

## GENERIC CITY - CITY FOR THE GLOBAL CITIZENS

3 months and 21 days ago this very day I was in my car on the street of Gurgaon, India, frowning at being stuck in traffic, worried I might miss my flight, and then the stars caught my attention they transitioned from the sky to building facades and spilled right in front of me over the streets; they looked brighter than they were on the sky, moving at a speed of 100 kms an hour they produced these flashes, flashes that hid behind them the children sleeping by the pavement. Today on my way back from downtown Houston I felt exactly the same ; I was frowning at being stuck in traffic , worried about missing my essays deadline, the stars, the building facades the streets were as bright and the helplessness of the homeless by the freeway exactly the same.



I lived in a city of contrasts and conflicts then and I live in a city of contrasts and conflicts now but does that mean these two cities are generic? Does this mean that these cities have no distinctive quality? I believe the quality lies in the fact that I could easily make a transition from the other side of the globe to this. The quality lies in the fact that we really are becoming a global community. We as architects are looking for solutions for the global village, a community that has the same issue, the same requirements and the same aspirations. We might have had different histories but the future we are hoping for is the same. And if the architectural journey led by us is the same then I would like to believe that we are on the right track.

The cities today are being built out of our need for speed, our demand of higher densities, our love for the car and our negligence towards the ones under the poverty line. And I suppose serving the 'global' is an identity in itself. Yes we live in cities that are polycentric, we share our neighborhoods with people from all over the planet, we love cars, we love the idea of walking on the streets, we are passionate about new technological advancements, we share lives on facebook, and we network on LinkedIn and so we live in cities that look the same.

*Moralistic is not moral. And as for truth - well, it's like brown - it's not in the spectrum.*

*Truth is so generic - Iris Murdoch*

Rem Koolhaas might believe that a 'generic city' is boiling down and accepting mediocrity but I believe we as architects or as a part of the human race can never be mediocre. We started out from the caves, carving out stones, producing wall art and look at us today; look at the journey we've made. We aspired, we dreamt and we achieved. We made the pyramids, the Greek temples, created the malls, the high rises, the Guggenheims and we are on our way to create many more specimens that shall translate history to our future generations, tell them about the journey we led, The decisions we took and the life we lived. They shall learn from us just like we learn from the Guggenheim.

*"It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair, we had everything before us, we had nothing before us, we were all going direct to Heaven, we were all going direct the other way - in short, the period was so far like the present period, that some of its noisiest authorities insisted on its being received, for good or for evil, in the superlative degree of comparison only." – Charles Dickens , Introduction to The Tale Of Two Cities.*

There are two sides to every story but there are multiple aspects to architecture, To me it seems inappropriate to name phases of architecture. Like how a 'skyscraper' doesn't really mean anything. Any architecture produced is a combination of so many social, economical, psychological and governing issues but years later when one sees it, it's just a physical form which might not narrate the hardship it went through to stand up and a tag over it makes it all the more difficult to tag itself. Imagine three decades from now people looking at a structure made in 2011 and calling what we build now as 'generic' something no distinctive quality. We might not be distinctive from each other but we are distinctive from what we were a decade ago. We are not modernists or the post moderns we are not undergoing the renaissance of the 14<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup> century we are finding answers to the renaissance of our own. We are distinctive in the methods we are using to built, we are distinctive at the speed we build in, we are distinctive in the materials we use, when are distinctive in the way we plan. We are truly a global world, we are not generic.