

The Urban Future, Back and Forth: Utopias and Dystopias

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ABSTRACT

Does the future of cities matter as a research topic? If we are powerless to predict or to control their trajectory, exercising such an investigation may in fact be pointless. Disregarding this possibility, urban society seems to enjoy making predictions about the kind of settlements it creates and lives in, as do scientific researchers who hypothesize a possible rational alignment between the past, present and times to come. This paper is a discussion on perspectives looking towards urban futures demonstrated in one world newspaper and in selected academic papers. The New York Times newspaper was chosen due to its global impact, the considerable amount of material available on its website, and the quantity of archived material it provides. Academic articles were chosen from SAGE Publications, due to the large number and variety of academic journals in its database. Assumption adopted is that key factors throughout history, not only necessarily those closely related to cities, play a decisive role in the way we envision the future of our own settlements. Discussion indicates that despite predictions may commonly fail exercises for envisioning times to come may help to transform current circumstances.

KEYWORDS: urban inflexion, city of the future, future of the city.

1 INTRODUCTION

At the beginning of the 20th century, the city of the future was an important driver of urban theories and designs. The way we live now does not necessary match a long ago imagined future and contemporary cities do not certainly look like those preconceived in the past: in fact, it seems to be clear that predict the city of the future is a very non-controlled scenario. On the one hand, exercising such investigation may in fact be pointless; on the other hand, proposing the future is an essential tool for planning. As put by Myers and Kitsuse (2000, 221), “Planners seek not merely to predict but create better futures”.

Among professionals and general public, urban society seems to enjoy predictions about the kind of settlements it creates and lives in and so supports scientific researches based on a possible rational alignment between past, present and times to come. This paper is a discussion based on both general and academic perspectives about the urban future. Though the future is unrevealed, discussing it is intriguing and may help us to understand our own present circumstance.

Most of artistic achievements concerning life to come, for example, are deeply rooted in past and present experiences, and include a critique of the social systems we create and are subjected to. Perhaps the most appropriate way to make assumptions about the future is by means of historical data; but subjectivity will always play a role, either contradicting history itself or leading us away from its logical implications. The idea that prediction should in fact be borne out of a well-established reality and taking a scientific method as one of its fundamentals. However, having the necessary tools and adopting proper methods does not guarantee accurate results. Confidence in this pair of minimum and necessary assets for predicting the future cannot be taken without criticism, even by scientists themselves who deal with realities that are quantifiable and whose probabilities can be established with certainty.

History cannot be used to reliably predict the future and data-driven extrapolation from past trends or 'analysis by analogy' - practices rife in the business and financial sectors--are particularly hazardous because they can give decision makers an unjustified sense of confidence. However, history is vital to understanding present conditions; without such knowledge, strategic policy planning efforts are likely to go awry. (FORBES, 2012)

Restrictions so far mentioned could be relegated if predictions were made for a given phenomenon or for a subject or process in a circumscriptive space. Cities, for being an open system, a complex reality, a mosaic that, if all understood, do not, by all means, explain the urban whole. On the contrary, they may make any forecast a dramatic exercise. Such indications for a disappointing endeavor easily lead us to a digression: the idea that when we are on the verge to figure out how cities can really look like in a near future, everything fails and clearly contradicts so far solid assumptions. This very same metaphor, rather than discouraging authors from starting a discussion on the future of the cities, plays the opposite role. Instead of sticking on the idea of the Sisyphean curse, a different approach may be taken: discussing the future does not necessarily mean elaborating it in clear colors. At this point, a digression leads to another one. In his work on the myth of Sisyphus, Albert Camus (1955, p. 123) presents us with a conciliatory understanding: "The struggle itself ... is enough to fill a man's heart. One must imagine Sisyphus happy."

Though this approach releases us from immobility, allowing for a portrayal of cities of the future, it does not mean we will face an elementary task. This article limits itself to a discussion of how the urban future is seen by a select few social agents and how it changes over short periods of time: most certainly a strategic and safer methodological option.

The structure adopted in this article proposes a discussion on the way the urban future is envisioned and of its relation with important events in urban society. By indicating certain parameters that guided the construction of futures in the recent past we can at least place our contemporary visions in a broader context.

Ambitions were so tamed but some room was left for embracing a more heterodoxical investigative methodology. Discussion of perspectives on the urban future is biased by a selection of specific agents' statements concerning this subject: through the eyes of one selected big media outlet and through the approaches of, again, selected academic studies. The New York Times newspaper was chosen due to their global impact, the considerable amount of material available on their websites, and the historical archives they have made available since 1851. Academic papers were chosen from SAGE Publications (some journals are available since 1964), which maintains a large database of highly regarded academic journals, many of which have earned high SCImago Journal Rankings.

These two different sources, despite their implicit limitations, may provide some material for starting a discussion on how the vision regarding our urban future develops. We adopt the assumption that key factors throughout history, not necessarily those closely related to the concrete visualization of the urban phenomenon (as cities are seen in Lefebvre, 2004), play a decisive role in the way we visualize the future of our cities. Such an assumption may be justified by the fact that the city, urban spaces, and human society are currently so closely connected, intertwined, and sometimes indistinguishable from each other, that constructions of utopias and dystopias - two possible formats when the future is portrayed - are based, rightly or wrongly, on each other's main features.

2 ALTERNATING BETWEEN PESSIMISM AND OPTIMISM

Changing ideologies seem to be an ever-present characteristic of our society: shifts between interest and apathy are therefore part of the construction of contemporary cities, and, most probably, of those to come. To illustrate this idea, two moments are selected here. Number one is to be found in the now far urban history that reveals frightened but also apathetic attitudes towards the cities crises observed in many rich countries late 1960s and in Latin American continent during the 1970s and 1980s. In the first case, the golden and optimistic age that followed the end of World War 2 with modernization, reconstruction and financial availability deeply entered into bleak years that sieged the idea of cities as a place of development. In the second case, the moment is characterized by rapid

urbanization, persistent lack of both services and infrastructures and by national economies in debt crises making big cities freeze development before rampant demographic changes and massive migrations took place. Those were the “lost years” or ‘lost decades’ that deeply marked entire continents, and especially Latin America. Some of the still most quoted authors in fact picture these pessimistic periods. Castells’ seminal work, **The Urban Question** (1997), originally written in 1972, depicts an urban world full of contradictions, unfair and that had accumulated high degrees of non-attended urban services and infrastructures. Not necessarily based on similar facts, a recurrently cited article by Everett and Leach also presents a doubt about the very existence of our cities.

Are cities obsolete? A recent magazine asked its readers. Is urban life as it has developed in the United States worth saving? What can be done to liberate cities from the dominance of the automobile which Mumford deplors? Is Lewis Mumford pessimism about urban life justified? Is the new town movement the answer? (Robinson Everett and Richard Lean, 1965, p.07)

Considering the fact that such way of seeing cities was recurrent and largely accepted as a precise picture of author’s contemporary cities, gloomy futures were so predicted as a fatal experience, leaving almost no room for optimism.

The third quarter of the 20th century was, in fact, marked by a deep urban crisis. Amy Nelson, Kent Schwirian and Patricia Schwirian (1998), based on a national survey in the US, focusing four aggregated social conditions (crime, housing, educational efficacy, and family) stated that this crisis began with the race riots in the 1960s and an outmigration of the middle-class from the central cities in the 1970s, followed by a financial crisis. A financial crisis that in cities like New York, which was unable to market its debt had, as one of its causes, an urban component. According to Shalala and Bellamy (1977, p.1119), “middle-income people went to the suburbs, lower-income people stayed up. (...) Retail trade followed its customers. Simultaneously, other kinds of economic activities began to shift away from the central cities”. Actually, New York during the mid-1970’s financial crisis is perhaps the clearest example of a crisis shaping the future so pessimistically.

Because of the graffiti-scarred walls, the crime in the elevators and the resulting "white flight" at Lefrak City, many of its middle-class tenants had come to expect the worst: that the huge, middle-class Queens housing complex would suddenly decline into a slum. ... By 1975, many believed that the development was hopelessly snarled in the full range of economic, social and racial problems that characterize so many low- and moderate-income, multifamily developments in cities around the nation. ... "By the mid-1970's, the confusion had reached crisis proportions," ... "It was difficult to sort out substantial issues from complaints of marginal importance." ... said Martin Gallent, vice chairman of the City Planning Commission (NYT, 1981).

This was a symbolic description of a moment that presented the novelty of middle class exodus from inner cities and a vilified 1970’s urban society dipped in endless social unrest. By simplifying periods in history, the 1970’s pessimism is clearly opposed to that almost generalized belief in the future of the 1960s, when political freedom, science, economy, and new planned or futuristic cities attested better times ahead. Even in developing countries this belief was a driving force, represented by the idealistic and joyfully inauguration of new capitals, both in old liberated countries (as in Latin America) or those more recently made free (Africa and Asia). For example, Brazilian new capital, Brasilia, inaugurated in 1960, represented at the same time the materialization of the modernistic principles of the period and the emergence of an economic booming in the fast urbanization of a developing world.

Do not look to the past that blurs us before this radiation that now illuminates our motherland. ... This city, recently born, is already rooted in the Brazilian people’s hearts has already raised the national prestige in all continents; it is already seem as a demonstration of our will in progress, as a high degree of civilization...(Juscelino Kubitschek, 1960).

However, as mentioned at the beginning of this article, this urban euphoria was immediately followed by the long *lost decades* of 1970’s and 1980’s, with rapid, violent, and unprecedented

growth of urban poverty. This serves as another example of predictions being influenced by deep present disappointments, prophesying doom for cities.

Race conflicts, white flight, the restructuring of economy to the disadvantage of older cities, and metropolitan political fragmentation are the usual suspects that scholars round up in order to understand the contemporary plight of urban America. Students of urban policy have described how these forces converged during the 1960's to create what we became known as the urban crisis-declining, problem-ridden central cities surrounded by mostly prosperous segregated suburbs (Paul Kanto, 1990).

Despite the fact that success and failure, optimism and pessimism, alternate repeatedly in an unquestionable way, comprising a never-ending succession of urban inflexions, the prediction of such cyclic changes is a long-exercised task that nevertheless hardly achieves certitude. Even though we do recognize the ebb and flow of these urban phenomena, considering the complexity of our object, we are unable to make precise forecasts. Those writing in the mid-1980's, for example, could not foresee the rapid changes that took place in Latin American cities in the 2000's. Despite a persistent skepticism regarding the sustainability of this phenomenon, social indicators do show consistent positive changes. Brazil's recent urban history, with the continued development of the largest cities on the continent, supports this idea: its success in decreasing its housing deficit, significant expansion of basic services and infrastructure, and impressive reductions in demographic/migration growth rates were not even suggested as distant utopian possibilities by scientific studies.

Visions of the future are always shaped by our own natural attraction to either optimism or pessimism. Contemporary optimism is not necessarily the one criticized by Voltaire (2006) in his **Candide** neither by Schopenhauer (1969), both opposing Leibzt's ideas of naïve and indulgent perspective towards life. Optimism we could adopt towards our contemporary cities or urban world cannot be biased by a humble acceptance that everything in the world is for the best but by a hopeful feeling that something can be done. Similarly, pessimism cannot constitute a tool for maintaining the *status quo* or for postponing socially desired changes. At this point optimists and pessimists seem, paradoxically, to agree by stating that if nothing is revised a general chaos is announced. This idea is brought by Ridley (2010), who in fact reiterates his sympathy towards a rational optimism. Although this author refers his conclusions mostly on economic - and liberal - factors, we agree with him that optimistic people in general may recognize problems in our society and they would be better tailored to transformative, progressive and entrepreneurial attitudes than their counterparts would.

Probably due to limitations in our ability to foresee the future, or to do so optimistically, we grew accustomed to the idea that negative indicators would persist forever or show linear increases in severity over time. Destruction and decay are easier scenarios to illustrate because they do not require the construction of a real new world: for such an elaboration it is sufficient to augment our contemporary suffering. On the contrary, a more brilliant future requires a proposition, a concrete idea about something new and far from a naïve social conception. Indeed, this last possible limitation also explains higher difficulties for the concreteness of positive approaches: creating a perfect future means establishing the guidelines for the city *we* consider ideal and thus not necessarily demonstrating commitment to majority interests.

Predicting any kind of urban future runs the risk of over simplifications, simple reproductions of current trends or the creation of unrealistic facts. Establishing the future we want or the future that is going to happen somehow burdens uncountable limiting factors. Primarily, there is the unthinkable exercise of imagining a different society, a different economic rationale or unseen cultural human desires, as the predicted future commonly is constituted of a transformed present - and, therefore, of the world we are used to.

If the way contemporary societies see their urban future commonly alternates between pessimism and optimism, difficulties in depicting brighter futures for cities might not be enough to explain our addiction to such a habit for so long. Such a manicheanist perspective of pessimistic-optimistic shifts unveils the fragile assumption of considering urban spaces as homogeneous entities, capable of being represented from a single point of view. Despite this intrinsic flaw, we might ask: Did the utopian proposals all fail? Were revolutions in vain? No particular initiatives were successful? At least the third question is possible to answer: although it is right to say that fundamentals of urban

society are resilient and require arduous work, some positive, despite, acupunctural changes did confirm as true.

In case we agree that predicting a bright future is always an arduous effort, it seems that only parts of a whole city may really be optimistically foreseen. However, again, this is highly influenced by our own current experiences, hardly crossing the barriers of our contemporary familiarity with cities, deeply encoded in personal experiences.

Due to the fact that parts are more easily encapsulated and their trends are more intelligibly portrayed, they can also wrongly be taken for whole contexts. The film industry commonly adopts this kind of urban virtual construction, making future cities deeply stereotyped as parts of urban contexts we already know: dangerous Parisian peripheries become a futuristic Paris; hungry poor districts of today are now generalized as the 2020 New York; totalitarian regimes around the world can now be visualized in a different New York of the future; technology alienates us all in a futuristic metropolis in the late 1920s. As Barbara Mennel (2008, p. 146) puts it when analyzing *Blade Runner*, which is set in a futuristic 2019, yet uses contemporary Los Angeles and art deco interiors to set the scene: “The film poses the problem of recognition for the audience: are we seeing and experiencing human subjectivity or not?”

Either resulting from the view of a limited number of people or from the impositions of our lack of a broader vision, the future of the city is believed to be part of specific moments in urban history, projecting forward what is felt at the moment experimented. Although precise cycles cannot be determined for sure, they are easily detected along history and according to a myriad of social influences. Although cities can be considered an artifact that results from multiple factors and actors’ arrangements, as seen by Pinch and Bijker (1984), including social, cultural, technological and economic preconditions - but also intentions - exercises to predict the way they will be in the future are, again, always embedded in their present existence.

Pessimistic views of the future city, either justified or not, have tended to be more prevalent than optimistic accounts; however, visions of ideal cities still captivate us, and some moments in urban histories more closely approximate these very same ideals. The history of modernist cities, for example, is partially the history of urban visions and desires for an ideal urban future, grounded in the assumption that architecture, urban design, and their concrete implementation could transform human society. Modernism, one of our most recent, and perhaps last, practical idealizations of an urban utopia, exemplifies this idea. Robert Fishman (1982, p. 8) noted that the cities envisioned by architects such as Le Corbusier were “the manifestos for an urban revolution”.

Le Corbusier intended that some of projects, and his urban proposals in particular, would establish the new principles for urban design in general but, in Joseph Corn and Brian Horrigan's judgment (1984, p.36)“...like most designs with potential or rhetorical intent, the results were often transmitted to popular culture as prophetic images”, not necessarily grounded in reality. Lack of adherence to reality is also criticized by Ela Krawczyk (2007, p. 121) in her discussion about pre-1945 urban proposals: “planners thought about the future as an end-state. (...) There was no recognition that many alternative futures are possible...”

But how have cities of the future been portrayed by the general public or by scientists? This seems to have a special relevance once we accept that predictions, selective facts, and desires forge our contemporary experiences of cities. As the discussion so far attests, the urban future is a risky scenario to specify, inevitably elaborated through our particular contemporary prism. We turn then to a specific exploration of how the future city has been envisaged in two types of influential forums.

3 THE NEW YORK TIMES: A FADING FUTURE

The keywords adopted here to detect the idea of cities published over time are a means of representing concerns regarding the urban future and are expected to have been used alternately, as synonyms. The first concern in the selection of this group of keywords was to determine whether they were really synonyms for what we were interested in discussing. Their similar behavior (their recurrence in search results) across the analyzed decades confirmed it. In fact, when the rate of usage of an exact wording changes, all others change in the same direction. That is, when a certain period shows a greater or a more restricted use of one of the selected phrases, a comparable change is seen to

occur with the others. It is important to note that selected words and expressions, are understood to be used more often in those periods when the future of the city is scrutinized heavily as something of interest, either due to a disappointment regarding the state of contemporary cities, provoking a desire to escape reality, or the opposite: a utopian vision built on a very enthusiastic consideration of the present.

Selected (key) words were: “the future of the cities”, “the future of the cities”, “city future”, “city of the future”, and “cities of the future”. Their steady increase for the selected period does not mean a constant and stable increase in the interest to discuss the future of the city: it is probably much more the result of an impressive addition of material in the selected media. However, some periods distinguish from others for their explicit demonstration of interest or disinterest to discuss the future of the city if compared with their predecessors. The periods of 1892-1901, 1922-1931 and 1972-1981 are the ones with the greatest increases in interest to discuss the future of the city if compared with others. Conversely, 1942-1951 and 1982-1991 are the periods when this interest is most radically diminished. Yet, the apparent downturn in urban futures thinking in the period 1942-1951 seems counter-initiative; other evidence reveals this as an innovative period of reconstruction and rebuilding which established a platform for planning policy in many countries. Although criticizing planners for believing physical transformations as able to transform society, this idea is reinforced by Krawczyk (2007, p. 121): “Future was still seen mainly as the preferred future state and no uncertainty or complexity were attributed to it”.

Depending on the source investigated, statistically speaking, we found that there was no connection between periods of crisis and detection of gloomy futures or between economic success and visions of brilliant futures. Though the turn of a century may constitute an opportunity to think about cities to come, the ends of wars or conditions of global crisis also produce motivation to discuss the future. If we propose the existence of a historical gap during the Second World War between the more distant past and the contemporary period, it is possible to state that futuristic exercises are no longer fashionable. It would explain, on the one hand, the steady increase in discussion of the future both at precise moments (turn of the Century) and during the financial turmoil of 1929, and on the other, a disinterest in it, both during the post-war reconstruction years and during the hardship of the 1980’s world crisis.

According to this meta-content analysis of a one substantial platform for expressing opinion, the New York Times, future looks a fading set, either having a not interesting one to our pragmatic contemporary society or a disenchantment regarding something more and more difficult to foresee.

4 SCIENTIFIC JOURNALS: NEITHER DYSTOPIA NOR UTOPIA

Whereas the analysis of the TNYT was used to see whether the future of the city was portrayed to a mass audience by a leading and mainstream newspaper during the 20th century, we take academic media in order to analyze whether and how this subject figured as discourse on a more analytically rigorous basis. Complementary to the general media’s discussion of the future of cities are the views presented in scientific journals. To incorporate these perspectives, we analysed the archives of SAGE, a publishing house with more than 560 journals, including more than 245 dedicated to societies and their regional or bonds (Sage Publications, 2010). Unfortunately, as the first journals available online date only from the 1960s on, it was impossible to use the same timeframe as we did with TNYT. Besides, it lets aside the buoyancy of the urban discussions of the 1960s, mainly in the United States and Europe. This period, as puts by Ela Krawczyk (2007, p.121) was of radical changes in urban planning, critical of the master plan and focused on “the rational process of decision-making” and the “systems view of planning”.

Although this period of analysis is not available in the database analyzed, it allows to follow whether the future of the city is a contemporary research subject or it has been somewhat abandoned. Selection of papers (14 in total) was made according to their explicit interest in discussing urban topics, their first month and year of publication online, and the recurrence of the exact phrases that we selected. The rate of recurrence of these phrases is evidently low, with a peak value for a single journal (*Urban Studies*) of less than 1%, corresponding to the expression “the future of the city”.

Discussions over the future of the city can take on many forms and expressions. However, the strikingly low level of contemporary discussion about it leads us to doubt if the extreme prospects of a new city or of a disastrous urban scenario is a fearful possibility. Only 0.6% of the 14,935 papers published by the selected journals discussed the future of the city, or the other related subjects.

Results in five-year periods, now in all SAGE Publications journals available online confirm an increasing use of the selected exact words (again, “the future of the city”); however, it may also be influenced by similar increase in the number of journals. Considering the fact that only two journals were made available online in early 2000’s, results of the last 10 years may indicate something new in terms of rising interest in discussion the future of cities.

Refining the search for the most expressive keyword (“future of the city”), from January 2001 to December 2010, within the SAGE journals classified as “urban studies and planning”, and excluding editorials and book reviews, the total of papers sum 50. Those articles were read and highlighted those that discuss “future” as their main subject. Most of the papers listed above are case studies and thus do not necessarily prioritize a more epistemological approach on the future of the cities. Only a few exceptions discuss more general ideas about this topic.

An initial highlight is “Cities of the Future/the Future of Cities”, by Andrea Kornbluh (2003) who presents a review on three books on how information technologies could reshape the cities. Indeed, the relationship between technology and the future of the city is recurrent decade after decade and is present in many of the papers listed above. A second highlight is “Planning Histories, Urban Futures, and the World Trade Center Attack” by Joe Nasr (2003), who explores how a specific event discussed in a variety of media (from newspapers to academic journals) became a milestone for the history of cities. A third highlight is “Evaluation in Urban Planning: Advances and Prospects” by Vitor Oliveira and Paulo Pinho (2010) who evaluate theories and methods in planning covering the second half of the twentieth century.

Besides having only a marginal real concern with the future of the cities in a more theoretical and comprehensive way, any of these authors reveal a consistent or long-term research about the subject.

Far from providing a justification for generalizations, this phenomenon clearly suggests that the future of cities as a topic itself is not a consistent topic in the scientific field. Again, there are signals we, researchers, *must fight the temptation of being alchemists instead of chemists*.

In fact, we are now facing Bachelard’s epistemological obstacles (1996), confirming we are always subject to a limitation in apprehending reality, we are always under ideas that do not allow the appearance of others. Perhaps, we are also afraid of being *prophetic intellectuals* as also and constantly rejected by Pierre Bourdieu (see Bourdieu, 2001), of exceeding the dimensions of the urban scientific field and embracing an insurmountable desire to understand everything.

Whatever are the reasons, and the consequences, based on the samples surveyed, we do tend to conclude that the future of the city has not constituted an important research topic in the last decades of the 20th century. Although Table 4 shows an increase in articles dealing with the future of the city in the last ten years, at least so promised by their titles, it may only suggest a reemergence of this question in a period of urban challenges. Nevertheless, as most of the papers are case studies, the use of these terms may have the only purpose of appealing a larger audience of readers. It is indeed intriguing that there are few theoretical papers on the future of the city. This evaluation reinforces what Andrew Isserman (1985, p.483) had already used as the premise of his essay on the role of “the future in planning practice and education”, that planning was maybe too focused on a problem-solving orientation: “Planning voluntarily is sacrificing its role as visionary and idealist and is abandoning its responsibility to be a source of inspiration and ideas about what might be and what ought to be”.

5 FINAL REMARKS

Looking at a commercial publication it was possible to confirm the ups and downs regarding the interest in discussing the future of the city for a general audience. Coherently for a mainstream newspaper, these movements are more related to general societal developments than to discussions and conceptual advances in urban theory. More surprisingly, however, was that the future of the city

in general was not a main research topic among urban researchers during the hard times of the 1970s and 1980s. Actually, it is even possible to state that scientific journals do not pay much attention to the subject. We, urban researchers, seem to be more dedicated to analyze specific topics in specific cases, and letting out a broader view of the urban realm.

Recent decades allowed more accurate techniques to deal with urban data, what have made urban studies a scientific topic – in the strict sense of dealing with data and using quantitative methodologies based on respected (and peer-reviewed) texts. Nevertheless, future do not always respect its preterit data. As Myers and Mitsuse (2000, p.225) point out, one reason for more general and proactive approaches to the future of the city by the academia may be “the rise of social science as the guiding intellectual framework for planning, which has directed academic inquiry to data and events that have been accumulated in the recent or distant past”.

We could finally consider that the very structure of the papers accepted in planning journals, which must have a “scientific” structure, is a barrier for finding papers thinking about the future of the city. Only a few editors would disagree there is almost no room for more essayistic papers in journals we publish, perhaps still a deference regarding the importance of quantitative data and statistical analyses. Essays are a freer form of envisioning a problem and, rephrasing seminal essay by Andrew Isserman (1985, p.487), it is time urban planning recovers “its responsibility to be a source of inspiration”.

Despite the truism, we must accept that any analysis of the future will be at a certain point based on speculation; and speculation is not science. With almost no room for essayistic debates in the academic editorial milieu, we, urban researchers, may be entering into the future blindly. And, in case blindness is the only option, urban planners, although their knowledge may be founded in quantitative methods, either remain involved in day-to-day problems and solutions *or envision imminent times not only blindly but also without expectations*

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