WHERE WE ARE, WHERE WE ARE GOING AND HOW FAR TO TRUST URBAN TECHNOLOGIES

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I take this opportunity to continue sharing the process of preparing the intervention next week in the course **Rethinking urban policies 30 years later**. This time they are the notes of the participation in the round table "*New urban paradigms: infrastructures, technology and urban habitat*". They are still provisional in the absence of a last review but this is basically what I will try to convey.

The emergence of new technological applications is modifying (and will do so in a way that we can barely guess today) many of the classic urban services. Any element inherent to urban management and life is mediated today by the emergence of solutions and technological applications of different signs that completely change not only the services themselves (what will private mobility and public transport be like when an alternative to the model emerges? based on fossil fuels, the individualization of transport, discretionary public transport services, etc?), but also the urban morphology itself, the experience of using these services and life in the city and even the opportunities for new forms of local development.

All this places us before a reality in which things will not be as they are today; without apocalyptic dreams nor futuristic promises, 20 years from now Cities must offer citizens new advanced services (transportation, energy, water supply, construction, built space, health services, cleaning and hygiene, etc.). Different technological perspectives have been approaching the world of urban management in recent years to offer alternatives and applications that facilitate citizen access to the services and possibilities that a city offers.

Urban services form an imprecise but evident economic and technological sector. If at the beginning of the 20th century only 10% of the world population lived in urban settlements, in 2007 this figure exceeded 50% and it is expected that by 2050 75% of the world population will live in cities. A population that adds new demands for public services of energy, water supply, housing, mobility, etc. The **global demand** in the main technology-intensive sectors is a demand driven by this urbanization process. The cities with the highest population growth expected in the coming years are located practically **outside the developed world**: Lagos, Kinshasa, Jakarta, Karachi, Delhi, Dhaka, Nairobi, Manila, Sao Paulo, Guangzhou, Shanghai, Bangalore and a long list of Asian and African cities are already seeing their population grow in a trend that will continue over time. Today there are already more cities with more than one million inhabitants in China (97) or India (40) than in the United States (39), and more in Latin America and the Caribbean (57) or Africa (41) than in Europe (40). **The cake is in other seas**.

Companies like IBM, Siemens or CISCO have already identified that it is **capable of offering solutions to urban problems where they are going to play it in the coming years**, and have somehow oriented their strategy to position themselves as the companies that have the solutions for a new urban management. With strategies that reach up to "give away" money to the cities that dare to be the first. A powerful signal: they indicate that, indeed, the telecommunications sector -or whatever we want to call it- today has new applications to improve the operation of urban systems and services. Some **cities also link their development strategy** to these issues, such as the SmartCity projects from Malaga or SmartSantander .

- Will we move around in electric vehicles? Will technologies based on the hydrogen?
- Are the buses finished as a collective transport system?
- Will the promises of personalization of public services provided by cities to care for people?

- How to imagine new mobility concepts without being tied to the four wheels or two wheels?
- How to create physical conditions that allow for more democratic public spaces?
- The design of the streets, do we take advantage of all its possibilities?
- Do transportation access systems make sense (rental, shared uses, fee-for-service) instead of ownership-based systems?
- How will all this change the way we understand road networks, the pedestrians, cyclists, aerial, underground,...in cities?
- Will the water demand management models be definitively integrated into the architecture and urbanism?
- Will we see the extension of distributed systems in electricity production and distribution in cities? Or will we continue to operate under centralized models?
- Can we find smarter ways to manage waste?
- Will buildings be extended with adaptive materials based on weather conditions? Will home automation with ambient intelligence be a reality?
- Will we get used to seeing electric stations on our streets to recharge electric vehicles?
- How far will the "promise" of the hybrid city give of itself? Will augmented reality consume us? Will it end up being more urban spam ?
- Is the bike back to stay?
- Are these developments leading us towards systems based more on sharing rather than ownership of means of mobility?

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But, having said all this, in the intervention I will try to point out **more fundamental issues**; On the one hand, as I have commented on other occasions, I think it is time to insist that a **very restrictive concept of technology** is being socialized. I say this because of things like yesterday's cover of the digital edition of El País, for example, which at a certain time included four magic words at the same time (Apple, Facebook, Google, Twitter), a **completely myopic look< /strong> about technological advances. But I also want to defend a soft concept of technology in the city. The sophisticated dazzles us and, furthermore, it is what I will have to contribute in the course, but I do not want to forget that the artifacts that can transform life (social and personal) in a city are very different and some are unsuspected.**

I also think that it is good in a discourse on the technological transformation of the city to maintain two **criteria** so as not to mislead:

- Most of these technological applications do not improve, by themselves, the functioning of the city, especially public services. It is, as always, the human factor or the **use we make of technology that makes it possible to improve public policies**and the relationship between citizens and urban managers.

- The **solution to the environmental sustainability problems of cities** will not pass exclusively through the application of new technological solutions; Of course, new advances can make the urban metabolism work more efficiently in many ways, but by now we know that consumption patterns are the driving forces behind environmental problems.

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