

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

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Urbanization, arguably most dramatic disruption of human habitat, has received surprisingly little theoretical attention from happiness studies in terms of theory. We know that urbanites are less happy, yet we miss theory: we do not know why? 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 each of the 4 happiness theories indicates at least substantial or usually complete happiness disadvantage of cities. This theory article is comprehensive in that it applies all happiness theories to urbanicity.

CITIES, URBAN LIVING, URBANICITY, HAPPINESS THEORIES, XXX TODO ADD TO EBIB AS KEYWORD PAPER-CODE-NAME AND TAG WITH EBIB KEYWORDS

Cities are not just buildings, it is a way of life (Wirth 1938). In 1800 a mere 1.7% of the world population lived in cities larger than 100k (Davis 1955). 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 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 humans need cities because humans are not self sufficient (e.g., O'Sullivan 2009), that is labor specialization works best at high population and density, and cities through agglomeration economies increase productivity and ultimately Gross Domestic Product (GDP), as an end-in-itself osullivan galeser.

but we dont need more GDP, in fact a reasonable argument can be made, 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 qol and swb Stiglitz et al. (2009), Diener (2009). For a collection of finding see Ruut Veenhoven's World Database of Happiness (Veenhoven 1995) at <https://worlddatabaseofhappiness.eur.nl>.

There is an apparent "urban unhappiness paradox". People flock to cities and yet people in cities are less happy: across the developed world, largest cities are least happy places: nyc, london, tornoto boilerplate etc. It is especially a puzzle for economists, who then try to cherry-pick data to argue that people are happier in cities glaeser burger. economic theory clearly does not explain the phenomenon as it predicts higher SWB in cities as there is more money, utility, and syupposedly rational people urbanize.

But 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 o places for jobs (Campbell 1981).CITE THAT economist from one of the 2 recent ones. Companies locate most jobs in metropolitan areas and so people are forced to move there.

just like with industrial revolution—much of population is forced<sup>1</sup> into urban (and suburban) areas in order to produce more for capitalists harvey city book and (Molotch 1976) and engels depiction of the city. Many others think chose city consciously, but are driven by suconscious size fetish CITE my pap.

it is of paramount importance to figure out what cities do to human condition; the question is long standing and many have studied it, notably classical US urban sociolohists such as wirth and park, but also simmel and toennies

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<sup>1</sup>they are not block slaves but wage slaves CITE

I thank XXX. All mistakes are mine.

there is a paramount need for study of urbanism-wellbeing, some even suggest a new field eg 'neurourbanism' (Adli et al. 2017). This study is a continuation of <<<BLIND FOR PEER REVIEW>>>

And there is a critical gap: there is no dedicated and focused study of happiness theories of urbanicity.

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 each of the 5 happiness theories indicates at least substantial or usually complete happiness disadvantage of cities.

## 1 Urbanicity and the 5 happiness theories

The four happiness theories are:

- – genes/evolution/set point/adaptation/adjustment/hedonic treadmill (Brickman et al. 1978)
- - happiness just a motivator (Carver and Scheier 1990)
- – comparison/discrepancies (Michalos 1985)
- ?- needs/livability (Veenhoven and Ehrhardt 1995)

In what follows each of them is briefly described and applied to urbanicity. The first 2 are related and discussed together.<sup>2</sup>

### 1.1 genes, evolution, set point, adaptation, adjustment, happiness as motivator, hedonic treadmill

Genes/set point theories are typically overlooked or even negated, Schnittker (2008) is one of few exceptions. Humans' behavior, as of any animal, is dictated by genes (Dawkins 2006, e.g.,).

It is notable that humans share with a chimp more than 95% of genes<sup>3</sup> Neither homo sapiens nor chimps evolved to live at high population size nor density, i.e., a city. As hunters-gatherers, when our natural evolutionary habitat has formed for tens of thousands of years, humans have lived in bands of 50-80 people Maryanski and Turner (1992). 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 again, 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). Nature, not city, is our home, not just a place to visit Pretty (2012). Humans evolved to live in natural environment, not in a mixture of asphalt, concrete, steel, and glass, i.e., in a city.

To summarize, the critical point is that it is not in human nature to live in a city.<sup>4</sup>

Genes also are the foundation of so called set-point or adaptation theory: 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 another 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"

<sup>2</sup>To some degree all are related and all, as everything else, is based on genes/evolution, but the first 2 are more directly related.

<sup>3</sup><https://www.genome.gov/15515096/2005-release-new-genome-comparison-finds-chimps-humans-very-similar-at-dna-level>.

<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, ?, ?, ?, ?, ?). Hence of all the influence 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>a see homeostasis, eg 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: like the one in ebib on his suicide in ann arbor

Human adaptation is astonishing indeed: winning millions in a lottery, losing limbs, etc about half of world population live on less than 5\$ per day cite and they somehow manage and don't commit suicide; people can adapt to just about anything.<sup>6</sup>

we know that adaptation is not full, for instance people do not adapt fully to unemployment or a British guy, unexpected death of a child (cited in ?) etc

But people do adapt to some degree. Then the city allure is overrated. People often seem to be attracted to cities not just by jobs THAT ECONOMIST I THINK PIECE THAT PEOPLE MOVE FOR JOBS (Campbell 1981), but also by amenities—opera houses, museums, etc (Campbell 1981),

—then probably expected happiness is higher than experienced happiness CITE Kahneman, and it may help to explain the apparent paradox or massive rampant urbanization and urban unhappiness at the same time. Surely, by the same mechanism, people would adapt to smaller places too, but then why pay more for city life.

People would probably stay rural if they could, but they were forced to cities by jobs (Campbell 1981), Today Americans prefer rural setting but close to city so that they have access to jobs and urban amenities FUGUIT x2 +that recent YouGov poll from city book.

Happiness is just a motivator (Carver and Scheier 1990): it is a critical and largely overlooked theory. Like set-point/adaptation, it also closely derives from genes/evolution. SWB merely signals that task at hand has been accomplished, then it dissipates, so that the signal is that I should move to another task.

If a person was perfectly happy all the time, she would not accomplish much, like a heroin addict. Happiness as 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>7</sup> A problem with that is that it's all too easy to find oneself on a hamster wheel accomplishing tasks until one lies on a deathbed and wishes one didn't work so hard—one of the top regrets of the dying is "CITE PROPERLY"

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 pond—reference line is higher in city; also cite Luttmer and Firebaugh and see MDT in next section

and we tend to make upwards comparisons CITE

there are many more tasks in the city and one cannot ever accomplish all of them, because there are always more and more.

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 Nietzsche Zarathustra

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 and recently confirmed by Lederborg

Cities stimulate and overstimulate human nervous system SIMMEL LEDERBORG—one feels energetic, possibly hectic in the city—urban environment gives one a quick short lived excitement boosts from its towers, neons, shopping windows and then comes down and then off to another one Steve Pile and my fetish book —city gives you a boost just like consumption, and then go back, but it doesn't last. The 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) page number?

<sup>6</sup>And yet the distributions do differ—these slides from Diener just goog Diener happiness distribution—almost non-overlapping! see next section per livability theory

<sup>7</sup>also like the earlier equation (Carver 2003): swb=achievement/experience—expectations/aspirations if rate of progress 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 we're not designed to be happy but to survive and reproduce! (Euba 2019)

various models (Carver 2003) 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

indeed an urbanite has a fuller, more experiential and more challenging life, more utility (money or consumption), the urban challenge can potentially build a better fuller human being. And yet such an opportunity seems to be open for few, an upper class; majority won't realize their potential toiling to just survive. And again this is more of satisfying higher needs on the Maslow pyramid. Lower needs come first.

MAYBE MV SOMEWHERE 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—the only way to support high density CITE FROM recent paper and specialization alienates us from other humans and our nature CITE Marx; yes

Genes and evolution have bad rep in soc sci bc of Eugenics social darwinism and so forth,<sup>8</sup>, but the pendulum seem to have swung too far in the other direction (Pinker 2003, Haidt 2012) , we downplay the genes, and some would outright deny they exist, eg one reviewer told me that race is purely socially constructed, no genetic component to it.

## 1.2 comparison/discrepancies MDT

Multiple discrepancy theory (Michalos 1985) states that happiness is function of:

1. social comparison, eg co-workers, high school friends, relatives
2. comparison to various standards, eg 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 eg losing may be more felt than gaining (Kahneman and Tversky 1979)

Per this theory, clearly city is a negative influence on happiness—visual recognition and social media—CP rephrase boilerplate from a recent one, etiquette/urban finish; 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 comparisons

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.

Karl Marx has observed long time ago 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.”<sup>9</sup> 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 BOB FRANK

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 my city fetish paper

## 1.3 livability theory

livability theory (Veenhoven 2014, 2000) is a major shift in thinking from the previous theories, and yet also is based on genes. Humans as all animals have innate needs, if those needs are satisfied, happiness follows. Humans needs include those on Maslow hierarchy of needs in figure 1: physiological needs like water, food, sleep; and other needs: eg contact with other living organisms (biophilia, social capital, nature, etc) and higher (human) needs eg belonging, self-actualization.

<sup>8</sup>Not everywhere, eg Russian sociology has incorporated evolution CITE THAT REV

<sup>9</sup>Marx and Engels 1849, quoted in Dittmann and Goebel (2010).

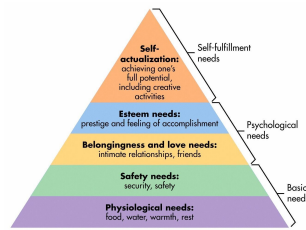


Figure 1: Maslow Pyramid, (?).

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.

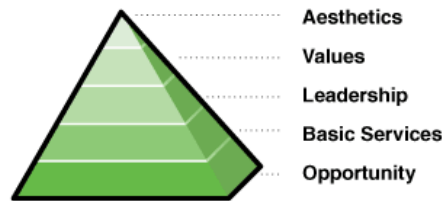


Figure 2: Place Pyramid, (Florida 2008, p 294).

Modern city does not help to satisfy human needs 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 clothing etc

humans do have needs for freedom from air, noise, and light pollutions exemplified in cities; in general cities are more stressful SIMMEL, and unhealthy for human brain LEDERBORG

Many cities are not livable because of typical city problems such as poverty and crime; but even successful cities are not livable in many ways—cities by definition are most congested and (noise and air) polluted areas where humans live.

(Molotch 1976) states that it is necessary to increase city disamenities to have a sufficient population size as per central place theory CITE, to produce city amenities such as opera houses and speculates that it may be perhaps worth it to some degree<sup>10</sup> ; however as per pyramid of needs city endangers more basic human needs to help to satisfy, amenities such as opera houses if anything help with very highest needs such as self-actualization and aesthetics, but more basic needs are endangered such as survival—by one estimate car pollution kills more people than car accidents; likewise social relations, an important human need, are endangered, in turmoil, of lower quality, more distrustful in a city (with Amin Simmel and Thrift? and that guy in science in 70s on trust I guess Milgram)

High density such as that in New York City or Hong Kong often implies crowding, which is not livable: New York offers some 250 sq feet 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. Some apartments or “cubbyholes” are even smaller at striking 40 square feet CITE properly put into local bib

Importantly, there are needs and wants (desires)—and much of urban glitz and attraction is about desires CITE MY FETISH (Campbell 1981),

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.

<sup>10</sup>Freud provides a wonderful discussion on civilization and its discontents

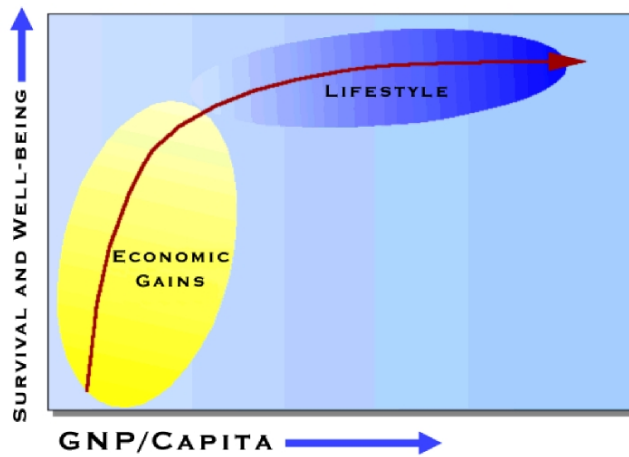


Figure 3: Well-being and income, (Inglehart 1997).

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

!!! srch johs for they art; srch goog scholar for urban wellbieng theory

## 2 Conclusion And Discussion

American intellextuals have been hostile and ambivalent towards urbanism for a reason white and white

it is often overlooked that governance percapita costs increse with population size (Molotch 1976)

AND other cool points from milotoh

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

if anything cities do help with commute, the worst thing that personcan 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 infectionus 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 envirnmentally 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 entratained such as promotion of contraception and taataion, but proper discussion is beyond the scope of thsi tehory article

TODO: have separate som-r.tex as opposed to having it below; and in paper say see supplementary material as opposed to see appendix!

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