Chronotypography: Nostalgia and Modernity in South Delhi's Linguistic Landscape

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1 Introduction

The study of Linguistic Landscapes (LL) is an investigation of the multifaceted relationships between spaces and subjects: how subjects structure space through signs, how subjects themselves are ordered or affected by signs and how space and subject dynamics reflect, reproduce or refute various ideological configurations. Utilizing the perspective of *visceral landscapes*, this paper will explore the evocative potential of the Linguistic Landscape on viewing subjects by looking at the different semiotic strategies employed by signs to bring about affective engagement. To do so, we focus on particularized experiences of modernity and nostalgia referenced in the commercial signage of South Delhi, India to explore the ways in which specific configurations of time and space are used to produce the evocative. We engage the notion of *chronotopes*, conceptualized envelopes of time and space that enable the interpretation of semiotic arrangements or practices (Agha, 2007a; Bakhtin, 1981; Blommaert, 2015; Silverstein, 2005). In highlighting how chronotopes in South Delhi's LL serve as "invokable histories" (Blommaert, 2015: 110), summoning images and senses of times, spaces and people, we show how signs may attempt at the visceral as well as contribute to the further quantification or flattening of such experiences (Kockelman, 2006).

To illustrate the construction of chronotopes on commercial signs through text and other semiotic strategies (a *chronotypography*, of sorts) we draw attention to two chronotopes present in the LL of South Delhi, the Indo-Chic nostalgia chronotope and the global cosmopolitanism chronotope, and highlight the ways in which these upper and middle class focused conceptions of space, time and personhood are brought about semiotically as well as the ways in which they may be seen to interact. While Indo-Chic nostalgia turns toward an imagined rural past and global cosmopolitanism toward an abroad future, these chronotopes are seen to frequently intersect in dynamic dialogue, underscoring the complex ideological shifts undergone and underway in India since economic liberalization in the early 1990s. As modernity and nostalgia

are mined in the commercial LL for their potential ability to elicit visceral engagement from young upper and middle class passersby, the consequences of such positioning are also felt as the imagined India begins to erase the quotidian and the rich variety of experiences of memory and aspiration are flattened, homogenized and priced for consumption.

2 Linguistic Landscapes

The field of Linguistic Landscapes (LL) explores displayed semiotic discourses of public spaces to reflect on the myriad social processes they reflect and propagate (Ben-Rafael, Shohamy and Barni, 2010; Jaworski and Thurlow, 2010; Scollon and Scollon, 2003). Central to the study of Linguistic Landscapes is consideration of displays as contextualizing entities participating in an active ordering of space, indicative of shifting ideological configurations, contestations and confluence (Pennycook, 2010; Shohamy and Gorter, 2008; Stroud and Mpendukana, 2009).

Initial documentation and analysis of LL dynamics involved quantitative-based methods, counting the presence of various semiotic variables on signs to discuss LL components and their relationships (Cenoz and Gorter, 2006; Landry and Bourhis, 1997). While such methods have been critiqued for potential risk of overgeneralization in the assignment of quantifiable categories (Barni and Bagna, 2010; Blommaert and Maly, 2014), current scholarship has encouraged the development of both quantitative and qualitative approaches, both separately and in tandem, to explore the complexities of LL contexts (Amos, 2016; Barni and Bagna, 2015; Blackwood, 2015; Lyons and Rodriguez, 2015).

Approached quantitatively or qualitatively, the study of LLs aims to understand the relationship between the ordering of public space and different dimensions of public life, including, significantly, the impact on subjects moving through or interacting within such ordered spaces (Barni and Bagna, 2015; Malinowski, 2009; Waksman and Shohamy, 2016). Attention to the diverse actors and agencies involved in interpreting or animating Linguistic Landscapes has brought important considerations to the field regarding how such LL subjects can be accounted for, and how their engagement and the extent of that engagement can be theorized.

A central assumption of LL research is that the act of displaying a public sign is usually a purposeful one, and an advantage to researchers engaging in LL. Commercial public signs in

particular have also been positioned as market-driven, as products meant to be consumed with sign producers spending conscious effort and time in creating them (Coupland 2012). As Cenoz and Gorter (2009: 55) put it, “a good sign for a business is plainly worth a lot of money”. The commercial sign as a potential for generating more profit is also influenced by “different circumstances – historical, social, political, ideological, geographic and demographic” (Ben-Rafael, Shohamy and Barni, 2010: xiii). For most signs, the potential sign viewer’s perspective appears to be taken into account, as signs are “bound to respect [their] sensibility, values propensities and tastes” (Ben-Rafael, Shohamy and Barni, 2010: xii).

As such, the concept of commodification is frequently discussed in LL literature as an significant theoretical point, as well as an important way to understand the ideologies and processes on display in a community. Commodification, or the making of something or someone into a commodity, i.e. something that may be consumed or exchanged, is commonly seen in LLs as a way to transform various scales and types of value to economic value. Leeman and Modan (2010) discuss the presence of languages and other semiotics referencing practices linked with particular cultures on signs in urban areas in the U.S. as a significant part of the shift to a “symbolic economy”, in which “culture, products and services are bundled together and marketed as ‘experiences’” to attract wealthy, privileged individuals to areas evacuated in the past (either due to white flight or suburbanization) and currently avoided (2010: 185). Language, due to its “status as a readily identifiable index of ethnicity and cultural authenticity [is casted] as a selling vehicle par excellence” (Leeman and Modan, 2010: 191).

In their work on the LL of Washington D.C.’s Chinatown, Leeman and Modan discuss commoditization in terms of a way to investigate how political and social forces shape the LL, while Malinowski (2010) explores how services such as Google’s Street View or a South Korean service called Daum Road View make the LL “ready for commoditization” (2010: 201). The multifaceted ways English is used as a commodity or “branding device” (Kallen and Ní Dhonnacha, 2010: 34) has been explored extensively in LL scholarship in areas around the world (Huebner, 2006; Lanza and Woldemariam, 2009; Stroud and Mpendukana, 2009; Thurlow and Jaworski, 2010; Vandenbroucke, 2016) as has the commodification of other languages particularly in the case of tourism (Coupland, 2012; Coupland and Garrett, 2010; Moriarty, 2014). The process of commodification within the LL has thus been explored in terms of what use of certain languages in the LL ‘do’ for businesses and the larger social or ideological

structures such commodification signifies or actively contributes to. We continue under this direction, discussing how chronotopes are seen to be commodified in South Delhi's LL, while incorporating Paul Kockelman's conception of commodities from a semiotic ontological perspective.

Kockelman's "semiotic ontology of the commodity" (2006: 76) is extremely useful when thinking about the commodification of language or other semiotics as, taking a Peircean perspective, it allows multiple interpretations of what a commodified object may mean to those who view it (see Peirce, 1955). Kockelman argues that the process of commodification is a process by which the many meanings a sign may be interpreted by viewers is "flattened" or transformed, into an amount of value (2006: 89; see also Marx, 1967). In this sense, commodification is in essence a quantification of the object (the 'thing' thought to be the cause or rationale of a reaction a sign induces in a perceiving subject by the subject, i.e. 'pain' from hearing the exclamation 'ouch!'). The dynamic relationship between a sign, its interpretants (the reaction induced in the perceiving subject) and its object in which meaning is conditional is replaced in commodification by a system of collateral relations, in which semiotic relationships are dictated by equivalencies of value. What commodification does is not change the meaning of something, *per se*, but how that meaning operates: using a token Hindi word on a sign as a means to make a product more 'authentically' Indian does not change the different things that word may mean to those who see it. The object, however, the thing projected by those perceptions becomes a countable, quantifiable entity: potential profit or loss. We can thus think of instances of commodification in the Linguistic Landscape as an inherent quantifying process, by which projections of interpretations or engagements with sign elements are converted to different amounts of value. This conceptualization preserves the integrity of the interpretant, maintaining few assumptions regarding the interpretation of or engagement with commodified signs (both in the LL and a more general sense) while capturing the homogenizing effect of the commodification process.

Keeping in mind that *no* level of engagement with LL items is an ever-present possibility, empirical evidence would suggest that people *do* pay attention to signs (Landry and Bourhis 1997). Aiestaran, Cenoz and Gorter (2010) discuss the significant differences present in LL perception between individuals of different language backgrounds living in the same community; Lou (2010) discusses the intense community involvement regarding the planning and design of

signs in Washington, D.C.'s Chinatown (see also Lou, 2016) and Amos (2016) uses interviews with residents to understand the relationship between individual's understanding of the demarcation of place and presence of signs in other languages. Theorizations of potential interpretations of signs have been discussed in terms of sign origins such as "top-down" for government produced signage or "bottom-up" for individuals endeavors or graffiti (Ben-Rafael et. al, 2006) as well as in terms of signs' position and origin influencing or "framing" their interpretation (Kallen, 2010; Goffman, 1974).

The concept of *visceral landscapes* is an extension of these ideas, furthering the discussion of potential engagement of sign viewers to embodiment. The mechanisms by which semiotic configurations attempt to transport subjects into the frame of the sign, or, rather, a specific, particularly evocative frame of mind, is what this perspective aims to highlight and explore. To characterize these processes, we use the theoretical concept of *chronotopes*, arguing specific configurations of space, time and personhood on display serve to orient a viewer and render visceral the LL.

3 Chronotopes

The chronotope was initially used by Bakhtin (1981) to show how the intrinsically intertwined temporal and spatial relationships were incorporated in literary discourse. Drawing on Bakhtin, Agha (2007a) broadens the domain of this notion and introduces cultural chronotopes, maintaining that, though Bakhtin's use of the term is mainly restricted to novelistic discourse, in his conceptualization, he agrees that the chronotope could be applied to 'other areas of culture' (Bakhtin, 1981:84). Agha also argues that, even though Bakhtin does not discuss it in detail, there is a third dimension of the chronotope, i.e. personhood, implied in how he conceptualizes time-space relationships in novelistic discourse. Thus, Agha defines the notion of cultural chronotope as 'a semiotic representation of time and place peopled by certain social types' (2007a: 321). Cultural chronotopes, according to Agha, help us understand how semiotic practices are organized through depictions of the bundle of time, space, and personhood. Following Bakhtin (1981) and Agha (2007a), scholars of language and society have recently applied the chronotope to other genres of discourse (e.g. Anderson, 2011; Davidson,

2007; Dick, 2010; Harkness, 2013; Karimzad, 2016; Koven, 2013; Rosa, 2016; Wirtz, 2016; Woolard, 2013).

Within migration discourse studies, the chronotope has been used to show how migrants and potential migrants orient themselves to home and host countries. Dick (2010), for instance, discusses how the participants in her study discursively create chronotopic images of a 'life beyond' their homeland through (re)-constructing an 'imaginative sociology, thus, mapping themselves into it – a practice that makes them into locally recognizable kinds of people, with particular dreams, life paths, and material surrounds' (2010: 277). In doing so, she illustrates that the non-migrants in the Mexican city of Uriangato draw on the *modernist chronotope*, an imagined migration to the U.S. in which they make progress at the expense of losing morality. Drawing on Dick (2010), Karimzad (2016) uses the chronotope to illustrate how the Iranian educational migrants in the U.S. construct spatio-temporal representations of a future ideal life in the host country, when and where they are able to experience the American dream. He argues that such future-oriented discourse in pursuit of a better future is prompted by their less than ideal past and present, given the social, political, and economic issues they have experienced before migration as well as the bureaucratic restrictions around them after migration.

The chronotope has also been applied to the analysis of language ideologies, historicity, and identity. Woolard (2013), for example, uses this notion to investigate the language ideological discourses among the participants in her longitudinal study. She specifically illustrates that the individuals with different life paths draw on contrasting chronotopes in their orientations toward Catalan language and identity. Wirtz (2016), on the other hand, highlights the idea of 'multiplicity of chronotopes', arguing that historical imagination is a product of the dialogue among various chronotopes. She argues that different understandings of the concepts of time and history among the participants of her study lead to the construction of strikingly different forms of morality, affect, belonging, and truth. Finally, Blommaert and De Fina (2017) apply this notion to the study of identity and argue that identities are organized chronotopically, i.e. social behaviors, or certain forms of identification, are dependent on certain time-space configurations. They maintain that viewing identities as chronotopic helps capture their complexity through seeing them as the product of the interaction of multiple large-scale and small-scale chronotopes and hence help avoid the simplistic characterization of identities within macro and micro context dichotomies.

Discussion of chronotopes within LLs was first explored in Pietikäinen (2014), an analysis of the Linguistic Landscape of Inari, a village in Finnish Sámi land. Pietikäinen discusses two chronotopes present in the Inari LL, the regulative chronotope and the transitory chronotope, to “highlight the spatio-temporal characteristics in signs in public space” (Pietikäinen, 2014: 488). Pietikäinen’s regulative chronotope encompasses moments of hierarchy and boundary, in which ideologies of institutions such as the state are reproduced and reinforced, while the transitory chronotope is comprised of “contestation and creativity ... hold[ing] potential for subversion and change” (Pietikäinen, 2014: 485). In this exploration of sociopolitical and historical processes embedded within Inari signage, Pietikäinen demonstrates the value of chronotope as a theoretical concept for the field of LL.

Building on this introduction of chronotopes to Linguistic Landscapes, we identify specific chronotopes present in South Delhi public signage as well as explore the relationships and dialogues in which they appear to be engaged. While Pietikäinen’s regulatory and transitory chronotopes are positioned as opposing and independent entities, we argue the chronotopic interaction seen in South Delhi is more fluid, observing displayed representations of space, time and personhood to actively intersect and interact. To explore these dialectic displays, we focus on two chronotopes observed in South Delhi’s LL: the Indo-Chic nostalgia chronotope (borrowing a term from Toor, 2000) and the global cosmopolitan chronotope. While distinct in semiotic components and orientation, signs that employ these chronotopes are seen to use similar strategies to transport or situate the viewer within particular kinds of experiences. Those experiences and the chronotopes that structure them, be it an imagined rural past or an imagined sophistication of the ‘global’ or – often – a complex combination of the two, are seen to draw from the middle and upper class imagination to quantify such memories and aspirations, re-affirming and re-iterating nationalist narratives tailored to and for the privileged.

4 South Delhi

South Delhi, the newest addition to India’s capital, is an ideal research site to explore chronotopes of nostalgia and modernity. During British colonial rule, South Delhi was considered the outskirts of the city – consisting of small villages, green hills and small streams (Gupta, 2010). This soon changed in 1947 in the aftermath of India’s independence from Britain

and partition from Pakistan, however, when approximately 450,000 refugees from both the Western and Eastern sides of the country fled to the capital (Baviskar, 2003; Roy, 2010). In 1948 the Ministry of Rehabilitation was appointed to house and support the refugee population, resulting in a huge expansion of construction in the periphery of Delhi focused on the South. Poorly constructed sewage lines led to an epidemic of jaundice in 1955 that killed 700 people – this incident and a rapidly increasing population led the Delhi government to establish itself as a Union Territory that same year, later forming the Delhi Development Authority (DDA) in 1957 to oversee future construction and development of the city (Roy, 2010).

The DDA continued to develop South Delhi throughout the 1960s and 70s under a “Master Plan” formulated according to Nehruvian socialist policy. Attaining and developing land was “dismally slow” (Singh, 1968) and involved clearings of slums that often turned violent. This was particularly the case during a 19 month period known as the Emergency (1975-77), when Prime Minister Indira Gandhi requested President Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed to declare a state of emergency for the stated purpose of responding to threats facing the country. During this period elections were suspended and civil liberties grossly violated as Prime Minister Gandhi sanctioned slum clearances, enforced family planning via sterilizations of coerced or questionable consent and suppressed the press (Tarlo, 2003). During this period in Delhi over 900,000 people were forced from their homes (Baviskar, 2002; Roy, 2010). Such significant displacement of poorer populations from the area combined with steady growth of more profitable developments by private contractors as the DDA began to sell off more and more South Delhi land, primed the area for slow, gradual gentrification.

Movement of capital in the form of resident wealth, private and public enterprise and infrastructural investment to South Delhi was moderate throughout the late 1970s and most of the 1980s, the area reflecting the rate of economic growth experienced by the rest of the country. After India achieved independence in 1947, India’s first prime minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, began to implement a series of economic, political, social and cultural reforms based on the Soviet model of the USSR. As socialist India grew, so did her bureaucracy, resulting in an inefficient system that stymied free enterprise and capitalist endeavors (Mehta & Pandharipande, 2011). While attempts were made by Indira Gandhi’s son Rajiv to liberalize during the early 1980s, the country’s economy continued to struggle through up to the beginning of the 1990s, until facing a dire fiscal crisis (Khilnani, 1998); threats of a trade barrier from the U.S. (“India assailed for

import licensing”, 1989) and pressure from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank (Toor, 2000) forced India to liberalize its economy and open its borders to foreign goods.

4.1 The Chronotope of Global Cosmopolitanism

The impact of liberalization spread far beyond the economy, causing fundamental shifts in reigning social, political and cultural ideologies. Particularly for middle and upper-class populations, liberalization provided unprecedented access to affluence and newly available foreign products to spend it on. Nehruvian-era definitions of progress and modernity tied to infrastructure development and eradication of rural poverty gave way to “a national political culture which increasingly centers on a culture of consumption” (Fernandes, 2000: 613).

‘Progress’ post liberalization became framed around the values and aspirations of middle and upper classes residing in urban areas, moving away from challenges facing rural communities such as limited or nonexistent infrastructure and insufficient access to health care and education. Instead, progress became defined by “visual signs of wealth” primarily in the form of commodities “from abroad” previously only available to individuals or families with relatives working outside of India or the extremely wealthy (Fernandes, 2000: 614). Access to and consumption of such products became “inextricably linked with a middle-class image of a new liberalizing India”, a stance reflected, reiterated and reproduced in advertisements, film, print media and other popular mass mediated discourses (Fernandes, 2000: 614).

An important strategy in encouraging India’s developing consumptive culture was the positioning of ‘traditional’ Indian culture and ‘global’ culture as mutually inclusive. Fernandes (2000) gives the example of an advertisement for air conditioning units that depicts a sadhu lying meditatively outdoors on a bed of nails in one panel and in the next transposed in the same position on a comfortable looking bed in a nicely furnished and air conditioned bedroom. The “well-established Orientalist images which associated India with holy men, exotic religious practices and poverty” are saved by the “luxury consumer item”, the air conditioner not only positioned as a desirable commodity but harmonious with Indian traditional practices (616). Bhatt (2008) describes this type of positioning as inhabiting a “third space”, a space “modern [but] ‘Indian’” (178), that does not claim one identity over the other but inhabits both simultaneously (see also Bhabha, 1994; Woolard, 1998).

This complementary juxtaposition of ‘traditional’ India and ‘modern’ global product actively demarcates the local and the global and their envisioned relationship in post-liberalization consciousness. We characterize this as the chronotope of global cosmopolitanism, the imagined time of the present contemporary moment and the seemingly timeless Indian tradition envisioned as comfortably sharing the same space peopled by the truly ‘Indian’ reaping in benefits from participation in the ‘global’ economy.

4.2 The Chronotope of Indo-Chic Nostalgia

Moments in which the ‘traditional’ and ‘modern’ are depicted as compatible are not only complicit in promoting a culture of consumption but significant driving forces in defining what ‘tradition’ and ‘modernity’ mean (Besnier, 2011; Fernandes, 2000; Agha, 2007b; Appadurai, 1986). Toor (2000) argues that the commodification of Indian culture and tradition used to encourage acceptance of capitalist-driven ideals has turned back on itself, resulting in the rise of a new type of Orientalism in which the “production-circulation-consumption circuit originates *and* culminates *in India*” (9). Orientalist tropes of exotification and stereotyping produced in the export of “cultural commodities” during the colonial and Nehruvian period are replicated within the post-liberalization “globally-oriented capitalist consumer culture” not by colonists but by a newly formed capitalist elite: “‘yuppies’ with disposable incomes unlike any experienced by previous generations of largely austere socialist India” (Toor, 2000: 1).

Borrowing a term used in a 1997 New York Times article to describe the rise in popularity and status of Indian products and practices as “indisputably chic” in the U.S. (Sengupta, 1997), Toor characterizes the main focus and commodity of New Orientalism as “Indo-Chic”, Indian cultural artifacts that have been re-imagined and re-fashioned to fit the aesthetic of India’s “new hegemony” of privileged, urban and self-consciously cosmopolitan young adults (Toor, 2000: 4). Toor also points to the emerging population of Non-Resident Indians, or NRIs, members of the Indian diaspora, as maintaining their patriotism from afar with Indo-Chic ephemera, “new generations of hyphenated Indians ... increasingly looking toward the home country in their quest for identity” (9). In their quest for an ‘authentic’ identity, they create and participate in the market of commodified and simplified Indian ‘culture’ of the Indo-Chic.

Interviews with South Delhi residents surfaced the pejorative term “hipster desis” to describe these types of individuals, “hipster” referring negatively to someone “[defined by] a shared personal aesthetic of ironically-presented low culture symbols and appropriated counter-cultural fashions” (Henke, 2013: 117) who mainstream a rejection of the mainstream, and “desi” (derived from the Hindi/Sanskrit *desh* or ‘country’) connoting someone or something from India or South Asia that is very ‘traditionally’ Indian or South Asian and usually tied to rural communities, aesthetics or practices.¹² The South Delhi neighborhoods surveyed in this study are a rich habitat for so-called “hipster desis” indulging in Indo-Chic, liberalization driving significant economic growth for middle-class and upper-class families residing in the area as well as fostering the establishment of multiple nearby offices for multinational corporations, in turn attracting young professionals and their quickly accumulating capital.

Inherent to the Indo-Chic aesthetic described by Toor is a delicate balance of Indian-ness as exotica and simultaneous conveyance of authenticity. As authenticity, like identity, is a process and what is ‘authentic’ varies from person to person, community to community and context to context (Bucholtz, 2003), the authenticity Indo-Chic constructs cannot be seen as authentic for all Indians. Rather, as Toor suggests, Indo-Chic is a specific re-imagining of Indian products generated by and for a wealthy elite, a re-imagining that replaces the realities of the past with fictions of nostalgia. Nostalgia (literally “longing for a return home”) manifests as a side effect of advancement of time and expansion of space, an internalization of the division between local and universal. The nostalgic, “instead of aspiring for the universal and progressive ... looks backward and yearns for the particular” (Boym, 2001:11). The particular of Indo-Chic that “encodes Indian artifacts as exotic and hence desirable” (Toor, 2000: 20) pertains to a chronotope of an imagined history, one which is primarily a rural landscape of the past, peopled by characterizations of the authentic ‘desi’, the Indian unchanged or untouched by the trappings of globalization. Interestingly, and perhaps not entirely paradoxically, the language employed in Indo-Chic is primarily English: English novels by Indian writers, English labels on Indian products, and, in the Linguistic Landscape of South Delhi, signs primarily written in English and always in Roman script, underscoring Toor’s observation that the “particular kind of Indian experience” tied to Indo-Chic is that “of the urban, middle and upper-middle class India, united by its cosmopolitanism and its *familiarity with English*” (Toor, 2000: 22, emphasis added).

In this sense the global cosmopolitanism and Indo-Chic nostalgia chronotopes are very closely related – both are images of times, spaces and personhoods cultivated post-liberalization primarily by and for privileged, wealthier individuals. This is not to say the signs in which we identify these chronotopes at work speak only to the privileged and wealthy, or that these chronotopes are the *only* ones these semiotic configurations evoke for viewers. From a Peircean perspective, the object of any sign (the ‘something’ that specifies the sign, enabling an effect or generating an ‘interpretant’ on the sign viewer) can be thought of as a “correspondence-preserving projection” of the interpretants of those who view it (Kockelman, 2006: 82; see also Peirce, 1955). That is, the meaning of the sign – in our case the summoning of a chronotope in a piece of the Linguistic Landscape – can have many effects or interpretations. As such we will focus on the semiotic strategies that these signs employ in an attempt to reference certain time, space and personhood configurations to evoke experience of the visceral.

5 Data and Analysis

Data come from a corpus of photos and videos of approximately 7,000 signs taken in 24 different neighborhoods in South Delhi during a 2-month period in 2013. Signs discussed in this paper come from the three wealthiest neighborhoods surveyed: Defence Colony, Greater Kailash I and Greater Kailash II. These neighborhoods were chosen as these were the only neighborhoods the Indo-Chic nostalgia chronotope was found to be present. The global cosmopolitan chronotope, however, is found throughout all neighborhoods surveyed.

Defence Colony, Greater Kailash I and Greater Kailash II, like many neighborhoods in South Delhi, were first established and built up in the early 1960s. Defence Colony or ‘Def Col’ began as a housing complex for retired members of the Indian Armed Services. It is widely considered a ‘posh’ and affluent colony, consisting mostly of restaurants, clubs and gourmet food shops. Greater Kailash Part I and II, or GK I / II were developed as residential areas by the private contractor Delhi Land and Finance with three main central markets: M and N Block Markets in GK I and the M Block Market in GK II. GK I markets served residents with general stores and pharmacies, and GK II M Block served as housewares market (selling primarily marble and fittings for bathrooms and kitchens) until the early 2000s, when expensive restaurants

and spas began to open reflecting the growing incomes of the neighborhoods' residents and clientele.

The first example of chronotopes on display is an evocation of the Indo-Chic nostalgia chronotope by a North Indian restaurant located in the main market of the Defence Colony neighborhood (Figure 1). The first semiotic component we draw attention to is the background behind the glass: rows of traditional Indian rolling pins, or *belan*, neatly stacked on wooden shelves completely filling the window. The repetition and positioning of the *belan* recall the replicated images and mass production aesthetic of pop artists like Andy Warhol, whose “concern... with materialism suggests a sameness of production, the common objects of our affluent society taken out of context and scrutinized for their symbolic value” (Schroeder, 1992: 10). Here, however, a common object of Indian traditional society, the rolling pin of one's aunt or grandmother, the “desi” rolling pin, appears to be taken out of context for a stylistic effect, its symbolic value exploited rather than scrutinized.

Fig. 1

This bombardment of *belan* evokes the imagined past time, rural place and traditional persons and practices of the Indo-Chic nostalgia chronotope through the item itself as an object of

nostalgia and via the use of actual, tangible pins. Viscerality of experience is attempted at both through caricature-like reference to an imagined Indian tradition and past and through the actual physical reproduction of this experience. Underscoring the tangible, visceral effect attempted by these elements is that the door (lower left corner of Figure 1) is blended into the rest of the wall with glass and *belan*, so visitors must open and pass through this 'wall' of nostalgia to go eat.

Painted on the outside glass is the name of the restaurant "Rollmaal" in stylized Roman script with the Hindi phrase "roll ke andar kya hai?" (*What's inside the roll?*) written in Roman script underneath. The name of the restaurant "Rollmaal" brings to mind the term "gol maal" (*chaos*) as well as a popular classic Bollywood comedy "Gol Maal" made in 1979 and a more recent series of films sharing the same name. Reference to classic Bollywood films and poster art is a common feature of Indo-Chic (Toor, 2000; Bandyopadhyay, 2008), and such a potential reference should be noted in its further construction of nostalgic discourse. A further 'Indian-izing' stylistic flourish present in this sign is the bar drawn across the top of "Rollmaal", reminiscent of the script of Hindi and other South Asian languages, Devanagari. The Indo-Chic nostalgia chronotope of an imagined and idealized 'authentic' India is brought to the viewer by these separate yet harmonious semiotic strategies: the *desi* rolling pin as accoutrement, an accessorized artifact of 'authentic' Indian experience; topped with a layer of reference to Devanagari, the 'true' Hindi language script, employed as decorative component.

Fig. 2

The second example of the Indo-Chic nostalgia chronotope at work is from the M Block Market area of the Greater Kailash II neighborhood (Figure 2). The text of interest is painted on an enlarged Indian frying pan outside of “not JUST parathas”, another North Indian style restaurant (*Parathas* referring to a dish of bread stuffed with spices, vegetables and occasionally meat or eggs). The message hand-painted on the pan speaks longingly of “the old walled city” of Chandni Chowk in “purani dilli” (literally *Old Delhi*, or North Delhi) as if it is a long-lost past, a romantic memory of the *real* Delhi that has been abandoned. The use of Hindi in this sign works to underscore this nostalgic depiction with a certain authenticating cachet, using “purani dilli” instead of Old Delhi and using terms tied or associated with India of the past such as “narrow katras” (*katras* referring to small side-streets in which individuals working in the same trade would historically practice business in the Chandni Chowk area dating to its establishment under the Mughal ruler Shah Jahan in the mid 1600s) and “opulent kothies” (*kothies*, another word reminiscent of a splendid, decadent past, referring to large mansions).

In this sign the Indo-Chic nostalgia imagined-past is seen to actively override and replace reality. The area of Chandni Chowk complete with “narrow katras” still exists, and the “gali parathewali” (*the street of parathas / people who sell parathas*) is very much in operation. In this instance, however, reality is reduced to a “piece of history”, a culture that has to be re-lived. Hindi terms facilitate this re-living, activating imagery of a distant, majestic and romantic past, a blend of architecture, people, culture and food. Hindi is sprinkled in not only as the language with which to bring about an ‘authentic’ experience of the past, but, through this construction, is itself positioned as the language *of* the past.

Instances of the global cosmopolitanism chronotope share a relatively homogeneous conception and simplified understanding of ‘Indian’ as authentic; however, within the time-space of the simultaneously progressive modern and timeless traditional, reliance on specific evocative images, objects and references such as those seen in deployment of Indo-Chic nostalgia are replaced with broader cover terms and references. This is seen in the first example from GK II M Block market (Figure 3), a sign for the furniture store “spaceworld”.

Fig. 3

This sign is very like the advertisement described by Fernandes (2000), in that it features two images side by side in a comparison that suggests both images and both sentiments expressed by the text are compatible. On the left, a young woman wearing Western clothes and short hair appears to be working in a modernly furnished office space (“International by art”) juxtaposed equally and favorably with a young girl in pigtails wearing a generic Indian school uniform (“Indian at heart”) leaning on a drawer with a basketball in it. The chronotope of global cosmopolitanism, of co-present and commensurate values or aspirations of global and Indian, is additionally underscored by these smiling female figures: the ‘modern’ working woman ‘liberated’ by participation in activities and dress thought of as ‘international’, and the ‘classic’, ubiquitous uniformed, pigtailed school girl of preserved Indian purity or innocence. The use of female figures as a way to map aspirations of national identity should also be noted as common trope of Indian nationalist ideology (Ramaswamy, 2009; Fernandes, 2000).

Such use of the global cosmopolitan chronotope situates understanding of the phrase “Indian at heart” to not mean a rejection of the modern, rather, “Indian at heart” seems to decree that Indian identity is and should be bivalent and simultaneous, echoing and reinforcing the shift in aspirational norms in post-modern, post-globalization India (Woolard, 1998; Fernandes, 2000). It is of note, too, that in this instance the global India is framed exclusively in English. Such linguistic positioning is similar to patterns seen in evocations of the Indo-Chic nostalgia

and a further indicator of such chronotopes reflecting a system of values and aspirations directed towards or reflecting the interests of the middle and upper class, privileged, English-speaking elite.

The de-Hindi-ization involved in the bringing about of these chronotopes is also present the next example of the global cosmopolitanism at work, a banner advertisement located on a bus stand near GK I M Block market (Figure 4). The ad is a promotion for Amul, a large Indian dairy collective that also produces bread, butter, cheese and other basic groceries. The message, “Amul doodh peeta hai India” (*India drinks Amul milk*) is presented in Hindi, but in Roman script. The background is plain, and the models strike poses that are reminiscent of the series of “got milk?” advertisements used in the United States. The semiotic organization of the sign is reminiscent of a ‘modern’ aesthetic, with an austere empty background and smiling models wearing sleeveless Western-style clothing. Of particular note is use of the term “India” to describe the nation, not Hindi words for India, “Hindustan” or “Bharat”. The ‘tradition’ made commensurate with this modern aesthetic is inherent to the very nature of the item advertised: Amul milk is *the* traditional Indian dairy or food product. Here, Amul is praised as the milk *India* drinks, not Bharat or Hindustan but *India*, the identifying term used abroad, used in English and used by the international community. This international India, however, drinks Amul, the classic, quintessentially Indian milk (see also Agnihotri and McCormick, 2010). Again, we see the global cosmopolitan chronotope to be evoked through nods to English in the form of Roman script and selective vocabulary (India), highlighting the linguistic politics of the global cosmopolitan modern/traditional spacetime configuration.

Fig. 4

While distinct, the chronotopes of Indo-Chic nostalgia and global cosmopolitanism have much in common and can be thought of as in active dialogue with one another: the imagined

‘modern’ cannot exist without an imagined ‘past’ to serve as comparison. The post-liberalization re-defining of ‘progress’ relied heavily on both of these chronotopes, not as separate entities but as complementary arguments, leading to instances of dialogue or intersection like that observed in this sign for the GK II M Block Market restaurant “Angreezee Dhaba” (*English Restaurant*) (Figure 5).

Fig. 5

The term *angreezee* is a particular Hindi term for “English” (both the language and the people, mostly in reference to people from England), while the term *dhaba* is a word for a distinct type of informal Indian restaurant that is found mostly on the sides of major roadways or in rural

areas. *Dhaba* serves to evoke a feeling of ‘traditional’ or ‘authentic’ Indian food and Indian food experience, while *angrezee* is positioned both as a distinct contrast and as a beneficial modifier. As clarified further in the underlying tagline, *Angreeze Dhaba* is selling “English Hygiene... Desi Khana” (*English Hygiene ... [Traditional-style / Country-style] Indian Food*). Here the English phrase “English Hygiene” is presented in parallel with the Hindi words *desi* (*from South Asia or ‘authentic’ Indian*) and *khana* (*food*), positioning the aspirations of ‘modern progress’ (*English* standards of cleanliness) as a foil for the authenticity of the ‘traditional rural’ (*desi* style cuisine).

This is different from the previous examples of the global cosmopolitanism chronotope in that ‘modern’ and ‘traditional’ are not necessarily presented as mutually inclusive or harmonious ideals. Instead, they appear to be pitted against one another, the aesthetic of the ‘authentic’ past having to be mitigated by clear insistence of ‘modern’ or ‘global’ sanitation: that despite the *desi* food you will not get sick or despite the rigorous cleaning procedures the food will still taste ‘authentic’. This juxtaposition is underscored by the language used in this sign: Hindi in Roman throughout (a common pattern between the Indo-Chic nostalgia and global cosmopolitan chronotopes) but, particularly in the tagline, used in conjunction with English as a *contrast*, not as a smooth integration as seen in the previous examples. In signs like the *Angreeze Dhaba* banner, we see the negotiation and tension between Indo-Chic and global cosmopolitan ideals of looking back and longing for time that ‘was’ and looking forward and imagining the ‘modern’ and ‘progressive’ India. In this instance, the simultaneous “modern [but] ‘Indian’” (Bhatt, 2008: 178) is seen in conflict, the imagined rural past and future abroad both positioned as something lacking: ‘*desi*’ cleanliness and ‘English’, taste.

As shown, the delineation between the Indo-Chic and global cosmopolitanism chronotopes can be fuzzy at times, as privileged post-liberalization narratives overlap and intersect. It is within this intersection, however, that these chronotopes develop boundaries and definitions, as conceptions of an idealized ‘tradition’ and ‘modernity’ serve as opposing metrics with which to illustrate and populate the aspirations of the growing Indian bourgeoisie.

6 Concluding Remarks

In our analysis of chronotopes on display, we have aimed to illustrate how narratives of modernity and tradition adjusted towards South Delhi's upper and middle classes are evoked in the LL and to highlight the ways in which these discourses intersect and interact. In the summoning of these chronotopes on commercial signage to engage potential customers, however, we note a strikingly simplistic and shallow portrayal of the kind of experiences, histories or traditions they reference. "Rollmaal" reduces the traditional *belan* rolling pin and entire Devanagari writing system to conspicuous embellishments; "Not Just Parathas" implies an entire neighborhood community of Delhi to be lost to the past; "Indian at Heart, International by Art" and "Amul doodh peeta hai India" seem to position 'modern' aspirations in English monolingualism and Romanization and "Angrezee Dhaba – English Hygiene, Desi Khana" frames 'global' practices as tasteless and 'local' food as reckless. In the use of these chronotopes in commercial signs, the wide scope of experiences, aspirations, concerns, considerations and complexities of post-liberalization India are shrunk to consumable chunks of romanticized essences, strategically deployed to entice the imagination and evoke the visceral. It is because they are used as commodities that these chronotopes become homogenized and flattened – the visceral experience of the subject on seeing the words and images of these signs may maintain recognition of the complex histories and trajectories of the chronotopes they evoke but the outcome, the object of their experiences is reduced to a potential sale.

The commodification of chronotopes, or the quantification of memory or experience, does not lessen what these evocative pockets of space, time and personhood potentially mean to people, but contribute directly to the dissemination of simplified, one-dimensional portrayals of what modernity and nostalgia can mean in India, or at least in this instance, South Delhi. To evoke the visceral in these instances is to in a way, diminish it, reducing the complexity of potential significances of these chronotopes to a quantifiable value. The potential for *visceral landscapes* to draw the viewer into a sign and a sign's narrative by evoking these senses of shared histories also can flatten them in the process, transforming cultural chronotopes into convertible capital.

¹ An Urban Dictionary definition of 'desi' reads "In South Asia, it is used to refer to something in the Indian way – it can mean 'traditional' or, in a pejorative way, 'rustic'. South Asians abroad

use it to refer to anything South Asian, i.e. Indian, Pakistan, Bangladesh, etc.” (Urban Dictionary, 2008).

² In “hipster desi”, however, “desi” can be assumed to be used sarcastically.

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