

Cities at crossroads of sustainable transitions

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Abstract

Objectives. The study aims to elucidate how cities contribute to shaping urban sustainability transitions for urban social growth. **Prior work.** Cities are dealing with urban sustainability transitions bridging theory of urban sustainability and practices that make wealthy urban spaces meeting the needs of urban communities without compromising the wealth of future generations. Sustainability transitions rely on responsible urban communities that develop conditions for making cities sustainable communities. **Approach.** The study is following a qualitative approach and framework, by identifying views and choices that cities are embracing in order to encourage responsible behaviors and actions that enable urban transformation. **Results.** Cities are playing a leading role for sustainable urban development enabling citizens as responsible actors in decision making that benefit urban communities. **Implications.** As agents of social change, cities should intentionally design and implement policies that contribute to social urban transformation and make healthy urban spaces within urban communities. **Value.** The sustainable future of urban communities relies on cities which are committed to promoting citizen behaviours for making healthy and environment-friendly urban spaces. Cities are always going in transition to develop itineraries for urban sustainability making and planning.

Keywords: urban future, urban growth, city and sustainability.

1. Introduction

Cities have to play a proactive role in driving environment-friendly and responsible citizen behaviors that make safe and wealthy cities as communities able to contribute to healthy and social urban spaces. Today, driving urban communities to support green and environment-friendly society and economies helps direct sustainability transitions [1] focusing on cities as natural sites for driving sustainable transition [2] with regards to urban ecosystems, meeting the question of grand challenges to be solved, that relate to urban living, leading to proactive citizen participation and involvement as a key means to encourage responsible behaviors that support the future of urban communities.

The pathway leading to sustainable urban development relies on building wealthy urban ecosystems and cities able to design and implement urban planning that enables business and citizens to actively contribute to shaping eco-friendly urban spaces and improving the quality of urban life. Cities should contribute to encouraging citizens and companies to assume responsible behaviors to mitigate environmental degradation and pollution, building eco-friendly urban communities, and stimulating natural environment-friendly policies for community development in wealthy ways, by identifying means to assess the advancements of cities in becoming sustainable urban communities [3].

The ambition of cities that are building the future is to drive the transition towards sustainable urban development, preserving, maintaining and improving social, natural and economic urban ecosystems. Sustainability transitions refer to processes that contribute to

social change, providing satisfying responses to societal challenges and solutions that concern long-term change. In contemporary times, urban development relies on cities that behave as engines of sustainable transitions that benefit urban ecosystems and communities [4].

Cities of the future have to re-orient the models of living urban ecosystems, producing and consuming in order to begin a pathway towards a sustainable way that fits coherently wealthy ecosystems' protection [5]. Rethinking cities in transition to urban sustainability helps develop urban design, identifying to achieve better quality of life and support social change development. Sustainable transitions rely on developing cooperative pathways that involve businesses, policymakers, citizens, no profit and no government organisations and educators [6].

Sustainable development aims to meet the needs of people and relies on communities that are rethinking on developing wealthy, green and sustainable activities. As responsible actors, cities are rethinking on the urban future with regards to future perspectives of urban development coherently with reducing urban pollution ensuring better quality of life for urban communities and people.

The study aims to elucidate how cities contribute to shaping urban sustainability transitions, by encouraging responsible behaviors and actions that develop a satisfying way to enrich and foster the itineraries of urban growth. The study relies on the analysis of literature that refers to cities that are embracing a socially and environment-friendly community-led view to urban sustainability.

The paper is organized as follows. After introduction and theoretical background related to cities that are going in transition to sustainable urban ecosystems and development, the methodological section is presented and elucidated. In the fourth section, we elucidate that the pathway to urban future urban growth relies on cities in search of frameworks and solutions that enable for responsible and sustainable transitions. Finally, discussion and conclusions are outlined.

2. Towards cities in transitioning to sustainable urban ecosystems and development

The urban future relies on cities that aim at rediscovering responsible roles and tasks in promoting future urban growth, and designing satisfying and acceptable ways to achieve sustainable urban development, by addressing responsible lifestyles in citizen and community behaviors with regards to sustainability issues in order to improve the quality of life within urban environments and communities.

Following the *UN 2030 Agenda for sustainable development*, cities of the future should develop and evolve as safe, healthy and sustainable urban communities that contribute to healthy and wealthy urban ecosystems. Most part of people will live in urban areas by 2050. Cities are the main consumers of energy and responsible of global pollution.

Reinventing the sustainability-led city helps urban communities rediscovering the conditions for urban wealth, supporting the consumption for biological and social survival

[7]. The time for driving green and environment-friendly society and economies arrived. In the *New Urban Agenda* cities contribute to urban transitioning, promoting green deal, responsible growth and production, making urban communities healthy places for life and work [8], leading to sustainable development as a source and competence for making livable cities and maintaining wealthy urban ecosystems [9].

Cities should plan, design and implement an intentional knowledge-based development [10] in order to exert influence on effective citizen responsible behavior as a means that helps shape green, eco-friendly urban communities, reducing the impact of pollution and environmental degradation, optimizing the use of energy and land, and training responsible citizens who deal with healthy natural environments, and contribute to green urban ecosystems, and incentivizing environmentally preferable behaviors, to perform a new generations of products for reuse and zero waste [11].

As urban communities, cities have to behave as a platform for urban capital advancing. The challenge and the opportunity is to make efforts to drive cities wealthy and livable urban communities, engines of social urban development [12]. Cities have to deal to improve the quality of life within urban spaces, promoting renewable energy use and contrasting pollution [13].

Today, making sustainable, greener and wealthy cities is both the challenge and the opportunity for driving the urban communities' development. As the *habitat* for most people around the world, cities contribute to driving urban sustainability transitions managing efficiently energy use and employing renewable energies [14], and minimizing resources use and transfer of environmental costs to urban communities. Sustainable urban development relies on cities able to prove liveable and healthy human environments, and contribute to improving quality of life of people and support the urban community well-being, and reducing negative environmental impacts [15].

3. Methodological section

The study is theoretical and exploratory, and analyses the literature related to understand the relationship between sustainable urban development and cities that aim at dealing with questions, challenges and negative externalities of urban growth, identifying initiative and means to achieve sustainability. The analysis helps to focus on citizens' behaviours within urban places and to drive cities as engines of urban responsible sustainability. Cities of the future contribute to the pathways to support sustainable urban development in order to improve the quality of life, leading to urban communities, pillars of responsible action. The selected contributions are interpreted in a narrative synthesis in order to elucidate new perspectives and advance theoretical frameworks on emerging issues [16], [17].

4. Cities in search of frameworks and solutions for sustainability transitions within urban ecosystems

Cities are natural sites for sustainable transitions advancing [1]. As urban socially sustainable ecosystems, cities may develop and evolve as sustainable urban communities by continuously promoting disruptive and no linear changes within urban spaces and dealing with challenge of transitions. By overcoming the barriers that impeded urban

transitions, local stakeholders and municipal administrators work together to successfully implement initiatives that facilitate effective transitions. Today, cities are playing a significant role in rethinking the city as a sustainability-led and transition-driven community, and driving transitions for urban sustainability, by promoting sustainable social and technological systems, leading to low-carbon urban development [18].

The future of healthy urban ecosystems that benefit human, no human and natural environment depend on the ability of cities to develop competences and identify solutions that enable sustainability transitions to proceed towards urban social and environmental sustainability. Cities have to design and implement a re-engineering of the urban spaces by identifying opportunities for revitalizing sustainable and resilient urban communities.

Transitioning cities that help drive urban sustainability tend to define policies and frameworks to make a smart life and engage communities, business and associations to work together to achieve sustainable development, making efficient energies that contrst pollution [19]. Cities have to define policies and encourage behaviors for responsible choices in order to provide conditions for enhancing the quality of life, meeting the needs of people, by improving energy and land use efficiency, and minimizing waste.

Cities contribute to sustainable urban future, encouraging responsible consumption that supports urban change and growth, meeting human needs and integrating environmental, ecological, social and economic aspects in order to make wealthy human and no human, social and natural urban ecosystems. Cities should rediscover a green, sustainable and eco-friendly vision to urban growth, following an integrated approach between human and environmental needs, shaping urban environment-friendly ecosystems, and minimizing the environmental impact of a consumeristic society [20].

Urban ecosystems are socio-ecological environments and places for human wealth. Cities contribute to shaping wealthy urban ecosystems, investing in sustainable urban planning to drive the urban transformation and ensure the well-being of citizens and communities in long-term. Cities could drive responsible communities able to develop renewable energy. As pillars for driving urban transformation, cities contribute to urban sustainability transitions developing identity-led and specific capabilities for urban transformation by promoting sustainable lifestyles, engaging people to reinvent today for the future [2].

Sustainable urban transformation is a subset of urban sustainability transitions, whereas sustainable urban structures and technologies, markets and institutions contribute to production and efficient use of resources along a long-term, vision-led, social, cultural, organizational, institutional change leading to long-term governance mechanisms that drive flexible and adaptive policy design and promote active stakeholder collaboration coherently with embracing and integrating different perspectives, knowledge, and expertise, by stimulating experimentation and learning [2]. Sustainable urban transformation relies on cities that aim at planning and implementing a radical change within urban spaces and driving practices that foster urban safe environments and improve the quality of life, leading cities to promoting initiatives for enabling new lifestyles and behaviors [21]. Investing in urban sustainability transitions relies on cities which are able

to build participatory frameworks that enable socially inclusive and digital platforms that inform, involve and engage citizens to make the city a smart social organism able to contribute to value creation within urban spaces [22].

5. Discussion and conclusions

Cities are dealing with urban change and innovation in order to define, drive and implement sustainability transitions that enable wealthy sustainable, social, environmental and economic ecosystems. Urban sustainability transitions rely on urban communities that aim at rediscovering the ecological and social function of land, encouraging people to adopt responsible behaviors to support cities to effectively contribute to social prosperity and transformation and sustainable urban communities. The challenge of contemporary times is quality of life in order to make cities engines of urban social able to promote conditions for green, eco-friendly and sustainable urban ecosystems. Investing in responsible urban choices is a means to achieve urban sustainability of communities and drive responsible production initiatives that contribute to green and eco-friendly solutions that support safe cities.

Cities may contribute to future sustainable urban prosperous growth, fostering initiatives that support green and healthy growth, leading to responsible behaviours that contribute to healthy urban spaces, and help shaping the pathway for sustainable urban transformation, so supporting green urban growth, managing efficiently energy use and reducing environmental pollution. Future urban responsible development, community wellbeing and high quality of life are the expected issue emerging within cities that aim at adopting virtuous pathways towards green, and incentivizing responsible behaviors for driving responsible and eco-compatible transitions by encouraging new models of urban growth, production and consumption.

Cities contribute to social prosperity and quality of life, leading to the renewal of sustainable urban lifestyles, rethinking about urban social transformation through green and eco-friendly practices that contribute to the preservation of social and natural urban environments. Urban spaces offer an opportunity for people and businesses that are willing to work together, making healthy urban communities by driving responsible behaviors that refer to urban sustainability. Adopting responsible behaviors supports transitions for urban sustainability and incentivizes companies and organizations to assume coherent actions and initiatives that contribute to improving the quality of life.

Citizens should become aware and proactive actors who contribute to wealthy and safe urban spaces by adopting a responsible orientation to urban living choices. Further research implies to investigate how Italian cities are developing urban intelligence, adopting a smart city view for building long-term sustainable vision to social ecosystems within urban spaces.

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