

Project Group (Number and Name): 28 Aesthetics and Sustainability

Comment

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Comment: When it comes to building sustainable cities, aesthetics is an important and often overlooked factor to consider. Scientifically defined, aesthetics refers to all things that can be perceived, as opposed to the colloquial definition which just means beauty. Under this definition, aesthetics can either positively or negatively affect citizens, which influences how likely they are to preserve their cities and make sustainable choices.

There are several perspectives to consider when it comes to building aesthetically sustainable cities. Firstly, there is the issue of safety and health. Well-lit cities, especially during the night, enable people who are walking alone, particularly women, to feel safer. This gives rise to an energy issue because it would not be sustainable to have lights on every street throughout the whole night. As a compromise, sensor-activated lights can create an aesthetic city where vulnerable demographics of people feel safe walking at night, and less energy is wasted.

Infrastructure is another issue, specifically car-centric city designs. In communities where public transport is inaccessible, and walking is inconvenient, people are forced to use cars frequently. As a result, not only does the city become unsustainable and polluted, but it is frankly ugly too. To avoid this, including big sidewalks and affordable and convenient public transport in urban planning is vital.

This is closely tied to the issue of leisure and urban greening. In modern cities, there is a great lack of outdoor spaces where adults can spend their leisure time without having to spend money. This discourages people from spending time outside which in turn makes them care less about whether outdoor spaces are preserved or not. In order for such spaces to be both aesthetic and sustainable, there would need to be spaces that are suitable for both cold and warm weather, and naturally, they would need to have an inviting and comforting design.

It is of course important to consider multiple demographics as aesthetics relate to how the city is perceived by all of its inhabitants. Some cities intentionally try to prevent homeless people from sleeping outdoors, for example by making the sidewalks sharp. This is not at all a viable solution to homelessness, and even makes the city a less comfortable space for others. Unfortunately, it is not realistic to have an urban design that accommodates every single one of its inhabitants. For example, having a sharp transition from a sidewalk to a road makes it easier for blind people to navigate, but more difficult for people with wheelchairs or strollers. Subsequently, urban planners should try to be accommodating to whatever extent is realistically possible.

Climate change must also be considered. Cities need to be prepared for natural disasters arising from climate change to avoid devastating impacts. Needless to say, cities that have been wrecked by natural disasters are no longer aesthetic spaces.

Lastly, all these initiatives are very costly, which gives rise to issues of funding and the opportunity cost of government expenditure. Nevertheless, the inclusion of aesthetics in the effort to build more sustainable communities is significant.

Video Information

Title of the Video: 28_New Year's Day

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