J. Macgregor Wise: Home: Territory and Identity

J. Macgregor Wise explores the idea of home and identity and that although the two are not the same they are inextricably linked and both a product of territorializing forces. Wise discusses the idea of a “milieu” or the environment of which a space occupies, arguing that one can change a milieu or environment through whistling, singing, etc. Wise feeds off an idea put forth by Deleuze and Guattari that as these milieus cross paths and intermingle they are communicating and thus are constantly allowing travel between an every changing environment. The concept of milieus then shift in an attempt to explore and understand space. Wise views space as something that can be marked and something comprised of continual motion composed of vectors, speeds (p.297). Space is not enclosed it is always multidimensional and open to other space according to Wise. Space then gives way to an understanding of territory, which is marked and begins to be defined by the connection that exists between milieus. Wise claims that unlike space territory can be defined and closed off.

Discussion then moves to the concept of Home, which is a type of territory defined and marked off by milieus, home functions different from other territories because it is lived in and there are very specific connections with identity that are associated and exist within and from the home (p.299). Wise touches on areas of culture and its position in the home, as something that is meaning making, complex aggregations of meanings and results in the development of the home, but not the final manifestation, the home is not individualistic, natural or a prior, a struggle exists between home and the home. Associations and identities of self and relation to home are dependent on the individual and their associate habits. Humans, as Wise puts it “are nothing but habits” (p.303), that there is no fixed self, only the habit of looking for one.” Habits, simply a repetition allows for an understanding of how we exist within the fabric of the rhythm of the world, a way in which we participate and change the rhythm, not just mimic it allows us to create, stimulate and interpret milieus differently and this allows for different readings and understandings of home and our identity within the home.

Questions:

1. Previous discussions and reading looked at the connection between networks and seemed to allude to the idea of global cultures being able to exist. How does global culture exist within the confines of Wises article? Does the culture change and create its own culture over time? Or can a global culture exist within the confines of a particular and existing culture?
2. To what degree should/can architecture control and influence individual milieus of situations? To be able to fully control milieus seems to be close to brainwashing and thus reductive of the integrity instilled within architectural fabric.