**SPECIAL SESSION AT THE 9TH INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON MONITORING AND MANAGEMENT OF VISITORS IN RECREATIONAL AND PROTECTED AREAS**

***New methods* for monitoring and management of visitors in recreational and protected areas: lessons learned, benefits and concerns.**

Visitor monitoring has been one of the most important tasks for recreational and protected areas for more than 40 years. The management of these special places requires knowledge of the numbers, profiles, perceptions, motivations and expectations of visitors. Over the last decade new techniques and technologies have emerged and been deployed to gather this critical information more efficiently, and in some cases generating sophisticated 'big' datasets.

At the same time the use of recreational and protected areas has been massified following global tourism trends which has increased the demand for better and more readily available insights on visitors. Also, the economic crisis of the last decade has decreased budgets for visitor monitoring and therefore inspired new ways to imagine data collection by harnessing the power of data publicly shared in Web2.0.

Diverse examples include volunteered geographic information (VGI), public participation GIS (PPGIS), web-shared services, citizen science, social media, and geocaching. In the last (half) decade this arsenal of methods has been examined and refined to achieve promising results for the monitoring of spatio-temporal use and related visitation parameters. Deeper analysis has also facilitated modelling and prediction of visitor conflicts.

This special session evaluates the lessons learned, benefits and concerns to discuss opportunities and management of these new tools. Key questions include: (1) Can they generate datasets representative of the study population?; (2) How do they compare to traditional methods and what kind of questions can be answered?; (3) How do we ensure that privacy rights are being respected and what other concerns do we need to address?

This will generate valuable insights for the multivalent perspectives of managers, researchers and tourism practitioners in recreational and protected areas.

The session organisors are as follows:

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The session will be delivered by Dr Ricardo Nogueira Mendesa, CICS.NOVA Interdisciplinary Centre of Social Sciences, Faculdade de Ciências Sociais e Humanas (FCSH), Universidade Nova de Lisboa, Portugal, rnmendes@fcsh.unl.pt