

Abstract

Experts on sustainability and on strategies for sustainability are seeking ways to maintain a high quality of life whilst reducing levels of consumption. In a world dominated by Western patterns of consumption, which is a complex and ambitious goal, not only in the Western countries with high levels of consumption but also in non-Western countries where consumption levels are rapidly rising. Major cuts in consumption levels are needed, according to experts in many disciplines, in order to protect and maintain planetary resources which are being threatened by disaster. Moreover, there is an acute need to find different forms of consumption for developing countries which have not yet reached the level of consumption which threatens global resources.

Designers have used various tools since the industrial revolution to encourage consumption, to generate demand for new products and to generate a desire for new products. Over the last few years, many design experts have started using their knowledge to reduce the consumption of products, aware that current trends cannot continue in a world where global resources are limited and are being used up at a rate which is not renewable and cannot be sustained over time. They have now turned attention to finding different ways of life and lifestyles both out of concern for the risk to environmental resources and out of concern for the social and cultural effects of the consumer society.

90% of the decisions concerning the sustainability of a product occur in the design stage – from the choice of materials, the production process and product distribution until the use of the product. Design expertise which previously enabled increasing demand for products is now being harnessed to seek solutions which could change consumer behavior and lifestyles. Design expertise can assist not only in finding solutions to slow down the wheels of high consumption levels but also to create new processes of sustainable consumption.

The urban context offers significant opportunities for design tools and design methodology to create something different. The highly sought after world competition between cities to be recognized as the Design Capital of the world demonstrates the significant role design can play as a tool for social, economic and environmental change. Capetown in South Africa is the most recent example of where design has been used to change behavior and promote urban sustainability.

The most relevant product design methodologies currently being applied to behavior change fall into 3 categories:

- Enabling – creating situations which encourage the desired behavior by making it easy and accessible
- Constraining – making undesirable behavior more difficult or less accessible
- Motivating – positive encouragement to promote a desirable choice of behavior through provision of information, education and incentives and turning it into the normal behavioral choice. This category gives more control to the user than the former two categories.

This paper describes different methods and presents tools which could help in designing a more sustainable urban future in Israel.