Conference Report:
The 7th International Conference on Urban E-Planning, 2023

Carlos Nunes Silva, Institute of Geography and Spatial Planning, Universidade de Lisboa, Portugal*

https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0265-6575

The 7th Annual Conference of the 'International Journal of E-Planning Research' (IJEPR), the third to be held online, offered once again a multi and an interdisciplinary global forum for the critical discussion of new perspectives, methods, and tools in the field of Urban e-Planning. It followed a successful series of six conferences, held since 2016, four onsite and two online, in the University of Lisbon, in Portugal. The conference was endorsed by ISOCARP and by the IGU Commission on Geography of Governance.

The 7th Conference, held online on 27-29 March 2023, from the Institute of Geography and Spatial Planning, University of Lisbon, Portugal, attracted a similar number of participants and papers, compared to the two previous conferences, and a little more compared to those held before the pandemic. In total, 159 authors, from 35 countries, in Europe, Africa, North and South America, and Asia, and 72 papers. The number of participants and countries present are similar to previous conferences held online and higher compared to the onsite conferences held before the pandemic. The delegates and co-authors, ranging from scholars, researchers, and planners to students, and other professionals, came from different academic backgrounds - Geography, Planning, Architecture, Arts and Humanities, Social Sciences, and Information Sciences.

The 7th Conference explored and discussed recent developments, emerging issues and future challenges in the field of urban e-planning, focusing four main themes: Smart Urban Governance and E-planning; Urban e-planning and Climate Emergency; Managing Natural and Man Made Disasters and the Post-pandemic; Citizens e-Participation in Urban Governance. The program was organized into four tracks, out of the five proposed initially, divided into 18 Sessions, in addition to the Opening and Closing sessions. The number of sessions was similar to the two previous online conferences and higher than in the pre-pandemic onsite conferences: Track 1 - Smart Urban Governance and E-Planning (11 sessions); Track 2 - Urban E-Planning and Climate Emergency (2 sessions); Track 3 - Managing Natural & Man Made Disasters & the Post-Pandemic (1 session); Track 4 - Citizens E-Participation in Urban Governance (4 sessions). On 'Smart Urban Governance and E-Planning' papers addressed issues such as participatory mapping, application of artificial intelligence, cellular phone data, neural networks, digital ethnography, cycling, smart villages, twitter bots, among others. On 'Urban E-Planning and Climate Emergency' papers dealt with the action of municipalities and cities towards climate neutrality, and on 'Citizens E-Participation in Urban Governance' authors addressed the e-participation tools for youth, gender sensitive e-participation tools, social media tools, open data platforms, big data, among other key issues. Some papers crossed more than one of these themes.

The debate in all sessions allowed a fruitful exchange of points of view among participants, as in the previous conferences, confirming the adequacy of the virtual setting for the discussion of empirical findings and theoretical approaches. Papers challenged established ideas about smart cities, climate action by planning authorities, and citizen participation, and presented new approaches, methods and

*Corresponding Author

tools. The articulation of technology and face-to-face contacts in the different stages of the planning process, a point raised in previous conferences, was again present in the discussions held in the three days of the conference.

Additional information, the full program, abstracts, oral presentations, opening and closing sessions, among other aspects, are available in the website of the conference (https://sites.google.com/view/uep2023conference/home).

In sum, the option for the online mode, adopted for the first time during the Covid-19 pandemic, in 2020-2021, allows the participation of more colleagues, some of whom would have not been able to attend, and at the same time reduces the carbon footprint of the IJEPR Annual Conference. This and the decision to make participation in the conference free of charge turned the IJEPR Annual Conference more inclusive, a characteristic we aim to maintain in the future editions of the Conference.

In 2024, the 8th IJEPR Annual Conference on Urban e-Planning (https://sites.google.com/view/uep2024conference/home), organized in collaboration with the Institute of Geography and Spatial Planning, University of Lisbon, Portugal, is hold fully online, free of charge. It aims to give continuity to the exploration of new approaches, methods, and tools, in a moment when the application of AI in the field of Urban e-Planning challenges long held assumptions, perspectives, planning methods and tools.

The UEPNET - Urban e-Planning Research Network (https://sites.google.com/site/uepnet/home), closely associated with the IJEPR and with its Conferences, will continue its role in the diffusion of information on Urban e-Planning.

Finally, a word of appreciation is due to all those engaged in the organization of the 7th IJEPR Urban e-Planning Conference, in 2023: authors of the papers presented; members of the conference scientific committee; session chairs and discussants; and the hosting institution.

Carlos Nunes Silva, Geographer, PhD, Professor Auxiliar at the Institute of Geography and Spatial Planning, University of Lisbon, Portugal, holds a degree in Geography (University of Coimbra), a post-graduation in European Studies (University of Coimbra - Faculty of Law), a Master degree in Human Geography: Regional and Local Planning (University of Lisbon), and a PhD in Geography: Regional and Local Planning (University of Lisbon). His research interests focus mainly on urban and metropolitan governance, the history and theory of urban planning, urban planning in Africa, urban e-planning, urban planning ethics, local government policies, local e-government, and research methods. He is the Chair of the International Geographical Union Commission on 'Geography of Governance', and the founding editor-in-chief of the 'International Journal of E-Planning Research' (IJEPR).