

# CULTURAL COMPONENTS IN ARCHITECTURE UNDER THE IMPACT OF GLOBALIZATION

Sub-theme: Culture and Identity

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**Abstract:** This paper tries to present initially what happens to cultural components in architecture under the impact of globalization. Environmental factors and cultural factors are the kinds of input that exist in any human activity. A human activity consists of a four stage process: *problem formulation* (planning and programming), *problem solution* (Design), *implementation* (Construction), and *use*. Environmental factors can be determined by the existing condition and by the physical environment and tools in between *the stage of solution* and *the stage of implementation*. In this paper, the major concern will be the cultural factors rather than environmental factors that affect building activity. In any building activity; knowledge, technology, and value-system, are three aspects of cultural factor. However, today these aspects have been standardized and lost their identities referring to local. Environmental factors, on the other hand, exhibits a more dangerous and even pathological conditions since its sustainability has been threatened by the globalization movement.

The major argument supported throughout the study will be shaped by the components of culture in any building activity. Throughout the paper there is one major problem addressed: "How can we determine cultural components—knowledge, technology, value judgements—in building activity via the globalization of economy, culture and lifestyle?" Since there is no single definition of globalization, Sklair categorizes globalization studies on the basis of four research clusters: 1) The world-systems approach, 2) The global culture approach, 3) The global society approach, 4) The global capitalism approach. In this paper my emphasis will be shaped by the global culture approach to globalization in order to redefine knowledge, technology, and values. Yet, it is not sufficient to explain globalization of culture in terms of the homogenization of mass media. Thus, this paper will also touch upon those four approaches to globalization for determining the cultural components in architecture.

**Key Words:** building culture, globalization, technology, knowledge, human values

## INTRODUCTION

Environmental factors and cultural factors are the kinds of input that exist in any human activity. Physical environment, since it has included topography, labor power, workshop equipment's and tools or the factory automation, machines, energy, and material is very variable. The major concern of this paper is cultural factors rather than environmental factors in architecture. In building activity; knowledge, technology, and value-system, are three aspects of cultural factors (Pultar, 2000, 156).

In order to re-determine the cultural components in architecture there is a need for defining 'globalization'. There are two dominant and opposing approaches to globalization which may be termed as globalist and traditionalist, while the third approach termed transformationalist takes a rather different stance (Cochrane

significantly influenced by human intervention. The optimists or positive globalists point to the benefits of globalization and see the results of globalizing influences as a change welcomed. They focus on the potential stretched social relation to improve the quality of life, raise living standards and bring people together, which, in turn, promotes the sharing of cultures and understanding among nations around the world. Through the enhancement of technological condition, the rising standard of living has been a central myth of this world-system (Wallerstein, 2002, 48). Pessimist globalists, by contrast, see the world as becoming less diverse and more homogeneous.

Conversely traditionalists are skeptical about globalization. They believe that globalization is a myth, or at any rate is much exaggerated as a distinctively new phenomenon, and emphasize continuities between the past and present. Traditionalists argue that in spite of increase in global flows of trade and money around the world, these are not substantially different to the economic and social interactions that have occurred between nations in previous historical times (Cochrane and Pain, 2000, 23). The exchange of goods and cultures goes back to early times. Traditionalists believe that most economic and social activity is regional, rather than global, and still see a significant role for nation-states.

A third—transformationalists—approach seeks to move beyond the debate between globalists and traditionalists. Transformationalists reject the polarity of globalist and traditionalist perspectives (Cochrane and Pain, 2000, 23). They argue that nation-states remain militarily, economically, and politically powerful. They believe that globalization represents a significant shift, but question the inevitability of its impacts. According to this view, the consequences of contemporary global interactions are complex, diverse and unpredictable.

## CONCEPTUAL BASIS OF GLOBALIZATION

Both globalists and transformationalists argue that globalization is a reality but evaluate the reasons and the consequences of globalization from a different perspective. Although there is no single definition of globalization, the crucial matter of defining the term is to distinguish it from internationalization. The study of globalization in sociology revolves primarily around two main classes of phenomena. These are the emergence of globalized economy based on 'new systems' of production, finance and consumption; and the idea of 'global culture' (Sklair, 1999, 146). The first is based on two different globalization researches called 'the world-system' and 'the global capitalism' approach. The second, on the other hand, is based on 'the global culture' and 'the global society' approaches.

### THE WORLD-SYSTEMS APPROACH

The world systems approach is based on the distinction between core, semiperipheral and peripheral countries in terms of their changing roles in the international division of labor dominated by the capitalist world-system. Wallerstein introduced the concept of *world-system* and argued that capitalism was the engine of globalization. However, there is no specific concept of 'global' in most world-systems literature. Wallerstein himself rarely uses the word 'globalization'. The 'global' and the 'inter-national' are generally used interchangeably by world-systems theorists (Sklair, 1999, 149-151).

Based on the Marxist concept of exploitation, Wallerstein's radical move replaces the image of separate individual societies with one of a *world-system* in which everything—every society, every government, every company, every culture, every class, every household, every individual—must insert and assert itself within a single division of labor (Beck, 2000, 32).

### THE GLOBAL CULTURE APPROACH

The global culture approach focuses on the problems that homogenizing mass media based culture poses for national identities. The global culture theorists primarily tend to prioritize the cultural over the political and/or the economical. Secondly, there is a common interest in the question of how individual and/or national identity can survive in the face of an emerging 'global culture'. The third distinctive feature of this model is that it problematizes the existence of 'global culture', as a reality, a possibility or a fantasy (Sklair, 1999, 151).

In contrast to pessimist globalizers who argue that the growth of global culture flows signals the demise of national cultures, positivist globalizers see the increasing global flow of communication and culture as a 'good thing'. This positivist view is based on the idea of the 'global village'. It refers to the transcendence of constraints of physical place enabled by new communication technologies that allow instant, inexpensive, global communication (Mackay, 2000, 55). Global villagers argue that with the Internet we have the possibility of a revitalized public sphere and a restoration of communities, with open access to many forms of global communication (Ibid., 64).

Pessimist globalizers on the other hand approach the culture from three different perspectives. First, from the point of increasing inequalities of access to the hard and software whereby culture is distributed and communicated. Second, from the point of increasing concentration of ownership of the media, and its increasingly homogenized nature. Eco claims that the country belongs to the person who controls the communication network (Eco, 1986, 135). According to Eco, the Marxian problem of alienation is different for the control of communication than for the control of the means of production because even if control changed hands "the situation of subjection would not change." The last and the third perspective is from the point of cultural imperialism which is rooted in the reduction of cultural differences around the world because of the distribution by global corporations of commodified Western culture, a process which has worked to the advantage of the US and Western nations. The concept of cultural imperialism is indeed based on the 'culture industry' concept of the Frankfurt School (Mackay, 2000, 49-60; Adorno, 1993, Horkheimer, 1993).

A subset of the global culture approach, is characterized as 'globo-localism' (glocalism). The main research question in this approach is the autonomy of local cultures in the face of an advancing 'global culture' (Sklair, 1999, 154). Robertson, Appadurai, Albrow, Featherstone, Lash, Urry and many others argue within the tradition of cultural theory. Strongly opposing the widespread notion of a 'McDonaldization' of the planet, they insist that *cultural* globalization does not mean the world is becoming culturally homogeneous. Rather it involves a cultural 'glocalization' (Beck, 2000, 31). Like transformationalists, the theorists studying 'globo-localism' suggest that globalization concerns with the intersection of presence (local) and absence (global) (Robertson, 1995, 26). Transformationalists think that the cultural imperialism thesis is a US-centric story (Mackay, 2000, 73). Defending cultural identity against the supposed threat of cultural imperialism necessarily involves invoking partial notions of national identity (Ibid., 74).

Transformationalists introduce a cultural hybridity and 'creolism'—by which is meant that, as a result of the interaction of two cultures, often on equal terms, over an extended period of time, new cultural forms emerge instead of an outdated homogeneity of national culture, in an era in which nations are characterized (Hannerz, 1990 and Mackay, 2000, 75).

## THE GLOBAL SOCIETY APPROACH

Historically, global society theorists argue that the concept of world or 'global society' has become believable idea only in the modern age and, in particular science, technology, industry and universal values are increasingly creating a 20<sup>th</sup> century world that is different from any past age (Sklair, 1999, 154). The globalization literature is full of discussions of the decreasing power and significance of the nation-state and identity, and correspondingly the increasing significance of supra-national and global institutions and systems of belief. Ideas of space-time distenciation (Giddens, 1991) and of time-space compression (Harvey, 1989) illustrate how process of globalization compresses, stretches and deepens space-time for people all over the world thus creates some of the conditions for a global society and so called world citizenship (Sklair, 1999, 155).

Technology has been sublimated by the positivist globalizers since it has greatly diminished geographical and social distances through the jet-powered airliner, the computer, the orbiting satellite, and many other inventions that now move people, ideas and goods more rapidly and surely across space and time than ever before. It is technology, in short, that has fostered an interdependence of local, national and international communities that is greater than any previously experienced (Rosnau, 1990, 17; Beck, 2000, 35).

## THE GLOBAL CAPITALISM APPROACH

'Global capitalism' model locates the dominant global forces in the structures of an ever-more globalizing capitalism (Ross and Trachte 1990, Sklair 1995, Robinson 1996). Ross and Trachte explain the deindustrialization of some of the heartland (core) regions of capitalism and the transformations of what is called the Third World (periphery) in these terms and argue that the globalization of the capitalist system is deeply connected to the capitalist crises of the 1970s and after (Sklair, 1999, 157). Thus, there is a shift of industrial production from the core to the peripheries which have been entirely examined in world-systems approach. The new global corporate structures have the capacity to devastate national labor markets by transferring their operations to cheaper locations overseas. The transnational corporations have no longer to do with movements of labor or industrial capacity but rather with that of capital itself (Jameson, 2000, 55). Because of this shift in production after 1970s Ross and Trachte claim that 'We are only at the beginning of the global era' (1990, 230).

## CULTURAL DETERMINANTS IN ARCHITECTURE

In general, culture is a way of summarizing the ways in which groups distinguish themselves from other groups. Wallerstein introduces two designation of culture. For the first usage he often uses the term 'culture' to describe the collection of such traits, behaviors, values, or of such beliefs (Wallerstein, 2002, 31). This means that each 'group' has its specific 'culture'. 'Culture' is also used to signify not the totality of the specificity of one group against another, but instead to oppose certain characteristics to other characteristics within the same group (Wallerstein, 2002, 32). In this sense, it is simply using culture to refer to the 'higher' arts as opposed to popular or everyday practice.

Architecture, which is art for all times, is a *building activity* of human directed at the satisfaction of human needs. Building activity is also a technology that requires knowledge on the use of material and techniques. As building culture changes via the changing values, building activity also changes. In reality, "architecture has always been at home in the house of mathematics. Early geometry may have sprung from architectural problems. Architecture is intimate with technology, engineering and the earth sciences. It is both *poiesis* and *technē*" (Steiner, 2001, 252). Built environment—the products of architecture, industrial design, city planning, even engineering—which is the product of unique ways of human activity, is in the intersecting domain of art, science, and technology. Nevertheless, technology does not tell us what is good or bad nor does it tell us what is aesthetically beautiful. Science, on the other hand only tells us the true or false in a scientific statement. The only cultural determinant in building activity to decide what is good or beautiful is the value system. Thus, values give the identity to architecture.

## KNOWLEDGE

Knowledge is "the reflection process of objective truth in human mind as a result of the relation between human and his/her environment" in Lukácsian philosophy. For Lukács, the reflection of truth can be made through two ways in relation to daily work activity: through science and through art (Lukács, 1999, 35, 122, 128). In one sense, knowledge is a very personal thing; it comes from personal experience, but personal experience is situated and formed in particular social institutions and work contexts (like universities, departmental disciplines, professional organizations) in particular geographical locations (cities, regions, states, rich and poor parts of the world) and is a product of particular *temporal* or historical periods, some of which are seen to be significantly formative (King, 2002, 403).

According to Lett, there are "three criteria that any claim to propositional knowledge" must satisfy in order to be considered valid (1987, 14). First, the assertion itself must be true. Truth is a necessary condition for knowledge, although truth by itself is not knowledge for many reasons. Second, you must believe that the proposition is true in order to claim that you know the proposition. Belief is a necessary but not sufficient condition for knowledge. Third, propositional knowledge must be substantiated by evidence—that is you must have a good reason for believing a proposition in order to claim that you know it. No knowledge is possible without some basis for knowledge. *Evidence* like truth and belief, is a necessary but insufficient condition for knowledge. Thus, knowledge can shortly be defined as "justified true belief."

In addition to these three criteria, there are seven distinct ways of knowing: Sense Experience, Logic, Authority, Consensus Gentium, Intuition, Revelation, and Faith (Lett, 1987, 18). However, each of these seven ways of knowing may be problematic, and as Lett claims "reliable knowledge thus is unobtainable."

However, today knowledge has become easily obtainable information which has always been integrally linked to globalization. Globalization does require information and communication technologies (ICTs)—satellites, television, and computers—if it is to function effectively, but it also requires other technologies and techniques such as improved means of travel and the establishment of common means of communication to facilitate the ready movement and interaction of people when required (Webster, 2002, 79-80). Communication not only expresses but also organizes the movement of globalization. It organizes the movement by multiplying and structuring interconnections through network (Hardt and Negri, 2000, 32).

## TECHNOLOGY

Technology, the second cultural factor, influences both art and sciences on a category of technical activity. Technical activity is different from technology. By viewing logically, Jarvie sees technology as a "substructure of knowledge" and viewing anthropologically, he sees knowledge as the part of man's multiform attempts to adapt his environment (Jarvie, 1972, 54). And he makes a distinction between two senses of the word 'know': *knowing how* to make an architectural drawing as a technique for example, and *knowing that* as a description of knowing the temperature, humidity or chemical components of the cement.

Here the problem is whether 'technology' or 'know how' is knowledge and if it is so, what kind of knowledge it is. For Jarvie, "technology does have somewhat different aims than science, it aims to be effective rather than true." This is nothing but the same thing with claiming that 'Nuclear weapon as technology is effective but not true'. This very effective weapon is one of the means of imperial control (Hardt and Negri, 2000, 345). For this reason, in 1960s, must have negatively criticized technology. Heidegger suggested that the possible end of human being is to be realized through technology. The most important reason of this possibility must be 'the objectification of human in modern science' because for Heidegger "human beings cannot be objectified" (Heidegger, 2001). Since modern technology reveals everything as 'standing-reserve' to be used, controlled, manipulated, and exploited, human appears as a mere piece of the same 'standing -reserve' (Heidegger, 1977, 308). Undoubtedly, even the number of soldiers and other innocent people who have died in the last US-Iraq war have already been estimated by calculating the number of people who have been objectified for the pre-calculation of the imperial interests. As Jameson suggests, only the US will adopt the role of world's policemen and enforce their rule through selected interventions—mostly bombings in various alleged danger zones—for its interests (Jameson, 2000, 51).

In a positive manner, technology is used as a knowledge for solving the problems of feeding, housing, and sheltering in different parts of the universe (Jarvie, 1972, 59). Why do we then talk of science whenever we talk about technology? Although human beings are affected by the outcomes of the science, science and technology in a sense are different. Science is a product of our imaginations, and sometimes we imagine impossible things as we usually see in science-fiction films. Science sets the *general* laws of the physical world. Technology, however, is quite *specific*. Even on the surface of the earth what is good technology in one place is not in another. For instance, the technology of architecture in Ankara/Turkey, and in Dhaka/Bangladesh is quite different because of the different environments and cultures. In short, it can be asserted that technological knowledge is knowledge within the boundary of the local circle which definitely coincides with the laws of science. "Whereas science in a way puts the question to the nature, technology puts the question both to the society and to nature." Much of what counts as a problem in technology will depend on the society, such as the technology of building, clean air, avoiding from the causes of earthquake, eliminating poverty, etc. Society sets the limits on the kinds of solutions in architecture and there seems to be an inescapable social element in technology. This social element can only be identified with the 'value system' of the society.

## VALUE SYSTEMS

Twenty years ago, 'culture' was thought to be about values, beliefs, world views, or alternatively, about 'what you need to know to be accepted as one of them by any members of a cultural group' is now constituted through representation (King, 2002, 402-403). Architecture, which is one of the most visible and influential ways of such representation, has much more complex cultural components.

Value-system can be determined as the collection of the value-judgements that are characteristic of a person or a group. The nature of the architectural problem, or the outcome as a solution to that problem, or the quality observed by the user is determined by neither environmental factors nor technology, and knowledge.

When deciding whether a solution is good, acceptable, desirable, or preferable an architect has to have certain beliefs that affect his activity. Unfortunately, these beliefs today have been manipulated in the hands of "the transnational capitalist class" (TCC), with the only quantitative economic value: money. Sklair defines TCC as the non-state actors for political transnational practices who act as 'global ruling class', the members of 'transnational corporation' (TNC) for economic transnational practices (Sklair, 1995; Sklair, 1999, 157).

In social sciences the term *value* has been used to refer to interests, pleasures, likes, preferences, duties, moral obligations, desires, wants, goals and needs (Kilby, 1993, 31). 'Desirable' is the key word in the definition of value and 'desirable' is different from 'desired'. 'Desirable' has the resonance of 'ought' or 'should' in its meaning. Although the values are to be defined as conceptions this does not mean that they are always clearly represented in consciousness (Kilby, 1993, 36). Whether these solutions are good or bad; value judgements change relatively from one society to another, and from time to time. However, as Kilby states "values tend to 'abide' rather than to be of the moment." They do evolve and change, but typically not suddenly via the transforming effect of globalization.

For studying the concept of 'value' most of the anthropologists preferred to use the term *value*, psychologists on the other hand employed the term *attitude*. It can be said that "the more general an attitude the more it becomes a value, the more specific the value the more like an attitude" (Kilby, 1993, 38-39). And finally, values are related to 'interests' which are "positive dispositions toward given activities" (Kilby, 1993, 44). Values relate to interests in two directions. First, interests may produce values—as the imperial interests produce the values of global culture. Second, in the reverse direction, values may be the basis of interests—as the values of the consumer culture are the basis of the imperial interests.

## CONCLUSION

As King argues, architects, planners, urban designers, indeed all those professions which deal with the realities of the built environment, need to understand questions concerning, for example, the long term economic, political outcomes of particular design policies or decisions, or the meaning of different building forms in various cultures, or issues relating to the social organization of space, whether at the level of the building or of the city (King, 2002, 397).

Architecture is considered as the primary activity of human being. This activity does not only and directly influence the natural environment, it rather creates the built environment. Like every human activity, building activity needs knowledge, technology and value judgement. Undoubtedly, the history of 'building activity' begins with the human needs in the biological area as a result of relation between human and his environment, and goes through the nearly sequential human areas, such as, "social, individual, and abstract" (Pultar, 2000). It is impossible to see the similarity between the 'history of building activity' and the 'history of death'. According to Steiner "death has its history" following the "biological, social and mental" sequence (Steiner, 2001, 266). So, being alive is the same thing with being against death which is also nothing but the same thing with being able to control the world. Today, under the chic name of globalization, imperial control operates through three global and absolute means: bomb, money, and ether (Hardt and Negri, 2000, 325). Each of them can be easily commemorated with the three cultural components of architecture: The bomb with the technology, the money with the value, and the ether with the knowledge and information.

The search for describing globalization without touching upon polarization in the society, seems to be nearly impossible. Although the world is still politically organized in terms of nation-states, 'globalization' as it was derived from the word 'globe', blurs the national borders, but "it creates at the same time some new categories" like identity, with an increasing emphasis on local values (Akcan, 2002, 1). Those new categories are some binary oppositions of modernization process which signify the poles in the society like rural-urban, old-new, Islamist-Secular as it is the case in Turkey. From this perspective, it seems that globalization is the extension of modernization process in underdeveloped or developing countries like Turkey. Now, in the globalization period, there is more or less the same opposition with new terms: local-global, West-(non)West, center-periphery, poor-rich, and such.

In this context, one can suggest that once a country has been integrated in the modernization process, it already has been 'included' in the process of globalization, otherwise it has been 'excluded' from the globe. But sometimes, as it is in Turkey, there is "neither exclusion nor inclusion in the edges" (Tanju, 2002, 6)

where the *hybrid* productions appear like squatter housing and arabesque music, in Nalbantoğlu's (1997) words, "silently interrupted" the modernization process toward globalization. These hybrid productions and interruptions in Turkey are also classified as informal. Keyder (2002) suggests that "the informal would be transformed into formal in due time." In Turkey, without being completely modernized, on the way of globalization, this transformation has been gradually realized since 1990. One such example is the GEÇAK Rehabilitation Project in Ankara where the informal and transit squatter housing areas due to the rapid modernization process have gradually gone beyond the rural-urban dichotomy (Varlı-Görk, 2002). Therefore, the exclusionary transit areas may come closer to the inclusionary areas.

Social exclusion refers to a "failure of social integration" (Keyder, 2002) at the economic, political and cultural level, it also connotes a spatial lack of integration and a consistent inequality in the experience of space. Globalization in Turkey, similar to other Asian countries is a never ending process which oscillates between inclusion and exclusion, between global and local, between Western and non-Western and accordingly between capitalism and its alternatives because it is "both historical and modern process" (Tanju, 2002).

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