

Bright lights, big airports – what's not to like?

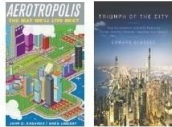
CITIES FROM B1

of culture, he argues, but fests of happiness. The more urban a country is, on average, the happier its citizens, according to research Glaser cites.

Crucially, too, cities offer a pathway to the middle class for immigrants and the rural poor. Concentrated poverty has always looked bad, whether in Chicago or Kinshasa, but the situation is almost always grimmer in destitute rural areas. (Another new book, *Arrival City: How the Largest Migration in History is Reshaping Our World*), offers a more ethnographic look at what those multi-generational rural-to-urban transitions look like in places such as Mumbai and Chongqing.)

Not long ago, Glaser's pro-city stance would have come across as more contrarian than it does now. After all, Americans are returning to cities — or, to be precise, to some cities. They're embracing Minneapolis, Houston, Boston and Washington if not, to put it mildly, Detroit, which lost 1 million people between 1950 and 2008. Since 2000, Glaser writes, Americans have actually been willing to pay a penalty, in wages, for the privilege of living in the most vibrant urban centers. (Illustrating statistics such as these are a strength of the book.) That's a sharp reversal from the '70s, when companies essentially had to bribe people to work downtown.

We should want people to reembrace cities, Glaser thinks, for ethical reasons that go beyond an appreciation for Kobe beef, cultural elan and entrepreneurial verve. For one thing, there may be no other way to achieve sustainable growth. The average suburban household consumes roughly one-fourth more electricity than the average urban household, Glaser observes. (David Owen made a



Reading these books serially is like spending the afternoon at the Smithsonian, then going clubbing with smart people.

similar argument a couple of years ago in his book *'Green Metropolis'*). And such averages mask great differences between cities. A household in San Francisco emits 60 percent less carbon than one in Memphis, because of the latter city's sprawling design.

Yet a daunting array of policies and circumstances militates against luring people back from the suburbs, including poor urban schools, artificially low gas taxes and the home-mortgage tax deduction, whose generosity grows with the size of the house you buy.

Whole shelves of books have been

written about each of those subjects, so it's hard to knock Glaser for turning scattershot when it comes to policy recommendations. He endorses a gas tax that takes into account the ecological harm caused by driving, tolls to reduce congestion, and school vouchers that would include urban and suburban districts.

His beto note, however, is the overregulation of land use in cities, which he believes is preventing appropriately dense development and thereby inflating housing prices. There is too much "not in my back yard" sentiment against building skyscrapers, he thinks, and too many untouchable historic districts that aren't all that historic. Jane Jacobs was a saint to many people for championing small-scale New York neighborhoods; to Glaser, she was a queen of unintended consequences because restrictions on development, inspired by her writings, have thrown housing supply and demand hopelessly out of whack, limiting available housing and turning large swaths of New York into playgrounds for the wealthy.

But Glaser is not entirely consistent on this point. He reluctantly concludes that the French are correct to ban tall buildings throughout downtown Paris because of the city's historic grandeur. But that's quite a concession, if such a pro-aesthetic, anti-economic judgment can be made on such a large scale there, why not, to a lesser degree, elsewhere, in the kind of neighborhoods Jacobs championed? Why should downtown Paris become a museum but New York's Upper West Side a spontaneous forest of high-rises? To be fair, Glaser is not against all neighborhood preservation, just a large proportion of it. And, also to be fair, the Upper West Side could stand a few more tall buildings.

If Glaser is coolly analytical, Kasarda and Lindsay are pumped to tell you about the New New Thing. The division of labor that produced *'Aerotropolis'* is noteworthy: Lindsay was basically the writer, while Kasarda was the guiding spirit, providing the intellectual framework and dropping in, Buddha-like, to sprinkle aphoristic commentary. (The book's genesis was a magazine profile by Lindsay of Kasarda, a business professor.)

What is an aerotropolis? It's "the urban incarnation of [the] physical Internet," the authors say. It "isn't necessarily a city but a superconductor, a piece of infrastructure promising zero resistance to anyone wanting to set up shop there." Or to be plodding about it, it's a city with a well-integrated airport.

To his credit, Lindsay recognizes the squishiness of the concept. Older cities, such as Chicago, New York and London, have much-used airports, of course — but these are deemed ill-suited for the modern economy, too hemmed in, too much under the thumb of hidebound politicians. Dallas/Fort Worth International Airport, on the other hand, is sort of a proto-aerotropolis: It has five times the surface area of LAX, and some 2,000 companies are located in Las Colinas, a corporate-centric planned community nearby. But DFW and its environs evolved organically, instead of springing fully formed from the brow of a business guru. (Dallas is another accidental near-aerotropolis.)

Closer to the ideal are Louisville and Memphis, home to the main UPS and FedEx sorting centers, respectively. If you want to ship an eBay or Amazon, your stuff probably passes through those hubs. With Kasarda serving as consultant, the Philippines built a rural airport complex, with a FedEx hub as the main economic engine, into which 100 foreign

firms pumped \$2.5 billion, the authors report. It's been responsible for as much as \$1.3 billion annually in export sales, they say.

The aerotropolis is basically an economic concept — hence Kasarda's presumably lucrative consulting gigs. Yet the authors seem to also be saying that a growing number of people want to live near airports; one of Kasarda's "laws" is that online communication counterintuitively leads to more, not less, travel. But until jets are replaced by something quieter, housing that's really close to airports will remain undesirable. So what's new here?

For the most part, the aerotropolis comes across as something that city fathers hunger for but that ever remains outside their grasp. That leaders had hoped to build an aerotropolis in the dismal Cobia Swamp, near Bangkok; the overthrow of a stragglant scuttled that dream. The fate of Korea's New Songdo City, built from scratch on a man-made island off Incheon, remains uncertain.

Yet, just when you're inclined to dismiss the aerotropolis thesis as just more "flat world"-style, business-book hype, you come across a fact that makes you prick up your ears. For example, China plans to build 100 new airports by 2020, at a cost of \$62 billion (and it's not going to let a few dozen villages, or human rights, stand in the way). Embrace the jargon term "aerotropolis" or not. But such a development can't help but reconfigure the world economy in unforeseen ways that may indeed warrant some hype.

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Listening to every No. 1. Ever.
By Jesse Rifkin

From "Blue Moon" to "Roses Are Red" to "Deep Purple" to "Paint It Black" to "Green Tambourine" to "Black and Yellow," 1,001 songs, as of last week, have topped the Billboard Hot 100 chart in the United States since its inception in 1958. And I've listened to them all.

Just before Christmas, I went to YouTube and listened to "Poor Little Fool" by Ricky Nelson, which hit No. 1 in August 1958, during President Dwight Eisenhower's second term. A few weeks ago, I finished with "E.T." by Katy Perry featuring Kanye West, a song Nelson never could have imagined — synthesizers, computerized drum beats, references to spaceships and a title that pays homage to Steven Spielberg's 1982 blockbuster film. In between, I heard musical magnificence and bubble-gum banality. I heard touchstones of 20th-century pop such as the Beatles' "Let It Be" (1970) and forgettable one-hit wonders such as "Pop Muzik" by M (1979) — in my humble opinion, the worst song on the list.

So, what did I learn from listening to this entire catalogue in chronological order?

Women got the respect

Aretha Franklin wanted. As women moved from the home into the workplace, song lyrics mirrored this social restructuring. Peggy March proclaimed "I Will Follow Him" in 1963 is a far cry from Franklin demanding "Respect" just four years later. The wedding romanticized by the Browns in 1959's "The Three Bells" seemed staid long before Beyonce called out, "All the single ladies, now put your hands up" in 2008. The Chiffons' 1963 hit "He's So Fine" — "If I were a queen, and he asked me to leave my throne, I'll do anything that he asked" — morphed into Helen Reddy declaring "I am woman, hear me roar" in 1972.

The sense of No. 1 artists also reflected the shift from traditional gender roles. Only six of the first 50 No. 1 songs were sung by women. Half of the most recent 50 put a lady behind the mike.



Aretha Franklin

Message songs are always in.

In 1968, a U.S.-led military intervention in Lebanon was considered a success. In the years to come, patriotism ran high with No. 1's such as "The Battle of New Orleans" by Johnny Horton, "Soldier Boy" by the Shirelles and "The Ballad of the Green Berets" by Barry Sadler ("Silver wings upon their chest/These are men, America's best in Vietnam").

But American losses in Vietnam changed the zeitgeist. Suddenly, No. 1's included "All You Need Is Love" by the Beatles, "People Got to Be Free" by the



Coolio

Rascals ("If everyone learned to live together... Such an easy, easy thing this would be") and "War" by Edwin Starr ("War means tears to thousands of mothers' eyes/When their sons go to fight and lose their lives"). In 1968, Barry McGuire's "Eve of Destruction" captured baby boomers' pre-26th Amendment resentment: "You're old enough to kill, but not for voting."

But politicization of No. 1's didn't end with Vietnam. Storied 1978 hit "Brother Louie" took on interracial relationships — or at least took them more seriously than the Rolling Stones' 1971 chart-topper, "Brown Sugar." The widening income disparity of the Reagan-Bush era popped up in Phil Collins' 1989 hit "Another Day in Paradise": "She calls out to the man on the street/'Sic, can you help me?/It's cold and I've nowhere to sleep." Coolio took on street violence in 1995's "Gangsta's Paradise." And Lady Gaga gave a shout-out to gay rights this year in "Born This Way": "No matter gay, straight or bi/Lesbian, transgendered life/I'm on the right track, baby/I was born to survive."



Paul Simon and Art Garfunkel

Stars shine past their prime. Songs that reach No. 1 sometimes don't reflect artists at their most influential. Elvis Presley had six No. 1 hits in the Hot 100 in his first five years, but 1969's "Suspicious Minds" rocketed to the top of the chart at a time when his musical influence had waned. George Harrison's "Got My Mind Set on You" (1988), Elton John's "Candle in the Wind 1997" (a Princess Diana-inspired remake of his own 1973 hit, which did not reach No. 1), Cher's "Believe" (1999) and Carlos Santana's "Maria Maria" (2000) also put established artists past their peak back on the airwaves.



Cher



Taylor Swift

Want a hit in 2011? Lose the band. The first 100 non-instrumental No. 1's were performed by 38 solo acts and 62 groups, but the most recent 100 were performed by 91 solo acts and nine groups. Though Lady Gaga, Britney Spears, Rihanna and Ke\$ha collaborate with other artists and producers, none has to share the spotlight. And who knows? If the Electro-Harmonix Voice Box — a device that stimulates harmonies for singers — had existed in 1966, maybe Paul Simon could have gotten rid of Art Garfunkel long before the duo's No. 1, "The Sound of Silence."

Chart-toppers don't just sing — they sing in English.

Only six foreign-language songs — including times sung in Spanish, German and Italian, as well as Japanese crossover Kyo Kasmoto's 1963 chart-topper "Sukiyaki" — have hit No. 1. Despite advancing globalization, none have done so since 1969's "Macarena" by Los Del Rio. And only 19 instrumentals have reached

the top spot, none after 1986's synth-percussion-fest "Miami Vice Theme" by Jan Hammer.



Los Del Rio

Don't have a No. 1? You can still be a legend.

What is remembered as the defining music of an era and what actually sold the most at the time are very different. Imagine the 1960s without Bob Dylan, James Brown and Jimi Hendrix; the 1970s without KISS, The Who and Led Zeppelin; the 1980s without Bruce Springsteen, Journey and Run-DMC; the 1990s without Nirvana, Green Day and Public Enemy; the aughts without John Mayer, Linkin Park and Taylor Swift. None of these giants have had a No. 1 song — at least not yet.



Taylor Swift

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