

Cities and urban consumption in transition towards sustainability

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Abstract

Sustainable urban development is advancing through cities that aim at encouraging sustainable consumption behaviours. Cities are in transition to achieving urban sustainability, meeting the needs of communities without compromising the wealth of future generations. Cities are playing a leading role in advancing towards sustainable urban consumption, and enabling citizens as responsible consumers and agents of social change. Driving responsible urban consumption provides benefits to urban communities by ensuring a better quality of life of people within urban spaces and natural environments. The future of urban development relies on promoting styles and behaviours of responsible consumption and making healthy and environment-friendly urban spaces.

Keywords: sustainable urban development, sustainable consumption, urban future, urban sustainability.

1. Introduction

Cities have to play a proactive role in driving environment-friendly models of urban consumption and encouraging responsible behaviors on urban consumption in order to drive safe and wealthy cities as communities that contribute to healthy and social urban spaces. Driving responsible urban consumption behaviors is a social and economic challenge and goal that cities aim at achieving in order to contribute to healthy and wealthy urban communities. As centers of consumption [1], cities of the future contribute to fostering urban sustainability [2], becoming attractive places for life. In the twenty-century brain-based and services-led economy, rethinking on cities in transition to sustainability helps transform consumption behaviors leading to change in consumption choices and attitudes as means for social change development [3]. Today, it is the time for driving green and environment-friendly society and economies, and urban spaces. Supporting proactive participation of citizens as responsible consumers helps achieve better quality of life for people who hold responsible behaviors in consumption. Sustainable development and consumption are interrelated topics and questions. Sustainable development aims to meet the needs of people and relies on economies and communities that are rethinking on developing wealthy, green and sustainable activities. Sustainable consumption and production refers to doing more with less, by efficiently managing natural resources and promoting lifestyles, preserving the needs of future generations. Cities are rethinking on the urban future with regards to development and consumption patterns. Cities tend to learn as responsible actors for advancing more sustainable consumption behaviors in order to reduce urban pollution and identify satisfying pathways for ensuring better quality of life for urban communities and people [4]. The aim of the study is to elucidate how cities contribute strategically to designing the pathway for sustainable urban transformation in transition from a consumerist view towards a sustainable consumption-driven vision to urban development. The study relies on the analysis of literature that refers to cities that are dealing with urban consumption to drive the transition to sustainable and green pathways. As spaces of consumption, urban spaces enable people, groups, communities

and businesses to work together in order to make healthy urban communities through urban consumption behaviors.

2. Cities going into the future through sustainable urban consumption

Most part of people will live in urban areas by 2050. Cities are consuming three-quarters of the world's energy and causing three-quarters of global pollution. As spaces of consumption, cities have to deal with consumption in virtue of social significance for people who are living within urban spaces [4]. Cities are the main drivers and influencers of responsible behaviors that open up to sustainable consumption. Today, the challenge of cities is to make sustainable, greener and wealthy urban spaces, promoting renewable energy use and contrasting pollution [5]. As the habitat for most people around the world, cities contribute to the transition towards urban sustainability in order to provide conditions for continuing survival within urban areas managing efficiently energy use and employing renewable energies [6], advancing conditions of sustainable urban development by combining high quality of living, minimizing resources use and transfer of environmental costs to urban communities, encouraging behaviors that refer to sustainable consumption [7]. Sustainable consumption means meeting the needs of people by enhancing the quality of life, improving efficiency, minimizing waste, and preserving the future of generations, relying on community-based practices for social inclusion and change [8]. Sustainable consumption and production means doing more and better with less, decoupling economic growth from environmental degradation, increasing resource efficiency and management, promoting sustainable lifestyles [9], leading to changing consumer knowledge, values and consumption habits to improve the quality of life [10] in order to identify a sustainable way to address green transition towards responsible consumers' behaviors [11], by encouraging better and responsible choices of consumers for healthy environment [12]. Cities aim at going into the future by planning intentional knowledge-based development [13] and rethinking on sustainable urban development in order to deal with urban contemporary problems [14]. The urban future relies on cities that are designing ways to achieve sustainable urban development by addressing responsible lifestyle in urban behaviors consumption in order to achieve urban wealth and improve the quality of life within urban environments. Following the *UN 2030 Agenda for sustainable development*, cities of the future will be conceived as safe, healthy and sustainable communities that aim at rediscovering the benefits of sustainable consumption and production patterns [15]. Spaces of consumption relate to the life of a community [16]. Sustainable urban development relies on providing liveable and healthy human environments, improving both quality of life and well-being, and reducing negative environmental impacts [17], enabling people as aware citizens who select responsible choices and behaviors on consumption [18].

3. Methodological section

The study is theoretical and analyses the literature that is related to understanding the relationship between urban consumption and cities aiming at dealing with questions of urban growth and sustainability. The analysis of the articles helps to focus on consumption behaviours and drive cities as engines of urban responsible sustainability and consumption. Cities of the future contribute to shaping urban communities as centres of responsible consumption and enhancing the pathway to support sustainable urban development in order

to improve the quality of urban life. The selected contributions are interpreted in a narrative synthesis in order to elucidate new perspectives and advance theoretical frameworks on emerging issues [19, 20].

4. Driving cities towards sustainable and responsible urban consumption

As engines of responsible consumption and sustainable development, cities aim at meeting human needs and considering both environmental, ecological, social and economic implications, making urban communities as healthy places for life and work through consumption [5]. Reinventing the city investing on urban consumption is the key to drive sustainable, renewable resource-based economies [3]. In the *New Urban Agenda* cities contribute to promoting the ecological and social function of land, driving responsible consumption in transitioning to green deal and production [21]. Consumption matters for cities and does have a social meaning within urban communities, characterizing the lifestyles and behaviors of individuals and groups within urban spaces. As spaces of consumption, post-industrial and post-modern cities attract people who are motivated to assume responsible consumption behaviors, refusing the wave of consumerism, and rediscovering the consumption as the process by which people acquire and use products and services for biological and social survival [3]. Cities contribute to urban sustainability transitions that refer to changes in production and consumption patterns, developing capabilities for urban transformation by promoting sustainable lifestyles and consumption behaviors, engaging people to reinvent today for the future [22]. Cities are responsible actors in driving sustainable consumption behaviors within urban spaces and communities. Cities in transition towards urban sustainability could contribute to social prosperity and help improve quality of life by following an integrated approach between human and environmental needs within urban environment-friendly ecosystems [23].

The key to unlock the door of sustainability is the city. As human settlements, cities are evolving in transitioning to the sustainable city, minimizing environmental impact and damage within urban areas, and leading to the renewal of sustainable lifestyle and transformation from the consumer society to consumer items as means rather ends. Sustainable urban transformation relies on driving urban radical change and transformation [24]. In the 21st century the urban sustainability-led challenge relies on cleaner, greener and carbon-neutral cities, by developing renewable energy, improving urban eco-efficiency, enabling cities to deal with climate change, urbanization and resource depletion [5]. Cities are transitioning to an urban stage of development that relies on sustainable consumption and production practices that foster urban safe environments and improve the quality of life [25], enabling new lifestyles and behaviors for urban consumption by developing cooperative and collective action relying on multi-stakeholder involvement [26]. Reinventing the city as a place which is attracting skilled people shapes a consumer city [27] and helps achieving healthy economies, leading to consumption as social-led activity within urban communities [28]. Cities could be the pillar for driving urban transformation, driving urban communities to move in transition towards the sustainable and circular city with regards to transformation of inputs [29], and leading citizens to behave as responsible decision-makers with regards to consumption choices than merely consumers, and contribute to stimulating natural environment-friendly public policies [30]. As mobilizers

of human energies and social capital for sustainable lifestyle and social change, cities are encouraging citizens to assume responsible behaviors about consumption through local policies in order to facilitate the rise of smart behavior about consumption, and encouraging bottom-up initiatives emerging from the proactive role of no profit organizations [31]. Cities have to re-engineer the urban spaces in order to revitalize the urban environments in a sustainable way, shaping resilient urban communities where citizens act as energy producers as well as consumers, and identifying opportunities for developing sustainable consumption patterns [32], engendering new ways to engage with consumers, and incentivizing environmentally preferable behaviors, and driving innovation in a new generations of products for reuse and zero waste [30].

5. Discussion and conclusions

Future urban development relies on cities that are able to adopt a virtuous pathway towards green and eco-compatible transitions by encouraging and renewing responsible behaviors of people in consumption choices. Cities of the future contribute to shaping sustainable urban prosperous growth, leading to responsible consumption behaviours. Adopting a sustainable and responsible consumption vision in urban spaces helps shape the city as an urban community which is able to drive efficient, effective, inclusive and green growth, reducing the sources of pollution and environmental degradation. Cities tend to shape healthy urban future, building urban spaces for sustainable and responsible consumption in order to support continuous urban change and growth. Cities have to encourage behavior changes in urban consumption lifestyles, mobilizing citizens to become aware and responsible consumers who pay attention to common wealth and help to spread sustainability patterns, avoiding the increase of pollution and environmental degradation phenomena. As citizens, consumers become aware and proactive actors that contribute to wealthy urban spaces. Responsible urban consumption provides benefits to natural environment and does contribute to pollution contrast, enabling efficient management of energy and resources. Cities should invest in urban planning design by involving all the urban stakeholders that contribute to shaping responsible urban communities in order to promote sustainable lifestyles in patterns of consumption. There are some limitations. The study is descriptive and provides only a theoretical analysis. The study does not refer to empirical research. Further research implies to investigate how Italian cities are developing urban intelligence for building long-term sustainable consumption going smart within urban spaces.

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