

Brazilian Urban Policy: Sustainability as a Driving Force

Subjects: Development Studies

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Defining global themes such as Urban Policy, Urban Sustainability, and even the Right to the City (RTTC) is fundamental to stimulating and establishing a continuous dialogue with the scientific community, mainly in the social sciences. Thus, understanding the dynamics around the scope of urban sustainability requires an analysis that is focused on multiple global realities. Taking a holistic view of Brazilian Urban Policy, this entry looks at the historical contexts that make urban sustainability the driving force behind this policy. In addition, an interdisciplinary consideration of urban sustainability is proposed using an analysis that is based on the connection between urban policies and social functions that reflect the idea of a sustainable city. The results of this analysis also point to the need for a continuous debate on the subject that primarily promotes new discoveries; this is so that the driving force of urban policy can gain new meanings and new guidelines can be implemented.

Keywords: urban policy ; urban sustainable development ; right to the city ; sustainable cities

With the accelerated process of world urbanization ^[1], cities have become the focus of various studies and discussions ^[2], showing themselves to be fundamental to the discourse on social, economic and environmental development ^[3]. Cities have been considered using diverse approaches, judgements, advances and typologies that consider them as cultural, commercial, historical and religious centers in the development and adaption of contemporary models, i.e., to be sustainable and smart ^[4]. Thus, when examining the various social phenomena that permeate an urban network, it is necessary to understand and highlight the connection between urban policies and the meaning behind the slogan “Right to the City” (RTTC) ^[5]. In this context, the term “sustainable cities” has gained attention from various social sectors, both nationally or internationally ^[6]. As a result, it is important to highlight its relevance and emphasize the positive aspects of urban policies within the Brazilian Federal Constitution of 1988, which established the dynamics, mobilized the RTTC and, in turn, translated it into the idea that individuals have an inherent right to access urban sustainability ^[7]. Therefore, interlacing theoretical and practical discussions on urban policies, and their respective functionalities, reverberates strongly as a theoretical framework for developing an agenda of sustainable development ^[8].

The aim of this entry is to promote reflections on urban sustainability via an interdisciplinary approach whose objective is to interlink analyses connecting urban policies and social functions that consider the idea of sustainable cities. This analysis of the nuances of urban policies for the promotion of sustainable cities is especially important when seeking answers from an array of theoretical assumptions and conjectures. In view of this ambiguity, the need for new studies and research on urban policy and sustainability is justified.

Delimiting Urban Policy

Contemplating, reflecting on and articulating contemporary themes that affect “urban space” has become almost inevitable insofar that urban spaces, rather than geographic spaces, have become the stage for various transformations ^[3]. Undoubtedly, among the various subjects that influence this discussion, dealing with urban sustainability under the aegis of urban policies ^[9] has become the theme in recent decades and will remain so for the foreseeable future ^[4]. In this way, the investigation of urban policies must be approached from two techno-scientific stances: an analysis of the founding principles and instruments employed for the execution of these so-called urban policies, and an analysis of the necessary geographic space that is linked to these formulated policies ^[6]. However, with regard to urban sustainability, there are several normative precepts that can direct the multiple analyses of this theme, i.e., the New Urban Agenda of UN-Habitat, or Objective number 11 of the United Nations 2030 Agenda ^[10]. Indeed, from the Brazilian perspective, this theme also gains strength via its incorporation into the City Statute Law 10.257/2001, which is legislation that proposes a series of fundamental guidelines and instruments that can be used to not only establish urban policies, but also to ensure urban sustainability ^[3].

Nowadays, there are several discussions, meanings and concepts held in the legal field about the RTTC. One such discussion of urban policies gained prominence in Brazil's constitution with the advent of the so-called Magna Carta of 1988 and, in doing so, strengthened its precepts and guidelines. From this perspective, urban policies have become strong instruments in assisting the processes inherent to the production, reproduction, and expansion of urban spaces in the Brazilian context ^[11]. Essentially, these aim to translate the constitutional determination into the orderly development of a city via its social functions, while guaranteeing the well-being of its inhabitants and their right to a sustainable environment ^[11]. Gradually, in Brazil, the process of creating and consolidating this legislation has been established, and it now embodies the Law of the City ^[12].

In this context, the “City Statute” has emerged as the main legislation; it aims to serve as the norm for the construction of ideas about a city and to simultaneously verify the processes that permeate the urban fabric ^[7]. From this perspective, the City Statute describes, both implicitly and explicitly, details behind the meanings of the RTTC and its compatibility with the precepts of urban policies ^[12]. Moreover, there are clashes and systematic distortions regarding the fundamental ideas and concepts that embody the idea related to urban policies and their alignment with the RTTC. Thus, such discussions on this theme are necessary in order to highlight these approaches and differences ^[13].

Model

For this entry, a qualitative approach is used to examine the relevant literature, draw conclusions and assemble a group of facts that are most pertinent to the past, present, and future contexts of urban sustainability. This strategy has the dual benefit of being both exploratory and descriptive, since the interconnection between urban policies and the functionalities of cities, for the advancement of urban sustainability, is explored and described in detail ^[14]. Finally, an integrative bibliographic research procedure that comprises the linking of bibliographies and conceptual assumptions is applied ^[15]. The main themes that emerge from this analysis are presented in **Table 1**, together with the principal references that cover them in the literature. Additionally, other authors that discuss and deepen the theories presented by the authors listed in **Table 1** were used to supplement the database.

Table 1. Representation of the main authors and themes.

Integrative Reference Portfolio		
Theory	Authors	Themes/Title
Right to the City (RTTC)	[4][13]	Theory of RTTC
Urban Policy	[3]	Sustainable, Fair and Democratic Cities
	[14][15]	What is a city?
Urban Sustainability	[16][17][18]	Right to urban sustainability

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