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What is a city?

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Abstract

A short reflection on the question, 'what is a city?'

Keywords

city, organism, humans

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Metaphorical Cities.

What are cities?

Bevan (2014) states that “beyond official designations though, economists, geographers and archaeologists have long debated what being a town or city means” (para.14).

Having grown up in a bustling metropolis, London, then a smaller city of Abu Dhabi, and more recently Los Angeles, I am very much a city dweller. I am accustomed to the throngs of fellow humans making their way about the city. Trains, and buses are commonplace. Crowds feel comforting, and yet I often wonder if I would have been more relaxed in a small town.

“In the Darwinian sense, only the strong survive. In the case of cities as living organisms, the same rule applies. The city has to be strong enough to take care of the collective needs of its people and fight off any real or perceived issues that may weaken its ability to evolve.” (Johnson, 2018, para. 3).

If cities are organisms, what does that make us? Are we cells? Are there humans who are the system that keeps the city alive, while others that act like a cancer, ruining the city from the inside?

If a city like Los Angeles is an organism, what function do I play in keeping the city alive?

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