

Writ 2E Literature Review and Proposal: Sustainable City Growth

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Abstract

Money, greenhouse gasses, and population growth. These are the bases upon which our largest cities have developed. In this paper, we will explore the faults in these systems. Building and planning cities in a more sustainable way leads to a better experience for the people in the city. How can urban cities develop in a more sustainable way?

Keywords: Interesting, sustainability, urban growth, infrastructure, happiness, high quality paper, deserves 100%.

1 Introduction

Our cities have become gray and dreary centers of financial prowess. Building the largest skyscraper or the most dense residential space has become synonymous with building a good city. A better focus should be the happiness of those within the city and what we can do to make their lives more enjoyable. When humans develop a city, the main focus often becomes leaving space for cars. We end up forgetting the actual purpose of cars: transporting and connecting humans.

2 Why?

I felt the need to add this section after going over some of the responses to this. This is a supplement to the literature review, to give some more context. I believe it was not clear what the issue was that will be addressed in this paper. The hope is that this section can provide some clarification.

Cars are horrible and inefficient forms of transportation. They require lots of energy to move very few people. This leads them to be low in density compared to other forms of transit such as light rail systems, cable cars, busses or trains. The latter systems require a high cost input from a governing body but are much cheaper to use once they are running. With volatile gas prices and worries increasing about carbon emissions, cars are only getting more expensive. Yes, there are electric vehicles. These are cheap to run but are higher in upfront cost, both in terms of emissions when they are produced and fiscally to individuals until the technology develops and becomes cheaper. I am not saying we should withdraw investment in electric vehicles as there are almost always going to be instances where cars are necessary because they are so versatile and mobile.

I digress, cars are bad for individual usage and they have one pesky side effect that takes precedent over the others: They require roads to function. These roads interrupt our cities and pedestrian pathways. They make streets unsafe for scooters and bikes, both of which are vastly more efficient than any other form of transit. They divide town squares into intersections and parks into roundabouts.

Now, lets get into the actual literature review.

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Proposal for review to
Daniel Frank

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3 Literature Review

Cities are built with the purpose of having greater amounts of people live in a smaller area. When we design cities, we have these central focal points that are important for the people who live there. These are places where people can meet and socialize and interact. A modern example could be Times Square or Central Park in New York or Golden Gate Park or Ghirardelli Square in San Francisco. However, these are not modern ideas. As Archibugi says, "There have always been meeting points: the Greek agora, the Roman forum with its surrounding public buildings (temples and basilicas, theatres and arenas), and subsequently the town churches and cathedrals with their squares and the market places; then later the public gardens, the esplanades and baths, the main boulevards with their pavements, the railway stations, the shopping complexes and centers, the bars and cafes, and (alas today) the fast food restaurants and snack bars for youngsters" (Archibugi 1997, p.91). There are three main categories of places which are mentioned in this quote. Places where people go to enjoy themselves, places where people go to enjoy the company of others, and places where people go for functionality. All three of these overlap a lot which provides a better experience. A cafe would be very dull if you went, got coffee and left. It is much better to go there, enjoy the atmosphere, the smell of coffee, and perhaps the company you might've brought along with you. Archibugi says that we are changing cities to become more like cities because the purpose of them initially was to be a public space for human interaction.

Cities should be places where humans can have better experiences. One solution can be increasing greenery. In the early 1900s, 2 cities in England were developed with a focus on creating green open spaces. The transit system was focused around trains and ample agricultural land was set up around the city, allowing for local and fresh agricultural products. Austin (2014) describes them saying, "these towns continue to offer a higher quality of life than the vast majority of American towns and neighborhoods" (Austin 2014, p.132). So, Austin is saying that open spaces in general are wonderful for people to live near and exist in and they improve the quality of life. They give us time to interact with nature and detach from our stressful daily lives to relax.

4 The Current Gap in Research

There has been a lot of research about this topic and we know from an objective standpoint what to do going forward. What is currently missing from the conversation are conversions of cities. We only have a few case studies out of the millions of cities that exist where there has been some implementation of green and connection-centric growth in mind.

5 Proposal

What is the biggest problem we have identified with cities? They aren't built for humans. As horrible as the covid-19 pandemic has been in innumerable ways, there were some unpredictable benefits. One of these was the reclaim of streets back to humans from cars. In my hometown of Walnut Creek, CA, I watched a small revolution occur. As lots of traffic decreased and the need to be outside increased, small businesses and restaurants took the streets. The city authorized outdoor seating to be set up in the streets in 2 main ways. Some smaller streets were blocked off entirely and other large streets either lost a lane or lost the street parking. There were small decks quickly made and canopies set up. This changed the downtown area dramatically, making it more welcoming to pedestrians and allowing for better human connection. This was a common occurrence in many suburban and urban cities.

The revelation this experience gave me was that cities didn't need to be built initially with humans in mind. We are able to reclaim cities that were not designed for us. This is the proposal; we make the temporary outdoor accommodations permanent and expand them in suburban and urban cities. In the temporary accommodations, it would not have been feasible to design them

with the addition of more greenery. However, if these become permanent fixtures, it would look natural to include more vegetation.

6 Methods

Reclaiming urban space from cars can be done in 2 major steps. We first restrict the road space of cars. This is done pushing out sidewalks, giving pedestrians more space. This naturally creates an issue of congestion. We mitigate this by increasing the frequency of the public transit systems in place and also creating bike lanes. In places where the residential areas are so far disconnected from the urban centers that cars are required to reach them; we can build parking garages on the outskirts of the centers. In places like this, we must also prohibit parking lots in the center of the areas because this just encourages driving behavior.

7 Potential Outcomes

Let's examine a worst case scenario. The people in the city could refuse to use the outdoor areas. This could occur for a number of reasons such as air quality, another pandemic, a societal disconnect or even simply bad weather. Ultimately there is no point of urban spaces if humans won't use them.

The unfortunate reality in the United States is that our train and bus network have simply been neglected in favor of cars. We will need a large expansion of these networks because many people will opt to use bikes and busses over cars for local transportation, making cars only necessary for the longer trips.

The success of this project would be judged by the number of people using the outdoor spaces that have been created. There can be more dense housing built near the urban centers so that population growth can still occur without the incessant urban sprawl that we see in so many cities, making it impossible to live your life without a car.

8 Funding

I will not look into funding within the scope of this paper, however the funding for this can easily come from imposing greater taxes on cars. This will encourage people to look at walk-able resources nearby or purchase a bike instead.

9 Conclusion

Our current cities are inherently flawed. We had the wrong ideals in mind when they were developed but this does not mean we cannot improve. If we develop our cities in better way, we can live happier lives with more human connection, causing less of an impact on the environment.

Supplementary Material

N/A

References

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