

TITULO

Come to Lisbon and see The Urban – the Lisbon Urban Studies Early Career Workshop

TEXTO

On November 8-10, 2023, ICS-ULisboa will host the [3rd edition of the Lisbon Early-Career Workshop in Urban Studies](#), which follows the editions of [2021](#) and [2022](#). The Workshop is organized by the [Urban Transitions Hub](#) (UTH, an ICS-based horizontal and informal group of some fifteen-twenty scholars affiliated to various academic institutions).

I am the UTH chair, and I should not be saying this myself, but anyway: the first two editions of the workshop have been a success, and the third edition promises to be even better.

Fig. 1 here – CAPTION: “Fig.1. Author: Marco Allegra 2022”

The first two editions have brought together some 45 young scholars from a broad range of countries (14 EU, and 12 non-EU, to be precise) – since the 2023 edition (30 participants from 10 EU and 9 non-EU countries) seems to confirm the cosmopolitan nature of the Workshop audience, I am writing this article in English.

The workshop is organized by UTH and the Association of European Schools of Planning (AESOP), and covers its costs through participants’ fees (€200 for the 2023 editions); this year, however, the generous support from the research group [SHIFT](#) and the [project UrbanoScenes](#) (FCT grant PTDC/GES-URB/1053/2021) has allowed us to offer four full bursaries and two fee waivers. In the past editions we have hosted interesting keynotes (this year we’ll have Michele Lancione and Stephanie Wakefield), very productive sessions, and even had quite a bit of fun. More importantly, the participants seem to have enjoyed the Workshop greatly.

But apart from my boasting, I think that what is interesting here is that Workshop is only the most visible example of UTH’s activities in the field of peer learning and mentoring – indeed, it would not be an exaggeration to say that the UTH has found in that field its core business.

In the last few years, the group’s stable activities have included the monthly UTH reading group, which has animated an interesting conversation between members and produced several interesting spin off (e.g. this [roundtable](#) on “conflicting imaginaries in East Lisbon” published by the journal Mediapolis, which I presented in an [older post](#) on this blog); and several rounds of horizontal peer review of applications, which have contributed to bring in several projects (e.g. Urbanoscenes, LOGO) as well as individual positions (e.g. eight CEEC contracts in five editions of the call).

What links together these different activities – and the Workshop?

The way I see it, the common denominator is in a set of principles that have emerged over time in the UTH group – and first and foremost, the idea that all UTH’s projects should bring a tangible benefit to the participants, and the principle of peer learning and horizontality as a guideline for structuring their interaction.

Fig. 2 here – CAPTION: “Fig.2. Author: Marco Allegra 2022”

How is this attitude reflected in the organization of the Workshop?

I think that the Workshop’s basic concept comes from a thought that has probably crossed your mind as well as ours, i.e. that life as an early-career scholar is quite hard. This is a tough and complicate line of work, and there are just not many chances to get a helping hand in the development of your own research project: good, dedicated mentoring is hard to come by in many institutions, and conferences are often a chaotic sequence of panel sessions, each one reshuffling the audience of participants and resetting the discussion.

From the very start, the UTH workshop tried to provide an alternative model, i.e. one based on good mentoring and the creation (within logistical and time constraints of a workshop of three days) of some sort of intimacy between participants.

This approach is reflected in the organization of the workshop in many ways. We ask for example all participants to provide a short text (a short paper or a long abstract, depending on the way you look at it) early on. This allows us to create thematic groups and, importantly, to provide a feedback before the start of the workshop. In Lisbon, each participant is assigned to a thematic group that work together for the whole duration of the workshop. Each group chaired by one or more UTH mentors, and each participant acts as discussant for one of the texts presented in the panel.

Fig. 3 here – CAPTION: “Fig.3. Author: Marco Allegra 2022”

After a first online edition in 2021, last year’s event added to the program a few other important elements, such as, first and foremost, the possibility of actually meeting each other in Lisbon – and using the chance to, for example, add social events to the mix. We have also added a “Lisbon walking tour” to familiarize what is a very cosmopolitan crowd with the recent history of the city. This year, beside the keynote lectures, the program will also include a session on “academic survival” chaired by Abel Polese.

This model, as we practice it, provides different advantages: it creates a more intimate working environment and a group dynamic between organizers, participants and keynote speakers (vs. the typical feeling of being lost in big events); it gives quite a lot of time to participants to present their work (vs. the limited time usually available in conference panels); and it helps developing themes in a more consistent and productive fashion (vs. resetting it after each session).

This model seems to be well-liked by organizers and participants alike – and indeed past editions have already originated some meaningful form of networking and between participants and organizers.

BRIEF BIO

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