

Paper submitted by:  
Asli Telli Aydemir, MA

Affiliation:  
Istanbul Bilgi University  
Fac. Of Communication  
Media & Communication Systems Prog.  
Istanbul / Turkey  
Teaching Assistant

European Graduate School, Saas-Fee / Switzerland  
Media & Comm. Studies PhD Prog. (A.B.D.)

Phone: +90 212 311 65 03  
Fax: +90 212 216 84 45  
e.mail: [atelli@bilgi.edu.tr](mailto:atelli@bilgi.edu.tr)

## Digital cities – A new platform to overcome the urban digital divide or to live by it?

The most basic discontinuity between cityspace and cyberspace exists because cityspace is bound up with the principle of least action, with energetics, with friction, gravity, occlusion and mechanical contact. Cyberspace and what happens there is all but free of these constraints. Of particular interest to me, however, is this fact: because each space can—indeed must—be experienced at some level spatiotemporally, *cyberspace, like cityspace, can be inhabited, explored, and designed*. Indeed, I am going to argue that community, economy, art, design, commerce, recreation, and other urban amenities are possible in both worlds, in the real and the virtual, in cityspace *and* in cyberspace. (Benedikt, 1993)

Despite the hype, the cultural lives of the majority of the world's urban populations are, and will continue to be, lived out in the slow-world, rather than the fast-world. This is not to say, however, that these lives will not be profoundly touched by cultures produced in the centres of the fast-world.

For Virilio, speed is the hope of the west and the western inhabitants will continue to be *super-vif* - super quick and alive at the same time. The subversions and transformations of fast-world cultures in the music, cinema, art, literature and everyday lives of the slow-world suggest the futures of cities and their cultures are replete with possibilities and challenges. The overwhelming possibility of a Third World citizen chit-chatting with a First World inhabitant in metaphorical space/time might signal unexpected commonalities.

Here is the apocalyptic picture: By 2025, 60 per cent of the world's population, which is increasing by 90 million per year, will be living in cities (Decker, 2000: 248). There are now 57 cities with populations of over 5 million, of which 44 are in the developing world. These cities concentrate environmental hazards in acute form generating the majority of greenhouse gases, today's urban centres consuming three-quarters of the world's energy and creating three quarters of the world's pollution. Cars now emit more pollution than industrial production. The climatic changes caused by emissions from the very instruments of modernism – environmentally-controlled buildings and motor cars – will cause massive life-threatening floods and droughts. The irony thus revealed is of cities that, on the one hand, are the cradle of our civilisation within which cultural patterns are determined, while, on the other, they threaten the physical welfare of the world's population. The view of the global village at the start of a new century reveals at least 600 million people now living in life-threatening urban environments with the divide between rich and poor continuing to widen. At worst, cities loom as ghettos of economic greed and ecological disaster and, at best, the promise of urban centres as sources of inspiration and beauty, places of social, cultural and intellectual development and joy, now appears precarious. Virilio (1995) has labelled this impact towards the end of the 20th century as 'total mobilization and motorization'. One probably has to add in a 21st century concept to this label: < **C[h]yb[p]ernation**>

This concept embarks upon a few separate phenomena. The fact that the first part of the word is an altered and regenerated version of the word '**c[h]yb[p]er**' and at the same time refers to cyberrealities is the hallmark of the argument. 'Nation' refers to the collective will of citizens comprising a certain territory and recalls the geographical boundaries of a multiplicity of cities at the same time. The city is a focus or node of social transportation and

communication, which mediates the relationship between other societies, communities, nations and/or other social groups. Taken as a whole, *c[h]yb[p]ernation* also has a literal meaning: *Becoming hyper-* free and mobile on the fourth living dimension created by the ICT. It is as a result of this *c[h]yb[p]ernation* that excess speed of tele-technologies appear. At that instance, Virilio (2002:10) asks: “Far more threatened by the 'excess speed' of tele-technologies than by the excess wealth of an apparently triumphant capitalism, will democracy finally prevail as some imagine, or on the contrary, is it simply going to disappear?”

As populations have increased rapidly in megacities of the world after 1990s, default daily relations started to reposition into computer screens. Individual demands have diversified with the time-squeeze arising from hectic schedules. This has not only had an impact in capitalist structures of the dominant system, but also created an urge for alternative cyber-platforms. These platforms have noticeable characteristics. They vary from personal announcements for hire and sale, billboards for collective action regarding neighborhood infrastructure, computer games for group-playing, friendly talk & invitations to global remarks.

One distinct example for such cyber-platforms is ‘*De Digitale Stadt*’ (*The Digital City of Amsterdam*) which has been constructed in 1995 with efforts of cyber-aware locals with diverse interests. This example along with its current travelling replicas have faced similar phases of evolution whereby e-marketing seems to be the only remaining active topic. Exceptions to the rule do exist, however, such as successful local actions and civil society related endeavors. According to current political experts and advocates of sociology, it is clear as day that decentralization provides the essential cure for disadvantaged communities of the slow-world. However, citizen involvement should also accompany practices of elected officials to create sustainable futures in cities of the developing world.

### What is a Digital City?

Cities of the past were built along railroads, waterways and interstate highways. Cities of the future will be built along information highways- broadband systems of communications connected to every home, office, school, library and healthcare facility in the region, and through the world wide web to millions of other institutions across the globe. (Eger, John M, <http://www.smartcommunities.org/links.htm> accessed: 31/10/2003)

A digital city means a totally connected city. People, organizations, and businesses are connected with each other and the city is connected with the outside world. It means that the communications will be easy and fast and information, goods and services will be readily available via your TV, PC or your mobile phone. In broad terms, the digital city is characterized by networks and joined-up services. Time and space are no longer important. The world is smaller ([http://www.hullcc.gov.uk/digitalcity/what\\_is\\_a\\_digital\\_city.php](http://www.hullcc.gov.uk/digitalcity/what_is_a_digital_city.php); accessed on 30/10/2003) The Hull City Council creates the following dimensions for their citizens.

What could a Digital City mean for her inhabitants?

- Every household or business having access to internet and e-mail.
- Shopping from your interactive TV
- Book hospital appointments
- Check your bus shedule via your mobile phone

- Report any problems to the council via the call center or internet
- When moving, notify only one place, the rest comes by itself
- Reserve a library book
- Pay a number of services via mobile phone

Even though most of the facilities enlisted above already exist in Turkey per se, they have not become a part of everyday lives. 'Surfing the net for efficient means' is a statement that has validity for a low percentage of technologically adept people who generally must sustain certain speed in their private as well as professional lives as of today. However, as characteristics of the global village become more homogenous, digitization will, in short term, be a compulsory aspect of our lives.

The following are various types of recent digital city projects and their working mechanisms.

According to planning / policy models, the digital city include the following types:

- Smart cities
- Intelligent cities and regions
- Virtual innovation islands: virtual districts, technology poles, regional innovation systems
- Telematics and online innovation / knowledge management : *The Digital California Project* may be an example.

### **Smart Communities**

<http://www.smartcommunities.org/>

The World Foundation for Smart Communities is a nonprofit educational organization founded to promote the concept and facilitate the implementation of "smart communities" -- communities using information technology as a catalyst for transforming life and work to meet the challenge of the new millennium.

Singapore, Malaysia, Canada, Hong Kong, Spain, Germany, Ireland, Netherlands and Saudi Arabia are linked sites to smart communities.

**Eurocities.org-** motto: inclusive city, prosperous city, sustainable city.

EUROCITIES is concerned about the ongoing liberalisation of the European market for services, which threatens to undermine the rights and responsibilities of local governments. Liberalisation is taking place on an ad-hoc basis in a context of confusion and legal uncertainty, without an overall strategy and clear political vision of how the provision of essential services can be guaranteed for the future. Cities and regions have a central role to play in ensuring that everyone in Europe has access to high quality services.

Demos (Eurocities governance portal) partners: Aberdeen, Antwerp, Chios, Edinburgh, Krakow, Turku, Solingen, Utrecht- community level decision making structures & initiatives are being set up by the project. Aim is to increase citizen participation in local government through innovative projects and action research in six European cities.

### **PEGASUS project-**

It stands for 'Planning, environment, governance and sustainability'. This project has come to view after Sustainable development policies were undersigned by most European states. It may be regarded as a counter uniting of forces against US as Bush government has

refused to proceed with the Kyoto Summit on global warming ever since they became the leading party.

#### **PLUS –**

It stands for 'Participation, Leadership and Urban sustainability'. A cross national research project supported by the EC under 5th framework programme, City of Tomorrow and cultural heritage, it involves 9 universities and 18 cities from across Europe, New Zealand, *Eurocities* and *Quartiers en crise*. The Cities Research center of the University of West of England, Bristol, coordinates the project.

#### **The Digital City of Amsterdam (DDS)- <http://www.dds.nl>**

DDS of Amsterdam is one of the first and most extensive of its type. The community dialogue, however, after its establishment in 1995, lasts for only a few years. Platforms for online shopping, e-commerce, gay and lesbian debate prevail. More in-depth analysis on DDS to be included in the forthcoming parts of the paper.

#### **The Digital California Project: <http://www.cenic.org/DCP.html>**

This project is a state-funded effort to build the necessary network infrastructure required to enable California's schools to take advantage of tomorrow's advances in network technology. In essence, we are developing an advanced-services network to serve the entire K-20 education and research community.

#### **Newcastle as a distinct city**

Newcastle will have the following characteristics as complementary service to newcastle.gov.uk. ([http://www.newcastle.gov.uk/compnews.nsf/lpt/kp\\_keyproject1](http://www.newcastle.gov.uk/compnews.nsf/lpt/kp_keyproject1); accessed on 30/10/2003) to be more competitive, cohesive and cosmopolitan.

- Virtual labor market- regional access to jobs and employment opportunities
- Geographic Information Service- an electronic directory of information on the region
- Business Market Place- Supply chain integration with buyers and suppliers
- Business Cluster Forums- Chance for procurement and purchasing within a cluster of similar businesses

Leadership is also an important asset in the field of community networking within the limits of the city. Many organizations have been founded to back-up digital cities in North America. Center for Creative Leadership (<http://www.ccl.org>) set up in North Carolina is a prominent example.

The City of the Future report, published by the Smart Communities recently, embark upon the need for telecommunications update mechanism in cities, independent of the federal or state governments. San Diego, a well developing tele-city, has been presented as a case example for this need. Task forces are also very effective around issues such as privacy, security, intellectual property, health care and education.

In a project funded by ESRC Research Programme 'Virtual Society' of UK (Public Participation in Local Decision Making: evaluating the potential of Virtual Decision Making Environments, principal investigator: Dr. Steve Carver / Un. Of Leeds carried out through 1 October 1997 to 30 September 1999, public participation in local decision making was measured after offering cyberplatforms for environmental issues such as sewage treatment. Community involvement and stakeholder dialogue was much more extensive via Internet.

## Way, Way off Amsterdam – attempts for a telepolis

Initiated in 1994, the virtual city project of Amsterdam may be recognized as the initiator for dematerialization of the city and her transfer to the virtual platform by interlinked projects based on community networking and cyber-involvement. An exemplary instance of a practical synthesis of these developments is provided by the six and half years history of the electronic community network known as the *Digital City of Amsterdam (DDS)*. This project, launched in high-spirited and adventurous atmosphere in January 1994 has been since going through a remarkable number of changes and adaptations to ever new conditions and circumstances. It evolved from an amateur, low-tech, non-budget grassroots initiative into a fully professionalized, technology and business driven organisation. And this culminated recently in its transformation from a non-profit foundation into a private sector ICT venture. In December 1999, the astonished 'inhabitants' learned that the directorate of the DDS had opted for a corporate framework, and that community-building and support were no longer a paramount objective.

Anyhow, the changes in activities of and expectation patterns about the DDS over the past six years had probably played a larger role in its decline as a genuine community network than the - often purely reactive - decisions of its management. In its early days (around 1994-95) the DDS was almost the only avenue to Internet access available to the general public in Amsterdam, and a model followed by a few initiatives elsewhere, usually with far less success. But within a few years, the explosive spread of Internet connectivity had robbed it of this fundamental function. Free e-mail, webspace and chat facilities are now available everywhere. Scores of new commercial providers have popped up all over the place, offering the same services, and often more and better ones, than the DDS is able to provide. They advertise massively, and attract a customers pool far removed from the idealistic concerns that used to inform the original Digital City . This has resulted in a substantial quantitative, but more importantly, qualitative erosion of the DDS' user base the last year and half -and the process is accelerating. Even if the absolute number of accounts has risen to reach an all time high mark of 160.000 in early 2000, an analysis of the use patterns show that these can no longer be considered conducive to community building or even to socio-politically relevant information exchange - homepage-building and upkeep, for instance, no longer attract much interest.

As a platform for discussion of local issues, the DDS has receded in importance, despite genuine efforts to trigger debates around important political events. Because of this, the DDS has basically been turned into a facilitation structure providing the usual ICT services to its 'clients', most of which see it as a convenient funnel for one-to-many, Dutch language interchange, and care little for the 'community' as a whole. The decline in the quality and the social usefulness as a whole, have been unmistakable. Keeping the Dutch language as the principal medium of transaction can indeed be said to be the sole remaining distinguishing feature of the DDS as a community network. The business equivalent of the Virtual Platform has meanwhile also come into existence under the acronym, ANMA the Amsterdam New Media Association, modeled after the New York original. (Lovink & Riemens, 2000)

Following Amsterdam, Rotterdam, in Amsterdam's footsteps, also set up an interactive local area network. Utrecht Province opened its digital doorways, with Groningen, The Hague and Eindhoven following suit shortly. In an interview Marleen Stikker (one of the digital city founders) gave in a daily paper, the central issue with DDS is stated as the fulfillment of

human needs. She goes on: "Everybody is equal on the net. People who never left their houses because they were afraid of crowds now regularly gather on bulletin-boards."

The periodic survey results suggest that the use of the DDS is Internet related and mainly recreational. This is also reflected in the distribution of information providers in the DDS and the distribution of the discussion groups. Although the DDS started as an activity aiming to improve local democracy, it is not very strong in political issues and civic activities. The DDS does not play a main role in the local political debates, and the political community is not very active in cyberspace. 'Traditional' communication media are still far more important here. It should be noted that civic organizations are only starting to use the DDS (and the Internet in general), and therefore their activities on the Web are still in their infancy.

One wonders whether a virtual public space and cybercommunities are emerging in addition to 'real' space and local communities. The answer is 'yes and no'. Yes since an increasing number of regular contact as well as active communities exist. No, since traditional media are still the decisive factor in political activism.

#### Which supercedes: Time or space?

Critics such as Mike Davis rightly attack the exclusions of electronic spaces. Cyberspace is heavily dominated by elite groups, yet often presented as if open to all; its privatized spaces presented as if they are public. Concerns about the commodification of space are justified, as cyberspace is increasingly home to commercial networks, commercial sites and commercial transactions. Simultaneously, cybercritics point to the decline of place-based relations, as factor in urban decay, linking these to the rise of electronic communications. Yet to call this critique the whole story would be like looking at cities only in terms of their shopping malls, or only looking only at the malls' trade literature and never examining how people actually behave there. These visions of cyberspace have not accounted for the increasing number of non-profit and grassroots organizations meeting online and in person to reinvigorate physical space (Light in Crang et al 1999: 126). The cost of these projects should also be viewed closely and expensive ones should be resisted. City networks should be built on grassroots level for developing countries to prevent exclusionary settings (Gillespie in Graham, 2001a: 413). The new urbanism movement does not address crises of difference and inequality since idealized urban forms of the past do not lead to correct institutional, social and cultural results.

To draw a line between these lines of thought, one may refer to more moderate interpretations. Online relationships may be strong and may continue offline (Rheingold 1993, Turkle 1995). Besides, these relationships need not always be action-based, but may also provide mechanisms for exchange of ideas. The tele-political enslavement introduced by Virilio may once again be overcome by means of tele-technologies. Previous chapters have been devoted to community networks and their working structures. According to Harvey, the notion of community should not be retained as particularity or difference. We have to transcend those particularities and look for a negotiation of universalities through which to talk about how the future of the cities should be.

Boyer argues about the disappearance of cities as symbolically bombed into nothingness; crime scenes and crash events increase in number to represent nothingness in the city. Image and reality are symbiotic in his claims. The form of the matrix brings to the city a

systemic order that hides its heterogeneous nature and the disjunctive positions we hold within it. Olalquiaga claims that, confronted with their own technological images, the city and the body become ruins. Paradoxically, while the analogy allows for the discussion of the disappearance of the city from our postmodern social and cultural agendas, the very immateriality of this electronic matrix and the world of virtual reality that it projects defies the grounding of that analogy. And it is exactly this crossroads that construct the open space created within cyber-cities.

The media-sphere is the communication and transportation environment of messages and people, which is composed of various media. Therefore, a city is a multimedia system – the city itself and the wider sphere surrounding it are organized as media-sphere, which consists of many kinds of media in a strong sense. With this current system in mind, the following question comes to mind: Will we really be able to characterize cities of the 21st century as systems of interlinked, interacting, silicon- and software saturated smart, attentive and responsive places (Mitchell, 2000: 68)? If so, how will our encounter be with those cities?

If one faces an encounter within the local-global distinction, critics like Aurigi and Graham (2001: 501) point out the danger within the virtual urbanism movement. Their idea twirls around the global notion that cities are merely products for international consumption is being emphasized at the expense of the “local idea” that cities are places of representation, politics, interaction and experience. This global notion is part of a very old tension and the virtual city may be taken to be a high-tech and technologically modern embodiment of it. However, the same argument may also be turned around for favor of the high technology being used to create a more current and lasting definition for the local interstices of the global city. The concept of “world citizen” is easily located within the mechanism of virtual cities.

Once again, we go back to our last statement in the introduction of this paper. Time to take a long sigh of relief for there is still [accidental] hope! As of today, the world citizen is able to make space, providing a link between metaphorical space and politics in the fourth, yet to be defined, public sphere of the 21st century.

### Fast world vs. Slow world

Among the affluent within the fast world, reterritorialization results from colonizing and invading spaces that can be given both social meaning and spatial identity (Knox in Johnston et al., 2002). Perhaps the most dramatic examples of reterritorialization are those derived from the lived experience of low-income transnational migrants, exiles and refugees. Within world cities, such groups are able to establish new networks and new cultural practices that define new spaces for daily life. In addition to the transformation and adaptation of old neighborhoods and obsolete socio-cultural spaces within consolidating ethnic enclaves, this involves the emergence of otherwise marginalized voices and alternate representations. These voices and representations can be carried over into the host society and carried back into the homeland. The former, not only contributes to the cosmopolitanism of world cities, but also has the potential (realized only in a few world cities- London, NY, San Francisco, Los Angeles and Sydney) to foster distinctive and innovative multicultural spaces- the latest phase in the sociospatial dialectic of global metropolitanism (Knox, *ibid*).

Harvey insists that it is the intensity of experience of time-space compression that distinguishes the conditions of postmodernity – all local economies have been incorporated into a global pattern of commodity exchange, and local systems of meanings subsumed within

global information networks, with the result that multiple and compound geographies tend to be erased (Dear, 2000). The erasure of these geographies serves as a signal for living spaces with extreme conditions.

Most obviously, online meeting places insulate you from physical risk. You can not be beaten up by those who take violent exception to your views. There are no muggers, no cops with billy clubs. This sometimes creates the ground that would not occur otherwise; in Santa Monica, California, for example, the PEN civic network – which is accessible both from private homes and offices and from kiosks in public places- has provided a congenial, nonthreatening place for the homeless population and their more fortunate fellow citizens to open up a dialogue (Mitchell 2000:87). This also marks a step forward in terms of slow world-fast world cooperation in a virtual platform of seeming commonality.

Recent Perspectives from Turkey

Considering the fact that the ‘digital city’ concept is identical to e-government (e-gov.) facilities (*e-devlet in Turkish*) in Turkey as of today, the following data are worth the attention.

<u>Countries w/ less usage of e-gov. facilities</u>		<u>Countries w/ more usage of e-gov. facilities</u>
Slovakia (14%)	Czech rep. (18%)	Sweden (57%)
<b>Turkey (13%)</b>	Italy (20%)	Norway (56%)
England (13%)	Germany (24%)	Singapore (53%)
Malaysia (12%)	France (25%)	Denmark (53%)
Lithuania (8%)	India (31%)	Faroe Islands (52%)
Latvia (8%)	Estonia (31%)	<b>U.S.A (43%)</b>
Poland(4%)		
Hungary (3%)		

*\*taken from turk.internet.com (findings of 2002). Turkey ranks 23rd in 31 countries. The research, including the findings above has been held in July-September 2002 in 31 countries by Taylor Nelson Sofres Siar. 28,952 people were interviewed by phone or face-to-face.*

According to statistics enlisted above, USA is among the top users of e-government facilities. Sweden and a few other countries are worthy of attention with their over 50% usage. Turkey, however, is in the less usage list, but ranking equal with England to one’s surprise. The promising side of these data is that Turkey seems to make incredible progress within very short time and is awaiting fast shifts towards moderate users. Latvia, Poland and Hungary are before Turkey in the waiting line for EU accession. However, the digitalization process in terms of their governmental facilities are much slower. Same research has shown that in Turkey, acquiring information from public sites has increased to 12% in 2002 while 2001 findings were 2%.

Most recent profile is as such: Turkey, trying to sharpen her adaptation criteria to EU, is following a more determinate pace of e-government. EU countries are increasingly making up for digital divides between them and the US. Experts and government officials are opening debates on e-Turkey now.

E-governing technologies (*e-devlet*) have been activated quite recently in Turkey; the cooperative role of so-called civic institutions stated below have and will continue to be

significant since certain measures are stated in the EU accession portfolio. Public trust polls show continuous decline when directed to political leaders; reminiscent of the series of coup d'état, trust have increased for military figures in a period of economic crisis and clash of civilizations involving geographical neighbors. The political distrust seems to have forced conscious populations to digitally unite and treat issues in various discussion platforms. The 1999 earthquake has also been the driving force and condition creator for realizing political redundancies. As of today, EU accession is an important catalyst and substance for sustaining cyber forces. Following are the civic initiatives undertaken recently and updated regularly:

- <http://www.turkiye.gov.tr>

Public portal initiated by the officials headed by the Prime Minister, it, not only aims to build a bridge between public agencies and citizens, but also to ease the communication on citizen-private sector and citizen-public sector basis. The public databases are updated regularly in the interest of Turkish citizens.

- [http://www.tbd.org.tr/e\\_turkiye](http://www.tbd.org.tr/e_turkiye)

Working groups headed by public & state agencies towards a greater e-turkey project. The themes covered include e-commerce, security, business, education and human resources, environment and health, legal issues, standardization and infrastructure. Informatics Association of Turkey is responsible for the follow-up and coordination of the series of projects held by the associated bodies.

- [www.stksempozyumu.org](http://www.stksempozyumu.org)

Well established network of NGOs in Turkey cooperating within a chain of symposia since 1994. Theme of symposia revolve around Turkish adaptation process towards EU, involvement of youth in civic initiatives, ethics, voluntary activities and localization / regionalization.

- [www.istanbulmuzesi.org](http://www.istanbulmuzesi.org)

Linked to the efforts of the Turkish History Foundation, this cyber as well as real-time museum project aims to form expertise on researching & disseminating the societal history. The overall research includes defining related documents as well as archiving and exhibiting them. The real-time museum is in Darphane where a special section hosts reflections of the past based on the industrial and economic structure of the city ([www.tarihvakfi.org.tr](http://www.tarihvakfi.org.tr)).

- [www.turksiviltoplum.org](http://www.turksiviltoplum.org)

This organization includes a support group that aims to improve civic initiatives by focusing on capacity development in Turkey. They have a subsistently updated database, issue oriented forums and regional training programs. Their website is a comprehensive one, also providing links to many related organizations and projects.

- *E-Yalova is a head-start towards digital cities.*

Yalova is a member of tele-cities. Under the motto *eCitizenship for All*, TeleCities has introduced the ambition to support an inclusive Information Society at city level. *eCitizenship for All* stands for the right of all citizens to have effective access to public services, to participate in local public decision-making processes affecting the quality of life and to equally share the benefits from Information Society, in a secure environment.

As a side note, this head-start by Yalova has not been publicly announced by the municipality or other governmental authorities. Whether there is any incentive being taken regarding this membership for *eLearning and Inclusion, eDemocracy and Community Building, eSecurity and Re-engineering of services* is a mystery. The new role of local governments is drafted in eEurope 2005 Action Plan of the European Commission.

Increasingly, the various urban experiments in developing electronic spaces are themselves being interlinked via the Internet. Special networks linking electronic communities and city-led World Wide Web experiments have recently emerged which provide an integrated interface between these initiatives on a global, real time basis. The issue at stake here, is the urban digital divide recognized and reflected in writings of Mike Crang in the University of Durham. His research supported by the Economic and Research Council of UK embarks upon how information technologies intersect with the time-spaces of the city for both relatively privileged and marginalized groups. His aim is to use such an approach to offer new insights into the effects of the 'digital divide' on the life chances of communities and neighbourhoods within urban Britain. While this dichotomy is not resolved in the minds of many established scholars, more practical minds like Cary Wintz of South Texas University pinpoints a quite significant phenomenon. The urban settlers in underprivileged communities also have curious consumption patterns. It is true that more than half the population around ages of 15-60 living in slums in urban regions of Turkey own cell phones. In only a few years, cell phones will accelerate in technological improvement and meet the facilities provided via several state and private web portals at the moment. Among these facilities are paying service bills, reserving books and online shopping.

Wireless communication, though a more recent phenomenon, will transform all paradigmatic logic about the 'wired city' concept, introduced by William Mitchell in early '90s. The space-time realm will be valid for communicators of all geographical spots. The term 'wireless' will be identical to 'urban' erasing all gaps and holes in information networks of a certain region. Above all, Turkle, Mitchell and Rheingold to name a few, are among many cyber-theoreticians who rely on the fact that networking via net increases face-to-face interactions among people of similar interests. This proposition becomes more valid now that wireless technologies enable swift communication from anywhere in and outside the city. William Mitchell describes the transformation of wireless technology in the hundred years since Marconi in his new book (Mitchell, 2003) --the scaling up of networks and the scaling down of the apparatus for transmission and reception. It is, he says, as if "Brobdingnag had been rebooted as Lilliput"; Marconi's massive mechanism of tower and kerosene engine has been replaced by a palm-size cellphone. If the operators of Marconi's invention can be seen as human appendages to an immobile machine, today's hand-held devices can be seen as extensions of the human body. This transformation has, in turn, changed our relationship with our surroundings and with each other. The cellphone calls from the collapsing World Trade Center towers and the hijacked jets on September 11 were testimony to the intensity of this new state of continuous electronic engagement.

The issues at hand in Turkey have developed over the years without any consideration. The expectation level of the young population is high in terms of what 21<sup>st</sup> century has in store for them. Self constitution and its relation to culture is, without a doubt, significant and the '*American way of doing things*' goes no further than a historical stereotype. Continuities and discontinuities exist in internet, but a technological culture needs to be developed. The implications of online communication for mediation of historically unequal relations between disadvantaged groups and social institutions have already been elaborated by experts (Eade & Mele, 1998) Self-fashioning refers to only white middle class having access, but can easily be transcended. The notion of actor in society which goes back to the '*joyful wisdom*' of Nietzsche & Reid is not a withholding factor since moderators are already questioned for their role in virtual communities.

New forms of electronically based democratic political organizations will emerge that are here today and gone tomorrow; for example, “cyberparties”, “citizens initiative networks”, “cyberpressure groups” and “virtual communities” of political transformation. These will transform representative government into a system much less responsive to traditionally organized pressure groups and more responsive to a broad base of its citizenry (Decker & Slaton in Decker, 2000:211). This impact is becoming apparent in Turkey recently- traditional pressure groups join academics, scholars and university students in cyber platforms to discuss issues and reach decision makers with well defined measures that are shaped by active participation of citizens representing diversity.

The State Planning Organization in Turkey also has recent and worthy efforts considering web-based cooperation between public sector, private sector and the civil society. A rich database on official documents as well as global issues concerning Turkey are also included in their site ([www.turkiye.gov.tr](http://www.turkiye.gov.tr), [www.bilgitoplumu.gov.tr](http://www.bilgitoplumu.gov.tr)). The Armenian Issue, the 1999 earthquake and terrorist attacks are prime examples. Another comprehensive project, tackled by the same organization as well as numerous ministries is the *e-transformation* project that aims for participatory citizenship through maintaining open and two-way public service. The revealing slogan of this project is ‘*E-citizenship for all!*’ Aspirations will only be met if citizens claim their rights in alternative hyper-environments which prove democratic by self-defined measures.

There is no doubt that Istanbul is a global city with her multiple stature as a center for international trade, politics, intellect, culture, history and mega-events. An interesting approach to the world city comes from Fuat Ercan (1996: 67) who claims the accelerating speed and volume of traffic can only be controlled, or rather attempted to be controlled in world cities. The emergence of control in those cities also brings to mind the possession of all traffic related vehicles, money and image which are also clustered in those geographies. Harvey adds in the entrepreneurial stitch to these cities; a perspective which develops a separate dimension of competition for becoming globalized. The interesting take from Ercan (1996:84) would be his prospects for the future of Istanbul. He, not only disagrees with economists who see Istanbul as a city with comprehensive potential for a world city, but also introduces the fragmentation/separation process of the city as it becomes internationalized. This separation within the internal dynamics of the city also has a significant impact on her spatial matrix and cultural positioning. One must carefully note the distinctions between a world city and a global city as well as the process of internationalization and globalization. World cities with their recent positions have the incentive for detecting and shaping material, finance and symbol trafficking whereas international cities only belong to that trafficking system.

On a city level, Istanbul could become the appropriate platform for a digital city since it is a highly populated cosmopolis with immense problems and potential for intellect. Several micro-projects such as “Virtual Istanbul Museum” ([www.istanbulmuzesi.org](http://www.istanbulmuzesi.org)) and “platform for life in Istanbul” ([www.istanbul.com](http://www.istanbul.com)) could be gathered around the same portal for creating a cyber-arena of diverse interests. We have seen from recent models that extended virtual communities do not last long. If all that energy of conscious Istanbulites could be focused on microcommunities with defined and specific interests, the futuro-Istanbul of 21st century real-time synergies could easily take her place in the family picture of mobility.

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