

# Urban-Rural Happiness Gradient Theory: What Happiness Theories Tell Us About Urban Way Of Life?

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Urbanization, arguably the most dramatic disruption of human habitat, has received surprisingly little attention from happiness studies in terms of theory. We know that in the developed world urbanites are less happy, yet we miss theory: what can be the mechanism? This article aims to start filling this gap. An apparently surprising finding that people are less happy in cities in the developed world should not be surprising given that happiness theories indicate at least substantial or usually complete happiness disadvantage of cities.

CITIES, URBAN LIVING, URBANICITY, HAPPINESS THEORIES,

Cities are not just buildings, urbanism is a way of life (Wirth 1938), and our species way of life has changed dramatically. In 1800 a mere 1.7% of the world population lived in cities larger than 100k (Davis 1955), but urban population will explode from 30% in 1950 to 70% in 2050, or from .75b to 6.75b (<https://population.un.org/wup>)—that's an addition of 6 billion of people to cities over just one hundred years. Arguably, this is the most dramatic change of human habitat in our species history.

Why cities exist in the first place? Economics tells us that cities are necessary because humans are not self sufficient (e.g., O'Sullivan 2009), that is labor specialization works best at high population level and density, and cities through agglomeration economies increase productivity and ultimately Gross Domestic Product (GDP), an end-in-itself (the ultimate goal of interest) (O'Sullivan 2009, Glaeser 2011b).

But we don't need more GDP, in fact a reasonable argument can be made that we need less (Skidelsky and Skidelsky 2012, Joutsenvirta 2016, Kallis et al. 2012, Kallis 2011, Kasser 2003, Roberts 2011, Roberts and Clement 2007, Klein 2014), and arguably the metric to be maximized now is happiness (Stiglitz et al. 2009, Diener 2009, Okulicz-Kozaryn 2016).

There is an apparent "urban unhappiness paradox." People flock to cities—6b over 100 years—and yet people in cities are less happy: across the developed world, in each country the least happy places are largest cities: New York City (Okulicz-Kozaryn and Mazelis 2016, Senior 2006), London (Office for National Statistics 2011, Chatterji 2013) Helsinki (Morrison 2015), Bucharest (Lenzi and Perucca 2016), Sydney (cited in Morrison 2011), and so forth.

It is especially a puzzle for economists, who then try to cherry-pick data to argue that people are happier in cities Glaeser (2014, 2011b,a, 2007). Economic theory clearly does not explain the urban malaise phenomenon as it predicts higher SWB in cities. To economist, money=utility, there is more money in cities, and so cities must be happier. And since also to economists, people are perfectly rational and fully informed, they rationally flock to the happiest places of all, cities Glaeser (2011b). Except that cities are least happy places of all.

And a simple point is missed—people do not vote with their feet in favor of urbanism—substantial portion of city growth is not due to people preference, but actually against it (Molotch 1976) People move to places mostly for jobs (Campbell 1981). Companies locate most jobs in metropolitan areas and so people are forced to move there. Just like with industrial revolution—much of population is

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I thank XXX. All mistakes are mine.

forced<sup>1</sup> into urban (and suburban) areas in order to produce more for capitalists (Engels [1845] 1987, Harvey 2012, Molotch 1976). Many others think they chose city consciously, but are actually driven by subconscious size fetish (Okulicz-Kozaryn and Valente 2017).

It is of paramount importance to study the effect of cities on human condition. The question is long standing and many have studied it, notably classical US urban sociologists such as Wirth and Park; but also notably German sociologists Simmel and Toennies. Some even suggest a new field e.g., 'neourbanism' (Adli et al. 2017). This study is a continuation of <<<BLIND FOR PEER REVIEW>>>

As this article argues, an apparently surprising finding that people are less happy in cities in the developed world should not be surprising given that happiness theories indicate at least substantial or usually complete happiness disadvantage of cities.

This article doesn't concern itself with philosophical or measurement issues—for that see for instance Brulde (2007), and we agree that a hybrid version of happiness theory seems most plausible. And comfortingly most studies of urban-rural happiness gradient take such an approach(e.g., Moeinaddini et al. 2020, Mouratidis 2019, Wang et al. 2019, Mouratidis 2017, Ma et al. 2017, Wkeziak-Bialowolska 2016, Valente and Berry 2016, Chen et al. 2015). Subjective Wellbeing (SWB) is an umbrella term for various subjective measures of wellbeing, notably positive and negative affects, happiness, and life satisfaction. Most of the urban SWB research uses life satisfaction measure, which is a global self evaluation of one's life as a whole. This measure is mostly cognitive and not affective—respondent evaluates her life as whole globally (everything, including professional, personal, family, community, etc)—for discussion see Campbell et al. (1976), Diener (2009). Following usual practice, for simplicity, we use these terms interchangeably: SWB, happiness, and life satisfaction, but specifically we mostly mean life satisfaction as defined above. SWB measure is also at least adequately reliable and valid and considered good enough for public policy making and public administration (Diener 2009, Stiglitz et al. 2009).

## 1 Urbanicity and the Happiness Theories

There are many happiness theories, but the most relevant ones to the urban-rural happiness gradient can be subsumed under three major theories. The three major happiness theories are:

- genes/evolution: set point/adaptation (adjustment, "hedonic treadmill") (Brickman et al. 1978); happiness as a motivator (Carver and Scheier 1990)
- comparisons/discrepancies (Michalos 1985)
- needs/livability (Veenhoven and Ehrhardt 1995)

The first two theories predict a major urban disadvantage of cities in terms of happiness. The livability theory does not make direct predictions on the urban-rural happiness gradient, but some urban disadvantage can be inferred from it. In what follows each of the theories is briefly described and applied to urbanicity.

### 1.1 Genes/Evolution

Genes and evolution have bad reputation in social science due to eugenics, social darwinism, and so forth, but the pendulum seem to have swung too far in the other direction and avoidance or denial of evolution is counterproductive (Pinker 2003, Haidt 2012).

Humans' behavior, as that of any animal, is dictated by genes (e.g., Dawkins 2006). It is notable that humans share with a chimp more than 95% of genes.<sup>2</sup> And a simple, yet overlooked point is that neither homo sapiens nor chimps evolved to live at high population size or density, i.e., a city. As hunters-gatherers, when our natural evolutionary habitat has formed for tens of thousands of years,

<sup>1</sup>Wage slaves are "hired slaves instead of block slaves. You have to dread the idea of being unemployed and of being compelled to support your masters" (p. 283 Goldman et al. 2003).

<sup>2</sup><https://www.genome.gov/15515096/2005-release-new-genome-comparison-finds-chimps-humans-very-similar-at-dna-level>.

humans have lived in bands of 50-80 people Maryanski and Turner (1992).<sup>3</sup> A modern city of hundreds of thousands of people is a very recent invention in human evolutionary history—there was no such even single place in the world before around 1,000 BC. And even by 1850 AD only about 2.3% of world population lived in cities larger than 100,000 (Davis 1955).

Some argue that many species, e.g., ants and bees, thrive at high densities, but humans are unlike ants or bees. By one estimate—we're 90% chimp and only 10% bee (Haidt 2012). Small population level and density in natural setting is humans' evolutionary home, not high population size and density in artificial setting. Pretty (2012). Humans have evolved to live in natural environment, not in a mixture of asphalt, concrete, steel, and glass—a city. To summarize, the critical point is that it is not in human nature to live in a city.

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Genes/evolution are also a foundation of several closely related happiness theories: set point/adaptation (adjustment, “hedonic treadmill”) (Brickman et al. 1978), and happiness as a motivator (Carver and Scheier 1990).

Set point/adaptation theory states that life events happen, even dramatic ones such as losing a limb or winning a lottery, but humans have an extraordinary ability to adapt to just about anything, and so their happiness over time comes back to status quo, a set-point (Brickman et al. 1978).<sup>5</sup> A useful closely related term is “hedonic treadmill”—we chase some goals, some greater happiness, but like on treadmill, we never get anywhere, being stuck always at the same place despite running. Durkheim ([1895] 1950) put it well: “the more one has the more one wants, since satisfactions received only stimulate instead of filling needs.” Human adaptation is astonishing indeed: winning millions in a lottery and losing limbs has little if any effect on happiness. Astonishingly, about half of world population lives on less than 5.5\$ per day (<https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2018/10/17/nearly-half-the-world-lives-on-less-than-550-a-day>.) and they somehow manage and don't commit suicide—humans can adapt to just about anything.<sup>6</sup>

We also know that the adaptation is not full, e.g., people do not adapt fully to unemployment (Lucas et al. 2004), unexpected death of a child (cited in Headey 2008), etc.

Then the city allure is overrated—people simply adapt to urban amenities (and don't adapt to urban disamenities—again city living is not in human nature).<sup>7</sup> People are often attracted to city not just by jobs (Campbell 1981), but also by its amenities—opera houses, museums, etc (Campbell 1981)—then arguably expected happiness is higher than experienced happiness (Kahneman et al. 1997, Schkade and Kahneman 1998, Kahneman 2000, Kahneman and Krueger 2006), and it may help to explain the apparent paradox or massive rampant urbanization and urban unhappiness at the same time. But wouldn't people by the same mechanism adapt to smaller places too? Perhaps, to some degree, but again natural environment is a natural human habitat and it has consistently positive effect on human condition Pretty (2012). And why pay more for city life,<sup>8</sup> and have less time—urbanites work longer hours (Rosenthal and Strange 2002, 2003, 2008)—to pay for skyrocketing urban crowded housing and other “urban amenities,” while free time is critical for

<sup>3</sup>Contemporary largest cities crowd millions of people at densities of about 25,000/sq km (Manhattan), which is 105 people per acre. Imagine a larger soccer field (2.7 acre) and 22 people on it (2 teams of 11 players)—it's a pretty livable density—Manhattan has 281 people on it. Of course it is only manageable thanks to towers and underground (subway) facilities. And there are dozens of cities more dense than Manhattan.

<sup>4</sup>Another side point in terms of genes is about heritability of happiness. Genes also matter more than anything else for one's happiness. About 50 percent of happiness, intelligence, personality, etc is determined by genes (Dawkins 2006, Krueger et al. 2008, Stangor and Walinga 2010, Stoolmiller 1999, Plomin et al. 1994, Bartels 2015). Hence of all the influences on our happiness level, genes have the greatest effect, as what is left for all the other influences is only the other 50%.

<sup>5</sup>Also see homeostasis, e.g., ch4 by cummins in “wealth(s) and swb” swb, like any physiological system requires homeostasis, a stable narrow range to function properly about 70-90 on 0-100 scale; still some people are chronically low say due to arthritis or caring for an elderly; and some over time change is still possible not that set point is set in stone; and see an interesting piece on Brickman: <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/11/24/opinion/happiness-depression-suicide-psychology.html>.

<sup>6</sup>And yet the happiness distributions do differ, for instance those of Denmark and Togo are almost non-overlapping—society can make a huge difference (Diener 2015). And see the next section per livability theory.

<sup>7</sup>One does not adapt to multiple city stressors such as air, noise, light pollutions, skyrocketing housing prices, etc, as evidenced by poor mental health of urbanites (Lederbogen et al. 2011, Adli et al. 2017).

<sup>8</sup>In other words, for jobs, it is often necessary to be in a city or close to it (suburb), but one should be aware that she is likely to adapt to city amenities and hence she should discount the expected happiness from her decision making to live in a city. Furthermore, enjoyment of many of urban amenities is expensive and time consuming—one is likely to end up not enjoying the amenities. It is another explanation for the apparent paradox that cities grow and yet are unhappy—people think they will enjoy more amenities (opera houses, top universities, etc) than they actually do, and they don't take into account the disamenities such as high prices and pollutions. Again it is expected vs experienced utility (Kahneman et al. 1997, Schkade and Kahneman 1998, Kahneman 2000, Kahneman and Krueger 2006). Similarly with California—many Americans would like to live there and many actually move, but they have unrealistic ideas about happy lifestyle, but end up with unhappy congestion, pollution, and high prices (Schkade and Kahneman 1998).

human flourishing—again, one of the top regrets of the dying is “I wish I hadn’t worked so hard” (Ware 2012).

People would arguably satyed rural if they could, by they were forced to cities by jobs (Campbell 1981, Engels [1845] 1987, Harvey 2012, Molotch 1976). Contemporary Americans prefer suburban settings, close to city so that they have access to jobs and urban amenities, and yet outside of central city so they have at least some nature, and less of urban disamenities Fuguitt and Zuiches (1975), Fuguitt and Brown (1990).<sup>9</sup> And yet suburbs are not a viable solution (Duany et al. 2001) for a society—rather, it was “smart for one, but dumb for all”—if few suburbanized, they’d probably came close to the best of the 2 worlds—city amenities close by without city disamenities, and plenty of nature. But predictably what happended instead, there happened a massive suburbanization. And suburbs are morphing into city-like creatures with less nature, higher prices, more congestion, pollution, etc Okulicz-Kozaryn (2015).

Happiness as a motivator is a critical and largely overlooked theory (Carver and Scheier 1990). Like set-point/adaptation theories, it also closely derives from genes/evolution. SWB merely signals that task at hand has been accomplished, then happiness dissipates, so that the signal is that a person should move to another task. If a person was perfectly happy all the time, she would not accomplish much. Happiness is simply a reward for accomplishing a task. Happiness is necessary to motivate a person to accomplish the task, and then the happiness must dissipate, so that a person is motivated to move to another task.<sup>10</sup>

A problem in the modern world, and especially in a city is that majority find themselves on a hamster wheel accomplishing tasks untill one lies on a deathbed and wishes one didn’t work so hard—one of the top regrets of the dying is “I wish I hadn’t worked so hard” (Ware 2012). There are many more tasks in the city and one cannot ever accomplish all of them, because there are always more, e.g., people work longer hours in cities (Rosenthal and Strange 2002, 2003, 2008).

Furthermore, ever increasing complexity and abundance of choices, exemplified in cities, may lead to paralysis as opposed to liberation. For instance, it has been shown that people offered many choices became overloaded and confused as opposed to thrilled (Schwartz 2004). On the other hand, it is not so that people in smaller areas are disengaged or withdrawn, rather they appear to be more “at peace” (Thoreau 1995 [1854], Nietzsche 1896).

People in big cities indeed do appear cognitively overloaded. They are not at peace, they are always chasing something, their gaze is disconnected from present and focused on some future task or goal, or they appear distracted, sometimes disoriented as observed long time ago by Simmel (1903) and recently confirmed by Lederbogen et al. (2011). Urbanism has a negative effect on human mental health in general (Adli et al. 2017). Cities stimulate and overstimulate human nervous system (Simmel 1903, Lederbogen et al. 2011)—one feels energetic, possibly hectic in the city—urban environment gives one a quick short lived excitement boosts from its towers, neons, shopping windows, etc (Pile et al. 1999, Pile 2005b,a, Okulicz-Kozaryn and Valente 2017). An urbanite has more of just about everything than a rural person, but also seem to want even more, again—“the more one has the more one wants, since satisfactions received only stimulate instead of filling needs” (Durkheim [1895] 1950).

Indeed an urbanite has a fuller, more experiential and more challenging life and more utility (money or consumption). The urban challanging environment can potentially build a better fuller human being. And yet such an opportunity seems to be open for few, an upper class, e.g., one defiently achieves greater monetary achieevemnt, but also cost of living is higher; one achieves higher position in society, but also hierarchies are taller, etc. This is more of satisfying higher needs on the Maslow pyramid (Maslow [1954] 1987). Lower needs come first.

Surely there is more experience/achievement in cities, indeed so much that one has cognitive overload (Simmel 1903, Lederbogen et al. 2011).

And a critical problem with the city is that for a person it is better to be a big fish in a small pond than a small fish in a big

<sup>9</sup>More recent data are at <http://today.yougov.com/news/2012/07/05/suburban-dream-suburbs-are-most-popular-place-live/>.

<sup>10</sup>Also as in an equation: SWB=achievement/experience—expectations/aspirations, i.e. the higher the expectations or aspirations, the lower the SWB, Carver (2003) argues similar: if rate of progress is below the reference rate: negative affect; if above: positive affect also if doing well: become satisfied, comfortable, possibly complacent (Carver 2003) until you fall below the reference line and it goes over again. Homo sapiens is not designed by genes to be happy but to survive and reproduce (Euba 2019). Carver (2003) discusses various models: cruise control: going over the hill gets tough, increase velocity and fuel use, reach plateau; and going down the hill: decrease fuel coasting: positive affect leads to coasting opportunistic shifting: positive feelings promote play—also see Marcuse (2015, 2013).

pond—reference line is higher in city Luttmer (2005), Firebaugh and Schroeder (2009), which brings us to comparisons in next section.

## 1.2 Comparison/Discrepancies: Multiple Discrepancies Theory (MDT)

Multiple Discrepancy Theory (MDT) (Michalos 1985) states that happiness is function of:

1. social comparison, e.g., co-workers, high school friends, relatives
2. comparison to various standards, e.g., clothes, car expected in a given profession
3. over-time: your swb now is determined by how you were doing in the past and what you expect in the future e.g., losing may be more felt than gaining (Kahneman and Tversky 1979)

Per MDT, clearly city is a negative influence on happiness: there is relative deprivation through upward comparisons and visual recognition/etiquette/urban finish. One mechanism is built environment—corporate buildings, shops, advertisements—they signal success is wealth and material possessions (Joye et al. 2020). Visual and social comparisons are more likely in urban areas as there are more people and more stimuli. Likewise, use of social media is higher in urban areas (Perrin 2015), and both visual and social comparisons in real life and on social media can make people seek status through money, material possessions, and conspicuous consumption (Taylor and Strutton 2016, Joye et al. 2020).

This is also arguably why thinkers such as Nietzsche and Thoreau felt better in the wilderness, away from crowds that are not only dull, energy sucking, and uncreative, but also mired in endless petty competition and comparisons.

Humans are unwilling and unable to make absolute judgements, rather they constatly draw comparisons from their environment (Frey et al. 2008). Higher aspirations reduce wellbeing (Frey et al. 2008). And cities induce higher aspirations (Okulicz-Kozaryn 2015, Okulicz-Kozaryn and Valente 2017). A key finding is that people look upward not downward whenm making comparisons (Frey et al. 2008). People make upwards comparisons—people look upwards when making comparisons: wealthier people impose negative external effect ion poorer people but not vice versa (Frey and Stutzer 2002).

Hence cities induce positional concerns as income ladders are tallest in cities—and it is better to be a big fish in small pond (town) than small fish in a boig pond (city).

A notable comparison that people make is against neighbors, Do I keep up with Joneses? We tend to compare to people in our geographic or social proximity—and there are more such people by definition in a city. Marx has observed that “A house may be large or small; as long as the neighboring houses are likewise small, it satisfies all social requirements for a residence. But let there arise next to the little house a palace, and the little house shrinks to a hut.” (Marx and Engels 1849, quoted in Dittmann and Goebel 2010). There are many mansions in urban areas, and many very wealthy people, so that a typical urbanite, by comparison, is poor and insignificant.

Notably, all these comparisons—against others, standards, and our own past, result in consumption arms race—people want to outcompete others—we want to demonstrate that we are better than others—but such race almost never can be won, end one ends up disappointed and unhappy (Frank 2004, 2005, 2012).

One reason we move to a metropolis such as London, Shanghai, or New York is simply because we want to demonstrate we are better than others (Okulicz-Kozaryn and Valente 2017)—dwellers of big cities feel consistently more proud than dwellers of smaller locations (Balducci and Checchi 2009, Morrison 2016).

Urban way of life increases chances, but not necessarily improves outcomes (for elaboration see Supplementray Online Material (SOM)). But it does increase relative deprivation—more people means more comparisons, and for happiness it is better to be a big fish in small pond (rural area). City stimulates but instead of fulfilment it increases wants and needs (“hedonic treaadmill”)—indeed, many had to leave the city to attain peace Nietzsche and Parkes (2005), Tesson (2013), Thoreau (1995 [1854]).

Indicators of objective well-being are high in urban areas, but subjective well-being is higher in less populated areas (Sirgy 2002, Okulicz-Kozaryn and Valente 2019, Okulicz-Kozaryn 2013). Then people are arguably attracted to cities because it has high objective

wellbeing (QOL): city amenities such as opera houses, but people actually end up with lower happiness than elsewhere.<sup>11</sup> People compare themselves with others who are much richer (Frey and Stutzer 2002, Frey et al. 2008) and, therefore, feel much poorer, while those living in less urban areas do not compare themselves with others as much.

Neighbors act as negatives Luttmer (2005), Firebaugh and Schroeder (2009)—rich neighbors make us unhappy—the denser the area, everything else equal, the more neighbors and more negatives—again, and we tend to make upwards comparisons—people look upwards when making comparisons: wealthier people impose negative external effect on poorer people but not vice versa (Frey and Stutzer 2002)

The most conspicuous consumption or waste<sup>12</sup> tends to take place in metropolitan areas (cities and their extension, suburbs)—for striking examples of urban conspicuousness see Frank (2012).

### 1.3 Livability Theory

Livability theory (Veenhoven 2014, 2000) is a major shift in thinking from the previous theories, and yet it is also based on evolution/genes. Humans as all animals have innate needs—if those needs are satisfied, happiness follows. Human needs notably include those on Maslow hierarchy of needs in figure 1: physiological needs like water, food, sleep; and other needs: e.g., contact with other living organisms (biophilia, social capital, nature, etc) and higher (human) needs e.g., belonging, self-actualization. Then there are attributes of places, environment, or ecology if it is “livable” then happiness follows. Florida conceptualized this as place pyramid in figure 2.

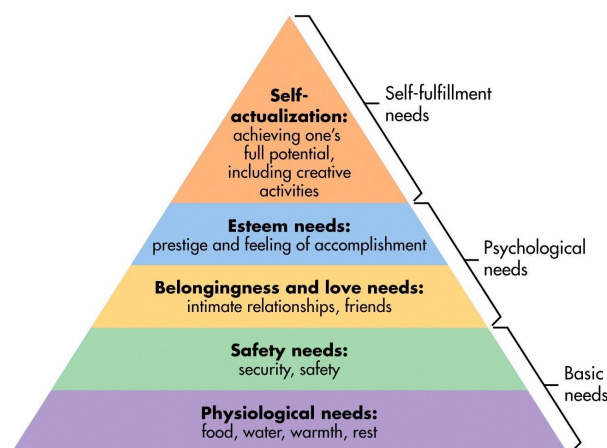


Figure 1: Maslow Pyramid, (Maslow [1954] 1987).

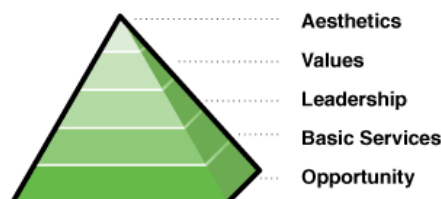


Figure 2: Place Pyramid, (Florida 2008, p 294).

<sup>11</sup>E.g., arguably most popular urban QOL index Mercer ranks Vienna as #1 in the world. Many would wonder why? Opera house, symphony, museums etc are a distinctive feature of Vienna. But so what? Do most people actually use these amenities? Or are they just proud they are around? (Balducci and Checchi 2009, Morrison 2016).

<sup>12</sup>VEBLEN 2 books used these terms interchangeably: the key feature of conspicuousness is waste—wasting something so that it can be shown that one is rich enough to do so

The point is that modern city does not help to satisfy human needs significantly in developed countries; human needs are already satisfied; if anything it was industrial revolution that produced city that helped to satisfy human needs such as shelter and clothing. For instance, humans do have a fundamental need for freedom from air, noise, and light pollutions exemplified in cities. Humans also have a fundamental need for adequate living space without crowding and freedom from consistent stress—cities are stressful (Simmel 1903) and brain-unhealthy (Lederbogen et al. 2011) form of settlement, where mental health suffers (Adli et al. 2017, Pykett et al. 2020, Abrahamyan Empson et al. 2020).

Many cities are not livable because of typical city problems such as poverty and crime; but even the most successful cities are not livable by definition.

(Molotch 1976) states that it is necessary to increase city disamenities to have a sufficient population size as per central place theory (e.g., O'Sullivan 2009, p. 86), to produce city amenities such as opera houses and speculates that it may be perhaps worth it to some degree.<sup>13</sup>, however as per pyramid of needs city endangers more basic human needs than helps to satisfy them (again, at least in developed world). Amenities such as opera houses if anything help with very highest needs such as self-actualization and esthetics, but more basic needs are endangered such as survival—for instance car pollution kills more people than car accidents (Jaffe 2014); likewise social relations, an important human need, are endangered, in turmoil, of lower quality and more distrustful in a city (Wirth 1938, Thrift 2005, Amin 2006, Simmel 1903, Milgram 1970) (Fischer (1995) presents an alternative in his sub-cultural theory).

Quality Of Life (QOL) can be defined as “necessary conditions for happiness” (McCall cited in Veenhoven 2000, p. 2). Human flourishing does not require urban amenities, such as opera houses, large airports, large museums, etc. They are neither necessary nor sufficient for human flourishing.

High density such as that in New York City or Hong Kong usually implies some degree of crowding for most people, which is not livable. For instance, New York City offers 250 sq ft apartments—given that a couple lives there with one child—it is less than 100 sq feet per person. Even more stunningly, some New Yorkers already live in 100 sq feet apartments. There are even so called “cubbyholes” at striking 40 square feet (Charlesworth 2014, Yoneda 2012, Weichselbaum 2013, Velsey 2016, Stevenson and Wu 2019).

Importantly, there are needs and wants (desires)—and much of urban glitz and attraction is about desires (Okulicz-Kozaryn and Valente 2017, Campbell 1981). And so in a way one's happiness in a city is delusional as in Nozick's experience machine (discussed in Brulde 2007).

Inglehart (1997) has recognized an important relationship across countries: the more money the less it matters for swb in figure 3. But the same can be applied to places within a country—the more money in a place, the less it matters for swb.

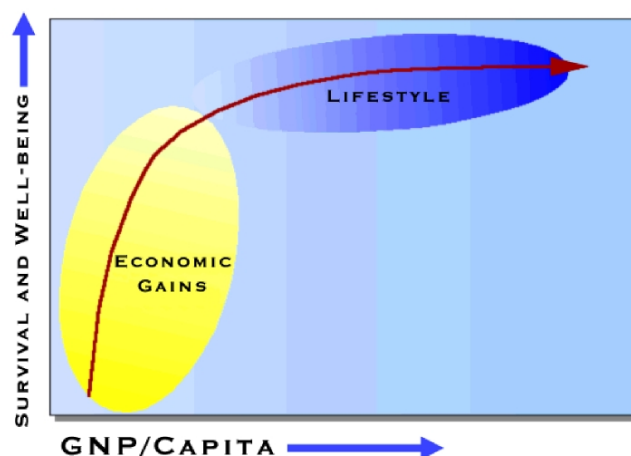


Figure 3: Well-being and income, (Inglehart 1997).

<sup>13</sup>Freud provides a wonderful discussion on civilization and its discontents (Freud et al. 1930).

Income buys happiness up to a point (Frank 2004, 2005, 2012). But experience buys more happiness than things (e.g., Kumar et al. 2014).

Veenhoven (2000) distinguishes between opportunities for good life “life chances” or means and good life itself “life results” or ends: it may appear that if not life results are better in cities, surely life chances are, after all there is much freedom and opportunities in cities. There are. but again, there is also more competition, taller hierarchies, more relative deprivation, more aspirations, and so forth, and they potentially cancel out and outweigh city benefits. Like with salaries and housing costs—you may make couple dozen percents more but housing costs couple hundred percents more.

(Campbell et al. 1976) aspirations do adjust to reality, and there is no other place on earth with more opportunity, inequality and hierarchy than city (Tönnies [1887] 2002, Milgram 1970, Fischer 1995, Glaeser 2011b, O’Sullivan 2009, Campbell 1981).

Freedom: surely cities bestow great deal of freedom on a person TOENNIES, “city air is free” etc; but is it perhaps forgotten that cities also enslave: urban finish and manners, and visual recognition, etc FROM CITY BOOK

AGAIN PER MECHANISM DON’T FORGET from of the 2 recent papers on nature as per JOYE the mechanism is that cities do not seem to kill positive affect but increase negative affect: e.g., restless bored upset lonely depressed (Campbell 1981) also a finding recently confirmed in MY CITIES 2016 paper when metropolis is too big. especially there is ahrp urban-rural divide in evaluation of neighborhood and community (Campbell 1981)

an interesting finding is that urbanities find life frustrating and they think they weren’t able to achieve their full share of happiness (Campbell 1981) this suggests that they either have higher aspirations or lower achievement or both; but given extreme opportunity found in cities (Tönnies [1887] 2002, Milgram 1970, Fischer 1995, Glaeser 2011b, O’Sullivan 2009), it is rather aspirations.

A very important distinctive feature of city life is that of specialization—as opposed to rural area, one has to deeply specialize in the city.

Human density forces differentiation and specialization as already observed by Darwin and Durkheim (Wirth 1938, p. 15). City not only enables, but what is often missed, forces differentiation and specialization, because it’s the only way high density can be supported (e.g., Burgess 1926). And humans, as most other animals, have not evolved to spend about half of their wake time performing a repetitive task—it is against human nature: specialization alienates us from other humans and our nature (Marx 1844, [1867] 2010)—indeed one ideally should be able to “to do one thing today and another tomorrow, to hunt in the morning, fish in the afternoon, rear cattle in the evening, criticize after dinner” (Marx and Engels [1845] 1965)

## 2 Conclusion And Discussion

American intellectuals have been hostile and ambivalent towards urbanism for a reason (White and White 1977).

it is often overlooked that governance per capita costs increase with population size (Molotch 1976)

Urban economists view cities as desirable development—they grow hence they must be good, economists tell us. Glaeser etc; cities are growth machine (Molotch 1976)

to economist utility is about income and consumption or power, dominance and status, not happiness, and accordingly economists advise people to maximize income and consumption, not happiness (Becker and Rayo 2008). status increase utility (Heffetz and Frank 2008)? i guess check if that’s what they say, and cities increase status MY CITY BOOK and ILAN FETISH, and so they should increase utility too

Benjamin and Heffetz (p 2107 2012) “in settings where one alternative involves higher income or more money, our survey respondents are systematically more likely to choose the money alternative than they are likely to predict it will yield higher SWB,” which in English means that people are greedy and prefer money to happiness.

Peck (2016) is good critique of Glaeser’s urban triumphalism, aka celebrity-urbanology or guru-urbanism. Indeed, as Peck argues, Glaeser is colonizing the city with economic rationality/utility maximization. And urbanization in general is alike to colonization, where



most large cities win, and smaller places lose (Rossi 2020).

Peck (2016, p. 2) describes well Glaeser's celebrity-urbanology:

He makes it his business to adopt controversial and attention-grabbing positions, combining uplifting celebrations of urban life, as the pinnacle of human achievement, with the dispensation of sober(ing) advice on the economically conditioned—not preordained—policy options available to cities today.

To unpack it, there are 3 parts: 1) grab attention celebrating city triumph as the pinnacle of human achievement, 2) credit economic principles of productivity and utility maximization for the city's triumph, 3) apply more of ideological (rather than scientific) libertarian neoliberal free market laissez-faire economic axioms if there is any problem with the city.

disussion about optimal city cise from city book and some econs bashing here too

if anything cities do help with commute, the worst thing that person can do for her happiness (in everyday life, aside from war, torture, etc) (Stutzer and Frey 2003, Kahneman et al. 2004)

we have learned yet again with covid19 that spread of infectious disease (bettencourt) is worse in cities

Clearly, a big elephant in the room is what can be done? If cities are harmful for human wellbeing, what is the right course of action. It must be noted that cities are the most environmentally friendly way to house humans—cities are most polluted, but pollute least per capita, a point made by Meyer (2013). So the culprit is overpopulation, measures to curb population could be entertained such as promotion of contraception and taataion, but proper discussion is beyond the scope of this article

For a collection of findings see Ruut Veenhoven's World Database of Happiness (Veenhoven 1995) at <https://worlddatabaseofhappiness.eur.nl>.

Do keep in mind that the above discussion refers to the developed world; in poorest countries, cities actually do help satisfy human needs, and accordingly may increase SWB. In poorest countries, life is often unbearable outside of cities lacking basic necessities such as healthcare and clean water.

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# ONLINE APPENDIX

[note: this section will NOT be a part of the final version of the manuscript, but will be available online instead]

## 3 Intrinsic v Extrinsic Motivations

We know that intrinsic motives increase wellbeing more than extrinsic MY TRANSFORMING GOVT PUB POL paper and (Frey et al. 2008); and there are several speciifc intrinsic aspects (Frey et al. 2008, p. 129):

- the need for relatedness: individuals desire to feel connected to others by love and affection, in particular by having family and freinds and by being in a social setting: we know that city isolates MY city book but also frees TOENNIES and may connect within subgroups FISHER SUBCULTURAL THEORY
- need for competence: individuals want to control the environment and want to experience theselves as capable and effective : more difficult to control in city and more comparisons again better be small pond; on the other jand easier to find maycthing sibgroup THEORY SUBCULTURSL THEORY
- the desire for autonomy: individuals value the experience of being in charge of their actions and being causal: again perhaps easier to be in chage in subrgoup that maches FISHER SUBCULTURAL THEORY and citi si more free TOENNIES, but more difficult to bein chage in bigger environemnt and taller hioerarchy; and city is in many wasy less cuasal URBAN FINISH ETIQUITEER CITE FROM MY BOOK, and othe other hand city bettwe accepts nonconformists TOENNIES

## 4 4 qualities of life

TODO: mover short relevant pieces to swbLivability

have 4 qualities from (Veenhoven 2000) table and inside say urban or rural!

	outer qualities	inner qualities
life chances	livability of environment [Mercer index, population size]	life-ability of the person [N/A]
life results	utility of life [NA]	appreciation of life [place satisfaction, life satisfaction]

**Table 1:** Veenhoven's four qualities of life. Measures used in present study in brackets

and that another table from recent one

Nowhere else there is so much variety and opportunity as in the city (Tönnies [1887] 2002, Milgram 1970, Fischer 1995, Glaeser 2011b, O'Sullivan 2009, Campbell 1981). While life chances are definitely greater in cities, not necessarily life results are greater as well. livability of environment: urban if consumerism; rural if good life; mercer inner appreciation of life: deinetly rural; swb

life abuiltly f persnL can be urban per subsultural urb they:everyone can fins sth, urba air is free; yet life ability is

exeteranl utility of life: urban r rural depending how one understands it

livability can be also called (objective) quality of life, welfare 'level f living' or habitality

utility of life or good life or meaning of life; again do not need opera houses or large intl airports

personal caoapcities or life-ability, capability or life potential: can be in some ways enhanced, say motivating effect of urban cometition or housing prices or diminished: they can also depress a person as opposed to motivate. and city is unhealthy for human brian (Lederbogen et al. 2011); Veenhoven (2000) considers absence of mental defects and 'normal' level of functioning as key for life-ability; on the other hand two other ingredients, autonomy and self actualization are likely to be better in cities.



brock p18 cited in Veenhoven (2000): considers important for best life: degree to which life fits the individual preferences, which should be greatest cities

Veenhoven (2000) enumerated some items under livability umbrella: moderate climate (South European cities should be livable), clean air (smaller cities should be livable), freedom (the larger the city, the more freedom TOENNIE), equality and brother (the larger the city, the more inequality) , wealth, arts and education (Western cities are richer, and larger cities have more arts and education) (Veenhoven 2000). Yet, fragmented city, can be quite cohesive with its neighborhoods as per subclutural urban theory (FISHER).

Cities are heterogenous by definition (WIRTH), especially large multicultural cities like London and Paris are clearly frgamented, and social fragmentation is for Veenhoven the reverse of livability; diversity or hetrogeneity should results in fragemnetation per homophily theory (CITE FROM BRFSS SEG)

appreciation of life is subjective: asw, lsts, happiness

livability is environmneat chances (Veenhoven 2000)

consumerism leads t misery: that kasser book!

(Veenhoven 2000) says most inclusive is swb+lexp; swb lower in urb; lexp if anything also lower in urb: pollutions, stress, and unhealthy to brian (Lederbogen et al. 2011).

urban way of life increases chances, but not necessarily improves outcomes. Furthermore, it always increasesrelative deprivation CITE MICHALOS MDT: more people means more comparisons, and for happiness it is better to be a big fish in small pond (rural area). City stimulates but instead of fulfilment it increases es wants and needs (CITE HEDONC TREADMILL)—see my disst slides guess BRICKMAN.

in fact urbanicity decreases likelihood of achieving top, hoever defined: top, by definition is father away, income, power, and other hierarchy ladders are taller and there is more competition. and livability can be conceptualized as one's position in spciety (Veenhoven 2000).and indeed there is much deprivation and exclusion across various cities, and deprivation and exclusion are livability antonyms for Veenhoven (Veenhoven 2000).