



**10<sup>th</sup> Metropolis World Congress**  
**23-26 November 2011**

## **Concept paper - Cities in Transition**

For decades the economic growth model at the world level has been based on consumption and the unlimited exploitation of natural resources. This overexploitation of resources has caused serious environmental impacts. The cities we know today have grown on the basis of this model and the world's population that lives in cities now represents over 50% of the total.

The financial downturn, the scarcity of petroleum and the depletion of this growth model mean that new city models have been established for some years now. One of these models aims to improve living conditions in cities, implementing more sustainable measures for economic transition, with actions that will rise to the challenge of impacts on urban development and growing social inequalities.

Online city movements have emerged in different parts of the world that opt for this new model ("Cittaslow", "Villes en transition", "Transition towns", "Post-carbon cities", "Tener o sostener", etc.).

**"Cities in Transition"**, as they are known, are the sum of local movements targeted at mitigating the effects of a future crisis in relation to peak oil and climate change. They are cities – and citizens – that decide to make a profound change of paradigm aimed at adopting a more sustainable model which can boost self-sufficiency (reducing the ecological footprint), support alternative energies, build more inhabitable cities, and contribute to local and responsible consumption.

These cities wish to learn from their history to build a better future. In the past, goods were produced in cities themselves or in their surrounding areas, and their inhabitants learnt to make more efficient use of local resources. This enabled them to face crises with more autonomy.

The change of paradigm affects all aspects of cities: the environment (reduce the ecological footprint, recover, recycle, promote renewable energies, etc.), the city's growth model (promote the compact city), the quality of life of the people (with cities built by the people for the people, thinking of future generations), and urban innovations (intelligent and more efficient cities). These are themes we have been analyzing and discussing in the Metropolis standing commissions for three years.



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At this conference we would like to profoundly reflect on:

- **How, who and with what actions can a transformation, a transition in our cities, be made, and how can cities be made more environmentally friendly and sustainable?**
- **What political, economic, social, and economic elements are decisive in starting a change in our cities?**
- **How do we move from the current city model to one that is more participative and transparent?**
- **Which innovations facilitate the transition toward a new, more sustainable, and intelligent city model?**
- **What would a city that is more pleasant to live in and more inhabitable be like? What must be done to achieve it?**

We can also hear the testimonies and recommendations of different cities in distinct processes of transformation and transition.

All these questions, in conjunction with the attendance of renowned experts and the experiences provided by the cities, promise a rich and profound debate on the future of our cities at the Metropolis Congress in Porto Alegre.