8_Transition paths and urban futures

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Cities and territories are revealing an increasing fragility in the face of numerous and often interconnected challenges: from the impacts of climate change, to the growing migration flows from areas affected by conflicts, poverty or natural hazards. The growth of urban population and the ineffectiveness of the measures so far implemented to reverse current unsustainable development paths could further worsen this fragility. In the last decades, a number of visions of a more or less near future have been developed, shedding light on collective fears and hopes. The sociologist Ulrick Beck (1992) has envisaged a "risk society", characterized by multiple risks, contending for the primacy of gravity. Science fiction has outlined apocalyptic visions of cities devastated by natural events, paralyzed by the fear of terroristic attacks or, on the opposite, dominated by pervasive technologies ensuring a total control. In all the cases, these visions do not seem to foreshadow a better place to live.

Planners have long been accustomed to using metaphors that, as remarked by Secchi (2014), generally "appear in urban discourse, when the urban condition is transformed and shifting (…). This calls for new ways of description and thus for metaphors".

Hence, in a time of fast and unprecedented changes, this track invites scholars and practitioners to outline metaphors, ideas and projects foreshadowing possible transition paths towards alternative urban futures, by taking into account the likely evolution of key environmental, technological, political, social variables in the long term. In particular scholars and practitioners are encouraged to sketch out broad utopian views, to report and reflect on projects' trying to develop different urban futures, to build up scenarios at different geographical scales envisioning possible transition paths towards more desirable futures, characterized by an improved capacity of cities and territories to tackle some of the main challenges already in place or emerging, with particular reference to:

- impacts of radical climate change;
- impacts of natural hazards;
- massive migrations;
- increase of inequalities;
- access to basic resources;
- pervasiveness of technologies;
- radical modifications in current geopolitical order.

Keywords: risks, change, visions, scenario building, roadmaps, utopias, transition paths.