

## **“IST Taguspark campus grew and expanded”**



**On 6<sup>th</sup> November 2021, the IST Taguspark campus celebrated 21 years dedicated to education and research. In this interview, the Vice president of IST for the management of Taguspark campus, professor Helena Galhardas, reflects on the path taken, the main gains, the challenges and the ambitions.**

**How was it like to inaugurate the IST Taguspark building on 6<sup>th</sup> November 2000?**

At that time, I was abroad doing my PhD. But I know that there was great expectation because I returned the following year. Some professors were very excited to come here to teach and the students had the opportunity to enjoy a brand-new campus and new facilities, namely compared to those of Alameda campus. (I must say that the building inaugurated on that day was a small part of the existing building today). The campus environment was also different from that of

Alameda. The IST Taguspark campus was, and still is, a smaller campus where people knew each other, including the students and professors, and it was, in a way, a more welcoming campus than the Alameda campus.

**After 21 years, do you think that the initial dreams were fulfilled?**

The dream of establishing strong synergies with the companies based in Taguspark Technological Park was below expectations. The number of companies has been growing over time and so the IST Taguspark campus, both in terms of infrastructure, academic offer and human resources. However, the collaboration with companies based here and in the surrounding areas was, in my opinion, always a little poor. It's important that we find the best strategy to improve this situation, particularly now with the new teaching model at IST and integrated projects. These projects bring together a multidisciplinary team around a specific problem and build a proof of concept, so it seems to me to be an opportunity to leverage closer and stronger collaborations with the technology-based companies.

**How has this campus changed over the past 21 years? What were the most important gains?**

Our campus offers 8 courses - 4 bachelor's degrees and 5 master's degrees (of which 6 are taught exclusively in this campus) - involving approximately 1500 undergraduate and master's students, and about 70 PhD students who carry out their research work here. We also have 30 technical and administrative staff, around 50 professors, 20 non-teaching researchers, 7 departments and 6 research centers. I think it's very good, especially if we compare with 2000. IST Taguspark campus grew and expanded. But we can do better! We have a 13-hectare campus, with the possibility of building new scientific buildings. A landscape requalification project for the creation of a garden that will benefit the Técnico community and the citizens in general is underway. We want to create a Técnico Open Laboratory that shows everyone our work and serve as a science and technology experimentation platform. Oeiras is one of the municipalities that has one of the largest scientific and business activities in the country, so I think that together we can go further!

### **And what are the biggest challenges?**

One of the challenges that we have faced over time has been our location. The Taguspark campus is located outside Lisbon and far from downtown Oeiras, therefore it is not easily accessible. Técnico provides a shuttle service that connects Alameda to Taguspark campus, 5 days a week, several times a day, which solves the problem of accessibility to some extent. The shuttle service doesn't operate at night and on weekends, so the students (namely those who are accommodated in the Prof. Ramôa Ribeiro Hall of Residence) who don't have their own car are very limited in terms of travel. There is an urgent need for a more comprehensive transport network that connects Taguspark campus to downtown Oeiras or Paço de Arcos, for example. In another line of thought, it is necessary to improve the campus life: restaurants, commerce, social spaces, leisure spaces. Otherwise, people don't want to work here and stay here after school/work.

The other challenge, from a different perspective, is to be able to value and invest in what makes this campus different from the other IST campuses. If we offer unique teaching and research specializations, anyone who wants to work on these topics comes to Taguspark. Having more people here means having more life, which creates the need for restaurants, local commerce, etc., thus entering a wealth cycle.

### **How do you see the IST Taguspark campus 10 years from now?**

I believe that we will have a renovated campus with an improved surrounding landscape that everyone can enjoy. We can provide teaching and research in: Space, Health, Industrial Systems, Transformation and Digital Citizenship, and Sustainable Urban Systems. We must focus on creating multidisciplinary teams capable of tackling needs and producing proof of concept. It is necessary that we open the campus to society and culture, where citizens can participate, thus establishing a synergy between Science and Culture through the concept of Artist-in-Residence. It is important that this campus becomes increasingly part of the Oeiras ecosystem, creating synergies with the institutes, local companies and the municipality itself.

**The campus opened its doors to the community to celebrate the 21st anniversary. Is this the first time that this happened?**

Yes, we decided to celebrate the 21st anniversary with an Open Day to provide our visitors with an opportunity to visit the laboratories, participate in experiments and activities, and to talk with researchers. We must start doing this event more often, like our neighbours ITQB and IGC do. The truth is that: we can be the best in some engineering fields, but if we don't open our doors to society and show what we do, we are, in a way, get stuck in a bubble. It is particularly important for this campus that Técnico and the other companies/institutions based in Taguspark campus know about our areas of knowledge, as they are useful to the local business. If companies know our work they will certainly turn to us and create the synergies I mentioned before. Finally, Taguspark has been offering activities for young people for several years. The most popular are "Verão na ULisboa" and "Rob9-16", in the field of Robotics and Electronics. Last year, we started a project called "Engenharia para Todos" ("Engineering for All"), in collaboration with the Oeiras City Hall, which includes periodic activities addressed to young people studying in Oeiras Schools, through the "Oeiras Educa" Program. The Open Day aims to go even further and set the stage for new collaborations.

**What are your wishes for the 21<sup>st</sup> anniversary of IST Taguspark campus?**

I am glad that we can be here physically to celebrate the 21<sup>st</sup> anniversary of this campus! I hope that we continue to grow together and contribute to further improve Técnico!

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