Happiness by design: the Future of the City

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Cities are human creations that are the culmination of millennia of collective efforts in trade, shelter and leisure. So, why now, we are so concerned about their future? Is not it that in our concern that an underlying unanswered question begs to be revealed.

Are cities under threat of extensions?

And therefore, we are so concerned about their future.

Certainly, cities in the future have been fascinating to philosophers, thinkers, painters and even Hollywood movie makers. The end segment of the Planet of the Apes is a demonstration of the apocalyptic perspective where skyscrapers of New York were submerged with ocean waves.

What justify this fear? What legitimize it? What is it this aching question that triggers it or is triggered by it? A closer look to the recently numerous exhibitions on the future of cities show the face of an unprecedented technological innovations that transforming our concepts of urban space.

We are in the nascent emergence of a fourth industrial revolution and unlike its precedents, it is challenging what is human as its core as artificial intelligence opens the doors to a different race.
Who gets to be transformed into that race which is heralded by neuroscientists as better and faster problem solvers? Unfortunate, none that the middle class and lower middle class which performs low to medium skilled jobs that are under threat. In that sense, the question is valid for “the City” now celebrated as the concentration of global flows of trade and people is in fact the seat of the bourgeoisies of economic development, the seat of the Middle class born of diverse rural migrants, foreign migrants and aspiring professionals through the anonymity disguising their roots would be able to forge an alternative destiny.
According to Richard Florida, Clarck, Sassen and dozens of urban thinkers and leaders rethinking prosperity and liveability on a local scale, Place is the one component that the current industrial revolution flirts with rather than erase it.

The “locale”, the “address”, the “destination”, the “place” still prevail in social media, smart cities and websites. Designers have tried for decades to comprehend, understand “Place”.

As an elusive ghost, the design process, this mental tool for expressing the ultimate in forms, approached it with awe or with the awareness that there is a dimension that we feel, we think about, we sense but does not respond to the Cartesian concrete framework that we think through our spaces.

A “Place” has an essence, a sense which attracts its dwellers, visitors and imbibe with meanings their thinking process; meanings that are only liveable in it and through it.

Sense of Place

What is that which forms the “spirit” of “Place”? How it is read and realized through human consciousness? And how a point in space would become a source of inspiration over millennia becoming mentally constructed over decades, ages and civilizations? Does this that each city is really trying to become in its quest of self-actualization? Is this which each city is striving to embody as a definition of “happiness”? Is this what the quest for Place is a quest for this presence experienced in the present but transcendent beyond space and time? Is it the ultimate expression of what the collective energy of city dwellers is?
The question then poses itself to our minds.

“"How the “space “within the “city” could be designed to embody “sense of place” as an ultimate expression of city happiness?

Is it the biophilic experiences that a city offers when it embraces nature rather than perceived itself separated from it?

Is it the human scale that a city reveres so much that its skyscrapers bow in humility to the Mind of their Makers?

Is it the ability of a space to allow flows of people to contemplate, reflect and be mindful so that their collective energy adds to the city sense of place?

Is it Art, as the ultimate expression of emotional creativity that inhabits the space and changes its procession into an experience?

Is it the Free Will guiding diverse activities, communities, groups, ethnicities into a group understanding towards the universality that we share?

How the Happiness caused by sense of place becomes liveable everyday?

How the human mind will inhabit the future city?
Conclusion

The future is a human construct

The space is a human construct

Reality is a function of the human mind

As such, is this pursuit of the Happiness in the future of the "city" is in essence a pursuit of the human minds to join in answering what can connect them beyond the ordinary that technology is claiming everyday?

Is it a leap of faith on the concept of “the City” as the physical manifestation of the joint awareness of the collective?

It is this deeper question that has at last revealed itself.