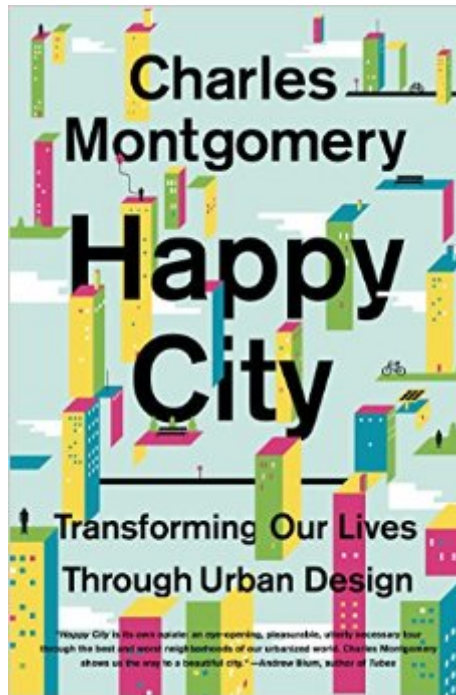


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# Happy City: Transforming Our Lives Through Urban Design



## Synopsis

A globe-trotting, eye-opening exploration of how cities can—and do—make us happier people. Charles Montgomery's *Happy City* is revolutionizing the way we think about urban life. After decades of unchecked sprawl, more people than ever are moving back to the city. Dense urban living has been prescribed as a panacea for the environmental and resource crises of our time. But is it better or worse for our happiness? Are subways, sidewalks, and condo towers an improvement on the car dependence of the suburbs? The award-winning journalist Charles Montgomery finds answers to such questions at the intersection between urban design and the emerging science of happiness, during an exhilarating journey through some of the world's most dynamic cities. He meets the visionary mayor who introduced a "sexy" bus to ease status anxiety in Bogotá; the architect who brought the lessons of medieval Tuscan hill towns to modern-day New York City; the activist who turned Paris's urban freeways into beaches; and an army of American suburbanites who have hacked the design of their own streets and neighborhoods. Rich with new insights from psychology, neuroscience, and Montgomery's own urban experiments, *Happy City* reveals how cities can shape our thoughts as well as our behavior. The message is ultimately as surprising as it is hopeful: by retrofitting cities and our own lives for happiness, we can tackle the urgent challenges of our age. The happy city can save the world—and we can all help build it.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

\*A full summary of this book is available here: [An Executive Summary of Charles Montgomery's](#)

'Happy City: Transforming Our Lives Through Urban Design'

The main argument: The modern city owes much of its current design to two major trends or 'movements' that have emerged since the time of the industrial revolution. The first trend traces back to the industrial revolution itself, when the appearance of smoke-billowing factories (and egregiously dirty slums) necessitated new solutions to the problem of how to organize city life. The answer--still reflected in cities all over the world--was to compartmentalize functions, such that industrial areas, shopping areas, office areas, and living areas were separated off from one another into distinct blocks of the city. The second trend in urban design took full hold in the post-war era, with the rise of the suburbs. In a sense, the suburbs represent a continuation and intensification of the compartmentalization movement, as the living areas of the upper classes were separated-off still further from the other areas of the city--out into sprawling districts miles away (as automobiles made it possible for certain city dwellers to escape to an idealized haven away from the hustle and bustle). While the suburban movement has had the bulk of its impact on the landscape outside of the city proper, the city itself has not been spared of its influence.

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