(Partial)

Introduction: Before Atlantis: 20 Million Years of Human and Pre-Human History

by Frank Joseph

Positive and negative images, surviving many years of evolution, are embedded, or "filed," somewhere in people's memories. Current experiences, beliefs, attitudes, and expectations add more complexity. It is extraordinary that the human mind can evaluate in fine detail what is seen, as well as whether it is positive and good or negative and bad. Unfortunately, results generated in Community Visioning sessions conducted in a broad range of cities and regions have revealed that negative images dominate.

This book presents many negative images that make communities feel depressed, balanced with many positive images that could ameliorate these negative conditions. The collective positive visions generate hope for a more positive visual, spatial, emotional, and sustainable short- and long-term future.

Reviewing over 40 years of Community Visioning, the positive and negative image responses have been extraordinarily consistent over the years. People know what they want if given choices. The goal of the visioning process is to identify negative places and spaces, and then enact some variation of the positive visions in building new positive places. To accomplish this, positive community visions need to be illustrated and written into updated comprehensive plans, existing codes, and zoning. They must be translated into two-, three-, and four-dimensional development and redevelopment plans for people to understand.

There are too few "well designed" places that meet the collective, desired, and imagined positive experience of place. Where these places exist, or have been transformed from negative to positive, people feel more happiness, and the economic value of place and efficiency increases. There need to be many more positive places. There need to be more explicit visions of what people want that can induce hopefulness and get built.

To capture a holistic vision of places and spaces, surveys have revealed that an optimum of fourteen (14) image categories must be probed separately and then combined. To accomplish this, many images have to be photographed and evaluated. A Visual Preference Survey typically contains between 30 and over 240 images, combined with a selected number of stop action videos. This smaller number of images is typical of an online Community Visioning session or probing a specific visual and spatial feature or location.

Each positive or negative image in this book has been extensively tested, with its collective response values expressed as the mean or average of all responses, and its standard deviation. We have found mean and standard deviation to be the most understandable for the public when presenting results. On

the other hand, the median or middle value, with half of the responses above and half below, and the mode, the number most often used, are often found to be confusing.

There are many positive and negative consensus visions in this book, intended for a wide range of land use, places, spaces, and mobility options. The selected images in each chapter present a collective positive or negative emotional response, along with recommendations for implementation to improve unacceptable places.

This book also contains value rated images of negative, unacceptable places and spaces which generate depression, hopelessness, fear, and anger. When places become unbearably negative, escape may result in anger, health disparities, and augmented reality using drugs, alcohol, internet and video games. When people encounter too many negative places, the images are embedded into their memory, then hopeless sets in, leading us to imagine even more negativity and fear while repressing the positive scenes we encounter.

A disturbing article in Harvard Magazine titled "How Depression Lingers," published by Professor Jill Hooley of Harvard in 2016, states, When additional negativism of place is focused on these brains, relapse could occure. This made me think seriously about those people who repeatedly experience negative places, with resulting inescapable negativism and depression, day after day. The Community Visioning sessions have also clearly demonstrated that negative places provide the greatest opportunity for potential change. Most people want these negative-rated places to change for the better. Unfortunately, there are many who prosper from places remaining in their negative conditions. Think about the suburban and urban commercial and urban residential slumlords.

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The brains of recovering patients (depression) still show distinctive activity patterns – even though the subjects report feeling normal.

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Selecting the final set of images for the book was extremely difficult given the vast number of images and places that have been evaluated over nearly 40 years and 400 vision sessions.

Many images in this book were evaluated in multiple vision sessions, in various locations, and to a wide demographic, thereby providing a large cross section of responses to specific images of ubiquitous land uses, like strip commercial developments or low density subdivisions. The multiple responses that were generated by participants from various communities generated a broader consensus

of the most acceptable and unacceptable visual and spatial characteristics in their towns and yet to be built neighborhoods. These visioned places impacted recommendations for development, redevelopment, preservation, or removal. The accumulated collective feelings about these images, experienced by a large number of people, are a validation of the universality of the emotional and physical reactions. Positives are to be promoted; negatives are to be redeveloped.

The collective visions from each community are unique but share an incredible number of commonalities. When images from all Community Visioning sessions are compared, results share positive and negative values, and attributes across multiple categories.

One overriding commonality is the intense desire for places and spaces that generate positive feelings. These images portray places that are healthy and sustainable for living, working, playing, procreating, and retiring. Community Visioning participants want places that integrate nature, provide a sense of community, are safe, are cost effective, and sustainable. They must also have buildings and streets built on a human scale, promote walkability, and have easy mobility connections to other places via transit. Everything needed should be available within a reasonable 10- to 15-minute walking time, a maximum 2 ½ mile bike ride or a 20-minute transit ride. These are the most desired time distance relationships. The participants expressed a need for healthy food and water, and jobs; perhaps most importantly, they wanted to be part of a greater vision to make their communities more positive, livable, human-scaled, safe, and affordable.

Two Community Visioning Sessions

Public meetings are typically well attended. There is an intensity of interaction when there is a meaningful visual and oral exchange to which everyone can respond.

The participants in the vision sessions represent a broad and diverse range of individuals. The following is a general profile of participants.