The role of amenities in shaping cities

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ABSTRACT: In this paper, we study the role of historic amenities that arise from historic buildings in shaping cities. Using detailed geolocated data for 579 European central cities, we test whether central cities endowed with historic buildings from the Roman, Medieval and Renaissance-Baroque periods behaved differently between 1961 and 2011. Results show that indeed historic amenities matter: Cities with historic amenities in their centers have steeper population density gradients, are more compact and centralized, and are less affected by the suburbanization effect caused by transportation improvements. Heterogeneity analyses show that the quantity and the quality of the historic buildings also matter. Several robustness checks controlling for the effect of other amenities, addressing endogeneity concerns, and testing the spatial scope of these amenities verify our main results.

Key words: Historic amenities, suburbanization, European cities, transportation, architecture

JEL classification: R4, R2, O4

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