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The residents of South Park are victims of environmental injustice, but are they happy? Is Sustainable Happiness achievable? In a perfect dream world, a federal umbrella of “sustainable happiness” would protect us all from the weathers of life, shield us from the current social injustice and protect everyone from the environmental toxins that commercialism is saturating us with. As we are an intricate interdependent part of our environment any city planning has an effect on us and us on it. The “Hausman model” of “zoning” adopted by America in the early 20th Century sought to protect residents from industrial pollution by keeping the areas separate, and this powerful “zoning” plan of protection still appears to live on in us as we chose to reside in the many segregated communities that exist. These early “zoning” committees adopted a natural reptilian action of “herding for protection” that is still reflected in today’s society and almost impossible to break without drawing on of the neocortex part of our evolved brain that can incorporate love, compassion and happiness. Enrique Peñalosa answer to sustainable happiness is to build cities for children, “planning with respect”.

For three years I lived “unharmd” in a “Bad” inner city area of Glasgow. I was happy, felt safe and my neighbors were friendly. However, having a young son, we risked “moving out” into the unknown to protect him from such a harsh environment, before it had any real influence over him. When we moved in we were the only ones in the tenement with a car and paid a large fee to have the first telephone line installed in the building. Children played between the garbage in the communal concrete courtyard. I would visit the local park each day with my son, share the swing park with Rottweiler’s and syringes, and then wipe the dog muck of the pushchair wheels before carrying it up 3 flights of stairs to our home. We could not open the windows in the summer because of the smell from the sewage plant 2 blocks away and the dust would collect in rivets due to the vibrating traffic from the 3 freeways triangulating us. Our son was happy and did not want to move but we “got out” unaware there was any other way. Though our unlocked car was never harmed while living there, every time we went back to visit friends it was vandalized.

South Park residents looked happy and protected by a strong segregated community, but the children’s future desire to have a prison close by is not what they need. Even though it will bring them love and happiness of shared family moments, it offers no respect or sustainability.