

EDITOR'S NOTE: THE REALTOR'S GEOPOLITICS OF FRAGMENTED URBANISM

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With this second issue of 2026, *Transactions* opens a new chapter in its development. The renewal of the editorial team brings several innovations which we hope will further strengthen the journal's role within the AESOP community and beyond. I thank Donato Casavola, Politecnico di Torino; Rebecca Cavicchia, NMBU Oslo; Christian Lamker, Rijksuniversiteit Groningen ; Katarzyna Piskorek, Wrocław University of Science and Technology; and Ceren Sezer , WTH Aachen University, for accepting such a challenging task.

Before looking ahead, however, the editorial team and I would like to express our sincere gratitude to Olivier Sykes and the other outgoing editors Ela Babalik, Andrea I. Frank, Nikos Karadimitriou. Their commitment and leadership guided the journal through challenging years and significantly contributed to its consolidation and growing international visibility. Thanks to their efforts, *Transactions* is now indexed in major international databases and reaches a far broader readership than ever before. Building on this foundation, we are confident that the journal will continue to appear regularly and offer an increasingly diverse range of contributions to planning research and practice. *Transactions* also retains one of its distinctive qualities: it is an open-access journal, freely available to readers worldwide and supported by an extensive network of planning schools and universities.

This issue illustrates the journal's ambition to diversify both its formats and its intellectual agenda.

In the Outlook section, Klaus Kunzmann argues that regional planning has become the "missing middle" between top-down, market-driven European and national policies and bottom-up, locally based participatory initiatives. Rather than advocating a return to comprehensive regional planning, he proposes a new role for planners as brokers and facilitators, working through temporary regional agencies inspired by the German *Internationale Bauausstellung* (IBA). His contribution also challenges current European cohesion policies by calling for more selective territorial strategies focused on regions strategically important to Europe's future.

The second feature is a special collection devoted to time in planning and urban design; an issue that has become increasingly important as planners confront uncertainty, climate change and long-term societal transformations. Edited by Stefano Cozzolino, Christian Lamker, and Fabio Bayro Kaiser, and following the work of an AESOP Thematic Group, the collection contributes to the emerging "temporal turn" by bringing together debates that have been largely developed in isolation. Rather than proposing a unified theory, it opens an interdisciplinary research agenda that links planning theory, governance, spatial analysis, and urban design through the concept of temporality.

¹ Marco Cremaschi, *L'urbanisme pervers de la « reconstruction » de Gaza*, <https://theconversation.com/lurbanisme-pervers-de-la-reconstruction-de-gaza-268855>

Finally, this issue inaugurates the new *Places* section. It is fitting that the first City Portrait focuses on Oslo, host of this year's AESOP Heads of Schools meeting. Rather than presenting cities as exemplary models or collections of best practices, the two contributions treat Oslo as a laboratory for long-term urban transformation. Together, they combine a systematic analysis of the city's planning model – its achievements as well as its tensions around housing, densification and segregation – with a reflective insider account of the strategic, institutional and political processes underpinning the Fjord City transformation. As the section develops, *Places* has the potential to become a distinctive comparative forum linking the historical evolution of cities and regions with planning institutions, contemporary challenges and transferable lessons.

Taken together, these contributions share a common concern: they all address planning under conditions of profound structural change. Whether discussing regional governance, temporalities of urban transformation, or the evolution of specific cities they invite us to reconsider planning beyond its conventional institutional boundaries.

At the same time, no reflection on planning can ignore the broader context in which our discipline now operates. Europe, and indeed much of the world, is entering a period that is marked by geopolitical instability, military conflicts, renewed security concerns and accelerating geo-economic competition. These developments are increasingly reshaping planning agendas, public investment, infrastructure priorities and urban policies; often displacing long-standing commitments to environmental transition, social inclusion and democratic governance.

Transactions has already begun engaging with these transformations. Two issues ago, the journal explored planning and reconstruction in Ukraine. The previous issue examined the legacy of mega-events and the exceptional governance arrangements which they generate. This issue, centred on urban design, inevitably raises another question: the geopolitics of design itself.

Urban design has never been politically neutral. Increasingly, however, it is becoming intertwined with geopolitical competition, infrastructure diplomacy, security strategies and financial investment. Large-scale urban projects, waterfront redevelopment, logistics corridors, energy infrastructures and housing markets are no longer shaped solely by local planning objectives. Global capital, sovereign investment funds, strategic state interests, and real estate coalitions operating across multiple scales increasingly influence them. Urban form itself becomes part of broader geopolitical strategies, as exemplified by the praised Dubai model or the infamous Trump redevelopment scheme for Gaza .

Recognising these emerging dynamics does not mean abandoning planning's normative ambitions. On the contrary, it reinforces the need for critical scholarship that can understand how democracy, social justice, environmental sustainability and collective urban life can be defended in increasingly fragmented and contested urban landscapes. If planning is to remain relevant, it must continue to examine not only how cities are designed, but also whose interests those designs ultimately serve.