Urban Observatory™

It's generally believed that we have all the maps we need in our smart phones and our computers, but have you ever thought of the possibility of understanding one city relative to another.

For purposes of walking and scale, the quality of life in one space, the density of population, the traffic speed through a city, the location of an airport relative to the town, the time it takes to get into town.

If you want to locate your global company you want to locate a factory someplace, (besides the tax incentives some country or city might give you), would you not like to understand the age of the population, the education of the population, and the availability. How long it takes to commute, the distribution of resources and the linear patterns of the distribution of not only your transportation system, but water lines, electrical systems, sewage, etc.

You only understand something relative to something you understand.

In 1962 I did a book of 50 city plans all at the same scale and I was shocked. Even though I had been to Rome and Paris and Beijing. I was shocked at their relative size, how much larger Paris was than Rome. In those types of comparisons I could go on. My understanding of each city, in my little book, was expanded greatly by understanding something relative to something I knew about viscerally.

So for the traveler, for the business person; the mother project of 19.20.21, which was a cartographic initiative for comparatively mapping information about cities, has been given form in the Urban Observatory.

Put together by the three partners:

Esri, the leading maker of software for maps in the world, GIS and Landsat.

@radical.media, the leading trans media company in the United States.

Richard Saul Wurman, who has done a number of books on cartography, travel guides information theory and created the TED Conference and others as well as invented the term information architecture.

The dream is taking the idea of having a live museum, with live streaming understandable comparative information in perhaps 100 cities around the world. Each one having access to each of the 100 cities, in comparative format, having access to live information from the other cities; seeing the festivals, traffic, sites, and fly overs. Well, all of that was shown or hinted at in the first exhibit which had 16 cities with 16 layers based on a new linguistic theory of cartographic information developed by Wurman and Esri. It was presented at the annual Users Conference in July 2013 at Esri for 14,000 cartographers where 160 nations have viewed it.

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First, all the above is based on a little known fact that no two cities of the world create their maps using the same scale or the same legends. The scale is easy, you always adjust a map by scale. But, the maps you see on your smartphone are pictures. You couldn't put two cites next to each other and compare traffic patterns or land use. In fact, if you just take industrial land use, the legends on every map of every city in the world have different things they call industrial land use. For instance, in some places industrial land use is all under one category, others it's light and

heavy industrial, sometimes it's toxic, sometimes it's broken down into transportation, storage and manufacturing, etc. So the patterns that come out of such information cannot be compared; the number of employees that work at plants, the density of land coverage, the effect on the environment, the access to them. None of these things can be compared and that is just one small element of the many functions of a city.

Second, the idea that all the above is based on is that we have a phenomena that we are living with today, which is the App. This museum in the fact that it would be all electronic with no object in it would be similar to living in a real time, real space, four dimensional App. It would be updated, changed and interactive.

It is an idea of tomorrow, today.

FINDING
THE
FUTURE
FIRST. ™