ERSA conference at the UP

In 2022, the annual conference of the European Regional Science Association (ERSA) will be held in Pécs, Hungary, between 23-26th August 2022. The conference will focus on the exploration of the territorial disparities caused by digitalization, its different aspects and will focus on the impact of the coronavirus epidemic. The theme will approach this issue from three main perspectives: networks, businesses and regional development.

Pécs is the first rural location to attract this prestigious scientific event to Hungary in a long time, jointly organized by the Hungarian Regional Science Association, the Faculty of Business and Economics of the University of Pécs and the Center for Economic and Regional Research. The event in Pécs will be the first ERSA Conference to be organized in a hybrid format. Our interview was conducted with ERSA President André Torre.

Have the changes caused by the COVID epidemic also affected the digitalization process?  
There have been a lot of changes because of digitalization, the changes have been accelerated by COVID, and especially in relation to zoom appointments, so now part of the population has the possibility to telework, there is a noticeable increase in the amount of teleworking. In France, for example, in a 5-day week people can work 3 days in the office and 2 days from home. So COVID has brought about a lot of changes in the way people work and behave, and with it an ecological transformation, because if more people work from home and travel less, they reduce pollution. But one of the main obstacles is that it has created inequalities between people. People like me can stay at home for days at a time because of work, but physical workers have to walk to work every day, so this increases the inequality between different types of people and work.

What scientific tools can help you capture this change? For example, is big data research a suitable tool?

There are several big changes happening, one of the global changes is that there is more and more data available everywhere that we can rely on and use, but also the characteristics of the data have changed, so now we have more and more globalized geographic data, for example we can track people using their mobile phones, so it is possible to have this type of data, this data is not centralised by the state, it is often from private companies or individuals.