



# Through the Distance

Establish dialogues in different scales

Project Description + Program

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Key words:

*Distance*

*Perception*

*Tension*

*Objects*

*Dialogue*

Main theme:

*To establish tensions and dialogues between individuals, between spaces, between individuals AND spaces, by perceptions created by physical objects through different scales of distances.*

## Distance

Distance has always been a fascinating and ambiguous concept, and being in such an extreme time we have never been this aware of it. Faces and places for which we used to take granted have become unreachable, and facing solitude has become the new normal.

However no one is an island, all the time we desire to reach out, searching for others, searching for dialogue, searching for interaction, our technology of course gives us the ability to communicate through distance, but can we still establish the dialogue even in a relatively primitive context?

## Intention

All of that leads to the key topic of this diploma project - in different scales of distances, what kind of dialogue can be established? When the distance increases, how will the perception change? And when not using modern communication tools, what can be the mediums to establish the dialogue through the distance?

## 4 Sub-projects

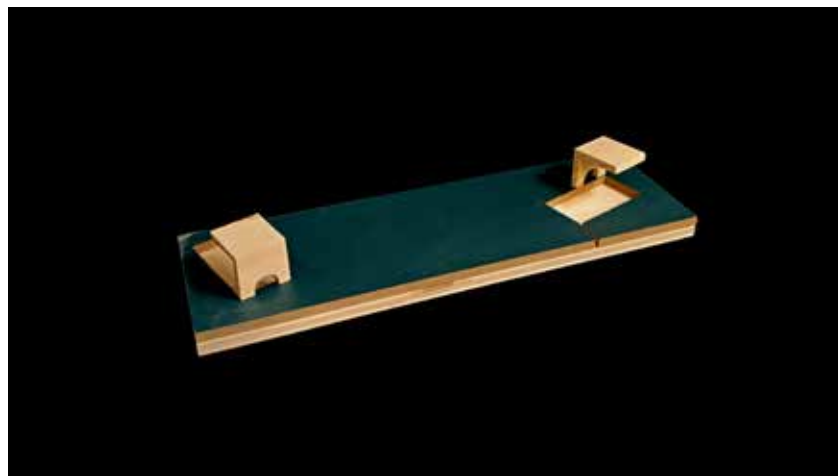
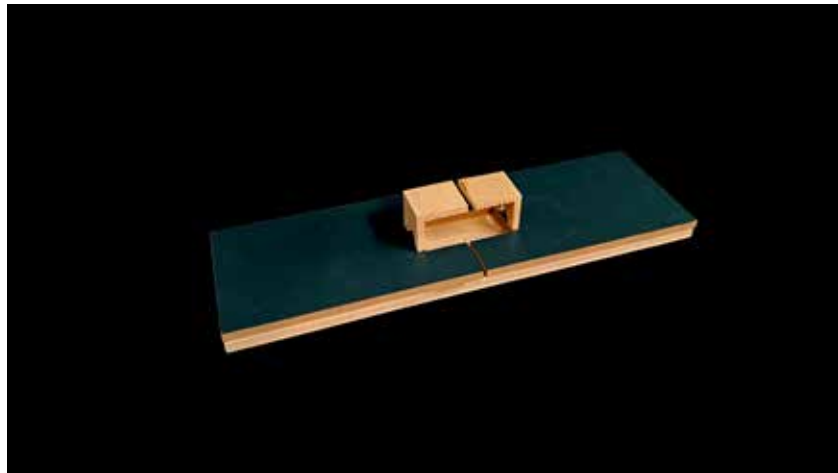
This project consists of 4 sub-projects, each of them focus on a different scale of distance, from extremely close, to extremely far. In each of the sub-projects, instead of designing a space, it's more about creating an experience and tension. The experience starts with designing of physical objects, and then these objects play as the keys, or mediums to establish each dialogue. The objects are designed and decided, but the experiences are not.

## 1:1 Making

In each sub-project, or in every scale of distance, the 1:1 physical objects are made to create 1:1 experience. Choosing this approach means a lot of testing and decision-making, as for the physical works, it's either working or not, there's no room for imagination.

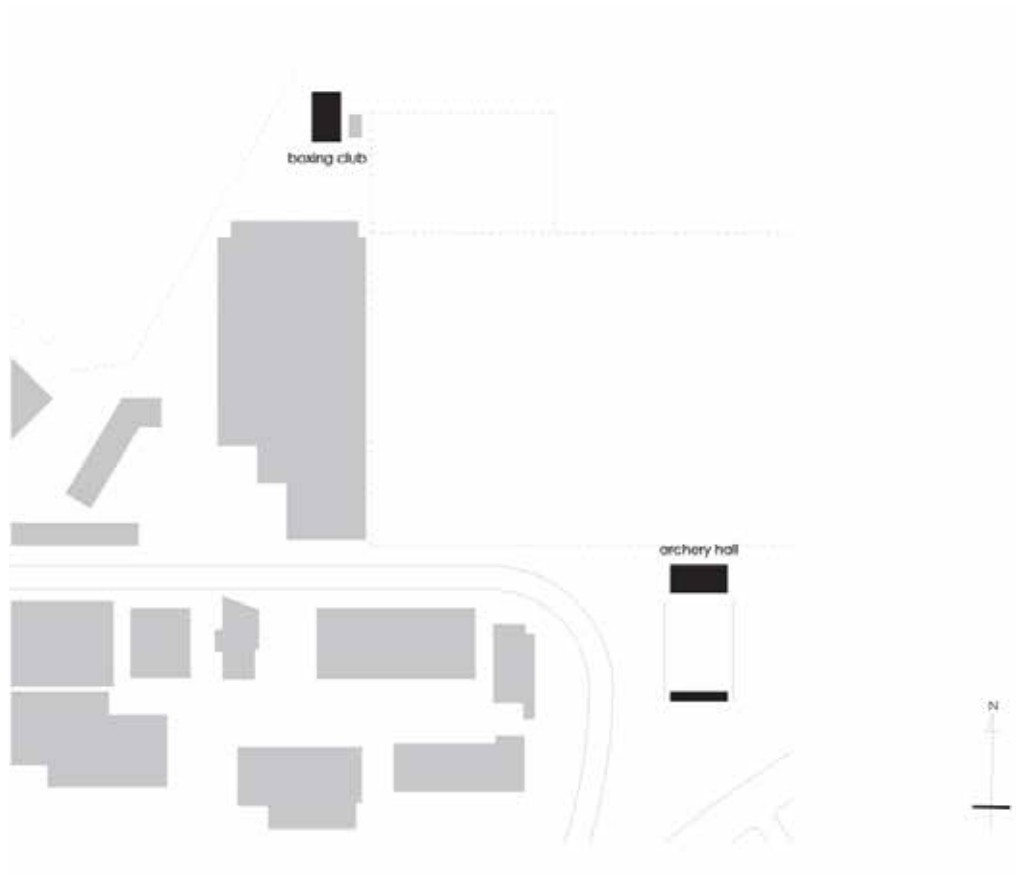
## Programme

This is the original programme and will be revised later, but most of topics and intentions were still carried on to the current project.



*Concept model*

Variations of a pair of dual objects under different scenarios, with different distances and contexts



### *Architectural case*

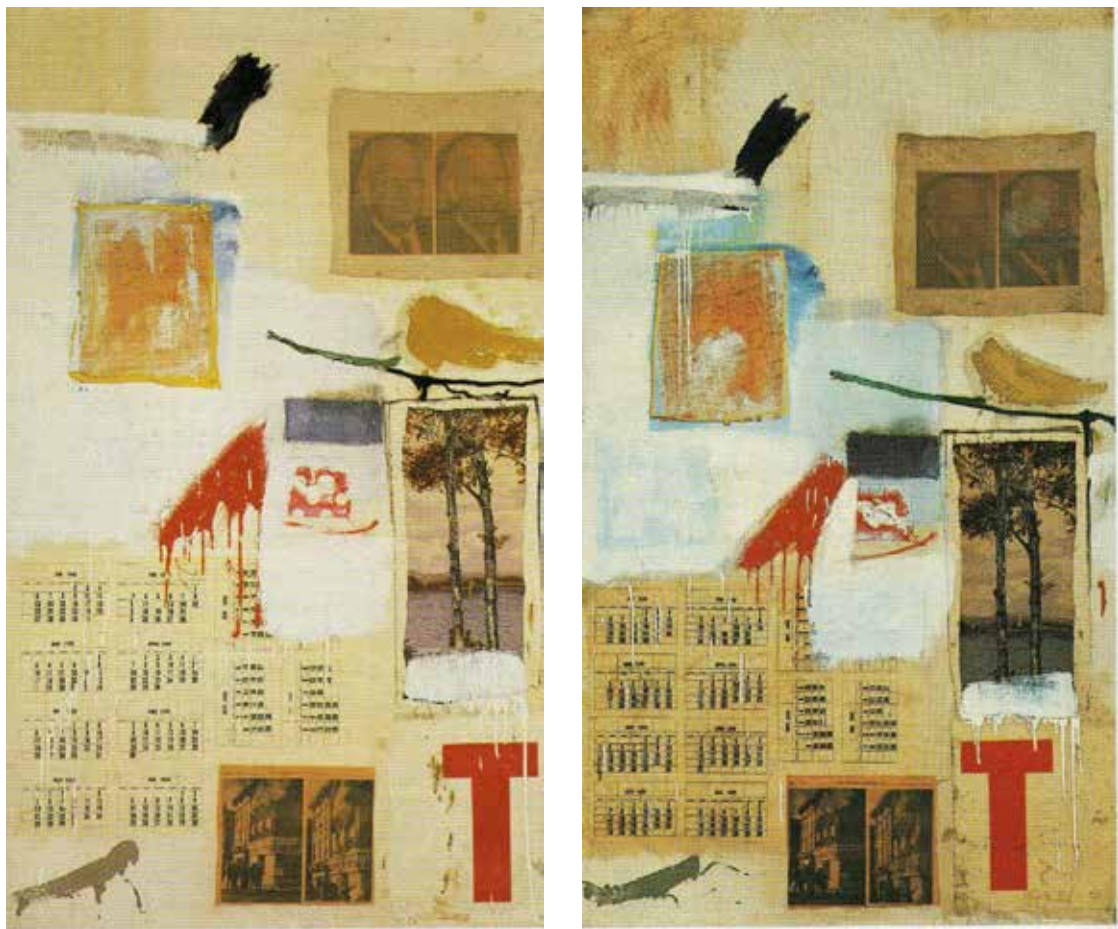
Two buildings in Kogakuin University campus, west Tokyo, 140 meters in between. The case shows a dialogue across the distance through the mediums of programs, activities, tectonics and materiality.



*Archery Hall*

*Boxing Hall*





*Artistic case: Factum I and Factum II by Robert Rauschenberg*

In 1957 Robert Rauschenberg made Factum I, the first member of a duo that includes Factum II, which was also painted that same year. These days, however, the two live apart: Factum I is now in the collection of the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles; Factum II lives in New York, at the Museum of Modern Art.

Though the two no doubt belong together, there may be something appropriate about their geographical separation. Factum I and Factum II are like biological twins: imperfect repetitions of one another that now, in their new found distance, would seem to fold West Coast onto East (or vice versa).



# Working Schedule

## January

- Common meeting and start of the diploma process
- Social science reading
- Writing of social science essay and delivery
- Presentation of social science essay

## February

- Micro scale and distance - installation project
  - design development
  - 1:1 construction
  - documentation

## March

- (Potential) meso scale and distance - shelters
  - sites select and observation
  - designing process
  - 1:1 experiments

## April

- Macro scale and distance - shelters
  - sites select and observation
  - designing process
  - 1:1 experiments

## May

- Final development and supplement on every stage

## June

- Final documentation and exhibition setup

## February Project - 1:1 Installation



In February I will be involved in the design developing process and responsible for the construction of an art project initiated by artist Jingyi Wang. It's a mobile installation which consists of two units, and can hold one individual in each. In the installation, visual connection is cut off to provide privacy and security, soft interior materials and introducing of natural light contribute to an intimate environment. In such space, the artist will have casual talks with passers-by one on one, to gain their opinions, knowledge and perspectives towards this world.

With this project, topics like perception without visual connection, intimacy and security, bond between individuals will be discussed. And this will be the starting point of following stages.

## Anthropology essay

This is the anthropology essay from the beginning of the semester, which shows the interest in the topic of “Glocalization”, this also inspired the later project.

# Vision, Illusion and Silhouettes

An Observation on Glocalization Process through Architectural Examples

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21.01.2021

Social science essay  
Bergen School of Architecture

## **Content**

*The Illusion and Disillusion of Globalization*

*Variations of Globalization – through Cases in Architecture*

*Spontaneous Globalization – Barns in Different Cultures*

*Glocalization – an Intertwined Phenomenon from Globalization and Localization*

*Consistency against Diversity?*

*Conclusion*

*Sources and References*

## **Abstract**

*Globalization and localization are always two ever-lasting, ever-changing and ever-intertwined processes of global society, and this intertwined status leads to a terminology named Glocalization, meaning the simultaneity - the co-presence - of both universalizing and particularizing tendencies. And from this concept, there are some interesting examples in every aspect and field. Here this essay will showcase some of them in the architectural aspects, trying to discover potential possibilities and focal points for the following project which addresses cultural variety, context differences and distance.*

## ***The Illusion and Disillusion of Globalization***

Globalization, as a world-wide process involving interaction and integration among people, companies, governments and nations, doesn't have a specific time of origin which is commonly recognized. As a terminology, it first appeared in the early 20th century, developed its current meaning around the second half of the 20th century, and came into popular use in the 1990s (James, Paul; Steger, Manfred B. 2014). But as a process in our society, it can even be traced back to the third millennium BC (Frank, Andre Gunder. 1998). In modern context, undoubtedly, it underwent an explosive growth in 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries, due to the massive development of transportation and communication, with the gradual removal of international trade barriers, the global market had brought great potential and benefit to the society, the "global village" never seemed so promising. And within the very recent decade, the rise of internet and technology enterprises constructed a world that has never been so interconnected with smart devices and social media.

However, with the most globalized social environment we are also experiencing the most severe counteractions, such as global environment change, over-fishing, over-hunting and over-cultivation, cultural imperialism, reduction of cultural diversity, polarization between rich and poor, labor exploitation and spread of terrorism. And when contextualized in the economical crisis like the Great Recession of economies between 2007-2009, or public health emergency like Covid-19 pandemic, the global village is often extremely vulnerable. Pandemic, conflicts between countries, politics point of views, social medias and developing the nationalism across the world are deconstructing all the positive visions of globalization.

The disillusion of globalization and tendency of societies being more isolated don't mean the process is to be reversed back to the stone age, but it certainly won't be the same as before, instead, under the new norms, more transitions will occur in this process, just like those that had happened before in all the aspects of culture and economics.

## ***Variations of Globalization – through Cases in Architecture***

The variations and diversity of globalizing process can be observed in various aspects through different phases of the history and different fields of disciplines, and here I would like to discuss about some examples in the field of architecture as slices of the process of globalization, to showcase various intentions and strategies. They don't follow strict chronological order, nor do they follow a logic of program, instead they are more like silhouettes of different aspects of

architecture's involvement in globalization.

### ***Spontaneous Globalization – Barns in Different Cultures***

When humans were still living a nomadic life, they would only stay in a certain area for a certain amount of time, and after they had consumed all the grains and cereals the area could offer, they would relocate to another domain for new food. After they gained advanced knowledge of cultivation and agriculture, and started to settle down in specific domains, in addition to dwellings, they needed ways to store the grains and supply themselves in colder seasons to come. And that's when the structure called barn emerged.

Through different historical periods and cultures, people constructed different types of barns with various building technics, but they sometimes share great similarities in appearances and tectonics. Here are some examples from different cultures:



*Left: Barn of Sami culture, Norway (Skansen Open-air Museum, Stockholm)*



*Right: Stone model of a barn from Han dynasty (National Museum of China, Beijing)*

By observing the pictures above, we can try to generalize the common features these barns share, like they are all lifted from the ground by pillars or foundations.

They are all overall enclosed, but with several small openings. And they all have pitched roofs. They are almost like the products from globalization, but totally spontaneous and with no advanced planning.

The reasons behind these similarities are not difficult to speculate. First, grains, which are the seeds of crops, will germinate under a certain level of humidity and temperature, and then become inedible. To avoid temperature from the sunlight, the barns are made enclosed, to keep the grains dry, small opening are cut to offer good ventilation, and being lifted up from the ground insulates the moisture of the earth. By the movement of lifting, people also made the barns safe from animals and insects. And unless in extremely dry climate, the barns usually have



pitched roof for drainage.



*Left: Stone barns in Galicia, Spain*

*Right: Khmu barns in northern Laos*

In this case, there was no recognized rule in different cultures that guide people to construct a barn, all the factors led to this globalization-like situation were only the nature of agriculture, and the nature of human life.

### ***Glocalization – an Intertwined Phenomenon from Globalization and Localization***

The concept of *glocalization* comes from the Japanese word *dochakuka*, which means global localization. It had referred to the adaptation of farming techniques to local conditions (Khondker, 2004). And the word "glocalization" itself first appeared in a late 1980s publication of the Harvard Business Review (Sharma, 2009). And to make the term enter the use in the English-speaking world, at a 1997 conference on "Globalization and Indigenous Culture", sociologist Roland Robertson stated that glocalization "means the simultaneity - the co-presence - of both universalizing and particularizing tendencies.

Before examples in the field of architecture, an example in tourism from the social-anthropological research by Noel B. Salazar could help to elaborate the concept of glocalization.

The research from Noel was undertaken during the summer of 2003 in and around the city of Yogyakarta, on the Indonesian island of Java. There he lived in a tourist hotel called "Traveler's Bar" and observed how the guides, as fashionable people in globalized society, perform the skills of guiding, to offer the tourists a trip of "authentic local culture". In his report he summarizes:

*“They fully participate in global popular culture and use new technologies in their private lives. While guiding, however, they skillfully represent the glocalized life around them as a distinctive “local”, adapted to the tastes of different groups of international tourists.”*

And some facts and details from his report:

- The Traveler’s Bar is run by a European owner
- Almost none of the guides are native from the village, they were chosen more because of their experience in tourism industry, their foreign language proficiency, self-confidence, and sense of initiative.
- All the guides are very much up-to-date with trends in global popular culture and technology, and even keep contact with their foreign friends with phones regularly.
- While narrating, they focus on aspects particularly different from the tourists’ own culture and traditions. And they are able to do this because they are familiar with the culture of their tourists.
- The language of contact between guides and tourists (an Indonesian form of international English) is one of the clearest glocal markers of the interaction. In some cases, guides will downplay their language proficiency a little, especially when they notice that people have problems speaking and/or understanding English.
- They might take their cell phones with them while guiding, but will use them mostly in unguarded moments, when the tourists are engaged in activities which do not require the guide’s attention.
- During the tours some of the guides wear a traditional conic straw hat which is also worn by many of the villagers working in the fields (attire guides would never wear when they are not working). By doing this, the guides subtly portray themselves as more local than they really are.

Such examples show how crucial it is to offer customized services based on not only the “authentic local culture”, but also on the culture of where the tourists come from. After all, even when experiencing exoticism, people still tend to find amenities from their own culture, just like most of Norwegian seasonal migrants live in two communities on the Spanish Costa Blanca that still choose the most Norwegian life style (Bente Haug, Graham M.S. Dann, Mehmet Mehmetoglu, 2006).

Similar strategies are often deployed the multinational corporations expand their business in other countries and cultures, a prominent example would be the effort on localization from fast food brands, to root in the local culture, it's far from enough to just implement their original menus with basic meals, they always develop new dishes based on the local food culture, for example McDonald's rice dishes in Asian markets. In addition, customizing their architectural and interior design has also been proved as an efficient marketing strategy.



*Starbucks, Nanjing, China*

Although this kind of strategies usually only produce superficial combinations of cultural icons and elements, but the motivation is always to make customers feel valued, and as aforementioned before, people always seek amenities from their own culture, even they claim that they want total exotic experience.

### ***Consistency against Diversity?***

It has been only 15 years since its unveiling, but the Apple flagship store under the glass cube at the base GM building on 5<sup>th</sup> avenue, Now York is already one of the best-known and most successful retail sites in the world. Not because of the selling space itself, but the iconic 10-meter tall glass cube as entrance. It was originally designed and built and fabricated at the limits of structural glass

technology at the time – 106 panels and 250 primary fittings, in 2006. 5 years later, the numbers were reduced to 15 panels and 40 fittings. And in 2019, the store even took another step forward, after extension, now it has almost double the retailing space than original.



*Comparison: Apple cube 2006 and 2011*

Unlike some other international corporations, Apple didn't seem interested in taking localization strategies, either products wise, or architectural language. Since the Apple cube in New York, Apple has been dedicated in establishing its unique aesthetics, applying the consistent architectural languages to all the major retailing centers all over the world: gigantic glass panels for facade, white and bright interior, same types of furniture. Some including me may argue that it's becoming repetitive and tedious, but the undeniable fact is, it's always iconic and recognizable.



*Apple's retailing centers across the world*

Unlike some other brands, especially those fast food brands, Apple obviously took another strategy, which is stressing its corporate icons and design languages instead of ingratiating itself with costumers. It exactly fits Steve Jobs' philosophy of "People don't know what they want until you show it to them".

As the debatable strategy Apple takes, within the architecture world, there also prevails the phenomenon where star-architects prioritize their personal trademarks – usually iconic architectural forms and materials – over the local contexts, no matter no much consider they claim they take, the results always appear tremendously similar. But meanwhile, these superficial elements are exactly what draw the appreciation of the clients all over the world, and the reasons why they hire them.

## ***Conclusion***

Globalization and localization, or as we would say today, glocalization, is an ever-changing and ever-lasting process, there are great amount of examples and

slices in every aspect, every field to demonstrate every point of view, every pro and con in it. Again, the examples given here are not trying to conclude anything, but rather just trying to showcase some silhouettes in this process, to show potential possibilities and focal points for the following architectural project which addresses cultural variety, context differences and distance.

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