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**Freedom in an Urban Framework**

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- **No other strategy for speeding up progress is as promising as:**
  - giving every family the freedom to move to an urban area that offers more types of interaction with other people; and
  - establishing a framework for urban life that encourages the good interactions that density and connection allow whilst limiting the bad interactions

- **This strategy - freedom in a framework - creates a paradoxical dynamic**

  - In a city like New York, freedom can sustain rapid change along most dimensions
    - The types of structures built on private land can change
    - The uses for these private structures can also change
      - from manufacturing to university laboratories around Washington Square Park
      - from office space to residential space around Wall Street
    - We use unanticipated types of vehicles to move around on the public space surveyed and claimed for Manhattan in 1811
    - Recently, we have even shifted the use of the public space away from cars to
      - buses
      - bikes
      - plazas

  - But the freedom that allows rapid change along all these dimensions relies crucially on a framework of public space that cannot change
    - For political reasons, most cities will never be "Hausmanned" as Paris was in the 18th century
Even in 1811, city leaders in New York could not add public space around Wall Street, because development there had already taken place.

- The public space there remains largely as it was then.

**In an urban area, a successful strategy based on freedom in a framework will support growth and mobility. It will give every family**

- the freedom to move into a city of its choice
- and the freedom to move about and interact with all other residents once they arrive

**A city can promote the general strategy based on growth and mobility using different tactics during the two main phases of its growth**

- In the early phase when most of its growth comes from increases in the built area, a good framework defines and protects a generous allocation of public space that will eventually be used to build the arteries of the transport and utility systems.
- In the later phase of intensive growth, a good framework ensures that the public surface space, which becomes inevitably becomes relatively scarce, is not allocated to low-value uses.

**If there is no formal framework, a dysfunctional informal framework will emerge that will be equally hard to change**

- In Manhattan, the formal plan of 1811 set aside 30% of the land as the public space that we use today for streets and sidewalks.
  
  - Counting parks too, public space accounts for 36% of the land.
- In other cities, informal development in favelas and slums allocate as little as 5% of land to public space, typically with none at all for parks.

**This means that a good formal framework has to be established in conditions of extreme uncertainty**

- In 1811, the planners who set aside the public space for Manhattan could not possibly have imagined how we would drive cars on it today.

**Because of uncertainty and long lead times, good frameworks should create options**

**To create options, a framework that manages a physical resource should start with excess capacity, with the understanding that this will gradually evolve into an ever increasing relative scarcity**

**Ironically, the options created by excess physical capacity can limit future choices by establishing a dysfunctional framework of perceived rights**
• In most cities, the default informal framework gives every car owner a perceived right to drive on any street at any time
  
  o Worst of all, perhaps even the right to park a car on public space

• In the early stages of development, a generous initial allocation of public space relative to private activity, this framework of rights causes little harm

• As population and economic activity increase, public space becomes ever scarcer and more valuable, and congestion costs start to increase very rapidly

• Voters motivated to defend their rights may then vote to limit growth and density even though the efficient strategy would be to use the public space more efficiently

• To protect mobility, they limit growth

▷ Economists frequently propose congestion prices to encourage efficient use of public space

• Like any departure from free access to road space, it may be politically unacceptable if it is proposed too late, after the right to free access is well established

• It may also conflict with other parts of a social framework
  
  o E.g. it could conflict with an affirmation of democratic equality that commits a city to the principle of equal access to public space

▷ Before a majority of citizens own a car, strategies other than congestion pricing might better prepare a city for the challenge of efficiently managing public space

• For example, a city might require that a driver buy an annual permit that grants the right to drive a car in the city

  o The government could establish from the beginning that it limits the supply of permits but that it is ones fellow citizens who eventually start to drive up the price

• Experience in Singapore and Shanghai shows that eventually, the market price for a permit that grants unlimited road access can be very expensive

• The principle of equal access might be well served by creating a portfolio of permits that give access during restricted periods of time

  o E.g. a permit that gives access only on Monday or only on Tuesday

  o Or only during the hours of 10 am to 2 pm

  o Compared to "even-odd" restrictions based on license plate numbers, such a system would avoid the wasteful purchase of extra cars when someone is willing to pay for access every day
Someone who wants to be able to drive any day of the week need only purchase 7 all day permits, one covering each day of the week.

- Such a system might even allow for universal access by giving everyone with a car a permit to drive on a specific day of the week, Saturday perhaps or Sunday.
- This kind of permit system might achieve the goal of giving everyone who aspires to ownership of a car a type of equal treatment and a form of free mobility.
  - This goal could be met by tolerating some congestion, but only on one day each week.

We should critically reexamine every proposed tactic for managing urban mobility to verify whether it is realistic and whether it truly supports:

- the specific strategy of urban growth and mobility
- the more general strategy of freedom in a fixed (or at best, a slowly changing) framework

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