Dear Reader,

This the 25th issue of the CITTA Newsletter!

I have to admit that when this small venture started back in 2007 I never thought I would still be called to write the editorial of this 25th issue. I’m pleased, I have to confess. All researchers, senior and junior, working at CITTA, with no exception, deserve special congratulations. Passing through all the turmoil of the past 12 years was not easy. We had to deal with frequent and successive changes in national research policies and funding options, every time a shift in government took place. We had to deal with the severe consequences of a major economic crises that left the country on the verge of bankruptcy. We had to deal with years and years of austerity policies and, consequently, with the persistent sub financing of the Portuguese university system. We had to deal with a disappointing and potentially discouraging scenario of no prospects of progress in the academic career, even for all those dedicated and hardworking lecturers and researchers. But we did manage to survive, and we even managed to expand slightly our staff and activities in both Oporto and Coimbra, diversifying our international partnerships and strengthening our scientific recognition and reputation.

In the beginning of this month (April, 2nd) we finally had the much awaited visit of the FCT Evaluation Panel, composed dominantly by European academics with a background and a research record in architecture and urban design. This composition was already expected by the way, after the FCT decision to reallocate the CITTA to the Architecture and Urbanism area on the verge of bankruptcy. We had to deal with years and years of austerity policies and, consequently, with the persistent sub financing of the Portuguese university system. We had to deal with a disappointing and potentially discouraging scenario of no prospects of progress in the academic career, even for all those dedicated and hardworking lecturers and researchers. But we did manage to survive, and we even managed to expand slightly our staff and activities in both Oporto and Coimbra, diversifying our international partnerships and strengthening our scientific recognition and reputation.

The Centre’s next main challenge is the preparation of our annual international conference on planning research. The conference is scheduled for the 20th of September with the embracing title of Planning for Change, inspired on the SPLACH project, one of the largest research projects in which we have ever been involved. The SPLACH includes our Centre, which leads the consortium, and the GOVCOP from the University of Aveiro and the DINAMIA-CET from the University Institute of Lisbon as well. The conference is also expected to benefit from the presence of the entire team of the Re-City Project in Oporto, an EU funded project under the ITN initiative. At the time of writing the call for abstracts is still open and so I take this opportunity to invite the reader to submit an abstract proposal choosing the most appropriate track according to the respective research area.

Paulo Pinho
Since our last research group report, back in April 2017, the size of the RG1 on Planning and Environmental Assessment (PEA) has stabilised at around 30 researchers, evenly split between senior researchers and junior PhD candidates. On the contrary, the range of research topics is still evolving, as one would expect. The long established research focus on urban morphology, accessibility planning, shrinking cities, urban metabolism and bioclimatic urban design is still there, in parallel with new and emerging topics related to urban quality of life, the management of urban spaces and urban cultures and identities.

At present, and apart from the numerous PhD research projects under way, the group is involved in nine research projects: three in the final year (the MIA, the USM, and the SPLACH projects); three in progress, and already reported in the Newsletter no. 21 (I’m referring specifically to the IPTC project, the Citizen Sensing project, and the RM FPER project); and, finally, three projects, launched more recently - the EPUM, the BooST and the Mobi-Age, - which deserve a brief presentation in the following paragraphs.

The EPUM - Emerging Perspectives on Urban Morphology is an international research project lead by Vitor Oliveira aiming at the integration of different urban form research and teaching approaches through pedagogic innovation, information and communication technologies (ICT). The project is EU funded by the ERASMUS+ initiative and “focus on the development of an innovative, open and inclusive system of teaching and training in urban form from a multidisciplinary perspective, capable of enabling the current and future generation of planning and design professionals to address comprehensively and effectively the variety of issues and challenges faced by contemporary cities” (see http://epum.eu/).

The BooST - Boosting starter cycling cities is a national project, funded by the COMPETE2020, and lead by Cecília Silva. The project includes three other partners, the European Cyclists’ Federation, the University of Aveiro and the Regional Coordination Commission for the Northern Region (CCDR-N). “By focussing on starter cities (from a cycling point of view), the project aims to provide specific technical know-how allowing them to reach the next level of bicycle use and breaking with the initial resistance. With this in mind, the project will develop a Starter City Roadmap aimed at offering technical guidance in motivating cycling. The roadmap will provide a toolkit comprising; an assessment framework of the Gross Potential for Cycling (GPC); an assessment framework of the Economic Value for Cycling (EVC); and a selection framework for mobility management measures best suited for starter cities” (see https://boost.up.pt/en/).

The Mobi-Age - Promoting urban mobility in ageing populations is a national project funded by the FCT-MIT Portugal Programme, and lead by Anabela Ribeiro. The project is centred on three main tasks: i) a review of the literature concerning the urban space and the elderly and the mobility and the elderly; ii) a full elderly-driven approach with the study of the populations, of the urban space and of the transport systems to be tackle in the case studies (the central historical zones of Coimbra and Oporto), including also workshops with the population; and iii) the development of a classification method for urban areas, the so called MOBIAGE evaluation methodology, and the respective manual, with specific criteria to assess the urban areas which are better adapted to the elderly (see https://mobiage.dec.uc.pt/).

Finally, I am pleased to refer the participation of one of our senior researchers - Silvia Sousa - in a COST Action CA17125 on Public Value Capture of Increasing Property Values, launched last year. Based on a comparative analysis across European countries, the main aim of this COST Action is the development of a common framework for public value capture and the provision of innovative tools in order to optimize the allocation of development costs and benefits, strengthening public budgets as well (http://puvaca.eu/).