

Association of European Schools of Planning (AESOP)

Announcement of the AESOP Prize Paper Committee Prize Award for the best published paper over 2007

Initiated in 1995, with the first award made in 1996, the purpose of the prize is to celebrate the work of the scholars and professionals in the planning field publishing in European planning journals. It also serves to bring to the attention of planning academics and other interested parties across Europe the range of academic work being undertaken in the spatial planning field and to exchange literature between our different national academic cultures. Annually, the Editorial Boards of more than 50 European planning journals are invited to nominate the best published papers of their journal for the Prize.

The editorial boards nominated 21 papers published in 2007. Among these papers, the AESOP Prize Paper Committee selected the following five as “highly qualified”:

Flyvbjerg, B., ‘Policy and planning for large-infrastructure projects: problems, causes, cures’, *Environment and Planning B: Planning and Design*, Vol. 34, pp. 578–597.

Jensen, O. B., ‘Culture stories: understanding cultural urban branding’, *Planning Theory*, Vol.6, pp.211–236.

Gualini, E. & Majoor, S., ‘Innovative practices in large urban development projects: conflicting frames in the quest for “new urbanity”’, *Planning Theory & Practice*, Vol. 8, pp 297–318

Tiesdell, S. & MacFarlane, G., ‘The part and the whole: implementing masterplans in Glasgow’s New Gorbals’, *Journal of Urban Design*, Vol. 12, pp. 407–433.

Turok, I. & Mykhnenko, V., ‘The trajectories of European cities 1960–2005’, *Cities*, Vol. 24, pp. 165–182.

Among these papers, there was such a close race between the two achieving the highest scores that the committee decided to award the prize to both these papers. The prize for the best paper published in 2007 has thus been awarded to:

BENT FLYVBJERG

Policy and planning for large-infrastructure projects: problems, causes, cures

Environment and Planning B: Planning and Design

and

OLE B. JENSEN

Culture stories: understanding cultural urban branding

Planning Theory

In the evaluation process, each paper was assessed only by those committee members who are not colleagues of the author(s) in question. The ranking of the 21 nominated papers was based on average scores among those jurors participating in the evaluation of the respective papers. This procedure implied, among others, that the chairman of the committee abstained from participating in the evaluation of the two above-mentioned winning papers, which are both written by colleagues of his at Aalborg University in Denmark.

The jury heralds *Flyvbjerg's* paper for addressing core issues in the field of planning, with great insights and implications for both theory and practice. Rhetorically very well written, the paper suggests that the frequently observed cost overruns and benefit shortfalls of large infrastructure projects can be better explained by psychological and political-economic factors than by lack of technical forecasting skills. While focusing on 'the dark side of planning' where political accountability and the normative rationality of planning are expelled through manipulative use of power, Flyvbjerg at the same time suggest way out of this culture of malpractice. The paper highlights the innovative potential and possible implications of the "reference class forecasting" methodology, but also suggest organizational and institutional measures aiming to prevent planners from being squeezed into producing 'strategic misrepresentations'.

The committee considers *Jensen's* paper as very elegant and conceptually rich. The paper addresses the role of culture and flagship projects in urban development and regeneration, focusing on the social meaning of symbolic communication. An in-depth case study is very appropriately used to illustrate a larger urban studies phenomenon. In this case study, Jensen distinguishes the opinions of proponents and opponents, showing how the stories differ radically according to people's allegiances. Interpreting brands as articulations within discourses, Jensen's paper highlights how different narratives about which elements of a city should be emphasized in branding may be rooted in hegemonic and counter-hegemonic discourses, each representing the interests of more or less privileged groups.

The selection of the winning articles is carried out by a committee nominated by AESOP's Council of National Representatives. During the evaluation of papers published in 2007, the AESOP Paper Prize Committee has consisted of the following five members:

- Prof. Dr. Petter Naess (chair) (Denmark)
- Prof. Dr. Vesselina Troeva (Bulgaria)
- Prof. Dr. Willem Salet (The Netherlands)
- Dr. Deike Peters (Germany)
- Dr. Elisabete Silva (United Kingdom)

The full report of the jury, including the complete list of nominated papers and the selection criteria, will be published on the website of AESOP: www.aesop-planning.com