

From the Planners' Bookshelf...

Arrival City,

How the Largest Migration in History Reshaped Our World.

Doug Saunders [doug Saunders.net]

Pantheon Books, New York, 2010.

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Summary.

Arrival City has many instructive ideas for the immigration-driven discussion today; and for those who plan cities. The U.S. used to get this right; and others in the world do so today. Thomas Friedman and Michael Mandelbaum in their 2011 book *That Used to Be Us: How America Fell Behind in the World It Invented and How We Can Come Back* support Mr. Saunders' hypothesis that immigration used to be an American strength, and perceived as such. While still strength today, the process has become so stigmatized as to compromise the incredible benefits we derive from the flow of new people, new ideas and new talents into our economy; despite the social burdens of strained public services, education systems and transitory poverty.



Doug Saunders

Implications for Character Towns.

1. **Engage the power of the newly arrived; most have aspirations.** Mr. Saunders uses the results of Janice Perlman's paper *The Myth of Marginality* based on her experience with the favelas of Brazil. She says..."In short, they [the people in the favelas] have the aspirations of the bourgeoisie, the perseverance of pioneers and the values of patriots." She laments that their ability to realize their aspirations is declining. [p57]
2. **Provide basic support systems for immigrants.** "In 2009...", Mr. Saunders reports..." the World Bank concluded that the most effective route to poverty reduction and economic growth is to encourage the highest possible urban population density and the growth of the largest cities through migration – as long as the urban areas where the rural migrants arrive are given intensive investment and infrastructure development by governments". [p58]
3. **Enable and encourage upward mobility.** "This is fundamentally a book about social mobility." [p273] Impediments to people earning prosperity result in a permanent underclass. Arrival cities are best positioned to eliminate or prevent any more impediments to immigrant prosperity than naturally face immigrants in their quest for economic and social prosperity.
4. **Understand the dynamics of the newly arrived and their families.** "The crucial paradox of the arrival city is that its occupants all want to stop living in an arrival city – either by making money and moving their families and village networks out or by turning the neighborhood itself into something better." [p321]

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YouTube

In addition to the many reviews below, check out the author's interview on March 10, 2011 at the International Development Research Centre.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hKtNZ4UQmNE>

Published Reviews

'Arrival City' by Doug Saunders - Review - The New York Times

www.nytimes.com/.../books/arrival-city-by-doug-saunders-review.html

Mar 17, 2011 - *Arrival City* by Doug Saunders looks to the world's great sprawling shantytowns and slums and finds a wellspring of human energy.

Book Review: Arrival City - WSJ.com

online.wsj.com/.../SB1000142405274870489360457619963054509430...

Mar 19, 2011 - Melanie Kirkpatrick *reviews* Doug Saunders's *Arrival City: How the Largest Migration in History Is Reshaping Our World*.

Arrival City: How the Largest Migration in History Is ... - The Guardian

www.theguardian.com › [Culture](#) › [Books](#) › [Society](#)

Sep 17, 2010 - *Arrival City* brilliantly captures the breakneck pace of this "great migration" ...

CharacterTown.org's Commentary

What is an "arrival city"?

Arrival cities are places of generational deferral; the parents are the first generation immigrants; they believe that the kids are all that matter, the next generation will have it better. "Like so many people here, and around the world today, they have staked their entire lives on their daughter's education – ". [p14] Cities can accommodate and enable success for these people who have historically come to America, sacrificed, and then prospered. "The residents of arrival cities do not consider themselves 'poor' but rather successful urbanites who happen to be passing through a period of poverty, perhaps for a generation." [p274]

"It [the arrival city] is not merely a place for living and working, for sleeping and eating and shopping; it is most importantly a place of *transition*." [p10] Mr. Saunders describes situations in China, the U.K., India and Brazil now attracting immigrants, usually from the native countryside but also from other countries. Many "arrival" cities appreciate the transitional function of their slums and support their populations as best they can without branding these places as havens for criminals or *ne'er-do-wells*.

Arrival City's author offers three reasons to take immigration seriously. First, there will be a labor shortage and the national economy needs immigrants as workers. Second, children of immigrants are citizens who will participate, or not, in the American dream.

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Some cities recognize the transition process and harness its economic power. Third, as Mr. Saunders states, large scale migrations are real and they will continue. "There is no romance in village life. Rural living is the largest single killer of humans today..." Moving to the city is a great alternative and we see the reality of this with the recent observation that in 2013, more people live in cities than in the country.

The unfounded fear of "the immigrant element's criminality":

The Immigration Policy Center reports: "Anti-immigrant activists and politicians are fond of relying upon anecdotes to support their oft-repeated claim that immigrants, especially undocumented immigrants, are dangerous criminals. This mythical claim is usually based on rhetorical sleight of hand in which individual stories of heinous crimes committed by immigrants are presented as "proof" that we must restrict immigration or "get tough" on the undocumented in order to save the lives of U.S. citizens. While these kinds of arguments are emotionally powerful, they are intellectually dishonest.



"There is no doubt that dangerous criminals must be punished, and that immigrants who are dangerous criminals should not be allowed to enter the United States or should be deported if they already are here. But harsh immigration policies are not effective in fighting crime because—as numerous studies over the past [100 years](#) have shown—immigrants are *less* likely to commit crimes or be behind bars than the native-born, and high rates of immigration are *not* associated with higher rates of crime. This holds true for both legal immigrants and the undocumented, regardless of their country origin or level of education.

"Crime Rates in the United States *Fell* as the Size of the Immigrant Population (Including the Unauthorized) *Increased* Dramatically.

- Between 1990 and 2010, the foreign-born share of the U.S. population [grew](#) from 7.9 percent to 12.9 percent {Figure 1} and the number of unauthorized immigrants [tripled](#) from 3.5 million to 11.2 million {Figure 2 on the IPC website}.
- During the same period, [FBI data](#) indicates that the violent crime rate declined 45 percent {Figure 3} and the property crime rate fell 42 percent {Figure 4 on the IPC website}."

What function does the city play in the immigration process?

Mr. Saunders has a fascinating observation about the role of cities in acclimating new arrivals to their new home and its society. Even when immigrants arrive and immediately locate in the poorest parts of town, the assimilation process then starts. His main thesis is that the main purpose of the barrios is transition; immigrants come, acclimate and move on. The functions of the "arrival city" are:

- A network connecting the arrival city with the old village of the immigrant's home,
- Entry mechanisms to stabilize immigrant trauma, such as entry housing, entry jobs,
- Urban establishment platforms that provide informal resources that allow migrants to accumulate some wealth,

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- A social-mobility path to the middle class or permanent employment to be in the upper working class.

What public services and facilities are critical to the upward mobility of immigrants?

The physical form determines a successful arrival city – the key factors are:

- transit systems than enable mobility without the expense and license requirements of a car,
- access to education to learn the new language, culture and technical information required for employment,
- affordable housing in the poor sections of town are generally cheap and well located to central city services and facilities,
- health services through community subsidized emergency rooms or otherwise.
- parks that offer free recreation and leisure amenities,
- infrastructure that cannot be provided at the local level. Garbage removal is critical. Street lights increase both safety and property values. Somehow electricity and running water are not priorities [p310], and
- older buildings that accommodate start-up businesses to enable economic development and stabilization for the immigrant family. The ability to start a small business is key. [p32]

Encourage small businesses and entrepreneurship. Home occupations, live-work spaces, minimally necessary permitting and licensing all contribute to a positive atmosphere for small business growth. Germany abandoned its guest-worker program because it required people to be citizens before they could start a business; clearly an inhibitor to economic growth. [p249] Similarly obvious impediments can be identified and eliminated while protecting the public's health, safety and welfare.

In his final chapter, Mr. Saunders offers ideas for those who plan cities [p296]:

- "...in a farsighted gesture of radical urban de-planning, Amsterdam demolished all apartment towers in two waves and replaced them with a tighter arrangement of mid-height structures which gave each apartment its own garden and 'ownership' of a section of street with loosely zoned spaces for shops and businesses in between, allowing teeming and haphazard markets."
- The best sections of Manhattan, Kensington, Chelsea and Paris,.. " for example, are extremely high density and very mixed-use districts." [p297]
- "Space for spontaneity" goes along with the idea that Euclidean zoning is counter-productive. [p298] Co-locating the place of residence and business are critical factors in enabling immigrants to accumulate enough wealth to move beyond their transitory period of poverty.
- Zoning that restricts business formation and the lack of credit are the two biggest constraints to upward mobility. [p283]
- "Around the world, arrival cities transform themselves from destitute poverty traps into pathways to success when they develop effective and well-connected internal governments." [p300]