

# Example of triumph of the city: book review

[Technology](#), [Development](#)



In the following book, the author considers the factors that contribute to the success of the city, as well as explores factors that can lead to its decay. The book examines how cities became one of the most influential forces of the modern world. The author calls the cities “our species` greatest invention” (p. 36) and points out that the main factors that contributed to this invention are proximity and density. Proximity, or closeness of space, makes people who live in the city more resourceful and creative. Also, proximity is linked with the high level of productivity giving rise to a bigger level of specialization. The author explains that although different cities had different “secret of success”, they all have a common foundation – benefit of proximity that allows a city to prosper, bringing the minds of different people together. Thus, the one common feature inherent to all cities lies in its ability to attract people and make them collaborate: “The strength that comes from human collaboration is the central truth behind civilization`s success and the primary reason why cities exist” (p. 15).

Modern cities face a huge amount of problems: sanitation, crime, poverty. However, the poverty is, in fact, not a problem; it is a sign of progress. The author`s contention is that cities do not make people poor. On the contrary, cities attract those people who live in poverty in rural areas. For them, cities are the land of opportunity, the opportunity to make a living. At the same time, a city “is failing” (p. 81) if the poor are not able to use that opportunity and make themselves richer.

Although such cities as New York, London or Paris are bright examples of the modern successful city, they all have one common problem: a high living cost due to high demand and low supply. The construction of new buildings

in those cities is severely regulated. For example, the Parisian regulations impose limitations on the height of all buildings in the city. There is also a strict control which aims to preserve old, historical buildings from being destroyed so that they could be replaced by new and more efficient buildings. This reflects poorly on the real estate prices and forces people to move away from the cities and live in the suburbs. In order to solve this problem, there has to be a major shift in the construction policies of big cities. Thus, the author makes one of the central suggestions of his book – “build up, not out”, meaning to build high-rise buildings or even skyscrapers which occupy less physical space but are able to provide more living space: “We must stop idolizing home ownership which favors suburban tract homes over high-rise apartments, and stop romanticizing rural villages.” (p. 15) And, of course, this density would positively reflect on the overall progress of the city: limited space makes people interact and cooperate, giving rise to new ideas and inventions:

It seems that the merit of this book is in its strong argument that explains the secret of success of modern cities, as well suggests the ways to improve the development and progress of cities in the future. The author grasped the essential features that unite all prosperous cities of our time, debunked common stereotypes and outlined the solution to the most pressing problems cities face in our days. At the same time, the author pointed out a lot of controversial ideas, particularly the idea that we should abandon our suburban houses and move to the cities to live in the limited space of apartments in skyscrapers. Of course, this would be great for the economic development and further progress of the city, as well as for the environment.

What the author fails to see here is a so-called human factor. From the psychological point, living in the large cities might be very depressing. Constant rush, excessive noises and tumult may have a negative impact on the psychological health of the city inhabitants. That is why many people try to escape from the hectic life of the city to the quite suburbs. And I do not think that anybody can deny them this right.

I would recommend this book to all those who are interested in social sciences, primarily economics and sociology. However, the book would also be a priceless gift for all those who are interested in the phenomenon of the modern-time urbanism and its consequences for the progress of our civilization.