Re-Embedding the Global Soul
Jade 02

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ABSTRACT

This thesis proposes to "re-embed" the "global nomad" into the context of an increasingly globalized world at the room scale. I define re-embedding as the "plugging in" of social relationships to local contexts and their recombination across time/space distances in order to establish a sense of continuity and order in events including those not directly within the perceptual environment of the individual. The term global nomads refer to a population of people who travel frequently and globally due to the nature of their jobs. Their transitory lifestyle restricts them to live principally in hotels or other temporary accommodations. The options available to global nomads are limited and do not adequately provide for the sense of place.

The research focuses on the lifestyle of global nomads from fashion, technology, to living environment i.e. furniture. It interprets fashion and technology as layers and wires that both filter and protect the global nomads like a cocoon. It interprets the blase attitude towards the homogenous living environment in the urban, metropolitan context as the culprit for the need to liberate. The thesis aims to expand the dimension of the 'cocoon' through the design of a wall of technology (transient) and the room as an open landscape (permanent) where the making-of-place can begin to happen. The room then becomes an object that can be strategically 'plugged in' to existing buildings at nodes of an intense, urban context locally.

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BACKGROUND

Globalization occurs through the engagement of local economies in global economies. In the process, national borders are blurred as international transactions, cultural attitudes, and consumer preferences migrate and merge independent of the state lines. (Ibeling) Cities become increasingly generic following development patterns established by ever-larger corporations, bureaucracies, and western-based standards. Modernization becomes increasingly equivalent to westernization, but along very corporate lines. (Ibeling & Koolhaas) The sense of place becomes more and more homogeneous. Spaces become less and less personalized.
The options available to global nomads today are very limited and do not adequately provide for a sense of home. In Hong Kong, global nomads live in self-contained hotels. One example is the Pacific Place in Hong Kong. It is located in Admiralty, a district adjacent to the CBD, Central, of Hong Kong. The Pacific Place consists of a four-storey shopping mall, two service-apartment buildings, two office-buildings, and three to four five-star hotels. It is a totally self-contained complex in the sense that one does not have to leave 'the building' and 'it' provides everything that one would ever need.

The essence of the blase attitude is an indifference toward the distinctions between things.

-George Simmel, *The Metropolis and Mental Life*
As Richard, a global nomad described in the book by Pico Iyer, said, "The things about [Pacific Place] is that you've got a miniairport on the ground floor, where you can check in for all Cathay flights. There's a Seibu department store on Level Two, where you can buy everything you want. My bank's next to the elevator, and the Immigration Office is next to my office." (Iyer 82) While one is benefiting from the stability and convenience that such self-sufficient complex offers, one suffers from the lack of adaptability to the true local condition. One is also deprived of the 'making-of-place' to create a sense of home in the midst of homogeneity.
Are these 'places' "appropriate" for people who are always on the move? Do these places, i.e. self-contained hotels, fall into the category of being generic, homogeneous, lacking personalization? Can the lifestyle of these people inform us of the "right" kind of architecture catered for them other than hotels? Can the conceptual diagram of a typical hotel be applied to another model? What is the program? What kind of furniture piece can function to re-embed people into the building and/or the urban context? What program does the room fulfill?

**Nine modes of dwelling:**

**Column H**

The hotel room is the ultimate case of minimal control, for occupants do not even control furniture. Only one level is acted upon by inhabitation: tenants only control the things they bring.

*(Habraken 61)*
I propose to re-embed a population of people who travel frequently and globally due to the nature of their jobs. I call these people "global nomads". They might grow up in one country, and study in another. With such multicultural backgrounds, they mostly turn into young entrepreneurs and professionals in services such as business, banking, advertising, design, and law. Due to the nature of their jobs, they become even more internationally mobile. They are always on the move, hopping through world cities, such as Hong Kong, New York, London, etc, and have no fixed residence. The length of stay in each city may range from as short as a day to as long as a month! Their transitory lifestyle restricts them to live principally in hotels or other temporary accommodations. They familiarize themselves with global chain business ranging from Marriott and Gucci, to 7-Eleven. While some of them might be inwardly rooted, some of them suffer deeply from rootlessness and are in need of the sense of home.

1. Samsonite thermal reactive travel wear for men and women
2. Samsonite luggage with four-wheel wheels
3. Nokia tri-band cellular phone
4. Pocket-size web surfer
5. Palm Pilot
6. Pocket-size digital video camera
7. Casio digital camera watch
Program: A room 12'x12'x30' for sleeping, bathing, and working

Concept: A 'cocoon' in a box; an oasis in the harsh urban climate

Objective: To expand the dimension between skin and clothing

Unlike the rest of us, when Tara Reid talks to the TV, the TV listens—and talks back. Via her Motorola Timeport two-way Skytel pager, she passes love blips to her live-in boyfriend, Carson Daly, host of MTV's Total Request Live. "This is my favorite thing," says the actress of her teeny gadget. "I don't use the phone anymore. Through this I get e-mail, faxes—and talk to Carson 24/7." Sure enough, across town, at MTV's Times
The “making-of-place” will occur at the room scale through three levels of engagement. First, the predetermined conditions in a room include the existing piping, window openings, entry and exit points. This set of predetermined conditions will indirectly dictate the interior ‘landscape’ of the room vis-à-vis the bed as a plateau and the tub as a trough that holds water. Then, the second level of engagement occurs through the introduction of a wall system (view) in relation to a free standing furniture piece (human dimensions). Finally, as new relationship begin to develop between the ‘landscape’ and ‘view’, and the furniture piece, space in the room begins to open up new possibilities, flexibility, and adaptability. The global nomad can begin to ‘plug-in’ to the local condition regardless of the personal ritual (the third level of engagement).

1. A conceptual wire frame model lined with paper (flexibility), felt (comfort), and stainless steel sheet (water resistance, heat resistance). It aims to identify the different zones and activities that could possibly take place in a generic space. 2. A wood frame model lined with wood (blackboard, patio, furniture), tiles (water-resistance), felt (comfort), and plexi (transparency). It aims to test the reality of the concept of lining spaces.
3. A foamcore model lined with interwoven felt, rubber sheet, string (hammock, storage), cardboard and wood (furniture, work space), stainless steel sheet (cooking and bathing space), and wood frames at window openings (sliding partitions). 4. A cardboard model based on the study of human dimensions focuses on the idea of landscape. The high volume is the plateau (sleeping space) and the sunken volume is the trough (bathing area). The criss-cross circulation suggests the possibility of nested furniture pieces. 5. A matrix identifying the various needs (lining, form, climate, furniture, spatial description) with regard to the type of activities that take place in a generic space.
1. A study of eye levels based on human positions. 2a & 2b. The wall of technology is the transient element of the project. It is a grid of LCD screens that responds to human teach. Different screen activates as it follows the eye movement while the user's body navigates in landscape. The wall is waterproof, teach sensitive, and upgradable. Rods are attached at the intersection of expansion joints so that curtains, clothes, and fabric could be hung across space.
3. First model made to study the idea of flexibility. Ceiling and floor spaces are used as storage. Surfaces are gridded with tracks to allow for attaching, hinging, sliding, and folding furniture, partitions, and doors. 4. Study of wall surface used as display area for personal items, rods hinged to hold up fabric; tracks attached with shelving spaces and allow for sliding a television along the room, floor panels fold up to hide the tracks.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lining</th>
<th>Condition</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Object</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>steel</td>
<td>hot</td>
<td>sleeping</td>
<td>oven</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>glass</td>
<td>(fireproof)</td>
<td>working</td>
<td>stove</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fiberglass</td>
<td>warm</td>
<td>playing</td>
<td>tub</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>aluminum</td>
<td>cool</td>
<td>relaxing</td>
<td>bed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bamboo</td>
<td>cold</td>
<td>bathing</td>
<td>sink</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cork</td>
<td>cooking</td>
<td>washing</td>
<td>chair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cardboard</td>
<td>windy</td>
<td>eating</td>
<td>table</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wood</td>
<td>wet</td>
<td>kneeling</td>
<td>vanity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tiles</td>
<td>(waterproof)</td>
<td>sitting</td>
<td>clothes rack</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>foam</td>
<td>dry</td>
<td>reading</td>
<td>light</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>leather</td>
<td>bright (day)</td>
<td>standing (waiting)</td>
<td>lounge chair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>inflatable plastic</td>
<td>dark (night)</td>
<td>reclining</td>
<td>dining table</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rubber</td>
<td></td>
<td>laying</td>
<td>storage</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1. Armchair with a spring mechanism that allows one change from a sitting position to a reclining position, designed by Jean Prouve.
2. Matrix of zones, lining, activities, and furniture in relationship to human dimensions and positions.
3. Cardboard and basswood model of a piece of furniture that changes form and function based on user needs (screen, lounge chair, vanity piece, table, easy chair...).
Global nomads actively and physically participate in the process of globalization. It is especially crucial that these people establish firmly a sense of ontological security as well as what sociologists call, 'social capital'. Social capital is built on the kind of trust that comes out of belonging to shared clubs, communities, and organizations. Social capital would be useful for the global nomad in conducting their business, as well as in feeling that they belong to a larger, transcendent order/community larger than they are. From the perspective of the local community, re-embeddedness may mean that the global nomad will behave more as a citizen, operating for the good of the community/state and not only for their own selfish interest.

1. A relationship diagram of spaces and activities in a typical hotel design. Question is: If one were to extract the guestroom as the element to plug into a local existing neighborhood, could the room achieve the same relationship diagrammatically with the neighborhood, reach the same level of convenience and more? Assuming that one could substitute the lobby with the use of internet technology? 2. A map of Causeway Bay in Hong Kong showing the application of the same diagram. 3. A generic space could exist in a local row house. (Refer to the red highlight on map)
4. A matrix showing the possibilities of relationship among sleep, bathe, work/play. 5. Taking one possibility and freezing it in time and looking at a diagrammatic section of the landscape, color-coded. 6. Color key identifying the zones and activities.
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Diagram that further analyzes the zones and microclimate of the landscape in a generic space. The three circles indicate the zones of spaces based on the existing climate of a city, i.e., Hong Kong. The microclimate is based on the optimal condition with regard to the existing climate of the city with relationship to the interior space.
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(Opposite page) 1. Landscape 2. Plan of final design (This page) 3. Section of final design
The process of making: The final model is scaled 1" = 1'. The model was made out of 3/16" white foamcore layered sheet by sheet. The trough, storage spaces, etc were created.
When the foamcore sheet were glued together, aluminum foil was taped onto the formwork by the layering of holes cut out of the foamcore.
When the formwork was completely covered with aluminum foil, a thick layer of vaseline was applied everywhere onto the foil to prevent resin from seeping through to the foil.
Once vaseline was applied, polyester sheet could be placed on top of the formwork. When the model was completely cover with polyester, it was ready for the deadly resin.
The spreading of resin onto the polyester sheet took about fifteen minutes. As the resin dries, the landscape is realized as one continuous surface.
The ceiling was made of 3/16” foamcore cut out as ribs and held together by basswood dowels. Beige stockings was pinned onto the rib to conceal the embedded speakers and light fixtures.
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Images of the interior of the room designed for global nomads

The model was lit with black light glowing from below the resin formwork of the landscape. Color codes the zones (red is heat...). The model is raised and put against a television.
Viewing into the model with a fish-eye lens, the camera shot pictures as the DVD player froze the screen. Movies in the background include Belly and James Bond The World is Not Enough.
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CONTENT REVIEW 11.14.00 Ellen Dunham-Jones Bill Porter Julia Scher
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RELATED READINGS


Illustrations done by author unless otherwise denoted
DIGITAL VISUAL WORLD OF INTERESTS

movie Belly
http://globalnomads.association.com/gninintro.htm
http://www.gsd.harvard.edu/hdm/bognar.htm
http://www.zagar.com/
http://creola.alessi.com/
http://www.t3.co.uk
http://www.bluefly.com/
http://www.vertigo.com/
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