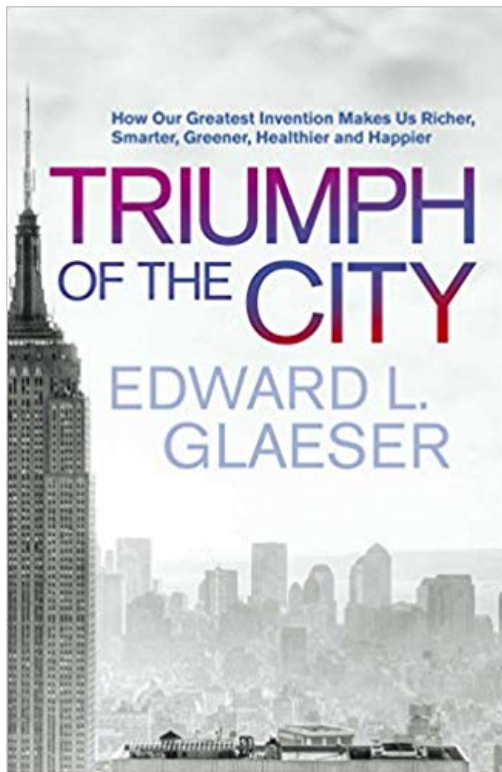


# Triumph of the City: How Our Greatest Invention Makes Us Richer, Smarter, Greener, Healthier and Happier *by* Edward L. Glaeser



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In 2009, for the first time in history, more than half the world's population lived in cities. In a time when family, friends and co-workers are a call, text, or email away, 3.3 billion people on this planet still choose to crowd together in skyscrapers, high-rises, subways and buses. Not too long ago, it looked like our cities were dying, but in fact they boldly threw themselves into the information age, adapting and evolving to become the gateways to a globalized and interconnected world. Now more than ever, the well-being of human society depends upon our knowledge of how the city lives and breathes. Understanding the modern city and the powerful forces within it is the life's work of Harvard urban economist Edward Glaeser, who at forty is hailed as one of the world's most exciting urban thinkers. Travelling from city to city, speaking to planners and politicians across the world, he uncovers questions large and small whose answers are both counterintuitive and deeply significant. Should New Orleans be rebuilt? Why can't my nephew afford an apartment in New York? Is London the new financial capital of the world? Is my job headed to Bangalore? In THE TRIUMPH OF CITIES, Glaeser takes us around the world and into the mind of the modern city from Mumbai to Paris to Rio to Detroit to Shanghai, and to any number of points in between to reveal how cities think, why they behave in the manners that they do, and what wisdom they share with the people who inhabit them.



## Reviews of the **Triumph of the City: How Our Greatest Invention Makes Us Richer, Smarter, Greener, Healthier and Happier** by Edward L. Glaeser

fr0mTheSkY

Perhaps you live in a large city. If not, you have certainly wondered about life there. "Triumph Of the City" answers all your questions: why they succeed (educated/skilled people and diverse industries); why they fail (not enough entrepreneurs and one dominant industry); why they look so different (do people mostly walk? Drive? Take the bus?); what are sprawl's benefits (space and time) and costs (pollution.) You find out why in a city you are more likely to eat gourmet food, be pick-pocketed, or meet your ideal mate. You also make counter-intuitive discoveries: the movement against building in the coastal California actually makes the world browner, not greener.

I greatly admire Edward Glaeser. He revived the field of urban economics, almost single-handedly. He has investigated every aspect of city life. He masters theory, statistics, and history. He is not ideological. All his qualities transpire here.

Yet The book reads easily. The economics and statistics are clearly explained. Examples abound: New York, Detroit, Houston, Milan, Mumbai, Rio, and then some.

As a non-ideologue, Glaeser heaps both scorn and praise on both markets and governments. Want to make house affordable? Let developers build up and out (in passim he criticizes the "eyes on the street" theory.) Do not look down on suburbia: many embraces it because life is cheaper and better than in the center. But you need governments to take care of public health, congestion and global warning.

Glaeser endorses water utilities, congestion taxes and some infrastructure. He lambasts the mortgage-interest deduction, most building restrictions (including for Conservancy and Preservation) and most efforts at urban renewal, like conference centers.) On the eternal struggle over the merits of centralized versus decentralized government he takes a middle ground: different levels are needed to look over each others' shoulders. I appreciated such nuanced views

This is the best pop-econ book I have read. Highly recommended

Nirn

This book is a hymn to the civic value and importance of city life...For it is Glaeser's contention that it is city life, where smart people gather to live and work, that is the mother of invention, productivity and entrepreneurship and that these three factors, above all, are the sine qua non of great cities and great civic life.

Yes, successful cities need other basic things like clean water, good schools, alert and aggressive policing, an abundance of good housing options, safe and attractive public places, and a pro business, pro development public sector, but it is the gathering together in close proximity of large numbers of bright, entrepreneurial people that is the ultimate life-source of great urban living....Ultimately, for Glaeser, it is great wealth that makes for great cities. New York, Boston and Houston are - each for partially different reasons - the exemplar cities of his thesis. LA, though he doesn't say it, would seem to be the anti-city of his thesis.

This is a wonderful book..full of engaging and interesting facts...that builds to a compelling thesis about the value and importance of great cities, and of the bedrock foundational conditions underlying their greatness.

Xmatarryto

Glaeser writes extremely well for an economist. The book offers plenty of data and statistics, yet they are offered in a easy to comprehend way and without ruining the pleasant rhythm of the book. The book might be seem a bit outdated, yet it still rings true on most topics. Would love to hear more from Glaeser on the current state of San Francisco and Seattle.

Last, the author makes some compelling arguments for high rise buildings, but I am still not giving up on old buildings.

Fordrellador

This book offers some interesting narrative on the history of cities, but Glaeser's arguments about the importance of cities in the modern world fall a little flat. His historical perspective is compelling, largely due to the fact that he is able to give real life examples of cities throughout history to bolster his narrative. The main gist of his argument is that cities bring people together, and it is only because of this that civilization can advance. While this might have been true historically, I do not necessarily believe that this will remain true of civilization in the future.

For example, he argues that telecommunication and technology cannot replace face-to-face interaction, but this is not necessarily true. More and more people work from home, and some studies have demonstrated that these people are actually more productive than those who are in a face-to-face office environment. I think that this type of interaction will become more pronounced as technology advances, eventually eliminating the need for a centralized office environment altogether.

Glaeser is more successful with his economic arguments, which makes sense, since he is an economist. However, he relies too heavily on correlation to prove his points, and we all know that correlation does not necessarily equate to causation. When he delves into environmentalism, his arguments just seem tacked on and unsupported in order to add a PC chapter on climate change. How stuffing more and more people into an urban setting without addressing the underlying problem of population growth makes little sense. His arguments are solely based upon carbon emissions as the issue.

Overall, this is not a bad book, but it is not a great book either. The historical bits are more interesting than the persuasive bits. It is a bit longer than necessary and jumps around without clear structure. I also have a major issue with him not directly citing his sources throughout the book via footnotes or endnotes. Instead, he has a section of sources at the end that aren't linked to anything in particular, so actually fact-checking some of his statistics or suppositions is a fairly difficult endeavor, as if he were intentionally trying to obfuscate his sources.

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