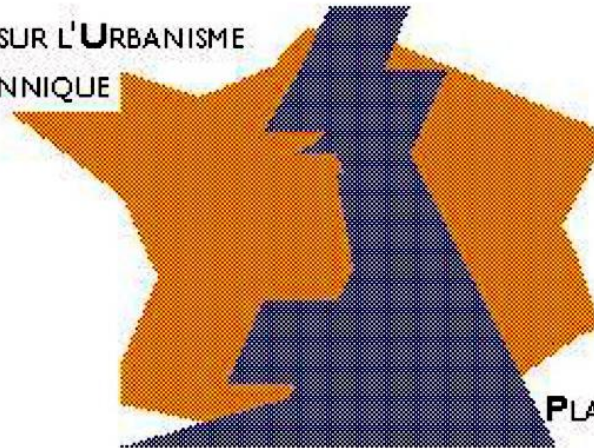


**GROUPE D'ETUDES SUR L'URBANISME  
FRANÇAIS ET BRITANNIQUE**



**FRENCH AND BRITISH  
PLANNING STUDY GROUP**

- The French and British Study Group on Urban Planning is an interdisciplinary network created in 1998 to promote dialogue between French and British academics conducting research on cities in the other country. 21 years of cooperation.
- The group has developed a sustained activity of meetings and events in France and the United Kingdom since that date and has produced a number of academic publications in English and French.
- The present symposium carries forward a theme explore at the French Embassy in London in June 2017.
- Today, the group has more than 50 members, mainly British and French, but also includes researchers from third countries interested in planning and society in France and the United Kingdom.
- Since 2005, the group has been formally established as a thematic network of the Association of European Schools of Planning (AESOP), which has enabled it to reach a wider audience of European researchers.



# 21 years of cross-channel cooperation, 1998-2019

## the euro-files

Olivier Sykes, Lauren Andres and Philip Booth offer some reflections on cross-national planning research from a decade and a half of 'Channel hopping'

# the potential and perils of cross-national planning research



Discussion of the internationalisation of planning practice, education and research is currently very much in vogue.<sup>1</sup> This is often seen against the backdrop of the contemporary phenomenon of globalisation and growing exchanges and interdependence between global regions and peoples.<sup>2</sup> The characterisation of the 21st century as the 'urban century'<sup>3</sup> and the identification of global planning challenges<sup>4</sup> by many observers and institutions have also contributed to raising the international profile of urban and spatial planning.

International organisations like the UN, regional groupings like the EU, national governments, and region and city networks,<sup>5</sup> are engaged in international reflection on the planning of cities and urban regions which are sustainable and resilient in the face of challenges to social, environmental, economic and cultural development. International consultancies offer their planning services in many countries across different continents, often expanding from 'mature' markets in the global North and West in search of opportunities for growth.

Educational institutions and professional bodies are increasingly seeking to capitalise on the international demand for education and professional accreditation in planning. Over the past decade UK planning schools have seen their overseas student numbers and applications increase considerably, demonstrating the demand and recognition for RTP1-accredited qualifications abroad, while other countries, like Russia, are seeking to establish more planning and urban-oriented curricula to train practitioners adequately.<sup>6</sup>

Meanwhile, in many countries, including the UK, the highest-quality academic research is considered to be that which is deemed to be 'internationally recognised/excellent or 'world leading' – although quite how the notion of 'international' is interpreted and used in this context, and the extent of

meaningful internationalism within the planning academy, remain matters of debate.<sup>7</sup>

However, what is undeniable is that across the various domains of planning activity, scholars, practitioners and students are currently being called upon to contemplate the international dimensions of their discipline. When surveying this context, there is perhaps a need to avoid the trap of what historians term 'presentism'.<sup>8</sup> Planning has, after all, long been characterised by the international 'flow' of ideas, techniques and policy solutions,<sup>9</sup> in a process given impulse by various mechanisms and bodies, including colonial governments, educational and scientific research institutions, professional associations and journals, and international development agencies and consultancies.<sup>4</sup>

The flow of ideas and practices has also been inspired by a general interest in comparing how planning works and deals with certain issues in different places, and a desire to 'learn from other countries'.<sup>10</sup> As Healey observes:

*'Wherever and whenever elites and activists have been concerned about the qualities of their cities and territories, they have looked about for ideas to help inspire their development programmes. And people have always travelled from place to place, offering suggestions about ways of solving problems or improving conditions in one place based on their experiences in other places.'*<sup>11</sup>

Similarly, Booth notes that 'Learning from other countries and the desire to make comparisons have been fundamental to research activity in the field of planning'.<sup>12</sup> He also emphasises that comparative planning research is complex and can be prone to pitfalls if the context-specificity and cultural embeddedness of planning are not recognised, and that this can be particularly problematic if the goal of comparison is policy transfer.

Echoing this, UN Habitat concludes that: *'An important lesson from the experience of modern planning is that planning approaches which have been shaped by a particular context should not be considered as models and imposed uncritically on very different contexts. While*

## Box 1

### French and British Planning Studies Group - timeline of activities

Date	Programme or theme of meeting	Venue
May 1998	French Planning Study Group: inaugural meeting	University of Sheffield
October 1998	Second meeting of the French Planning Studies Group First Participation of French colleagues	South Bank University Technopark, London
March 1999	Planning Research Conference: 'Future's Planning: Planning Futures'. Group workshop on themes in French planning	University of Sheffield
May 1999	Lille study visit	Lille
December 1999	Group meeting	University of Westminster
September 2002	Acting together in urban regeneration Sponsored by the French Embassy and the Institut Français	University of Sheffield
May 2003	Comparative essays in French and British planning (1)	Université Lille-2
September 2003	Comparative essays in French and British planning (2)	University of the West of England
May 2004	Local planning policy and its implementation Sponsored by GRALE	Université Paris-1 Panthéon-Sorbonne
July 2004	AESOP Congress 2004, Grenoble. Round Table: 'Shaping planning systems: challenges, opportunities and constraints in French and British planning'	Université de Grenoble
September-October 2004	Lille-Metropole Agence du développement et de l'urbanisme de Lille	Lille
January 2005	Public transport in a comparative context	University of Nottingham
June 2005	Colloque IFRESI: Logiques métropolitaines: modèles, acteurs et processus	IFRESI, Lille
January 2006	Study theme for 2006: Spatial planning and the reforms in the UK and France	
June 2006	First Seminar: 'The move towards 'spatial planning' in the UK: scales and issues' Second Seminar: 'Spatial planning in France: future outlook'	University of Westminster Université de Bordeaux IV
2007	The meetings of the Group in 2007 were devoted the launch of <i>The Spatial Planning Systems of Britain and France: A Comparative Analysis</i>	Paris
February 2008	European cities and Capitals of Culture: a comparative approach (1)	Liverpool
June 2008	European cities and Capitals of Culture: a comparative approach (2)	Lille
September 2011	UK-Ireland Planning Research Conference: 'Potentials and challenges of temporary land uses'	Birmingham
2012	Knowledge economy and higher education	Lille
May 2012	Urban Rails 2012 (1) – Rail and urban development Supported by financial and in-kind aid from the University of Paris I – Panthéon Sorbonne; CRIA; the University of Liverpool; <i>Town Planning Review</i> ; Réseau Ferré de France	Université de Paris 1 Panthéon Sorbonne
November 2012	Urban Rails 2012 (2) – Rail and urban development Supported by financial and in-kind aid from the University of Liverpool; the University of Paris I – Panthéon Sorbonne; <i>Town Planning Review</i> ; the Association of European Schools of Planning (AESOP); Réseau Ferré de France; Merseytravel; Merseyrail; Network Rail; the Franco-British Council; Sharethecity.org; and Cass Associates	University of Liverpool

Bristol 2015, Nantes 2016 – 'Green Cities'  
London 2017 – 'Metropolisation'

# Tours, April 2019

- The issue of metropolitan governance and the dynamics of urban areas are currently at the centre of political and research priorities in many countries.
- Thanks to UMR CITERES for organisation of this conference



# Liverpool, September 2019?

*“Make Planning Great Again: Legitimacy and Justice in a Post-Truth World”*

The screenshot shows the University of Liverpool website. At the top left is the university logo. Navigation links include 'Study with Liverpool', 'Our research', and 'About us'. A search bar and 'A-Z Sign in' link are on the right. A teal banner reads 'Department of Geography and Planning'. A left sidebar lists various departmental links, with 'Events' expanded to show 'Planning Research Conference' and 'Tracks'. The main content area features a breadcrumb trail: 'University home > Department of Geography and Planning > Events > Planning Research Conference'. Below this is a large aerial photograph of the Liverpool cityscape, including the iconic Spire. The title 'Planning Research Conference 2019' is displayed in bold blue text, followed by a paragraph of introductory text.

UNIVERSITY OF LIVERPOOL

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## Department of Geography and Planning

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University home > Department of Geography and Planning > Events > Planning Research Conference

### Planning Research Conference 2019

The Planning Research Conference will be hosted by the University of Liverpool from 2<sup>nd</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> September 2019. The conference will bring together international researchers and practitioners to discuss the latest developments in planning. It will feature keynote talks from leaders in the field, roundtables, study tours and the opportunity to present work to colleagues. The conference will also provide visitors with an opportunity to visit Liverpool, a city which has changed hugely in the last 20 years yet retains a unique maritime history.

- Abstract submission until Tuesday 30th April 2019

<https://www.liverpool.ac.uk/geography-and-planning/events/planningresearchconference/>