



## Urban Spirituality: Need for Connectedness and Communication

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### Abstract

*Modern urban planning seems to neglect taking into account the inner resources of individuals while designing a sustainable urban life. In rethinking urbanisation, spirituality must be seen as an integral part of the human connectedness in the context of urban lifestyles. Current study considers spirituality as part of our individual wellbeing- and questions whether argues that the concept of spirituality and the need for human connectedness should be taken into account while planning a more sustainable urban life. Here we focus on the issue of human connectedness and explore how urban lifestyle redefines our communication and spiritual needs.*

*Though the material aspects of urban life cannot be underestimated, we argue that a more holistic approach is needed to achieve inner and outer sustainability in creating more harmonized lives. Our findings show that spirituality not only encompasses human connectedness but also reveals such human needs as belonging, safety, transcendence and communication, which are by nature intertwined. In this study, we take a bottom-up approach in exploring the spiritual needs of urban dwellers and how those needs present challenges in their daily lives, and in discussing the significance of means of communication in creating connected lives. We then suggest that urban spirituality is mediated through a number of innate needs, and challenged in the urban context via materialistic, relational, moral and transcendental means.*

*Designing a qualitative approach, semi-structured in-depth face-to-face and telephone interviews were held with 47 participants who were government officers employed by the Presidency of Religious Affairs of Turkey. All participants fulfilled the criteria of receiving early training in spiritual care and counselling.*

**Keywords:** Urban, Spirituality, Connectedness, Wellbeing, Mental Health



## Kentli Maneviyat: Bağlanmışlık ve İletişim İhtiyacı

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### Öz

Modern şehir planlaması sürdürülebilir bir kent hayatı tasarlarken bireylerin içsel kaynaklarını hesaba katmaktan kaçınmaktadır. Kentleşmeyi yeniden düşündüğümüzde, maneviyat, modern hayat tarzında insan bağlanmışlığının içsel bir parçası olarak görülmelidir. Mevcut çalışmada maneviyat insanın iyi olma hali olarak ele alınmakta, ve insanın bağlanmışlık ve iletişim ihtiyacının sürdürülebilir bir şehir planlarken hesaba katılması gerekliliği vurgulanmaktadır. Ayrıca bu çalışmada insan bağlanmışlığı ve kent hayatının, iletişim ve manevi ihtiyaçlarımızın yeniden tanımlanması gerektiği konu edinilmiştir.

Nitel araştırma yöntemlerinin kullanıldığı çalışmada 47 Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı din görevlisi ile yüz yüze ve telefon yolu ile yarı yapılandırılmış, derinlemesine görüşmeler gerçekleştirilmiştir. Katılımcıların tümü daha önceden manevi bakım ve danışmanlık eğitiminden geçmiştir.

Çalışmanın bulguları maneviyatın insan bağlanmışlığını kapsadığını ve aidiyet, güvenlik, aşkınlık ve iletişim gibi doğası gereği iç içe olan insan ihtiyaçlarını ortaya çıkardığını göstermektedir. Bu çalışmada kent sakinlerinin manevi ihtiyaçları, bu ihtiyaçların günlük hayatlarında ortaya çıkardığı zorluklar, iletişim ve bağlanmışlık ihtiyacı tümevarım yaklaşımı ile ele alınmıştır. Kentlerin maddi ihtiyaçlarının karşılanması önemli olmakla birlikte, sürdürülebilirlik için içsel ve dışsal bir harmoni oluşturabilmek adına daha bütüncül bir yaklaşımın önemi vurgulanmaktadır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Kent, Maneviyat, Bağlanmışlık, İyilik Hali, Ruh Sağlığı

## Introduction

Past few centuries witnessed a great deal of developments in all areas of life. Science, technology and an inevitable consequence of them, namely urbanisation, reformulated our lives through modernity - delving into our homes, socialites, and living habits. Global distances are compressed, became almost non-existent through the fastest modes of transportation, 7-24 World Wide Web access, the use of virtual reality and social media, and so on. Now we utilise advanced technology in treating diseases, easing our challenges physically, acquiring higher levels of education, accessing opportunities to advance our prosperity and connecting with others and surroundings. Alas, not all went in parallel with positive advancements; as other aspects of our lives went downhill as numbers indicate higher levels of stress and anxiety, loneliness and burnout, broken family ties, violence, hate and crime, suicidal rates, and so on (WHO, 2017).

There is a worldwide debate on the declining trends of societal, mental, and physical health (Ritchie & Roser, 2018). The daily chaos we all face in an urbanized world call for answers to the eroded systems of life, leading to materialistic quests, consumerism, unsatisfied relations, stress and anxiety towards maintaining a life balance. Indeed, the World Health Organisation (2017) is also looking for answers to this very question- what threatens our sense of safety, almost lurking in our veins this engrained.

One possible explanation recent research has offered is the neglect of inner dimensions of human nature while planning for an easier, faster, modernized and wealthier standards for life (Dhar et al., 2011). Indeed, we firmly believe that contemporary approaches to economic and social development have failed to address humankind's abiding need for spiritual growth and the need for connectedness. Modern urban planning seems to neglect providing inner resources of individuals while constructing a sustainable urban life.

The concept of sustainability centres human beings in the heart of environment –which changes the way we interact with nature and maintain our environment. Sachs (1999) suggests the core drive of any kind of sustainable development to “[keep] the volume of human extraction/emission in balance with the regenerative capacities of nature.” (p.24). Here, we agree with Sachs, that sustainability policies and their urban conceptualisations are incompatible with the nature of human resource if spirituality is not taken in the equation. Human connectedness, in this context, could be described as a contact point, union and abandon (Smaling & Alma, 2010). It involves union, attention and care, rather than control or dominance. In presenting this viewpoint, Her-

mans' theory of Dialogical self (1998) outlines two basic human motivations "assumed to give rise to two recurrent developmental tasks: the realization of an autonomous self and the establishment of contact and union with the other (p. 45). According to Derkx (2014), Smaling and Alma interpret connectedness as the experiences of loving, befriending or abandoning the other, and the recognition by the other that he is distinct and not a piece of his identity. In other words, connectedness offers a central meaning point of relating with self and the other. The need for connectedness might therefore overlap with other meaning units of life.

We now know very well how our early experiences of connectedness as a spirit keep shaping our ways of relating to self, others and transcendence based on the living environments we are all subjected to (Lee & Robbins, 1998). In other words, with every input and experience, we learn how to depend on other beings, rely on our senses to form interactions with other kinds-to survive, to thrive and grow. Re-considering urbanisation, spiritual advancement must be seen as an integral part of the human connectedness in the context of modernized lifestyles. Executive board of the World Health Organisation (1998) declares spirituality as the fourth dimension of human health. While the policy makers and governments can play their respective roles, current study adopts spirituality as part of our individual wellbeing- and questions whether the concept of spirituality evolved and the need for human connectedness are met while planning for sustainable urban lives.

Before the current study unfolds itself, we would like to set the framework to give a clear idea of what shaped the rationale of this work. It is beyond the scope of this paper to review the complex nature of connections at the intersect of mental health of human beings and the nature. However, it is necessary to touch on some of the contemporary key concepts and approaches available within the field. Indeed, this paper is an attempt to shed light into a dynamic we believe at the convergence of these connections.

In hope to unravel some of the spiritual challenges urban dwellers experience, it is anticipated that through exploring humans' abiding need for spiritual growth we can bring some awareness to some of the underlying problems relating to the very concepts of connectedness, togetherness and communication. We are also aware of the challenges in examining various perspectives on the subject in an interdisciplinary fashion, bearing in mind the already complex nature of the human existence - interlinkages, causalities, processes, and relationships.

### **Why Communication Matters?**

Why do we communicate? Why do we still need communication skills if it is already hardwired to our existence? In the modern world, do we still need for communication and, what social media has anything to do with? To simply put, it is because the quality of human lives relies on communication. From infancy to adult world, communication is the mean for creating connections, contexts, products, intertwined in our very existence. Communication also helps us to be successful in both personal and societal level. It is also a vital source for our wellbeing, mental health and quality of life in general. Communication is deeper than talking and it's beyond the words. Talking is the act of sharing information verbally, but communication is the act of connecting to the all aspects of being alive- signifying a symbolic capability of ours (Carey, 1989).

In the urban context, modern communication tools, impaired communication styles, or ineffective exchanges in the form of failing to get the message across creates a void, impairing bonds among living beings, leading to many dysfunctions within self, society, and working tasks of daily life. At the heart of our fast paced, junked, wired lifestyles, we wondered how urban dwellers meet this very innate need of existence.

### **Why Spirituality Matters?**

The definition of spirituality is conceptualized by a variety of disciplines, different schools emphasizing different elements of it in accordance with their discourse. According to Waaijman (2002), "Spirit ... gives vitality or life to a system. What gives life to us is spirit; it is the source of power which enables our body to move, eyes to see, ears to hear, nose to smell, tongue to taste, skin to feel and the brain to be conscious and to think. Once is withdrawn, the body becomes lifeless or is dead" (p. 315).

In the context of spirit, modern usages of spirituality tend to refer to a subjective experience of sacred, in a value/meaning context often relating to a transcendental creator and with one's inner and outer dimensions (i.e. social dimension). In differentiating religious beliefs from spirituality, spirituality perhaps is a more transcendent concept, "beyond or above the range of normal or physical human experience", as defined in the Oxford Living Dictionary. Gilbert and Parkes (2011) suggests spirituality to imply something more fluid, personalised, and vague than religion. Alas, a full review of conceptual and historical understandings of religion and spirituality is beyond the limits of this article, and could be discussed somewhere else.

The spectrum of ideas, means and practices that are considered religious or sacred is almost the same number with the world population, that we cannot really talk about “sacred” or religious concepts, but should instead question what are those things, practices that could be considered sacred within their particular cultural contexts (Taves, 2013). Spirituality, therefore, is often concerned with one’s existence in serving to an ultimate power, purpose, meaning; a value for life. Fisher (1998) suggests this part of human nature to serve inner and outer peace of human beings, to live in harmony with the environment. A holistic approach to health comes to mind here; an approach that goes beyond focusing on illness or specific parts of the body, but instead considers the whole person and how he interacts with his or her environment (i.e. Gordon, 1988).

In line, spiritual wellbeing is proposed to be an indication of individuals’ quality of life, much like the colour of one’s complexion and pulse rate to be an indicator of good health (Ellison, 1983). National Interfaith Coalition on Aging (NICA), defines 4 indicators of spiritual wellbeing (personal, communal, environmental, and transcendental) as “the affirmation of life in a relationship with God, self, community and environment that nurtures and celebrates wholeness” (Fisher, 2010, p.4). To date these four relational domains are well researched in the context of spiritual wellbeing (i.e. Benson, 2004; Como, 2007; Fisher, 2010).

Overall, studies and the operational definition of spiritual health outlines the inter-connected & dynamic & harmonized nature of self-transcendence, dependent on intentional self-development, congruence, value-oriented purposefulness. According to Tillich (1967), communal domain of spiritual wellbeing (horizontally) comprise morality, culture and religion in the constitution of spirit in an inseparable but distinguished manner; and transcendental domain on a vertical dialect creating a distinct relationship with the transcendent other.

With this in mind, current work is an attempt to contribute to the ongoing debates on how to get a deeper understanding of the complexities of the human spiritual wellbeing. To be able to facilitate a more holistic perspective over modern health practice, it is suggested here that we need to take wellbeing at the junction of an inner and outer interface of human-environment interaction.

It is arguable indeed, that cities without adequate planning on dwellers’ holistic needs will find it increasingly difficult to provide affordable health and public services given the fact that everything runs on human resource. Across the world, governments initiated policies on providing psychological and

spiritual support to the changing needs of citizens. Turkey also put relevant services in place within hospitals, government run dormitories (KYKs) and prisons (etc.) to meet the needs of sustained urban lives. With this in mind we looked into the spiritual profile of these service providers with an aim to gain insight into how their conception of spirituality evolved with urbanisation.

## **Methodology**

### ***Research Questions***

In accordance with the aim of the current work, we explore the following questions:

- Spiritual dilemmas urban dwellers face and struggle -part of living an urban lifestyle
- The potential impact of urbanisation over spiritual needs of the society,
- Whether the spiritual needs of communities changed through years moving to urbanised cities

### ***Data Collection Procedure***

Semi-structured face-to-face and telephone interviews were held with individuals who consented to participate responding back to an email invitation to the study. A research assistant of the project group then held interviews one by one, for half an hour or so, asking 8 semi-structured questions. These items were derived from a prior study (n: 150) questioning participants' understandings of spirituality; while researching inner workings of spirituality as part of a prior research project of the authors.

### ***Sample***

47 government officers employed by the Presidency of Religious Affairs of Turkey were recruited. Sole inclusion criteria was to receive spiritual care and counselling training prior to practice, practicing with the title of spiritual care and counsellor officer- observing needs, changes, and challenges of the community.

All in all, 34 males and 13 females participated, aged between 25-34 (32%), 35-44 (49%), and 45-54 (19%). Three quarters of the sample was brought up in relatively rural towns or villages; all living in urbanised cities or lived once. Alongside their daily duties at mosques or Quran

courses, they also reported practising at hospitals, government run dormitories for students, social services, and prisons - meeting people from all walks of life, from youngsters to patients, believers to non-believers.

### **Data Analysis**

Content analysis methodology was utilized to analyse the collated data, with an aim to determine, quantify and analyse the presence of meanings or relationships through certain words or concepts within texts or contexts (Cole, 1988). The aim here was to attain a condensed and broad description of the phenomenon under interest, and the outcome is both categories describing the concept. Data was examined using one of content analysis' basic methods- conceptual analysis. With that, we conducted the on the interview transcripts into codings, breaking down into manageable categories on a variety of levels (i.e. themes and concepts). The focus here was on looking at the occurrence of selected themes and concepts, even if the terms may be implicit as well as explicit (Cavanagh, 1997).

### **Findings**

Utilising an inductive approach, we open coded the data, creating categories and abstraction. The written material was read through again and again as necessary to create as many codes quantifying all aspects of the content (Elo & Kyngas, 2008). Overall 114 codes were recorded, followed by grouping under higher order categories, collapsed under similar mean-sets (Burnard 1991, Downe- Wamboldt 1992, Dey 1993). As Cavanagh (1997) argues, we did not classify codings merely because of their similarities or relatedness, but with the purpose of creating a model of understanding and generate knowledge of the phenomena under interest.

Following this approach, 4 environmental sub-categories emerged, with 3 higher order categories on a more psychological level, and a core-category of *human connectedness* as an umbrella phenomena- as a higher power of source in co-creating human experience on a more spiritual and ontological level.

### **Challenges urban dwellers face in their daily-routines**

The analysis led us to 4 themes each representing a thread of sub concepts in explaining the challenges and/or burdens citizens of the cities expressed



experiencing. These themes and the connected meaning units emerged as follows: 1. Relational Challenges, 2. Mental challenges, 3. Materialistic Challenges, and 4. Moral Challenges (see Table 1).

**Table 1.** A conceptual summary of challenges urban dwellers face in their daily-routines

<b>Relational Challenges</b>	<b>Mental Challenges</b>	<b>Materialistic Challenges</b>	<b>Moral Challenges</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Loneliness</li> <li>• Self-reliance</li> <li>• Mistrust</li> <li>• Loss of love and care</li> <li>• Short-lived relationships</li> <li>• Loss of communal identity</li> <li>• Family disintegration</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Emptiness</li> <li>• Burn out</li> <li>• Stress</li> <li>• Helplessness</li> <li>• Disturbance</li> <li>• Narcissism</li> <li>• Hopelessness</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Economic Burdens</li> <li>• Long Working Hours</li> <li>• Excessive Consumption</li> <li>• Dissatisfaction</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inauthenticity</li> <li>• Pretentious religiosity</li> <li>• Non-commitment (unfaithfulness)</li> <li>• Rationalisation &amp; legitimization of actions</li> <li>• Self-righteousness</li> </ul>

### **Relational Challenges**

The most salient theme prevalent in the data was those relating to relational challenges urban dwellers face in their daily lives. Spiritual care and counselling officers expressed higher levels of concern over seven concept of challenges they observed and, were sought support after.

These concepts were associated with *loneliness* that comes with *mistrust* and *loss of love and care for one another* in the midst of issues to do with *family disintegration*, *short-lived relationships*, and *loss of communal identity*; resulting with *self-reliance*, which in turn reinforced the feelings of loneliness and alienation.

### **Mental challenges**

Second prominent theme was about mental health challenges urban dwellers expressed, at times implied while seeking counselling for. With mental challenges, we mean conditions affecting the way how an individual think, feels, relates and/or behaves to her encounters and surroundings.

Seven concepts of challenges were reported. Feelings of *emptiness*, *helplessness* and *hopelessness* seem to stem from daily *stress* resulting from in-

creasing demands and rushed routines, leaving individuals *disturbed*, *burnout* and finally *narcist* to others' needs to nourish unmet needs of self.

### ***Materialistic Challenges***

Third re-occurring theme was about challenges to do with material expectations and burdens. According to respondents, urban dwellers find themselves unable to answer some materialistic demands modern urban lifestyle set standards for, grouped under four concepts. In meeting these standards, individuals seem to suffer under *long working hours* to shoulder *economic burdens* and *excessive consumption trends* (as in dream houses, fashion styling) resulting only with *dissatisfaction* of haves and have-nots in constant comparison to others.

### ***Moral challenges***

The final theme clustered around moral challenges respondents observed in their communities. They found individuals wearing masks most of the time, even while conversing their problems and seeking assistance and guidance. Again, 4 concepts were found helpful in explaining the current theme. Here these challenges are reported as they were expressed, leaving out its connection with other themes. There was concerns over *pretentious religious presentations*, and *rationalisation and legitimization of immoral actions*, resulting with other problems as *inauthentic mannerism* and *unfaithfulness* towards all kinds of commitments he once acclaimed important. One of the most criticized characteristics of self-presentations was self-righteousness, in the form of moral superiority in one's beliefs, actions, and affiliations to be a greater virtue than those of the average person. More is discussed within the following section of this paper.

## **Understanding the Spiritual Needs of Urban Dwellers**

### ***Need for belonging -intimacy, affiliation, attachment, bonding***

This theme emerged as the most prominent spiritual need urbans struggle in meeting. The dilemma was to find a place in being self-sufficient and belonging to someone in such materialized engagements. So needless to say, belongingness here does not refer to belonging to someone else, but represents more of a psychological concept. Many of relational and mental health challenges reported to be relevant with the unmet

belongingness need of the society due to other challenges individuals are occupied with. The concepts emerged under the theme of belongingness were increasing need for *intimacy, affiliation, attachment, and bonding*.

### *Need for transcendence*

The theme of need for transcendence emerged from several connotations that were mostly associated with concepts as self-actualization, sense of meaning, identity, eternal values and dignity as in beauty, goodness, charity, and contemplation. One of the concepts they all emphasized was trusting in God's will and plan, and gratitude towards Allah, the eternal creator. In that sense, according to respondents, there was a growing need for transcendence both to escape from the constraints of urban & modern life and to find meaning and co-existence.

### *Need for communication*

The dataset presented theme of need for communication, prevalent as much as other themes, if not more. Respondents viewed most of the challenges and relevant problems to be associated with the unmet communication needs of urban dwellers. Accordingly, they firmly believed in communication to be a fundamental need in succeeding any type of relationship (with friends, spouses, children and relatives etc.), including the relationship with God- the creator. They then suggested material world to take the stage and damage relationships, by creating non-communicating members within the society, and damaging the relationship with God and human beings ultimately. Communication now happens on a more technological (i.e. social media), and materialistic channels (i.e. narrative of possessions) they believe, impairing the relationship with self and others.

### *Need for safety*

The last major theme our respondents conveyed was the increasing need for safety urban dwellers face more and more. In the midst of complexities cities run by, the evolutionary need for securing self and our loved ones from potential threats - in a present and future context requires elevated levels of protection and constant planning of available resources and also multiplying and managing possible environments of gain. Due to inevitable constant access to internet and social media, some also

tapped on to the need for protection over possible threats to the family unit, children's cognitive and emotional functioning, and privacy.

### **The Dynamics of Spirituality in the Context of Urban Life**

Third research question sought the dynamic of spiritual needs of the society in the context of urbanized lives. To begin with most of them reported experiences of transformation themselves, now catering to the changing spiritual needs of their communities. Mostly, the concept of spirituality seems to evolve within years of experience, growing up, and learning subjected to urban environments. For instance, one of the respondents (M, aged 35-44) conveyed his understanding of spirituality to evolve from pure religious doctrines and rituals to transcendental connotations such as inner peace, meaning, love and respect, and morality. In interpreting his response, we accept his position to evolve with the society- connected to it- within the urban context.

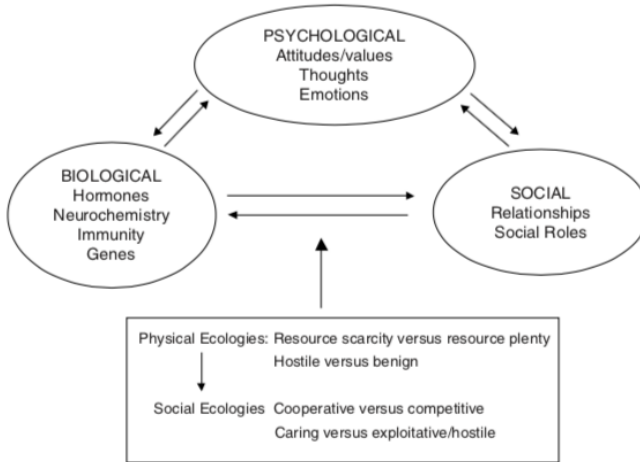
With this in mind, respondents believe that spiritual needs of urban dwellers changed concurrently with their perception of what spirituality entails to. An example could be given from an interview held with a practitioner of spiritual care and counselling (M, aged 45-54) as follows: "Not so long ago, our community would inquire more about rituals and law of sharia, whereas nowadays they tend to seek consultation for family issues, the loss of communication with the other, economic burdens, and relationship problems. They ask more about tranquillity, meaning of life, inner peace, and satisfaction of soul and mind". These are already outlined in the previous sections of the findings.

### **Discussion**

Our findings indicate a gap in looking at urban dwellers' evolved needs of spirituality as a way of connectedness while constructing modern urban planning for a more sustainable urban life. We will first consider why people's spiritual desires for connectedness lies at the heart of challenges urban dwellers face and struggle with. Research indicates connectedness to be an evolutionary concept, reasoning social practices to have a physiological effect on connecting individuals in the context of receiving signals and exchanges (Aldridge 2000; Cacioppo et al. 2005). We could argue material needs to be necessary, but not enough, even inadequate to achieving inner & outer sustainability in creating more harmonized lives. Indeed, current find-

ings reveal the need for contextualizing connectedness within a biopsychosocial model, offered by Gilbert (2005). The model suggests complex and dynamic interactions between psychological (attitudes, thoughts, feelings), social (relationships, social roles) and biological systems (hormones, immunity, genes, neurochemistry) regulated by the local ecologies (both physical and social) in which they form and develop, as seen in Figure 1.

**Figure 1.** Biopsychosocial and ecological interactions (from Gilbert, 2005)



According to Hofstede insights, Turkey with a score of 37 (over 100 on individualism dimension) is a collectivistic society, in which individuals' self-image is defined in terms of *we* rather than *I*, indicating the degree of interdependence our society maintains among its members. In line with the views shared by the respondents of the current work, this means that *we* is still important in our society, that people seek belongingness in-groups (i.e. families, clans, communities), avoid conflict, strive for harmony of the group, and relationships need a moral base to survive. Nisbett et al. (2001) explains this structure with collective approach treating the environment in terms of interconnected patterns.

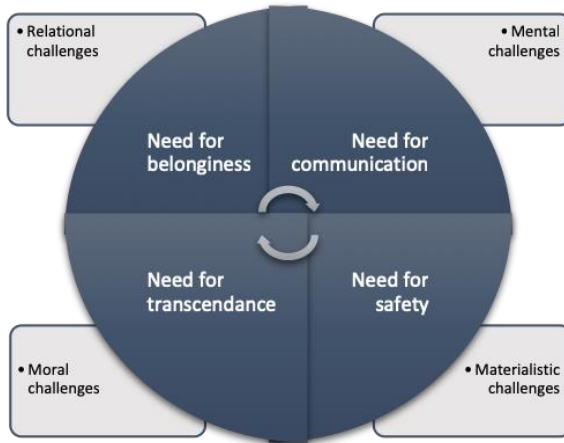
This means, the concept of spirituality as well as the needs emerged accordingly, focus on relationships, transcendence, belongingness, and safety in our society. A holistic approach is vital therefore, with taking inner and outer dimensions of individuals together, with the importance of creating harmony in between. If one of the dimensions above were to taken as a single entity by segregating things into individual units in creating *happy cities*; increased income & wealth, or technology, or green areas, or

drugs and new treatment methods of science would be good enough in healing our problems living in urbanized cities. Alas, Orr (2002) argues spiritual emptiness corrupting the attempts to wholeness- which in nature requires four key conditions to hamper our transition to sustainable urbanization, besides relevant measures for citizenship and governance, education, and biophysical wealth.

Indeed, research done in the field of positive psychology yet to inform our urban planning policies and practice. Enrique Peñalós, in 2001, made an admiring attempt to take a more multidisciplinary approach to the city planning. While planning Bogotá's transportation in an urbanized context, he examined the needs and aspirations of children, with an aim to plan for happiness. It turns out there is more to transportation than moving people and goods. The concept could be also planned in context of discovery, joy, wonder and happiness, as they invested in (Tranter & Malone, 2003).

At this junction, the recognition that society's health and urban planning relays a co-dependent dynamic (Killingsworth and Schmid, 2001), our understanding of health expands to include spirituality in the context of connectedness, we challenge to consider its convergence with planning sustainable and prosperous cities for future. Here we offer a bottom-up model to understand spirituality in the context of urban dwellers' connectedness need, challenges and expectations, as depicted in Figure 2.

**Figure 2:** The Dynamic of Spirituality in the Context of Urban Life  
Human beings spiritual desire for connectedness



*Environment in the Urban Context*

### *Dynamics of Urban Spirituality*

Figure 2 depicts the model emerged from the analysis of the current data. It aims to conceptualise a spirituality oriented holistic model for understanding the dynamics of urban life.

First, as discussed earlier with Fisher's (2011) conceptualisation of spiritual health, spirituality is a dynamic concept manifesting on four domains of need in the ultimate aim of connectedness to inner and outer exterior of existence. We believe, the very fundamental needs of individuals (belongingness, communication, safeness, and transcendence) are met in the environments they interact. In other words, the inner and outer exteriors of human beings shape each other, creating challenges in the meantime if failed in meeting these needs.

The urban life, in this context, seem to fail meeting these fundamental needs of urban dwellers on 4 domains of problems related to relational, materialistic, moral and mental processes. Even when the interacting environment would have changed to rural, only the challenges individuals face would differ, again failing to meet the fundamental needs to form and maintain connectedness for a spiritually healthy existence.

In understanding the fundamental needs depicted in the model, it is important for us to discuss why these matter to the phenomena under research.

Need for belonging, to begin with, is a powerful drive in forming significant, lasting relationships not only with other but also self as well. Baumeister and Leary (1995) suggest frequent and positive interactions, care and compassion to meet this very fundamental need in creating meaningful bonds. This is in line with our respondents' understanding of the need and why they spiritually suffer in the absence of it. Research support low levels of belongingness to associate with higher levels of physical, mental health and behavioural problems (Lambert et al., 2013).

Need for transcendence, is another fundamental concept in understanding why urban dwellers suffer in meeting their spiritual needs of coexistence with the other. Even though we enjoy all the achievements of modern life in connecting with world in easier ways, we now don't have answers in what to do with ourselves. To coexist with the connected lives, differences, materials, and all possible dreams; and maintain a balance in controlling the uncertain(s), we believe urban dwellers' need for experiences that go beyond these are in urgent need to be rooted in self-transcendence. In Hawel's (1994) words; "a transcendent experience is one

that takes you out of yourself and convinces you of a larger life or existence; in this sense, it means something close to spiritual" (p. 17).

Need for safety is another fundamental need in meeting the drive for connectedness. Gilbert (1993, 2005) argues signals responding to connectedness operate on and through safeness systems, which has massive impacts on healthy bonding between the care giver and child for instance. We now know how the degree of this very core relationship effects our adult attachment, physical and mental wellbeing (Gilbert, 2009a). The materialistic and mental challenges with regards to working long hours fast and furious, consumerism seem to add onto feelings such as dissatisfaction, stress, emptiness, hopelessness we face in the urban context, leaving us with fear of being out of control, restless, and unsafe.

Need for communication, hardwired to the human existence, is a vital part of wellbeing, mental health and quality of life. We communicate not just to share information, connect with others, and form meaningful relationships. In this context, communication is an act of connecting, sometimes with or beyond words, actions and more, which comes to us inherited, very spontaneously (Carey, 1989). We suspect our inherited forms of communication styles do not work in the modern urban context yet. Data tells us this is exactly the case with some urbaners, that individuals started connecting to outer world via materials and internet; neglecting mutuality, continuity, the exchange part of it when it comes to inner circle of their relationships- family, friends, society. The void then fills with materials they say, with wired junk; not meeting the conditions of healthy communication. This is also feared to distort individuals' connectedness with self, and with God eventually. If met, research emphasize how effective communication could reduce stress and anxiety, create stronger/ satisfying relationships, enhance conflict resolution, learn and create, respond to life circumstances better while gaining confidence in ourselves.

### **Conclusion: The intertwined nature of spiritual needs and connectedness**

Our findings show that spirituality not only encompasses human connectedness but also reveals such human needs as belonging, safety, transcendence and communication, which are by nature intertwined. Current work took an inductive approach in exploring the spiritual needs of urban



dwellers and how those needs present challenges in their daily lives, and the significance of means of communication in creating connected lives. We then suggested that urban spirituality is mediated through a number of innate needs, and challenged in the urban context via materialistic, relational, moral and transcendental issues.

It is noteworthy to interpret current findings in a broader sense, coming from a holistic viewpoint on wellbeing and urbanisation. The need for connectedness seem to be beyond acquainting or frequenting interactions with (significant) others. Connectedness in this light could be interpreted in a more communal sense- working for an improved standard not just for one but for all. This would mean connecting with the impersonal other as well. This brings a positive light into the notion, something deeply meaningful about the state of being connected. The desire for connectedness then links the need for transcendence, safety, communication and belongingness as a need for meaning.

Connectedness with the other then transcends meanings of words, possessions, things valuable for us; which in turn request the need for respecting others' needs by limiting self. Hence, the need for safety and ethical responsibilities over others' need for safety comes to the scene, to communicate and find a meaning that is both personal but also shared. Otherwise, a meaningful existence would consist just personalized needs, then the notion of agency as well as dependency, vulnerability, love and care would suffer in relating to life and other meanings. Maybe here, the challenges we identified stemmed from the fact that urban life do not serve the meaning systems urbaners need inherently- yet. We may in need to ask why we still lack meaning, not truly connected, even though we are more educated and competent; have busier, wealthier life standards compared to a couple of decades ago. It is quite probable that taking human dimensions as a single entity failed in understanding human connectedness in any context, in this case in the context of urban life.

Research therefore is in need of exploring the meaning systems- spiritual workings of the society- which should be considered as an important goal to achieve for urban planners and policies regarding public welfare. This would require new methods of understanding societal needs qualitatively, not to miss each and every individual. The most prosperous cities will be those that design sustained, comprehensive visions, and create new institutions, or strengthen existing ones, to implement a holistic vision on healthy individuals- healthy cities. In order to return to a more harmoni-

ous integration of an urbanized humanity with the natural world, urbaners must consciously re-organise their values and worldviews.

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