

Network-Assoziation of European Researchers
N-AERUS on Urbanisation in the South

N-AERUS 2007 Way Forward

Summary aide-memoire of points discussed at coordinating & support group meeting on Friday 7th (including email discussion) and the N-AERUS general meeting on Saturday 8th September 2007 in London

1. Aims and purpose of N-AERUS.

These remain as they were (as expressed on the website), ie in summary:

- A. Mobilise & develop European research and training capacities on urban issues in South
- B. Disseminate information
- C. Develop research & training capacities
- D. Mobilise and consolidate institutional & individual capacities
- E. Back urban development projects
- F. Assist members in disseminating & collecting information & finding appropriate resources
- G. Provide a European perspective on development

These were presented at the general meeting as a reminder and to set the context for the rest of the discussion. It was noted in the various discussions in the last couple of weeks that these aims are being met to some extent with the current activities of the network (namely the annual conference and related publication of papers), and that there is scope to push for more continuous interaction between members and intensification of intellectual exchange. There is a need to identify what value the network adds. It was also noted by some, however, that any initiatives in this regard should avoid changing the nature of the network (whose flexibility and lack of resources at the moment may be seen as a weakness but also as a strength as there is no potential for power struggles within it), and that they should be taken forward with a minimum of effort.

2. Structure of N-AERUS. Role and membership of the coordinating group and the support group.

The roles and membership of the various groups can be summarised as:

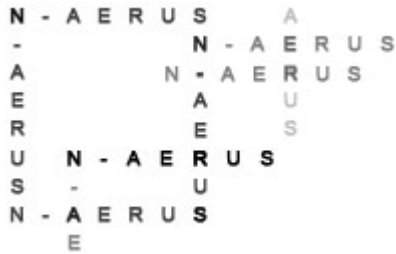
Coordinating group(technical coordination & creation of opportunities for the network) - current members continuing into 2007/08:

- Peter Gotsch, Germany (communication & information)
- Eleni Kyrou, England (conference follow-up & funding)
- Harry Smith, Scotland (membership & funding)

Support group (advice based on the socio-cultural and disciplinar diversity of its members, support in conference organisation & decentralised membership extension - see also next point on decentralisation).

Current members are:

- Marcello Balbo, Italy (confirmed for 2007/08 in person at the conference)



Network-Assoziation of European Researchers
N-AERUS on Urbanisation in the South

- Jean Claude Bolay, Switzerland (please confirm whether you wish to continue to be part of the support group for 2007/08 - we hope you do)
- Alain Durand-Lasserve, France (confirmed for 2007/08 in person at the conference)
- Graciela Landaeta, Sweden (confirmed for 2007/08 via email)
- Francoise Navez-Bouchanine, France (please confirm whether you wish to continue to be part of the support group for 2007/08 - we hope you do)
- Jurgen Oestereich, Germany (confirmed for 2007/08 via email)
- Kiran Sandu, India (confirmed for 2007/08 via email)
- Sasa Van der Wegen, Netherlands (our understanding is that your personal and professional circumstances have changed and you may not be able to continue to be part of the support group in 2007/08 - please confirm if you do wish to continue in 2007/08 though)

New members joined the support group during the conference:

- Either Marijk Huysman or Maarteje Van Eerd, Netherlands (in order to fill the gap left by Sasa's move from IHS and from The Netherlands - confirmation of whether Marijk or Maarteje will be the new member is yet to be received)
- Francesc Magrinya, Spain (a welcome step towards addressing the lack of support group members from the Iberian Peninsula)

At the conference an invitation was made to participants for more volunteers to join the support group (particularly from French-speaking countries and Italy). The following people have offered to join the support group since:

- Alex Jachnow (TU-Berlin)
- Ramin Keivani (Oxford Brookes University)
- Dimitra Adamantidou (Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs)

Members in network (develop content, generate initiatives, participate in conference & network):

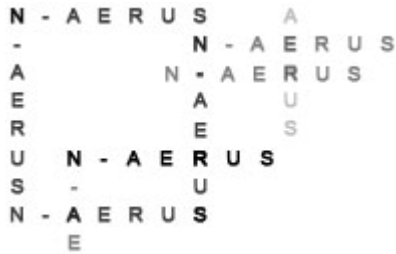
- 285 members currently on mailing list
- 24 new members since January 2007 (14 based in Europe; 10 based in the South)

Actions:

- Jean Claude Bolay, Francoise Navez-Bouchanine and Sasa Van der Wegen to confirm whether they wish to continue to participate in the support group
- Marijk Huysman and Maarteje Van Eerd to confirm who will participate in the support group
- All to comment on whether Alex Jachnow should be invited to join the support group

3. Decentralisation - Dissemination and expansion of the network managed at country level, possibly as the responsibility of members of an expanded support group.

There is a range of views on this, from supportive to sceptical. The consensus seems to be that members of the support group can take on the task of disseminating the existence of the network in their own countries and language areas of influence if they wish, and they are especially encouraged to do so where network participation is low (of



Network-Association of European Researchers
N-AERUS on Urbanisation in the South

course the actual task of registering new members remains with the coordinating group, who receive the applications via email).

The issue of support group members taking on specific responsibilities as individuals has been raised and will need to be considered in the future.

Actions:

- All members of support group to consider whether they wish actively to disseminate N-AERUS in their geographic area

4. Availability of member information on the website. To achieve a more transparent and informative website, becoming a tool for members (and non-members) to network more with each other.

There seems to be support for this among support group members. At the general meeting there was discussion about it, with some people in the audience speaking in favour (3 people) and others against (2 people). Concerns raised by those against were about member information becoming some form of glossy advertising, and the posting of member information on the web generating a lot work for the coordinating group. It would appear that the way forward therefore is to make the information that is currently provided when registering (name & contact details, field of interest and geographic area of interest) available online on a voluntary basis, with direct input by members (i.e. each member inputting their details using the new website facility discussed in point 5 below). It was also noted that it would be useful if members could select which parts of this information they wish to make visible and which parts not.

Actions:

- See Action in point 6 below

5. Design of the website (a) presentation of revamped design; (b) discussion of content/structure and functionality (including proposed content management system that will allow adding content in a more decentralised and flexible way); (c) resources (managerial and technical) and time needed to improve and run website.

The way the website is being redesigned, to allow network members to add content directly, has received broad approval, with the caveat that some mechanism (norms and perhaps a moderator) should be put in place in order to ensure the nature and quality of what is posted. The work on this is ongoing and the new website is scheduled to be launched in January/February 2008. At the moment Peter Gotsch is working with Oliver Kraetschmer (a student of graphic design) on this, with limited resources - the issue of ongoing resources for website development and maintenance remains unresolved.

Actions:

- Peter Gotsch to continue coordination of website redesign



Network-Association of European Researchers
N-AERUS on Urbanisation in the South

6. Mechanisms for continuing intellectual exchange (chat-rooms, etc).

The above restructured website will offer network members who have ideas or initiatives around specific themes the possibility of easily setting up online discussion forums for intellectual exchange. This will make possible cross-country forums in which North-South exchanges of ideas and experiences can take place avoiding the expense of travel. N-AERUS will simply offer the technical platform for this. The coordinators are working to make this technically possible, but the initiative to start specific theme-based forums and chat-rooms can come from any member of the network, who will be responsible for providing the content for the experience and managing it.

Actions:

- **Coordinating Group** to explore the options that the content management based webpage gives and to try to adjust it to the requirements raised in the above points (privacy vs. transparency, decentralised input etc – points 3, 4, 5 & 6)

7. Provision of information on funding opportunities for NAERUS members to pursue in collaboration. E.g. funding information on the website for major budget lines and through the newsletter for other calls.

It was generally agreed that it will be useful to have information on funding opportunities for collaborative research (mainly from EU) made available through the channels of information N-AERUS offers (its website and newsletter).

Actions:

- **Eleni Kyrou and Harry Smith** to work on this with the support of staff at their universities who provide advice on funding opportunities.

8. Internal funding mechanisms The previous agenda items raise issues of how to fund activities necessary to develop the network. Should there be a membership fee for example?

There seems to be little support for a membership fee, but there is recognition that funding for the network's core activities remain an issue. European funding for the network as such has not been available since its initial funding, and may be very difficult to get.

Actions:

- **Eleni Kyrou and Harry Smith** to continue to explore funding options for core network activities (such as e.g. fee collection for webpage improvement and maintenance, etc at future conferences), though it is recognised that the network will have to keep the costs of its activities at a minimum given the voluntary source of its resources at the moment.



Network-Assoziation of European Researchers
N-AERUS on Urbanisation in the South

9. Host for next year's conference.

Hosts have volunteered for the next two conferences (both to be confirmed by the respective potential host institutions):

- Technical University of Catalonia (Barcelona) 2008. Though the N-AERUS conference took place in Barcelona in 2004, this was without the support from any institution in Spain. The proposal this time has come from a research group within the Technical University of Catalonia with links elsewhere in Spain. It is an opportunity to disseminate N-AERUS work in the Iberian Peninsula and engage researchers from this part of Europe (and the partners from the South that they work with) with the network. In addition it may help renew contacts with the European Commission.
- Institute for Housing and Urban Development Studies - IHS (Rotterdam) 2009. IHS is willing to host a N-AERUS conference but is already organising events to celebrate its 50th anniversary next year, so 2009 may be more appropriate and realistic to host N-AERUS.

A call was made at the N-AERUS conference for suggestions for hosts and themes for subsequent years.

The theme for 2008 is to be discussed via email among the coordinating and support groups.

Actions:

- **Francesc Magrinya** to confirm whether the Technical University of Catalonia will host the N-AERUS 2008 conference.
- **Marijk Huysman** or **Maarteje Van Eerd** to confirm whether HIS will host the N-AERUS 2009 conference.
- **All** to discuss theme for next conference via email once venue has been confirmed. If TUC is confirmed, **Francesc Magrinya** could take lead on proposing a theme (or themes) for discussion.

10. Any other business.

No other issues were raised.