

22. Responsible cities: imaginaries, practices, and policies in a challenging Era

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Format: traditional (call for abstracts and individual presentations of around 15 minutes)

The purpose of this session is to use the dimension of responsibility as an analytical framework of current cities, taking in consideration multiple levels of analysis: imaginaries, theoretical paradigms, practices, policies, and forms of governance. The dimensional growth and the complexification of the urban sphere and environment recall the urgency to improve the studies and researches around this concept.

If there is no real definition of the concept of responsible city today, still it is possible to identify some prevailing interpretations in the current debate that call into question three crucial dimensions: 1) sharing, 2) collaboration and 3) sustainability.

On one hand, these dimensions seem nowadays to outline the semantic framework of different policies, which try to redesign the dialogue and relationship among citizens and institutions, as well as to reformulate the paradigms of local and economic development. On the other hand, those dimensions define a field of practices that move "from the bottom" and within the social fabric of the cities.

In this perspective, some emerging paradigms might be identified: the ones of "sharing cities" and "collaborative cities" - this latter is often alternatively declined as "common city"- and, finally, the one of the "circular city". Each of these paradigms shed light on several elements which are useful to redesign more fair, inclusive, sustainable and common's-oriented cities, where it is possible to enact forms of shared social responsibility.

However, it seems more and more necessary to overcome a reductive perspective, "flattened" on the "technological" element – such as in the variation of the "smart cities" as well as sometimes in the circular and sharing cities frames – towards a more "substantial" reading, which focuses not only on "how", but also on the purpose of the change that we want to produce on the social, economic and environmental level.

Technology is certainly an enabling factor, although never neutral. Technological innovation should rather be framed within socio-technical systems, taking in consideration the different cultural aspects and the nature of the economic system within which innovation is produced and do operate.

More recently, also the current pandemic crisis is calling for a responsible approach to globalization, reminding us the need to constantly balance the relationship among social justice and urban, environmental, and technological development.

Therefore, without the intention of defining in a normative sense what a responsible city is or should be, in this session we want to discuss and explore some issues: which kind of imaginaries, paradigms, practices and policies might reshape and foster the co-construction of responsible cities? Which new narratives and practices as well as urban, social, and cultural challenges for a “responsible city” are emerging from the “Covid-19 crisis”? Which ambivalences do we need to overcome, in order to make this concept substantial, getting it back to its political dimension?

This call intends to invite for any proposals that help to compare these questions with some theoretical as well as empirical contributions in relation to different spheres of urban life. Among the many issues that may be investigated, the following ones are an example of the areas of interest:

- Collaborative consumption.
- Circularity of production and consumption (reduction, reuse, and recycling).
- Solidarity economy.
- Responsible tourism.
- Urban commoning.
- Community and new forms of proximity.
- Collaborative governance and bottom-link governance.
- Socially innovative policies for sustainable cities.