

## **The Impact of Globalization on Architecture - Environment Relations: Housing Projects and Design Approaches**

*Aylin Ayna*

*Aylin Ayna*

Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University, Istanbul, Turkey

E-mail: [aylin.ayna@msgsu.edu.tr](mailto:aylin.ayna@msgsu.edu.tr)

### **Abstract**

In this paper, the impact of globalization particularly on culture and the architecture - environment relations will be examined in the context of housing projects. Globalization greatly influences society, life styles and practices by the cultural, economic and technological currents that it creates. With the "global culture" presumably having been created and fed by such currents, individuals and their life styles are changed and transformed. It is natural that "our homes" are also influenced. "Home" is one of those places most open to changes because it may provide to its owner - or its user - such feelings as identity, belonging, etc., and is also seen as an investment. Particularly dynamic changes can be expected in large cities that are more open to global flows of life styles, brands and fashion trends. In this study, the aim is to examine the housing relations with the environment (built and unbuilt and natural, social and cultural environment) in new housing projects, particularly those realized and designed in recent years in Istanbul.

**Keywords:** globalization, housing projects, environment, global culture

The concept of "globalization" that we have frequently come across in many studies conducted recently is an interdisciplinary concept that has not a certain definition due to differences in views and interpretations. By some it is considered as creating a common global culture and homogenizing identities and life styles, while for others it may be interpreted as highlighting differences and supporting locality. Anthony Giddens describes globalization as a homogenizing process, made possible by the differentiation of time from space. In this way, modernization establishes a network of global relations between near-by and distant communities (Giddens 1998).

### **Global flow: global culture, consumption, fashion, "life style"**

Media flow and technological breakthroughs such as the TV, cinema, the internet and others are the most important factors enabling us to interact with remote communities which may be culturally different from our own. By such contact a common global culture is formed. Stuart Hall emphasizes that a new kind of globalization process, in which global elements are intermingled with local ones, has been started, and this new type is the globalization of the American culture (Hall 1998). The spread of a global culture and lifestyles is very fast, compared to previous times, and it emanates from an identifiable center (Taylan 2008).

Due to new communication technologies and media, culture has become a commodity, produced, offered and marketed, and so it has become an image. The world is becoming a single social space held together by the cultural transportation of semantic systems and symbolic forms (Hannerz 1998).

Some authors speak of a media imperialism whereby powerful countries strive for hegemony (Curran 2000). McChesney also suggests that particularly after 1980s, media systems have become more international and the global advertisement market has started to prosper (McChesney 2001). According to this view, the common culture created is the culture of those dominating this market.

### **Global unit area: City**

The internationalization of capital, changes in production types and profitability from production to consumption, and the growth of transnational investments have changed the economic order and the associated social and cultural patterns. Many concepts nowadays have become commodities to be marketed and consumed. In turn, many consumable items have started to play a role in the formation and delimitation of identities (Thorns 2010: 121).

### **Global Cities**

Global flows of finance, media, information, ethnicities, and technology shape societies, and therefore countries and cities. According to Jonathan Friedman, cities are spatially organized socio-economical systems. As such they become global accumulation fields (Friedman 1995). The position of cities within these global flows also affects their economic, social, and cultural structures. Although "global cities" are the focal points of the world, they also represent globe-wide activities and positions of their countries. Moreover, they are involved in relations with other global cities.

Global cities - metropolises - are those cities that have high technological facilities, have been developed or transformed by international capital, have high investment values, have advanced communication - transportation technologies, and have been in communication - interaction with the others. The uneven integration of the city into the global economy, however, may also produce urban dissociation, increasing urban crime, poverty, and fear (Thorns 2010: 74-76). Dissociation effects of globalization change the lifestyle and expectations of urban dwellers and stimulate efforts for the creation of protected places free of the adversities of cities (Isik 2001; Suer 2002).

### **Do Differences Have to Form Abysses?**

Changed production forms, consumption-driven life, and expanding service industry have also influenced societies and created changes and imbalances in income distribution. These imbalances cause very different life style forms within cities. Eventually, within cities, a variety of housing types are formed from shanty houses to apartments, from closed housing complexes- 'gated communities'- to residences, and even these are differentiated among themselves with their unique "concepts" and design approaches.

Through media, fashion, etc., various images of global culture have been created and spread. Such images are presented to us as "lifestyles" or identity elements, etc., and influence our preferences in architecture and urban life. Different parts within the cities representing different life styles emerge.

### **Social closures**

Great differences in income levels within cities increase the crime rate and fear in cities. In response to the perceived danger, certain social groups withdraw from the public arena into enclosed complexes and residences with their own security personnel, surrounded by high walls and camera systems.

For the luxurious housing projects, "lifestyle" is the key word. Each luxurious housing project represents a certain life style and identity which are emphasized especially during the

promotion stages of such projects. Accessibility, particularly fast and quick access to the metro, the availability of services within complex, advanced security measures, good property appreciation forecast, the proximity of large shopping centers, and the image of an idealized global life style are considered as the most important points in the promotion process.

### **The case of Istanbul**

The case of Istanbul is similar to many global cities. The city has different housing regions accessible to different socio-economic strata. Variety of neighborhoods formed by migration, slum houses, rebuilt slum houses, old neighborhoods – apartments, complexes, residences, etc., may be observed sometimes side by side, sometimes at different locations.

Ugur Tanyeli stated that high-income groups in Turkey buy "order" and insulation from chaotic communal and cultural realities in luxurious housing complexes. He suggests that those who buy type-villas lock themselves up in the closed suburbs and they are not disturbed by standard "residential outfits" around them (Tanyeli). Tabloid periodicals presenting the latest trends among rich significantly affect the architecture and interior design of these housing projects. (Thorns 2010: 132)

Cities, particularly metropolises, transform human beings into individuals (Tanyeli). Thanks to the progresses in technology and transportation, even very long distances are accessible in very short time periods. All global cities - metropolises - are at the same time the centers of fast transportation - several international airports, fast trains hubs, etc.

Metropolises, on one hand, compete with each other and try to be different; on the other hand, they look alike. Everywhere we can see the same chain stores with similar design and architectural examples representing the same life style - office buildings, housing projects, etc. Marketing strategies encourage the consumption of identical brands in different locations. New life styles and forms are being created and presented as a commodity and "fashion". Accordingly, life styles are being changed, and the locality and local products lose their importance with the global competition of powerful brands spreading to every corner of the world. As a result, city dwellers become detached from the locality.

When we associate all these developments with architecture, we see that places which Augé described as "non-places", that is, shopping centers, airports, hotel and supermarket chains, shanty houses, holiday resorts and suburbs proliferate, and that human beings become ever more alienated (Augé 1997). No relation may be established with "non-places" and they may be only momentary lived and consumed; they have no relation with history. According to Augé, history may only be a part of the show in non-place (Augé 1997). Augé does not mention housing projects when describing "non-places". For housing projects are personalized by people living in them, and are imbued with memories. However, we think that at least some housing projects bear the characteristics of Augé's non-places. In many projects, history and values of location have been turned into a part of the show. We may see this in city architecture when copies or simulations of historical buildings are built or when copies or simulations of buildings from other (exotic) locations are incorporated in the cityscape.

For instance, Bosphorus City Istanbul project has been created with an idea of creating a second Istanbul strait as a design concept. Project presentations promise living in "Bosphorus" with a motto reading it will be almost the same as Istanbul Strait, with waterside residences, cafés, and a strait (of 720 meters) passing through (Arkitera 2008). That is, it promises a different life in a different location that has no relation with its actual physical setting; in this context, the project detaches itself from its location.

## The concept basket of global

There are also other project approaches that have no historical or spatial value, and have no relation with their location or environment. A good example of such projects, regardless of the historical or cultural architectural style chosen, are gated communities, emphasizing self-sufficiency in services, infrastructure, security, recreation etc. Being self sufficient and large enough detaches those living inside from the outside world; on the other hand, it prevents the outside world from entering inside.

The new housing projects sometimes used foreign architectural styles (milliyet 2010<sup>4</sup>, gazeteparc 2008<sup>5</sup>), sometimes they recreate a "neighborhood" with the nostalgia of a neighborhood life style and neighbor relations that were lost in the process of metropolitization (milliyet 2010<sup>6</sup>); and sometimes they are built around a central theme such as water (milliyet 2010<sup>7</sup>).

A very important theme in urban and architectural design in new housing projects is "nature" and "rural life". Even though, nature in these projects is only an illusion, there is a great demand for it among the buyers who may dream of a "house in nature". The illusion of nature and rural life is sometimes realized by fruit trees and artificial lakes placed in complexes (milliyet 2010<sup>8</sup>), and also by using certain flowers or trees as symbols (milliyet 2010<sup>9</sup>).

The new housing projects serve not only as identity representations and life-style shows, but also as investment strategies which are vital in supporting the manifested identities. Transportation facilities are very important in this context. Being close to the metro and the airport may be considered crucial. There are projects focusing completely on transportation.<sup>10</sup> Every new invention that accelerates the speed of transportation and communication puts forward the claim that it is going to change the social relations (Ritzer 1998, Thorns 2010). Technology also brought the ability to live one's life without the need for physical contact (Graham 1997: 25). This change directly affects the city and city life. The posed question is "whether there is going to be the need for sustaining the face to face relations among people in global city or whether the relationship is going to be in the cyber life?" (Thorns 2010: 87-93).

When all these changes and developments are taken into consideration, the effects on the city dwellers and city life become clear. Socio-economic stratification and stylistic differences affect the relationship of the city and the city dweller with the physical and social environment. Global flows of finance, culture, information and technology have a great influence on the dynamics of this relationship.

## References

Arkitera. 2008. *Küçükçekmece'ye 2. Boğaz'ı inşa ediyor*. Arkitera. [Online] may 29. [Cited: September 02, 2011.] <http://v3.arkitera.com/h29478-kucukcekmeceye-2-bogazi-insa-ediyor.html>.

Augé, M. 1997. *Yer Olmayanlar: Üstmoderniliğin Antropolojisine Giriş -Non-lieux* Introduction a une anthropologie de la surmodernité. İstanbul: Kesit Yayıncılık.

<sup>4</sup> Centro Futura. Dap Yapı. Sancaktepe-İstanbul.

<sup>5</sup> California Houses in Çekmeköy

<sup>6</sup> Mahalle İstanbul. Sur Yapı. Çekmeköy

<sup>7</sup> Aqua City 2010, Sinpaş. Sancaktepe – İstanbul.

<sup>8</sup> Adapark. Sur Yapı. Çekmeköy-İstanbul

<sup>9</sup> Ağaoğlu My Roseville. Kemerdere-İstanbul.

<sup>10</sup> White Side, Çekmeköy-İstanbul

Curran, J. and Myunig-Jin P. 2000. *Beyond Globalization Theory De-Westernizing Media Studies*. London&NewYork: Routledge.

Friedman, J. 1995. *Where Do We Stand: A Decade of World City Research*. World Cities in a World System. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Gazeteparc. 2008. *Çekmeköy'deki Kaliforniya*. [www.gazeteparc.com](http://www.gazeteparc.com). [Online] June 28. <http://www.gazeteparc.com/h30674-cekmekoydeki-kaliforniya.html>.

Giddens, A. 1998. *Modernliğin sonuçları*. İstanbul: Ayrıntı Yayınları. pp. 66-67.

Hall, S. 1998. Yerel ve Küresel: Küreselleşme ve Etniklik. In: King, A., ed. *Kültür, Küreselleşme ve Dünya Sistemi*. Ankara: Ankara: Bilim ve Sanat Yayınları. pp. 39-61.

Hannerz, U. 1998. Çevre Kültür Senaryoları. In King, A, ed. *Kültür, Küreselleşme ve Dünya sistemi*. Ankara: Ankara: bilim ve Sanat Yayınları. pp. 139-169.

Işık, O. and M. Pnarçioğlu. 2001. *Nöbetleşe Yoksulluk*. s.l.: Ayrıntı Yayınları.

Mcchesney, R. W. 2001. Global Media, Neoliberalism and Imperialism. *Global Med Monthly Review: An Independent Socialist Magazine* 52 (10).

Milliyet, emlak. 2010. *emlakta son dakika. milliyet emlak*. [Online] April 19, 2010. [http://www.emlaktasondakika.com/haber/Konut\\_Projeleri/Istanbul\\_Cekmekoyde\\_10\\_yeni\\_konut\\_projesi/886.aspx](http://www.emlaktasondakika.com/haber/Konut_Projeleri/Istanbul_Cekmekoyde_10_yeni_konut_projesi/886.aspx).

Süer, D. and Yasemin Y. S. 2002. *Küresel Sermayenin Yeni Tüketim Mekânları Lüks Konut Siteleri. Mimarlık ve Tüketim*. İstanbul: Boyut Kitapları. pp. 39-67.

Tanyeli, U. *90'lar Türkiye'sinde Mimarlık: Metropolleşme ve Metropole Direnme*. Mimarlık yılı 1.

Taylan, H. H. and Ümit A. 2008. Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi. Cilt X. Sayı 1. Medya ve Kültür: Kültürün Medya Aracılığıyla Küreselleşmesi (*Media and Culture: Globalisation of Culture by means of Media*). Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi. June. X(1). pp. 85-97.

Thorns, D. C. 2010. *Kentlerin Dönüşümü: Kent Teorisi ve Kentsel Yaşam*. İstanbul: Soyak Yayınları.