

# **AESOP 2<sup>nd</sup> EUROPEAN SUSTAINABLE FOOD PLANNING CONFERENCE**

**Urban Performance Group  
University of Brighton**

## **CALL FOR PAPERS**

**Friday 29th - Saturday 30th October 2010**

Abstracts should be no longer than 500 words, and e-mailed to Andre Viljoen no later than the 31<sup>st</sup> May 2010 at [a.viljoen@brighton.ac.uk](mailto:a.viljoen@brighton.ac.uk).

For updates and further information please visit the conference web site at:  
<http://arts.brighton.ac.uk/aesop2>

### **Urban agriculture.**

**Convenors:** Prof. Dr. Han Wiskerke and Jan-Willem van der Schans (Rural Sociology Group - Wageningen University)

Urban agriculture receives more and more attention today, in the developed as well as the developing world. Urban agriculture is the growing of food in and around cities, using urban resources such as vacant plots of urban land, run-off water, volunteer labour, etc. and producing goods and services for the urban market. Cities all around the world are exploring the possibility of reconnecting food production (agriculture) and urban life, either by helping to re-establish the link between city dwellers and peri-urban farms or by allowing or creating spaces for food production within the city limits. These places may involve private allotment gardens, school gardens or community gardens, but there is also an increased interest in city farms (run by a professional farmer and /or a dedicated group of citizens) as well. To understand the rising interest in urban food production in the western world, it is vital to study the social and economic context in which these initiatives take place. Although the issue of access to food is important in certain cases (such as the case of food deserts), it is clear that urban agriculture also addresses other urban problems, such as the deterioration of quality of life, the social exclusion of people with difficult or no access to the labour market, economic marginalisation and environmental degradation. If urban agriculture can provide so many benefits to city life, the question remains why there still are so few examples in practice of food production in cities as a systematic approach to (re-)build greener, more sustainable metropolises. There is of course the problem of competing claims to space, and food production as such never was, and probably never will be, an activity earning as much revenue per square or cubic meter as other urban activities. There are also practical problems such as contamination of soil, air or water, competition from cheap food produced conventionally, and restrictive government policies in the field of physical planning, nuisance law, food safety and retailing. The aim of this workshop is to find out how existing initiatives in cities have got around these barriers,

This workshop wants to address the real and potential contribution of urban agriculture to contemporary city life. We welcome empirical as well as more conceptual contributions about the following questions:

- Does urban farming represents a substantive alternative to mainstream food production or is its role more symbolic, a way to reconnect urban dwellers with food production?
- Which parties are promoting urban farming and for what reasons? Parties involved may be city government (which departments and agencies), but also building societies, real estate developers, and charities.
- How do urban farms operate in practice, where do they get their inputs, what do they sell as products or services, what is the business model? And how does this model differ from conventional farming or multifunctional farming in rural areas?
- What is the actual (and potential) productive capacity of cities and urban fringes? To what extent have urban farms actually been able to capture ecological benefits, create employment opportunities, combat hunger and poverty, and strengthen community networks?
- How does the network of urban agriculture contribute to the resilience of the metropolitan food system? Is there competition with conventional food production or is there some form of complementarity?
- What typologies of urban agriculture can be developed? Urban agriculture initiatives differ widely in terms of size and shape as well as character and impact. This diversity makes it difficult for policy makers to develop more generic policies for urban food production.
- What are the typical production systems that are used in urban space (as compared to production systems developed for rural areas). Urban farming systems tend to be small scale, labour intensive and highly productive. Where does the knowledge to grow food in cities come from? Who develops the technology?