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TRACK 07: ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE

Understanding policy mixes in urban climate adaptation: the case of Porto, Portugal

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Abstract

The focus of climate change debates has shifted from mitigation towards adaptation to unavoidable changes. In this context, urban areas have been recognised as leaders in both increasing climate change and uncovering solutions for addressing their subsequent challenges. This recognition has promoted climate adaptation to the forefront of urban planning considerations. Nevertheless, two main challenges arise. The first challenge addresses the recent recognition that the degree of adaptation needed in specific systems might not always be compatible with the limits of such systems, implying the need for a systemic change (Wolfram et al., 2019). The second challenge relates to climate adaptation strategies. It comprises two main concerns: (1) climate

adaptation strategies have been piled up in complex and potentially conflicting policy mixes, which can contribute to their ill-defined action and hinder their expected outcomes; and (2) climate adaptation strategies have not been articulated with other urban policies, which can result in conflicting strategies that hamper each other's aims and outcomes (Lorencová et al., 2018). These challenges highlight the need for transformative capacity in climate adaptation policies. This capacity enables systemic change as well as the breakage of existing lock-in characteristics and exogenous and endogenous stressors that hinder adaptation. To this end, the literature on both adaptive and transformative capacity points out urban policy articulation as part of the solution. Generally, it refers to the vertical and horizontal articulation of different policies and is particularly essential in policy mixes, such as those formed by climate adaptation policies. Research has shown that one of the key features that can enable the transformative capacity of urban policies is their vertical and horizontal articulation alongside multi-system approaches and concerted actions at the planning level (Wolfram et al., 2019, Woodruff, 2022).

There is a common understanding that urban policy articulation might benefit climate adaptation policies since it may promote self-articulation and their articulation with other urban policies. However, there is still a lack of understanding of how climate adaptation policy mixes work (Ulibarri et al., 2021) and the role of policy articulation in them. Thus, this research aims to map and analyse the policy mix related to climate adaptation policies implemented in the case study of Porto, Portugal, focusing on the relationship between climate adaptation policies and urban planning and policy. The goal is to understand the interactions between these two spheres and how their interplay hinders or boosts urban climate adaptation.

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Ana R. Sousa is a PhD Candidate in the Doctoral Programme in Spatial Planning at the Faculty of Engineering of the University of Porto and a researcher at CITTA—Research Centre for Territory, Transports and Environment. Her academic journey, from her Master's in Spatial Planning to diverse research initiatives, has led her to specialise in critical areas such as urban planning, climate adaptation, transformative capacity, and policy articulation.

- **Sara Santos Cruz, CITTA-FEUP**

Sara Santos Cruz is an Assistant Professor at the University of Porto, Spatial Planning and Environment Division, and senior researcher at CITTA—Research Centre for Territory, Transports and Environment. Her main research interests focus on urban design, development, and management, in particular research into the urban spaces and processes that shape them, their social and psychological significance, meanings and values of public spaces, agencies of urban change, and implications of urban change for the communities (and certain vulnerable groups) and for the environment, and urban resilience.

- **Isabel Breda-Vázquez, CITTA-FEUP**

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