THE WELL-TEMPERED CITY. What Modern Science, Ancient Civilizations and Human Nature Teach Us About the Future of Urban Life. Edited by Jonathan F. P. Rose

We all know that people tend to live in cities. Recent United Nations population data clearly shows that urbanization is a growing phenomenon. In fact, the increasing concentration of population in cities has led to the emergence of mega-cities. 2015 data suggest that 30 cities already have more than 10 million inhabitants; in 1950, just 30% of the world population was living in urban areas. Today the same figure is around 56%, and this percentage is supposed to reach 68% in 2050. Consequently, two out of three inhabitants will live in a city in the next decades.

If we look at the most developed regions, these percentages are even larger. Recently, research on cities became increasingly sophisticated. In fact, we know much more about city size and urban growth patterns (Henderson, Squires, Storeygard, & Weil, 2018) We also know that, throughout history, cities meant prosperity and wealth. Evidence is clear about the large number of opportunities that are available to city dwellers. Cities attract human capital and innovation; they are more productive, and urban residents tend to be both healthier and happier (Glaeser, Gottlieb, & Ziv, 2016). However, we also know that cities are also problematic places to be. They can be congested and polluted, crime rates are typically higher in cities, and the latter may lack affordable housing and face neighbourhoods' segregation problems. These are just a few examples of why cities (or some areas within cities) could also be bad places. Thus, there is room to improve the knowledge we have about how cities work, while also delivering solutions to apply when cities are in trouble.

The well-tempered city: What modern science, ancient civilizations and human nature teach us about the future of urban life does a good job in this direction. This excellent contribution aims at understanding the origins of cities, their evolution and, more specifically, many of the challenges that cities are facing these days. Clearly, the author picked out a highly relevant and up to date topic. The book, nearly 500 pages long, makes an easy read, even for a non-specialist in the urban economics field, and deals with the hot topics currently discussed in the academic but also in the public policy forums. The author introduces the reader to many disciplines that easily flow from one page to the other. He approaches issues related to the origin of cities or climate change through social

networks and big data without forgetting urban income inequality. All these topics are introduced in a very rigorous, but at the same time, pleasant way. It is likewise very interesting to see how the author illustrates the different parts of each chapter with examples of cities all over the continents in the world.

It is also worth stressing how the author organises the contents of the book to be able to include all the different approaches mentioned before. This is not an easy task: to accomplish this endeavour, the author goes back to Johann Sebastian Bach, the classical composer who in the first half of the eighteenth century wrote *The well tempered clavier* . In that splendid and innovative piece, Bach created a system of tuning notes totally new if compared to the former system accepted for centuries. The book is inspired by that musical composition and the author tells us about the 'tempered city' that has to fulfil five main qualities: (i) coherence; (ii) circularity; (iii) resilience; (iv) community; and (v) compassion. After the introduction, the author organizes the rest of the chapters around these five characteristics. First, '*coherence* ' is about the origins and the shape of cities. The author gives a master lesson of the history of cities and how ancient urban areas were organized (from the first Mesopotamian communities through Mayan civilizations and Islamic cities, to Hanseatic league cities). In all these cases, cities follow a more or less successful urban plan.

Later on, well into the twentieth century, the transport revolution changed the traditional city organization and spurred the suburban model. In the twenty-first century, new technologies are again changing the shape of cities. In the book, smart growth and big data are introduced as the current opportunities for cities to be better organized. The second principle is '*circularity* '. In this case the author introduces in a very informative way and with many examples the idea of the city as the main consumer of resources (energy and water). He also discusses how cities can at the same time be efficient and sustainable. The third principle, '*resilience* ', deals about climate change and how cities may find creative solutions to face it. The author talks about parks and gardens but also about green buildings. The fourth principle, i.e. '*community* ', has to do with the density of cities, and consequently how their residents socialize in their neighbourhoods and the associated benefit of social networks and social capital. In this case we learn about cognitive ecology, prosperity, income (in) equality and even happiness. Finally, the author guides us to the idea of the '*compassion* ' of cities. The last pages of the book are devoted to understanding how cities could be a better place for people.

Glaeser, E.L., J.D. Gottlieb, O. Ziv (2016), Unhappy cities, *Journal of Labor Economics*, 34, 129-182.

Henderson, V., T Squires, A. Storeygard and D. Weil (2018) The Global Spatial Distribution of Economic Activity: Nature, History, and the Role of Trade, *Quarterly Journal of Economics* (forthcoming).