

To-morrow: Arriving soon in a region near you?

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This paper will argue that the general theoretical notion of the Social City originally proposed in 1898 by Ebenezer Howard in his book "To-morrow: a peaceful path to real reform" not only remains valid, but is supported by an increasingly strong evidence base that simply did not exist when Howard's book was originally published. Much of this evidence is based on analytical techniques such as network analysis, computer simulation and large-scale time-series studies that had not yet been developed at the end of the 19th century.

Howard's book also predated the dominance of the private motor car and its overwhelming influence on the creation of urban forms, and so his proposed transport modes tended to be of the public variety: canal and rail. Now, just over a century later, many urban planners are contemplating the possibility of a future in which the private motor car, while still important, no longer enjoys the near-absolute dominance of its 20th century florescence.

Instead, the idea of reasonably compact cities of limited size, that do not ruin their own local environment, and that are connected by efficient and safe public transport, is perceived by some as not just an idea, but an ideal. It might be said that Howard's theory is finally being put into proper practice: To-morrow might soon arrive.

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