

Bridging generations: A decade of open peer review and collective knowledge-building in planning scholarship through plaNext

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Open Access Journal

## Bridging generations: A decade of open peer review and collective knowledge-building in planning scholarship through *plaNext*

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This dialogue between the old and new editorial board marks the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of *plaNext – Next Generation Planning*, reflecting on its evolution as an experimental and inclusive platform for early career scholars. Born out of the AESOP Young Academics Network, *plaNext* has advocated the principles of open peer review, aiming to foster constructive, transparent and mentorship-driven academic publishing. As a fully online and open-access journal, it has served as both a publishing outlet and a pedagogical space where academic writing is cultivated collaboratively. Now indexed in Scopus, *plaNext* enters a new phase—grappling with questions of visibility, institutional expectations and the sustainability of its original mission. This dialogue gathers founding and current editorial board members to examine key milestones, reflect on the ideological and operational implications of open review, and strategize on maintaining the journal's core identity while embracing global relevance and growth. Through honest discussion of challenges, aspirations and future pathways, the conversation offers critical insights into the journal's past decade and its renewed commitments for the next.

**Keywords:** open peer review, academic publishing, journal evolution, reflections, indexing, scholarly dialogue

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*As plaNext celebrates its 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary, the editorial board convened a transgenerational conversation to reflect on the journal's roots, assess its signature commitment to open peer review and explore the implications of its recent indexing in Scopus. Held online on 5 March 2025, this editorial dialogue brought together both founding and current editorial members, offering a cross-sectional view of what plaNext has stood for and what it could become.*

*Sıla Ceren Varış Husar:*

Welcome everyone, today we are going to have a dialogue for the 10th year special issue of *plaNext* for the last decade of *plaNext* and this is the first dialogue session with previous editorial board members and new editorial board members. I would like to thank you again for your time and today's topic is the open peer review and online fully open access. I would like to start with a short introduction, and I would like to ask you to explain in like a couple of sentences your experience with *plaNext*: when and how did you get involved and your insights? My name is Ceren, I am a post-doctoral researcher and an urban planner. Since I chaired the AESOP Young Academics (YA) network<sup>1</sup> coordination team, I have been invited to the editorial board member membership. Starting from December 2023, I have been actively involved in the editorial board. We have been in a transition period from the past editorial board to the new one and I have been working with Asma Mehan as an Editor in Chief and with Esra and Francesca as fellow editorial board members. I would like to give the floor to everyone.

*Simone Tulumello:*

I was one of the founding editors of *plaNext*. At that time, I was one of the members of the YA coordination team, together with Nadia, Ender and Feras Hammami. It was, I think, during the 8<sup>th</sup> annual AESOP YA network conference, titled "Cities that Talk" and held in Gothenburg in 2014, that we started discussing the need for a journal for the young academics. So we started working and launched the first issue in 2015. I have been one of the editors for a few years and then, since I stepped down, I am very happy to see this is growing: take the listing in Scopus, though we are going to talk about its problems later, that's one of the good news.

*Nadia Caruso:*

As Simone has already said, we were the founding members. We discussed the first ideas about the journal in 2014 in Gothenburg. Then, the first issue<sup>2</sup> was published in 2015 with the papers of the AESOP YA Conference. As the coordination team, at that time we were the only ones involved in the journal, we believed in this project and tried to share responsibilities and duties. It was quite an interesting and inspiring moment, full of decisions to take.

*Ender Peker:*

Together with Nadia and Simone, I was also part of the coordination team at that time. I've actually been involved with the YA network for about 15 years now. In 2014, we founded the journal, which was a very exciting moment. We wanted to create something bold and enduring, not just a temporary initiative, but a lasting platform that could build its own archival legacy. It's rewarding to see how the journal has continued to grow and evolve under your leadership. I might also add that I was one of the people who came up with the name of the journal. We spent quite a bit of time brainstorming, experimenting with different terms and combinations, and eventually arrived at *plaNext*. It emerged from combining "plan" and "next", reflecting our vision of a journal for the next generation of planning scholars.

*Sıla Ceren Varış Husar:*

That's great. Asma, would you like to continue?

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<sup>1</sup> <https://aesop-youngacademics.net/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://journals.aesop-planning.eu/index.php/plaNext/issue/view/1>

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*Asma Mehan:*

Thank you everyone for joining us today. It's a pleasure to have this discussion with you and learn from your experiences and different perspectives. My name is Asma, I've been engaged with AESOP, especially YA related activities, during the past five years at different capacities. Before joining the *plaNNext* journal, I served as part of the coordination team for a while and worked along with my colleagues like Ceren and a couple of others. Starting from August 2024, I took the lead as the Editor in Chief of the *plaNNext* journal from Feras. For me this was an exciting and pivotal moment because it was a time that I could learn from all those past experiences, as Ceren mentioned, to help the *plaNNext* for this transition stage. We are so thrilled and happy because, as you've been informed, the *plaNNext* journal have been indexed in a Scopus and this couldn't happen without all of your contribution, dedication and perspectives and long-term vision that Ender mentioned.

*Esra Kut Görgün:*

I am Esra Kut Görgün and I was a visiting researcher at Politecnico di Milano, but now I have come to Türkiye and I'm a researcher and city and regional planner, and I'm new as an editor board member, so I'm just trying to learn the editorial work.

*Sıla Ceren Varış Husar:*

These are uncharted waters for us. We have a lot of things to learn from you also today. Francesca, would you continue?

*Francesca Dal Cin:*

Honestly, I just joined *plaNNext* together with Esra, I believe it was in August 2024, so I'm still quite new to both the journal and the process. At the same time, I've been serving—and I'm still serving—as a member of the editorial board of another Italian journal, *in\_bo – Ricerche e progetti per il territorio, la città e l'architettura*<sup>3</sup>, which is published by the University of Bologna. I do have some experience with editorial work. That's it for now, and I'm very open and willing to contribute more actively to *plaNNext* moving forward.

*Sıla Ceren Varış Husar:*

Before I open the floor for questions, I'd like to explain our reasoning for this. The initial idea was that *plaNNext* is a great initiative and it has been institutionalized in its unique way. It helped a lot of young scholars to raise their voices in the past decade. It clearly involves a lot of dedication from editorial board members, personally I also experience it right now. In this dialogue basically we wanted to understand what your experience was, what the main challenges are and also what you foresaw for the future and how much that happened until now. Additionally, what we can bring new to the table, how we can collaborate on this and have this dialogue in a text format in the special issue so that we can keep it and have a reference for future.

Let me start with the questions. This set of questions mostly concern the previous editorial board members:

- How was this idea of open peer review born, and why?
- How has *plaNNext* evolved over the past decade, particularly during your active involvement in the editorial work and its approach to open peer review?
- Did you get the results you hoped for? Was it smooth?
- What were the key milestones that have shaped the journal's development?

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<sup>3</sup> <https://in-bo.unibo.it/>

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For your information, we're now shifting to double-blind peer review, though we are still using open peer review sometimes. I would like to open the floor for some reactions and responses.

*Simone Tulumello:*

I can start because it was probably me to suggest, at that time, that we could experiment with the open peer review. I have always been interested in issues of scientific evaluation, the role of evaluation in the building of scholarship, and so forth. In the early 2010s, there had been quite a lot of critical discussions on peer review, particularly on how blindness, though a powerful instrument to guarantee certain minimum standards of quality, also tends to stifle innovation and efface power relations: it hides power relations more than it tames them. The debate was stronger in the field of project funding: many argued at the time that projects should be funded by lotteries, because there is really no way of forecasting what project will result in great results. But problems also exist when evaluating completed research, as in the case with peer review of journal articles. There had been calls for opening up the black box, and so we thought that a journal created by and for younger academics, in which the editorial approach was less about seeking for the few groundbreaking articles and more about building an environment where early career scholar could train their "academic muscles", improve they ability and skills for writing up a journal article, this journal could be a good place to experiment.

If the goal is not to bar articles but rather working together to build good articles to be published, then there is less of a necessity to, so to speak, "protect" authors and reviewers through blindness. And that's why we decided that authors would never be blinded. Well, that's also one of the myths of blindness: in 90% of cases, identifying the author is relatively easy for the reviewer, who is supposed to be an expert in the field. Actually, identification is harder with early career scholars, who tend to have less power and whose names will hardly be a weight for the evaluation. And we decided to give the reviewers the freedom to decide whether they wanted to remain anonymous or not. The experience of the first few issues, on which I and Nadia published a short article in the Italian journal *EyesReg* (Caruso & Tulumello, 2017), showed that we had a very small minority of reviewers that decided to remain anonymous. And, though it wasn't really a quantitatively significant sample, it was quite evident that the poorest reviews—shorter, less aimed at engaging with the authors and more at pointing up problems—were from those that asked to remain anonymous.

Granted, the nature of a journal like *plaNext*, and particularly the specific editorial environment we wanted to build, made the decision of not using blindness easier than it would be in larger, more established, more generalist journals. Still, I think that was quite an interesting experiment. In fact, in the following years, other very good journals started to experiment with these approaches. One of those is *Fennia*<sup>4</sup>, published by the Geographical Society of Finland. It's an international journal, published online, fully open access, and so forth. And in 2018, they started giving the opportunity to reviewers to not only disclose their name, but also to publish the review as a companion to the article (see Kallio & Riding, 2018). This means that at the end, the article is basically a dialogue. That may not be suitable for all situations, but it's definitely an interesting instrument: in the palette of opportunities for publishing, this should be one of those available. But here I would ask you why they decided to step down on this idea of open review?

*Sıla Ceren Varış Husar:*

It's a great start to the dialogue. Asma, would you like to respond to Simone?

*Asma Mehan:*

Thank you so much, Simone, for your response. I also agree with all the comments. You share the idea of an open peer review process versus blind traditional way of peer review process.

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<sup>4</sup> <https://fennia.journal.fi/>

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I agree that it would be a great experience especially for the early career or young academics. I do agree, but I want to focus on a specific angle and maybe a challenge for the process of open peer review process, which is the idea of biases. Also there are lots of ongoing debates about the open peer review process and the potential for biases/conflicts of interest, and it could be positive or negative. But especially when the reviewers and authors know each other's identities. I want to learn, especially from your editorial experience. Did *plaN*ext face the same challenges in ensuring fairness and impartiality in the open peer review process? This is a crucial topic related to biases and ethics. I'm interested in learning more about the measures taken to mitigate these potential biases or conflicts of interest. Especially for this open peer review process to make sure that it's a really academically objective peer review process rather than being more subjective. Do you have any thoughts on this?

*Sıla Ceren Varış Husar:*

We can bridge this discussion to another dimension for this dialogue. I wanted to ask about the specific challenges *plaN*ext faced and how these challenges have been addressed. Whether they have been solved or what the discussions were in the editorial board back then. Of course, I want to underline the discussion about impartiality and inclusivity of both approaches to reviewing.

*Ender Peker:*

This is actually something we discussed in detail when Simone first suggested adopting an open review process—and we all agreed with him. Of course, we debated the pros and cons of different review models, but ultimately, we felt that the ethos of the journal—at least from the perspective of the founding editorial team—called for a more constructive and transparent review process. As you all know, traditional peer review can sometimes become quite destructive, especially when everything happens behind the scenes and reviewers remain anonymous. Our goal was to shape a review process that would be both transparent and supportive, particularly because the journal's main audience consists of early career researchers. At that stage, publishing can feel overwhelming—like being a small fish in an ocean—so we wanted to create a space where feedback would not only provide critique but also help authors improve their work.

That's why the open review format made sense. We weren't compromising on quality—rigorous critique was still essential—but we encouraged reviewers to offer suggestions that would help authors develop their manuscripts further. In that sense, both sides had something to gain: reviewers had the chance to engage with emerging scholarship in a constructive way, and authors received guidance they might not otherwise have access to.

As editors, we were responsible for ensuring that this constructive tone was maintained. Personally, I never encountered any conflicts between authors and reviewers in this process. In fact, if I can share a personal experience: in one of my earlier review experiences, a reviewer indirectly revealed his identity through the comments. His comments were quite critical, but very detailed and valuable. The paper improved significantly as a result. Later on, we got in touch and eventually collaborated on a project. He's a senior scholar in water research based in Australia, and this connection wouldn't have been possible without that open gesture.

To sum up: the very nature of a journal that supports early career scholars almost naturally calls for an open review process; one that fosters learning, transparency, and constructive engagement.

*Nadia Caruso:*

I would like to add another dimension to the previous answers of Simone and Ender. It's important to remember that in this first stage of the journal, *plaN*ext was really homemade. The review process was conducted by contacting colleagues, scholars and friends to ask for

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the reviews. The journal was new and a request to support young academics in the publishing process was too. The message to the potential reviewers was to give constructive comments. But it was really something that came out naturally, the editorial board didn't have to push anyone or any review. We started with personal networks and then we had list of scholars to contact.

*Simone Tulumello:*

I think most points that are specific to *plaNNext*, that is, to the process of building a journal for and by early career scholars have been covered. However, the question by Asma and Ceren pointed to a broader issue, which I think is worth reflecting. When one asks: "How to guarantee protection from biases and conflicts of interest in an open review?", this seems to be implying that those are not problems with blind peer review. If that's the suggestion, I completely disagree. I mean, we all have experience with peer review, we all know, as editors, as authors, as reviewers, that there are competing values, normative ideas, epistemological and methodological approaches to research, especially in the social sciences. When, as editor, you pick a reviewer, you basically have 80 to 90 % of chances to already know whether they will say yes or no to that article. And, as editor, you know that if you want to accept an article you have to send it to name X and Y, because they agree with that paper. If you want to reject it, you will ask Z or A. Of course, a good editor will pick one of those who would agree and one of those who would disagree.

The point is that power is very much present both on the side of the editor and of the reviewers. And blindness puts even more power in the hands of the editor. By not disclosing who they picked, editors can say of a decision: "Look, these were the peer reviewers"; but, in fact, it was the editors who decided who to invite and, with that, basically whether the paper would be accepted or rejected. The point is that power exists: I'm not saying that openness and transparency are the way to definitely solve power issues, but I believe it's a way, at the very least, to create an environment in which power issues are more evident. For instance, if a reviewer is really doing everything they can to bar an article from being published, they would probably not accept to disclose their name, or even to participate in the game.

Once again, this is definitely easier in a journal that has not an ambition to become the top journal in the field, a journal where everybody wants to publish, where you need to reduce the number of submissions because you don't have space to accept everybody. In a journal for which the problem is actually the opposite, that is, recruiting authors, this constructive and open approach is definitely easier and, for me, it is an experiment in thinking of a different way to address power, rather than pretending it disappears because people are protected by anonymity. Actually, and I refer to Ender's comment, one of the things I always do when doing peer reviews is that, if I suggest to the authors a work of mine, I always disclose my name, which is a way of saying: "I think this may be useful to you, but that's mine, so I may be biased, so I'm not gonna judge your decision on whether to cite it or not." This is very different from one typical problem of blind, poor reviewers, asking completely unrelated works to be quoted. I mean, if this happens to me as an editor of a blind journal, I would not send this comment through or say to the authors: "this is probably just not interesting for you." But the point is this happens. And this happens because of lack of accountability, it would not happen in open reviews: once again, I am not claiming this will solve the issues, but that openness is actually one of the ways to deal with power.

*Ender Peker:*

In my case, by the way, the reviewer actually suggested many other articles too—not just his own. But I understand exactly what you mean, Simone. I also find it quite awkward when reviewers send a long list of only their own work, almost like a checklist. It feels more like self-promotion than helpful feedback.

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*Sıla Ceren Varış Husar:*

Thanks for listing down mostly the positive, but also the negative, sides of the open review approach. The next question, what do you think about this recent indexing in Scopus? The journal has been evolving with your efforts and with our efforts right now. It's a good milestone and we are on the edge of something like rethinking or restructuring the journal. The expectation is that there are going to be more submissions. I would like to ask the new editorial board, Editor in Chief primarily, what do you think about this, and what steps are being taken to enhance. Are we going to still support young academics and early career researchers or are there any different ideas for the future?

*Asma Mehan:*

It has been more than 10 years that the *plaNNext* has been initiated with all your help, support, visions and great perspectives. After a decade, the Scopus indexing marks a very important moment for *plaNNext* and also for *plaNNext*'s future and vision. It is important because it solidifies the *plaNNext*'s reputation as a high-quality peer reviewed journal. I didn't say open or blind peer reviewed journal in the field of urban studies and planning on purpose. It is not an end point, I think it's just a stepping stone and just the beginning of a new process.

My main concern and push as the Editor in Chief of the *plaNNext* would be to make sure to help the visibility of the journal. So I would love to expand our national, international, regional and local presence through targeted related outreach. Also, I would love to create more platforms for collaborations and different academic networks. For example, I'm based in the US and now I'm working with the American Planning Association for having a roundtable and introduction about the *plaNNext* journal. Creating this new international collaboration and visibility of *plaNNext* for me is a really important goal.

I want to make sure that we keep our rigorous editorial work and especially the peer reviewer standards. This is really important when you are being indexed in Scopus, you need to keep this peer reviewer standards and the quality of the papers being published. I think here, it's essential to make sure that we do have our published articles in a really high-quality and rigorous peer review process. Definitely the next step would be to invite the leading and senior scholars and academics and even practitioner as guest editors, and also reviewers, to make sure that we are just holding the excellence as well as making sure that we do provide the stage for the early career and young academics because this is the main mission and aim of the journal.

Finally, I think it's essential to consider the impact and the strategies, which encourage authors to cite *plaNNext* in relevant studies: keeping the citation is in line with Scopus strategies on international level and also engaging with other high-quality Quartile 1 journals to increase our citation metrics. We want to apply for the different regional and national indexing to make sure that journal has a wider outreach as well. Additionally, digital footprint in our digital world is really important and we need to have some digital strategies. My idea is to leverage social media, different research platforms, Academia, ResearchGate and different institutional repositories to make sure that the *plaNNext* is being seen and being acknowledged as a Scopus indexed academic journal. These are the main aims and goals to have the leads for the next stage and the impact of *plaNNext* journal.

*Sıla Ceren Varış Husar:*

These are the goals that we have because the existing academic publishing system kind of pushes us to get indexed and apply for this and that constantly. We have been discussing the fact that there has also been a serious slowdown in the submissions to *plaNNext* for the past one and a half year. We knew that people would like to publish on this platform; yet there are some criteria to be filled, for example, for finishing PhD, getting a position, etc. So, I can rephrase my question, being indexed as a journal is a good step, but what are your critical

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thoughts on this? Since the needs that were 10 years ago, maybe are not the same right now in the academic world.

*Ender Peker:*

Well, I agree with the majority of those goals, and I really appreciate the efforts toward indexing, including being listed in Scopus. But when it comes to the broader system and the way it pushes us toward certain benchmarks, I can't help but question whether this might conflict with the original spirit of the journal. I don't want to sound too pessimistic, but I do have some hesitations when it comes to indexing. The conventional way of looking at academic publishing encourages us to chase these indexes. And yes, I understand that after completing a PhD, many researchers are required to publish in indexed journals—we're all familiar with these institutional stories, and they apply across many countries. But as we pursue credibility through indexing, there's a risk that early career researchers—the very audience this journal was created to support — could be overshadowed. For example, as the journal becomes more visible and better indexed, it will likely attract submissions from more established scholars. While that's not inherently a bad thing, it could shift the balance. We may start receiving fewer submissions from early career academics. There's also a risk that we'll feel pressure to adapt to more traditional models of academic publishing, such as adopting a more closed, anonymous peer review process. I'm not saying this will happen for sure, but it's a possibility that the system might push us in that direction over time.

Another concern is that the editorial board itself is made up of early career researchers. One of the values of *plaNNext* is that we're learning by doing. But as the workload increases and more experienced scholars begin submitting to the journal, the capacity of the editorial board to respond as a team might be stretched. The pace of learning within the editorial board may not keep up with the expectations of these more established contributors. So I think it's worth asking: how do we maintain the journal's identity as a platform for early career scholars? Are we going to define authorship eligibility, say, by limiting it to those within a certain number of years after completing their PhD? Probably not — and we shouldn't have to. But then how do we balance our efforts? How do we ensure that we continue to support new and emerging scholars while dealing with increasing submission numbers? For instance, we started out handling 5 or 6 papers at a time, which we could manage individually. But now, with the journal's growth and the indexing, I imagine there are 30 or 40 papers in the system — maybe more. And with Scopus indexing, you can expect even more submissions, maybe ten per a month or more. That's a real accumulation, and it raises questions about scale and sustainability. These are just my concerns. I'm not trying to make a black-and-white argument. I'm just reflecting on how we might navigate these challenges while staying true to the journal's founding mission.

*Asma Mehan:*

Ender, thank you so much for your comments. Respectfully, I want to just let you know that it's exactly the opposite for most of the early career and young academics. They were very hesitant during the past years to submit to the *plaNNext* journal because the journal was not indexed. I think via indexing they think you're also providing a really firm platform for the early career young academics. I don't think that we need to just define all that traditional way of, for example, how many years after your PhD or postdoc, etc. Rather than that, I think we need to judge based on the quality of the submission. This should be a merit base selection rather than the years from your PhD. I think it's a different perspective. So I think that this being indexed in the *plaNNext* will help and motivate the young and early career academics to submit their work to the *plaNNext*. I also agree that it's also encouraged some of the more senior established scholars to contribute.

We just received so many comments and hesitation from people across different countries. For example, from Italian colleagues we received a comment that *plaNNext* was not indexed in

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the Italian system, so they were not going to submit their articles. This sparked the idea of making sure that *plaNext* is indexed in Scopus. Especially for early career academics, it's a relief since they want just to make sure that their efforts are valued and recognized. They gain credits for their PhD, postdoc, etc. They need to get hired in an academic institution that is built on the indexing system without being hesitant about the journal and the ability of the journal itself. I think it creates new potential, especially for the young academics and early career researchers.

In addition, please also consider that we also have submissions from the AESOP YA network annual conferences. This is the medium that exists especially for young academics and early career researchers, and I think we need the mixture of contributions from both young academics and senior scholars because we are not living in a void. Both groups are together in the academic system. We need to have a mixture of all these experiences, and I think that's how the young people are being more motivated to submit to the *plaNext* journal.

*Ender Peker:*

My hesitation is more about the long run. *plaNext* should preserve its distinction from more mainstream, established journals. It shouldn't become, for example, like *Transactions of the AESOP*<sup>5</sup> in the future. The question is: how will that difference be maintained? Conference-based issues and special issues are tools for doing that. But the open call model, by its nature, is open to everyone, and that makes it harder to preserve the original character of the journal.

*Simone Tulumello:*

I see a contradiction here: of course, in the present environment, being indexed in Scopus is a good thing, congrats for that. The point, one thing Ender was saying, is: more people are going to submit, sure, are you ready to manage five times, six times, ten times the number of articles? In my personal experience, when I was at *plaNext*, it was very tough for me to handle five, six articles a year. Now, at *Análise Social*<sup>6</sup>, the journal of which I am an editor, I handle 30 to 40 a year, which is the normal thing for most journals. The point is that when you are an early career academic, it's tougher for any number of reasons: managing those huge numbers of papers is something that may not be that easy when you are a PhD candidate or starting up your career. That's, however, a pragmatic issue, which can be addressed and I'm sure you will manage to address it.

But I think there is a broader point here, which is the idea of buying into a problematic system. I mean, I personally think that PhD candidates should not write articles. The PhD, in the social sciences, should be the period of a career in which you focus on actually doing a monograph, which will become your first and best book. And this obsession of pushing PhD candidates to publish is not for them. It's just a way for universities to have a cheap workforce publishing a lot of stuff. And, of course, now they are all in this competition because you don't get into a postdoc if you haven't published; in this way you get stuck, individually and collectively, into this process. Granted, I'm not saying journals like *plaNext* should not be indexed; but I think the editorial board should be aware of the meaning of this system. Indexes, and it's becoming more and more evident every day, do not guarantee quality. I mean MDPI and Frontiers publish lower quality journals and they are all indexed. They are in Scopus, in Web of Science, and they have very high impact factors, and so forth. The fact is that there is no relation between quality and indexing. This wasn't a debate 10 years ago; nowadays, it's something everybody knows, and still we are into this, this run for getting indexed, otherwise people would not publish. So, there is a tension here, of which especially a journal for and by early career scholars should be aware of. I think it's a good thing for journals in this environment to be

<sup>5</sup> <https://transactions-journal.aesop-planning.eu/index.php/TrAESOP/index>

<sup>6</sup> <https://revistas.rcaap.pt/analisesocial/>

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indexed. But only as long as you have spaces to debate what indexes are about: I mean, this is a great space for doing it, isn't it? So thanks for launching this initiative.

*Sıla Ceren Varış Husar:*

Additionally to what we are going to publish in the *plaNNext* but also the editorial model that we need to restructure. At the moment I am responsible for nine papers and the review processes. I believe that we can still provide the necessary requirements without losing the soul, without losing the core views of the journal. The early career scholars that would like to publish are going to publish with us. What are the strategic goals? What do you have in mind as the new editorial board member of the *plaNNext*?

*Esra Kut Görgün:*

I guess we should share posts on YA network because everybody can access information there easily. And for each public publication, we should share some posts on social media. I agree with Asma, I guess I can just say that.

*Sıla Ceren Varış Husar:*

Since Esra mentioned the ideas of posting on social media and reaching out young scholars, maybe we need to put on the journal website our manifesto: what we are trying to do is; what our ethical point of view is; what the soul of this journal is and how we are going to keep the core of this journal. Maybe we can also discuss, Asma, in the next editorial board meeting and Francesca would you like to add something about the future ideas and goals that you have in mind for the *plaNNext*?

*Francesca Dal Cin:*

Picking up from where Esra left off—about the website—I think that, even though it's not directly related to the publication process itself, it's important to focus on the design and visual side of the site. Improving the layout and imagery can really help attract a broader community of readers and contributors. Since the journal focuses on topics such as architecture and planning, I believe we should pay more attention to the visual identity of *plaNNext*. Images and visual communication can play a key role in engaging different kinds of authors, especially from creative or design-related backgrounds.

Another idea—though I know it may be a bit ambitious or even wishful thinking—would be to organize a workshop. Something designed specifically for early career researchers, to bring them together and help them better understand how to write an academic article. Before even debating whether it's better to publish a monograph or an article, I think it's important to clarify what each format is, what the differences are, and how to approach writing. Especially at the beginning of a PhD, these distinctions can be very unclear and confusing. That's more or less what I've been thinking about.

*Asma Mehan:*

As Esra and Francesca mentioned, there is a point here and I think after our conversation now it's more strong for me. One of the goals would definitely be bridging these established and more senior and the early career scholars. We had this long discussion on how we want to make sure that *plaNNext* serves as a mentorship-driven platform where a young researcher receives constructive feedback from more senior academics.

*Sıla Ceren Varış Husar:*

Last but not least, as we conclude, could you share your vision for *plaNNext* and what you hope to see from it in the years to come?

*Simone Tulumello:*

I honestly think it's not for not-so-early-career folks like me to give a vision for a journal by and for early career folks. For instance, many of the issues we discussed in this dialogue are very

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different from the perspective of a (recently) tenured guy like me and (mostly) precarious scholars like those at *plaN*ext: I am a bit sceptical of indexes, and yet perfectly understand the need for precarious folks to privilege publishing in indexed venues—a contradiction that can only be solved if people manage to publish in different venues for different purposes. What I feel like saying is that I would be happy if *plaN*ext could remain a space where, more than following the latest fashion in academic evaluation, people could experiment with different ways of being in academia, like we tried and did launching it 10 years ago.

*Nadia Caruso:*

I hope *plaN*ext could be a place where young and early career scholars can experiment and publish with a different ratio, finding a supportive and constructive journal to enrich their knowledge and capabilities to publish. I suggest that the current and future members of the Editorial board keep an open mind, to be able to invent and test calls and initiatives in this spirit.

*Ender Peker:*

I think *plaN*ext is a unique journal by its nature. From the very beginning, it stood out not just for what it published, but for how it approached the entire publishing process. That's something rare. What made the journal special, at least for me, was its openness to young voices and its commitment to constructive feedback mechanism—both in the content it published and in the way it operated behind the scenes. As it gains recognition and becomes more visible through indexing, I hope it can keep that spirit alive. I'm no longer part of the editorial board, but as someone who was there at the beginning, I hope it continues to evolve without losing its character, and that it remains a place where emerging scholars can feel seen, supported, and challenged in different possible ways.

*Esra Kut Görgün:*

My question is, how do we overcome the challenges faced by new generation urban planners in academia through more interactive and collaborative systems?

*Francesca Dal Cin:*

In the near future, I believe *plaN*ext should continue to strengthen its role as a reference point for early career scholars—not only by publishing high-quality research, but also by actively fostering spaces for exchange and dialogue. In this regard, it would be desirable to promote opportunities for direct interaction among young researchers, through initiatives such as seminars, workshops or special issues emerging from collective processes.

At the same time, the journal could further consolidate its interdisciplinary vocation by encouraging dialogue between planning and related fields such as environmental studies, political ecology, digital geographies or feminist theory. These cross-disciplinary engagements are essential to critically interpret the complexity of contemporary spatial transformations and to question the normative and performative dimensions of planning.

Finally, I envision *plaN*ext as an increasingly accessible and visible platform, capable of extending its impact beyond academia. This could be achieved through more open editorial formats, carefully curated thematic sections, and a stronger relationship with AESOP—not only as a reference network, but as an active interlocutor in supporting the growth of the next generation of scholars.

*Asma Mehan:*

As the current Editor in Chief of *plaN*ext – *Next Generation Planning*, I see the journal's next phase as a delicate balancing act: deepening our roots in open, mentorship-driven practice even as we embrace the visibility and reach that come with being indexed in Scopus. My vision is to continue as a creative incubator where early career scholars can experiment with formats, narratives, and methodologies—often overlooked in mainstream, metric-driven venues—but

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now backed by the confidence that their work meets institutional benchmarks. We will safeguard our signature ethos of transparent peer review and constructive feedback, building formal mentorship pathways between seasoned academics and early career authors, ensuring that every submission becomes a site of learning and growth.

I plan to launch thematic special issues, workshops and digital initiatives to cultivate skills, foster dialogue, and broaden our community across disciplines and regions. A public manifesto or guiding statement will be formalised to assert our editorial values, serve as a compass for future leadership, and reaffirm *plaN*ext's identity as more than a journal—a living project that champions inclusion, experimentation, and intergenerational collaboration. *plaN*ext will continue to serve as a crucial platform that recognises, supports, challenges and empowers emerging scholars to shape the future of planning scholarship.

I want to thank you all for joining us today and it's not the end of our conversation. So I will get back to you, it's for different collaborations. Dear Simone, Nadia and Ender, we want to learn more from your experiences and for us it's important to keep you engaged. Our aim is to make sure that you are engaged in the related activities of *plaN*ext because I think you are the founding members of the *plaN*ext, and this relationship never stops.

*How does a journal stay true to its mission of empowering early career scholars while also adapting to the realities of the academic world? That's the question at the heart of this conversation about the future of plaNext. Participants shared their visions for the journal, discussing how it can continue to foster a creative and supportive community for emerging scholars without compromising on the quality or visibility needed to advance their careers.*

### **Acknowledgment**

The dialogue is transcribed from a recorded online meeting by YouTube's automatic transcription. Original texts have been compared, combined, compacted and edited by Sila Ceren Varış Husar. The other authors have reviewed and modified it.

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