



e-Planning, Urban Science and Digital Transition

MIT-DUSP **Monday Lunch Speaker Series**

"City Arena" (9-255)

October 16, 12:30- 2 PM, Talk:

The Cost of Free:

Understanding the new equation relating technology, market economy, regulation, privacy and power

Pedro Ferraz de Abreu

Session Program:

Speakers:

Christopher Zegras, Professor of Mobility and Urban Planning, Department Head

Welcome

Joseph Ferreira, Professor pos-tenure of Urban Information Systems

e-Planning & Urban Science Seminar Roadmap

Pedro Ferraz de Abreu, Professor Catedratico (ret. U. Lisboa) of e-Planning, Visiting Scholar

The Cost of Free: Understanding the new equation relating technology, market economy, regulation, privacy and power.

Discussants (MIT-DUSP):

Amy Glasmeier, Professor of Economic Geography and Regional Planning

Jason Jackson , Associate Professor of Political Economy and Urban Planning

Links:

<https://dusp.mit.edu/people/chris-zegras>

<https://dusp.mit.edu/people/pedro-ferraz-de-abreu>

<https://dusp.mit.edu/people/amy-glasmeier>

<https://dusp.mit.edu/people/jason-jackson>

<https://dusp.mit.edu/people/joseph-ferreira>

<http://web.mit.edu/uis/e-planning2023/speakerseries.html>

The Cost of Free:

Understanding the new equation relating technology, market economy, regulation, privacy and power

We live in a dangerous paradox. Main-stream, dominant policies and social actors, public and private, claim to promote sustainability, equality, free market, individual rights and peace, so at least we should see a consistent tendency in that direction. In our cities, in our lives. Yet, even main-stream institutions, like the UN, World Bank, International Monetary Fund, OECD, etc, recognize the opposite is happening.

The same when it comes to Technology Development and Deployment. Yet, the last UN Strategic Report on Technology states: "New and rapidly developing technologies... hold incredible promise for advancement of human welfare. They also hold the potential to generate more inequality and more violence" (UN General Secretary Guterres, 2018). So what makes the difference?

In this Talk, we focus on the paradox of the "Cost of Free", to discuss the structural role of information and communication technologies in this trend. Why "free market" is giving way to a growing dominance of Giant Technological enterprises? Why even smart Regulation is failing? What role can Planning – and Planners – play? We argue that we need to understand the new equation relating technology, market economy, regulation, privacy and power.

Twenty years ago, Pedro Ferraz de Abreu argued, in the first e-Planning Seminar (MIT-DUSP, Fall 2003), "Information technology is far from being simply a tool, that planners can master and use; it is also a powerful driving force transforming our society, that planners must understand and find the means to influence, where and when it is possible and convenient.". Today, this assertion is commonly accepted, but we face new challenges, a new reality. What must we do during the next twenty years?

Pedro Ferraz de Abreu

Pedro Ferraz de Abreu founded and coordinates the "e-Planning Consortium" (www.e-planning.org), integrating 5 Universities and other Institutions (in Portugal and Brazil) in collaboration with MIT (DUSP). e-Planning is a transdisciplinary scientific area he and Joseph Ferreira Jr. developed at MIT in 2003, articulating the study of Engineering with Social Sciences for better e-government, e-governance and e-citizenship.

Pedro is now Visiting Scholar at MIT, and a Researcher at University of Lisbon. He retired as Invited Full Professor at the Faculty of Architecture of the University of Lisbon, having taught as such at the University of Aveiro (2015-19), Faculty of Sciences (University of Lisbon 2013-14) and Social & Political Sciences (Technical University of Lisbon 2007-12).

Pedro has a BSc. in Electronic Engineering and Telecommunications (ISEL), a Lic. in Computer Engineering (FCT-UNL), a Master's in Intelligent Computer-Human Interface, (MIT-Media Lab), and a PhD in Urban & Regional Planning, (MIT- DUSP). His latest book, in 2021, on "e-Planning & Ubiquity", is multi-lingual (Portuguese and English) with 30 international contributions and was well received in Portugal's Academia as a landmark.