

SMART CITIES

SMART CITY 1.0

I open my eyes. Look around. Grey, immense skyscrapers prevent me from seeing the sky. Giant buildings, but empty. Few people walk past, fast, busy. I don't even get a glance from them.

I feel bewildered.

I decide to enter one of the thousand skyscrapers I can see with the naked eye. I take the elevator; I want to go up and see the sky.

I reach the last floor. There is a door, I open it.

A green and immense space opens up in front of me: trees, plants and flowers seem to have been there since the beginning of time, as if that was a natural place to grow and flourish, proliferate. But everything is neat and tidy. A man, a man that I can't see, who doesn't live here, who doesn't even exist in the space he created himself, must have necessarily passed by there. It's a green space, but not wild. Rather, immensely human.

I go back, looking for the man.

I step back into the elevator and pick a random floor number in search of the cause of everything my eyes can see.

Floor 33. Through solid glass I can glimpse offices, desks, computers.

Everything is tidy, everything works.

A few people – definitely not enough for the number of computers on the floor – are sitting there working, focused, silently.

I can hear the noise of technology in the background. Printers, keyboards, I almost sense the emails flying through the air. Everything works.

But for nobody.

There's nobody. Nobody speaks. Nobody sees me.

I have the feeling that the whole city can't recognize me, can't perceive me.

I am alone. I am an unrecognized file. Error 404.

SMART CITY 2.0

Suddenly, everything changes.

I am in the same place, in the same skyscraper, on the same floor.

But the offices are full of people who are working, discussing, moving fast between rooms.

They are clearly people of high social status.

One of them, in the rush, gives me a shove. He feels me, I feel him. He sees me, but keeps going.

All these people are discussing. How to manage, how to organize, how to be efficient. How to make their permanence in this city the best it can be, for themselves and for everyone.

Or at least, this is what they say.

They have implanted their technology everywhere. There are cameras everywhere, screens everywhere.

This time, they see me, and they recognize me. But they control me too.

I feel observed, I know each of my movements is recorded, controlled, monitored.

I seek a place to be myself. I go out from the building.

All of this was created for me, and for each one of us. And yet, I feel that I am running out of air.

Something is still not working.

On the streets, in the immense flow of people who rush with their smartphones in their hands, I recognize individuals who are bewildered like me. They try to keep up, but the other people slam into them. They are cut out. Of all the services we are surrounded by, they don't know how or cannot use a single one. What do I do with car sharing service if I can't pay for it? What do I do with a multi-story parking lot if I don't have a car? What do I do with the latest generation smartphone if I don't want to be – or cannot be – online?

There is no place to sit and be surrounded by green space. There are a few parks, but they are fenced off.

There are a few benches, but sad, isolated, in front of the usual gray skyscrapers.

Around me, everything is the same and runs fast.

There is no history, no culture.

Only technology, which reigns supreme.

I am no longer alone in being alone.

Here, we are all alone.

SMART CITY 3.0

I woke up.

Alone, in my bed.

I can't understand if all of this happened for real or if it was just a weird dream.

I guess there is only one way to find it out. I need to go out and check the reality that surrounds me. The buildings, the green spaces, the people.

The first thing I want to pay attention to, is if I am still watched. Yes, there are some cameras around, but not so many as before, and I don't have this feeling of being monitored anymore.

I can still see services around, but they seem to be more accessible. Not only rich people have access to it. More importantly, I can't sense so many lost souls as in my dream – or whatever that was. No one seems to be left alone, in their poverty and misery.

People seem integrated, part of this reality. Happy to be included, to be heard. Living in a city that responds to their needs, accessible and inclusive, where everyone has their own place.

Technology is present, but not invasive. It's a useful tool to create connections, to facilitate the lives of all of us. It matches and respects perfectly the green environment around us. It seems so natural, like the two couldn't live without each other.

It's a smart city, because it knows how to support its citizens, to share with them its beauty, how to combine green and gray, nature and innovation. It's a modern city, full of flora and fauna.

I am part of it.

Yes, I am awake now.

The smartest city is a Sustainable, Green city.

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