Seeing the City

Contents

City and People

A city is a complex organism comprising of different people from diverse backgrounds with varied aspirations. A city with well-developed physical and social infrastructure fuels these aspirations. It further allows freedom of choice through the options it offers, bringing people and businesses together. It thus works as a machine of growth that generates interactions at various levels.

Spaces that allow solace, or contemplation and relief are critical in the city. "Work has become the dominant fact of human life, leisure and recreation a more or less luxurious afterthought which is fitted in around it. The dreary preponderance of building, the almost total absence of gardening, in our metropolis, is a direct reflection of this. Yet leisure and recreation, in their broadest sense, are fundamentally necessary factors of human life, especially in an industrial age." [1]

The city today stands between man and the source of recreation; it needs spaces which can provide a means of restoring vitality dissipated in work. "The provocative city results from many different kinds of interrelated activities where people have an opportunity to participate in elegant, carefully designed art and spontaneous non-designed, elements juxtaposed into what might be called folk idiom, a series of unplanned relationships..." [2]

"It is an environment which should provide for those random and unforeseen opportunities, those chance occurrences and happening which are so vital to be aware of the strange and beautiful which no fixed, preconceived order can produce." [2]

Collectively urban population shows distinct characteristics, not only their recreational needs vary widely with age, gender, customs and habits; but they are constantly changing influenced by work and living conditions. The urban inhabitant requires complete, evenly distributed and flexible systems fulfilling all types of needs for persons of every age, interest and gender. These spaces are also ecologically and biologically essential to life for the development of the individual.

Many times public parks and common open areas which are parts of planning systems of the city, remain unoccupied and underutilized due to many reasons. Public parks, which get locational and visual advantage, seemed to work better than other public parks of the city. Inappropriate scale, incorrect implementation, wrong location, accessibility could be some of the reasons for the failure of their usage. Contrary to this, unlabelled and unplanned typological open spaces like foot paths, road edges, private campuses, market squares, cross roads, wastelands, traffic islands, railway stations, bus stands, auto-stands, parking spaces attract people and activity. Association, environment, ambience, distance, location, time of the day, company, comfort, surrounding community and activity along with individual's emotional needs of the hour could be some of the many factors influencing people to come to these spaces.

Open spaces which are not designed as public spaces cannot be overlooked. For example, bridges in the city need attention because of the interest and activity surrounding it. They become the centre of evening meetings for the urban population allowing them to connect to the river and sky. This is also true for spaces like abandoned mill lands, dry river beds, cross roads, foot paths and road dividers which draw people to come to these places.

formal
streets
bridges
labourers
children
river
nature
wait
breeze
aloof
shade
institutional campus
morning walk
peace
market square
father and son

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