

Brand melancholy

Description

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Who would want to brand their city as melancholic? Iâ??ve just caught up with the Guardianâ??s city brand barometer. One of the parameters by which they measure brand success is â??buzzâ?•: â??a combination of social media (Facebook likes and Twitter sentiment analysis) and media mentions.â?• They donâ??t measure melancholy, but if buzzing is frenetic activity, then itâ??s opposite is something like lethargy, or perhaps just slowness. If busy buzzers keep their eyes on the task at hand, then melancholics take the long view.

In an interesting article â??The geography of melancholy,â?• Tara Burton draws attention to the melancholy evident in any city, and accounts for it in terms of *brand*: â??Nearly every historic city has its brand of melancholy indelibly associated with itâ??each variety linked to the scars the city bears. Lisbon has its *saudade*: a feeling of aimless loss tied to the cityâ??s legacy of vanishing seafarers, explorers shipwrecked in search of Western horizons. Istanbul has *huzun:* a religiously-tinged brand of melancholy rooted in the cityâ??s nostalgia for its glorious past.â?•

Charles Baudelaire (1821-67) recounted his impression of the demise of Old Paris in his poem The Swan: â??a town, alas, changes more quickly than manâ??s heart may change.â?• Heâ??s reminded of the Paris that was lost as he sighted a swan waddling in the dust, â??I think of sailors on some isle forgotten; Of captives; vanquished . . . and of many more.â?•

Thereâ??s loss, but also the long view. Cities by the sea, on the edge of large planes, or on top of high hills have something of the melancholic about them â?? expansive horizons giving spatial expression to the melancholy evident in any city. But then something similar can be created via those vast carless plazas that now grace many European cities.



Reference

- Burton, Tara Isabella. 2014. The geography of melancholy. *The American Reader*, (http://theamericanreader.com/the-geography-of-melancholy/).

Notes

- Iâ??m giving a talk on the melancholic city in London on Monday 9 March 2015 at the Bartlett City Futures Cities Seminar: Living the Future City. *The melancholy city* (Richard Coyne): This talk is a response to the recent enthusiasm for mapping cities and regions to show how people feel, in general through mood maps and happiness indices. Richard will discuss some of the technologies involved, but also the way cities relate to film, digital media and other cultural forms along the dimension of melancholy. *Sustainable Connected Cities* (Duncan Wilson): How community scale solutions can use technology to make cities a better place to live? The talk will focus on the city experience delivering human centric services that are socially, economically and environmentally sustainable. Duncan is currently working on large scale deployments of sensor networks in London and will describe some of the challenges of deploying an internet of things in cities.
- Also see blog posts: Melancholy urbanism, Good morning melancholia, Absence of melancholy, The melancholy medium and Profoundly bored.

- The image above is of the main plaza in the old town of Siracusa, Italy. The picture below is at Lakes Entrance, Victoria, Australia 1965.
- Burton mentions the word huzun (hÃ¼zÃ¼n). In Turkish this means sadness, melancholy and gloominess according to wordsense.eu. Thereâ??s a link there to the arabic origin of the word (Ø-Ø²Ù?), the noun form of which means rugged and hard ground.



Category

1. Architecture

Tags

1. city
2. melancholy
3. mood

Date Created
March 7, 2015
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