Creating an Interactive Website - "Building the Ideal Smart City"
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Abstract

This project will explore the sociological and architectural frameworks necessary for creating sustainable and human-centric smart cities through an interactive website (creative project). Unlike current smart city discourse that often prioritizes technological integration, this project will examine how urban design patterns and social connectivity can create more livable environments. The project will investigate how hexagonal city planning, walkable communities, and mixed-density development can promote social cohesion while reducing environmental impact drawing from both architectural innovation and urban sociology. The website will analyze how different urban patterns – from the intimate streets of Venice to the high-density grid of Manhattan – can affect social interaction, community formation, and sustainable lifestyles. Interactive buttons and various images of the website will help explore different urban layers through showing how the design reduces city footprint by 20% while maximizing human encounters and green space access. This research is sociologically significant in that it addresses fundamental questions about how the urban environment shapes human behavior, social capital formation, and community resilience. By examining how the hexagonal city's "figure-ground" patterns and mixed-use development influence social relationships, economic opportunities, and environmental justice, this project contributes to the understanding of creating more sustainable and socially vibrant urban futures.

Annotated Bibliography

1. Glaeser, Edward L. 2011. Triumph of the City: How Our Greatest Invention Makes Us Richer, Smarter, Greener, Healthier, and Happier.

Summary:
In "Triumph of the City," Edward Glaeser presents argument for the enduring importance of cities in fostering human progress and innovation. Through a blend of historical analysis and contemporary case studies, Glaeser demonstrates how urban density creates a fertile environment for creativity, economic growth, and social advancement. His research combines economic analysis with sociological observations, examining the ways in which physical proximity in urban settings facilitates knowledge transfer and cultural exchange. Glaeser challenges prevailing misconceptions about urban living, arguing that well-designed cities can be more environmentally sustainable and socially enriching than their suburban or rural counterparts. He emphasizes the crucial role of face-to-face interactions in driving innovation and social development, even in an age of advanced communication technologies. Also he explores how urban environments create opportunities for diverse groups to interact, leading to the cross-pollination of ideas and the emergence of new cultural and economic paradigms.

Furthermore, Glaeser delves into the historical roots of urban success by tracing the evolution of cities from ancient times to the present day. He examines how different urban forms have influenced social and economic outcomes and by so provides insights into the characteristics that make cities engines of progress. By analyzing both successful and struggling urban areas, he gives valuable lessons for urban planners seeking to create more vibrant, sustainable cities.

How it fits:

This source provides a theoretical foundation for the sociological benefits of compact, walkable urban design, which aligns with my project's focus on creating sustainable and human-centric smart cities. His emphasis on the importance of face-to-face interactions and urban density supports the proposed hexagonal city model and underscores the need to prioritize human connection in smart city design. This source will help justify the sociological aspects of the project's urban planning approach.

2. Gehl, Jan and Birgitte Svarre. 2013. How to Study Public Life.

Summary:

"How to Study Public Life" by Jan Gehl and Birgitte Svarre offers a methodological framework for analyzing human interaction within urban spaces. The authors present patterns of social behavior in public areas across various cities. Their research method includes a range of techniques, including systematic counting, mapping, tracing, and photographing of human activity in urban environments. Gehl and Svarre demonstrate how specific design elements, from the placement of benches to the height of buildings, directly influence patterns of social interaction. Their findings reveal that successful public spaces share certain key characteristics, such as human scale, active edges, and opportunities for both passive and active engagement. The book provides detailed insights into how urban design can either facilitate or inhibit social interaction, offering practical tools for urban planners and designers to create more vibrant and socially conducive public spaces.The authors also explore the historical evolution of public space studies, tracing the development of their field from its early beginnings to contemporary practices. They emphasize the importance of understanding human behavior and needs when designing urban spaces, arguing that this knowledge is crucial for creating cities that are not only functional but also socially enriching. Through numerous case studies, Gehl and Svarre illustrate how their methods can be applied to improve the quality of urban life in different contexts.

How it fits:

This source is valuable for the project's analysis of how different urban patterns affect social behavior. The methodologies used by Gehl and Svarre will inform the evaluation of the potential social impacts of the proposed hexagonal city design. Their insights into creating vibrant public spaces align with the project's goal of fostering social cohesion and sustainable living practices through urban design.

3. Sennett, Richard. 2018. Building and Dwelling: Ethics for the City.

Summary:

In "Building and Dwelling: Ethics for the City," Sennett talks about the complex relationship between the physical structure of cities (ville) and the ways people inhabit them (cité). Sennett advocates for an ethical approach to urban design that promotes social interaction while respecting and preserving diversity. He also examines how various urban spaces influence social behavior and community formation. Sennett introduces the concept of "complex diversity," arguing for the creation of urban spaces that bring different social groups together while maintaining their distinct identities. He delves into the historical development of cities, from ancient to modern times, to understand how urban form has shaped and been shaped by social relationships. The book critically examines the successes and failures of various urban planning approaches, offering insights into how cities can be designed to foster more inclusive and vibrant communities.

A key focus of Sennett's work is the tension between top-down urban planning and bottom-up organic growth. He argues for a balance between these approaches, suggesting that successful cities need both structured design and space for spontaneous development. Sennett also explores the impact of technology on urban life, considering how smart city initiatives can be implemented in ways that enhance rather than diminish human interaction and community bonds.

How it fits:
This source provides a theoretical framework for analyzing how smart city design can promote social interaction while preserving cultural diversity. His concept of "complex diversity" aligns with the project's goal of creating sustainable and human-centric smart cities. This source will inform the development of guidelines for designing urban spaces that balance technological efficiency with social needs.

4. Castells, Manuel. 2010. The Rise of the Network Society. Second Edition.

Summary:
Manuel Castells' "The Rise of the Network Society" is a book that is about an analysis of how information technology and networked communications are transforming urban social relationships and spatial organization. Castells explains how digital networks create new forms of social space that interact with and reshape physical urban environments. A central concept in Castells' work is the "space of flows," which describes how information networks interact with traditional urban spaces to create new patterns of social interaction. He argues that successful urban spaces in the network age must facilitate both virtual and face-to-face social connections, recognizing the continued importance of physical proximity despite the rise of digital communication. Castells explores how these changes affect various aspects of urban life, including work patterns, cultural expression, and political engagement. The book also mentions the global nature of the network society, examining how cities around the world are adapting to and shaping these new realities. Castells considers the implications of these changes for urban inequality, discussing how access to digital networks can either exacerbate or potentially alleviate social and economic disparities. He challenges urban planners and policymakers to rethink traditional approaches to city design in light of these technological and social transformations.

How it fits:
Castells' analysis of how the network society affects urban space and social relationships is crucial for understanding how smart cities can integrate digital technology while preserving human-scale interactions. The concept of the "space of flows" will be particularly relevant in exploring how physical urban design can complement and enhance digital connectivity, aligning with the project's goal of creating sustainable and socially connected smart cities.