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## EDITOR'S DESK

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# IS DATA THE SOLUTION?

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Welcome to the first special issue of the international journal *Ekistics and the New Habitat: The problems and science of human settlements* for 2021. Although this issue is appearing at the outset of 2022, delayed as it were by the impacts of the global pandemic, it contains articles that address ongoing concerns within the Mediterranean region. Firstly, I would like to thank our guest editor Prof. Dr George A. Giannopoulos and the contributors for their energy and patience, without which this issue would not have come to fruition. It is with delight, therefore, that we can now present this outstanding range of contributions to the readers.

The special issue begins with Prof. Giannopoulos' editorial which sheds light on the difficulty selecting contributions that will be of interest to the general reader, and that will adequately reflect the diversity and specific concerns of the region. This insight reminds us of the challenges and benefits of conducting research at the regional scale, whilst maintaining an interest in smaller scale case studies and analyses. The issue then takes us to Cairo where we discover research exploring the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in traffic management systems. Shafik et al. present the fine-grained control and flexibility made possible by new forms of AI, providing great insight into the applications and effects of such technology. The reader's attention is subsequently drawn to the Western Balkans where a debate over the benefits of implementing a network-based or corridor-based model for regional transport solutions is examined. In this article, Dionelis & Giaoutzi introduce the stakes of regional transport development and highlight the complexities of planning decisions for regional players who operate within global networks. The reader is then invited to focus on the urban scale where a case study concerning bus lane usage in the eastern part of Thessaloniki, the second largest city in Greece, provides an opportunity to analyse public transport in the context of an urban area consisting of approximately one million inhabitants. From Greece the reader moves on to Spain where Angel Aparicio makes another appearance between the covers of *Ekistics and the New Habitat* to explore the social dimension of sustainable urban mobility. This theme is further explored by Tsami & Bekiaris who focus on the use of crowdsourcing apps as a means of enhancing urban mobility. Extending this type of analysis, Palatzas & Nalmpantis address the issue of e-scooters; turning to the data from multiple cities to explore this not-uncontroversial mode of transport. Finally, Mylonas et al conclude the reader's journey with a discussion of intelligent transport systems in Greece now and into the future. Their focus draws together the prominent themes in this special issue that seem to highlight the ever-increasing role that data, AI, and 'smart technologies' are playing in the development of solutions to transport and network challenges.

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