

Association of European Schools of Planning (AESOP) 7th Sustainable Food Planning Conference in Torino, Italy & Expo Milano 2015 “Feeding the Planet, Energy for Life” By Alexandria Novokowsky

As students of the Mundus Urbano program in the faculty of Architecture at TU Darmstadt, we are asked to consider urban problems through a social lens. While most of the students are built environment professionals (architects, engineers and urban planners) my background is in international development, specifically in Latin American countries. Working with urban agriculture projects in Havana, Cuba and rural regions of Bolivia has led my research toward issues of food security. As such, attending the AESOP conference on sustainable food planning was an excellent opportunity to hear from international professionals and academics regarding their current research and extensive experience in this field of study.

Attendees benefitted from a diversity of lectures and discussions guided by academic perspectives, social movement battles, government interventions and work on behalf of international organizations such as the UN. Touting the work of the municipal government, the mayor of the city of Torino inaugurated the conference. His speech was directly followed by the president of the Slow Food movement Carlo Petrini, who lamented the lack of government action in protecting farmers and passionately declared a state of emergency regarding the presiding Italian, and global, food production system. In the afternoon, parallel sessions were directed by professionals and academics alike with a special session delivered by the IPCC (UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change) and UNESCO food systems chair that led discussions on how the climate crisis affects food and in turn provokes mass migrations of climate refugees. On day two, keynote speaker and City of Toronto food planner, Wayne Roberts delivered a lecture entitled, “What food can do for city planning and what city planning can do for food”. The wealth of viewpoints provided a more nuanced analysis, making for a well-rounded and enlightening encounter.

Additionally a conference always presents the opportunity to network with other professionals. Taking advantage of this, I decided to volunteer as a member of the board and currently I am working as the assistant secretary aiding with preparations for the 2016 conference scheduled to take place in September at the Nürtingen-Geislingen University near Munich.

Finally one of the most fortuitous advantages of attending a conference in Torino was the proximity to the 2015 Expo, which also dealt with issues of food security. Attendees of the AESOP SFP conference profited from a guided visit to the Expo site, receiving an even more global vision of the current state of food systems.

Many students of the Architecture faculty at TU Darmstadt have attended AESOP conferences in the past. The organization, quality of attendees and material covered was impressive and personally, I would highly recommend conferences coordinated by this association to other students. Thank you to the EFA committee for making this experience possible.