Humanization of Tall Buildings:
Case Study of the City Centre of Melbourne in Australia

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ABSTRACT This research deals specifically with urban planning by focusing on passages connecting tall buildings. Tunnels built in the air, and connecting tall buildings create human passage ways for people to walk through. Australia's Melbourne Central Business District (CBD) is a good example of Humanization of high-rise buildings, which is the case study of this paper.

INTRODUCTION

This research deals specifically with urban planning by focusing on passages connecting tall buildings. Tunnels built in the air, and connecting tall buildings create human passage ways for people to walk through. Australia's Melbourne Central Business District (CBD) is a good example of Humanization of high-rise buildings, which is the case study of this paper.

The methodology employed for this research was the analysis of Photographs taken of the city, and analysing them from an architectural perspective. This research was based on existing literature and the authors' observational experience. It begins with an overview of tall buildings in the world, providing some recommendations based on this example

TALL BUILDINGS AND THE ECONOMY

Tall buildings are usually built in business centres, as in the case of Melbourne. The reason behind this is because "high-rise and high-density developments are the result of growing demand for space in the central parts of cities and it appears that this is the only rational way of redevelopment that could be adopted" (Reddy 1996).

Throughout the late 1940s and 1950s planners used the opportunity to implement the modernist ideal of building towers that were surrounded by gardens. By the late 1960s and early 1970s many planners were coming to realize that the imposition of modernist clean lines and a lack of human scale also tended to sap vitality from the community. Modernism can be said to have ended in the 1970s when the construction of the cheap, uniform tower blocks ended in many countries, such as Britain and France. Since then many have been demolished and more conventional housing has been built. Rather than attempting to eliminate all disorder, planning now concentrates on individualism and diversity in society and the economy. This is the post-modernist era.

Economy has become a major factor in forming architecture and cities; also a leader of planning policy. Tall buildings appear to became a phenomenon of modern cities. All over the world, architectural competition exists between rich countries competing to create high rise buildings that focus on height and appearance. According to Ada Huxtable "the early, or functional, skyscraper was an economic phenomenon; business was the engine that drove innovation" (Huxtable 1992). Yet Huxtable emphasizes the aesthetic aspect of skyscrapers, and not just its functionality. Huxtable explains:

"In its most familiar and exhilarating aspect, the skyscraper has been a celebration of modern building technology… and often in spite of it, the skyscraper is still an art form. The tall building has that in common with all major works of architecture consciously conceived in aesthetic terms" (Huxtable 1992).

The city is considered to be an accumulative process of human interaction. Some studies indicate that culture and social factors are one of the main factors which form a built environment, therefore physical planning cannot be understood without studying or understanding the prevailing culture.

Case Study: City of Melbourne

Melbourne is the capital of the state of Victoria, which is one of the six states making up the

Commonwealth of Australia. Melbourne started up as a speculative settlement that broke away from New South Wales (Melbourne, 2 July 2007). Gold was discovered in Victoria in the early 1850s which led to the growth of Melbourne, and people arriving by sea to Melbourne averaged 90, 000 a year between 1855 to 1858 (Melbourne, 2 July 2007). This led to a boom in Melbourne and "where previously in the city three or four storey office blocks had been the highest buildings, virtually overnight eight and nine storey buildings were built as a result of private enterprise" (Melbourne, 2 July 2007). Today, Melbourne houses 'Australia's second tallest building, the 300-meter Eureka Tower' (Melbourne, 2 July 2007). The following gives an account of the rise of tall buildings in Melbourne:

In the late 1950s and 1960s there were enormous changes to the Central Business District. Between 1956 and 1958 Melbourne witnessed the construction of what was to be its first skyscraper. ICI House was designed by Bates Smart and McCutcheon and represented an international style glass curtain wall development. In the lead up to the 1956 Olympic Games the removal of verandahs further contributed to the radical changes taking place in the city fabric. In the 1960s the first stage of the Victorian arts centre complex was open-end, and the National Gallery of Victoria designed by Roy Grounds (Melbourne, 2 July 2007).

Between 1916 and 1957, Melbourne had a 40 meter height limit on its skyscrapers, except for decorative towers. The city was home to the first high-rise buildings in the world in the 1890s. To be specific, in 1889 Melbourne had the third tallest Australian Building which was demolished in the 1980s. It was the first skyscraper in the southern hemisphere, around a 12-storey building (Walking Melbourne, 28 June 2007).

The pathways linking buildings to each other around the shopping area in Melbourne's Central Business District (CBD) go through Bourke Street Mall. Bourke Street Mall is a walking space where only trams go through as the following explains:

Bourke Street Mall was transformed into a pedestrian street in the late 70s and then reconfigured recently as a transit mall. It is also one of the Melbourne's defining public space destinations... Just as the street was once dominated by automobiles, many now feel that the new transit-oriented design is still oriented too much around transportation and not enough around shopping, cultural creativity and social life (Streets blog, 20 Jan 2008).

Melbourne has for many years laid claim to Australia's tallest building. The city once had the world's 3rd tallest skyscraper in the Australian Building 1889. The building was Australia's and the southern hemisphere's very first true skyscraper (12 storeys or taller). Today, Melbourne is home to 5 out of the 10 tallest buildings in Australia, and Australia's tallest since is the Eureka Tower (see Fig. 1).

The City of Melbourne has been voted the 'Most Livable City in the World' twice in the last four years by international travel agencies. Melbourne arcades are indoor shopping streets, originally built wide enough to accommodate the voluminous skirts of ladies who shopped the lanes in the late 1800's. The shopper in Melbourne avoids its cold winter or hot days by travelling through built tunnels that run over the below street and link buildings together. This way, pedestrians can avoid having to wait in order to

Fig. 1. Melbourne: The Eureka Tower The tallest building in Australia (By the author).

cross a busy street. This is specifically noticed in passages that run over Lonsdale Street linking one shopping centre to another. These tunnels allow the passer-by to see the below street through glass walls, and in some cases where the tunnels are built over smaller streets, cafes have been set for people to sit and relax (see Figs. 2, 3, and 4).

On one hand, Huxtable points out that "an increasingly limited preoccupation with surface appears to be coupled with a sheer, stubborn disregard for the people and the cities the structure serve" (Huxtable 1992). However, we notice as in the case of Melbourne's city centre that this paper looks into, that people have been allowed to become part of these buildings by the creation of passages for them to travel through, and thus making them an interactive element with urban buildings.

DISCUSSION

As Dan Rice states: "There are three forms of visual art: Painting is art to look at, sculpture is art you can walk around, and architecture is art you can walk through" (Rice 2008). Human interaction is detrimental in making architecture alive and the cases delivered in this study have exemplified this, where a human flow exists from one tall building to another. Tall buildings are therefore connected to ensure that they do not stand alone, but have a place in a community. As Stephen Kellert explains:

A sense of placelessness is often linked to large-scale development, short-term construction, and earth-transforming technology – practices that often reflect indifference, if not disdain, for distinctive vernacular conditions. Such an approach to designing the built environment ignores the virtue of compatible connections among culture, nature and history. Office towers, shopping malls, and housing developments are instead designed in abstract, universal ways that are disconnected from both local culture and ecology (Kellert 2005).

It is therefore important to offer spaces in outdoor areas, and in indoor areas, as in the case of Melbourne's Central Business District (CBD).

Marshal McLuhan puts forward the case between the civilized man and the tribal man, and his connection to his environment by explaining that "… civilized man, tends to restrict and enclose space and to separate functions, whereas tribal man had freely extended the form of his body to include the universe" (McLuhan 2003: 169). This is suggestive that it is part of man to be part of his environment, so the modern skyscraper should enclose man and become an extension of his body.

Melbourne's case has revealed that passages between tall buildings have been constructed to

Fig. 2. Flying bridges over the street linking tow buildings in Melbourne-Australia (by the author)

Figs. 3 & 4. Different View of flying biggest between Tall buildings In Melbourne. Creating Human Interactions between buildings and streets, and between inside and outside creating Human Urban Spaces. (By the author).

provide a human flow between tall buildings. This has assisted the pedestrian in avoiding extreme weather conditions by providing shelter, in addition to avoiding busy traffic by being elevated above the street. This is highly convenient for humans travelling from one tall building to another, which makes them feel as if they are part of this modern construction.

CONCLUSION

This paper suggests that, Melbourne can be put as an example to implement human scale for other cities. The architecture freedom used in this city helped people to move easily through crossing huge and tall buildings by using tunnels and flying bridges; instead of using transport means or walking long distances in cold and hot weather. An example of modern architecture in today's urban areas.

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