Glocalization - The Globalization of the Local Community

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INTRODUCTION

With the accelerating pace of technological innovation, particularly since the development of information technology and global networks, it has become increasingly apparent that communication systems and associated major transportation systems dramatically affect and alter social communities. In this regard, the notion of glocalization is a concept in which the idea of the local is inextricably related to the development and hybridization among local, regional and global infrastructures of information and transportation systems. For example, both our local and regional communities in the town of Gazimaguza and in the country of North Cyprus respectively have witnessed the development and the consequent effects upon architectural and urban forms due to ongoing development of two major types of infrastructure. The first can be described as an airport and national divided highway network as hybridized with the internet, with the consequence that the local and regional are conceived in terms of the context of global tourism. That is, the master plan for development in North Cyprus is emerging as a network of tourist nodes, including education, recreation and medical and historic sites accessed globally, by means of the internet and airport, and upon arrival transported nationally and locally by means of an emerging network of new extended highways and divided highway systems.

The communication systems, or ground-works, supporting these developments involve hardware infrastructures such as improvements and extension of the airport, an emerging national divided highway infrastructure, extended and upgraded electric power systems and desalination plants and water supply systems, complemented by the construction of a national and global surround of telecommunication and internet systems. As a result, the emergent geometry, as archetype for all levels of transport and communications, is the nonlinear network as opposed to the traditional linear forms such as the grid or centre-margin configurations. d(Castells) d The former facilitates a leveling in terms of a horizontal resonant interplay integrating users and institutions locally and globally, while the latter represents the fragmented and lineal pyramidal and hierarchical organizations and patterns of the mechanical industrial age and nation-states.

This relatively rapid development in North Cyprus, over a period of about ten years, provides a laboratory for observing and evaluating these groundwork changes and their effects on the community; changes such as the effect on the local habitat as impacted upon by enhanced communication with the world at large. In particular, this effect has been rather dramatic; take for example how easy access to digital services and global networks has significantly altered the identity of the commercial street from a local traditional shopping district to a glocal interface for commercial exchange. In less than five years there has been significant growth and availability of a mobile phone infrastructure, increasing broadband facilities, IT and mobile technologies and related shops and services; all this in the growing context of the local community as a college town. As a consequence, the local is being subsumed by the emergent context of computer technology, internet and virtual graphics, as exemplified by the main commercial road becoming

a smart street or interactive space, which I refer to as a 'digital simulacra'. That is, the hardware nature of conventional commercial architecture is being displaced by imagery, iconography and brand names, as 'surface' architecture, displacing conventional local shops, whereby form does not follow function but rather 'form follows *fiction*'. These changes have been relatively fast and by analogy, if someone is sitting in a bathtub and the temperature was increased one degree a minute, when would she/he know to scream? But if a bucket of hot water was poured into the tub what follows is obvious. Similarly, as change is occurring at a considerable pace in our community, then the effects could be readily observed. Therefore, by means of studying the effects in the community of these developing infrastructural ground-works, such as the commercial simulacrum, one can observe that local spaces are being hybridized within globalized communication systems, which in this emergent integrated context alters social behavior and identity in what can be referred to as the 'glocal'.

In terms of a methodology, the argument towards defining current social developments as glocal, involves a figure-ground, or gestalt analytic. For example, the glocal space of the commercial street as simulacrum can be described in terms of a co-creative and co-formative development between shoppers in the space of the street subsumed by the integrated systems ground-works constituting cyberspace. In this regard, the identity of the local is qualified in terms of global communication infrastructures as perceived by the effect of transforming the traditional shopping street into a digital simulacrum. In the global village, hybridization of the local street system with a global system of information feedback, programming analytics and modeling with feedforward, fosters a one's sense of globalized simultaneity; as a consequence the new communications surround displaces the hardware or embodied experience of the commercial street, for the software identity in the manner of decentered positioning an digital imaging referred to as the glocal.

INFRASTRUCTURAL DEVELOPMENT AND CHANGING IDENTITIES

Teaching in the Eastern Mediterranean University over the past decade has provided me with opportunities to witness and question what effects infrastructural change has had on the university and local communities of Gazimaguza and the capital community of Lefkosa. In essence, this paper will deal with the discussion of how infrastructure improvements and extensions including at first, highway and airway extensions, and secondly, the development of IT and networking infrastructures have provided the ground for various kinds of glocalization. These two developments will be discussed with regard to two design studio projects which revealed, by means of site and program analyses, the significant changes that were occurring with regard to architecture and urban forms.

The first project, which was carried out in the spring semester 2008-2009, involved an investigation of the main commercial street that catered primarily to the student community as well as to the local community. One of the striking observations made was that the buildings and the streetscape were changing by becoming predominantly composed of branded shops, oversized icons and graphic images. Also, a number of large LED advertising screens are being placed upon the roofs of existing buildings, but located significantly at roundabouts or nodes of the existing street systems where the volume of traffic is greatest. This transformation was a wakeup call, as this change had occurred over a very short period of less than five years and is continuing apace today. Consequently this begged the question, how did this imagist streetscape composed of colorful graphic façades, loud billboards, oversized seductive posters and kaleidoscopic displays on large LED screens come to displace the more conventional image of a shopping street; a street conventionally composed of functionalist elevations (i.e. form follows function) expressed by tectonic features such as structure and building construction systems and materials, various kinds and sizes of doors, windows, stairs, and a minor amount of graphics displays. In other words, how was architecture of form-follows-function being displaced by a scenic iconographic montage of form-follows-fiction? That is, architecture of the modernist functionalist and structuralist aesthetic as a mode of utilitarian expression was becoming a space of subliminal persuasion by means of graphic communication mediating consumer desires in an interactive con-text (i.e. with-the-text) of imagery. A discussion will be provided below, on information technology, networking, and imaging that will illustrate how this transformation occurred and its

role in creating a space of glocalization in the commercial street of this college town.

A revealing insight regarding the effects of emergent infrastructural forms involves another studio project which resulted in a study of the relationship between the design of mixed-use buildings, their significant locations, and their relationship at first to automobile or divided highway networks, and then in turn, with these networks and the global airport and internet infrastructures. In the spring semester, 2010-2011, the studio was assigned a design project for a mixed-use facility including commercial, some recreation, and various housing types in a single building block. The site that was chosen was at a round-about near the margins of the capital city of Lefkosa, in North Cyprus. In retrospect, it is important to note that this site on the roundabout is a node in what is becoming an emergent divided highway infrastructure both locally in Lefkosa and eventually by extension, nationally. This infrastructure is superimposed on an existing fabric of streets and roads with typical intersections but where necessary were being displaced with roundabouts. What is significant about this infrastructural change is that the divided highway, overlaid and integrated with the existing street fabric, accelerates and amplifies the amount of traffic in the area which is particularly noticeable at the roundabouts.

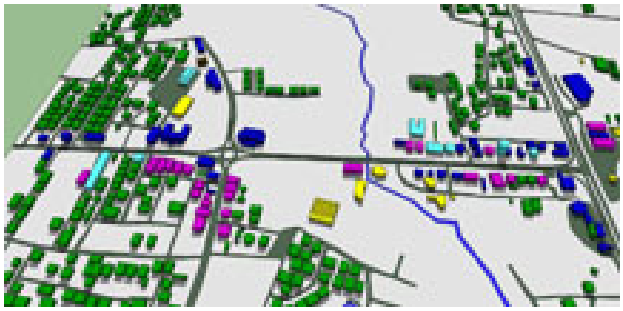

Figure 1.

When we initially chose this site we were not aware of the architectural development adjacent to the roundabout. So, to discover that a mixed-use form was the emergent building type about this roundabout was an interesting surprise (Figure 1). A cursory study of similar nodes between divided highway segments, as regards to the city, revealed the same pattern of development. Further discussions and study regarding development in North Cyprus disclosed the fact that, as in Lefkosa where the nodal network was displacing the traditional patterns of streets and roads, a network of new divided highways was being developed for the country at large, extending local communication on a regional or national scale. Many of the nodes on this larger network represent areas of recreation for tourism in the manner of beach resorts and casinos, education tourism at the university level and eco and historic sites. However, a major node of this layered local and regional decentered network, (as opposed to center-margin designs of the railway, or grid pattern of the traditional urban street system) is the airport, which in turn, via the global network of airways makes global access to these various recreational facilities a glocal event. In the case of our community college town, with students and teachers from as many as fifty different countries, the town has become glocalized. In recent years, a more focused and concerted effort to compete globally for foreign students has met with considerable success from countries as diverse as Iran, Nigeria and China. To accommodate registration, course selection and payment of fees and other bureaucratic essentials (online courses are not available but have been developed), on-line communications in tandem with the hardware networks of airport and highway infrastructure increasingly facilitates and consequently defines identity and community in transition from the traditionally local to the glocal.

Defining the local, for the urban historian Lewis Mumford, meant that the human scale was a vital criterion as a measure of the humane viability of the local community; i.e. that this uncompromising sustainable humanist habitat is ideally at the scale, pattern and pace of the traditional agrarian village societies. However, in his book *The City in History*, he accounts for the effects of the evolution of civilizations and empires measured in a large part by the development of superhuman extensions of institutions, bureaucracies (religious, military, public and private) and technological development which makes his image of the ideal community at best nostalgic.[1] Regarding North Cyprus, which was a predominately agrarian eighteenth century culture consisting mostly of farming villages until about 50-60 years ago, and was transformed by adding the mechanical advantage of the tractor to these communities? Mechanization had exploded the village as a kinship unit, requiring less manpower,

so that population dispersal and movement to the towns was inevitable. As mentioned above, with the eventual development of various types of road and highway infrastructures, universities, extended electrical and information infrastructures, the communities in this territory made a quantum leap from the 18th century village communities to 21st century post industrial society; bypassing the experience of a twentieth century industrial age.

Two infrastructural systems play an important role in redefining changing identity from the local to the glocal. The first, is the hybrid of divided highways, airport and internet systems and the second, is the purely software space of internet and IT communications. Particularly, the system of divided highways as superimposed or layered upon the existing street system has fostered an emergent form that may be termed the 'urban village'. This involves the clustering of mixed-use buildings at the nodes of the network of divided highways as they traverse, and in a sense transcribe the urban context. The highway system, as opposed to the exiting street system, dramatically enhances the scale of activities about the network nodes or roundabouts. This occurs by means of amplifying the traffic (i.e. a system of greater speeds and enhanced volume of cars) thereby increasing traffic by means of access to a larger catch basin of the population. This infrastructural development affects the nature of the figures (i.e. users and building types) that will emerge in this developing mobility gestalt. That is, amplified traffic therefore increases the market which fosters the development of an aggregate of mixed-use rather single or minimum use buildings that characterize much of the traditional street system so that the meaning of local now extends to include the larger population catch basin. A aggregate of mix-use development, qualified by the extended scale of communications is a manner of regional glocalization; whereby transformation of the local, at critical network nodes, into an 'urban village' ironically recovers these places as pedestrian areas by means of anticipatory and creative design thus conserving the milieu or ambience of the pre-industrial village. (A discussion of Baudrillard's concerns regarding Disneyfication and the nostalgic idealization of the main street could appear at this time if there was space.)

By Understanding that the form of the urban villages defines the more vital nodes of the urban highway system then one can imagine as the system is networked nationally and connected both to the airport and internet communication global networks then, potentially urban villages begin to define the primarily recreational clustering of related facilities with an appropriate mix. This includes the kinds of urban village nodes at the beach resort called Bafra (i.e. which includes an autonomous mix of hotel, casino, restaurants, shops and access to the beach), the college community in Gazimaguza (i.e. a mix of student resident complexes, including restaurants, shops and recreation facilities) or mixed facilities for visitors at major historic sites, like the old fortressed towns of Girne and Gazimaguza. Because these nodes are necessarily accessed from a range of scales and speeds of communication networks, from the divided highway to the all inclusive surround of global information networks, therefore the appearance of these commercialized urban villages, as mixed traffic modalities of international tourism, significantly redefines the identity of traditional local places as glocal. Also, the ubiquitous use of the internet hybridized with activities on the commercial road is an event in the global village that glocalized the street as transformed by the digital simulacrum.

THE COMMERCIAL SIMULACRUM: THE GLOCAL AS AN EMERGING INTERACTIVE AND ICONOGRAPHIC SPACE

The gestalt analytic of infrastructure development can be effectively applied to the first studio project mentioned above (i.e. the commercial street design) and to certain questions regarding the transformation of the local commercial street as an effect of current emergent global communication systems. This problem involved third year students, analyzing twelve blocks of the main commercial street (Salamis Road), in the community/college town of Gazimaguza, North Cyprus. The aim of the project was to locate vacant lots along this primarily consumer shopping street for immediate development, and with the stipulation that the students would try to imagine what the surrounding context might be like by the year 2015.

The study began with an urban analysis of the street. During discussions among tutors, with the students, and in front of presentation panels displaying elements of urban zoning, such as public, semi-public, and private spaces, as well as the

texture of the blocks and other related contextual and zoning features, a particular question came to mind. This question related to the proliferation of large-scale graphic images that had progressively replaced the traditional facades along the street (Figure 2).

Figure 2.

It became evident by reviewing photos and videos of the street that the facades of many buildings were transformed from architectural elevations, (composed primarily of doors, windows, building materials and other tectonic features) into graphic façades composed of icons/logos and variations on billboard designs. It also became apparent that many older shops were replaced by new multinational branded franchises, such as Nike, Adidas, Gloria Jeans, Levis and others. During our discussions, it dawned on me that we were witnessing the architectural relocation of Robert Venturi's Las Vegas experience, but with a digital twist; i.e. not as an effect of an automotive suburban/exurban society, but rather that our street was becoming an emergent resonant space in a global network of instant information-movement.

GLOCALIZATION AND THE SIMULACRUM

A new emergent 'urban form', as exemplified by the notion of what the cultural and media theorist Marshall McLuhan termed the 'global village', and experienced locally as a populist iconographic and digital space, or commercial streets as simulacra, represents new forms of both architecture and urbanism.[2] Today, the shopping street is increasingly dependent upon information movement facilitated by means of data centers and processing, programming analytics and modeling and information technology, and is a 'local' constituent of the currently emergent infrastructure of cyberspace as the global village. Members of our town and university are both influenced by their augmented movement along the electronic 'highway' environment or internet.

The street as populist simulacrum involves real-time information processing by means of an automated three-phase system consisting of feedback, programming/modeling and feed-forward. This system begins with feedback, which involves collecting information via internet use that in turn generates individual profiles and group profiles (i.e. clusters). These market profiles constructed by specialist firms (e.g. PRIZM) by means of programming analytics are then sold to public relations and advertizing companies, as well as to producers and distributors of commodities.[3] These consumer profiles represent, for example, members of typical college communities around the globe, which also reflects behavioral or consumer potentials in our community. The next stage of this recursive tri-partite information infrastructure involves feed-forwarding individually tailored or bespoke ads to wireless digital phones or placed as ads and strategically replaced (this depends on feedback and consumer analytics) on screens and billboards, both in shops or along the street; i.e. customized 'pod-casting' or clustered 'broadcasting' respectively. In this way, Iconic architecture and populist images are reflexive mirrors, or 'facings', re-presenting the consumer profiles with consumer updates in virtually real-time by means of this interactive interpretive smart street. This interactive space is a space for generating heat by subconsciously provoking 'e-motions', such as our data based and evaluated behaviors in terms of expectations and desires; consequently, this is an interactive phenomenological space-time which attempts as much as is possible today in real-time, to subconsciously generate heat but not light. This is a space of education as subliminal persuasion or coercion and not enlightenment, which appeals to our more conscious and rational faculties. The ads provide cues motivating behavior based on transparency of ourselves as data profiles which are not accessible to everyone. Consequently, the street is not an interior or exterior space, in the sense of our mechanistic fragmenting terminology, but rather, an inclusive responsive

'interiorized' space reflexively re-presenting ourselves as architecture of surfaces or iconographic imagery; shaping behavior by means of modifying 'e-motions' in the context of digital simulacra is the practice of designing phenomenological space-time or engineering consciousness.

The Enlightenment era, as an epitome of the Modern period, valorized individualism, reason, analytic logic and objectivity, as well as privacy, representational government and rule-by-law which Marshall McLuhan understood as intrinsic attributes of the phonetically literate Western worldview; a view becoming obsolesced in the emergent context of an electronic, Postmodern mass society. McLuhan provides a uniquely interesting definition for the meaning of the term 'masses' in the context of digitally constructed realities. In this electronic social context, a mass can be composed of simply two people if by means of instant communications the distance between them disappears, as for example by means of a phone call or credit card exchange in a shop. Mass communication in this context, by analogy is like a spider's web, whereby if one or more strands are plucked the entire web vibrates simultaneously. This quality of resonance among individuals as an all-at-once experience is a defining quality, an "organic unity", of the commercial space of populist simulacra, whereby McLuhan writes that:

> Automation or cybernation deals with all units or components of the industrial and marketing process … The new kind of interrelation in both industry and entertainment is the result of the electric instant speed. Our new electric technology now extends the instant processing of knowledge by interrelation that has long occurred within our central nervous system. It is that same speed that constitutes "organic unity" and ends the mechanical age that had gone into high gear with Guttenberg. Automation brings in real "mass production," not in terms of size but of instant inclusive embrace. Such is also the character of "mass media." They are an indication, not of the size of their audiences, but of the fact that everybody becomes involved in them at the same time. Thus, commodity industries under automation share the same structural character of the entertainment industries in the degree that both approximate the condition of instant information. *Automation affects not just production, but every phase of consumption and marketing; for the consumer becomes a producer in an automation circuit*…[my italics].[4]

The 'consumer as producer' exemplifies the notion whereby intentionality becomes a responsive chord in the manner of total instant response of the internet to a consumer's purchase. This response is manifold and dialogical. The consumer as producer engages the internet by means of a credit card, which is identical to a telephone call, providing vital information about the market. For example, each purchase in a shop induces resonance across the internet as a network of networks. The shopping data is collected, retrieved, analyzed and regenerated as ads and icons that transcribe the street graphically and interactively. In other words, we 'write' ourselves (i.e. lifestyle profiles) and in turn the street 'writes' us (iconic architecture and bespoke ads for mobile phones that reflect emergent trends). This street therefore, functions in the manner of a co-authored space of emergent trends and tastes whereby 'form follows fiction'. Paradoxically, this material infrastructural reality sustains an immaterial software reality; a virtual reality or intelligent interactive space of iconic commercial simulacra, which involves more than just moving data electronically at the speed of light, because instant communication produces an unprecedented change in identity.

Instant, all-at-once communication means that users are virtually at two or more positions at the same time. This deconstructs the Cartesian materialist notion of space, as *res extensa*, which is only possible because, in cyberspace we are not 'transported' materially but rather transcribed into pure information, virtual bits and bytes, in the manner of visual and/or acoustic virtual images; i.e. we are now transported via the resonant electromagnetic field that is cyberspace but not as embodied beings, but rather as virtual images. Also, in this hyper-real context the notion of the Cartesian '*res cogitan'* or embodied 'thinking subject' is obsolesced as a physical entity for a metaphysical or discarnate data-image or branded identity. We increasingly identify with virtual images as self-images, sustained both by electronic and advertizing infrastructures, or as James Joyce quipped, we have learned to 'love our labels as ourselves'. That is, the message/massage of electronic networking is that users are sent (content is secondary) in digital sensory modalities in order to maintain real-time communications, whereby space and time disappear at the speed of light.[5] Today we send 'ourselves' as virtual images in the context in which the local has become glocalized on the commercial street as simulacrum.

CONCLUSION: TRAFFIC AND INFRASTRUCTURAL SYSTEMS OF COMMUNICATIONS

The idea of traffic applies across scales and modes of transportation/communication systems. In conceiving the notion of traffic, this excludes the idea of a single person or car with freedom to travel at any pace as opposed to when it is moving along a route as a cluster of individuals (crowds) or cars. The cluster is the traffic and each individual is determined and directed by the flow. But the flow is routed by more than the roadways or physical routes.

On the internet, with massive data collection centers, information trafficking becomes the fuel for programming and modeling in order to develop individual and cluster data-profiles. As a consequence, our sense of a real body image is increasingly modified by virtual images in terms of producing data profiles as the process and processing of the commercial corridor. In the Interactive information-routed space, consumers are cognized as software images and re-cognized as ads or reflexive 'facings' which generates a movement of the mind in-formed by the con-text of the iconographic streetscape as feedforward; a process of engineering consciousness by modifying awareness by the ubiquity of communication modalities that have displaced the streetscape as traditional and natural. Feedforward is part of an ongoing real-time recursive process of feedback, programming/modeling and feedforward which, according to Baudrillard, defines the simulacrum in the digital age. [6] These digital environments are managed and engineered to regulate flows of consumers and direct awareness which exemplifies phenomenological space-time in which the glocal is increasingly amenable to being branded and privatized.

As described above in terms of the two studio case studies, there are degrees of phenomenological space-time, which is a measure of the kind of infrastructural medium, conditioning social relationships. These relationships are experiences defined under various conditions of human scale, pace and pattern, as mediated by communication groundworks which, in turn, influence meanings for the emergent figures of architecture, urban form and associated identities. In this regard, the glocal is a relative measure of patterns of community, influenced by dominant communication systems. Today, in the global village, where space and time have dissolved by means of instant communications, every position in cyberspace is glocal. This hyperreal dimension of community takes us even further from Munford's critic of the super-real communities of the mechanical worldview and their loss of a quality of life. These are qualities he associated with the natural human scale of the preindustrial village, and to a degree is being retrieved by the 'urban village' of aggregated mixed-use complexes, as compared with the hyper-human scale and speed-up of the global village.

ENDNOTES

1 Lewis Mumford, The City in History (New York: Harcourt, Inc., 1961), 14-15.
2 Marshall McLuhan and Quentin Fiore, War and Peace in The Global Village (Toronto: Bantam Books, 1968)
3 Douglas Rushkoff, Coercion: Why we Listen to What They Say (New York: Riverhead Books, 1999), 244-245.
4 Marshall McLuhan, Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man (London: London: Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd., 1964), 245.
5 Eric McLuhan, Electric Language: Understanding the Present (Toronto: Stoddard Publishing Co. Ltd., 1998), 53.
6 Jean Baudrillard, Simulacra and Simulation (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1994)