, increased urban biodiversity and environmental functionality (including rainwater absorption), environmental quality, and ecosystem services.

In this context, *Terrain Vague* (Figure 1)—i.e. unbuilt and abandoned hybrid open spaces without a specific or productive function where urban, rural and wild dimensions mingle (Solà-Morales, 1995)—are valuable both for the roles that they already play today, and for their considerable future potential (Lévesque, 2001). *Terrain Vague* spaces offer a rare intersection of ecological and social interests and possibilities. They emerge as valuable opportunities for rethinking contemporary city planning, serve as ideal places for the growth of certain forms of resistance, and potentially function as spaces that open alternative ways of experiencing the city (Lévesque, 1999).

***Figure 1**. Terrain Vague in Lisbon. Source: the authors*

Despite the benefits outlined, these spaces are constantly at risk of disappearing due to intensive building pressure in cities across the world, and because they are conceived as empty, worthless spaces—problems to be solved. As such, their qualities and values are erased or reduced, due to a functionalist or merely productive approach to design. As Solà-

Morales (1995) pointed out in the definition above, a traditional functionalist approach does not work in these spaces as it erases (or drastically reduces) their value and qualities, diminishes their potential, alters their essence, and is not able to fully account for their potential.

In this sense, the foundational text defining the concept of *Terrain Vague* remains not only relevant and significant to the topic at hand, but also crucial for the central question raised regarding how we approach these spaces: "How can architecture act in *Terrain Vague* without becoming an aggressive instrument of power and abstract reason? Undoubtedly, through attention to continuity: not the continuity of the planned, efficient, and legitimated city, but of the flows, the energies, the rhythms established by the passing of time and the loss of limits" (Solà-Morales, 1995, p. 123).

Once often conceived as a problem to be solved and underestimated as mere "empty" spaces, we believe that in the coming years the debate on the potential and interventions in *Terrain Vague* spaces will become an important and crucial issue for urban planning and research. Several reasons support this claim.

First, due to the expansion of cities and the urbanization of territory in many countries, it is no longer possible to delegate certain biological, ecological, and social functions to other areas outside the city. The importance of making cities more sustainable, resilient, and even regenerative is emphasized not only by numerous scholars, but also by European and global agendas and policies (such as the Sustainable Development Goals). However, given the high density of construction and the extensive impermeabilization of urban land, as well as the highly technologized nature of infrastructure, this transition can be particularly costly and challenging.

Moreover, there is a growing demand for improving urban quality of life: more accessible green spaces, greater biodiversity, and achieve spatial and environmental justice. In this sense—and particularly considering that urban land, and especially permeable urban land, is not only a finite resource but also an extremely scarce one—*Terrain Vague* spaces represent a unique opportunity to address these challenges and to help solve some of these issues.

In fact, under conditions of speculative pressure and ongoing construction, *Terrain Vague* spaces are an exceptionally rare resource, of immense value, and accessible even in peripheral areas. A substantial body of scientific literature demonstrates and enumerates the significant benefits, functions, and value these spaces provide—often at little to no cost (Brighenti, 2013; Clément 2022; Gandy, 2022b; Kamvasinou and Roberts, 2014; Mariani & Barron, 2014; Lopez-Pineiro, 2020; Phelps and Silva, 2018).

Thus, the research questions underpinning this article include: How is it possible to intervene and design in *Terrain Vague* spaces without erasing their qualities and value? How can we transition from a state of abandonment, informality, and spontaneity to a planning or project-driven approach that also manages to preserve some of the characteristics and qualities of these spaces, maintaining their value and activating their full potential?

This article seeks to address the current gap in the literature between theory and practice by connecting principles concerning the potential benefit of *Terrain Vague* spaces—drawn from the extensive scholarly debate on the subject—with a series of formal projects and practices that aim to preserve and enhance that potential. There is, in fact, a rich and comprehensive body of academic literature describing the benefits and value of *Terrain Vague* spaces, spanning a wide range of disciplines—from geography and biology to sociology. At the same

time, there are innovative projects and practices that, through new approaches, seek to enhance the potential of these spaces. However, a bi-directional gap between these two dimensions can be identified: only limited academic literature addresses how to approach these spaces in practice, while only few designers explicitly draw on scientific evidence grounded in academic theory. This paper is an initial, exploratory attempt to overcome that gap. In this regard, it is worth noting that recent and noteworthy attempts have been made to begin addressing this gap, resulting in highly relevant publications: *Urban Interstices in Italy: Design Experiences* (Bonfantini & Forino, 2021) and *Disclosing Interstices: Open-ended Design Transformation of Urban Leftover Spaces* (Luo, 2021).

To address this aim, this article offers the following: a brief theoretical introduction to the object of study; an outline of guiding principles for a new approach to *Terrain Vague* spaces, based on existing literature, followed by a synthesis of the values associated with such spaces; and a concise description of nine formal projects implemented in these areas. These projects aim to preserve the inherent value of *Terrain Vague* spaces and align with the theoretical principles outlined, demonstrating various possible practical applications. Finally, as a preliminary outcome, the article proposes a set of indicative strategies—emerging from the case studies presented—which serve as a link between theoretical principles and project implementation.

***Terrain Vague*: a theoretical overview**

Starting in the 1960s, a new type of urban space began to emerge in cities, shaped by the convergence of various processes and factors: rapid and uncontrolled urbanization, the cyclical alternation of sprawling and shrinking dynamics, and the inability of traditional planning tools to adequately capture the scale and complexity of these new phenomena.

As an overview, these new types of spaces are abandoned, vacant, and undeveloped urban open spaces (Figure 1)—often invisible and varying in scale—where emptiness prevails over the built environment and spontaneous nature prevails over the planned. They are characterized by their state of waiting, abandonment, marginality, and underutilization. These spaces are ambiguous, often lacking clear boundaries or thresholds, and serve as transitional zones where urban and rural dimensions and activities blend, overlap, and hybridize.

Due to the novelty of the phenomenon and the inherent ambiguity of these spaces—first observed and described primarily by photographers, artists, and filmmakers—there is no single, universally accepted definition. Instead, a constellation of terms and definitions has emerged. Owing to their distinctive characteristics and potential, these spaces have attracted the attention of scholars from a wide range of disciplines—including economics, sociology, urban planning and architecture, landscape architecture, botany, and biology—each of whom has proposed different terms to describe them.

Some of the most frequently cited terms include: urban voids (Lopez-Pineiro, 2020); the third landscape (Clément, 2022), originally published in French in 2004, urban interstices (Brighenti, 2013), vacant land (Bowman & Pagano, 2004), brownfield or wasteland (Gandy, 2013b), and *Terrain Vague* (Solá-Morales, 1995).

Amongst these definitions, the definition of *Terrain Vague* (Solá-Morales, 1995) marks a turning point. Coined in 1995, during a period of significant deindustrialization and widespread urban shrinkage, it was the first to approach these spaces from a positive perspective—revealing their vast potential while simultaneously warning of the challenges involved in intervening in them: “The relationship between the absence of use, of activity, and the sense of freedom, of expectancy, is fundamental to understanding the evocative potential of the city’s terrain vagues. Void, absence, yet also promise, the space of the possible, of expectation”

(Solà-Morales, 1995, p. 122). The foundational text describes and justifies the choice of the French term *Terrain Vague*, as well as its untranslatability into English, while also explaining its complex etymology and the variety of meanings it conveys.

The original text addresses the fundamental challenges related to the *Terrain Vague* approach, which remain relevant today and have been further explored in this paper, which aligns with this perspective on these spaces. It represents a pivotal shift in reevaluating these spaces as prior texts often regarded vacant land as a problem to be solved (Lopez-Pineiro, 2020). Ignasi de Solà-Morales (1995) emphasizes an essential relationship between the absence of use, the sense of freedom, and the potential evocation of new uses within urban terrains. In this way, the challenge of intervening in these spaces using traditional architectural tools and vision is acknowledged, highlighting the need to avoid becoming an aggressive instrument of power and abstract reasoning. The text provides insights into the revaluation and potential of these spaces, as well as guidelines that can inform strategies for their future regeneration. Continuity, not of the planned and efficient city, but of the flows, energies, and rhythms shaped by time and the dissolution of boundaries, should guide the new approach (Solà-Morales, 1995). These spaces represent a disruption in the functional and productive neoliberal city, existing in a state of suspension across functional, economic, and institutional dimensions. In essence, urban voids (*Terrain Vague*) offer a unique convergence of sociocultural and ecological opportunities (Lopez-Pineiro, 2020).

Terrain Vague: Future Challenges

Regarding the theoretical framework on *Terrain Vague* spaces, we believe there are two distinct, yet interconnected, aspects that it will be important to explore further in future research. First, the theoretical and conceptual definition of these spaces—namely, the description of their physical and planning characteristics, uses, history, as well as the various definitions and terms employed to describe them. Concerning this first aspect, we consider the existing body of literature to be abundant and more than sufficient, with a proliferation of diverse terms and definitions that describe these spaces in detail and with considerable depth. Future research could, in fact, focus on organizing and systematizing this rich universe of terminology—often still used interchangeably. Second, the potential of these spaces in addressing urban challenges. We believe this aspect to be of fundamental importance for addressing the current and future challenges faced by planners, as evidenced by the growing body of research in this direction. Given the new scales of urbanization, the increasing pressures from construction and real estate development, and the finite nature of land as a resource, it is clear that the use of undeveloped spaces will play a significant role in future urban debates. In this regard, the present article should be considered a first attempt to bridge the existing gap between theory and practice in the context of these spaces.

Methodology

This article attempts to bridge the identified gap between academic literature on the potential of *Terrain Vague* spaces—and the emerging projects and practices operating within them-by proposing a preliminary set of indicative strategies. Accordingly, the methodology and sources employed differ across the two main sections of the paper.

The theoretical discourse regarding the value of *Terrain Vague* spaces and the principles of a possible socio-ecological approach is based on a review of existing available literature. A range of texts have been analyzed with the aim of collecting and synthesizing the key aspects to be preserved, and the guiding principles for a valorizing approach to these spaces, as identified by scholars. Two primary challenges emerged in conducting this literature review: the wide variety of terms and definitions used to describe these spaces, and the diversity of academic disciplines concerned with them.

Indeed, the interest in *Terrain Vague* spaces from such varied fields (including economics, sociology, biology, and urban planning) has resulted in a rich and extensive—yet fragmented—body of literature. This disciplinary fragmentation has led to a relative lack of comprehensive overviews or integrated visions. As might be expected, each discipline tends to approach these spaces through its own specific lens, highlighting certain aspects while overlooking others. The greatest value of these spaces arguably lies specifically within the intersection of multiple fields of interest. Therefore, any serious attempt at their revaluation must consider both social and ecological dimensions in tandem.

For these reasons, in the identification and selection of texts for the theoretical framework, the methodological approach adopted began by consulting collections of contributions regarded as key and relevant works on the subject (Brighenti, 2013; Clément, 2022; Gandy, 2022b; Kamvasinou & Roberts, 2014; Mariani & Barron, 2014; Lopez-Pineiro, 2020; Phelps and Silva, 2018). These references were consulted in order to find additional articles and contributions.

After collecting and synthesizing key principles of a socio-ecological approach from the literature, the article proposes an initial attempt at organizing and systematizing the value of these spaces along three main dimensions—ecological, social and economic, cultural and visual—to make explicit and consider together the various values identified and recognized by scholars.

The examples and case studies chosen are intended to represent a small, focused sample of exemplary projects that demonstrate the extreme variety and diversity of these kinds of projects. They were not selected with the aim of providing an extensive and comprehensive collection of projects realized in *Terrain Vague* spaces. From a methodological perspective, the selection of projects was based on specific criteria and characteristics: projects implemented in spaces previously classified as urban vacant spaces; projects that explicitly aimed to preserve some of their original features while applying innovative and socio-ecological approaches; and the inclusion of a variety of scales, functions, and project types. The selection process drew on key compilations and seminal texts on the subject (Kamvasinou, 2006; Mariani & Barron, 2014), as well as works on urban commons, social value, and other more recent projects published in academic and non-academic magazines, websites and journals.

The aim of this paper is not to provide a detailed evaluation of the projects. Rather, it seeks to outline a new approach and identify a set of emerging practices. The article proposes that a critical assessment and deeper discussion of these practices is necessary for future research. Although the selection and presentation of the projects may appear overly positive or celebratory—potentially overlooking nuances, possible negative implications, and lacking a thorough evaluation of their actual impact—this paper serves as an initial step toward a more comprehensive exploration. The selected projects were among those considered the most significant and virtuous implementations of the principles of the new approach, drawn from projects published in academic texts, journals, and articles. All data collected on the projects is based solely on information obtained from these sources. No information or data was collected directly from the field, apart from photographs taken during site visits. Based on the study and analysis of these vague projects, a preliminary attempt at categorizing has been carried out.

For the purposes of this article, an initial sample of nine projects was selected. Compared to the other projects included in the review, the *High Line* project is a pioneering initiative, older than the rest, and one that has received greater attention. For these reasons, there is more literature and a wider range of sources available, and sufficient time has passed to allow for medium- and long-term impact assessments. It is solely for this reason—and not because it is considered more important than the other projects—that the article presents more mature and comprehensive evaluations of this case.

Finally, a detailed analysis was conducted which compared the selected projects based on intrinsic common characteristics, using metrics such as their size, duration of existence, and the strategies employed for their formation. This analysis highlights specific aspects *of Terrain Vague* and the corresponding project strategies. An initial set of strategies for this project was a direct outcome of the analysis. To facilitate this comparison and synthesis, a comparison table (Table 1) and a representative diagram were created (Figure 8), summarizing the findings and illustrating the proposed strategies. In this article, comparison of projects was used as a primarily qualitative research method. Diagrams helped to visualize this comparison and the ideas for further discussion.

Designing with a socio-ecological approach to activate the potential of *Terrain Vague* spaces

This study revealed that *Terrain Vague* can offer opportunities and solutions for unresolved urban problems and significantly contributes to achieving sustainable urban development goals. These spaces can promote a more socially just urban habitat by improving access to and availability of green spaces across all city areas: “Wastelands constitute a resource with relevant strategic opportunities for addressing a variety of issues i.e., reducing land consumption, providing urban maintenance and rehabilitation, and increasing the supply of public open spaces, environmental quality characteristics, community standards and services” (Camerin & Gastaldi, 2023, p. 6).

Although *Terrain Vague* spaces already fulfil important functions, unlocking their full potential requires the development of a new vision. As Solà-Morales (1995) pointed out in the initial definition of *Terrain Vague*, the greatest risks and difficulties associated with these spaces concern the traditional approach to architectural or urban planning: due to their vague, undefined, and mutable characteristics, these spaces challenge traditional design principles, such as function, planning, and ownership, as well as traditional dichotomies like urban and rural, common and private, bottom-up and top-down, ephemeral and long-term. One of the central questions concerning these spaces that this article addresses—paraphrasing the Solà-Morales’s (1995) text is: How can we intervene and design in *Terrain Vague* spaces without compromising their essence and potential? How can we transition from an informal state to a formal and planned state while preserving some of the qualities of the original state?

As a result, this paper proposes several indicators for reconceptualizing *Terrain Vague* through a socio-ecological approach. This reconceptualization is structured as follows:

1. Guiding principles: Initial results that establish guiding principles, derived from theoretical literature.

2. Values of *Terrain Vague*: Presentation of the various values of these spaces as identified in academic literature.

3. Socio-ecological approach in practice: Demonstrating that this socio-ecological approach is already being put into practice.

Guiding principles of a socio-ecological approach

The complex challenge lies in the design and management of *Terrain Vague* spaces, safeguarding the “different priorities: indeterminacy, less control, layers of memory of previous activities” (Kamvasinou, 2006, p. 257) and preserving at least some of the essential characteristics of these spaces. These essential characteristics include: i) diversity, understood both as biodiversity and others (i.e. diversity of users and communities, functional and usage diversity); ii) indeterminacy, openness, and flexibility, meaning openness to

unforeseen and ephemeral uses; iii) the predominance of use value over exchange value, referring to the prevalence of spontaneous and community uses over productive and profit-oriented values.

Primarily, a socio-ecological approach to these spaces should consider the needs and desires of citizens, their existing everyday uses and spontaneous appropriations (Chase et al., 1999), as well as the history of the place (Kamvasinou, 2018; Zetti & Rossi, 2018). In this way, the socio-ecological approach would view these spaces as full of life and possibilities, rather than as a *tabula rasa* to be designed from scratch as in other approaches. In the reuse of these spaces, it would be desirable to involve the local community through participatory and co-creation processes (Kamvasinou & Roberts, 2014; Nunes et al., 2021), including between government institutions and local associations (Russell et al., 2023), challenging the traditional dichotomy between top-down and bottom-up approaches (Kamvasinou, 2017). These spaces could be directly managed by the community as urban commons (Akbil et al., 2022; Belingardi, 2015; Dellenbaugh-Losse et al., 2018; Foster & Iaione, 2022).

Benefit of a socio-ecological approach

Additionally, this type of collaboration would provide mutual benefits. On the one hand, it would satisfy potential stakeholders—those who see these spaces as sources of danger and decay—by offering economical and quick solutions to community needs, given their immediate availability and low costs. On the other hand, through participation and community management, these spaces offer opportunities to strengthen community and neighborhood ties, while also leading to reduced management costs for institutions. In this context, art and artistic activities could be an effective way to initially activate neighborhoods in areas that are usually less active (Bertolino, 2017; LaFond, 2010).

Secondly, a socio-ecological approach would enhance the immense environmental and ecological potential of these spaces while also posing positive social benefits and interests (Anderson & Minor, 2017; Lee et al., 2015; Lokman, 2017; Soares et al., 2017). This can be achieved by designing and planning for diversity, challenging traditional functional dichotomies (diversity in this case refers to both human and non-human diversity, i.e., different communities and biodiversity, as well as diversity in functions, uses, and activities). These spaces fulfil important ecosystem functions and can be designed using nature-based solutions. There is a wealth of scientific literature declaring the enormous environmental and ecological benefits and value of these spaces (Anderson & Minor, 2017; Clément, 2022; Gandy, 2022b; Twerd & Banaszak-Cibicka, 2019). Moreover, it is equally clear that increased presence and availability of accessible green spaces in less privileged neighborhoods or communities with limited access to resources would simultaneously improve both urban ecology and spatial justice: “Hester (2006) introduces the notion of ecological democracy to emphasize that citizens should be engaged in every process of environmental decision-making in order to create inclusive, functioning, and vibrant environments for all living things” (Lokman, 2017, p. 4).

It is essential to consider and assess the dynamics of environmental justice to critically evaluate the actual social impact of new practices implemented in Terrain Vague spaces, particularly in relation to factors such as gentrification or even eco-gentrification (Black & Richards, 2020). This term refers to the relationship between urban green space projects (for example, New York’s High Line) and processes of gentrification: “rising property values, displacement of existing residents, and a large in-migration of wealthy populations” (Black & Richards, 2020, p. 1). Indeed, the creation of improved green areas and enhanced public spaces is often linked to dynamics of speculation and centralized profit, frequently neglecting the needs of the local community: as a clear example, studies on New York’s High Line (Millington, 2015; Haase et al., 2017) highlight these significant aspects.

To mitigate such risks—while acknowledging the complexity of the issue, which would require more in-depth investigation—the active participation and direct involvement of residents and local communities, both in the design and in the management of these spaces, could play a significant role. In this sense, an experimental case of the intersection of social and ecological interests in *Terrain Vague* spaces with the direct involvement of local community is represented by the concept of the healthy corridor, conceived within the Urbinat research project, which in the case of Porto made extensive use of *Terrain Vague* spaces: "the Healthy Corridor is a concept that combines nature-based solutions with human-centered ones to impact citizens' wellbeing" (Moniz, 2021).

Finally, it would be desirable for part of the vagueness, unpredictability, immediacy, and mutability of *Terrain Vague* spaces to be preserved in projects and valued instead of being seen as a problem. This can be achieved by considering the variable of time in the design process, in at least two seemingly contradicting aspects: by valuing and allowing for the temporary and ephemeral, and by designing for the unexpected and unpredictable. Projects in these spaces often originate from temporary and ephemeral occupations and activities, which sometimes extend over time; other times, they conclude, but their social and community legacy is of great value. These spaces are prime grounds for exploration and experimentation in the field of tactical urbanism or temporary urbanism (Grávalos-Lacambra & Di-Monte, 2022; Hou, 2010; Kamvasinou, 2017; Németh & Langhorst, 2014), which, although ephemeral, can be part of a broader strategy, redefining the traditional dichotomy between the ephemeral and long-term vision (Cavaco et al.,, 2018; Pagano & Bowman, 2000).

In addition, although it may seem paradoxical, it is possible to design for the unpredictable, the unexpected, the unplanned and the spontaneous (García & Esmeralda, 2017). Indeed, it is possible to design space as an infrastructure that remains open and available for change, for different and variable uses, that is adaptable according to needs and functions, and that is welcoming to spontaneous and unexpected uses—both for humans and nature (Sikorska et al., 2021). Recently, landscape architects have been very sensitive to the ecological and aesthetic value of spontaneous nature, and it is possible to observe the emergence of practices and projects for parks and gardens where large areas are deliberately left unplanned, allowing spontaneous nature to emerge, and for mutability and unpredictability to appear (Kamvasinou, 2006; Metta & Olivetti, 2021).

Values of Terrain Vague

To activate and enhance the role of *Terrain Vague* in sustainable urban development, the urban and architecture design serves as a key tool for uncovering and leveraging the place's qualities and potential from a holistic perspective. First, an innovative project in Terrain Vague spaces acknowledges and amplifies the tangible and intangible connections of the space, facilitating its preservation. It then provides a comprehensive assessment of the various values at stake, ensuring balance across the three pillars of sustainability: social, economic, and environmental. Upon completion, the project's impact can be evaluated based on the mentioned sustainability pillars. *Terrain vague* spaces offer unique sociocultural and ecological opportunities, acting as intersections of diverse values and interests (Lopez-Pineiro, 2020). The authors propose three provisional categories of values or potentials, recognizing their interconnectedness: i) ecological value, ii) social and economic value, iii) and cultural, visual, and aesthetic value.

Ecological value

These spaces harbor a rich variety of biodiversity (Figure 2) as they serve as havens for endangered species that are not allowed within human-controlled green areas (Clément,

2022; Gandy, 2013a, 2013b, 2022a, 2022b). Despite their small size, when interconnected and treated as a unified system, these spaces can transform into green corridors (Nunes et al., 2021) (for istance, Corredores Verdes in Lisbon), serving as meeting points between urban and wild environments (Metta & Olivetti, 2021), as well as human and non-human elements (Kamvasinou, 2011; Lokman, 2017; Stavrides, 2014). Notably, "vacant lots that are allowed to grow wild (unmowed) or that are restored have the potential to increase urban biodiversity and may even contribute to the conservation of rare and endangered species" (Anderson & Minor, 2017, p. 147). They provide opportunities for informal gardening (Beveridge et al., 2022) and the potential for cultivating low-cost, local products, establishing new networks, and complementing existing urban food systems (Marat-Mendes et al., 2022). Moreover, *Terrain Vague* spaces provide important ecosystem services (Cortinovis & Geneletti, 2018; McPhearson et al., 2013) and ecological functions such as rainwater absorption, air quality improvement, and all other benefits related to the presence of vegetation in urban contexts, and they can be conceptualized or designed as nature-based solutions (Sikorska et al., 2021).

***Figure 2**. High Line before intervention. Source: Wally Gobetz / CC BY-NC-ND 2.0*

Social and economic value

Due to their uncertain nature, these spaces are often spontaneously and informally utilized by nearby residents, fostering community interaction and occasional conflicts, while also accommodating uses that are typically restricted in traditional public spaces (Kamvasinou & Roberts, 2014; Mariani & Barron, 2014). It is precisely their detachment from certain controls, productivity, and economic mechanisms that positions these spaces as potential alternative models to the neoliberal city. Additionally, these spaces can be used for urban design experiments, events and temporary uses that foster aggregation (Beveridge et al., 2022), strengthen bonds and benefit the community. The presence of green areas—or the transformation of abandoned spaces into gardens and parks—not only enhances the quality of life of residents and also increases the value of surrounding residential properties (Nassauer & Raskin, 2014).

Cultural, visual and aesthetic value

Since the early 1960s, the concept of *Terrain Vague* has received significant interest from artists (Careri, 2006), filmmakers and photographers (Mariani & Barron, 2011) who were attracted by the beauty and new aesthetics of these spaces, long before they were discovered and studied by architects, urban planners and academics. Lately, there has been growing interest and appreciation within these disciplines for the aesthetics of ex-industrial, abandoned, or incomplete spaces (Gandy, 2003), such as the project *Incompiuto Siciliano* (Gambaro, 2020). This has increasingly led architects, artists, planners and landscape architects to requalify industrial space, abandoned or in ruins, as no longer negative but rather as the inspiration and subject of a project (Gandy, 2013a). Precisely because of their state of abandonment, *Terrain Vague* spaces often contain important traces of the territorial palimpsest, ruins, parts of monuments, traces of the history (Kamvasinou, 2018), culture and overlays of the place (Zetti & Rossi, 2018). For this reason, visiting these spaces can strengthen a community's sense of belonging, as well as play a didactic role in learning about the history of a place. Therefore, it becomes important to acknowledge that "ephemeral and interim urban spaces as part of heritage ensures that valuable community spaces do not get lost but are documented and revisited for future generations and build a legacy worth following and sustaining in collective memory and practice" (Kamvasinou, 2018, p. 97).

Socio-ecological approach in practices: nine projects

In this section, nine examples are presented to exemplify the consistent application of the principles outlined in the new approach (Table 1). A list of projects is organized according to the nature of the intervention, the project's main purpose or function, and the involvement of different types of technicians and professionals in its implementation.

Project	Location	Year	Scale	Duration	Type	Key concept
High Line	New York, USA	2009	Medium (Linear shape)	2009–	Urban park	Regeneration
Parc aux Angéliques	Bordeaux, France	2012	Big	2012–	Urban park	Unfinished
Parc Henri Matisse	Lille, France	2001	Big	2001–	Urban park	Third landscape
Passage 56	Paris, France	2006	Small	2006–	Small multifunctional plots	Participation
LABIC Barreiro Velho	Barreiro, Lisbon, Portugal	2022	Small	2022–2023	Small multifunctional plots	Citizen laboratory
ONDI	Tokyo, Japan	2010	Small	2010–	Small multifunctional plots	Flexibility
R-Urban	Paris, France	2008	Medium	2008–2015	Urban garden	Urban commons
BotaniCALL	Lecce, Italy	2020	Medium	2020–	Urban garden	Reactivation
Abbey Garden	London, UK	2008	Small/ Medium	2008–	Urban garden	Historical heritage

***Table 1**. Comparative summary table of the observed projects*

Public parks

The *High Line* in New York (Figures 2 and 3) was originally built in 1934 as a functioning rail line. It was then decommissioned in 1980 and became an abandoned structure in the city center. Over time, without human control, vegetation started to grow along the old rail line, transforming it into a wild garden. Initially considered old and unattractive, the structure was slated for demolition. In 1999, the non-profit conservancy "Friends of the High Line" was established to advocate for its preservation and repurposing as a public space. Through a collaboration between James Corner Field Operations, Diller Scofidio + Renfro, and Piet Oudolf, the project successfully regenerated the structure, opening it to the public while preserving its ruins and the spontaneous vegetation that had grown. In this case, as in other cases of linear parks that followed this pioneering project, the ecological value should be conceived not in absolute quantitative terms but in relation to its context. In a densely built and permeable context, a green passageway holds significant value for the community and residents. Although initially intended to improve the quality of space for local inhabitants, its added value—combined with rising surrounding property prices has contributed to the gentrification of the surrounding neighborhoods (Black & Richards, 2020).

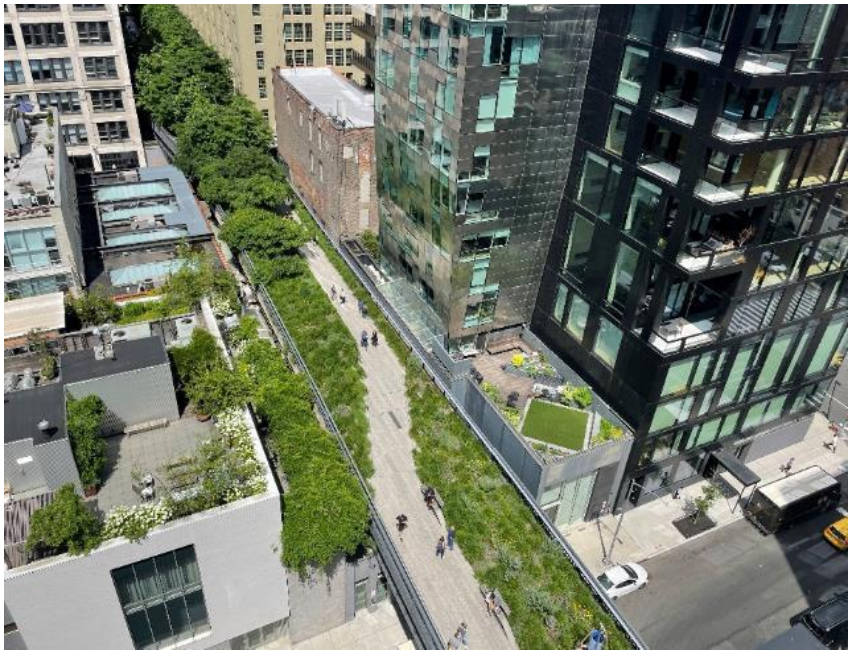

***Figure 3**. High Line project. Source: Wil Fyfordy / CC BY-SA 4.0*

Landscape architect Michele Desvigne coined the term "intermediate nature" (Desvigne et al., 2009) to describe his approach and projects. Desvigne's designs embrace the concept of time, allowing for phases, the ephemeral, and the indeterminate. They aim to create a structural framework that can adapt to events, uses, and communities over time. Resembling natural cycles rather than finished architecture, Desvigne's projects have a long lifespan, and consider the "meanwhile" of the transformation process. These "intermediate natures" provide positive attributes to the sites while awaiting construction (Desvigne et al., 2009; Kamvasinou, 2006; Koller, 2016). For example, the master plan proposal for the riverbank in Bordeaux (2004–2005), which would later also include the *Parc aux Angéliques* urban park, envisions the conversion of former abandoned and post-industrial lots into a floodplain forest. However, the master plan does not focus solely on the final formal outcome and aspect, but also on the process and the passage of time. Indeed, it allows for considerable flexibility and openness regarding the final form, thus aiming for the progressive transformation of the landscape and

enabling spontaneous and unexpected appropriations—whether by nature itself or by unforeseen needs arising during the process (Desvigne et al., 2009).

The garden designer and botanist Gilles Clément coined the term “third landscape”, identifying by exclusion all areas that are neither pristine nature nor man-made gardens or parks. With his *Manifesto*, Clément (2022) gives attention, value and status to marginal and abandoned spaces, where human neglect has fostered a wealth of species and biodiversity. After theorizing this concept, along with others, through books and publications, he went on to design several projects that put these ideas into practice. Among these, one of the most renowned examples is undoubtedly *Parc Henri Matisse*, located in an intermediate zone between the city center and the railway, aims to create a new urban ecological enclave by enhancing and preserving the intrinsic characteristics and values of the site and of the pre-existing *Terrain Vague* space. Set in the middle of *Parc Henri Matisse*, is Derborence Island (Figure 4), a reinforced concrete platform inaccessible to man, represents an interesting realization of his ideas. Far from the gaze and control of humans, this space becomes an unspoilt natural reserve; despite being artificial and man-made, it is a monument to biodiversity (Gandy, 2013a; Marinoni, 2004; Zetti & Rossi, 2018). Derborence—named after one of Europe’s primary forests in Switzerland—becomes, in this project, a hidden, elevated, and inaccessible area designed to preserve a new fragment of untouched nature (Marinoni, 2004).

***Figure 4**. Derborence Island, Parc Henri Matisse. Source: Velvet / CC BY-SA 3.0*

The last two presented projects are designed green spaces and because of the large scale of the intervention, it can be stated that they have a high ecological and environmental value and demonstrate good ecosystem service performance. This is due to the urban context in which they are located, their extensive permeable surface area, and their innovative approach, which involves preserving or even stimulating spontaneous and uncontrolled nature. In addition to the general social and economic value of the increased presence of urban green spaces, this latter aspect further enhances the significance of these projects. In particular, adding social, aesthetic, cultural, and educational value for a new re-evaluation and understanding of nature in urban contexts, challenging the traditional conception of these spaces.

Small multifunctional plots

Passage 56 (Atelier Architecture Autogérée, 2006), a small vacant lot or interstitial space located in the Saint Blaise district in Paris, was initially abandoned as it was considered unbuildable. However, it later became the subject of an interesting project conducted by Atelier

Architecture Autogérée. After several months of surveys and investigations conducted with inhabitants and neighborhood associations, the architects proposed solutions based on suggestions made by the local community. Community-led construction workshops were organized, and during the construction period, the space remained open to allow citizens to use the area, learn with the construction site, and contribute with small "parallel" construction projects. The space is periodically used by the community for gardening, urban agriculture, performances, exhibitions, debates, parties, workshops, and any other type of event.

LABIC Barreiro Velho (LABIC, 2022), a laboratory of community innovation based in Barreiro Velho—a city within the Great Metropolitan Area of Lisbon—plans to carry out surveys to map and identify places and people in the area; to create and strengthen relationships and a sense of community; to design and implement projects with the participation of citizens; and to strengthen links between the community and institutions. In 2022, during the first phase of LABIC, a photographic walk was organized by the laboratory team in collaboration with the photographers' association of Barreiro Velho, local residents, and other artistic and cultural organizations: this was connected to projects' initial aim to identify and map the local actors, challenges, as well as the potential of the territory. During the photo walk, 25 urban voids were identified, mapped, and photographed, all of which were abandoned and unused. These amounted to 450 m^2 of empty space, i.e. the equivalent of a football pitch. At a later stage, hypotheses about the possible future of these voids were made, together with the inhabitants and architecture students. During this process, the owner of "void number 12" temporarily gave the land to the LABIC association, which immediately began cleaning and maintenance activities to make the space usable. Subsequently, the space was used as a meeting space with the community to discuss its future use (Figure 5).

***Figure 5**. The void 12 used for a festival. Source: Carolina Cardoso, LABIC*

ONDI is a vacant rental space located in the Yanaka neighborhood in Tokyo. In this case, "the owners of this site deliberately set aside the financially lucrative coin-operated parking option. Instead, they placed a higher value on the quality of the neighborhood, appreciating its tradition of cultural and creative richness exemplified by the increasing number of galleries, workshops, and cafes selling handicraft and artworks" (Rahmann & Jonas, 2014, p. 100). The owner decided to rent this space at minimum rates and with very simple and flexible rules, which make it possible for different groups to use the space for very different cultural events. The mix of events, ranging from performances, art exhibitions, markets, student workshops to traditional *Butoh* performances.

These last three projects share common characteristics: relatively small-sized spaces in extremely dense and built-up contexts that do not propose any permanent or irreversible modifications to the space. Considering their small scale, the ecological contribution to the city may not be significant in quantitative terms, although it is important to note that, before the intervention, these spaces were often used as dumps and were therefore polluted. Considering the context, flexibility, and possibilities, these spaces have a significant social and cultural impact relative to their size. The social and cultural value lies in hosting a wide variety of events and activities, reflecting the real needs of the community and changes over time, at extremely low costs, thus also impacting the economic aspect.

Urban gardens

R-Urban (Figure 6) is a replicable prototype project realized in Colombes, in the suburbs of Paris, from 2013–2017 by Atelier d'Architecture Autogérée (Petcou & Petrescu, 2014, 2015; Petrescu & Petcou, 2023). Starting from the reactivation of a vast abandoned *Terrain Vague* between social housing buildings, the project involved co-designing and implementing a hub together with the inhabitants and local associations, serving as the center of a system and network of local actors. One of the most interesting aspects of the project is the simultaneous coexistence of agricultural, cultural and social functions, and an educational dimension: all processes were designed and implemented together with the community, at events and workshops, thus activating a continuous learning circle (Atelier Architecture Autogérée, 2022).

In 2018, the plot, owned by the municipality, was sold for the construction of a car park (Drouet & Lacrouts, 2018). The legal process that followed these events was an opportunity to test out an innovative approach for the economic valuation of the different types of new tangible and intangible values that the project had produced. In the words of the organizers, "we combine estimates of the direct revenues generated for a host of activities that took place in R-Urban, including an urban farm, community recycling center, a greenhouse, community kitchen, compost school, café, a teaching space, and a mini-market. We then estimate the market value of volunteer labour put into running the sites, in addition to the value of training and education conducted through formal and informal channels, and the new jobs and earnings that were generated due to R-Urban activity" (Petrescu et al., 2021, p. 159).

***Figure 6**., R-Urban. Source: Ion Antim / CC BY-SA 4.0*

BotaniCALL (2016) is the project of reactivating 1500 m^2 of the 13-hectare Botanical Garden in Lecce, Italy, led by Team Lecce of Actors of Urban Change. The Salento Botanical Garden had been abandoned for years, when in 2016 a group of volunteers started a synergistic vegetable garden, with the aim of transforming the botanical garden into a local hub for growing food, experimenting with new techniques and researching local traditions (Giulia Toscani et al., 2017). “The team, made up of a cultural association coordinator, a public foundation board member, an architect and an urbanist, has focused on encouraging locals to engage with the local environment as well as experiment with sustainable practice and production at a time when climate change is just beginning to impact the region” (Schlueter & Surwiłło-Hahn, 2018, p. 42).

Abbey Garden (Figure 7) is a community garden, and public space located in Newham and founded in 2008. The space functions as both a community garden—with volunteers organizing workshops every 3 weeks—and as a public space open to the community. What makes this space unique is its connection to culture and historical memory, due to its origins and continued development through artist-funded initiatives and proposals. “The element of heritage is clear in the history and status of the site, as it is one of only two Scheduled Ancient Monuments in Newham that contains the remains of a twelfth-century Cistercian abbey where monks once ran a kitchen garden” (Kamvasinou, 2018).

***Figure 7**. Abbey Garden, 2023. Source: the authors*

Open Access Journal

The last presented examples are three urban community garden projects, created in previously abandoned and unused spaces, initiated, designed, and managed directly by the community and local associations. From an ecological perspective, they are agricultural spaces, thus permeable, in an urban context. Their great ecological and social value lies in their educational, didactic, and awareness-raising character regarding sustainable food production and consumption, which is of great importance for the future of cities. All of these projects are managed directly by the community as urban commons, based on mutual learning and the sharing of knowledge and experience. Profit or the sale of products are not core aims, instead, the focus is strengthening community bonds and learning agricultural skills and practices. Finally, these spaces are not limited to hosting agriculture-related functions; they often offer social, cultural, and artistic opportunities (festivals, workshops, concerts, lessons).

Findings: indicative strategies for designing with a socio-ecological of *Terrain Vague* spaces

From the intersection of the guiding principles of the socio-ecological approach and the review of the case studies, possible indicative strategies are derived that indicate a new socio-ecological approach to *Terrain Vague*. As a result of the analysis of the projects, a synthesis matrix diagram is proposed to represent the possible indicative strategies (Figure 8). The comparative analysis of these examples focused on three key variables, which were deemed crucial based on academic literature, the nature of the space, type of intervention, designer's intentions, and the availability and type of project data. These variables are: (1) Time; (2) Scale; and (3) Strategy.

***Figure 8**. Comparison of projects based on space, time, and strategy. The colored circles represent the preferred strategies in each project. The size of the circle is merely a graphic device of representation. Source: the authors*

Time is really the key factor in *Terrain Vague* design. These spaces are always occupied with informal and temporary appropriations and uses before the interventions. For this reason, the intervention in these spaces oscillates at varying intensities between continuing to preserve the current occupation and allowing future new uses, through the design of unpredictability. This last approach involves creating structures, traces, or infrastructures that remain open to the unexpected rhythms of both natural and human cycles, extending entirely beyond the designer's control.

Scale is both the easiest to compare and the most variable visible material feature existing a priori. The scales of the *Terrain Vague* vary from interstitial plots within dense built-up areas to large undeveloped land at the city limits. The hypothesis concludes that scale can influence the design of these spaces and enquires into how. It is important to note that the scale of the space does not necessarily correspond to the scale considered by the intervention, e.g. a very small empty lot can be a key element included in a spatial scale strategy.

Strategy for designing *Terrain Vague* spaces is an attempt to synthesize the set of actions, tactics and intentions introduced and considered to achieve a given objective. Therefore, depending on the variables at play, the designer may prefer one strategy over another.

The proposed chart is organized in two axes (Figure 8): scale and time. The vertical axis of the map represents the scale of the space considered, and the horizontal axis represents the time scale considered in the project. The colored circles each represent a strategy and are represented under the name of the projects, and the varied size of the circle demarcates the co-presence of different strategies.

The authors propose five possible indicative strategies or tactics, conceived as fundamental project dimensions, derived from the intersection of the theoretical framework and the project review:

1. *Ephemerality and temporality.* Time is considered as an element and criterion of design in three different ways: first, as a way to consider the human and non-human uses and appropriations that always exist in these spaces at the time of the project; secondly, by conceiving the intervention in phases—accounting for the intersections and overlaps of the phases, as well as the interim use of the spaces while the work is being implemented. Time can be considered as a design strategy in various ways and dimensions: incorporating the passage of time into the project, and therefore embracing unpredictability and the spontaneous appropriation of nature, as in the case of *Parc aux Angéliques* in Bordeaux or *Parc Henri Matisse*; time understood as maximum flexibility to accommodate any type of activity or function, adapting over time, as in the case of *Passage 56* or *ONDI*; time as an ephemeral or temporary intervention, as in the *LABIC* project; and time in the sense of history and heritage, as in the case of *Abbey Garden*. Finally, due to the transitory and uncertain nature of these spaces, it would be important to value and incentivize ephemeral or temporary uses as they can activate collaborations or strengthen the sense of community. This is the case of the spaces *LABIC*, *ONDI* and *Passage 56*, where the absence of a single specific function allows for ever-changing ephemeral occupations. It also applies to the case of *Abbey Garden*, where the history of the place has inspired the design of the garden.
2. *Indeterminacy and vacancy*. The new *Terrain Vague* vision should take indeterminacy into account—rather than designing and implementing finished and concluded forms, it should set structures, frames or open systems that are flexible and adaptable to spontaneous appropriation or variation of circumstances. For the three small multifunctional plot projects—*Passage 56*, *ONDI*, and *LABIC*—the design approach

deliberately avoids fixing the space to predetermined uses. Instead, by preserving the functional openness typical of *Terrain Vague* spaces, these projects remain adaptable over time, ready to host an unlimited variety of occupations and activities as circumstances evolve. This approach would make it possible to preserve the absence of control and unpredictability, and to leave possible informal and spontaneous appropriations. This strategy can vary from light-touch designing of paths that leave plants free to grow in unpredictable forms over time, as in the case of Desvigne's works (*Parc aux Angéliques*), to the most radical and extreme case of Derborence island (*Parc Henri Matisse*), where the project creates an area inaccessible to humans, allowing natural processes to unfold unpredictably and freely.

3. *Multiscalarity*. Through a complex network of material and immaterial connections and flows, these spaces always involve different scales of interest and intervention—from the local to the global, from the neighborhood scale to the city scale—which should always be considered. Indeed, these spaces can fulfil both local functions, such as providing access to green spaces or community spaces, as well as urban functions, such as rainwater absorption or walkways and cycle paths (e.g. in the case of the *High Line*). This aspect is evident, first of all, in the significant differences in scale among the projects, which range from large urban parks (such as in Bordeaux) to the small footprint of a single buildable lot or an interstitial gap between buildings, as in the case of *Passage 56*. Moreover, these projects often act as mediators and connectors across multiple scales: in the case of *Parc Henri Matisse* or *Parc aux Angéliques*, they bridge the scale of major infrastructure (river, docks, or railway) with that of the local urban fabric; they can also function as linear routes, as with *LABIC*; and, finally, they may serve as hubs integrated into a larger territorial system or network, as in the case of *R-Urban*.

4. *Diversity.* This term refers to two different aspects. Firstly, it refers to the preservation of the abundance that diversity represents in these spaces: biodiversity, diversity of communities, uses, functions, and exchanges between the human and non-human. Secondly, it refers to the consideration and balance of the diversity and of the different values outlined earlier (ecological, social, and aesthetic). The *R-Urba*n project, for example, is an agricultural and permeable space, and by conducting agricultural workshops and self-construction of structures and street furniture, it provides ecological, social, and aesthetic and cultural functions at the same time. In this sense, it is interesting to observe how the different projects interpret the notion of diversity in distinct ways: large urban parks tend to frame it primarily as botanical diversity or biodiversity (as in the cases of *Parc Henri Matisse* and *Parc aux Angéliques*); the three multifunctional plots projects express it as an extreme openness to multiple uses and activities, precisely by avoiding any predefined function; while urban gardens combine both dimensions—diversity of activities and functions, and diversity of objectives, for instance, social, educational, and pedagogical aims.

5. *Connectors, limits and margins.* The new vision for these spaces should reverse the concept of limits and margins, traditionally seen as of less importance, and should instead conceive the design of margins, of boundaries as a valuable opportunity to reactivate connections and flows in the contemporary city. Small urban voids, if they do not have great value or potential in isolation, can gain enormous potential value if they are connected and function as networks and systems between the human and non-human. This is the case of the void in LABIC, for instance. These projects operate as margins—intermediate and mediating spaces. In Bordeaux, they mediate between the river and the city; in *Parc Henri Matisse*, for example, between the railway and the

local urban scale. In the case of the small multifunctional plots, as well as urban gardens, the project sites are tiny urban interstices that function both as physical connectors—spaces that can be crossed, pathways—and as metaphorical connectors, strengthening neighborhood ties.

Discussion

Over the past two decades, several experimental and emerging projects have attempted to engage with *Terrain Vague* spaces, seeking to preserve their qualities while pursuing social and ecological goals. Despite their significant value and potential—demonstrated and described by a substantial body of interdisciplinary academic literature—the integration and enhancement of these spaces within the urban system remains highly complex and rarely occurs. One of the main challenges lies in the ability to intervene in such places while preserving and enhancing their spectrum of values. This type of intervention is particularly difficult and requires careful attention to the defining characteristics of *Terrain Vague* spaces, as well as the consideration of diverse values—social, environmental, and cultural.

This article is an initial attempt to bridge the existing gap between scientific literature and emerging practices in these *Terrain Vague* spaces. It provides an initial systematization of such practices by proposing a set of strategies derived from the intersection between theoretical guiding principles and the specific features of the selected projects. The analysis and systematization of these innovative practices aim to contribute to the definition of a new socio-ecological approach—one that can subsequently be tested and integrated into design practices and urban planning processes. The article responds to research questions concerning these spaces. Specifically, how is it possible for *Terrain Vague* spaces to transition from a state of abandonment and spontaneity to a formal project state without losing their qualities?

From the existing literature, a set of theoretical guiding principles were derived to inform an approach to these spaces aimed at preserving their value. To this end, it was also necessary to gather a variety of contributions concerning the value of these spaces and to outline a preliminary classification along three main axes—social, ecological, and cultural. It is important to recognize that the value of these spaces encompasses multiple disciplines and very different forms of value: from biodiversity to social and community spaces, from economic benefits to a new aesthetic. These values can be preserved through a new socio-ecological approach, outlined by the guiding principles—an ensemble of theoretical recommendations drawn from academic literature.

This research sought to test whether these theoretical guiding principles can be applied in practice by identifying emerging practices within *Terrain Vague* spaces and examining how the principles had been implemented. The observation and comparison of a small sample of selected experiences offers valuable reflections and insights for future research. For example, one interesting insight concerns the considerable variety of these projects in terms of scale, duration, actors involved, public sector engagement, type of space, project typology, and so on.

From this, it can be inferred that these spaces have the potential to support a wide range of projects and solutions. This highlights the need for future research to further investigate the relationship between the specific characteristics of these spaces and the types of projects or functions that may be implemented within them.

The study emphasized the need for a new approach that preserves the essence and potential of these *Terrain Vague* spaces while transitioning them from informal to formal spaces. This vision includes guiding principles such as acknowledging temporary uses, considering varying

scales, preserving biodiversity, addressing both local and urban functions, and redefining boundaries to activate connections.

The new socio-ecological approach should be based on some of the characteristics of *Terrain Vague* spaces, valuing and transforming them into guidelines for future development. Diversity should be maintained and designed, allowing for the integration of the various values present in these spaces (ecological, social, economic, cultural, and aesthetic), enabling different functions, and transforming these spaces from limits to margins, spaces of connection and passage, at various scales. This diversity is possible when the space is flexible and open to changes. By considering time, unexpected and spontaneous uses can be planned for, allowing both people and nature to use the space freely: this would allow for the emergence of spontaneous human and non-human appropriations, as well as ephemeral projects and tactical urbanism. In turn, temporary projects and small urban interventions could activate long-term processes and provide immediate solutions to community needs. The local community, at both neighborhood and city levels, would likely benefit most from this approach, as these stakeholders would have greater access to green spaces and non-profit spaces which they can manage directly, and where they can learn, experiment, and organize cultural, artistic, and agricultural events.

Closing remarks

In the introduction section, it was outlined the importance and potential of *Terrain Vague* spaces, based on their specific characteristics, qualities, and the scarcity of available land in dense urban contexts—particularly considering future urban challenges, the demand for greater spatial and ecological justice, and the improvement of urban quality of life. However, we believe that much remains to be done regarding the design, approach, and interventions in these spaces, as well as their integration into conventional planning, legislation, and local authority policies. In fact, the existing gap between theory and practice, coupled with outdated paradigms, means that the value of these spaces is still largely overlooked by conventional planning systems.

Moreover, innovative projects in *Terrain Vague* offer significant opportunities for experimentation in urban design, co-creation, and urban commons. These projects could provide valuable lessons for the future integration of bottom-up, co-created, and co-managed practices into conventional planning, as well as for approaches that embrace spontaneous nature and biodiversity.

For these reasons, this article proposes an initial attempt to connect the extensive theoretical literature on the potential of these spaces with projects implemented in accordance with such principles, through the examination of a sample of selected case studies. Furthermore, by cross-referencing the literature with the review of these cases, the article seeks to derive a preliminary set of potential strategies for innovative interventions in *Terrain Vague* spaces, aimed at advancing planning, urban design, and urban policy.

Among the wide range of practices and projects emerging in these spaces, we consider this selection to be exemplary of a new and innovative approach. This approach formally intervenes in *Terrain Vague* spaces while simultaneously preserving some of their original features—aiming to enhance their intrinsic value rather than erase it and replace it with new productive functions. Moreover, although the collected practices may appear to present cohesive interventions in unused or underused spaces, the projects represent considerable diversity in several aspects, such as type and scale of space, primary function, designers and stakeholders involved, duration, legal framework and urban designation, as well as modes of governance and community participation.

This study demonstrates that there is a correspondence between the theoretical prescriptions regarding the principles and value of *Terrain Vague* spaces and the emerging projects and practices taking place within them. This alignment is precisely what allows such practices to avoid becoming destructive interventions and instead act as strategies that preserve or activate the potential identified benefits of these spaces. Given the multidimensional nature of their value, a holistic approach is required—one that considers environmental, ecological, social, economic, and cultural aspects within the urban context.

Furthermore, by describing and analyzing the nine selected projects, this research proposes a set of indicative strategies. These strategies represent concrete ideas and actions that translate the theoretical guiding principles into practice, closely connected to the specific characteristics of *Terrain Vague* spaces.

The strength of this article lies in its attempt to address the identified gap in scientific literature, namely the missing link between the theoretical framework concerning the potential of *Terrain Vague* spaces and the innovative practices implemented in recent years. Its main contribution is the effort to systematize these practices based on the existing scientific framework, while also proposing a set of possible strategies.

As this represents an initial attempt, it is important to highlight the limitations of this research, which primarily concerns the relatively small number of reviewed projects, as well as the depth of the analysis and comparison among the observed experiences. In this regard, it is necessary to emphasize the importance of future research that considers a significantly larger number of case studies, based on clear selection criteria, and that develops a more in-depth analysis and comparison, also accounting for additional relevant factors. We believe that such an approach may further contribute to refining and expanding the proposed set of indicative strategies.

Noting that this article is an initiation into enquiry, a more in-depth analysis and systematization of these practices is of crucial importance in order to better understand the features of *Terrain Vague* spaces, implications for planning and design, and potential to address the urban challenges of the future.

Finally, an important aspect that future research will need to assess and address is the social dimension and impact, particularly in relation to social justice and equity. While there is a growing set of parameters and criteria for evaluating the ecological dimension and impact of projects of this kind, these will need to be complemented by specific indicators that address the social dimension. Such indicators must be developed, measured, and adapted to the specific case of *Terrain Vague* spaces.

As demonstrated by the growing body of scientific literature, and innovative practices that have emerged in recent years on the topic, fostering research and practice around *Terrain Vague* will be of fundamental importance for addressing urban challenges and for future planning.

Acknowledgments

This work was supported by FCT – Fundação para a Ciência e Tecnologia, I.P. by project reference 2022.11783.BD and DOI identifier https://doi.org/10.54499/2022.11783.BD.
The authors sincerely thank Krystallia Kamvasinou, for the valuable insights on *Terrain Vague* spaces and for hosting Lorenzo during a research stay at the University of Westminster in London, and DINÂMIA'CET-Iscte – Centre for Socioeconomic and Territorial Studies for supporting the authors research activities.

References

Akbil, E., Axinte, A., Can, E., de Carli, B., Harrison, M., Méndez de Andés, A., Moebus, K., Moore, T., & Petrescu, D. (2022). *Urban commons handbook*. dpr-barcelona.

Anderson, E. C., & Minor, E. S. (2017). Vacant lots: An underexplored resource for ecological and social benefits in cities. *Urban Forestry & Urban Greening,* 21, 146–152. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ufug.2016.11.015

Atelier Architecture Autogérée. (2006). *Passage 56*. AAA. https://www.urbantactics.org/projets/passage56

Atelier Architecture Autogérée. (2022). R-Urban: Resilient agencies, short circuits, and civic practices in metropolitan suburbs. *Harvard Design Magazine,* 37.

Belingardi, C. F. M. (2015). *Comunanze urbane. Autogestione e cura dei luoghi*. Firenze University Press.

Bertolino, N. (2017). Riappropriarsi dei luoghi dell'abbandono: La comunità creativa come epicentro della rigenerazione urbana sostenibile. In R. Galdini & A. Marata (Eds.), *La città creativa – Spazi pubblici e luoghi della quotidianità* (pp. 69–77). CNAPPC.

Beveridge, R., Kip, M., & Oevermann, H. (2022). From wastelands to waiting lands: Retrieving possibility from the voids of Berlin. *City,* 26(2–3), 281–303. https://doi.org/10.1080/13604813.2022.2040200

Black, K. J., & Richards, M. (2020). Eco-gentrification and who benefits from urban green amenities: NYC's High Line. *Landscape and Urban Planning,* 204, 103900. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.landurbplan.2020.103900

Bonfantini, B., & Forino, I. (Eds.). (2021). *Urban interstices in Italy: Design experiences*. LetteraVentidue.

Bowman, A. O., & Pagano, M. A. (2004). *Terra incognita: Vacant land and urban strategies*. Georgetown University Press.

Brighenti, A. M. (2013). *Urban interstices: The aesthetics and the politics of the in-between*. Ashgate.

Camerin, F., & Gastaldi, F. (2023). Wastelands. Recycling urban spaces for the shrinking city. *Contesti. Città, Territori, Progetti,* 1, 5–13. https://doi.org/10.36253/contest-14671

Careri, F. (2006). *Walkscapes: Camminare come pratica estetica*. Einaudi.

Cavaco, C., Santos, J. R., & Brito-Henriques, E. (Eds.). (2018). *Ideas for intervention in abandoned urban spaces*. Academia de escolas de arquitetura e urbanismo de língua portuguesa.

Chase, J., Crawford, M., & Kaliski, J. (1999). *Everyday urbanism*. Monacelli Press.

Clément, G. (2022). *Manifesto of the third landscape*. Trans Europe Halles.

Cortinovis, C., & Geneletti, D. (2018). Mapping and assessing ecosystem services to support urban planning: A case study on brownfield regeneration in Trento, Italy. *One Ecosystem,* 3, e25477. https://doi.org/10.3897/oneeco.3.e25477

Dellenbaugh-Losse, M., Zimmermann, N.-E., & de Vries, N. (2018). *The urban commons cookbook*.

Desvigne, M., Corner, J., & Tiverghien, G. A. (2009). *Intermediate natures: The landscapes of Michel Desvigne*. Birkhäuser.

Drouet, L., & Lacrouts, O. (2018, May 4). Parigi. Una nuova Agrocité. *Domus*. https://www.domusweb.it/it/architettura/2018/05/04/parigi-una-nuova-agrocit.html

Foster, S. R., & Iaione, C. (2022). *Co-cities: Innovative transitions toward just and self-sustaining communities*. MIT Press.

Gambaro, M. (2020). Alterazioni Video e Fosbury Architecture (Eds.), Incompiuto: La nascita di uno stile / The birth of a style. *TECHNE – Journal of Technology for Architecture and Environment*, (20), 309–310. https://doi.org/10.13128/techne-10150.

Gandy, M. (2003). Landscapes of deliquescence in Michelangelo Antonioni's *Red Desert*. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers,* 28(2), 218–237.
Gandy, M. (2013a). Entropy by design: Gilles Clément, Parc Henri Matisse and the limits to avant-garde urbanism. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research,* 37(1), 259–278.
Gandy, M. (2013b). Marginalia: Aesthetics, ecology, and urban wastelands. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers,* 103(6), 1301–1316.
Gandy, M. (2022a). Ghosts and monsters: Reconstructing nature on the site of the Berlin Wall. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers,* 47, 1120–1136.
Gandy, M. (2022b). *Natura urbana. Ecological constellations in urban space*. MIT Press.
García-López, E. (2017). From void to opportunity. *Procedia Environmental Sciences,* 37, 637–646.
Grávalos-Lacambra, I., & Di Monte, P. (2022). New paradigms of the unfinished city: The reactivation of abandoned spaces through temporary uses. *Ciudad y Territorio Estudios Territoriales,* 54(214), 799–812.
Haase, D., Kabisch, N., Strohbach, M., Haase, A., & Kabisch, S. (2017). Greening cities – To be socially inclusive? About the alleged paradox of society and ecology in cities. *Habitat International,* 64, 41–48. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.habitatint.2017.04.005
Hou, J. (Ed.). (2010). *Insurgent public space: Guerrilla urbanism and the remaking of contemporary cities*. Routledge.
Kamvasinou, K. (2006). Vague parks: The politics of late twentieth-century urban landscapes. *Architectural Research Quarterly,* 10(3–4), 255–262. https://doi.org/10.1017/S1359135506000364
Kamvasinou, K. (2011). The public value of vacant urban land. *Municipal Engineer,* 164(3), 157–166. https://doi.org/10.1680/muen.9.00020
Kamvasinou, K. (2017). Temporary intervention and long-term legacy: Lessons from London case studies. *Journal of Urban Design,* 22(2), 187–207. https://doi.org/10.1080/13574809.2015.1071654
Kamvasinou, K. (2018). Documenting interim spaces as 21st century heritage. *AMPS Proceedings Series,* 15(1), 92–100.
Kamvasinou, K., & Roberts, M. (2014). Interim spaces: Vacant land, creativity and innovation in the context of uncertainty. In M. Mariani & P. Barron (Eds.), *Terrain vague: Interstices at the edge of the pale* (pp. 187–200). Routledge.
Koller, M. (2016). Adaptive planning. *Topos Magazine*. https://toposmagazine.com/adaptive-planning
LABIC. (2022). *Plano de atividades*. LABIC Barreiro Velho. https://labicbarreiro.pt/atividades/
LaFond, M. A. (2010). eXperimentcity: Cultivating sustainable development in Berlin's *Freiräume*. In J. Hou (Ed.), *Insurgent public space: Guerrilla urbanism and the remaking of contemporary cities* (pp. 122–130). Routledge.
Lee, S. J., Hwang, S., & Lee, D. (2015). Urban voids: As a chance for sustainable urban design. In *Proceedings of the 8th Conference of the International Forum on Urbanism*.
Lévesque, L. (1999). Montréal, l'informe urbanité des terrains vagues. Pour une gestion créatrice du mobilier urbain. *Les Annales de la Recherche Urbaine,* 85(1), 47–57.
Lévesque, L. (2001). The "terrain vague" as material: Some observations. *Paysages*, 16–18.
Lokman, K. (2017). Vacancy as a laboratory: Design criteria for reimagining social-ecological systems on vacant urban lands. *Landscape Research,* 42(7), 728–746. https://doi.org/10.1080/01426397.2017.1355446
Lopez-Pineiro, S. (2020). *A glossary of urban voids*. Jovis.
Luo, S. (2021). *Disclosing interstices: Open-ended design transformation of urban leftover spaces* [PhD dissertation, Delft University of Technology].

Marat-Mendes, T., Silva Lopes, S., Cunha Borges, J., & Bento D'Almeida, P. (2022). *Atlas of the food system: Challenges for a sustainable transition of the Lisbon Region*. Springer.

Mariani, M., & Barron, P. (Eds.). (2014). *Terrain vague: Interstices at the edge of the pale*. Routledge.

Marinoni, G. (2004). Parc Henri Matisse. *Lotus International,* 121, 114–121. https://www.editorialelotus.it/web/item.php?id=121

McPhearson, T., Kremer, P., & Hamstead, Z. A. (2013). Mapping ecosystem services in New York City: Applying a social–ecological approach in urban vacant land. *Ecosystem Services,* 5, 11–26. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecoser.2013.06.005

Metta, A., & Olivetti, M. L. (2021). *Wild & the city: Landscape architecture for lush urbanism*. Libria.

Millington, N. (2015). From urban scar to "park in the sky": Terrain vague, urban design, and the remaking of New York City's High Line Park. *Environment and Planning A,* 47(11), 2324–2338. https://doi.org/10.1177/0308518X15599294

Moniz, G. C. (Ed.). (2021). *URBiNAT – D4.2 Healthy corridor concept*. CES.

Nassauer, J. I., & Raskin, J. (2014). Urban vacancy and land use legacies: A frontier for urban ecological research, design, and planning. *Landscape and Urban Planning,* 125, 245–253. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.landurbplan.2013.10.008

Németh, J., & Langhorst, J. (2014). Rethinking urban transformation: Temporary uses for vacant land. *Cities,* 40, 143–150. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cities.2013.04.007

Nunes, N., Björner, E., & Hilding-Hamann, K. E. (2021). Guidelines for citizen engagement and the co-creation of nature-based solutions: Living knowledge in the URBiNAT project. *Sustainability,* 13(23), 13378. https://doi.org/10.3390/su132313378

Pagano, M. A., & Bowman, A. O. (2000). *Vacant land in cities: An urban resource*. Brookings Institution, Center on Urban and Metropolitan Policy.

Petcou, C., & Petrescu, D. (2014). R-Urban: Strategies and tactics for participative utopias and resilient practices. In K. Bradley & J. Hedrén (Eds.), *Green utopianism: Perspectives, politics and micro-practices* (pp. 270–290). Routledge.

Petcou, C., & Petrescu, D. (2015). R-Urban or how to co-produce a resilient city. *Ephemera: Theory and Politics of Organisation,* 15(1), 249–262.

Petrescu, D., & Petcou, C. (2023). The role of architects in initiating, sustaining and defending urban commons in mass housing estates: R-Urban in Grand Ensembles. *The Journal of Architecture,* 28(1), 169–181. https://doi.org/10.1080/13602365.2023.2183619

Petrescu, D., Petcou, C., Safri, M., & Gibson, K. (2021). Calculating the value of the commons: Generating resilient urban futures. *Environmental Policy and Governance,* 31(3), 159–174. https://doi.org/10.1002/eet.1890

Phelps, N. A., & Silva, C. (2018). Mind the gaps! A research agenda for urban interstices. *Urban Studies,* 55(6), 1203–1222. https://doi.org/10.1177/0042098017732714

Rahmann, H., & Jonas, M. (2014). Void potential: Spatial dynamics and cultural manifestations of residual spaces. In M. Mariani & P. Barron (Eds.), *Terrain vague: Interstices at the edge of the pale* (pp. 135–150). Routledge.

Russell, B., Milburn, K., & Heron, K. (2023). Strategies for a new municipalism: Public–common partnerships against the new enclosures. *Urban Studies,* 60(11), 2133–2157. https://doi.org/10.1177/00420980221094700

Schlueter, S., & Surwiłło-Hahn, A. (2018). *Actors of urban change 2017–2019*. MitOst e.V.

Sendra, P., & Sennett, R. (2020). *Designing disorder: Experiments and disruptions in the city*. Verso.

Sikorska, D., Ciężkowski, W., Babańczyk, P., Chormański, J., & Sikorski, P. (2021). Intended wilderness as a nature-based solution: Status, identification and management of

urban spontaneous vegetation in cities. *Urban Forestry & Urban Greening,* 62, 127155. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ufug.2021.127155

Soares, A. L., Talhé Azambuja, S., Brito-Henriques, E., & Simões, A. R. (2017). Vacant land in city: Potential functional, ecological and aesthetic role in the urban landscape. In *ECLAS Conference 2017 Proceedings*.

Solà-Morales, I. de. (1995). Terrain vague. In C. Davidson (Ed.), *Anyplace* (pp. 118–123). MIT Press.

Stavrides, S. (2014). Open space appropriations and the potentialities of a "city of thresholds." In M. Mariani & P. Barron (Eds.), *Terrain vague: Interstices at the edge of the pale* (pp. 91–106). Routledge.

Toscani, G., Carpentieri, A., Guarascio, F., & Carlino, M. (2017). BotaniCALL – Lecce (ITA). *Actors of Urban Change*. Retrieved March 5, 2023, from https://www.actorsofurbanchange.org/projects/botanicall/

Twerd, L., & Banaszak-Cibicka, W. (2019). Wastelands: Their attractiveness and importance for preserving the diversity of wild bees in urban areas. *Journal of Insect Conservation,* 23, 573–588. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10841-019-00148-8

Zetti, I., & Rossi, M. (2018). *In mezzo alle cose: Città e spazi interclusi* (Vol. A). Dipartimento di Architettura, Università degli Studi di Firenze.

Open Access Journal

Artificial intelligence and the planning task

Peter Ache
Co-chair of AESOP Urban Futures Thematic Group, Radboud University, Nijmegen, the Netherlands
peter.ache@ru.nl

The editors of this special issue invited me to reflect on the planning task and, given the 10th anniversary of *plaNext*, to provide an outlook for the next ten years or more regarding urban futures, all in connection with artificial intelligence (henceforth, AI). A fine call to develop a piece of speculative future, seasoned with armchair evidence from actual debates about cities, futures, and artificial intelligence. I will do so in nine movements, starting by briefly addressing what the urban is made of, a clarification which is essential for our view on the makings of AI. Then I will look at AI proper, well not as an expert, which I am certainly not, but rather like what I find interesting about AI and what is supposedly confronting us in the planning context. Finally, a short outlook will be done inviting the renowned science fiction author Phil K. Dick for a comment on the future and the urban.

(1) Most readers of this journal will be familiar with the debate that resulted from Brenner and Schmid's (2015) hypotheses of planetary urbanisation, which I would like to use as a starting point for the first movement. In a positive way, I share their view on the urban and urbanisation especially as: a process, not a universal form; with the three mutually constitutive moments of concentrated, extended, and differential urbanisation—and I like to add, with metropolitan regions becoming more and more important; of a planetary scale; unfolding through variegated patterns of uneven spatial development; and in particular, as a collective project in which the potentials generated through urbanisation are appropriated but also contested. More recently, Schmid et al. (2018) developed the analytical approach further by focusing on the question, whether a new vocabulary of urbanisation is needed, suggesting a productive dynamic perspective on urbanisation: to analyse an urban territory as an overlapping and intermingling of various urbanisation processes. Or, in other words, to deconstruct an urban territory into several urban configurations and to reconstruct the urbanisation processes that produced them (Schmid, et al. 2018). Both arguments, the first a critique of the oversimplification or standardisation of the urban, the second suggesting a tool for the analysis of, per definition, always specific settings, emphasise that the challenges have to be identified and the solutions have to be found in each individual case by or in individual actor constellations. At the moment, we find AI mostly on the other side of such specific configurations, instead driven by large numbers revealing patterns and looking for applicable standards and universal, that is replicable solutions.

(2) One process forming urbanisation, at least increasingly so and closely connected to the topic of AI, has been criticised by Brenner and Schmid (2015, p. 157) in their original work as a totalising hypothesis speaking of a techno-scientific urbanism:

 ISSN 2468-0648.

Please cite as: Ache, P. (2025). Artificial intelligence and the planning task. *plaNext – Next Generation Planning,* 15, 132–136. https://doi.org/10.24306/plnxt/108

> Contemporary discussions of 'smart cities' represent an important parallel strand of techno-scientific urbanism, in which information technology corporations are aggressively marketing new modes of spatial monitoring, information processing and data visualization to embattled municipal and metropolitan governments around the world as a technical 'fix' for intractable governance problems (Greenfield 2013; Townsend 2013). The law-bound understanding of urbanization it embraces is used not only for epistemological purposes, to justify a universalizing, naturalistic research agenda, but as part of a broader technoscientific ideology that aims to depoliticize urban life and thus 'to assist the cause of sound management' (Gleeson 2014, 348).

Despite the failing of projects like Google's Sidewalk smart city in Toronto, the intention to make the urban 'smart' has not evaporated, given its potential trillion-dollar market in advanced information, sensor and control technologies; with the city twin as its epitome. But also, the planning profession (now addressing the service provider) uses it widely and diversely—as we can read from an advert:

> Generative Artificial Intelligence is transforming smart cities by offering innovative solutions across multiple sectors. Linker Vision, through its GenAI Observ platform, uses Vision Language Models (VLMs) and Large-Scale Vision Models (LVMs) to create advanced AI-driven video analysis tools. These technologies enable smart city applications like real-time video search, summarization, and customized analysis for sectors such as smart transportation, industrial monitoring, and incident prediction" (Tomorrow.city, February 2025)

The training sets for AI systems claim to be reaching into the fine-grained nature of everyday life, but—given the always reductionist character of a 'model'—they often repeat the most stereotypical or accepted social patterns, re-inscribing a normative vision found in the human past and projecting it into a human future.

(3) It all comes fine and handy, if we exclusively understand the urban as a material-mechanistic extension of ourselves; if the urban is seen as a machine, brought to you by corporations (see, for example, Toyota's Woven city) and turning each citizen into a customer and consumer. AI will relentlessly monitor the data generated in this laboratory and—based on the more or less stereotypical concepts provided for analysis—plan and provide solutions. The more often you ask the smart home app to turn on the light and the stereo the moment you enter your home, the more it is being served to you, until you forget there is a physical switch which you could actually use. This can go wrong, obviously, as we have seen in series like *Mr. Robot* where hackers use home appliances to terrorise the owner, or can read in an older text by Phil K. Dick (1969) where Joe Chip, the customer of a convenience apartment (conapt), is trapped by his door:

> Back in the kitchen he fished in his various pockets for a dime, and, with it, started up the coffee pot. Sniffing the—to him—very unusual smell, he again consulted his watch, saw that fifteen minutes had passed; he therefore vigorously strode to the apt door, turned the knob and pulled on the release bolt. The door refused to open. It said, 'Five cents, please.' He searched his pockets. No more coins; nothing. 'I'll pay you tomorrow,' he told the door. Again he tried the knob. Again it remained locked tight. 'What I pay you,' he informed it, 'is in the nature of a gratuity; I don't have to pay you.' 'I think otherwise,' the door said. 'Look in the purchase contract you signed when you bought this conapt.'

The conflict escalates and, suffice to say, ultimately Joe Chip has to break out but will be sued by the door for this violation. The city as a smart machine will not stop at your front door but will crawl inside your premises and harvest any of your life's utterances for commercial purposes—pay as you go (and make sure to have cash on you)! A planner might find her/himself/themselves in a digital machine room setting the dials (as is already the practice in some digital-city-twin applications).

(4) The latter section confronts all of us with some essential questions: streaming music or TV-series, using smart home appliances, driving a smart car, using a mobile phone, typing short text messages, searching the web, modifying photographs, checking the best restaurant nearby, asking where can I meet my friends now, translating text—all of this already today involves various forms of AI or predecessors of it and, more importantly but often unaccounted for, requires massive infrastructures, materials, and socio-economic relations at a global scale. In their highly recommendable article, Kate Crawford and Vladan Joler (2018) provide a deep exploration of this system using "(T)he Amazon Echo as an anatomical map of human labor, data and planetary resources". This account is very rich and informative regarding all the operations that are necessary to run a rather small object in itself and addresses questions like: labor exploitation and inhumane working conditions; extraction of rare elements that required billions of years to be produced (as Crawford & Joler, 2018 (vii–viii), quote Parikka (2015) by saying "we are extracting Earth's history to serve a split second of technological time, in order to build devices that are often designed to be used for no more than a few years"); user control while the real power and complexity of a smart appliance lies somewhere else, far out of sight. From a planning point of view, all these activities are so complex and distributed at a global scale, that we cannot control the footprint created by it, while our ambition usually would be doing so. In such a setting, how can planners effectively act as keepers of a global justice idea and post-growth or de-growth?

(5) And there is a more concrete planning challenge. An article in a recent issue of *The New Yorker* gives some further insights into the operations behind AI. Bill McKibben (2025) writes in "How is Elon Musk Powering his Supercomputer?" about a case in Memphis. On the premises of an abandoned factory that used to belong to Electrolux (OK, structural change in an old industrial region), the Colossus factory was erected, providing a home to allegedly the largest supercomputer currently under construction and stuffed with graphics-processing units, the basic building blocks of AI systems; two hundred thousand at the moment, heading for a million. The crucial point is the electric power to operate the supercomputer—which comes from thirty-five mobile methane-gas-powered generators parked on site. These truck-mounted units give off some considerable pollutants, including nitrogen oxides and formaldehyde. However, and most importantly, they are operating without a permit, at least at the time of publishing the article:

> "xAI has essentially built a power plant in South Memphis with no oversight, no permitting, and no regard for families living in nearby communities, the Southern Environmental Law Center said, in a report released in April. <…> It will surprise no one to learn that the neighborhoods in South Memphis surrounding (the) … facility—including Boxtown and Westwood—are predominantly Black and also home to a number of industrial facilities, including chemical plants and an oil refinery. The area already has elevated levels of pollution compared with leafier precincts, and, according to Politico's E&E News, 'already leads the state in emergency department visits for asthma'." McKibben (2025)

Included in the case is, of course one might think, a political tug of war between different stakeholders. What the example reveals is that planners will face more of these challenging constellations with a further extending AI driven economy. The mobility sector especially needs our attention in that respect. A report[1] by the National Science Foundation on MIT research points out, based on a statistical model to investigate the problem, that one billion autonomous vehicles, each driving for one hour per day with a computer consuming 840 watts, would consume enough energy to generate about the same level of emissions as all global data centers in 2023 did. Harvesting energy, energy production and distribution, infrastructure networks, the localisation and routing of these infrastructures will continue to be a problem if not excessively demanding our attention.

[1] https://www.nsf.gov/news/computers-power-self-driving-cars-could-become

(6) I do not intend to develop a 'doomer' perspective on AI, exclusively. However, the 'boomer' side will certainly rest on defining clear rules of engagement to avoid the classic trap, that a piece of technology as such is neutral, but the outcomes of it depend exclusively on the strategies of those who own or respectively apply it. And that is definitely necessary in view of the Broligarchy that stands behind AI. The question is what 'intelligence' lies in AI and how we use this intelligence. Cassidy (2025) refers to Daron Acemoglu, an MIT economist and a Nobel laureate, who told MIT News that AI was being used "too much for automation and not enough for providing expertise and information to workers." Acemoglu acknowledges AI's potential to improve decision-making and productivity but warns that it would be detrimental if it "ceaselessly eliminates tasks and jobs; overcentralizes information and discourages human inquiry and experiential learning; empowers a few companies to rule over our lives; and creates a two-tier society with vast inequalities and status differences." In such a scenario, AI "may even destroy democracy and human civilization as we know it," Acemoglu cautioned. "I fear this is the direction we are heading in" (Cassidy, 2025). Summarising Acemoglu's writings and thoughts, John Naughton (2023) from the British *Guardian* concludes:

> There are three things that need to be done by a modern progressive movement. First, the technology-equals-progress narrative has to be challenged and exposed for what it is: a convenient myth propagated by a huge industry and its acolytes in government, the media and (occasionally) academia. The second is the need to cultivate and foster countervailing powers—which critically should include civil society organisations, activists and contemporary versions of trade unions. And finally, there is a need for progressive, technically informed policy proposals, and the fostering of thinktanks and other institutions that can supply a steady flow of ideas about how digital technology can be repurposed for human flourishing rather than exclusively for private profit.

(7) For the last two points in the conclusion above, the critical countervailing powers and thinktanks generating new ideas, it is important to think about the intelligence we search or need. My reference here comes from the work of James Bridle (2023, p. 56). In his view, intelligence "is not a collection of abstract modes: a concatenation of self-awareness, theory of mind, emotional understanding, creativity, reasoning, problem-solving and planning that we can separate and test for under laboratory conditions." Rather, by expanding our definition of intelligence, and the chorus of minds which manifest it, we might allow our own intelligence to flower into new forms and new emergent ways of being and relating. The admittance of a general, universal, active intelligence is a necessary part of our vital re-entanglement with the more-than-human world. Bridle (2023, p. 9) ultimately calls for a commonwealth and ecology of human, machine, and more-than-human intelligences—instead of one, that is "framed, endorsed and ultimately constructed in machines (as) a profit-seeking, extractive one."

(8) Concluding, we indeed need to expand our intelligence and vocabulary of the urban, but AI should not be the exclusive pursuit of this. Instead, we should embrace also other forms and bearers of intelligence (Bridle (2023) explores for instance wood wide webs). And with a view to the future, bound to the intricate edifice of various realities and intelligences, such a new vocabulary can be extended by the utopian perspective giving a name to what is not, or rather, what has not been named yet and making a future present, which helps us build the 'house that needs to be built' (Levitas, 2013; Mumford, 1922). Join Thomas Machiels and me in the AESOP Thematic Group on Urban Futures[2] to discuss these and other aspects, where we at the start of 2025 organised a set of online workshops on "Who says future? Acting subjects and the construction of futures".

(9) And finally here is an excerpt of the interview with Phil K. Dick—which resulted from the following prompt which I formulated in a test of ChatGPT in 2023: Write an interview of about

[2] You can find us on LinkedIn https://www.linkedin.com/groups/13049050/

800 words with the science fiction author Phil K. Dick on the future of the city in the year 2100, using his novel *Ubik* as reference point and focusing on environmental challenges, social divides, technological innovation and the role of citizens versus global mobile capital in the shaping of the future city.

> *Interviewer*: Finally, what advice would you give to young writers and artists who are interested in exploring the future of the city in their work?
>
> *Phil K. Dick*: My advice would be to approach the future of the city with a sense of curiosity and openness. Don't be afraid to challenge assumptions and push boundaries. The future is full of possibilities, both good and bad, and it's up to us as writers and artists to explore those possibilities and imagine what the world could be like. Also, don't forget the human element—technology is important, but it's ultimately the people who live in the city who will shape its future. So make sure to pay attention to the social, cultural, and political factors that will influence the city's development. And most importantly, have fun with it—the future is a wild and unpredictable place, and there's no limit to the kinds of stories and ideas you can come up with.

Acknowledgement

Thanks to Thomas Machiels for his comments on the first draft.

References

Brenner, N., & Schmid, C. (2015). Towards a new epistemology of the urban? *City*, 19(2–3), 151–182. https://doi.org/10.1080/13604813.2015.1014712

Bridle, J. (2022). *Ways of being: Animals, plants, machines: The search for a planetary intelligence*. Penguin UK.

Cassidy, J. (2025, April 14). How to survive the A.I. revolution. The Luddites lost the fight to save their livelihoods. As the threat of artificial intelligence looms, can we do any better? *The New Yorker*. https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2025/04/21/how-to-survive-the-ai-revolution

Crawford, K., & Joler, V. (2018). *Anatomy of an AI system: The Amazon Echo as an anatomical map of human labor, data and planetary resources*. https://anatomyof.ai

Dick, P. K. (1969/2010). *Ubik* (Original work published 1969). Gollancz.

Gleeson, B. (2014). *The urban condition*. Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge

Greenfield, A. (2013). *Against the smart city: A pamphlet*. New York: Do Projects.

Levitas, R. (2013). *Utopia as method: The imaginary reconstitution of society*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Mumford, L. (1922). *The story of utopias*. London: Boni and Liveright.

Naughton, J. (2023, May 7). Power and Progress review – why the tech-equals-progress narrative must be challenged. *The Guardian*. https://www.theguardian.com/books/2023/may/07/power-and-progress-daron-acemoglu-simon-johnson-review-formidable-demolition-of-the-technology-equals-progress-myth

Parikka, J. (2015). *A geology of media*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Schmid, C., Karaman, O., Hanakata, N. C., Kallenberger, P., Kockelkorn, A., Sawyer, L., Streule, M., & Wong, K. P. (2018). Towards a new vocabulary of urbanisation processes: a comparative view. *Urban Studies*, 55(1), 19–52. https://doi.org/10.1177/0042098017739750

Tomorrow.city. (2025, February). The heart of urban innovation. https://www.tomorrow.city/welcome/

Townsend, A. M. (2013). *Smart cities: Big data, civic hackers, and the quest for a new utopia*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company.

plaNext
NEXT GENERATION PLANNING

AESOP / YOUNG ACADEMICS

Open Access Journal

Framing the values of teaching urban design in planning education

Ender Peker
Middle East Technical University, British Institute at Ankara, Türkiye
enderp@metu.edu.tr

This article explores the pedagogical value of urban design within planning education, framing it as a distinct mode of inquiry that strengthens spatial, analytical, ethical, and collaborative competencies. Drawing on a review of the literature and insights from teaching practice, it identifies six core contributions: (i) experiencing space through studio-based learning, (ii) enhancing spatial reasoning, (iii) fostering critical reflection, (iv) learning through co-production, (v) engaging with public needs and institutional structures, and (vi) developing sensitivity to both local contexts and global challenges. These values demonstrate how urban design supports students in analysing, interpreting, and (re)shaping the built environment. Rather than occupying a peripheral or elective role, urban design serves as a foundational element in planning education, one that reintegrates design as a form of knowledge production.

Keywords: urban design, planning education, spatial thinking, design studio

Please cite as: Peker, E. (2025). Framing the values of teaching urban design in planning education. *plaNext – Next Generation Planning,* 15, 137–146. https://doi.org/10.24306/plnxt/107

Introduction

Ten years after co-founding *plaNext – Next Generation Planning*, I return to a question that has come up repeatedly in my engagement with planning education: what does it mean to teach urban design to next generation planning students, and what kind of educational value does it offer? Rather than approaching urban design as a competing discipline to planning or seeking to compare the two in terms of superiority, this piece considers its pedagogical role within planning curricula. Drawing on both the literature and my own experience in teaching design, it explores how the integrative nature of urban design, rooted in its capacity to bring together diverse domains of knowledge, can contribute meaningfully to planning education.

Urban design has been described by Carmona (2014, p. 2) as a 'mongrel' discipline, not in a pejorative sense, but to underline how it brings together different bodies of knowledge from planning, architecture, landscape, engineering, and the social sciences. While some see the lack of clear disciplinary boundaries as a source of ambiguity or even a weakness (Madanipour, 1997; Inam, 2002), others, including Carmona, argue that urban design's ability to overlap and synthesise knowledge domains is precisely what enables it to remain responsive to both academic inquiry and professional practice. In this article, I build on this view by suggesting that what makes urban design's mongrel character pedagogically valuable is not just its interdisciplinary range, but its ability to create a space where different modes of knowing (i.e. analytical, spatial, material and institutional) are brought into dialogue. This convergence invites planning students to think across boundaries, to test ideas through making, and to reflect critically on how knowledge is produced and applied in shaping urban environments.

From this perspective, the article outlines six pedagogical values that help explain why and how urban design enriches planning education. These include: learning through experiencing space in the studio; enhancing spatial thinking and formal reasoning; fostering critical reflection; learning through co-production; engaging with public needs and institutional realities; and exploring contextual specificities and global outlook. Together, these values offer a framework for understanding urban design not simply as a specialised skillset or an elective, but as a structuring element of a more integrated and spatially literate education. Urban design brings together ways of seeing, reasoning, and acting in urban space that are increasingly crucial for preparing next generation planners to navigate the challenges of today's cities.

Values of teaching urban design in planning education

Drawing on a content analysis of existing contributions, I propose that the educational gains associated with urban design teaching can be meaningfully explored under six main themes. These themes are shaped by recurring pedagogical aims identified in the literature and by the way such aims tend to cluster in actual teaching settings. Table 1 summarises these themes alongside the enabling skills they support and provides a framework for the discussion that follows.

The values presented in the table are not meant to stand alone, but to be read as overlapping and mutually reinforcing. In different ways, each one reflects how urban design helps students work with space, not only as a physical setting, but also as a site of knowledge and engagement. The discussion now turns to each of these six values in more detail.

***Table 1**. Values of teaching urban design in planning education. Source: author*

Value	What it enables	Key gaining	References
Learning through experiencing space: Studio culture	Engaging directly with urban space through observation, movement, and fieldwork	A deeper connection to context and an embodied understanding of spatial conditions	Forsyth et al. (1999); Radović (2004); Senbel (2012); Wu (2016); Mancini and Glusac (2020); Breed and Mehrtens (2021)
Enhancing spatial thinking and formal reasoning	Thinking critically through scale, morphology, and the structure of urban form	The capacity to interpret, model, and intervene in the built environment	van den Toorn and Have (2010); Elshater (2014); Kropf (2018); Momirski (2019); Gu (2020); Blazy and Łysień (2021)
Fostering critical reflection	Questioning norms, roles, and design assumptions	Intellectual independence and ethical sensitivity in spatial thinking	Cuthbert (2001); Sargın and Savaş (2012); Elshater (2014); Chiaradia et al. (2017)
Learning through co-production	Co-production of knowledge across disciplines and with peers	Communication, teamwork, and the ability to work with diverse viewpoints	Brandão and Remesar (2010); Senbel (2012); Wu (2016); Mahmud and Arifin (2021)
Engaging with public needs and institutional realities	Navigating stakeholder dynamics, governance structures, and power relations	A more grounded and political understanding of design processes	Forsyth et al. (1999); Mancini and Glusac (2020); Wu (2016); Breed and Mehrtens (2021)
Exploring contextual specifies and global outlook	Responding to diverse urban conditions, cultures, and planning traditions	Adaptability and the ability to think beyond dominant paradigms	Radović (2004); Butina Watson (2016); Gu (2020); Sepe (2020)

Learning through experiencing space: Studio culture

Urban design pedagogy prioritises experience-based, hands-on working that most often focuses on real urban complexities (Savage, 2005). It values situated, bodily, and sensory engagement in knowledge production. At the core of this approach is the studio, which functions not simply as a classroom but as a laboratory for production and reflection. The studio culture fosters iterative thinking through cycles of design, critique, and revision, encouraging students to learn by doing.

Various scholars have emphasised the pedagogical value of studio-based teaching, particularly its capacity to foster experiential and practice-oriented learning (Gu, 2018; Lak and Aghamolaei, 2022). Different studio models have been developed to support this approach, including service-learning (Forsyth et al., 1999), integrated (Mancini and Glusac, 2020), hybrid (Senbel, 2012), and online formats (Cihanger Ribeiro, 2022). Most of these expose students

in real-world urban challenges and enables iterative learning through cycles of design and revision. These approaches situate learning within both social and spatial realities, encouraging students to engage with the human, political, and sometimes institutional dimensions of urban space. That also includes understanding everyday life dynamics such as patterns of use, formal or informal practices that shape how space is inhabited and contested by people. Field-based observation also sharpens students' spatial perception (Wu, 2016) and allows them to negotiate ecological and administrative constraints in live public-sector projects (Breed and Mehrtens, 2021).

In some planning schools, studio-based teaching is already well established and has become part of an institutional culture. Yet in programmes not pedagogically anchored in studio formats, the inclusion of urban design becomes particularly significant. It introduces a space of direct spatial engagement, where students can work iteratively and contextually with the built environment, a mode of learning that is essential for developing spatial perception (Radović, 2004). The studio also enables students to synthesise insights through reflective experimentation, making it a site for value-testing (Chiaradia et al., 2017). This aligns with broader critiques of planning education's shift away from physical design. As Yavuz Özgür and Çalışkan (2025) argue, planning education initially distanced itself from spatial design, but later reintroduced it as a response to critiques that planning had become overly procedural and detached from the physical and material aspects of urban space. This shift was not simply a return to intuition-based design, but a move towards a more structured, reflective, and evidence-based approach to engaging with urban form, aiming to reintegrate design as a form of knowledge production within planning education.

A closer look at the evolution of planning education standards, particularly through a comparison of the 1995 and 2024 AESOP Core Curriculum[3], reveals a gradual de-emphasis on studio-based learning as a central pedagogical format. While the 1995 version explicitly emphasised design integration, laboratory exercises, and project-based engagement with real-world spatial problems, the 2024 update disperses these elements within a broader skills framework, where digital tools, leadership, and governance competencies are more prominently featured. This shift signals a declining emphasis on direct, embodied encounters with space. It is precisely in this context that the teaching of urban design becomes increasingly important, not to revive traditional studio formats, but to reassert the spatial dimension of planning through alternative pedagogical means. I argue that, especially in programmes where studio culture is absent or has been scaled back, urban design serves as a necessary channel through which students can critically and creatively engage with the physicality and lived experience of urban environments. Without this grounding, planning risks turning into an abstract exercise (probably detached from place, context, and reality) ultimately undermining its claim to shape meaningful urban futures.

Enhancing spatial thinking and formal reasoning

A core pedagogical value that urban design brings to planning education is the development of spatial thinking and formal reasoning. These competencies allow students not only to analyse and interpret the built environment, but also to (re)shape it with purpose, whether at the scale of the street, neighbourhood or entire city. While planning curricula often prioritise abstract policy frameworks, strategies and regulatory notes, urban design encourages direct engagement with the physical form and spatial organisation of cities. In doing so, it helps translate abstract knowledge into concrete spatial understanding, moving from strategy to

[3] https://aesop-planning.eu/activities/core-curriculum

intervention. It equips students to see how morphology influences both the lived experience and functional performance of urban environments.

A growing body of literature has reinforced the importance of embedding this kind of spatial reasoning into teaching practice. This includes historically grounded and analytically rigorous methods such as typological studies and layered mapping, as essential tools for helping students read, interpret, and intervene in urban form (Kropf, 2018; Gu, 2020) and visual thinking, precedent analysis, and diagrammatic reasoning in cultivating design fluency and spatial awareness (van den Toorn and Have, 2010). These tools enable students to explore form not as static composition, but as an evolving spatial order tied to use and meaning.

The literature expands this foundation by emphasising visual thinking and spatial concept development as key elements of active learning. This includes design methods such as sketching, mapping, and modelling, which enhance students' ability to reason spatially and think in form-based terms (Blazy & Łysień, 2021), as well as hands-on workshops using visual communication and rapid prototyping, which offer opportunities to convert abstract planning objectives into tangible urban solutions (Momirski, 2019). Additionally, digital tools like virtual reality are shown to deepen students' spatial cognition by immersing them in scaled environments where proportion, movement, and spatial relationships become more intelligible (Nisha, 2019).

These diverse methods, ranging from typological analysis to immersive technologies, support spatial literacy through iterative engagement with form. However, spatial thinking in urban design education is not reducible to technique. It involves understanding how spatial arrangements emerge from and respond to circulation, human activity, environmental conditions, and institutional frameworks. From this perspective, form-making becomes a critically reflective and socially embedded process (Elshater, 2014). Students are encouraged to interpret spatial configurations within their wider political, ecological, and cultural contexts. Through this approach, urban form is understood not only as a physical outcome of design, but also as a situated expression of how urban life is organised and experienced. Spatial reasoning thus becomes a means of understanding the complexity of cities and preparing planners to engage with it thoughtfully and responsibly.

Fostering critical reflection

Planning education has long supported critical thinking by encouraging students to engage with the socio-political dynamics that shape cities. Urban design education builds on this tradition by adding a reflective dimension that emerges through spatial inquiry and thinking. Rather than confining analysis to written or verbal formats, urban design encourages students to think critically through drawing, modelling, and visualisation. This design-based form of reflection is typically embedded in the studio, where students encounter the complexities of urban form through situated and often speculative design work. A particular method for this type of reflection is dialectical urbanism approach that emphasises critical engagement with the contradictions of urban space (Sargın and Savaş, 2012). Here, students are trained to see urban form not as a neutral backdrop, but as the result of conflict, negotiation, and layered meaning. Through critical mapping, narrative work, and tactical strategies, students are encouraged to interrogate how urban spaces are negotiated and shaped, while also developing a clearer understanding of their own role within the design process.

This process of reflection also requires confronting the ethical and normative choices embedded in design decisions. Urban design, as Chiaradia et al. (2017) remind us, is never value-neutral. By making these values explicit in the studio context, students are able to see

the socio-political implications of their spatial interventions. A closer integration between theoretical critique and design application has been called for, with the argument that students must test their ideas within the constraints of institutional and spatial systems (Elshater, 2014). Such pedagogical approaches help to cultivate a form of reflexivity that goes beyond problem-solving. Reflexive thinking is essential, requiring students not only to question their proposals but also to interrogate the dominant assumptions that shape planning education itself (Cuthbert, 2001). When embedded in design-based learning, this reflexive stance enables future planners to navigate the tensions and ethical complexities involved in shaping urban space.

Learning through co-production

Urban design education also offers students the opportunity to engage in co-production by working collectively to develop spatial design proposals. This is a shared design process that unfolds through drawing and modelling, where decisions are shaped by dialogue, discussion, feedback, and revision. In this setting, students must respond to one another's ideas and learn how to build a proposal collectively. This kind of co-production fosters team-based thinking and collaboration skills essential to planning (Senbel, 2012). These methods help students articulate and test ideas collectively, allowing them to form a language that is intelligible across different disciplines such as planning, architecture or geography.

Co-production also fosters a deeper awareness of urban complexity. When students engage with interrelated ecological, infrastructural, and social themes in a design studio setting, they begin to recognise patterns of interdependence that influence both the content and form of urban design (Mahmud and Arifin, 2021). This approach, often grounded in systems thinking, teaches students to locate their individual contributions within a broader web of relationships. Wu (2016) notes that this mode of working encourages planners to move beyond disciplinary silos, particularly when the curriculum incorporates insights from regulation, landscape ecology, and environmental systems.

Such integrative pedagogies resonate with broader theoretical perspectives on interdisciplinarity in urban design. Rather than merely coordinating technical inputs from distinct fields, interdisciplinary collaboration invites students to engage with the challenging realities of urban life. Brandão and Remesar (2010) emphasise that this mode of learning seeks holistic synthesis, restructuring knowledge to reflect the evolving urban condition. Here, co-production becomes not just a method of collaboration, but a means of critically examining and reimagining the foundations of knowledge through collective inquiry.

Engaging with public needs and institutional realities

Urban design studios offer a setting where students can explore how spatial ideas take shape within institutional and societal frameworks. While planning education introduces students to governance systems, policy instruments, and modes of public engagement, urban design deepens this learning by asking students to translate these considerations into spatial form. Often, this occurs through site-specific design work that requires attention to the spatial qualities of a place as well as the expectations of communities, the demands of planning systems, and the limitations of available resources (Mancini and Glusac, 2020; Wu, 2016).

This embedded approach allows students to experience how design evolves through iteration and negotiation. In live public-sector projects, students are often required to adjust their proposals in response to ecological constraints, bureaucratic procedures, and stakeholder input (Breed and Mehrtens, 2021). Similarly, service-learning studios situate students within

real communities and civic processes, prompting them to grapple with issues such as equity, access, and public need (Forsyth et al., 1999). These experiences highlight that design is shaped not solely by intention, but also by the systems within which it operates. Studio work, in this sense, becomes a means through which learners navigate the institutional contexts that influence spatial decisions. This mode of learning has also been linked to a deeper understanding of public interest and democratic process, supporting the integration of spatial thinking with social responsibility (Brandão and Remesar, 2010).

Exploring contextual specificities and global outlook

Finally, urban design education catalyses students' development of a deeper understanding of localities while also encouraging them to engage with broader urban trends and global concerns. This ability to connect site-specific conditions with wider processes is particularly important for planners working in increasingly complex and interconnected urban contexts. An important part of this learning involves developing the skills to read and interpret urban form. Here, Gu (2020) highlights the value of morphological analysis in helping students understand how cities evolve over time. By working with the spatial organization and historical layering of the built environment, students learn how to develop design strategies that respond to the character of a place while offering change. While doing that, engaging with the sensory and cultural aspects of place is also important (Radović, 2004). Without attention to these details, spatial design proposals risk becoming detached from the people and communities they are meant to serve.

On the other hand, this focus on context does not stand in opposition to global awareness. In this regard, Sepe (2020) calls for teaching methods that prepare students to address shared urban challenges such as climate change, social inequality, and public health. These themes may be global in scope, but they call for locally grounded strategies, as their implications are experienced differently in different localities. For example, to protect communities from the negative effects of heatwaves, urban design details will vary across different geographies. Therefore, while responding to global challenges, it also becomes crucial to respond to local-specific cultural and institutional settings.

In this regard, contextually sensitive urban design enables students to move beyond generic proposals and instead develop responses that are informed by and attuned to place. A contextually responsive approach to design "seeks to create places of, for, and with local people" (Black et al., 2024, p. 19). As planning education increasingly incorporates digital tools (e.g. AI) and global references, the challenge is to ensure that students remain grounded in local realities, developing the capacity to interpret and respond to the distinctive social, spatial, and environmental dynamics of a given context. Thus, as Butina Watson (2016) reminds us, design education should help students become more reflective and adaptable, particularly in international or cross-cultural learning environments. Students need to recognise that planning systems, governance structures, and societal expectations vary widely—and that meaningful design must be responsive to these differences. By learning to connect local knowledge with broader spatial thinking, students become more capable of proposing designs that are both grounded and forward-looking.

Final reflections

The six pedagogical values discussed in this article highlight the significant contributions of teaching urban design to planning students. Urban design serves as an important mode of inquiry, advancing students' ability to read, analyse, and intervene in the urban built environment. By focusing on spatial reasoning, urban design enables students to understand

how urban form operates across interconnected scales, from street and neighbourhood to district and city. This multiscalar awareness enhances their capacity to trace the spatial logic of planning decisions and critically evaluate their implications with precision.

Urban design also cultivates three-dimensional thinking by foregrounding the experiential and spatial dimensions of urban space. Methods such as modelling, section drawing, and site-based analysis help students translate abstract instruments (i.e. building regulations, density standards, and open space ratios) into spatial form. In doing so, they begin to assess whether planning decisions are responsive to context, and how design can mediate between policy aims and generated urban conditions. In addition, urban morphology can address the challenges derived from the piecemeal approach to urban development, which has resulted in disjointed urban fabric (Gu, 2018), a common issue, particularly in developing countries. Thus, it is essential for future planners to be trained to see the urban built environment as a whole, uphold ethical values, and avoid fragmented approaches.

This kind of spatial understanding is developed not through simulation alone, but through hands-on, iterative work where students learn by doing. For example, while AI tools have growing relevance in planning and design workflows, it is not the use of AI that poses a risk, but how it is integrated into educational programmes. When that integration is absent or unclear, students may resort to unauthorised or ethically questionable sources of production—bypassing the reflective, situated learning processes that spatial thinking requires. At the same time, the integration of AI into urban design education opens up a new arena for research, particularly around how these tools reshape spatial reasoning, authorship, and the pedagogical foundations of design learning. Exploring these dynamics is crucial not only for adapting curricula, but also for ensuring that technological adoption strengthens rather than erodes the core values of planning education.

Finally, what makes urban design significant for planning education is not only its interdisciplinary reach, but its ability to create a setting where different modes of knowledge are brought into sustained dialogue. Analytical knowledge, often developed through policy analysis and socio-spatial research, is combined with spatial reasoning, which emerges through drawing and modelling. Spatial knowledge arises from engaging with physical form, construction methods, and environmental performance, while institutional knowledge stems from working within governance systems, regulations, and political constraints. In the design studio, these modes are not treated separately; they are tested, questioned, and reassembled through iterative processes of production and reflection. For example, when students test how a proposed layout interacts with land-use regulations or explore how a streetscape design can balance ecological concerns with accessibility, they learn how knowledge is produced, challenged, and applied in shaping urban outcomes. Urban design, in this sense, becomes a critical pedagogical ground where students learn to integrate insight with imagination, and where design reclaims its role as a form of inquiry within planning education. This integration enables future planners to approach urban complexity not with prescriptive answers, but with the capacity to navigate uncertainty, reconcile competing demands, and propose grounded yet visionary alternatives.

References

Black, P., Martin M., Phillips R., & Sonbli T. (2024). *Applied urban design: A contextually responsive approach*. Taylor & Francis. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003024163-3

Blazy, R., & Łysień, M. (2021). Teaching spatial planning using elements of design thinking as an example of heuristic in urban planning. *Sustainability*, 13(8), 4225. https://doi.org/10.3390/su13084225

Brandão, P., & Remesar, A. (2010). Interdisciplinarity—urban design practice, a research and teaching matrix. *On the w@terfront*, 16, 3–33. https://revistes.ub.edu/index.php/waterfront/article/view/18710
Breed, C., & Mehrtens, H. (2021). Using "live" public sector projects in design teaching to transform urban green infrastructure in South Africa. *Land*, 11(1), 45. https://doi.org/10.3390/land11010045
Butina Watson, G. (2016). An international perspective on urban design education. *Journal of Urban Design*, 21(1), 21–32. https://doi.org/10.1080/13574809.2016.1220134
Carmona, M. (2014). The place-shaping continuum: A theory of urban design process. *Journal of Urban Design*, 19(1), 2–36. https://doi.org/10.1080/13574809.2013.854695
Chiaradia, A. J., Sieh, L., & Plimmer, F. (2017). Values in urban design: A design studio teaching approach. *Design Studies*, 49, 66–100. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.destud.2016.10.002
Cihanger Ribeiro, D. (2022). Teaching basic design online during the Covid-19 pandemic: An evaluation of the conventional and innovative pedagogies. *Megaron*, 17(4), 589–601. https://doi.org/10.14744/megaron.2022.70457
Cuthbert, A. (2001). Going global: Reflexivity and contextualism in urban design education. *Journal of Urban Design*, 6(3), 297–316. https://doi.org/10.1080/13574800120105805
Elshater, A. (2014). Prosperity of thought versus retreat of application: A comprehensive approach in urban design teaching. *Archnet-IJAR: International Journal of Architectural Research*, 8(3), 45–63. https://doi.org/10.26687/archnet-ijar.v8i3.302
Forsyth, A., Lu, H., & McGirr, P. (1999). Inside the service learning studio in urban design. *Landscape Journal*, 18(2), 166–178. https://doi.org/10.3368/lj.18.2.166
Gu, K. (2018). Exploring urban morphology as urban design pedagogy. In: V. Oliveira (Ed.), *Teaching Urban Morphology* (pp. 145–157). The Urban Book Series. Cham: Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-76126-8_9
Gu, K. (2020). The teaching of urban design: A morphological approach. *Journal of Planning Education and Research*, 40(4), 472-481. https://doi.org/10.1177/0739456x18775480
Inam, A. (2002). Meaningful urban design: Teleological/catalytic/relevant. *Journal of Urban Design*, 7(1), 35–58. https://doi.org/10.1080/13574800220129222
Kropf, K. (2018). Interdisciplinarity and design: Tools for teaching urban morphology. In: V. Oliveira (Ed.), *Teaching Urban Morphology* (pp. 297–315). https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-76126-8_17
Lak, A., & Aghamolaei, R. (2022). Evidence-based urban design studio: An action research approach. *Educational Action Research*, 30(1), 107–123. https://doi.org/10.1080/09650792.2020.1773889
Madanipour, A. (1997). Ambiguities of urban design. *Town Planning Review*, 68(3), 363–383. https://doi.org/10.3828/tpr.68.3.2365658h658v0157
Mahmud, S. N. D., & Arifin, N. R. (2021). Systemic design thinking in urban farming I-STEM teaching and learning module. In *2021 2nd SEA-STEM International Conference (SEA-STEM)* (pp. 34–37). IEEE. https://doi.org/10.1109/sea-stem53614.2021.9668036
Mancini, F., & Glusac, T. (2020). Experiential and integrated learning environments–Teaching urban design studio at Curtin University. In *HEAd'20 Conference Proceedings* (pp. 1045–1053). https://doi.org/10.4995/head20.2020.11192
Momirski, L. A. (2019). Urban design workshops in the education curriculum: Advantages and disadvantages. In *IOP Conference Series: Materials Science and Engineering* (Vol. 471, No. 10, p. 102048). IOP Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1088/1757-899x/471/10/102048
Nisha, B. (2019). The pedagogic value of learning design with virtual reality. *Educational Psychology*. https://doi.org/10.1080/01443410.2019.1661356

Radović, D. (2004). Towards culturally responsive and responsible teaching of urban design. *Urban Design International*, 9(3), 133–146. https://doi.org/10.1057/palgrave.udi.9000124

Sargın, G. A., & Savaş, A. (2012). Dialectical urbanism: Tactical instruments in urban design education. *Cities*, 29(6), 358–368. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cities.2011.11.003

Savage, S. (2005). Urban design education: Learning for life in practice. *Urban Design International*, 10, 3–10. https://doi.org/10.1057/palgrave.udi.9000130

Senbel, M. (2012). Experiential learning and the co-creation of design artifacts: A hybrid urban design studio for planners. *Journal of Planning Education and Research*, 32(4), 449–464. https://doi.org/10.1177/0739456x12455065

Sepe, M. (2020). Shaping the future: Perspectives in research on, and the teaching of, urban design. *Journal of Urban Design*, 25(1), 28–31. https://doi.org/10.1080/13574809.2019.1706308

van den Toorn, M., & Have, R. (2010). Visual thinking and the teaching of precedent analysis in landscape architecture and urban design. In *INTED2010 Proceedings* (pp. 5128–5138). https://resolver.tudelft.nl/uuid:2ab19342-4018-4707-a29b-673123981bb2

Wu, B. (2016). Discussion on the urban design course teaching reform in landscape architecture program. In *ICSSTE 2016* (pp. 1011–1014). https://doi.org/10.2991/icsste-16.2016.183

Yavuz Özgür, I., & Çalışkan, O. (2025). Urban design pedagogies: An international perspective. *Urban Design International*, 1–29. https://doi.org/10.1057/s41289-025-00271-w

plaNext
NEXT GENERATION PLANNING

AESOP / YOUNG ACADEMICS

Open Access Journal

Planning ahead: Toward a critical, environmental, just, and action-oriented planning theory, practice, and journal

Elisa (Lizzy) Privitera
University of Toronto Scarborough, Canada
elisa.privitera@utoronto.ca

This essay contributes to the 10th Anniversary Special Issue of *plaNext – Next Generation* Planning by offering reflections and ideas for inspiring a renewed roadmap in planning theory and practice that more systematically incorporates tools and contents from emerging critical disciplines. It emphasizes the crucial contributions that young researchers and planners can make through their work, as well as the potential of a journal led by early-career scholars—such as *plaNext*—to shape the field.

The paper introduces the contemporary challenges facing planners within the context of the current global polycrisis, i.e., crisis of the ecosystem, society, democracy, and knowledge. Such a polycrisis will be linked to the urgent need for renewal in the field and a rethinking of how planning scholars and practitioners contribute to and engage with societal transformation and existing inequities and injustices.

Drawing on emerging critical disciplines—including critical ecofeminism, critical disability studies, critical environmental justice, critical heritage studies and critical eco-museology, multispecies justice and critical animal studies, critical food studies, and urban political ecology—the essay explores how these perspectives have brought an ecosystemic understanding of the axes of power that drive inequality and injustice. It examines the extent to which these perspectives have already been incorporated into planning studies, the added value of integrating their critical tools, and the potential for planners and policymakers to engage in spatial and practical experimentation with these provocative concepts.

Finally, the essay outlines some ideas for what a journal like *plaNext* could do for providing a space for innovative theoretical developments while supporting action- and justice-oriented work—both of which are increasingly crucial in today's global context.

Keywords: critical planning theory, urban polycrisis, ecosystemic justice, interdisciplinarity, intersectionality, early career researchers

Please cite as: Privitera, E. (2025). Planning ahead: Toward a critical, environmental, just, and action-oriented planning theory, practice, and journal. *plaNext – Next Generation Planning*, 15, 147–169. https://doi.org/10.24306/plnxt/116

Of being researchers and planners in challenging times

The 10th Anniversary of *plaNext – Next Generation Planning* arrives at a historically significant and troubling moment marked by intersecting global crises—what some have described as a *polycrisis*[1]: crises of the ecosystem, society, democracy, and knowledge. At the time of writing, major crises and wars (Ukraine, Palestine, Syria) are unfolding at the borders of Europe, having already resulted in hundreds of thousands of deaths and refugees. Institutions of the European Union, and of other parts of the world too, have appeared for a long time unable—or unwilling—to prevent these conflicts and uphold fundamental human rights. The ongoing humanitarian catastrophe in Gaza, increasingly described by human rights observers as a case of mass atrocity or genocide (Human Rights Council, 2024a, 2024b), starkly exemplifies this failure.

Meanwhile, across the globe, and in the United States in particular, democratic institutions and civil liberties are under severe strain. Far-right, nationalist, and authoritarian governments are gaining ground in many countries, advancing agendas that undermine decades of hard-won progress in environmental policies, social welfare and civil rights. In contexts where long struggles have achieved protection and equity, those rights are at risk or have been quickly eroded—sometimes within a few months or even just a few days. Public discourse and policy around women's and LGBTQ+ rights are cases in point: reproductive rights are being increasingly restricted, and LGBTQ+ communities are facing renewed threats and discrimination. The ditching of clean energy policies, accompanied by the return to the narrative of the inescapable necessity of fossil fuels, is another key example. For instance, the "drill, baby, drill" campaign in the United States not only delays the transition towards a net-zero emissions' society but also legitimizes the abandonment by other countries of sustainable development goals (among others, Khadka, 2025; Milman & Noor, 2025). This trend is also quite emblematic of how environmental crises are intertwined with social and democratic crises. Less protection and rights for people, especially the most marginalized ones, go hand in hand with less protection and rights for the environment: both become considered as "expendable" (Pellow, 2025) or "redundant" (Armiero, 2019) by certain governments and sectors of the socio-economic (or better financial) global system.

Crucially, these reactionary trends are not isolated. They are often aligned with—and materially supported by—the interests of global financial elites. The current political landscape in, again, the United States, for instance, reflects a disturbing convergence of oligarchic capitalism and authoritarian populism, marking a new and dangerous phase in the evolution of neoliberal governance. Across the world, we are witnessing a normalization of policies that simultaneously enrich the ultra-wealthy (Moran, 2025), criminalize dissent (Di Ronco & Selmini, 2024), target migrants (Altman et al., 2025; Burtin, 2025), and defund equity-focused programs (Nunes, 2025).

This climate has also fueled direct attacks on all forms of dissent—particularly, or perhaps primarily, that which is organized and promoted by universities—jeopardizing freedom and critical thought. The United States, again, is emblematic, with its "witch hunt" against researchers and students involved in the "Free Palestine" movement, many of whom now face blacklisting, surveillance, or funding threats. But similar dynamics are visible elsewhere: public universities and research institutions are increasingly subject to state censorship, while increasingly suffering from public funding cuts and austerity policies. These developments represent a broader assault on the independence of intellectual life and on the institutions that enable democratic deliberation.

[1] This term was coined by the French philosopher and sociologist Edgar Morin (1993) in his book "Terre-Patrie", then translated in "Homeland Earth" (1999).

There is a real risk that such erosion of basic rights, human dignity, and freedom—combined with the deepening socio-economic inequality and the multi-decade growth of mistrust in science—will become normalized. It becomes "normal" for billionaires allied with reactionary forces to concentrate unquantifiable economic and political power. "Normal" to exterminate entire populations. "Normal" to blame the most marginalized people rather than interrogate the systems that created their marginalization. "Normal" to deny civil and human rights, putting in place processes of "othering", i.e. leading to alienation, exclusion, and even dehumanization of the "others". "Normal" to disinvest in culture and education, while silencing dissent. "Normal" to deny scientific evidence and mistrust scientists, scholars, and intellectuals. And when something becomes normalized, it no longer seems worth resisting and fighting back to create something different. It becomes the *new normality*.

So, we are left with open, urgent questions: What can we do? What is—and can be—the role of researchers and intellectuals in times of crises (or polycrisis), especially when faced with such stark injustice and inequality across the world? How can researchers continue to foster critical thought, freedom, human rights, and democratic action under these conditions?

Much has already been said about the role of intellectuals and scholars. There is a long-standing call to move beyond the "ivory tower" and produce knowledge that responds to real-world issues. For decades, scholars have explored concepts such as post-normal science (Funtowicz & Ravetz, 1993), which involves engaging "extended peer communities" in understanding and addressing the "wicked problems"[2] and uncertainties of the risk society[3]. These debates have produced meaningful proposals for aligning scientific knowledge more closely with people's everyday challenges, through knowledge co-production and community-based models. According to this strand of scholarship, the current times require other epistemologies and methodologies, intersecting disciplines, and opening them to the variety of knowledge and actions that are incorporated into various practices on the ground. In response to this, some scholars—particularly from social sciences and humanities—have embraced a more open political stance, working in solidarity with marginalized communities and challenging dominant knowledge and power structures, in the spirit of Gramsci's notion of the organic intellectual[4]. Others—often in STEM disciplines—still hold to the idea that scientific knowledge is neutral, and thus scholars must remain neutral themselves, i.e., detached from the socio-economic context and related power relations[5].

Planning studies find themselves amid the broader challenge of navigating today's complex and contested terrain. Planning scholars and practitioners play a potentially crucial—but also tricky—role, as cities[6] offer a powerful lens through which to understand and engage with overlapping crises. The effects of climate change, the disruptive advancement of AI technologies, the erosion of democracy and widening socio-economic inequality, both globally and within local contexts, are especially pronounced in cities. Urban spaces magnify the

[2] I wrote about this topic in Dall'Omo et al. (2020).
[3] *plaNext* also dedicated a volume to this theme, see Privitera et al. (2022) and https://journals.aesop-planning.eu/index.php/planext/issue/view/15
[4] Organic intellectuals are, by definition, proletarians themselves, even if they hold leadership roles among the subalterns. They have often refused to be molecularly co-opted as traditional intellectuals into what Gramsci (1999) calls "the dominant class."
[5] Perhaps, it is worth mentioning that Bruno Latour (1987), already at the end of the 1980s, argued and demonstrated that scientific facts are not universally objective but are socially constructed through processes of negotiation, interpretation, and the establishment of networks within laboratories and society. He challenged the idea of science as a detached pursuit of pure truth, instead emphasizing that scientific claims become "hard" facts by eliminating alternative possibilities through scientific practice, training, and the acceptance of scientific orthodoxy.
[6] I am not referring only to cities and dense metropolitan areas, but any urbanized area and urban settlements.

contradictions of global systems—but they also serve as laboratories for alternative futures. They are places where institutions and communities can and do experiment with more democratic and just forms of life. Cities are also increasingly recognized as key sites for envisioning and implementing climate action (among the others, Castán Broto & Bulkeley, 2013).

Cities concentrate contradictions; they are contradictions. This is why planning schools have been and should continue to be heterogeneous and plural. Among them, some have actively resisted the dominant power structures, as I will briefly discuss later in this paper. While not everyone may adopt a "revolutionary" (for instance, Swyngedouw 2024, 2025) stance, the urgent question remains: What kind of planning theories and practices can respond to today's challenges, while analyzing present urban environments and planning for those of the future?

To stay tuned to a changing world, the planning field should also be dynamic, updated, and open to novelties. However, it is also fundamental to ensure that it remains anchored in key principles and values—ones that guide us toward better lives for all—before a new normal takes hold and becomes entrenched.

This volume, celebrating the 10th anniversary of *plaNext,* already offers powerful directions for such a transformation. Ibrahim (2025) calls for decentering Western understandings of planning and engaging with Southern and humanitarian theories and experiences. I would add to her contribution the importance of rediscovering the humanistic values that, while rooted in Western history and culture, are centered on treating people with dignity and respect, focusing on their needs for happiness, growth, and freedom, and advocating for progressive, rights-based, and secular policies. This is connected to Tulumello's (2025) reflection on the dialectic between past and future in the context of envisioning the next generation of planning. Other publications have indicated some potential future directions for planning, especially in relation to AI and technological advancements (Mehan, 2025; Ache, 2025). Elsewhere in this volume, the authors have been more precisely focused on what a journal led by early career scholars, like *plaNext*, can do. Hammami (2025) highlights how editorial and scientific production can serve as forms of resistance to the erosion of human rights and dignity. Varış Husar et al. (2025) value the collective knowledge-building processes and the importance of promoting open and accessible scientific knowledge. Privitera et al. (2025) reflect upon journals as spaces for empowering early career researchers, while learning and innovating collectively to experiment with alternatives to the mainstream publishing system.

In this paper, I will contribute to this already rich ongoing discussion by arguing that planning, in its continuous transition and in the current context of polycrisis I briefly outlined earlier, should aim to be critical, environmental, just, and action-oriented, and I will explain what I mean by this.

Critical, environmental, just, and action-oriented: The planning of the future is rooted in the present

While I do not intend to offer a comprehensive agenda for the future of planning, I want to briefly highlight some perspectives that planning theory and practice could further integrate and mainstream. These directions would help the field stay attuned to both conceptual advancements in other disciplines and the rapid transformations of the real world. Interdisciplinarity here means more than borrowing between academic fields—it also implies crossing epistemic boundaries and recognizing the value of embodied, experiential, and community-based knowledge. Planning should not only learn from other disciplines but also from different ways of knowing that challenge traditional hierarchies of knowledge.

Of the critical in planning studies

The term *critical* in relation to planning theory is far from new. Planning scholars such as John Friedmann, as early as the 1960s and 1970s, and Leonie Sandercock, in the 1990s and 2000s, critiqued mainstream modernist approaches, advocating for more radical and emancipatory perspectives[7].

Examples of critical planning theorizations and practices include:

- Transactive planning, introduced by John Friedmann (1973) in his book "Retracking America: A Theory of Transactive Planning", is a "people-oriented" theory of urban planning that emphasizes dialogue and mutual learning between planners and community members. It was a radical break from traditional, quantitative models of planning, which he argued tended to lock society into predictable, self-fulfilling cycles.
- Advocacy planning, which emerged as a reaction to technocratic, centralized models, gave voice to marginalized groups. Planners should act as advocates for specific groups, helping them create their own plans and presenting them as alternatives to the official plans of powerful authorities.
- Radical planning sought to challenge the status quo through grassroots activism, emphasizing personal growth, cooperation, and freedom from authoritarian rule (Sandercock, 1999). For its proponents, *radical* means both the emancipation of humanity from social oppression and the pursuit of a more egalitarian, self-guiding society (Perrone, 2022).

These schools of thought, while developed several decades ago, share a transformative intention: to challenge unjust distributions of power in how cities are made and unmade. However, perhaps because they emerged in a context less evidently shaped by climate change, they do not explore what such critical stances would imply for the environment and our relationship with it.

More recent books have proposed new directions for critical planning theory. They align with the idea that planning theory needs to be recurrently challenged and unsettled to avoid becoming ossified and to remain relevant. This is the case with Allmendinger et al. (2025, p. 1), who from the beginning of the book provocatively state that "urban theory would seem to hold great promise for planning—yet it often seems to fall short of expectations: tolerated by planning academics, endured by students, and ignored by practitioners." Their work explores new directions in planning theory, interrogates planning's orthodoxy, and pushes the boundaries of contemporary theory using ideas from both within and beyond planning. Drawing on examples from across the globe, the authors engage with potential alternative ways of thinking about planning and highlight areas that remain underexplored. They pose emphasis on expanding the theoretical and interpretive tools available to planning scholars, including, for instance, decolonial thoughts (Barry, 2025; Jon, 2025), Southern theories (Shrestha, 2025), the role of emotions (Díaz-Padilla, 2025), and a better inclusion of the time dimension (Jensen et al., 2025; Laurian, 2025). Nonetheless, it is worth noting that this book refers to environmental and climate change questions only tangentially.

A similar interest underpins another recent book edited by Perrone (2022), which examines the roots, pathways, and frames of 20th- and 21st-century planning theories, with a focus on some key figures, including Ildefons Cerdà, Yona Friedman, Alberto Magnaghi, Ian McHarg,

[7] Critical urban theory, as defined by Brenner (2009), nourishes this approach. It differs fundamentally from mainstream urban theory—such as that inherited from the Chicago School or technocratic policy science—by focusing on the critique of ideology, power, inequality, injustice, and exploitation within and among cities.

John Friedmann, Leonie Sandercock, Doreen Massey, David Harvey, Tom Sieverts, and Patsy Healey. Perrone discusses the three interrelated dimensions—radical, critical, and alternative/insurgent—of transformative planning, emphasizing how they embed an oppositional element:

- Radical: Conflict strategies and probing problems against governmental barriers.
- Critical: Structural change operationalized at multiple scales.
- Alternative/Insurgent: Practices driven by insurgent citizenship, claiming the right to the city.

These two books, therefore, show how planning scholars have offered a compelling, contextual understanding of what it has meant to "be critical." They illustrate how this meaning has evolved—what being critical meant a century ago—and stimulate to think how that connects to contemporary interpretations. They also propose ways in which planning theory can continue to be critical, primarily drawing from related urban scholarship. Therefore, these two books hold significant value in stimulating theoretical debate and pushing the field toward new frontiers.

I build on this existing work and broaden it by arguing that contemporary planning theories and practices would benefit even further from deeper engagement with critical approaches developed in other disciplines—especially those that unpack the power-based and ecosystemic interconnectedness between society, the environment, and space.

Potential fields are numerous. For example, Southern theories and epistemologies have already spurred what we might call a "Southern turn", deeply connected to the debates on how to decolonize urban and planning theories and practices. This theme is increasingly relevant in settler-colonial contexts, such as the United States, Canada, and Australia, as well as in former colonies. It is no coincidence that key promoters of Southern studies come from India, South Africa, and South America. The Association of European Schools of Planning (AESOP) and the Young Academics Network (YAN) have already embraced this critical stance, expanding beyond Western interpretations of planning issues, as seen in the establishment of the AESOP special group "Global South & East"[8] and the publication of two booklets of the "Conversation in Planning" series (Mukhopadhyay et al.; 2021; Kumar et al., 2021). *plaNext* has also played a role in promoting a decolonization of western-centric planning through the publication of an entire special issue dedicated to this theme[9]. This ongoing unsettlement of planning thought seeks to understand the cultural and historical roots underpinning Southern epistemologies, and by doing so, has also opened the door to integrating Indigenous knowledge into Western mainstream planning policymaking, studies, and practices (Barry, 2025; Sandercock, 2004) —an interest aligned with a multi-year rich debate on the value of local knowledge in urban planning processes (among the others, Fox & Margalit, 2025; Corburn 2003; Fischer, 2000).

While Southern theories and decolonial studies are crucial to critical, environmental, just, and action-oriented planning, I will focus on other critical fields from which planning theories (including research) and practices (including policy and design) could significantly benefit, and which have not been sufficiently explored yet.

[8] https://aesop-planning.eu/thematic-groups/global-south-east
[9] https://journals.aesop-planning.eu/index.php/planext/issue/view/11

Of the critical, environmental, and just in other fields

(Critical) Ecofeminism

Ecofeminism is both a political movement and an intellectual critique that emerged amid diverse perspectives linking feminist thought with ecopolitical issues such as toxic production and waste, Indigenous sovereignty, global economic justice, species justice, colonialism, and dominant masculinity. Early ecofeminist thinkers highlight the interconnections between the oppression of women and the exploitation of nature (e.g., Mies & Shiva, 1993). They argue that the domination of women and other marginalized identities, and the degradation of the environment, stem from the same patriarchal, capitalist, and neo-colonial ideologies that sustain hierarchies of race, class, gender, sexuality, ability, and species. The first phase of ecofeminism attributed to women a closer connection with nature due to their biological functions (menstruation, childbirth, breastfeeding) and sought to promote so-called feminine principles of care and cooperation over masculine ideals of abstract rationality. More recent ecofeminists, such as queer ecofeminism (Gaard, 1997) and critical ecofeminism (Gaard, 2017) have criticized such assumptions as too essentialist (Buckingham, 2015), and, by building on the anti-dualist ecological feminism[10] of Plumwood's (1993, 2002), embraced a critical lens that highlights how patriarchal, capitalist, colonial, and other systems of power and discrimination are intertwined with ecological destruction.

Queer and critical ecofeminism offer a rigorous, intersectional framework for advancing both social and ecological justice. By intersectional, I refer to the concept developed by Black African American feminist thinkers (such as Kimberlé Crenshaw) to describe a set of theoretical and organizing principles that highlight the entangled relations of power along the lines of gender, class, and race. Intersectionality was initially mobilized to "interlock" simultaneous systems of oppression, particularly those impacting the lives of Black queer women (Taylor, 2017) and has since expanded into a broader framework for analyzing the multiple axes of oppression shaping our socio-ecological systems. More recent interpretations present intersectionality not as a mere "additive" combination of essentialized categories, but as a critical praxis—one that enables coalition-building and the dismantling of oppressive systems across a wide spectrum of social justice movements and decolonial projects (Di Chiro, 2021).

Feminism, although marginal, has received increasing attention from geographical and planning scholars (e.g., Pojani, 2022; Kern, 2020) and in urban policy and design, giving birth to the so-called feminist urbanism[11]. Critical ecofeminism has not yet emerged in planning studies and practices, but it has already generated some interesting works. Several innovative publications question what a city inspired by ecofeminism would look like and introduce reflections and proposals on water accessibility, public health, and social care services (Dengler et al., 2024; Triguero-Mas et al., 2022). Others elaborate ecofeminism-inspired urban and ecological design proposals (Bayas Fernández & Bregolat i Campos, 2021; Newalkar & Wheeler, 2017).

More effort is needed to introduce critical and queer ecofeminist approaches to planning policy

[10] It is worth noting that ecofeminism is anti-dualistic and critiques binary, oppositional ways of thinking like mind/body, culture/nature, or man/woman—which create a hierarchical system of domination, with the presumed "superior" term (e.g., mind, culture, man) oppressing the "inferior" one. Ecofeminism seeks to dismantle these dualistic systems by recognizing the interconnectedness of humans and nature, and women and men, rather than simply reversing the hierarchy.

[11] Among the others, see the website https://genderedcity.org/; the following articles and reports: CHANGE, Data-Pop Alliance, & Open Data Watch. (2024);Palifrovska (2024, November 2); Day (2021).

and urban design. A queer intersectional and critical ecofeminist approach could further challenge the exclusionary, male-dominated city design while elaborating climate and environmental urban justice solutions. It does so by going beyond a mere women-centric interpretation and has the potential to stimulate planning theories, policies, and designs that intersect wider gender-based priorities with multispecies-related issues. The same features of cities that made them unsuitable for women's needs are also not apt for non-heteronormative people and non-human species. All of these groups are marginalized in mainstream cities. Designing critical ecofeminist cities aims to create urban environments that are more inclusive for women, queer folks, other species, and, ultimately, for everyone.

(Critical) Disability Studies

Critical disability studies constitute interdisciplinary fields that conceptualize disability as a social, political, and cultural construct rather than a purely medical condition. While disability studies often focus on the social model and the political inclusion of people with disabilities, critical disability studies emphasize a more complex, interdisciplinary analysis that challenges societal norm privileging able-bodiedness and examines how institutions and structures marginalize disabled people, thereby producing disability as a category of exclusion. By centering on the experiences and expertise of disabled individuals, critical disability studies promote activism and systemic change to challenge ableism, foster inclusion, and achieve equality (among the others, Ellis et al., 2025).

Crip studies are a more radical, specific approach within these fields and use the reclaimed term "crip" to challenge norms and emphasize a radical politics of disability, particularly by merging it with queer theory (Kafer, 2013). Crip studies emphasize an activist and transgressive stance, challenging the idea of "normal," and focuses on the intersections of disability with other identities like gender and sexuality. A key concept formulated within these studies is cripistemology, which emphasizes ways of knowing rooted in disability experience, highlighting the epistemic value of lived realities. For example, the notion of "Crip Time" challenges normative temporal structures, recognizing that disabled people experience and interact with time differently (Samuels, 2017; Ljuslinder et al., 2020). Both critical disability studies and crip studies seek to disability justice, i.e., they highlight the transformative role of disability politics, cultures, and communities to collectively dismantle ableism and build, through cross-movement solidarity, more accessible and socially just societies.

While there is research on how to make cities, including urban infrastructure (Ehrensperger, 2022), more accessible and liveable (Hamraie, 2024), and just for all their inhabitants, urban environments still privilege able-bodiedness, creating hidden geographies of urban ableism even when promoting sustainable solutions (Addlakha, 2020; Hamraie, 2020). Emerging research is questioning how to move beyond merely visible disabilities to also include invisible ones (van Holstein, 2020). However, what this attention to more or less visible disabilities implies from urban and environmental planning and design perspective remains underexplored, representing an interesting field for further research and experimentation.

(Critical) Environmental Justice

Critical environmental justice is both a scholarly and activist framework that critiques the limitations of traditional environmental justiceJ approaches by going beyond the mere distributive, procedural, and recognition dimensions of environmental justice, and interrogating the underlying systems of power, inequality, and colonialism that generate and perpetuate environmental harm. Pellow (2025) identifies four pillars of the critical environmental justice framework:

- Intersectionality: Moves beyond single-axis analyses (e.g., race or class) to examine how multiple forms of oppression—such as gender, sexuality, ability, and species—intersect and compound environmental injustices.
- Multi-scalar analysis: Examines environmental problems across both spatial and geographical scales: from local bodily impacts to global climate change, connecting these glocal dynamics[12] to one another. It also considers temporal scales, incorporating historical dimensions such as colonialism, as well as transgenerational legacies of environmental injustices.
- Critique of state and capital: Challenges the assumption that government agencies and liberal reforms can adequately address environmental injustice, arguing that these institutions often reproduce systemic inequalities.
- Indispensability: Counters the logic of expendability that devalues certain human and non-human populations, asserting the inherent worth of all beings and ecosystems for a collective, sustainable future.

Environmental justice has been extensively discussed and integrated into urban sustainability (Agyeman, 2005, 2013) and urban planning debate (Kotsila, 2023). Examples are the debate around environmental justice in the nature-based solutions (Tozer et al., 2023; Anguelovski & Corbera, 2023; Cousins, 2021) and green gentrification (Cucca et al., 2023; Anguelovski et al., 2022). Instead, critical environmental justice framework has been applied in several fields of research (Schlosberg et al., 2024), including prisons (Privitera & Pellow, 2025; Privitera et al., 2024), but has not yet been the object of a deeper discussion in the planning field.

(Critical) Heritage Studies and Critical Ecomuseology

Critical heritage studies is an interdisciplinary field that interrogates cultural heritage as a social, political, and cultural phenomenon. Unlike traditional heritage studies that focus on preservation, critical heritage studies adopt an analytical approach, questioning the power dynamics and social justice implications of how the past is selected, interpreted, and managed in the present. Critical heritage studies conceptualize heritage as a political process, emphasizing that heritage-making is not an objective recovery of the past but a dynamic, contested activity. Critical heritage studies have often been connected to urban planning and resistance, for instance in Volume 1 of *plaNext*[13].

A related area, critical ecomuseology, questions the foundational assumptions of both traditional museums and early eco-museum models. Ecomuseology is a community-driven approach to preserving and interpreting heritage in its local environment for sustainable development (among others, Rivière, 1985), while critical ecomuseology is a more specific and advanced form that uses critical heritage studies to analyze the power structures and social impacts within ecomuseums. Critical ecomuseology builds on ecomuseology by questioning existing power dynamics, colonial histories, and the societal effects of museum practices, moving beyond the basic community-centric model. It examines the political and social roles of heritage institutions and advocates for community empowerment, social justice, and decolonization in cultural heritage management. There are a few examples of research merging critical ecomuseology and heritage studies with planning through community-based planning (Pappalardo, 2023).

[12] Such glocal dynamics have been developed also by Swyngedouw (1997, 2004). Furthermore, reference to a more glocal and multiscalar understanding of environmental justice and urban planning and design can be found in Krähmer (2022).
[13] https://journals.aesop-planning.eu/index.php/planext/article/view/3/2

According to both critical heritage studies and critical ecomuseology, time and memory are as non-neutral as they are intermeshed with power relationships. They not only provide analytical tools for examining urban heritage but also frame it as something that can be collectively re-appropriated and aligned with sustainable development principles.

Multispecies Justice and Critical Animal Studies

Multispecies justice is a transformative framework that redefines justice to include the flourishing of all Earth beings and the relationships that sustain them. Moving beyond anthropocentric models, it addresses interconnected social and ecological crises, framing harm to animals, plants, ecosystems, and even non-living matter as fundamental injustices.

Critical animal studies complement this perspective by challenging anthropocentrism and the systemic exploitation of nonhuman animals. Critical animal studies combine scholarship with activism, advocating for total liberation—the emancipation of humans, nonhuman animals, and the Earth from all systems of domination.

Urban planners have recently started to engage with multispecies studies more directly (among others, Fieuw et al., 2022). For instance, the urban planning scholar Metzger (2015, p. 40) argues that "myriads of creatures and existences are speaking to us all the time," and Despret (2005, quoted in Houston et al., 2018) argues that we, humans, have a responsibility to listen properly to their voices. Based on this perspective, Houston et al. (2018, p. 198) propose two key challenges for planners:

> (1) How can multispecies relationships be ethically and politically considered in spatial land use planning decisions?
> (2) How can socially and environmentally just planning meaningfully engage nonhumans in deliberative practice without reducing nonhumans to objects or symbols of urban political struggle?

Building on these challenges, participatory designers are questioning how to expand the notion of participation towards the voices and interests of other-than-human actors (Akama et al., 2020; Haldrup et al., 2022; Lindström & Ståhl, 2019). These new participatory design processes challenge the consolidated and mainstreamed human-centric participatory process and instead entails a re-imagination of the city beyond human exceptionalism, as the recent publication of the "ladder of multispecies participation" demonstrates (Førde, et al., 2025). A few experimental applications of multispecies urbanism[14] have been conducted by collectives of architects, artists, and activists[15].

While some works have looked more closely at how urban policies reflect multispecies justice (Kohli, 2025), others have explored the impact of multispecies agency on governance (Privitera & Cykman, 2025), providing fresh insights into how humans can play a role as mediators or translators of other species' needs within cities. Researchers have also advocated for the incorporation of multispecies conviviality and stewardship while designing urban ecosystem services (Privitera & Funsten, 2024), nature-based solutions (Raymond et al., 2025), and green infrastructure (Rupprecht, 2020).

In short, while multispecies and critical animal studies are increasingly entering the planning academic debate, they remain largely under-experimented in practice, especially in urban development and design. Consequently, their potential critiques and contributions have been discussed and theorized only to a very limited extent.

[14] See: https://whoiswe.nl/pdf/solomon-multispecies-urbanism.pdf
[15] See: https://landezine.com/debra-solomon-multispecies-urbanism/

Open Access Journal

Urban Political Ecology

Urban Political Ecology examines the intertwined political, economic, social, and ecological processes shaping urban environments. Rejecting the nature–city divide, UPE views cities as socio-natural hybrids (Swyngedouw, 1996) produced through labor and capital investment.

Key concepts include:

- Socio-ecological metabolism: Cities as metabolic systems with resource flows (water, energy, food) governed by political and economic interests, often producing environmental inequalities.
- Uneven development: Capitalist urbanization creates unequal landscapes, exposing marginalized communities to environmental hazards while privileging affluent areas.
- Extended and planetary urbanization: Urbanization is a global process, linking cities to distant resource extraction, agriculture, and waste disposal, blurring urban–rural boundaries.

Charachterized by several phases and strands (Gandy, 2021; Heynen, 2014; Keil, 2003), urban political ecology has become a consolidated field of research[16] that critically engages with the environmental crisis and climate change through the lens of inter-scalar (or better, glocal) power and political relationships (Swyngedouw, 2004). Urban political ecology's scholars have deconstructed the salvific green city idea, unveiling how it can easily be translated into discriminatory development processes, such as green gentrification and renovictions. The more recent call for a "situated urban political ecology" (Tzaninis et al., 2020) emphasizes everyday practices (Loftus, 2012) and embraces a scholarship of presence (Kaika, 2018) aimed at promoting a more nuanced understanding of power as diffuse and relational (Lawhon, 2012). This new phase seeks to integrate issues of race, gender, and location and encourage a reconceptualization of environmental justice beyond the typical North–South divide. Urban political ecology has produced a few applied studies, such as Yiu (2025), who examines how community-based planning for sustainability and heritage operates within a high-density urban landscape in Hong Kong. Similarly, Silva et al. (2024) identify ways in which key insights from the critical social sciences—particularly urban political ecology—can be mobilized to support water sensitive urban design practices.

Yet, despite providing essential critical tools, urban political ecology still lacks systematic engagement and experimentation with urban planning practices and projects, and further explorations could bring innovative approaches.

(Critical) Food Studies

Critical food studies interrogate the social, political, and cultural dimensions of food systems, moving beyond nutrition or culinary arts to address structural inequalities. For instance, scholars in this field have highlighted that efforts to localize food production and consumption may not automatically yield just or sustainable food systems if racial, colonial, class, and gender issues are not systemically addressed (Agyeman et al., 2016).

Core themes include:

- Food justice: Tackling inequities in access to healthy food, particularly in marginalized communities.

[16] One sign that urban political ecology is increasingly establishing itself as a consolidated field is the launch of the journal *Urban Political Ecology* (https://journals.sagepub.com/home/upe).

- Food sovereignty: Advocating for communities' rights to define their own food systems, resisting corporate control.
- Globalization: Examining the impacts of global trade and industrial agriculture on local foodways.
- Alternative food movements: Initiatives like Slow Food and urban agriculture as resistance strategies, while acknowledging their potential limitations and role in gentrification.

There is an interesting academic debate, rooted also in several concrete experimentations, regarding the design of urban edible landscapes (Gorgolewski et al., 2011), with emphasis on an edible urban "morphology" (Parham & Abelman, 2018). Other studies delve into the multiple urban, social and ecological values of agroecology, especially of urban food forests (Cykman & Privitera, 2023; Riolo, 2019). Some researchers have also looked at the intersection between edible landscapes and ecological infrastructure and nature-based solutions, as a way to promote urban conviviality between species (Rupprecht, 2020; Privitera & Funsten, 2024). Building on an emerging literature on multispecies commons (Haldrup et al., 2022), agroecology initiatives have been framed as multispecies commons that trigger experimental forms of multispecies reflexive governance (Privitera & Cykman, 2025).

The action-oriented

By examining the crosscutting characteristics of these fields of study, we can highlight several shared foundations. They critically engage with power relations, are grounded in anti-oppressive and anti-racist principles, and apply an intersectional lens to analyze how categories of difference shape the world. Moreover, they explore socio-ecological relationships in a multi-scalar way—ranging from the micro to the macro, from the personal to the systemic and political, and from the local to the global. Through scrutiny of existing forms of injustice and oppression, these fields unmask the direct consequences or indirect legacies of colonial, racist, patriarchal, ableist, and capitalist systems, while envision alternative systems that are anchored in a deep respect for dignity, human (and more-than-human) rights, care, solidarity, and compassion. Their aim is to empower powerless people and advancing emancipation.

They also value the margins—including marginalized communities of humans and other species—as a space for envisioning and proposing alternative ways of being, existing, and relating to each other. Perhaps most importantly, they frame environmental degradation primarily as a social issue, and more precisely, they identify environmental inequalities as forms of social inequality.

While spatial dimensions are not always central in these fields, space and the urban are nevertheless present in meaningful ways. The urban is understood as the result of intermeshed socio-natures shaped by power relations at a glocal (global-local) level. It is a space produced through layers of colonialism, racism, ableism, capitalism, and patriarchy—and a site of resistance, where people often push back against dominant powers, including the state and capitalist interests, and experiment with alternative systems. The previously presented fields of study raise theoretical and epistemological questions, and, in a few cases, are rooted in close collaboration with activism and social movements. Some of the critical fields mentioned above have already been integrated into certain areas of planning theories, nevertheless, they continue to represent a minor area of investigation; yet they hold groundbreaking potential.

I believe that the practical application and experimentation of these theories could prove truly transformative—this is precisely where urban planning could play a crucial role. Urban planning theories and practices could draw from these studies and experiment with concrete, real-world applications, and perhaps even suggest related policy changes. My argument is twofold: on the one hand, planning theories could integrate some of these key insights into the critical toolbox to analyze and scrutinize urban environments in both interdisciplinary and intersectional ways. On the other hand, planners and designers could begin to experiment with applied, spatial translations of these theoretical ideas.

The planning discipline is uniquely positioned to pursue practical experimentations with the critical theoretical concepts developed within the aforementioned critical fields. Planning scholars and practitioners deal with the complex, lived realities and they are well-equipped to navigate not only interdisciplinary knowledge, but also to explore what it means to act on it in practice. This is not only a matter of interdisciplinarity but also of intersectionality. A foundational question to consider, therefore, is: What do awareness and understanding of intersectional forms of injustice, domination, and inequality imply for planning and urban design theories and practices, beyond simply providing tools for critical analysis?

Below, I offer some examples of questions that emerge from the intersections between the emerging critical fields and planning theory and practice, to better illustrate what I mean:

- What does it mean to promote urban policies or designs informed by both “Crip Time” and critical ecofeminism?
- How might we design a park according to anti-oppressive, anti-racist, and ecofeminist principles, while also embracing multispecies justice—where not only humans, but also plants and animals, benefit?
- What does it mean to design a space based on the principle that everyone is indispensable and interdependent?
- What would it imply, spatially, to envision a neighborhood grounded in anti-policing and mutual care?
- What might a critical heritage-inspired urban policy look like, especially in settler colonial contexts?
- How can we plan mobility—especially public transportation—through the lens of critical food studies?[17]
- How can a city be designed to embed the principles of ecomuseology, perhaps by incorporating the narrative tools often used by radical environmental humanities scholars?

And so on—I could continue posing more questions like these, each exploring the intersections between the critical frameworks mentioned earlier and spatial planning and design. These, and other potential questions, are open challenges that have not been tackled systematically yet.

I do not believe that all scholars and practitioners must immediately adopt these approaches—but we should begin to critically engage with them and incorporate them into graduate

[17] For instance, one of my students from the course “Food, Environment, and People”—which I taught last year at the University of Toronto—envisioned and designed bus stops in underserved suburban areas of Toronto and used both the platform roofs and benches to integrate edible and growing spaces. The goal was to provide food for people (and other species) in areas with some of the highest rates of food insecurity in the city. Needless to say, such equity-driven greening would also have offered heat refuge during the summer. Of course, I am aware that in practice, such experiments pose a range of challenges, including those related to daily maintenance and the need for broader cultural shifts. But it is precisely through the practical application of these ideas that we can better understand the challenges that arise and identify areas that require further development.

education and training. This should not replace mainstream approaches but rather complement and expand them.

As for implementation, I am aware of the critiques of "being critical" itself (Sanyal, 2008), and of the paradoxical tension between understanding a problem and acting on it. In other words: while "we must think far-futures, we also need to act now" (Laurian, 2025, p. 217). The real added value of urban planning lies in its grounded, action-oriented approach, and its capacity to translate theory into meaningful practice.

Integrating these innovative theories supports the idea of "planning for social transformation" rather than "planning for social maintenance" (Friedmann & Huxley, 1985). After all, "planning theory has to do with the relation of knowledge to action" (Friedmann & Huxley, 1985, p. 37). There is substantial room to connect social equity and environmental concerns through a spatially informed, intersectional approach. While critical perspectives from other fields have provided valuable tools for understanding the complex web of power dynamics and injustices underpinning our society, they rarely challenge power structures directly. Similarly, less explored in these fields are the mechanisms that could be put in place to support a genuine redistribution of power. In this sense, anti-extractivist and anti-oppressive research approaches are particularly instructive, as they aim to foster reconciliation and redistribute power, rather than merely describing inequality (Potts & Brown, 2005). This aligns with a more egalitarian vision of socio-environmental transformation, and with the idea of "organizing hope" and "envisioning alternatives" (Sandercock, 2023)[18], starting from "reimagining the soul of urban planning" (Sandercock, 2024).

This is why I believe that planning studies and particularly practice should give more space to community-based and action-oriented research that deliberately and actively cultivates power and proactively challenges the status quo. Given that planning is both a scientific discipline and a practice, the possibilities for meaningful intervention are numerous. I believe that community organizing — i.e., community-led strategies to identify shared problems, build collective power, and take coordinated action to achieve social, political, or economic change—has much to offer in this regard. It not only would be interdisciplinary and intersectional, but somehow also "undisciplined", a term that has been used to refer to the desire to engage with issues in the non-academic world (Robinson, 2008)—issues that do not primarily emerge in disciplinary journals or academic discourse alone. An important characteristic of this style of interdisciplinarity is a very strong focus on partnerships with the external world—partnerships that go beyond treating partners primarily as audiences and instead involve these partners as co-producers of new hybrid forms of knowledge.

Again, I am not suggesting that all research must become "undisciplined" and action-oriented, given that a similar statement would risk reducing planning studies to being meaningful only when action-oriented, but I do see tremendous potential in research that is not only rooted in real-world problems, but also supports the mobilization and self-organization of communities, especially the most marginalized ones, and builds alliances between them, institutions, and other actors to resolve those problems.

Action-oriented planning research is not merely about distributive or procedural justice; it is about disrupting existing power dynamics. Otherwise, we risk the very critique many scholars have already raised: that of reproducing injustice through tokenism and consensus-building that leaves structures of domination intact.

[18] *plaNext* has dedicated an entire volume 8 to the theme of "Making space for hope", as you can see in the following link: https://journals.aesop-planning.eu/index.php/planext/issue/view/8

Is this easy to achieve? Certainly not. But in today's global context, scholars may only survive either by acquiescing to current power elites, or by resisting and reorganizing both the systems of knowledge and the practices they support. Rethinking how we live in the world is becoming a matter of survival strategy. In times of socio-ecological and democratic crises, planners can think, plan, and design an urban future whose primary principles are precisely the survival of deep ecological and democratic values. What I am saying now is also related to another fundamental "task" for the next generation of planning, which is that planners should also be willing to advocate for socially just visions of cities—visions that are radical but not unrealizable. This allows planning to align itself with widely shared values such as democracy, the common good, and equality. Both resistance and envisioning are necessary strategies.

In short, the discussed critical studies reveal unjust power dynamics, raise awareness, and denounce inequality—but they do not, by themselves, transform or destabilize power. Only by building and redistributing power can we truly challenge the systems that perpetuate injustice.

***plaNext*: The promise of navigating the intersections**

In times of ecological breakdown, rising inequalities, and democratic backsliding, the role of scientific journals cannot remain neutral, nor passive. Journals are not just repositories of knowledge. They are pieces of a larger puzzle—tools for organizing hope and mobilizing knowledge and justice across generations. They hold power: the power to shape what is heard, what is published, who is cited, and ultimately, who is believed to be scientifically valid.

We are facing a crisis not only of climate or inequalities, but also of trust in knowledge itself. Scientific institutions are increasingly underfunded and politicized. Climate denial and fake news spread alongside heatwaves and floods. In this landscape, to publish is no longer a neutral act. It is a political one. Suppose the current polycrisis is crises of the ecosystem, of the society, of the democracy, and of knowledge. In that case, a journal can be a space where such polycrisis is narrated, beyond some mainstream dominant voices, analyzed and scrutinized by adopting an intersectional and interdisciplinary perspective.

The journal of tomorrow—the one we need—must be brave and committed. It must stand in solidarity with those whose voices have long been marginalized and challenge the supremacy of shareholder-driven knowledge. "To change everything, we need everyone"—and we need everything, including scientific journals.

A truly transformative journal does not simply disseminate information. It unmasks existing injustice, cultivates alternatives to the competitive logics. It embraces slow academia, relational care, and the value of open knowledge as a form of publishing equity and justice. It breaks open the ivory tower and cross-pollinates with radio, zines, Instagram, community forums—platforms where knowledge lives, breathes, and mobilizes (Privitera et al., 2025).

Such a journal would not shy away from normative commitments. It would be committed to urban justice and equity, climate action, and the right to the city. It would welcome pluralism. It would recognize that no single method, no single discipline, and no single voice can answer all the questions we face.

We must move beyond despair. We must use journals as spaces to debunk fake narratives and news, and tackle complexity.

As planning scholars, we must ask: *Planning for whom? Knowledge for whom?* Planning is—or should be—a humanistic discipline: one that uses technique not to dominate, but to care and to heal.

In this context, the mission of *plaNext* becomes more urgent than ever. In another piece of this volume (Privitera et al., 2025), we reflected on how *plaNext* was born and developed over the years, keeping this characteristic of being a friendly and non-hierarchical, horizontal space to self-organize, learn about academia, urban planning, working in an international and intercultural group, and networking, but also a space to "freely" share and develop fresh ideas, and why not, a place to experiment with them. As a journal committed to creating a peer and safe space for early-career researchers to engage in planning themes and intergenerational dialogue (Varış Husar et al., 2025), *plaNext* stands as an experimental platform that has the potential to challenge mainstream narratives and fake news, to imagine alternatives to the current publishing system and knowledge production system, and to foreground voices and practices rooted in justice and care.

plaNext should incentivize and welcome research that is innovative and, when possible, action-oriented and aimed at impacting the urban environment. A journal that does not fear trespassing disciplines, but welcomes moving through them, navigating the intersections between several fields of knowledge, being aware that "there is no thing as a single-issue struggle because we do not live single-issue lives" (Lorde, 2007, p.138). Not only interdisciplinary but also "undisciplinary", which entails challenging the way academia works, by disobeying it and being deeply connected with the real-world problems. In short, *plaNext,* by doing so, will support the next generation of planners in building cities—and futures—that are more just and more livable.

Akcnowledgememnt

This paper is part of ongoing research, and I am grateful to *plaNext* for welcoming and supporting this early-stage work. I would also like to extend my sincere thanks to Batoul Ibrahim, Asma Mehan, and Pavel Grabalov for their insightful and constructive suggestions and rigorous review during the preparation of this manuscript.

References

Ache, P. (2025). Artificial intelligence and the planning task. *plaNext – Next Generation Planning*, 15, 132–136. https://doi.org/10.24306/plnxt/108

Addlakha, R. (2020). Disability and the pursuit of mobility: Risks and opportunities in the Indian urbanscape. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*. https://www.ijurr.org/spotlight-on/disabling-city/disability-and-the-pursuit-of-mobility/

Agyeman, J. (2013). *Introducing just sustainabilities: policy, planning, and practice*. London: Zed Books.

Agyeman, J. (2005). *Sustainable communities and the challenge of environmental justice* (1st ed.). New York: New York University Press.

Agyeman, J., Schlosberg, D., Craven, L., & Matthews, C. (2016). Trends and directions in environmental justice: From inequity to everyday life, community, and just sustainabilities. *Annual Review of Environment and Resources*, 41, 321–340. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-environ-110615-090052

Akama, Y., Light, A., & Kamihira, T. (2020). Expanding participation to design with more-than-human concerns. In *PDC '20: Proceedings of the 16th Participatory Design Conference 2020—Participation(s) Otherwise*. Vol. 1 (pp. 1–11).

Allmendinger, P., Tewdwr-Jones, M., & Wargent, M. (Eds.). (2025). *Critical planning futures: New directions in planning theory* (1st ed.). New York: Routledge.

Altman, H., Broder, T., & D'Avanzo, B. (2025, August 20). *The anti-immigrant policies in Trump's final "big beautiful bill," explained*. National Immigration Law Center. https://www.nilc.org/resources/the-anti-immigrant-policies-in-trumps-final-big-

beautiful-bill-explained/
Anguelovski, I., & Corbera, E. (2023). Integrating justice in Nature-Based Solutions to avoid nature-enabled dispossession. *Ambio*, 52(1), 45–53. https://doi.org/10.1007/s13280-022-01771-7
Anguelovski, I., Connolly, J. J. T., Cole, H., Garcia-Lamarca, M., Triguero-Mas, M., Baró, F., Martin, N., Conesa, D., Shokry, G., Pérez del Pulgar, C., Argüelles Ramos, L., Matheney, A., Gallez, E., Oscilowicz, E., López Máñez, J., Sarzo, B., Beltrán, M. A., & Martinez Minaya, J. (2022). Green gentrification in European and North American cities. *Nature Communications*, 13, 3816, 1–13. https://doi.org/10.1038/s41467-022-31572-1
Armiero, M. (2019). What is critical environmental justice? [Review of the book *What is critical environmental justice?* by D. N. Pellow, 2018]. *Ethics & the Environment*, 24(1), 109–119.
Barry, J. (2025). The ongoing unsettlement of planning thought: The difference that settler-colonial and critical Indigenous theory make. In P. Allmendinger, M. Tewdwr-Jones, & M. Wargent (Eds.), Critical planning futures: New directions in planning theory (1st ed., pp. 11–27). New York: Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003402855
Bayas Fernández, B., & Bregolat i Campos, J. (2021). *Ecofeminist proposals for reimagining the city: Public and community paths*. Observatori del Deute en la Globalització. https://odg.cat/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Ecofeminist_cities.pdf
Brenner, N. (2009). What is critical urban theory? *City*, 13(2–3), 198–207. https://doi.org/10.1080/13604810902996466
Buckingham, S. (2015). Ecofeminism. In J. D. Wright (Ed.), *International encyclopedia of the social & behavioral sciences* (2nd ed., Vol. 6, pp. 845–850). Elsevier. https://doi.org/10.1016/B978-0-08-097086-8.91020-1
Burtin, A. (2025, July 22). How Europe mirrors Trump's hardline anti-immigration agenda. *EUobserver*. https://euobserver.com/migration/ar9fd84f2d
Castán Broto, V., & Bulkeley, H. (2013). A survey of urban climate change experiments in 100 cities. *Global Environmental Change*, 23, 92–102. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.gloenvcha.2012.07.005
CHANGE, Data-Pop Alliance, & Open Data Watch. (2024). *Inception report: Feminist urban design: A gender-inclusive framework for cities*. https://www.citieschange.org/content/uploads/2024/11/Inception-report_Urban-Design-Gender-Inclusive.pdf
Corburn, J. (2003). Bringing local knowledge into environmental decision making: Improving urban planning for communities at risk. *Journal of Planning Education and Research*, 22, 420–433. https://doi.org/10.1177/0739456X03022004008
Cousins, J. J. (2021). Justice in nature-based solutions: Research and pathways. *Ecological Economics*, 180, 106874. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecolecon.2020.106874
Cucca, R., Friesenecker, M., & Thaler, T. (2023). Green Gentrification, Social Justice, and Climate Change in the Literature: Conceptual Origins and Future Directions. *Urban Planning*, 8(1), 283-295. https://doi.org/10.17645/up.v8i1.6129
Cykman, N., & Privitera, E. (2023). The urban value of food forests: Reflections from a project of urban socio-ecological justice in California. In E. Marchigiani, C. Perrone, P. Savoldi, & M. C. Tosi (Eds.), *Proceedings of the national conference of Italian urban planning* (pp. 72–79). Planum Publisher.
Dall'Omo, C. F., Limongi, G., Privitera, E., Somma, M., & Vingelli, F. (2020). Doctoral research, environment-oriented planning and wickedness: Networking for innovative contamination. *Plurimondi*, 19, 123–160. http://plurimondi.poliba.it/index.php/Plurimondi/issue/view/16
Day, K. (2021). Feminist approaches to urban design. In M. Mitrašinović & V. Mehta (Eds.),

Public space reader (1st ed.). New York: Routledge.
Dengler, C., Völkle, H., & Ware, S. (2024). Time and space for social-ecological transformation: care-full commoning in and beyond the ecofeminist city. *Environmental Politics*, 34(5), 861–881. https://doi.org/10.1080/09644016.2024.2411934
Di Chiro, G. (2021). Mobilizing 'intersectionality' in environmental justice research and action in a time of crisis. In B. Coolsaet (Ed.), *Environmental justice: Key issues* (pp. 316–325). Abingdon: Routledge.
Di Ronco, A., & Selmini, R. (2024). *Criminalisation of Dissent in Times of Crisis* (1st ed. 2024.). Springer Nature Switzerland. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-75376-3
Díaz-Padilla, R. (2025). A trek from instrumental and communicative rationality to emotional and symbolic involvement in urban planning and design. In P. Allmendinger, M. Tewdwr-Jones, & M. Wargent (Eds.), *Critical planning futures: New directions in planning theory* (1st ed., pp. 123–142). New York: Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003402855
Ehrensperger, E. (2022, December 12). Cripping infrastructure. *Society & Space*. Retrieved September 12, 2025, from https://www.societyandspace.org/articles/cripping-infrastructure
Ellis, K., Kent, M., & Cousins, K. (Eds.). (2025). *The Routledge international handbook of critical disability studies* (1st ed.). Abingdon: Routledge.
Fieuw, W., Foth, M., & Caldwell, G. A. (2022). Towards a more-than-human approach to smart and sustainable urban development: Designing for multispecies justice. *Sustainability*, 14(2), 948. https://doi.org/10.3390/su14020948
Fischer, F. (2000). *Citizens, experts, and the environment: The politics of local knowledge*. Duke University Press.
Fox, J., & Margalit, T. (2025). Beyond the professional–local knowledge dichotomy: Toward a new epistemology in urban planning. *Urban Studies*. Online first. https://doi.org/10.1177/00420980251375771
Friedmann, J., & Huxley, M. (1985). Transactive planning and life space. *Urban Policy and Research*, 3(3), 37–40. https://doi.org/10.1080/08111148508522595
Friedmann, J. (1973). *Retracking America; a theory of transactive planning*. Anchor Press.
Funtowicz, S. O., & Ravetz, J. R. (1993). Science for the post-normal age. *Futures: The Journal of Policy, Planning and Futures Studies*, 25(7), 739–755. https://doi.org/10.1016/0016-3287(93)90022-L
Førde, A., Reiertsen, T. K., Olsen, C. S., Solvang, I., & Wilson, H. F. (2025). The ladder of multispecies participation: Moving towards a more convivial urban planning. *Nordic Journal of Urban Studies*, 6(1–2026), 1–18. https://doi.org/10.18261/njus.6.1.1
Gaard, G. C. (2017). *Critical ecofeminism*. Lanham: Lexington Books.
Gaard, G. C. (1997). Toward a Queer Ecofeminism. *Hypatia*, 12(1), 114–137. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1527-2001.1997.tb00174.x
Gandy, M. (2021). Urban political ecology: a critical reconfiguration. *Progress in Human Geography*, 46(1), 21-43. https://doi.org/10.1177/03091325211040553
Gorgolewski, M., Komisar, J., & Nasr, J. (2011). *Carrot City: Creating places for urban agriculture*. New York: Monacelli Press.
Gramsci, A. (1999). *Selections from the prison notebooks* (Q. Hoare & G. Nowell Smith, Eds. & Trans.). ElecBook. (Original work published 1971).
Haldrup, M., Samson, K., & Laurien, T. (2022). Designing for multispecies commons: Ecologies and collaborations in participatory design. In *Proceedings of the Participatory Design Conference 2022: Volume 2* (PDC 2022 Vol. 2), Newcastle upon Tyne, United Kingdom, August 2022. ACM. https://doi.org/10.1145/3537797.3537801
Hammami, F. (2025). Ethical publishing as resistance: Reflections from *plaNext* and the

politics of knowledge and space. *plaNext – Next Generation Planning*, 15, 25–34. https://doi.org/10.24306/plnxt/104

Hamraie, A. (2024). Modeling the Livable City: Urban Ableism Across Borders. *The Professional Geographer*, 1–7. https://doi.org/10.1080/00330124.2024.2361844

Hamraie, A. (2020). Crip mobility justice: Ableism and active transportation debates. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*. https://doi.org/10.56949/2PBE8904

Heynen, N. (2014). Urban political ecology I: The urban century. *Progress in Human Geography*, 38(4), 598–604. https://doi.org/10.1177/0309132513500443

Houston, D., Hillier, J., MacCallum, D., Steele, W., & Byrne, J. (2018). Make kin, not cities! Multispecies entanglements and 'becoming-world' in planning theory. *Planning Theory*, 17(2), 190–212. https://doi.org/10.1177/1473095216688042

Human Rights Council (2024a). *Genocide as colonial erasure: Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967, Francesca Albanese* (Document A/79/384). United Nations, https://www.un.org/unispal/document/genocide-as-colonial-erasure-report-francesca-albanese-01oct24/

Human Rights Council. (2024b). *Anatomy of a genocide: Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967, Francesca Albanese* (Fifty-fifth session, Agenda item 7; Document A/HRC/55/73). United Nations. https://docs.un.org/en/A/HRC/55/73

Ibrahim, B. (2025). Grounded futures: A decade of planning through humanitarian and Southern lenses. *plaNext – Next Generation Planning*, 15, 40–48. https://doi.org/10.24306/plnxt/105

Jensen, M., Galland, D., & Harrison, J. (2025). The mistreatment of time in planning theory: Towards planning beyond the clock in a world increasingly out-of-sync. In P. Allmendinger, M. Tewdwr-Jones, & M. Wargent (Eds.), *Critical planning futures: New directions in planning theory* (1st ed., Chapter 11, pp. 180–200). New York: Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003402855

Jon, I. (2025). Environment planning after decolonial critique: On politics of knowledge, freedom, and future. In P. Allmendinger, M. Tewdwr-Jones, & M. Wargent (Eds.), *Critical planning futures: New directions in planning theory* (1st ed., pp. 28–43). New York: Routledge

Kafer, A. (2013). *Feminist, queer, crip*. Indiana University Press.

Kaika, M. (2018). Between the frog and the eagle: Claiming a 'scholarship of presence' for the Anthropocene. *European Planning Studies*, 26(9), 1714–1727. https://doi.org/10.1080/09654313.2018.1484893

Keil, R. (2003). Urban political ecology. *Urban Geography*, 24(8), 723–738. https://doi.org/10.2747/0272-3638.24.8.723

Kern, L. (2020). *Feminist city*. London: Verso.

Khadka, N. S. (2025, February 16). How Trump's "drill, baby, drill" pledge is affecting other countries. *BBC News*. https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/ce85709xdk4o

Kohli, I. R. K. (2025). Do municipal sustainability plans reflect multispecies justice? The case of Toronto. *Politics and Animals*, 11, 1–19

Kotsila, P. (2023*). Injustice in urban sustainability: ten core drivers*. Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group.

Krähmer, K. (2022). Degrowth and the city: Multiscalar strategies for the socio-ecological transformation of space and place. *City*, 26(2–3), 316–345. https://doi.org/10.1080/13604813.2022.2035969

Kumar, A., Ramesh, A., & Watson, V. (2021). Planning from the South: Learning from academia, praxis, and activism. In *AESOP Planning in Conversations (Booklet 10)*.

Association of European Schools of Planning (AESOP). https://archive.aesop-planning.eu/server/api/core/bitstreams/8b969746-c0d8-4d14-b493-06a2cb0e0e47/content

Latour, B. (1987). *Science in action: how to follow scientists and engineers through society*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Laurian, L. (2025). Think far futures, act now: Reclaiming distant futures in planning education and practice. In P. Allmendinger, M. Tewdwr-Jones, & M. Wargent (Eds.), *Critical planning futures: New directions in planning theory* (1st ed., pp. 201–221). New York: Routledge.

Lawhon, M. (2012). Relational power in the governance of a South African e-waste transition. *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space*, 44(4), 954–971. https://doi.org/10.1068/a44354

Lindström, K., & Ståhl, A. (2019). Caring design experiments in the aftermath. Paper presented at *NORDES—Who Cares? Nordic Design Conference 8*, Helsinki, Finland. https://archive.nordes.org/index.php/n13/article/view/495

Ljuslinder, K., Ellis, K., & Vikström, L. (2020). Cripping time: Understanding the life course through the lens of ableism. *Scandinavian Journal of Disability Research*, 22(1), 35–38. https://doi.org/10.16993/sjdr.710

Loftus, A. (2012). *Everyday environmentalism: Creating an urban political ecology*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Lorde, A. (2007). Learning from the 60s. In A. Lorde, *Sister outsider: Essays and speeches* (Revised ed., pp. 134–144). Berkeley: Crossing Press.

Mehan, A. (2025). *plaNext* in transition: A decade of young academic publishing in planning (2015–2025) – Insights and futures. *plaNext – Next Generation Planning*, 15, 18–24. https://doi.org/10.24306/plnxt/109

Metzger, J. (2015). The city is not a Menschen park: Conceptualizing the urban commons across the human/non-human divide. In C. Borch & M. Kornberger (Eds.), *Urban commons: Rethinking the city* (pp. 22–46). Abingdon: Routledge.

Mies, M., & Shiva, V. (1993). *Ecofeminism*. London: Zed Books.

Milman, O., & Noor, D. (2025, March 12). Trump's 'drill, baby, drill' agenda could keep the world hooked on oil and gas. *The Guardian*. https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2025/mar/12/trump-fossil-fuels-oil-and-gas

Moran, B. (2025, July 18). How the 'big, beautiful bill' will deepen the racial wealth gap – a law scholar explains how it reduces poor families' ability to afford food and health care. *The Conversation*. https://theconversation.com/how-the-big-beautiful-bill-will-deepen-the-racial-wealth-gap-a-law-scholar-explains-how-it-reduces-poor-families-ability-to-afford-food-and-health-care-260680

Morin, E., & Kern, A. B. (1999). *Homeland Earth*. Cresskill: Hampton Press.

Mukhopadhyay, C., Belingardi, C., Papparaldo, G., & Hendawy, M. (Eds.). (2021). Special issue: Planning practices and theories from the Global South. In *Conversations in Planning Theory and Practice Booklet Projects*. Association of European Schools of Planning – Young Academics Network. https://aesop-planning.eu/images/uploads/special_issue_final-theories-gloabl-south.pdf

Newalkar, R., & Wheeler, A. (2017). Ecofeminist ethics for sustainable urban public space. In *The IAFOR International Conference on the City 2017: Official Conference Proceedings* (pp. 195–208). IAFOR. https://papers.iafor.org/wp-content/uploads/conference-proceedings/CITY/CITY2017_proceedings.pdf

Nunes, F. (2025, March 10). DEI initiatives removed from federal agencies that fund science, but scientific research continues. *The Conversation*. https://theconversation.com/dei-initiatives-removed-from-federal-agencies-that-fund-science-but-scientific-research-continues-248810

Palifrovska, B. (2024, November 2). Feminist urbanism approach to urban planning. *Urban Design Lab*. https://urbandesignlab.in/feminist-urbanism-approach-to-urban-planning/?srsltid=AfmBOorTiQvdFAocAHhuSazdB8viveqO28qe_a9czfnl1XUOhJFexa36

Pappalardo, G. (2023). Open challenges and possible alliances for two fields of knowledge and practice: Museology and urban planning in the 21st century. *Les Cahiers de Muséologie*, 3, 115–133. https://doi.org/10.25518/2406-7202.1505

Parham, S., & Abelman, J. (2018). Food, landscape, and urban design. In J. Zeunert & T. Waterman (Eds.), *Routledge handbook of landscape and food* (1st ed., pp. 409–432). London: Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315647692-28

Pellow, D. N. (2025). *What is critical environmental justice?* (2nd ed.). Polity Press.

Perrone, C. (Ed.). (2022). *Critical planning and design: Roots, pathways, and frames* (1st ed.). Springer International Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-93107-0

Plumwood V. (2002). *Environmental culture: The ecological crisis of reason*. London: Routledge.

Plumwood, V. (1993). *Feminism and the mastery of nature*. London: Routledge.

Pojani, D. (2021). *Trophy cities: A feminist perspective on new capitals*. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing.

Potts, K., & Brown, L. (2005). Becoming an anti-oppressive researcher. In L. Brown & S. Strega (Eds.), *Research as resistance: Critical, Indigenous, & anti-oppressive approaches* (pp. 255–286). Toronto: Canadian Scholars' Press.

Privitera, E., Grabalov, P., Husár, M., Leccis, F., Madureira, M., Nath, S., Uğur, L., Mukhopadhyay, C., & Varış Husar, S. C. (2025). Empowering scholarship: Young researcher-led journals as spaces for learning, envisioning, and experimenting with alternatives. *plaNext – Next Generation Planning*, 15, 61–77. https://doi.org/10.24306/plnxt/111

Privitera, E., & Cykman, N. (2025). Whose city? Reflections on urban agroecology as multispecies commons. In J. Edelenbos (Ed.), *Reflexive urban governance* (pp. 121–141). Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing. https://doi.org/10.4337/9781803927343.00013

Privitera, E., & Pellow, D. N. (2025). Prison environmental injustice in the Global South(s). In N. Deb, M. Nair, & G. W. Muschert (Eds.), *Handbook of social justice in the Global South* (pp. 58–81). Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing. https://doi.org/10.4337/9781803921150.00013

Privitera, E., Pellow, D. N., & Armiero, M. (2024). Critical environmental justice and the Wasteocene: Oppression and resistance in an Italian prison during the Covid-19 pandemic. *Environment and Planning E: Nature and Space*, 7(4), 1735–1756. https://doi.org/10.1177/25148486241243028

Privitera, E., & Funsten, C. (2024). Beyond emerging. Just, multi-species, convivial and food-related urban ecosystem services in two food forests in Sicily and California. *BDC. Bollettino Del Centro Calza Bini*, 24(2), 329–354. https://doi.org/10.6093/2284-4732/11442

Privitera, E., Dhrami, K., Madureira, M., Dörder, P., & Toto, R. (2022). Editorial: Planning for uncertainty. *plaNext – Next Generation Planning*, 12, 8–12. https://doi.org/10.24306/plnxt/84

Raymond, C. M., Rautio, P., Fagerholm, N., Aaltonen, V. A., Andersson, E., Celermajer, D., Christie, M., Hällfors, M., Saari, M. H., Mishra, H. S., Lechner, A. M., Pineda-Pinto, M., & Schlosberg, D. (2025). Applying multispecies justice in nature-based solutions and urban sustainability planning: Tensions and prospects. *npj Urban Sustainability*, 5, 2. https://doi.org/10.1038/s42949-025-00191-2

Riolo, F. (2019). The social and environmental value of public urban food forests: The case

study of the Picasso Food Forest in Parma, Italy. *Urban Forestry & Urban Greening*, 45, Article 126225. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ufug.2018.10.002

Rivière, G. H. (1985). The ecomuseum —an evolutive definition. *Museum* (English Edition), 37(4), 182–183. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-0033.1985.tb00581.x

Robinson, J. (2008). Being undisciplined: Transgressions and intersections in academia and beyond. *Futures: The Journal of Policy, Planning and Futures Studies*, 40(1), 70–86. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.futures.2007.06.007

Rupprecht, C. D. D. (2020). Edible green infrastructure or edible landscapes? A case for co-stewardship in multispecies commons [Proceedings paper]. *APSAFE*. https://www.apsafe.online/2020/11/12/11-dible-green-infrastructure-or-edible-landscapes-a-case-for-co-stewardship-in-multispecies-commons/

Samuels, E., (2017) Six ways of looking at crip time. *Disability Studies Quarterly*, 37(3). https://doi.org/10.18061/dsq.v37i3.5824

Sandercock, L. (2024). Reimagining the soul of urban planning. *Nature Cities*, 1, 5–6. https://doi.org/10.1038/s44284-023-00010-8

Sandercock, L. (2023). Mapping possibility: Finding purpose and hope in community planning. Routledge.

Sandercock, L. (2004). Commentary: indigenous planning and the burden of colonialism. *Planning Theory & Practice*, 5(1), 118–124. https://doi.org/10.1080/1464935042000204240

Sandercock, L. (1999). Introduction: Translations from insurgent planning practices to radical planning discourses. *Plurimondi*, 2, 37–46.

Sanyal, B. (2008). Critical about criticality. *Critical Planning Journal*, 15, 143–160.

Schlosberg, D., Rickards, L., Pearse, R., Della Bosca, H., & Moraes, O. (2024). Critical environmental justice in contemporary scholarship and movements: consensus and plurality of the discourse. *Environmental Politics*, 34(3), 399–420. https://doi.org/10.1080/09644016.2024.2362573

Shrestha, P. (2025). Learning from the 'south': Towards a postcolonial narrative and understanding of informality. In P. Allmendinger, M. Tewdwr-Jones, & M. Wargent (Eds.), *Critical planning futures: New directions in planning theory* (1st ed., Chapter 4, pp. 44–67). New York: Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003402855

Silva, R. H., Zwarteveen, M., Stead, D., & Bacchin, T. K. (2024). Bringing ecological urbanism and urban political ecology to transformative visions of water sensitivity in cities. *Cities*, 145, Article 104685. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cities.2023.104685

Swyngedouw, E. (2025). Prefiguring communist urban political ecologies. *Urban Political Ecology*, 1(1–2), 59–65. https://doi.org/10.1177/30497515251359485

Swyngedouw, E. (2024). Traversing the climate deadlock: Embracing the idea of communism. *Dialogues on Climate Change*, 2(1), 56–60. https://doi.org/10.1177/29768659241300667

Swyngedouw, E. (2004). Globalisation or 'glocalisation'? Networks, territories and rescaling. *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, 17(1), 25–48. https://doi.org/10.1080/0955757042000203632

Swyngedouw, E. (1997). Neither global nor local: "Glocalisation" and the politics of scale. In K. Cox (Ed.), *Spaces of globalization: Reasserting the power of the local* (pp. 137–166). New York: Guilford Press.

Swyngedouw, E. (1996). The city as a hybrid: On nature, society, and cyborg urbanization. *Capitalism Nature Socialism*, 7(2), 65–80. https://doi.org/10.1080/10455759609358679

Taylor, K.Y. (ed.). (2017). *How we get free: Black Feminism and the Combahee River Collective*. Chicago: Haymarket Books

Tozer, L., Nagendra, H., Anderson, P., & Kavonic, J. (2023). Towards just nature-based

solutions for cities. In N. Kabisch, N. Frantzeskaki, & T. McPhearson (Eds.), *Nature-based solutions for cities* (pp. 30–47). Edward Elgar Publishing. https://doi.org/10.4337/9781800376762.00011

Triguero-Mas, M., Anguelovski, I., & Cole, H. V. S. (2022). Healthy cities after the COVID-19 pandemic: The just ecofeminist healthy cities approach. *Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health*, 76, 354–359.

Tulumello, S. (2025). For a dialectic of planning pasts and futures: Theoretical courses and recourses in conversation with Patsy Healey. *plaNext – Next Generation Planning*, 15, 35–39. https://doi.org/10.24306/plnxt/103

Tzaninis, Y., Mandler, T., Kaika, M., & Keil, R. (2020). Moving urban political ecology beyond the 'urbanization of nature'. *Progress in Human Geography*, 45(2), 229–252. https://doi.org/10.1177/0309132520903350

van Holstein, E., Wiesel, I., & Legacy, C. (2020). Mobility justice and accessible public transport networks for people with intellectual disability. *Applied Mobilities*, 7(2), 146–162. https://doi.org/10.1080/23800127.2020.1827557

Varış Husar, S. C., Tulumello, S., Mehan, A., Caruso, N., Peker, E., Kut Görgün, E., & Dal Cin, F. (2025). Bridging generations: A decade of open peer review and collective knowledge-building in planning scholarship through *plaNext*. *plaNext – Next Generation Planning*, 15, 49–60. https://doi.org/10.24306/plnxt/113

Yiu, E. C. Y. (2025). Urban political ecology in action: Community-based planning for sustainability and heritage in a high-density urban landscape. *Sustainability*, 17(8), 3726. https://doi.org/10.3390/su17083726