

The Mental Illness of The City and Its Identity

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1. The Illness of the City

AIDS (Acquired Immuno-Deficiency Syndrome) is widely known as a serious current illness in the world. The lack of knowledge about the illness fills people with anxiety. However mental disorder should also be pointed out as a current illness which anybody could possibly have under the right conditions. Mental disorders are increasing because of the complexity of present human society. Recently a new type of disorder is known as a **borderline personality disorder** which expresses symptoms between that of neurosis disorder and schizophrenia.

This definition is based on DMS-III-R (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorder, the third edition revised) of American Psychiatric Association in 1987¹⁾. The main symptom of the illness is labelled as "**stable instability**"²⁾. The mentality of the patient fluctuates between normal and abnormal world and it suddenly changes corresponding to the surrounding situation. In reality, it is very difficult even for the expert to discover the symptom of the illness through a brief normal diagnostic interview. There are many examples such as refusal to go to school and emotional disorder in adolescences. However the knowledge of this "**mental disorder**" cannot be distributed widely. If a serious problem does not happen legally, economically and socially, the patient does not have the opportunity to be treated. The surrounding people have to face the surprise, disappointment and unreasonable phenomena.

If we look at the city, as a sort of organization of human beings, it might be assumed that the city represents the mentality of the people. Therefore the city can be assumed to be infected

with the "**mental disorder**" when considering the mental climate of the individual area. For example, the disaster of the earthquake in Kobe on January 17 of this year has given not only physical damage but also mental damage to the people. The image of Kobe has often been described as an "**exotic and fashionable city with the younger people.**"

Therefore they have had a strong "**identity of the city**" in this sense. However, this situation has changed dramatically. If the author mentioned that he is from Kobe, the response now is "**the city of the earthquake.**" It sounds like a sad and blue area. It cannot be denied that this image of the disaster city was created partly by mass media. However the image of the city has changed a lot in many aspects. It should be mentioned as a result that each city has its own personality and the city should be regarded as not only a physical community but also a mental community.

2. Road Construction and the Image of the City

The rapid construction of road networks in Japan has been done in correspondence to the increase of vehicle traffic. The basic concept of urban road traffic management is still illustrated as smooth, comfortable and safe. In terms of engineering, many advanced application techniques of traffic information are developed in this field.

Apart from the technical aspect, the function of the city and the condition of the road networks are connected to each other. Therefore the construction and destruction of the roads easily change the image of the city. A survey was done to ask the colour of the image for Hanshin Expressway networks. The Kobe route of motorways is coloured as **blue** (25%) and **green** (17%) by respondents of the

survey. These colours come from the image of the motorways which pass through Kobe city according to its natural and social circumstances, culture and history.

The **blue** is generally regarded as a colour of mysterious nature and tranquillity. And also the **green** is interpreted as safe, stable and sound. What colour images are appearing in the minds of the people faced with the present invisible motorways destroyed by the earthquake ?

Basically the road construction should be planned to consider the development of the city. The activity of the city gives the requirements of the function of the road and the fundamental image of the city. On the other hand, the development of the road networks will give limitations to the activity of the city. The image of the city is described by the importance of the city as the unit of the world. The lack of materials make the minds of people poor. However it is also true that an oversupply of goods causes an improper change in the mind of people. The important fact here is that the material being is lost while the image remains in the depths of our minds.

3. Future of Civil Engineering Technology

The materialistic sufficiency cannot be the propose of our lives. The giant creatures are given by civil engineers as a symbol of the city. If the motorway networks are said to be the skeleton of the country, they must be embodying the mental frameworks as well. The road networks will be a factor of the personality of the city and they will be involved in the metal climate of the city.

The typical symptom of the borderline disorder is so-called "**identity disorder**."²⁾ The patient feels that he cannot identify his proper position within society and cannot find the role which he should play. The concept of deriving the optimal transport networks corresponding to the scale of a city must be economically reasonable. This is the most common infrastructure planning approach described in field textbook. In this sense, it is entirely

reasonable to construct the same infrastructure in the same size cities.

However if we consider the personality of the city based on its culture and history, the identity of the city should be kept in terms of the planning of the road systems and the city itself.

The fraction of mental disorder in the depth of the mind can be observed even in a city which seems to have normal development economically and socially. Counselling for city planning might be recommended to find the mental illness. The civil engineering technology which provides the "**huge mental creature**" may include the treatment of the mental illness of the city which strongly connects with its personality.

4. Concluding Remarks

The analogy of psychoanalysis to city planning has been mentioned in this paper. The Civil Engineering technology should be developed to consider the construction of the mental structure of the city. Since the human mind consists of many psychological factors, the degree of mental disorder cannot be easily measured by simple observation. For further study of the regional mental climate, the advanced process from the psychoanalysis of the region to the psychotherapy for future planning should be discussed using many incentive materials³⁾. Finally this approach may help in the creation of the **identity of the city**.

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References

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