

Caravanserai for Urban Nomads

Introduction

One of the core premises of our design research this semester is to understand technology from a deeper human level. Too often we get caught up in the technology itself and may lose sight of the basic human needs or desires technology is serving. With all the tech of artificial intelligence and the fascination with mixed realities, I sense that the human is being lost while we push technology forward. Are we technology centered or human centered, in our work? What if we were both? This question was 'on the table' in a symposium for enterprise, I recently attended, in San Francisco, on

Mobility in the City of Tomorrow. Some viewed the subject through the lens of an engineer and the problem as one of technology and the optimization of time and tasks. Others saw the subject through the lens of a humanist who thinks of technology making cities more and more livable. Whatever their position or point of view, cities were becoming more dense, more expensive, and more difficult to find rewarding and meaningful work. From politics to play our society is in a transitional state, becoming more de-centralized, distributed, and competitive. It is also becoming more networked. Paradoxically, networking a fragmented system creates a new type of coherence. Our new sense of wholeness and belonging is adjusting to new realities.

We are at a crossroads, an excellent place for the Architectural mind.

Prologue

There will be **two projects** to focus on technology and Work. We will try to grasp what is lost or gained with technology and automation growing in the workplace. Our research and discussion will circle around 2 main subjects, smart technology becoming our 4th skin and automation creating new business models. Currently, there are shifts in the traditional supply chains, and re-structuring of the workforce itself.

The first shift in our way of life and the first disruption in the human workforce occurred 10,000 years ago.

The Agrarian Revolution, made possible by domestication of plants and animals, disrupted hunters and gatherers.

The benefit was food production increased, and populations grew enabling larger human settlements and eventually urbanization and the rise of cities.

Project 2 _ Caravanserai for Urban Nomads

A provisional settlement for a growing provisional workforce in a GIG economy

A place to re-fine or re-invent a work life

Premise

- Advances in automation and technology are disrupting workforces in every industry.
- Advances in automation and technology make it possible for Companies to produce more with fewer employees and hire on a short-term project basis.
- Advances in automation and technology have created a growing number of Independent contractors known historically as freelancers and now drivers of the GIG economy.
- Advances in automation and technology have made people in the workforce more mobile.
- Advances in automation and technology have created a workforce that would rather be inventors and entrepreneurs rather than employees.
- 40% of the workforce by 2020 will be independent contractors. They will move where the work is or closer to it.
- Workplace, workforce, and employer are unbundled by technology.
- Physical alignment is not necessary anymore.

Prologue

A **Caravanserai** functioned as the first mixed use project -- a depot, trading outpost, rest stop, and an informal storytelling salon for Traders and Travelers. Marco Polo, the Italian and Ibn Batutta were travelers and storytellers, entertaining and educating the traders on the cultural richness that existed. These depots supported the flow of culture and commerce across the network of trade routes that extended from Asia, across North Africa, and into southeastern Europe, primarily along the Silk Roads. Our speculation is that this is an historical model that has not been exhausted and is ready to be re-imagined in L.A., as a model for a new type of facility for creative production and exchange.

Provocations

What if we were altruistic in the best of times?

What if we created a place for a cooperative community to work together repurposing their lives?

Project

Our project will be a place for people whom are connected and on the move without expectation of permanent employment, ever. They are literally urban nomads, working freelance in an economy that is shape shifting in slow motion, for the next 3 decades. Long held business models and work regimens will dissolve and reconfigure. Historically, it has been the third quarter when the disruptions came to rest for a while before the next one. A settlement for the growing GIG workforce, freelancers, in residence on a short-term basis, (6 months max) who want to live in a cooperative community, closer to the company they are contracted with. Some here are refining their capabilities and knowledge to stay ahead of the curve, and some others are included in a historical category of disrupted workforces. This will be the place to get back on the path and stay there.

Backstory : Global Shifts

This is a time of great shifts in the physical, digital, and biological worlds, slowly disrupting and reshaping Human institutional structures. Reverse migrations, population growth, limited resources, economic, and the beginning of the Fourth Industrial Revolution as the economist Klaus Straub has written about. Our resilience and capacity for response, adaptation and constructive invention allows us to constantly face these challenges with optimism and a plan.

The people who come to work and live at the *Urban Nomad Settlements*, are here to be in a community of practice in an Affinity Zone, with others, all of whom are searching for a common ground of being and to survive. Also, they are here for practical reasons. They must learn how to 'surf and monetize disruption' and to collectively address these epic shifts in imaginative and productive ways. The scale of our intellectual capacity to respond to the scope of these challenges must dissolve boundaries that extend beyond trans-disciplinary, into the cross-sector collaborations. We need many brains working together as 'one big brain' with depth and breadth of intelligence and wisdom, that is scalable, to address these complex challenges.

Story One : Avatar 1

Kate is one of our storytelling Avatar and world builders, there will be 5 more whom you will identify and 'flesh out.' Kate and the others will serve as a creative mate on the ground answering your questions and giving advice. She is a working student at UC Berkeley, in LA for 4 months, working freelance. The Caravanserai/LA 1 is a perfect set up with its infrastructures for living, working, and networking to meet potential co-workers or friends. She just settled in to work. She places her double Americano next to her mobile phone, digital notebook for sketching and opens her laptop and logs on to the C1LA wireless connection to continue her research on mobility, the current hot topic of anthropologists and enterprise alike. She has a 4-month gig with specific deliverables. She is a regular here in the rooftop cafe, but doesn't usually bring cash, no problem and she recalls, cash requires id anyway. That says it all, she thinks. Permanently connected, she communicates by text, photo, video or voice throughout the day with her friends and workmates, and does her "work stuff" at the same time she plays. She roams around all 4 levels of C1LA for exercise and reconnaissance. So many people all engaged with each other in a variety of activities, open source knowledge transfer and informal learning at its' best. She often docks her customized van at these urban oases that cater to urban nomads. These settlements provide a watering-hole and a place to rest for "techno-Bedouins." Since Bedouins, whether in Arabian deserts or American suburbs, are inherently tribal and social creatures. A good oasis has to do more than provide Wi-Fi; it must also become a traditional kind of gathering place, an **Affinity Space**, where strangers become friends quite easily. Tonight she will participate in a project based workshop structured around a topic about Life long Learning. She plans to stay ahead of the curve.

Urban nomads have started appearing only in the past few years. Like their antecedents in the desert, they are defined not by what they carry but by what they leave behind, knowing that they must travel light and their next settlement will provide for their needs, if they contribute. **Thus, Nomads do not carry their own water, because they know where the next oases are.**

A New Story : a networked hybrid of many collected stories

We are beginning the next phase of the human enterprise, **the fourth industrial revolution**. This will be a significant shift over time requiring a cooperative alignment of friends and strangers working with common sense of purpose and not only in the worst of times. The problem we face trying to achieve this aspirational alignment is, **we are without a common story. It's all a question of story**. The old story gave us guidance or rules, depending on your independence of mind, in reflecting on the 3 big existential questions, how did the world come to be and how did we fit into it. The answers informed by our former **stories** are no long effective. Our traditional story of the universe sustained us for a long period of time. They were written before we understood the concepts presented to us in Powers of Ten, before we knew of worlds within worlds and only of worlds beyond. The stories were written before the Fathers went into the desert to ponder the meaning of it all, had discovered the quantum universe where there is no predictable metric and uncertainty is a control point not a variable. Indeed, we need a new story so we can answer the questions of our children.

21st C Workers in a Gig Economy

Creative Sectors, arguably, provide the City with its greatest competitive advantage.

Creative Industries, Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Media (STEAM) have been the fastest growing segments of the 21st C economy over the last decade, outpacing traditional economic drivers. The creative workforce and the culture they create, are what attracts others to the city.

A thriving creative workforce is a key feature of nearly every successful modern city. To grow a long-term Creative Culture with resilience, we will focus our architectural minds on the unstoppable trend in the labor force, self-employed creative workers and independent contractors choosing to be inventors rather than employees. To put our current status in context, we are in the early stages of our centennial shifts that seem to reach full strength in the 3rd quarter of each century, thus 50 more years of disruption. We will need to learn how to surf and creatively mine the disruption.

The First Industrial Revolution used water and steam power to mechanize production.

The Second Industrial Revolution used electric power to create mass production.

The Third Industrial Revolution is using electronics and information technology to automate production.

The Fourth Industrial Revolution is, building on the Third, the digital revolution that has been occurring since the middle of the last century. It is characterized by a fusion of technologies that is blurring the lines between the physical, digital, and biological spheres.

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|--------|--------|---------------------------|---|
| 18th c | energy | - steam | mechanize production |
| 19th c | light | - electricity | mass production |
| 20th c | time | - electronics | automate production |
| 21th c | memory | - artificial intelligence | fusion of physical, digital, biological spheres |

The Avant-Garde of the 21st Century is mashing together art, science, and technology into one hybridized domain. What is the 'Architectural equivalent of this?'

20th C worker – obsolete



21st C toy - enchanted



Children with Sticks



Communal Working

Addendum 1

The Fourth Industrial Revolution – a term coined by the World Economic Forum and a book by Klaus Strauss, Economist and Founder of WEF, refers to our current era that is characterized by a fusion of technologies blurring the lines between the **physical (matter), digital (light), and biological sphere**. Technological advancements have reached a point where they have enormous impact on political, economic, social systems, and cultural systems.

We are at an inflection point and stand on the brink of a technological revolution that will fundamentally alter the way we live, work, and relate to one another. In its scale, scope, and complexity, the transformation will be unlike anything humankind has experienced before.

We do not yet know how it will unfold, but one thing is clear: the response to it must be integrated and comprehensive. To succeed, a cooperative collective enterprise is fundamental.

Cooperation is biologically necessary and an evolutionary imperative.

These definitions are about the same thing, people working together to solve epic problems but specifically they have subtle yet critical differences.

Trans-disciplinary Research is defined as research efforts conducted by investigators from different disciplines working jointly to create new conceptual, theoretical, methodological, and translational innovations that integrate and move beyond discipline-specific approaches to address a common problem.

Interdisciplinary Research is any study or group of studies undertaken by scholars from two or more distinct scientific disciplines. The research is based upon a conceptual model that links or integrates theoretical frameworks from those disciplines, uses study design and methodology that is not limited to any one field, and requires the use of perspectives and skills of the involved disciplines throughout multiple phases of the research process.¹

Cross-sector Research is embedded in today's research culture with increasing importance being placed on the value of research to society.

Within interdisciplinary and cross-sector projects, team members may hold distinct views on the types of impact they want to create. Set in the context of an interdisciplinary, cross-sector project comprising of partners from academia, industry and the non-profit sector.

Drivers of Social, Cultural, Economic Shifts

Toys – enchanted

Merging of physical, digital, and biological

Scientific discoveries

Environment (ecology, resilience)

Unity of Knowledge (consilience)

Biotechnology (health, wellness, and longevity)

Bio-science

Neuro-science

Energy - renewables

Communications – analogue and digital

Cooperative Technology (simultaneous non-local collaborations)

Artificial Intelligence

Mixed Realities – AR and VR

Mobility and Transportation

Data analysis (big data visualization and mining)

Governance (poly-centric, multi-leveled, or distributed networks)

Addendum 2

Location – Corner of Vermont and Wilshire to 6th Street, 3.3 Acres



Program - mash-up of cooperative work place, media lab, fabrication lab, great room (conference/meetings) energy farm, food/learning garden, governance hall parking structure, park, campsite, motorhome park, micro-unit living pods, gym, dojo (yoga/martial arts/dance), café, restaurant, community kitchen, playground, local maker showcase, experience based retail for workers and residents distributed around complex, archive.

Population – 100 residents who can work and live here
200 non-resident workers, makers, learners, storytellers

Play and Speculation

In a world where the only constant is change and its scale is reaching thresholds beyond comprehension, we become aware of the increased interest in improvisation across a wide variety of disciplines. The basis for making decisions in an unpredictable world is our core principles and placing premium on spontaneity, inventiveness, and creativity. Improvisation is as fundamental to play as play is to learning.

Play and Learning

Many animals play but mainly to practice basic survival skills. Generally, humans have the longest period of protected play, that begins in early childhood and extends until the rites of passage in our early teens, approximately 10 years. Children play to develop imagination, creating hypothetical scenarios to test and learn. During childhood we build the brain wiring to explore. Play is sometimes contrasted with work and characterized as a type of activity, which is essentially unimportant, trivial and lacking in any serious purpose. Our society tends to dismiss **play** for adults, perceiving it as unproductive. The notion is that once we reach adulthood, it's time to get serious. And between personal and professional responsibilities, there's no time to **play**. Quite the opposite is true, **play** is very serious and essential to our wellbeing. We must continue to exercise and grow our imagination, and to do so, as we get older, we need to **play**, by suspending disbelief, opening our mind, and believing once again that anything imaginable is possible.

Assignments

Every class session we will meet as a group to express our thoughts. Everyone, with your unique ideas must participate.

A. Reading and Research

1. Read the complete syllabus and make a list of questions.
2. Research is mandatory.
3. Begin writing a story that weaves fact and fiction into a timeline of 4 people living a nomadic life, traveling around LA and to other states – imagine working on 2-4 projects a year in different cities.
4. Make a list of architectural 'styles' you have a strong attraction to and then make a short list of 2 architects who you identify with this style and then study their philosophy and work-flow process.

B. Personal History

1. Pick your favorite style – approach to architecture and urban design - bring examples beginning Monday.
2. list 2 architects whose style and approach you find compelling at the moment.
3. Know it in context, its lineage, its philosophy – thought structures and how it is conceived

Glossary to be Defined:

1. what is a caravanseraï
2. what is an urban nomad, what does it mean to be nomadic
3. what is communal working vs. co-working
4. what is cross sector collaborations
5. what is communal living
6. what is the gig economy
7. what is the creative workforce
8. what is an independent contractor
9. what industries already have this structure in place
10. what is a flash organization
11. what is consilience

Schedule

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| Wed 10.25 | ✓ | Review [Updated] Midterm Deliverables Introduce Project 2 |
| Fri 10.27 | ✓ ✓ | Vermont/Wilshire Photos Due Glossary Terms Defined Due |
| Mon 10.30 | ✓ ✓ ✓ | Images/Plans of Program Types Due Density & Context maps Due Nomadic Story Due |
| Wed 11.1 | ✓ ✓ | Report "What is the role of the Caravanserai in the 4 th Industrial Revolution" Due Technology Timeline Due |
| Fri 11.3 | ✓ | Case Study / Site Diagrams Matrix Due |
| Mon 11.6 | ✓ ✓ | Nomadic Story Update Due Preliminary Massing Due |
| Wed 11.8 | ✓ | Massing Update Due |
| Fri 11.10 | ✓ | Review: All research, Diagrams & Massing Due |
| Mon 11.13 | ✓ | Nomadic Story Update Due |
| Wed 11.15 | | TBD |
| Fri 11.17 | | TBD |
| Mon 11.20 | ✓ | Nomadic Story Update Due |
| Wed 11.22 | | TBD |
| Fri 11.24 | | TBD |
| Mon 11.27 | | TBD |
| Wed 11.29 | | TBD |
| Fri 12.1 | | TBD |
| Mon 12.4 | ✓ | Pre Final Review |
| Wed 12.6 | | TBD |
| Fri 12.8 | | TBD |
| Mon 12.11 | | TBD |
| Wed 12.13 | ✓ | All Materials Printed/Complete and Pinned Up by 12 AM or no review |
| Thu 12.14 | ✓ | 3pm Keck Hall Final Review |