

The future of the city essay sample



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The article “ The Future of the City” was written by Leo Hollis, and published in Aeon Magazine in 2013. Hollis researches the problem of the city vulnerability caused by various natural disasters. Hollis argues that a huge majority of cities have no future since they lack resilience. The topic of urban resilience has always been interesting to me, therefore, I decided to choose this article, especially since I am a positive supporter of environment protection, and by writing about this article I hope to call my readers’ attention to the problems in our environment. This lack of resilience is often explained by the lack of the necessary infrastructure and technologies but Hollis argues that the main problem is the absence of well-developed social communities in the cities. He concludes that instead of investing into engineering and technologies, it is far more effective to build communities where all members help each other. Though the approach offered by Hollis has some common sense, it is not supported by other scholars researching the problem of resilience and sustainability of the cities.

Kelly Shannon, for instance, states that eco-engineering is the main precondition of city resilience and urban development. Without introducing new methods of planning and design, cities remain to be vulnerable to natural disasters, such as floods and hurricanes. After Shannon analyzed the historic patterns of city development, Shannon comes to the conclusion that water is the most important resource influencing the process of city growing and decline. In other words, the development of levee systems should become the main objective of city designing, and it is related to the concept of “ integrated resource water management” (Shannon 164). According to Shannon, the key to a successful future for our cities lies in “ decentralized

and proactive approach of detention, retention and recharge which protects the natural water cycle and ecological system by the introduction of local source control” (Shannon 164).

The idea of “ integrated resource water management” is supported by Lisa Sun who argues that engineering plays a decisive role in the city resilience. She states that engineering does not need to require a lot of money or efforts, but nevertheless, can provide people with beneficial results. One of such results is “ building a series of roads that run perpendicular to the coast” (Sun 2157). Such design is exceptionally important for the waterfront cities having an increased risk of natural disasters. It will allow communities to reduce risks and will prevent them from floods or other natural disasters while keeping an access to roads and utility infrastructures. Sun also emphasizes the importance of an effective levee system that is built according to the principles of eco-engineering. While both Shannon and Sun point out the importance of managing water resources as one of the most important factors of city development, they also pay attention to the roads problems.

Generally speaking, the questions of road infrastructure are widely discussed by many scholars. In the recent research conducted by Spickermann et al (2013) the problem of mobility in the urban areas is highlighted as the most urgent one. The authors introduce the concept of multimodal mobility and indicate that: [t]he contemporary pressures faced by cities cannot be dealt with by the infrastructural systems and legacies often developed over the 20th century in many western contexts. The socio-technical system of multimodal mobility has the potential to solve urban mobility challenges.

Multimodal mobility combines both private and public transport modes, thereby capitalizing on the benefits of various systems. (1) Therefore, besides urban resilience and sustainability, researches are bringing up the questions of engineering solutions and road infrastructure, which are also cutting-edge problems of modern urban planning.

According to the authors mentioned above, the number of cities and people living in them will increase in the nearest decade. It means that cities face an urgent need to innovate the existing infrastructure. This can be done only in case of developing new technologies and making new investments into urban planning and infrastructure of the cities. This approach is supported by the concept of “night city—an innovative model of the city based on the system of resource economizing” (Zaki & Ngesan, 2013). In general, it is possible to state that contrary to Leo Hollis who emphasizes the importance of social changes and community development, such authors as Lisa Sun, Kelly Shannon, Alexander Spickermann, Saniah Ahmad Zaki and many others point out the importance of infrastructure modernization and implementation of the principles developed by eco-engineering. It will allow cities to become less vulnerable to natural disasters and will increase their resilience. In my opinion, eco-engineering can become the straw that will save both present and future cities.

References

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