



The Spirit of Cities: Why the Identity of a City Matters in a Global Age

Daniel A. Bell, Avner de-Shalit

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Cities shape the lives and outlooks of billions of people, yet they have been overshadowed in contemporary political thought by nation-states, identity groups, and concepts like justice and freedom. *The Spirit of Cities* revives the classical idea that a city expresses its own distinctive ethos or values. In the ancient world, Athens was synonymous with democracy and Sparta represented military discipline. In this original and engaging book, Daniel Bell and Avner de-Shalit explore how this classical idea can be applied to today's cities, and they explain why philosophy and the social sciences need to rediscover the spirit of cities.

Bell and de-Shalit look at nine modern cities and the prevailing ethos that distinguishes each one. The cities are Jerusalem (religion), Montreal (language), Singapore (nation building), Hong Kong (materialism), Beijing (political power), Oxford (learning), Berlin (tolerance and intolerance), Paris (romance), and New York (ambition). Bell and de-Shalit draw upon the richly varied histories of each city, as well as novels, poems, biographies, tourist guides, architectural landmarks, and the authors' own personal reflections and insights. They show how the ethos of each city is expressed in political, cultural, and economic life, and also how pride in a city's ethos can oppose the homogenizing tendencies of globalization and curb the excesses of nationalism.

The Spirit of Cities is unreservedly impressionistic. Combining strolling and storytelling with cutting-edge theory, the book encourages debate and opens up new avenues of inquiry in philosophy and the social sciences. It is a must-read for lovers of cities everywhere. In a new preface, Bell and de-Shalit further develop their idea of "civicism," the pride city dwellers feel for their city and its ethos over that of others.

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