

RSA RN on Bridging Governance Gaps in City-Regions Addressing Land Take and City-Region Building through Comparative Research Event Report

Roundtable: Rethinking City-Regional Planning: Perspectives on Land Take, Planning Cultures, and Education.

6th World Planning Schools Congress (WPSC), Helsinki-Espoo. 29 June – 3 July 2026

The roundtable took place on Thursday, 2.7. from 11:00 – 12:30 at Aalto University.

The event took the form of an international roundtable designed to promote comparative perspectives on city-regional planning cultures and planning education in the context of reducing net land take. Originally, the discussion was intended to bring together North American, European, and Chinese perspectives in order to examine how different institutional, cultural, and educational contexts shape approaches to city-regional development and ecological transformation.

Due to the unforeseen absence of the invited participants from China, the roundtable ultimately focused on Canadian and European experiences. The discussions explored how future planners are educated and how planning practice addresses land take reduction and ecological challenges in soft and functionally defined city-regions. By comparing these different planning cultures and educational systems, the event provided valuable insights into shared challenges, context-specific approaches, and opportunities for mutual learning, while also highlighting the importance of broadening the international comparison in future network activities.

The main WPSC event had nearly 1600 participants and 1200+ scientific presentations (worldwide). The RN Roundtable included 1 moderator and 4 panellists from 5 countries, with approximately 30 participants from Germany, Denmark, Italy, China, the UK and other countries engaged in the discussion.

Moderation and Organisation:

Prof. Dr. Anna Growe (Kassel University, Germany)

Panellists:

Prof. Dr. Daniel Galland (Aalborg University, Denmark)

Prof. Dr. Alois Humer (TU Wien, Austria)

Prof. Dr. Pamela Robinson (Toronto Metropolitan University, Canada)

Prof. Dr. Peter Schmitt (Stockholm University, Sweden)

The panellists were invited in order to bring together perspectives from America, Europe and Asia. Due to personal reasons, invited panellists from China could not participate on short notice.

Overall program of the WPSC

Congress programme

	Sun 28.6. Aalto	Mon 29.6. Aalto	Tue 30.6. Aalto	Wed 1.7. UH	Thu 2.7. Aalto	Fri 3.7. Aalto
9:00	AESOP Executive Committee	AESOP Council of Rep- resentatives	Welcome to Aalto, GPEAN, LOC, UN-Habitat (Anacláudia Rossbach)	Welcome to Uni of Helsinki Keynote: LIU Jian	Keynote: Stefano Moroni	Parallel sessions/ Roundtables
10:30	COFFEE		Coffee/ Poster session	COFFEE	Coffee/ Poster session	Coffee/ Poster session
11:00 - 12:30	AESOP Executive Committee	AESOP Council of Rep- resentatives	Keynote: Libby Porter	Panel: Aleksi Neuvonen & co Keynote: Mustafa Bayırbağ	Parallel sessions/ Roundtables	Parallel sessions/ Roundtables
12:30	LUNCH					
14:00 - 15:30	GPEAN Council	AESOP Executive Committee	AESOP Council of Rep- resentatives	Parallel sessions/ Roundtables	Parallel sessions	AESOP General Assembly
15:30 - 16:00	COFFEE			Mobile workshops	COFFEE	
16:00 - 17:30	GPEAN Council	AESOP Executive Committee	Keynote: Hanna Mattila, Pilvi Nummi & Eveliina Harsia-Mikkola		Parallel sessions/ Roundtables	Closing plenary
17:45 - 19:15			Student competition exhibition opening		Parallel sessions/ Roundtables	GPEAN Council
19:30 - 21:00						
			AESOP YA General Assembly			
		Other location		Other location	Other location	
19:30 - 22:00		Welcome Reception hosted by City of Es- poo		Congress Dinner	20:00 - 22:00 Farewell Reception hosted by City of Helsinki	

The discussion during the roundtable was organised along the following three main questions (as listed on the slide below) and invited reflections on the additional sub-questions mentioned.

1. Where are we? <i>How do different planning cultures and educational traditions currently address city-regional sustainability?</i> 2. What are we missing? <i>Which institutional, cultural, or pedagogical barriers hinder sustainable transformation?</i> 3. Where do we go next? <i>How should planning education evolve to support sustainable and just city-regions?</i>	• Which roles and responsibilities of planners are emphasised in planning education? • How are city-regions conceptualised and taught? • How are ecological concerns and land take integrated into planning curricula? • Which planning cultures or traditions shape teaching and professional practice in your country or region? • Are current planning curricula adequately preparing students for sustainability challenges? • Which competencies are missing when dealing with land take and ecological limits? • How do institutional frameworks and cultural understandings of land influence planning education? • Which roles should future planners assume in processes of social-ecological transformation? • Which teaching formats and pedagogical approaches are particularly promising? • How can planning education foster city-regional thinking beyond administrative boundaries? • What can different planning cultures and educational traditions learn from each other?
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The following points provide a preliminary summary of the main insights from the roundtable discussion. They reflect the initial outcomes of the exchange and will be further developed and critically elaborated in a Think Piece to be submitted to the AESOP Transactions.

Key insights

- **Comparative perspectives:** The roundtable brought together predominantly European perspectives (Denmark, Sweden, and wider European contexts) alongside a Canadian perspective, enabling an initial comparison of European and North American planning cultures and planning education.
- **Three guiding questions:** Discussions were structured around three overarching questions: (1) *Where are we?* – How do different planning cultures and educational traditions currently address city-regional sustainability? (2) *What are we missing?* – Which institutional, cultural, or pedagogical barriers hinder sustainable transformation? (3) *Where do we go next?* – How should planning education evolve to support sustainable and just city-regions?
- **Net land take within broader sustainability agendas:** Participants highlighted that reducing net land take is increasingly competing with other sustainability priorities, particularly infrastructure planning and decarbonisation agendas associated with the European Green Deal. While land take remains an important planning issue, it currently receives less political attention than other sustainability challenges.
- **Context-specific understandings of land take:** The discussion demonstrated that concepts such as *net land take* are interpreted differently across planning cultures. In Sweden, land scarcity is perceived differently, making the reduction of land take a less prominent policy objective. In Canada, debates are more closely linked to concepts such as *giving land back*, particularly in relation to Indigenous land rights, illustrating fundamentally different historical and political framings.
- **Planning education and negotiation skills:** A central theme was the need to strengthen planning education by placing greater emphasis on negotiation, mediation, and collaborative decision-making. Planning was consistently understood as a process of balancing diverse stakeholder interests rather than applying purely technical expertise.
- **Innovative educational approaches:** The Canadian example of using simulated public participation exercises with professional actors was highlighted as an innovative teaching method for preparing future planners to navigate complex negotiation processes and conflicting interests in real-world planning practice.

These preliminary findings underline the importance of considering planning cultures and educational traditions when addressing sustainable city-regional development. A more comprehensive analysis of the discussions and their implications for planning research and education will be presented in a forthcoming Think Piece for AESOP Transactions.

As a result of the Roundtable, we are planning to write a “Think piece” in “Transactions of the Association of European Schools of Planning”, an international peer-reviewed open-access journal produced and owned by AESOP, the Association of European Schools of Planning.

The next event will be a workshop at Kassel University)

BRIDGING GOVERNANCE SPACES IN CITY REGIONS
RSA Research School for Action

Building One Space for Action: City-Regional Imaginaries and the Reduction of Net Land Take

UNIKASSEL
VERSITÄT International Workshop — Call for Abstracts

University of Kassel, Germany
4–6 November 2026
Submission deadline: 27 July 2026
Notification of acceptance: end of August 2026

Confirmed Keynotes

- Prof. Dr. John Harrison (Loughborough University)
- Dr. Marco Pütz (Swiss Federal Research Institute WSL)

Submit as PDF to: [lukas.haefner\[at\]uni-kassel\[dot\]de](mailto:lukas.haefner[at]uni-kassel[dot]de)

Include:
Title • Abstract (300–500 words) • Author(s) • Short bio (max. 100 words)

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Interdisciplinary and comparative perspectives on city-regions as collective spaces for action
Keynotes, thematic sessions, excursions, and panel discussion
Early-career researchers especially encouraged to submit



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 Prof. Dr. Alois Humer (TU Wien)
 Prof. Dr. Pamela Robinson (Toronto Metropolitan University)
 Prof. Dr. Peter Schmitt (Stockholm University)

Moderation: Prof. Dr. Anna Growe (University of Kassel)



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Anna Growe is Full Professor for the Economy of Urban and Regional Development at the University of Kassel. Her research focuses on regional governance, metropolitan regions, urban systems, sustainable development and regional imaginaries.

Photo by Christian Fertner.

