

The Soul of the City: A Reflection

Kejiwaan Bandar: Satu Sorotan

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ABSTRACT

This article presents a small scale research on the definition of the soul of a city as an indicator of liveable city that has undergone rapid and drastic changes in the process of urbanization. When humans begin to inquire various questions in their minds with regards to the characteristics of the surrounding town, the knowledge of city's soul emerges. Humans observe the conditions of a city as they reflect upon themselves. Such reflection is parallel to the development of human mind which result in patterns of the soul of the city as both object and subject of observations: a metaphor and something that is intriguing yet complex. Patterns of the soul of the city contain life's motives, values and norms, sustainability, complexity and harmony. The city's soul physical and social development as well as enhancement is a natural driving force among the people, principles and patterns of places of the city itself. With this driving force, liveability is formed whereby any changes either in form or space was to take place, they (the changes) would not be able to influence existing form and soul. However, the biggest challenge in interpreting the essence of the soul of the city is to decode its abstract nature into its physical form which can be touched, seen while remaining its coherence and sustainability.

Keywords: Soul of the city; reflection; sustainability

ABSTRAK

Artikel ini membentangkan satu penyelidikan kecil terhadap definisi jiwa bandar sebagai petunjuk bandar sejahtera yang telah mengalami perubahan yang pesat dan drastik dalam proses pempandaran. Apabila manusia mula bertanya pelbagai soalan di dalam fikiran mereka mengenai ciri-ciri bandar sekitar, pengetahuan tentang jiwa bandar ini muncul. Manusia mematuhi syarat-syarat di bandar kerana ia memikirkan diri mereka sendiri. Renungan demikian itu adalah selari dengan perkembangan minda manusia yang menyebabkan corak jiwa bandar kerana kedua-dua objek dan subjek pemerhatian: metafora dan sesuatu yang menarik lagi kompleks. Corak jiwa bandar mengandungi motif, nilai-nilai hidup dan norma, kemampanan, kerumitan dan keharmonian. Jiwa bandar ini merangkumi peningkatan fizikal dan sosial serta daya penggerak semula jadi di kalangan rakyat, prinsip dan pola tempat di bandar itu sendiri. Dengan kuasa ini memandu, kesesuaian untuk didiami terbentuk dengannya apa-apa perubahan sama ada dalam bentuk atau ruang adalah untuk mengambil tempat, mereka (perubahan) tidak akan dapat mempengaruhi bentuk sedia ada dan jiwa. Walau bagaimanapun, cabaran yang paling besar adalah menterjemahkan inti pati jiwa bandar dan memecahkan kod sifat abstrak ke dalam bentuk fizikal yang boleh disentuh, namun masih mengekalkan kesepaduan dan kelestarian.

Kata kunci: Jiwa di bandar; renungan; lestari

INTRODUCTION

What is the definition of "Soul of the City?" Neither new nor rarely heard, knowledge of the psyche seeks to unravel human's instinct. Generally, the depth and breadth in knowledge of the soul is something comprehensible to the human. Hence, it cannot be equated with psychological knowledge which is only a fraction of the definition and contains specific patterns from the whole body of knowledge of the soul itself. Moderation is the key to this knowledge which encompasses all ideas, knowledge, perceptions, dreams and speculations

of a soul. Historically, the development in the knowledge of soul was traced back to the Islamic civilization and stretched itself to the west. Once there, the knowledge widens to form various fields of study in the field of psychology. To human minds which are limited and psychological, a soul is fixed and unchanged as well as able to be analysed into separate characteristics which are further separated from one another. In the past, people who study the soul regarded it as a part of philosophical knowledge. It was a field that could stand on its own as a strong body of knowledge. In addition, methods of research in this knowledge were largely autonomous. Only

until recently that research of the soul is not limited to only philosophies regarding the soul. Analysis are based on empirical data and supported by academic methods which lead to another area that is the soul of the city. The soul of the city is never equal to the study of the soul as purported by philosophers such as Plato and Aristotle. Neither does it related to an examination of philosophical nor spiritual knowledge. It is an exploration of a concrete body of knowledge. This is due to the fact that a human soul is not detached from the physical aspects. As much as a human's soul is kept within his physical structure, the soul of the city is defined by the surroundings which are concrete in nature, can be touched, learned and investigated based on research and can definitely be proven.

SOUL : HISTORY, MEANING AND LANGUAGE

A look back in the history of the knowledge of soul development or psyche brings one to two main parts. First, this knowledge was regarded as part of Philosophy or abstract in nature. Human minds which were philosophical supported their knowledge and research with thoughts and experiences about the available truth, reasons and laws. Therefore, the knowledge of the soul for the past decades, is largely substantiated by logic, aesthetics, metaphysics and epistemology. Second, in the past, there was a solid body of knowledge for the soul and was accepted as a discipline. First came to the people in the 19th century, among other fields that emerge from the knowledge of the soul are psychology, sociology, physiology and anthropology.

Etymologically, 'psyche' refers to knowledge of soul, spirit, essence, eternal or breathing. Several configurations underlying the core of the soul with regard to the term "knowledge of the soul" or to put it as the knowledge about the soul:

1. The first configuration is when the term 'psyche' is used, will it be able to be associated with the use of knowledge of the world and another question will follow – what is the meaning of "knowledge of the world." The answer is subjective yet never too difficult to comprehend since the world can be observed directly, touched, seem and many more. However, defining a soul is not something that is easy since it cannot be directly observed, unable to be touched. As for both, colors and shape are unknown.

2. Second configuration is the use of 'soul' as a term which is part of humans : one of the aspects of an individual's life is a soul that is alive within his physical structure or body. Hence, in discovering one's soul, one does not only recognize the spiritual essence but also the physical as a combination of spiritual and physical which can never be separated or divided.

In the search for meaning of 'soul', by definition, the second configuration seems to be easier to be interpreted into the study of the city's soul since it is a form of knowledge that enables one to analyse activities or behaviours which interact with anything in their vicinity. This statement is further supported by scholars who study the human's psyche such as Woodworth and Marquis (1957) and Ernest Hilgard (1987). According to these individuals, the study of the soul is not reduced to only humans as main subject: it also reaches anything within its boundary such as animals, plants, buildings, roads and many other items. They are not the ultimate reason, nevertheless, they add to an understanding of a person's activity or community at a certain space.

In studying the soul of the city, an individual or a community's activity can be categorized into several activities such as:

1. Activities which involve movements or physical exertion such as walking, interacting, sitting and the list go on. All these activities are consciously done since they are actions which are reflective of changes in the surroundings.
2. Some activities are related to urges from the outside, for instance, focusing, listening, smelling, remembering, illusion and others.
3. Activities which interact closely with motives to obtain a certain goal or wish are wants, ambitions, purposes in life, needs and others.
4. Some activities are expressive of emotions, instincts or certain feelings like sadness, happiness, anger, stressed and others.
5. Conscious actions are known as learning, socialising and shopping as well as activities which one is not clearly aware of such as miscommunication, read something wrongly, lost directions and others.

Therefore, humans' actions in a certain space become an object of knowledge within the study of the soul's city. Humans' activities are no longer explored through psychology but also analysed

through a combination of anthropology, sociology, history and other related fields of study. For example, anthropology of physics is used in order to comprehend natural ways of groups of people in the city. As for cultural anthropology, it is mainly used to study the culture of the urbanites and its influence on the city's individuality. Historical aspects of a city are beneficial to the analysis of human activities from the past to the present.

'Soul' as a word, is indicative of its knowledge which has sparked a lot of debates found in translated old holy books or scriptures. It is also a word that had been interpreted and given a wide range of perspectives namely religious, philosophical, racial and the list goes on. In Arabic, 'soul' is known as *nafs* (jiwa), *qalb* (heart), *roh* dan '*aql* (common sense) (Hassan Langgulong 1996). If one goes through all layers of meaning, according to Mohd. Jawad Mughniyah (1973) the word *nafs* refers to an existence in a whole. It is a general noun that encompasses humanity. Nicholson (1935) stated that *qalb* is often used to relate to human's emotions and common senses. Its usage is more specific than *nafs*. In addition, the word "roh" in Arabic is used to refer to many meanings. 'Roh' is known as life and a revelation brought by the angels. Moreover, '*aql* indicates that humans are able to think and have their own thoughts. It is strength or simply a *nafs* that thinks and can be divided into two main categories: practice '*aql* dan theorist '*aql* .

Philosophers agree that 'the soul' or psyche is something that sustains human's life. Then, the term psychology which originated from the Greek language was introduced: it becomes well known among the world's population even though the distinction between research in knowledge of the soul or psyche seems to be very little. Both share almost the same method. In fact, some uses these words as referring to one meaning. For instance, Plato who was a philosopher interpreted a soul into a single definition. The others chose to separate the two words and gave different meanings each. There are Islamic philosophers who concurred with the Greek philosophers in defining *al-Nafs al-Natiqah* (a soul that thinks) as a psyche or a human's spirit (Avip Nurfitra et al. 2010).

In Sanskrit, the word Jiva (जीव) is derived from 'jiwa' and has several different meanings based on Vedic's knowledge and philosophy. Based on old Sanskrit scriptures, Jiva was defined as a living creature or specifically, an eternal essence for living organism (humans, animals, fish, plants and

others) and maintain its being before the death of its physical existence – the same usage of Atma or self-cosmic that points to a living entity for individuals or specific life.

In the context of research in the soul of the city, a definition of 'jiwa' or 'soul' is limited to an interpretation that refers to something that is still alive, non-changing and sustainable. A soul is not abstract but rather physical in the sense that it could be touched, seen, coherent and harmonious. Efforts taken in achieving the soul of the city requires multiple or various approaches and mechanisms which involve challenges and adaptations. These in turn, demands a closer look into history, meaning and language at each phase of its implementation particularly at actor's stage and the community that determines how the soul of a city is shaped.

ONTOLOGY, EPISTEMOLOGY, AXIOLOGY AND THEIR RELATIONSHIP IN THE SOUL OF A CITY

Studies in the soul of a city, in general, is an elaboration of Social Psyche with a focus on discourse in livability development (H.M Dahlan 1997). It is one field of knowledge that deals with research on urban dimension which was formed due to rapid and drastic changes in a city. These changes brought with them numerous transformation and modernization in many aspects of humans' life such as various activities involving socio-economy, urban migration, modernization and industrialization, development in infrastructure, telecommunication and media, housing and the list goes on. All transformation processes share the same underlying objective: a concerted effort to breathe life into a city to create a livable place with interesting physical characteristics for all racial groups, open and friendly with thriving economy, healthy, peaceful and harmonious as well as free from any doubts about safety issues concerning the individuals, their houses and sustainable living (Shaharuddin Idrus et al. 2010)

ONTOLOGY OF THE CITY'S SOUL

Ontology is a debate of the reality behind any type of knowledge. The soul of the city is related to ontology in a way that is to clarify the existence of reality in a city's soul as well as which object that is being studies and explored?

THE TRUTH BEHIND A CITY'S SOUL

The soul of a city is an interdisciplinary study, which means that it consists of various interrelated disciplines. Knowledge of the soul, urban livability, sustainability, architecture and others are all integrated and intertwined in order to form a basis for debate on any issues related to the soul's city. Exploring and analysing a soul's city requires a variety of activities which are based on the knowledge of the soul, urban livability, sustainability all of which are important to comprehend the soul of a city, the dwellers and so on and so forth. Some contexts which are related to the city's soul are listed below:

1. Town Planning Developers/Organizations

Developers or town planner is an organisation that has strong influence in human's life. It is directly related to the situation, comfort, harmony as well as human's quality of life as a whole. All these factors, in turn, largely influence humans' feelings, behaviours and actions in living their lives. (Embong 2004). Developers or town planners have their own unique ways in overcoming issues of the city and at the same time play an active role in strengthening, establishing, encouraging and supporting relationships among elements that can breathe life to a city. Other than adhering to the nation's town planning philosophy, city developers are deemed reliable in determine the scope or planning in a city which needs focus. In conjunction with the town planning doctrine which is referred to as guidelines, city developers are capable of exhibiting credible technical abilities as well as possessing good values which are required by the urbanites.

2. Urbanites

Migration from the rural areas to the city (urbanization) had changed the landscape of job structures, income and social classes as well as way of life of an urbanite. One of the biggest impact of urbanization processes was the change in social stratification when more new social classes and lifestyles which were later known as urban lifestyles. Most Malaysian city dwellers are made of multilingual and multinational individuals which further shaped the dynamics of space and shape, that has unintentionally existed in the city (Abdul Hadi Harman Shah et al. 2010). Thus, the city dwellers are taken

as agents of change and extremely important in determining the history, image and uniqueness of a city where there exist social lifestyle directed to values which come from diversity in customs, culture and different religious beliefs.

THE CITY'S SOUL OBJECT OF STUDY

Urban changes or transformation directly or indirectly create something known as elements of the city's soul which are permanent in nature, fixed, unchanging and form the factors that shape a city. These contributing factors help develop the city to ensure its survival, progress and eventually reach their maturity. Therefore, elements of the city's soul have to be analysed and categorized in the process of conurbation changes which are rapid and drastic, these days. Objects in the city's soul are not limited to only the search in urban identity such as cultural architecture, symbolic landscape or functional space and abstract shapes. Rather, the objects of a city's soul are more directed to physical items which can be touched, seen, comprehensive and coherent, as well as rational. Orientation of the elements of a city's soul often leans towards positive urban changes. Any elements of the soul's city that is related to livability will enable a city to maintain its value even though a city's transformation usually takes a long time to establish (Abdul Samad Hadi et al. 2010)

EPISTEMOLOGY OF A CITY'S SOUL

Epistemology is a discussion of methods which are used to gain knowledge. Thus, in the study of a city's soul, epistemology is a way to or a method to study the soul and how elements of these cities' soul are obtained. As for this research, qualitative method is used to collect information and data. To achieve the objective, the researcher will use three techniques namely content analysis, in-depth interview and visual survey. Data collection which involves thinking patterns and experiences of the developer in assimilating elements of soul for the purpose of town planning will be done by analysing the main issues and interviews in depth on selected developers who have been successful in developing certain cities. In addition, data on urbanites dynamic functions will also be collected through in-depth interviews of which 10 to 15 main informants are men and women between 30 to 70 years old

who have lived in the city for more than 10 years. Selection of informants will be thoroughly done by screening and carried out in stages – it is based on social hierarchy beginning from the general community to those with specific positions in the society, regardless of race, religion and language background. The rationale behind limiting the informants to only those who have lived in the city for more than 10 years are these people must have gathered experiences which influence the way see, evaluate, listen, explore and communicate as they thrive within their communities. Observations will also be included and this is a continuous process to monitor various dimensions in a city's lifestyle in the last 30 years through photographic method. For instance, an observation can be carried out by analysing elements of a city which has never changed so far - signboards, building's typology, public transportation and various other elements. Other than that, micro and macro perspectives on urban changes will be gathered from official statistical data and other secondary data via library research which will also be carried out.

CITY'S SOUL AXIOLOGY

Axiology is a discussion on values of moral knowledge. This study is related to the research of a city's soul to answer questions regarding how knowledge of the soul's city will be used as well as to analyse the type of relationship that exist between the process of changes in urban conurbation and the norms among the developers and the city dwellers. Urban elements, whether or not they exist concurrently or not, is the soul that can contribute life to a city. Therefore, when the city's soul can be identified, livability of the city will be able to be sustained in the context of urban development as a whole. Patterns of a city's soul in major cities' conurbation become extremely important. The implication it has on fast and drastic changes is useful in creating specific research findings which are interrelated and highly valuable for those in academics or just for the public at large. Another issue that one must comprehend is that a city's soul is often closely related to the functions and norms of the developers and dwellers since the values which can be found in the soul is the essence to a town's development.

CONCLUSION

The soul of a city is a discipline that is related to sustainability where analysis is focused more on observation, studies and identifying a city's elements. These elements are also taken as factors that will be able to ensure the livelihood of a city until it is established. As one of the fields of study, a city's soul must be seen through a prism which contains history, meaning and language as well as developing on frames of ontology, epistemology and axiology as its basis. This study focuses on a dimension of urbanization which was formed based on rapid and drastic urban changes until now. In between those drastic urban changes, one remains complete, maintain and become part of the city's identity. It is also the core of the city's livability. With this article, it is hoped that many people will benefit from it especially to those who are studying the city's soul.

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